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A
DISPLAY
OF THE
RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES
OF THE
Associate Synod
OF
NORTH AMERICA.



REVISED BY THE ASSOCIATE SYNOD, 1813:

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast.
REV. iii. 11.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.
HEB. x. 23.

FOURTH EDITION.



Pittsburgh:

PRINTED BY EICHBAUM AND JOHNSTON—MARKET STREET.

.....
1823.

PREFACE.

THIS volume contains all the printed papers which display the religious principles of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, and the people of their communion.

THE Presbytery have studied plainness and perspicuity, in stating their religious profession, more than elegance of style. The apostle says, 1 Tim. iii. 15, that the church of Christ is "the pillar and ground of truth;" that is, the church is a public witness of the truth: and he alludes to the custom among the Romans, of inscribing the edicts of magistrates, presently in force, upon pillars erected in public places, and in courts of judgment, that all might know them, and govern themselves accordingly.

THAT this collection may be the means of spreading the knowledge of reformation principles, of removing prejudices from the minds of the generation, and uniting the hearts of the Lord's people in love and in the truth, that they may stand fast in one spirit, with one accord, striving together for the faith of the gospel, is the hearty desire of

WILLIAM MARSHALL.

PHILADELPHIA, *June 17, 1794.*

Act of the Associate Presbytery,

APPROVING THE ENSUING NARRATIVE.

Philadelphia, October 25, 1784.

THE Presbytery having judged it necessary that a NARRATIVE concerning what the Lord has done for that part of his church, with which they stand most immediately connected, and concerning the Testimony which, to this day has been maintained in it, against various opinions and measures injurious to his cause, should be prefixed to their Declaration and Testimony; a draught of this Narrative having been considered at several meetings, was at last finished; and in this and the preceding day, it was read by paragraphs. The question was put, "Approve of this Narrative, or not?" it was carried, "approve." Wherefore, the Presbytery did, and hereby do, judicially APPROVE this Narrative, as what they judge necessary, both as a Testimony by them to the cause and work of God in former times, and as an ACCOUNT they are, in duty bound, to give the present and following generations, that they may *not forget the works of God.* The Presbytery do, however, declare, that an adherence to this Narrative, as is evident from the nature of the work, can make no part of that profession, which will be required of church members upon their admission to communion with us.

This, by order of Presbytery, is signed,

WILLIAM MARSHALL, *Moderator.*

Extracted by

JAMES ANDERSON, *Presbytery Clerk.*

NARRATIVE

CONCERNING THE MAINTENANCE

OF THE

Reformation Testimony.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Warrant we have from the word of God, and from the Practice of his People, to maintain a direct and public Testimony for the Truth.

THERE is no service acceptable to God, beside that which he hath appointed. *His word is a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path.* According to it we study to walk; by it let our faith and practice be tried. If any ask, by what authority we prove it to be our duty to testify, in the manner we do, for the truth of the gospel, and against the prevailing errors of our time, our answer is, The Lord hath commanded us. He who is the *Amen, the faithful and true Witness*, and who himself before *Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession*, describes his people, both in the Old and New Testament, by the name of Witnesses; and the design of this, as of every other name by which they are described in the oracles of God, is to put them in mind of their duty. Moreover, the Lord has promised, that they *shall be his witnesses*. And this promise was not confined to the apostles: the testimony of Jesus was not to die with them. It was to be maintained by the succeeding generations of Christians. *The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses*, said Paul to Timothy, *the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others.* The testimony of Jesus was main-

tained in the lowest state of the church, in the days of antichrist's reign. After the witnesses of that period had finished their testimony, or performed their appointed service in the church militant, and after the enemies of Christ had prevailed so far, that they imagined their victory complete, this testimony was revived in the Reformation. Surely it is our duty to hold fast what we have thus attained, and what has been transmitted to us by the goodness of God, watching over his church from age to age, and remembering it in its low estate, and saving it from the hand of those who hated it, and redeeming it from the hand of the enemy. Surely it is our duty to follow the footsteps of the most faithful and most zealous servants of Christ, who have confessed him before men, kept the word of his patience, and testified against the prevailing wickedness of their times, at the hazard, often the expense of their lives. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony; and so must we, or we cannot attain, together with them, what is expressed in the promise of Christ, *To him that overcometh will I give to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

All true Christians do, in some degree, maintain the testimony of Jesus; but it is not uncommon to find them, through weakness or prejudice, neglecting some special part of it. Often the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, deters them from some part of their duty; while the remaining corruption of their hearts sets them upon excusing, yea, vindicating themselves in this neglect. In such cases, Christians are great losers themselves: for the Lord's service carries in it, its own reward; and the more faithful we are in it, we will find it the more profitable to us. The interest of the church suffers also: those truths and duties for which no proper testimony is maintained, are as it were lost.

Our Lord Jesus hath said, *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven; but whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.* It is by confessing the Lord Jesus, that we testify our love to him, our sense of the obligations we are under to the God of all grace, our esteem of his word, and our resolu-

tion to hold it fast, whatever we may suffer for so doing. It is thus that we declare ourselves on Christ's side, and renounce all fellowship with his enemies in their devices against him, in their disobedience to his laws, and in their contempt of his salvation. It is thus we give to God that glory, due to his name, which the wicked refuse to give. And the more open, full, and particular this confession and testimony is, it is so much the more fit to answer the ends designed by it.

Such a testimony is necessary for transmitting the truth of the gospel to following generations; pure, without a mixture of error; and entire, no article of it being lost. Though no article of the truth shall ever be wholly lost; though it is all preserved in the holy Scriptures; yet many articles of it may be forgotten among a people professing Christianity, and so lost to them. During the rise, progress, and reign of antichrist, various important truths were so generally forgotten, that although the evidence for them in Scripture was plain and strong, many can hardly be persuaded, that what was so long forgotten among Christians belongs to Christianity. We ought, therefore, to give the more earnest heed to those truths, the knowledge of which was, through the mercy of God, revived at the Reformation; lest in this time of prevailing apostacy, we should let them slip. *What we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us, we should not hide from their children, shewing the generation to come, the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and the wonderful works that he hath done.*

Such a testimony is necessary as a reproof to backsliding Christians, who are fallen into a spiritual sleep; or who, being timorous, will not by an open confession of the truth, expose themselves to the reproach of gainsayers; or who through too great love to this present world, do, in many instances, seek their own rather than the things of Christ; or who are so far led astray, that they set themselves against some part of the truth of the gospel. Whatever may be good in such, is no reason why we should not oppose what is evil in them. The good principles they may retain, do not make their evil principles less dangerous. Their piety does not make the working of their corruption less hurtful. Do Christians often err in their practice? So do they also in their principles: they are no more infallible in the one than in the other. Would it

be reckoned an absurdity to say, that no evil practice of which a Christian may be habitually guilty, ought to be reprov'd? It is not less an absurdity to say, that no principle into which a Christian may be led, ought to be testified against.

Such a testimony is necessary as an appointed mean to convince the wicked of their sin, and warn them of their danger. We are called to declare to them, in the most solemn and explicit manner, that, because they hold fast their iniquities, God is angry with them every day; and that, if they do not flee for refuge, to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, his anger will quickly break forth upon them. They may refuse to hear; but if we give them faithful warning, their blood will not be required at our hands.

A faithful testimony for the truth of the gospel will always have many enemies. Backsliding professors of Christianity may be much enraged against it. Those who are hardened in sin, and who rebel against the light, will hate and despise it. The testimony of the witnesses, during the great apostacy, tormented the antichristian generation who dwelt on the earth; and the Dragon is still wroth with the woman, and attempting to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The devil, though now restrained from deceiving one part of mankind, and destroying another, to the degree he once did, is still working in the hearts of the children of disobedience, and laying snares for the people of God. He is opposing the kingdom of Christ, by the profane, who scoff at it; by the teachers of error, who labour to subvert it; and by the lukewarm, who neglecting their duty, cease to defend it, yea, even betray to the enemy. If the testimony we maintain, is hated and opposed by many, this is no more than what we are taught to expect. The world hates Christ: and the cause it approves is not his, nor the party it commends on his side.

The word of God is our testimony. We must bear witness to all those truths which it declares, and against all those evils which it condemns. It is most injurious to accuse us as if we neglected this word, because we apply it in a testimony suited to the times and circumstances of our lot. In doing so, we follow the footsteps of the flock of Christ. The great question between Israel and their

heathen neighbours was, Whether Jehovah was the creator, governor, and judge of the universe, or not? Upon the determination of it the whole controversy depended. The God of Israel being acknowledged to be the true God, the whole system of heathen idolatry and superstition was, at once, declared impious; and the fear and service of the God of Israel became an acknowledged duty. Therefore, the leading article of the testimony maintained by the church of Israel, was, That Jehovah, their God, was the only living, and true God. *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.* The great question between the apostles and the unbelieving Jews was, Whether Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, or not? On the determination of it, all other controversies between them, about the law, about the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and about the calling of the Gentiles, depended. Therefore, the leading article maintained by the Christians against the Jews was, That Jesus was the Son of God; the promised Redeemer. Thus it is said of Paul, immediately after his conversion, that *he confounded the Jews who dwelt at Damascus, proving that Jesus, whom their rulers had condemned and crucified, was the very Christ.* The great question between the witnesses of Jesus and anti-christ was, Whether the word of God, or the traditions and commandments of men, are the rule of our faith and practice? The man of sin, perceiving that he could not stand if he was tried by the former, did, with the fury of a roaring lion, at one time, and with the subtlety of a serpent, at another, fight for the latter; claiming an infallibility to himself, or to the councils of his creatures. Therefore, the testimony maintained by the Lord's remnant was, in substance, this, That his word is our only guide, and is to be believed and obeyed, rather than any decrees or commandments of men.

At the Reformation the testimony maintained by the witnesses, in former times of darkness, was enlarged, more clearly stated for the truth of the gospel, and carried in it a more full and particular condemnation of the great apostacy. This appears in the confessions of the Reformed churches. These contain a testimony for the truth which former adversaries were not able to suppress, and which present and future adversaries will in vain fight against. *No weapon that is formed against Zion shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against her in judgment she shall condemn.*

CHAPTER II.

Of the State of the Church of Scotland from the Reformation, 1560, to the year 1637.

THE church of Scotland, of which we are a branch, beside the testimony she maintained in common with the other churches of the Reformation, was called to testify, in a special manner, for this important truth, That the Lord Jesus is the only Head of the church; against the usurpation of the civil powers, who claimed a right to make laws for it, and to hold it in subjection to their will. Soon after the Reformation, attempts were made to bring that church under the yoke of bondage to creatures of the magistrate, under the name of bishops. But such attempts were boldly resisted; and, though sometimes carried very far, did, for many years, fail of success.

The clouds, however, began to gather over that church toward the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. James VI. of Scotland, succeeding, about that time, to the throne of England, North and South Britain were so far united, as to live in peace under one supreme magistrate. But this event had a malignant influence on the church of Scotland. The kings of England have, since the Reformation, claimed a right of succeeding to the Pope in one of his names of blasphemy, viz. Head of the church. This strange prerogative was very pleasing to the prince already mentioned; he being remarkable for vanity, weakness, and self-conceit. As the laws of England gave him a supreme power over the church in that kingdom, he imagined that he had a right to claim, and to exercise the same power over the church of Scotland. The design was to fashion the last of these churches according to the pattern of the first, whose external order and appearance was very like that of Rome, it having been most imperfectly reformed. By deceit, and by violence, and by a mixture of both, an Episcopacy was introduced into Scotland. Not, indeed, all at once. The power at first given to the bishops seemed very little; but it was, by degrees, increased till they became terrible. Those Popish ceremonies, which the church of England had so zealously retained, were also imposed, according as the power of the bishops seemed able to force submission to them.

After the accession of the next prince to the throne, viz. Charles I. who succeeded his father in 1625, matters became still worse. Charles not only pursued his father's measures in church and state; but more impatient of contradiction, and more resolute in making attempts against the rights and privileges of his people, he proceeded from violence to violence, till he turned Britain into a field of blood and confusion. Under him the bishops rose to be more formidable tyrants than ever before. If any man ventured to testify against their impositions, no sooner did the report reach them, than the instruments of their vengeance were employed to seize and punish him. In England, where their tyranny was come to its maturity, the punishments they used were of the most cruel and barbarous kind, such as none but men of an infernal disposition would choose to inflict on any of their fellow creatures.

As the order and discipline of the church of Scotland was subverted by the prelates, so the doctrine of justification by free grace was opposed by them, both in England and Scotland. This was a part of that conformity to the church of Rome, which the leaders of the faction were studying; though their followers could not be quickly brought over from the Protestant faith, in a point justly reckoned of so great importance, so fully expressed in all the confessions of the Reformed churches, and so zealously defended by the divines who had written against the church of Rome. The system of doctrine at that time introduced into Britain, was then, and is still known by the name of Arminianism; but it is nothing materially different from the doctrine taught in the Popish church, concerning the important articles of election, redemption, effectual calling, and the perseverance of the saints. Both Papists and Arminians agree in subverting the free grace of God, and in ascribing to men that glory which is due to him alone. The corrupt doctrine which then began to spread in Britain, has been, like a plague, wasting the churches there ever since; and this country has caught the infection. But, through the goodness of God, a testimony has hitherto been maintained against it. He has *given a banner to be displayed because of the truth*; and it is our duty to stand by it.

The prelates, to clear the way for accomplishing their devices against the church, set themselves to destroy the remaining liberties of their country. They taught that unlimited obedience was due to their sovereign; that the

privileges of the subjects flowed from his royal beneficence, and might be recalled at his pleasure. With them, there was hardly any sin to be compared with that of those who opposed the unrighteous exactions of an arbitrary court. Their great reason for urging the doctrine of passive obedience, by which they flattered weak princes into measures which ruined them, was, that the sovereign, being invested with unlimited power, they, his creatures, might use it as they pleased. They hoped that men, tamed to an absolute subjection of their life and property to the prince, would more easily be compelled to submit their consciences to such a spiritual lordship as these prelates had assumed to themselves.

During these days of trial, there was much fainting and yielding to temptation among the professors of religion in Scotland; and some not only changed with the times, but, as commonly happens in such cases, were very zealous to draw others along with them into apostacy. Yet a considerable number continued faithful in the cause of Christ, and testified, as the Lord gave them opportunity, against the prevailing iniquities of those times. Of these, some were banished, some were imprisoned, and some found protection at home, several men of rank and influence exerting themselves to save them from the fury of the prelates. The power of godliness and the spirit of prayer continued among this remnant; on account of which they were hated and scoffed at by the prelatie faction, who were generally careless and formal in their religious services, and many of them profane.



CHAPTER III.

Of the state of the Church of Scotland from 1637 to 1650.

THE greatest triumph of the enemies of Christ is commonly a presage of their immediate ruin. The prelates of England and Scotland, having devised a service book for the last of these kingdoms, not only as bad, but, in several articles, worse than that of England, seemed to have almost accomplished their designs; unless, as was with reason suspected, concerning some of them, they

intended to reconcile the churches of Britain to that of Rome. But they were snared in the work of their hands: their new service-book proved their ruin. Though they readily obtained a royal proclamation, commanding it to be used in all particular congregations of the church of Scotland, under pain of rebellion; yet so much was it hated, that scarce ever did a nation more unanimously agree in any thing than the Scots did in rejecting it. It awakened an abhorrence of all the popish and tyrannical principles of the bishops among all ranks of men. Many who had formerly submitted to them, would do so no more, when they saw to what point they were driving. The timorous, casting off their fears, appeared openly and resolutely in behalf of the Reformation cause, which they saw in imminent danger. The national covenant of Scotland, entered into in the year 1581, was renewed in a bond suited to the circumstances of the time of which we now speak; and this was done by all ranks in the land, with acknowledgments of their manifold breaches of it, and with professions of sorrow for their sin.

Though the king, instigated by the prelates, laboured to hinder every thing which appeared like a reformation in Scotland, used fair speeches and threatenings by turns; yet he prevailed not. A general assembly of the ministers and elders having met at Glasgow, November, 1638, condemned the whole course of defection, which had taken place during the forty years preceding, censured the bishops, according to the crimes proved against them, declared episcopacy unlawful, it having no authority from the word of God, and having been found so pernicious to the interests of religion. They also restored Presbyterian government; which they declared to be according to the rule of God's word.

The king, who was resolved to bring his subjects to that unlimited subjection to his will in all things, civil and spiritual, which he and his creatures alledged was their duty, took up arms against the Scots. But, finding them better prepared for war than he expected, and seeing the English very backward to assist him in destroying the liberty of their neighbours, which they justly supposed would make way for completing their own slavery, he desisted from his purpose. He pursued, however, the same unhappy measures in England as he had done in Scotland, till a civil war was raised in the former kingdom, which spread,

like a conflagration, from one end of the island to the other, and raged, till king, lords, and commons, falling each in their turn, a kind of military government succeeded.

The kindness of the Lord towards his church was remarkably displayed in the midst of these confusions. He caused the walls of his Jerusalem to be built, even in troublous times. Those in England who were standing up against a tyrannical prince, in defence of their just rights, (at the head of whom was the Parliament, the representatives of the nation) entreated the assistance of the Scots, which was granted. And the friends of religion and liberty, both in Britain and Ireland, entered into a Solemn League and Covenant; the design of which was to assist and encourage one another in maintaining and promoting the reformation, and in defending themselves against that tyranny, which threatened not only to enslave them, but to take the light of the gospel from them. An assembly of divines being met at Westminster, in England, the church of Scotland sent commissioners to join with them in such deliberations and determinations as might be found necessary, and conducive to the interests of religion; particularly to consult on what might be most effectual for uniting the churches of both nations in one confession of faith, form of church government, and order of worship. In this Assembly the confession commonly called the Westminster Confession, was agreed upon, with the Catechisms Larger and Shorter, the Directory for Worship, and Form of church-government. All which were received by the church of Scotland, and served, from that time forward, to declare to the world her faith and order. In these, both were more fully expressed, and the truth more directly stated against the errors of the times, than in the Old Confession and Books of Discipline, received by that church; which were composed at a period when the Papists were almost the only enemies she had to encounter. The doctrine taught in both confessions of faith is, however, the same; and the order of worship and form of church-government, agreed upon by the Assembly at Westminster, are in nothing materially different from the former order and government of the church of Scotland.

This reformation was, at this time, carried forward with a commendable zeal; and the blessing of God was remarkable on those engaged in it; many were turned *from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God*; the truth

of whose faith was manifested in a conversation becoming the gospel. Iniquity was, in many instances, forced to stop its mouth, as ashamed: a number of burning and shining lights were raised up in the church; not a few of whom yet speak to us by their writings. We are not, therefore, to be blamed for considering that as a remarkable period of the church, affording a multitude of examples worthy of our imitation.

We do not, however, approve every thing in the proceedings of the church in these times. Imperfections adhere to the best works of men; and there are many things which might be excusable, and even expedient in the peculiar circumstances of the church in that period, which would be quite improper in a more orderly, settled state of public affairs. The enemies of our reformation, being then almost universally enemies of the civil liberties of their country; and the preservation of the church from persecution, depending upon the preservation of the natural rights of mankind, civil and spiritual matters were so intermixed, that it was not easy always to observe the proper distinction between them. But the nature of the Christian church requires, that we should be very careful to observe this distinction; and the experience of past times may serve to set the propriety and advantage of doing so before us in a clearer light, than that in which our ancestors saw them.

The inhabitants of these United States have special reason to remember with gratitude, what the Lord did in the period of which we have been speaking. The fruits of the deliverance then wrought for those engaged in the cause of reformation and liberty, still remain, and are amply enjoyed by the people of this country. Had that cause been crushed in Britain, so would it have been in such of these states as were then settled, (they being at that time provinces of Great Britain,) and the growth of others, since planted, would either have been wholly prevented, or they would have grown up in slavery and superstition. Instead, therefore, of passing over what happened in Britain at that distant period, as of no importance to us, we judge ourselves bound to observe it with particular attention, and to thank the Lord that he defeated the schemes of those who were preparing a yoke of oppression for that and the following generations. We may, by attending to things past and present, see that the Lord our God is indeed *wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.*

Does any man here sit under his vine and under his fig-tree, none making him afraid? Have we liberty to worship God according to the order we judge most agreeable to his word, no man forbidding us? And is it not owing to this, that God delivered our fathers from oppression, and thus taught us the value of liberty, and the necessity of watching for its defence? The deadly wound, then given to tyranny in Britain, paved the way for the memorable and glorious revolution of 1688, and for the freedom and independence of these United States. The testimony of Jesus also, as then stated and maintained against Episcopacy and Arminianism, has not been entirely deserted at any time since. The Lord has raised up one generation of witnesses for it after another; and a review of what the Lord has done for them, with their contendings and sufferings in his cause, is useful both for confirming our minds in the truth, and for encouraging us to appear boldly on its side. *Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof: mark ye well her bulwarks: consider her palaces; that ye may tell to the generations following the goodness of God, in defending and delivering his church.*



CHAPTER IV.

Of the State of the Church of Scotland from the year 1650, to the Revolution, 1688.

THE admission of the malignant party in Scotland, to places of power and trust, 1651, proved extremely hurtful to its civil and spiritual interests. These men, though known to be enemies to the cause of the reformation, were admitted into the church upon a profession of repentance, which was not attended with any proper evidence of sincerity. This gave great and just offence: and the ministers, who had protested against certain resolutions of the general assembly leading to the admission of these men, suffered, in several instances, hard treatment from their brethren.

The army employed by the English Parliament having before this time assumed the supreme power to themselves,

and having tried the king, and condemned him to die by the hands of the executioner, the Scots expressed a regard to his son, Charles II. which he never deserved; calling him home from exile, and receiving him as their sovereign. The profane wicked prince, lying to God, and deceiving men, engaged, in the most solemn manner, at his coronation, 1651, to maintain their religion and liberties, and even swore the Covenants already mentioned. But the English army, who then carried all before them, soon overran Scotland, and obliged him to seek refuge in foreign countries. People, however, became so distracted by the frequent revolutions which were happening, and by the dread of a military government, that the greater part of the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland were glad to see him restored to the throne, 1660. This change, however, was from bad to worse: the representatives of these nations, in a foolish haste, put a rod into the hands of a tyrant, and, sooner or later, almost every description of men felt the weight of it; but the Presbyterians of Scotland were the first and greatest sufferers.

The Presbyterian government was quickly abolished in that kingdom, and Episcopacy established; the national Covenant and Solemn League were declared treasonable oaths, and burnt with every mark of ignominy. Three hundred ministers who would not submit to the prelates, were, without any form of trial, cast out of their churches. The king was declared, by Act of Parliament, to be "the only lawful, supreme governor of the realm, as well in matters spiritual and ecclesiastical, as in things temporal." And whoever would not acknowledge this usurped authority over the church of Christ, were declared rebels, and punished as such. In a word, the king and his ministers of state were bad; but some of his prelates were still worse, who, though in the character of ambassadors of the Prince of peace, yet, laying aside all tenderness, frequently sat in judgment upon the lives of those who testified against their usurpations, and were commonly the most forward to condemn them to death.

During this and the next reign, thousands were spoiled of their goods, banished into foreign countries, or forced to wander up and down in the mountains and deserts, concealing themselves from the enemy. Many were imprisoned and tortured; many were executed as criminals; and many were without any form of law, murdered in their

houses, or in the fields, by savage hands, commissioned to destroy them. A few of these persecuted people took arms in their own defence, 1666; declaring, at the same time, their readiness to obey the king in all lawful commands. They were soon dispersed; and such of them as fell into the enemies hand, suffered much barbarous treatment, and many of them were put to death. Towards the end of this persecution, when the fury of enemies was risen to a very great height, multitudes of people being put out of the protection of the law, and hunted every where by a brutal soldiery, as if they had been wild beasts, a considerable number of them refused to own the authority of tyrants, whose conduct towards them was a continued series of injuries, from whom they received no benefit, and to whom, therefore, they owed no obedience. In this, their conduct was soon justified by the example of the whole nation.

The cause for which these people suffered was their adherence to this truth, That the Lord Jesus is the only head of the church: believing this, they refused to acknowledge the civil magistrate as the supreme judge in all causes spiritual as well as civil, would not submit to his creatures the prelates, or renounce the solemn obligations they had come under to abide by the doctrine and order of the Reformed church of Scotland, which the prelates were seeking to destroy.

If the conduct of some of them was, in certain instances, blameable, this is not to be wondered at. Their enemies were, with a very few exceptions, a set of the most merciless, profane men which ever, in the holy providence of God, were permitted to chastise a nation. Cruel oppression often forces the wisest men into measures which appear desperate. Besides, these people acted commonly without any leader or guide, according as each of them thought best. Their situation, scattered up and down among adversaries, who narrowly watched their conduct, hindered them, in many cases, from consulting one another concerning what was most fit to be done. They were also, most of them, country people, acquainted with the scriptures, and instructed by the preaching of the gospel; but destitute of other learning, and not much qualified to devise the most unexceptionable expedients for their relief.

CHAPTER V.

Of the State of the Church of Scotland from the Revolution, till the year 1733.

THAT promise has often been accomplished to those who wait on the Lord, *At the evening time it shall be light.* When matters were come to the last extremity in Britain and Ireland, civil liberty being almost crushed to death under the feet of a tyrant, and Popery, with all its attendant horrors and abominations, speedily advancing to take possession of those isles, the Lord strengthened the spoiled against the strong. *For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy,* he arose, and set them in safety from those who puffed at them. When the wisest of men knew not to what hand they should turn, nor how it was possible to save those nations from the evils which they saw approaching, the Lord so ordered it, that the family who had so long possessed, and so long abused the supreme power, was driven into exile, and another prince raised to the throne, almost without the stroke of a sword.

The church of Scotland, broken, scattered, and almost destroyed by twenty-eight years of persecution, was then raised up out of ruins. Great was the mercy displayed in this deliverance. Well might the nation say, *The Lord hath done great things for our land*; well might the church say, *The Lord hath remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever.* But there was, at that time, a great failing, in *not rendering to the Lord according to the benefits he had bestowed.* Many, who had complied with the wicked measures of former times, and some who had been active in promoting them, were admitted into the Revolution church without due evidence, indeed without any evidence given by them, of their repentance. The sins and backslidings of former times were not particularly acknowledged and lamented; nor was the reformation of 1638, and the testimony of those who suffered for their adherence to it, directly approved or vindicated, from the reproach which malignant, wicked persecutors had cast on both. Neither was that important truth, for which so many suffered even to death, expressly asserted, viz. That Jesus Christ being the only head of the church, no man pretending to be the head of it, ought to be acknowledged in that

character; though the usurpation of the civil magistrate, about that very time, taking upon him to dissolve and prorogue the assemblies of the church at his pleasure, loudly called for the most explicit declaration of Christ's sole headship over it. A desire to please men in power, and to order the affairs of the church to their mind, proved the snare of that day.

It ought, however, to be thankfully remembered, that there were, at this time, and for a considerable number of years after, many eminent and godly ministers raised up in the church of Scotland, who testified more or less fully against the defections of the times, according to their light, and were very successful in gathering sinners to Jesus Christ. Ignorance, profaneness, and contempt of the Lord's day, which had greatly prevailed under the ministry of the curates, or underlings of the bishops, were, in many places removed by the light of the gospel. And, while there was any considerable degree of zeal and watchfulness to be found in the judicatories of that church, its enemies were restrained from doing the mischief they intended.

The union of North and South Britain into one kingdom, 1707, however proper and advantageous it might be in some respects, yet in the way it was concluded, proved hurtful to the church of Scotland. The members of her communion, when employed in the service of government, in England or Ireland, were obliged to take what is called the *sacramental test*, that is, to take the sacrament of the Lord's supper, according to the superstitious forms prescribed in the English liturgy, as a qualification for a civil office. This horrible profanation of that holy ordinance, was not duly testified against, nor those who submitted to an imposition so unreasonable and so wicked, censured. The union also introduced certain government-oaths into Scotland, which were a snare to many, as they, more or less directly, contained an acknowledgment of the supremacy, claimed and exercised by the kings of Britain, over the church of England.

The members of the British Parliament being generally of the communion of the Episcopal church of England, and one class of them Dignitaries in it, it was not to be expected, that they would act the part of friends to the Presbyterian interest. Accordingly, in the year 1711, when a party who entertained a deadly hatred against the English

dissenters, and against the church of Scotland, prevailed, the parliament grievously injured both, and took from the people belonging to the latter, the liberty of choosing their own pastors, restoring to some men of rank, or to the crown, certain rights, which they claimed from the laws, and customs of Popish times, to provide for vacant congregations such ministers as they thought fit.

It was easy to see what would follow, when the care of providing pastors for the church was lodged in the hands of men generally abandoned in their lives, and many of them avowed enemies to religion. For some time indeed, this pretended right was not much urged, or was exercised with less rigour by Patrons, as these usurpers over the house of God were called. But when they found, that the church of Scotland, as represented in her judicatures, was not only submissive to their tyranny, but often ready to assist in executing it, they assumed more confidence, and presented to vacant congregations, men of very unworthy characters, making a jest of the opposition of the people.

The church might have prevented this deadly evil, by positively refusing to admit any to the ministry in her, who accepted presentations. As a society, she had a right to make such laws and rules as were necessary for her preservation, and to judge of the qualifications of her own members. The fear of offending the civil power, will not excuse any neglect, or perversion of the institutions of Christ, of which this is evidently one, that the office-bearers in his church are to be chosen by the members of it. Nor was the danger, in this case, great. It is not likely, that the government would have forced that wicked law upon the church of Scotland, had her judicatories faithfully and resolutely opposed it. A desire of pleasing, rather than a fear of offending those in power, seems to have drawn them into a neglect of their duty.

The evils already mentioned did not come alone. *The faith once delivered to the saints* was as little regarded in these articles which more immediately relate to the salvation of sinners, through Jesus Christ, as in those which relate to the order and government of the Church. Mr. Simson, professor of divinity in the University of Glasgow, was charged, at the bar of the general assembly, with teaching the students, under his care, various Socinian tenets; such as, "That there is an obscure revelation made
"to all men, of the way of salvation: That a sincere use of

“the means God has appointed, cannot fail of rendering them acceptable to him; and that a sincere use of the means, is not above their natural abilities.” By these, and many other errors of a similar nature, he introduced a scheme of doctrine, the design of which was to exclude our Lord Jesus Christ from having any more to do in the salvation of sinners than this, That he taught the way to obtain it, more perfectly than the wisest of the Heathen’s could do. This charge against Mr. Simson was proved; and the assembly declared, that some of his opinions were not necessary to be taught; and that some of his expressions were used by adversaries in a bad sense, and had a tendency to exalt corrupt nature to the disparagement of free grace; and they forbade him to publish such opinions, or use such expressions any more. But this prohibition signified nothing, They ought either to have been satisfied of his repentance, or to have laid him aside from his ministry. Their negligence was the more alarming, on account of the important office which Mr. Simson filled in the church.

False teachers, when continued in the church, commonly proceed from evil to worse. This man, far from retracting any of the Socinian principles he had formerly taught, proceeded to deny the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, as was fully proved against him at the bar of the assembly. But, after all, that court did not lay him aside from the office of the ministry, or cast him out of the communion of the church. They only suspended him from the exercise of the ministry, and from his office as a teacher. So lightly was the man censured, who denied our Lord Jesus to be *God over all, blessed for ever*: and the carnal policy of some, desiring to secure Mr. Simson in the emoluments of his office, which continued due by law to him while only suspended, prevailed over the regard that was due to the glory of that *name which is above every name*.

As the assembly appeared friendly to error in not censuring the teachers of it; so they did, in sundry instances, manifest a hatred of the truth by condemning it. Particularly, in the year 1720, they condemned, in very strong terms, several propositions extracted out of a book entitled, the Marrow of Modern Divinity. The book had been published in England, 1645, had gone through many editions there, and was, at this time, reprinted in Scotland. It was, like other human writings, not perfect; but upon

the whole, it contained no other doctrine than what was to be found in the writings, of those men whom the Lord employed, and whose labours he blessed, in restoring the light of the gospel at the Reformation. The substance of it was extracted out of their works. The sum of the passages condemned was, "That there is an assurance in the nature of faith; that the offer of salvation is to every one who hears it; that the gospel, strictly taken, contains no commands nor threatenings, being only glad tidings of the grace of God to fallen men; that believers in Christ are delivered from the law as a covenant of works, so as to be no more under either its commanding or condemning power; that the fear of hell, as a punishment to which they may become liable, and the hope of heaven, as a reward in any way due to their works, ought not to be the motives of obedience to believers."

These, and other such propositions, the assembly considered as so pernicious, that they strictly forbade people to read the book in which they were contained. This was among the first evidences of general apostacy from the gospel of Christ among the ministers of the church of Scotland; and, as commonly happens in such cases, it was only the beginning of evil.

The assembly were also, in many instances, guilty of oppressing the flock of Christ. They forbade the sacraments to be administered to those who would not submit to the ministry of intruders. This act respected only one presbytery; but it serves as a specimen of that ecclesiastical tyranny which they would have extended over the whole nation, if they had not afterwards been restrained by a fear of driving still greater numbers of people into the Secession. Presbyteries were commanded under pain of the highest censure of the church, to enroll as members, intruders to whom they could not, with a good conscience, give the right hand of fellowship. Violent settlements became more and more common. The people were, in various corners, *as sheep having no shepherd*. The intruders were generally as far from preaching the doctrine of Christ in their sermons, as they were from acting by the Spirit of Christ in the manner of their entrance into the ministry. Not having *come in by the door into the sheep-fold*, but *having climbed up another way*, they were soon found to behave themselves as hirelings, often as *thieves and robbers*. Either they did not care for the flock, or they

smote and destroyed it. Men of perverse minds, who had risen up in the church, finding they had nothing to fear from its general assemblies, became more bold and active in teaching and spreading their errors. Thus, while the most steadfast and zealous were oppressed, the minds of the careless and unstable were poisoned.

There was, however, a great number of ministers and Christians in the land, too quicksighted not to discern these evils, and too deeply concerned for the prosperity of the church of Christ, not to testify against them. Scarce any act of assembly injurious to the truth, had passed without some testimony against it. One representation and petition, signed by forty-two ministers, and another signed by more than seventeen hundred people, were offered to the general assembly, 1732. But neither of them could obtain so much as a hearing. The assembly determined to persist in the measures they had taken, treated with contempt all who either testified against their injurious proceedings, or refused submission to their decrees.



CHAPTER VI.

Of the Rise of the Secession, and of the Associate Presbytery.

WHEN other methods proved ineffectual, the most faithful and zealous ministers studied to maintain as full and direct a testimony, against the evils already mentioned, as they could, in the course of their public ministry; but the same tyranny which had laboured so hard to suppress other testimonies, was not less active against this. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, being appointed to preach at the opening of the synod of Perth and Stirling, chose for his subject that text, *The stone which the builders refused, is made the head of the corner*, Psalm cxviii. 22. The sermon is extant, and speaks for itself. It contains no railing accusations; but was a faithful testimony against the conduct of the leading party in the church of Scotland, who, at that time, were proceeding from one unrighteous measure to another, with a very high hand. This testimony they could not bear. The sermon was condemned, and the preacher declared worthy of censure: and because

he would not retract, by submitting to a rebuke for what he had said, and to an admonition, warning him to speak so no more, he, and other three brethren, who adhered to him in protesting against the sentence of the synod of Perth and Stirling, afterward approved by the general assembly, were by order of the last of these courts, deposed from the ministry of the gospel in the church of Scotland.

The severe measures against these brethren were, at that time, condemned by many of the most valuable ministers and Christians in communion of the established church. But a party, whose faith was dubious, and whose zeal was chiefly directed against such as adhered steadfastly to the doctrine and order of that church, in its best and purest times, carried all before them by majorities in ecclesiastical courts.

These four brethren had, with many others, long and earnestly testified against the defections of the established church of Scotland, in communion with it. They were evidently unwilling to separate from it, but now they found themselves thrust out: and they found that they could not any more have liberty, to testify either in their sermons or by protests, against such acts and proceedings of the ecclesiastical courts as they judged sinful. They did not reckon that their relation to their congregations (a great majority of whom steadfastly adhered to them) was dissolved by the unjust sentence passed against them: and therefore they continued in their churches, preaching the word and dispensing the sacraments, as formerly.

Soon after the sentence of the commission of the general assembly, in November, 1733, loosing their relations to their respective charges—declaring them no longer ministers of the church of Scotland and their churches vacant, they constituted themselves into a Presbytery, known by the name of the Associate Presbytery. They were encouraged to do so by the promise of Christ—*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*: which was a special respect to the office-bearers of the church, meeting to consult and determine about matters which concern its welfare. They found such a step necessary to preserve that order which the Lord has appointed in his house. They judged it their duty to maintain a judicial as well as a doctrinal testimony for the truth, in opposition to the errors and apostacy of the times. They saw the flock of Christ oppressed and scattered by

hirelings, who imposed themselves upon it, and by false teachers, who were administering spiritual poison in place of the bread of life; and they judged it therefore necessary, that, as a presbytery, they should attend to the petitions of those who desired their assistance, and regularly appoint some of their number to dispense gospel ordinances to them.

It is true, they had, at their ordination, promised subjection to the judicatories of the established church of Scotland; but it was no less true, that this promise did not bind them to a blind or unlimited submission, and could not oblige them to do what they judged contrary to the word of God, and to other parts of the engagements they came under at their ordination. It obliged them to abide by that church, in the profession of the truth she required them to make, when they entered into the ministry, but not to follow her in departing from it.

The assembly, 1734, did somewhat to heal the breach: they repealed an offensive act or two; not because they were contrary to the word of God, but on account of some irregularity, which had been complained of in the manner of passing them, and because they had been found hurtful to the church. They passed an act in behalf of what they reckoned due ministerial freedom, but did not repeal former acts which laid ministers under an undue restraint. They directed the synod of Perth and Stirling, of which the four deposed brethren had formerly been members, to restore them to their office, and to their respective charges as ministers of the church; but they forbade the synod to inquire either into the proceedings against these brethren or the defences made by them. The former assembly had itself censured them, in as much as it ordered them to retract their protest, and to profess their sorrow for what they had done; and it had positively directed its commission (viz. a committee of its number) to suspend them from the exercise of the ministry, unless they should, in presence of it, make the retraction and profess the repentance the sentence of the assembly required: and if they still continued to refuse doing so, the commission was directed to proceed to higher censures against them, which was accordingly done. But this assembly would have the whole buried. Sin was to be found somewhere, but none were willing to acknowledge it.

Most gladly would these four brethren have entered, at

the door now opened, into the communion of the established church, if they could have done so with a good conscience. For a while, some of them were in doubt as to what was their duty; but when they duly considered matters, they found, that almost every defection of which they complained, remained the same as before; that ministerial freedom was not properly restored, by the act of assembly, 1734; while it declared the proceedings of the former assembly not any wise contrary to the due and regular exercise of this freedom; that no proper testimony was given against these errors, which ministers of the church and professors in the universities were, from time to time, teaching; and that the healing measures of the assembly, 1734, seemed rather to proceed from political views, than from a regard to truth. For these reasons, they judged it their duty, as they had been violently thrust out, to continue where they were, till they should see the way more clear: and the conduct of subsequent assemblies confirmed them in this resolution.

The former measures were, after this time, pursued as keenly as ever. Congregations were oppressed by the intrusion of hirelings, and error passed without censure. Among other instances of the last, the following is remarkable; Mr. Campbell, professor of ecclesiastical history in the University of St. Andrews, and minister of the established church, had, in his writings, materially denied the Christian religion; affirming, "That the laws of nature, in themselves, are a certain and sufficient rule to direct rational minds to happiness; that the sole and universal motive to virtuous actions is self-love, interest, or pleasure; that to consult the throne of grace, to lay matters before the Lord, and to implore his light and direction, are terms of art much used by enthusiasts;" with many other things of the same kind. Darkness is not more opposite to light, than those opinions are to the holy scripture, which assures us, *that there is no salvation for any but in Jesus Christ; that whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God; and that, in every thing, by prayer and supplication, we should make known our requests to him.* But the general assembly, in 1736, did not, when Mr. Campbell's writings were under their consideration, find him deserving the least degree of censure. Thus the faith once delivered to the saints, was rather slighted and denied, than contended for, by the supreme

judicatories of that church: and, ever since, these judicatories have been proceeding from one step to another, in a course of apostacy. Many things injurious to the truth and cause of Christ, are to be found in their acts and proceedings these fifty years past; and there is no appearance of their returning to the Lord, from whom they have deeply revolted. They do not hearken to that command of him who speaketh from heaven, *Remember from whence ye are fallen, and repent, and do the first works.*

The steps taken by the brethren who were cast out of the established church, were not rash, or such as men usually take who are moved by resentment. They had eleven presbyterial meetings, chiefly for prayer and conference; and at the twelfth meeting, August, 1735, they appointed a committee of their number to prepare a draught of a judicial testimony; and, after much conference on the subject, and many prayers for direction, this work was finished, and passed as a judicial deed at their twenty-fourth presbyterial meeting, December, 1736.

The chief design of this testimony was to express the adherence of the Associate Presbytery, and of those who joined with them, to the testimony of those who had, in former times, contended and suffered for the truth in Scotland: to condemn these sins and backslidings of past generations, in which the present were more or less directly following them; to assert and vindicate those truths which had been slighted or denied by the judicatories of the established church; to endeavour, according to the covenant-obligations they were under, the preservation of the reformed religion in Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; to transmit the truth, in this solemn manner, to posterity: and, by an open confession, to satisfy all who should inquire as to the principles which they maintained, and the foundation upon which they, through the grace of our Lord Jesus, desired to stand.

Soon after this, four other ministers, leaving the established church, were admitted members of the Associate Presbytery. In the year 1739, being all called in due form, these eight ministers appeared as a constitute presbytery, at the bar of the general assembly; and in answer to the libel or charge laid against them, read and presented an act of their presbytery, in which they declared themselves authorised by the word of God, and bound in conscience, to decline the authority claimed over them by ju-

dicatories of the established church, these being guilty of apostacy from the truth, of tyranny towards the heritage of God, of attempting to crush those who were studying faithfulness in the cause of Christ, of receiving into their number, or of retaining in it many whose errors or scandalous practices rendered them justly deserving of censure, and of surrendering the spiritual privileges of the church of Christ to the civil powers, by either approving or silently submitting to their unjust claims of authority over it.

The assembly, though as great enemies to the cause maintained by the Associate Presbytery as ever, did not appear quite so impatient of hearing them, or so forward to censure them, as in the case of the four brethren who appeared at the bar of that court, 1733. The reason was plain: formerly they thought to carry all before them by the mere force of authority; but now, seeing a breach made, and fearing it might become very great, they found it necessary to act with some appearance of moderation. They did not proceed to censure at this time; but they recommended it to the general assembly, to depose all or any of these eight ministers who should not, before or at the time of its meeting, signify their repentance and submission to the judicatories of the established church. Accordingly, none of them making any such acknowledgments, they were all deposed by the assembly, 1740.

In an act of the assembly, 1739, one very grievous accusation was brought against the ministers of the Secession; but one which never could be proved, viz. "that they had taken upon them to speak in most injurious, disrespectful, and insolent terms concerning the highest civil authority." There was something cruel, but nothing new, in this attempt to stir up the civil powers against such as were studying a faithful adherence to truth and duty. The pretence on which this accusation was founded, was taken from the Declinature, or act of the Associate Presbytery, read and presented to the general assembly, in answer to the libel of the latter. A little before this time an act of parliament, commonly known by the name of Porteus act, was, by the supreme legislative authority of Britain, ordered to be read from the pulpit on the Lord's day, once a month for a whole year, by every minister of the church of Scotland, under pain of being deprived of his seat in the judicatories for the first offence, and of his salary for the second; and the civil courts were directed to exe-

cute both penalties on such as should refuse. Most part of the ministers of the established church, in one way or other, read that act: and none of the judicatories testified against this encroachment of the civil powers on the church of Christ, or against those who submitted to it. This the Associate Presbytery mentioned, in their Declinature, as an usurpation of the authority of Christ on the part of those in power, and as a material acknowledgment of that usurpation, on the part of those who submitted to it, or who refused to testify against it.

They further condemned the reading of that act, as a profanation of the Lord's day, as rendering the office of the ministry contemptible, and as an offence to Christians. This was the sole ground of the accusation.

No sooner was the sentence of deposition passed against the ministers of the Associate Presbytery, than instant notice of it was, by order of the general assembly, sent to the magistrates of these places where they were settled. They were, accordingly, thrust out of their churches by the civil authority, some of them, the next Lord's day: the rest, some time afterwards. The congregations, who generally adhered to them, built new places of worship for them; and they did not suffer any further trouble from the supreme powers: only some magistrates of inferior rank have, at various times since, shewed that their willingness to persecute the people belonging to the Secession, was greater than their power. No one who had joined the Secession was found in that conspiracy against the Protestant religion, and the rights of mankind, formed by the adherents of the exiled Stuarts, in the year 1745. They were, moreover, as active, according to their ability, as any, in suppressing it; and this taught the government, that, notwithstanding the calumnious insinuations of their adversaries, they were as faithful subjects as any other denomination of men in the country.

The Secession, though a strong opposition was made to it, increased; and the dispensation of gospel ordinances was, in many instances, attended with a remarkable blessing among those of that society. As numbers, in various places of the land, appeared on the side of the testimony maintained by the Associate Presbytery, a supply of ministers was found necessary; and the Rev. Mr. Wilson of Perth, was appointed to instruct students in divinity. According to the practice of the Reformed churches, they

neither did then, nor have since, admitted any to the study of divinity, till they had first studied the Latin and Greek languages, and the most useful branches of Philosophy.

The doctrine of free grace through Jesus Christ, having been much injured by the general assembly of the established church, the Associate Presbytery judged it necessary to state and vindicate the truth on that head, more fully and particularly than they had done in the judicial testimony. This they accordingly did, in an act passed in the year 1742, entitled, "An Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace," which was then, and is still to be considered as belonging to the profession made of the faith, and to the testimony maintained for the truth of the gospel, by those of the Secession.

They proceeded in the year 1743, to that much opposed duty of solemn public covenanting. Considering the engagements come under by their ancestors, in the National Covenant and Solemn League, (of which we have formerly spoken) as still binding on them, they entitled the bond into which they entered, "a Bond for renewing these Covenants." But they followed the example of the church of Scotland, in former times of reformation, by adapting the bond into which they entered, to their circumstances; and they prefixed to it, an acknowledgment of these sins of which they and the people among whom they lived, were guilty, particularly, the sin of all ranks in acting contrary to the engagements they were under to the Most High God. As some defections which took place long before that time, are mentioned in this confession, it has been represented as improper. The church, it has been said, has nothing to do with such antiquated facts. But these objectors, if they adhere to the word of God as the rule of faith and practice, should consider that the righteous Judge of all the earth, *visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth, yea, as it may be seen in the present case of the Jews, to very distant generations of those who approve and imitate the sins of their progenitors; and they should also remember, that it is a distinguishing character of the people of God, to sigh and cry for all the abominations done in the land where they live.*

There will commonly be found in a very small remnant, some double minded men, unstable in all their ways. Mr. Nairn, a member of the Associate Presbytery, whose charac-

acter appeared dubious to some, both before and after he joined it, now acted such a part as it was feared he would do. He dissented from his brethren, because they would not swear the National Covenant and Solemn League in the very words in which these were originally framed; and because they condemned the principles of a party who disowned the civil government of the country, alleging, that certain religious qualifications, not to be found in the rulers of Britain, were so essential to the being of magistracy in a christian land, that it was sinful to acknowledge or obey those who were destitute of them, even in such things as are, in themselves, lawful. To this party Mr. Nairn joined himself; not, as appeared, from a persuasion that they were in the right way, but from very sinister motives. By his assistance they constituted themselves into what they announced to the world by the name of the Reformed Presbytery. This man, however, left them some years after, and returning to the established church, with professions of sorrow on account of his secession from it, became, through his instability and manifest hypocrisy, so contemptible, that he was little regarded by any.

The Associate Presbytery, in *answer to Mr. Nairn's reasons of dissent*, declared, That though they judged many things very far amiss in these acts of parliament which concerned the church, and the interests of religion, yet, as members of civil society, they did, without hesitation, submit to the government in all its lawful commands, not only for fear of *wrath*, but for *conscience sake*. They declared, that as the majority of any state or nation have a right to set up whatever form of government they judge best; and, as the government of Britain was so established in consequence of the revolution, 1688; so it was the duty of Christians to submit to it, or to any other power ruling by the choice or consent of the people, and affording protection to them, in whatever place of the world their lot may be ordered. They farther declare, that the essential qualifications and duties of the magistrate were prescribed by the light of nature, and that his whole office respected the good and evil works of men, only as these affect the peace and order of civil society.

In the year 1742, and for some time after, there was a strange motion among numbers of people belonging to the established church of Scotland, in the western parts of that

country. This was effected chiefly by the ministry of Mr. Whitefield, and of his friends and admirers. People, in hearing these speakers, cried out, fainted, and fell into convulsions, and bye and bye, were transported with a joy, which seemed rather to arise from some impressions on the imagination, than from a well grounded confidence in the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Many signs of delusion attended this work; and deluded, it is certain, many of the converts were. The speakers addressed themselves rather to the imagination than to the judgment; and some of them taught, that ideas or representations formed in the mind, of Christ as man, were helpful to faith. Consequently, the passions of many were greatly moved, while there was no good reason to consider them as persons whose minds were enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and whose hearts were subdued to the obedience of faith. The general character of the supposed converts, was marked by a high contempt of the most steadfast and exemplary Christians, who questioned the nature of the work at that time carrying on, and by a strong aversion to any proper testimony for the truth of the gospel. *As the priest, so were the people.* Mr. Whitefield made light of the difference between Calvinists and Arminians, Protestants and Papists. He cried down all controversies about forms of church government, and the external manner of worship, as pernicious to godliness; and he industriously promoted a scheme for uniting all parties, in the way of neglecting such articles of the faith, once delivered to the saints, as, through the blindness or perverseness of men, have been subjects of debate. According to this scheme, that great cloud of witnesses in Britain and Ireland, who at the hazard, often at the expense, of all that was dear to them in the world, refused submission to Episcopal superstition and tyranny, must have contended, suffered, and died as fools. But we are firmly persuaded, the Judge of all the earth did not account them so. This Latitudinarian scheme, which is still in repute, was very expressly testified against by the Associate Presbytery, and in this testimony we desire to persevere.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the Associate Synod, and of its Proceedings?

THE Associate Presbytery having increased to a very considerable number, divided themselves into several presbyteries, subordinate to a synod, ever since known by the name of the Associate Synod. This happened in the year 1744. It may be here observed that a presbytery and a synod are materially the same: both are a meeting of the presbyters or elders of the church: both may, therefore, be called Presbyteries. But, to preserve distinction in language, a larger meeting, in which the members of several lesser ones are convened, is called a Synod.

An affair which came before this synod, the following year, occasioned much trouble, and ended in a division of that body. The oath to be sworn by such as were admitted burghers, or freemen of towns in Scotland, had, in some places, this clause: "Here I protest before God and your lordships, that I profess and allow with my heart the true religion, presently professed within this realm, and authorised by the laws thereof, that I shall abide thereat, and defend the same to my life's end, renouncing the Roman religion called Papistry." It was strange, that any belonging to the Secession should ever have imagined the swearing of such an oath consistent with the profession which they had made. But some of them having sworn it, and others defending it as consistent with their profession, or being uncertain as to what was duty in this matter, the synod was obliged to take it into consideration. And having done so at several meetings, they gave a decision in April, 1746, importing, "That the swearing of the clause already mentioned, was inconsistent with the testimony they maintained, and with the solemn engagements they had come under in the bond for renewing the covenants: they further warned such of their people as had taken the oath, that, before they entered into the bond, it would be necessary for them to signify their satisfaction with the judgment of the synod, and acknowledge the mistake which they had, through inadvertency, fallen into by swearing that oath."

It is plain, that the declaration of the synod was no more than truth. In the judicial testimony, many things are con-

considered as amiss or defective in the religion professed by the established church of Scotland, and authorised by the laws of that realm. Without controversy, this, and no other, was the religion intended in the oath; nor does it alter matters in the swearer, that it is called the "true religion:" every oath, if men will act uprightly, must be taken in the declared sense of the imposers and administrators of it; and, in this instance, their sense, as well as the evident sense of the words, was, that the religion established by the laws of Scotland, was the true religion, and to be acknowledged as so absolutely true by the swearer, that he allowed or approved it with his heart, and promised to continue in it to the end of his life. The oath was a material approbation of all that the civil powers had done, both at the revolution, and after that time, concerning the establishment of religion. It will be hard to prove, that those acts of parliament, by which the people were deprived of liberty to choose their own pastors, and by which ministers were commanded, under pain of being deprived of their seat in the judicatories, to read, on the Lord's day, any paper the legislature should enjoin, did not belong to the religion mentioned in the oath. The way of settling ministers, and the authority by which they are to be directed in the exercise of their office, are two very material points of religion, but were a part of the religion authorised by the laws of the realm, only as consistent with the acts of parliament referred to. Moreover, if one should inquire what was the religion professed by the established church, and sworn to in the oath, surely he behoved to consider such acts of the general assembly as were designed to express the doctrine of that church; (among which the act condemning several important truths, extracted from the book entitled the Marrow of Modern Divinity, was one) as belonging to the profession made in it. No man of integrity, if he consider the matter without prejudice, can deny, that a person's swearing the oath in question is inconsistent with his withdrawing at the same time from the communion of the established church on account of the sinfulness of that communion. The design of the religious clause in that oath, was to exclude such as did not approve the national profession of religion from certain civil privileges. And all who, in swearing it, evaded this design, were guilty of something so very like equivocation, or mental reservation, that it will be difficult to find any other name for it.

Plain, however, as the propriety of the synod's decision was, five ministers and two elders protested against it. And they, with some others who took part with them, laboured very hard to have it rendered of none effect, by insisting, at several meetings, that the synod should declare it no term of communion; that is to say, that though the synod had declared the swearing of the religious clause in the oath already mentioned, inconsistent with the profession made by them, and therefore sinful; and though this judgment stood in their minutes unreversed, yet they should admit the swearers of it to communion, without requiring them to acknowledge this sinful inconsistency; or, in other words, the synod should, at the same time, declare a thing to be sinful and not to be sinful. After much confusion, occasioned by the irregular conduct of these protesting brethren, and also by the mismanagement of some, who, though of a different judgment from them about the chief subject of controversy, yet were ensnared into a voting with them in some previous questions, an entire separation took place, April, 1747.

The party of the protesting brethren insist, that they obtained, at that time, a vote of the synod, declaring, that the decision of April, 1746, should not be a term of communion. But this could not, with any propriety or justice, be called a vote of the synod. It was carried by nine ministers and thirteen elders only: while thirteen ministers and ten elders, all of an opposite judgment, could not vote on the question, as they were standing under a protest against entering on the consideration of it, till the reasons of the protest, taken in April, 1746, with the answers, should be read. These papers were so absolutely necessary for the information of members, particularly of some ministers and of many elders who had not been present at former meetings, in which the subject had been reasoned upon. The protesting brethren, who voted on this occasion, were very improper judges in a question, the import of which evidently was, whether or not their dissent should be allowed to make void the synod's decision. It is further to be considered that neither moderator nor clerk acted on this occasion. For these reasons, the vote already mentioned was not a vote of the synod; it was a violent perversion of order. And the brethren on the other side, seeing the synod put into such entire confusion, as threatened the ruin of the cause in which they were engaged,

took such measures as they judged most proper for preserving it. The moderator of the last meeting, who was one of their number, and to whom of right it belonged to preside, when the other declined doing so, read a paper, in which he declared, That as the present conduct of the prevailing party was contrary to order, and subversive of the whole testimony maintained by them; so the power and authority of the Associate Synod did properly belong to those who were opposing the irregular and pernicious measures carrying on: he, at the same time, called these last, and such other members as should adhere to them, to meet next day in another place. Upon which he, with twelve other ministers and ten elders, instantly withdrew. Both parties have ever since claimed the title of *Associate Synod*. To whom that designation properly belongs, may be learned from what has been already said; and also from this plain fact, that the division was at last found to be, twelve ministers who opposed the decision of April, 1746, separating from nineteen who adhered to it. There were, before this breach, thirty-two ministers belonging to the synod. One of them, who lived in England, withdrew from the Secession. The rest divided in the manner now mentioned.

This cannot be justly represented as a trifling controversy, unless it could be proved, that swearing by the name of God is a small matter; which we hope, none bearing the Christian name will attempt to do. The question arising from the consideration of the oath which occasioned the breach, was, Whether the profession of religion authorised by the laws, and made by the established church of Scotland, deserved to be, without exception, approved? And people must follow a very different course, according as they determine it. This has been fully manifested in the conduct of these two parties, since the breach; the one having continued to profess a steadfast adherence to the testimony in which they had formerly engaged, and having proceeded to solemn public covenanting, from time to time, as the Lord gave them opportunity; while the other have been frequently finding fault with that testimony, and have laid aside the practice of covenanting altogether.

But though it was not possible for the synod to consider the swearing of contradictory oaths as a light matter; yet, surely the excellency or usefulness of an oath, imposed by the magistrates of certain towns, was not so great, that any

could reasonably judge themselves bound to defend it at the expense of making such a breach in the church; and if the brethren who maintained the consistency of swearing that oath, with the Secession testimony, (a point which their conduct, since, shews they were not able to maintain,) had so far acquiesced in the judgment of a majority of the synod, as not to have insisted for an allowance to be given people, in the Secession, to swear it, the breach would have been prevented.

The Associate Synod of Edinburgh requires, both of ministers and elders, that they signify their approbation of the decision in April, 1746; and also their approbation of the synod, as constituted in the way of testifying against the conduct of the party whose opposition to this decision, and whose attempts to destroy its force, produced such confusion in some of the first diets of the meeting, in April, 1747. And, doubtless, this is upon the matter to declare, that the conduct of that party rendered them justly liable to censure: but an approbation of the censures passed on this or the other man, is what neither the Associate Synod, nor any well ordered church of Christ, ever made a term of communion. Those who are of a different mind, concerning the two points now mentioned, cannot honestly seek admission into that synod; seeing, according to them, its very constitution is wrong.

Some years after the breach, the Associate Synod found themselves obliged to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, against a new attack made upon it, by a new revival of some Arminian errors, in a new form. It was asserted, That Christ was a surety for all mankind, and that he died, not only for the elect, but for those who perish in their sins. The name of a worthy minister of the church of Scotland, in the last age, was (whether justly or unjustly, is not quite certain) borrowed to support this scheme. A book, said to be written by him, was then published for the first time, in which the errors mentioned, and others connected with them, were taught.

These opinions were the more ensnaring, as they were propagated by persons who not only professed a warm zeal against the other articles of the Arminian scheme, but even professed to differ from it in this one; alleging that Christ died, not as the Arminians teach, in the same sense for every one of the human race. The authors of this new scheme maintained, that our Lord Jesus died in one respect

for those who perish, and in another for those who are saved. But this distinction was such, as they could never find made in scripture; and such as they could never explain, so as others could well understand what they intended by it.

The synod, seeing their people in danger of being led astray by fair, but seducing pretences, did, in a few propositions, state, explain, and defend the scripture doctrine concerning the suretyship and death of Christ, as it has been received in the Reformation churches, declaring, "That he was a surety for the elect only, and died for none but those who were given him out of the world, and who shall infallibly be saved by his death; that the blessings purchased by him cannot be divided, whoever has an interest in one of them having an interest in the whole; that his intercession, so expressly declared to be for the elect only, is of equal extent with his death; that the death of Christ, being, in itself, of infinite value, as set forth in the gospel, as what every one may and ought to take hold on, as a sufficient ransom for him; and that the ground of faith lies in this sufficiency of the death of Christ, together with the gift of him, and the offer of salvation through him, made in the gospel to sinners as such; not in any supposed revelation of Christ having died for all mankind." On this occasion, one minister, belonging to the synod, dissented from his brethren, strongly insisting that Christ died, in *some sense*, for all mankind; though what that sense was, he never could distinctly tell. He was earnestly entreated to forbear teaching such an opinion; but he refused. The consequence of long dealing with him, was, that the synod found no other way to preserve unity of doctrine, but by deposing him from the ministry of the gospel, which they accordingly did. This controversy gave occasion to the synod to explain very fully some articles of scripture doctrine; particularly the call of the gospel to sinners, and the warrant given them to believe, which had been partly misrepresented by the friends of this new scheme.

This account of the rise and progress of the Secession in Scotland we judge necessary. Those who are disposed to seek further information concerning these matters, may find it in "A Defence of the Reformation Principles of the Church of Scotland, by the Reverend *Mr. Wilson*, of *Perth*;" and in "A Display of the Secession Testimony,"

“by the Reverend *Mr. Gib*, of *Edinburgh*.” With respect to other proceedings of the Associate Synod, these thirty years past, we do not apprehend it necessary to insist upon them: because, though they deserve to be inquired into, by all who are friends to the cause in which they are engaged, and by all who would judge impartially of them; yet these matters do not so properly belong to the state of their testimony. Though they have maintained, and still do maintain it, yet they have not, during that period, had any remarkable occasion to enlarge it, or to state it against any new scheme of opposition to the truth.



CHAPTER VIII.

Of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, and of the Reasons why they continue a distinct Body from the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia.

SOME people, belonging to the Secession, in Scotland and Ireland, having, at various times, removed to this country, they, and others, who judged it their duty to join with them, made application to the Associate Synod, stating the reasons why they could not join in church fellowship with the general body of the Presbyterians here, and desiring the synod to take them under its inspection. Their request was granted; and two ministers were sent to them, and directed, if they saw cause, to constitute themselves into a presbytery, with the assistance of ruling elders; which they accordingly did, 1754. And as further applications were made, the synod, from time to time, sent others, for their assistance, to labour in the work of the gospel.

We never did separate from other Presbyterians here; for we never were in communion with them. If some people have left them to join us, so have some left us to join them. If we receive such as prefer our communion to theirs, so do they such as prefer their communion to ours. And surely we have the same right to do so as they have. The circumstance of their being many, and our being few in number, gives no more authority to the one than to the other.

The adherence to the Westminster Confession, required of ministers belonging to the synod of New-York and Philadelphia, is, with an exception of what not only the synod itself, but any presbytery subordinate to it, may judge "not essential or necessary in doctrine, worship, and government." And who knows what this may be? Were the articles, deemed not essential or necessary, specified, it would then appear, what was the public confession made in that church; but while they are not, we cannot say what this is.

It is not agreeable to the views of that synod about confessions of faith, to maintain a public and joint testimony, against the errors and defections of the present time. The testimony maintained by us, was judicially condemned, in some of its most material articles, by the Presbytery of Newcastle, near thirty years ago, who, in a WARNING published by them, represented our principles as pernicious, and our conduct, in leaving the established church of Scotland, as schismatical. We do not suppose that all the members of the synod of New-York and Philadelphia, to which that presbytery now belongs, are of the same mind with the latter, in every matter of difference between us and them; but, as that presbytery's opposition to what we judge truth and duty, was never any wise condemned by their brethren, it is but reasonable to conclude, that the majority are much of the same mind with them.

It will not be denied, that some members of that synod are of principles opposite to those which we have expressed in the second part of our testimony, as what we believe to be the truth taught in the word of God, maintained by the churches of the Reformation, in their confessions of faith; particularly, by these Presbyterian churches of Britain, who have steadfastly adhered to the Westminster Confession. As to church communion—the necessity of a public joint confession of the faith—the duty of public covenanting—the singing of the Psalms of David in worshipping assemblies—and several other matters, expressed in the last part of our testimony, it is evident, that the most part of the members of that synod are opposite in their views and practice, to what we judge most agreeable to the Scripture rule, and most conducive to the real prosperity of the church.

The design of what we have now said, is not to displease others, or to promote contention; but when we are blamed

for maintaining a separate communion from others, common justice requires, that we should be allowed to declare our reasons for doing so, that any, who will, may see them, and judge whether or no we are deservedly blamed. We desire to rejoice in whatever we see good and commendable, according to the word of God, in the synod of New-York and Philadelphia, and we are very far from thinking, that there is nothing of that kind to be found in it: but, while matters stand as they now are, we cannot, for the sake of a more entire agreement with it, lay aside the testimony we maintain for the truth of the gospel; because, in so doing, we would neglect our own duty, and harden others in the neglect of theirs.



CHAPTER IX.

Of the Union which produced the Associate Reformed Synod.

IN the year 1776, the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, was, by agreement, divided into two, viz. that of Pennsylvania, and that of New-York. Some years after, a scheme of union was set on foot between these presbyteries, and a party who called themselves the *Reformed Presbytery*, and who were of the same principles with those who take that designation to themselves in Scotland, of whom we have already given some account. The plan, on which the advocates for this union proposed to effect it, was gradually discovered; and was found to be, a laying aside, or expressing in ambiguous terms, every thing about which the parties mentioned could not agree. And the Associate Synod having always testified, very plainly and earnestly against such *latitudinarian schemes*, as injurious to the truth and cause of Jesus Christ, those of them who were then members of it could not but know, that such an union as they proposed would put an end to their connection with it. But this seems to have been the very thing they were desiring: displeased with their former professions and connections, (for reasons best known to themselves,) they were resolved to cast off the one and the other.

The union was agreed to by the Associate Presbytery of New-York, 1780. And at a meeting of the Presbytery of Pennsylvania, June 12, 1782; its friends had, by the casting vote of the moderator, a majority in this last. The members, who voted against the union, protested and appealed to the Associate Synod; but the other party, avowing that they, as a presbytery, did not any longer acknowledge their connection with that synod, as belonging to it, therefore refused to admit any protest in which there was an appeal to it. Upon this, the protestors, seeing the principles and constitution of the presbytery plainly deserted by their brethren, judged it their duty to do what they could for preserving both, by withdrawing; which they accordingly did; having declared, in a protest, that the power of the Associate Presbytery belonged to them who adhered to its principles and constitution. Having retired to another place, and transacted what business came before them, they appointed the time and place of the next meeting, and concluded in the usual manner. An account of their conduct having been laid before the Associate Synod, no one member of that court found fault with it; but, on the contrary, it was unanimously agreed to, that they ought to be encouraged and supported. The circumstance of the majority of any church court deserting their profession, does not destroy the power of the rest, or hinder them to continue their meetings as formerly.

The brethren who opposed this union, readily acknowledge, that harmony among Christians is much to be desired: and if any part of their received principles, can be proved to be merely *their opinions*, and to have no foundation in the word of God, they will not only give up these opinions, for the sake of peace, but they will even openly acknowledge that they were wrong, in ever making them a subject of controversy in the church. But they have not yet learned, that they ought to lay aside a public testimony for any truth or any duty, taught in Scripture, because certain denominations of Christians will not agree with them in it. The Lord has said, *Love the truth and the peace.* To obtain the last, we must hold fast and improve the first. So far as we walk contrary to this rule, the peace we obtain will be only a confederation against the cause of Christ. It should be the steadfast resolution of every one to do nothing against the truth, but for it.

Further, this presbytery cannot judge it their duty to lay

aside the testimony they maintain, while the necessity of it is still greater than when it was first stated, in so direct a manner against the errors and backslidings of this age, by their brethren in Scotland. Apostacy has been, in most instances, increasing in this land, and among the reformed churches of Europe, since that time. *The enemy*, having *come in as a flood*, is still attempting to destroy the church by a deluge of dangerous and wicked opinions; and we cannot be too careful, steadfast, and zealous in opposing him. The Lord Jesus is, from heaven, saying to us, *That which ye have already, hold fast till I come*: and with respect to those backsliding churches, whose communion we have left, his direction is plain—*Let them return unto thee: but return not thou unto them.*

We do also consider the engagements we came under, at our ordination, as binding us to continue in the profession we then made, unless we find something in it sinful, which we have not yet done; and to continue in the society of our brethren, the other members of the Associate Synod of Edinburgh, while they abide by it, as, through the good hand of God upon them, they still do. Though their principles and conduct are industriously misrepresented, by some here who were once of their number; yet we are satisfied to remain in connection with them, as our *brethren and companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*, and we hope the Lord will bless this connection to us, and to them, for encouraging each other to steadfastness in his cause, and for promoting the knowledge of the gospel.

As to the union, which made such a breach in this presbytery, it may be further observed:

First, That there never was any prospect that it could be concluded in a desirable manner. The principles of the Reformed Presbytery, about civil government, unknown in the Christian church, till the rise of their society, used to be a chief topic of their public discourses, and filled almost every page of the testimony they published to the world. And because we stated that to be the duty of Christians, which they denied, viz. to acknowledge these as lawful magistrates, who ruled by the choice or consent of the people of any state or nation, and to submit to them in every thing not inconsistent with our duty to God; we are represented by them, not in some private writings only, but in the public testimony, the joint deed of the body, “as teach-

ers of false doctrine, as treacherous in covenant, as enemies to the Lord's work, as barefacedly belying the Scriptures, as guilty of a most dreadful and deceitful imposition on the generation." Men who have so grievously accused us, and have never retracted a word of what they said, could not be supposed willing to join with us, in a testimony they had so severely reprobated. Either we or they (themselves being judges) must be extremely far from the Lord's way: we, if their charges against us are just; they, if they have so accused us without cause. If they judge that, in these accusations, and in many others of the same kind, they did no injury to the cause and work of God in which we are engaged, we have just reason to refuse entering into church communion with them, though they should be so inconsistent with themselves as to be willing to enter into communion with us. If they have changed their mind, their acknowledgment of the truth should be as plainly declared as their opposition to it was. Such a solemn public charge, against any denomination of Christians, as is to be found standing against us in their testimony, is no trifling matter, and will not be accounted so by the Head of the church. Nothing less than a plain declaration, by the Reformed Presbytery, that they had fallen, from the opposition they had formerly made, to the truth maintained by us, was sufficient to convince us that they were friends, and so agreed with us, that we might walk together in a holy and profitable fellowship.

Secondly, The measures taken to accomplish this union were irregular, and subversive of presbyterial order. The Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania having, in April, 1781, *unanimously* agreed, as to the terms on which it could be effected, sent these to the Reformed Presbytery, with an intimation, that, if they were not agreed to, further conferences, with a view to union, could answer no valuable purpose. And as the Reformed Presbytery did reject them, the matter seemed to be at an end. But, about six months after this, three ministers, belonging to the presbytery, took upon themselves, at a private meeting, to draw up other terms; and one of these brethren, at a conference with the members of the Reformed Presbytery, settled the whole plan of the union with them. In consequence of which, he, and others of his party, entered into church fellowship with them. Thus the business of the presbytery was taken out of their hands; and the work of a party, who

believed themselves able to carry their scheme by a majority, was laid before the court, when met, that it might receive a formal approbation. When the affairs of the church are managed in this manner, it is a sure presage of confusion and ruin.

Thirdly, The first fruits of this union were such as manifested a change in the principles of those who had gone into it. The brethren, who left us, did, a few days after the breach already mentioned, order a warning to be read, from the pulpit, to the associate congregation of Oxford, against two members of this presbytery, for the alleged crime of adhering to what had been the principles and constitution of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, since the first day of its erection. In that paper, they say, "they cannot but look upon the conduct of these brethren as highly schismatical, and tending to sow discord and division among Christians; and therefore warn this congregation against countenancing their ministrations; ay and until they return to their duty, and due subjection to this presbytery, in the Lord." To give it the more solemnity, it was signed, not only by the moderator and clerk, but by the other ministers present. This was a deposing these brethren from the ministry of the gospel, only not according to the form of the Christian process, observed in most of the Reformed churches. As to the returning to subjection to them, they must have had a considerable portion of assurance to require it; seeing these brethren never promised subjection to them, any more than to the Roman Pontiff. Do they find any such presbytery as theirs mentioned in our ordination engagements? The party who went into the union, did also, soon after, restore to the ministry, a brother whom they, and the other ministers of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, had, some time before unanimously deposed from that office, on account of various errors which he had taught, and persisted in defending. What acknowledgments he made to them we know not. But we know, that numbers of people have been deceived by his errors, having, in ignorance, received them as new discoveries of truth; whereas, they may all be found in the writings of its adversaries, of an older date than the present age. And though these people are hardened in their opposition to the truth of the gospel, by the restoration of that brother to his ministerial character; yet no proper warning against his errors is given, by those who received him.

Surely, if our brethren had put a due value on the truths injured by the assembly of the national church of Scotland, by the asserters of universal redemption, and by others, both here and in Britain, they would not have been so active in burying a testimony for them. A carelessness about the truths of the gospel, and a general disposition to prefer peace with their enemies to an earnest contending for them, belongs to the evil signs of our time. There is no end of schemes of reconciliation, in the way of setting aside subjects of controversy, till nothing of Christianity is left to contend about. We find one class attempting thus to reconcile differences, in what they call circumstantial, or lesser matters; a second, attempting to reconcile Calvinists and Arminians; a third, laying their schemes so wide, as to comprehend Papists, and every other sect bearing the Christian name; while a fourth, not content even with this, have actually attempted to reconcile Christianity with Deism, with Mahometan delusion, and with Jewish blasphemy, by composing a form of worship in which men of all these denominations may agree. Such a form was composed, and, for some years, used in a meeting at London not long ago. This last appears to be modern catholicism carried to its perfection. When men give up truth to please its adversaries, further concession will be required, as long as any article of it remains. If it is said, by those who make concessions in lesser matters, that they are resolved to hold fast the truths essential to salvation, still the question recurs, What are these truths? for there is no one article of Christianity, which has not been either denied, or the belief of it deemed not essential to salvation, by some who profess to be Christians. Daily experience shews us, that men, who, for the sake of an unhallowed peace, give up these truths, the acknowledgment and profession of which they once reckoned necessary, do often proceed also to give up these truths, the acknowledgment and profession of which they once reckoned essential to Christianity.

It may not be improper to add here an observation or two from Dr. Owen:—"Perhaps," says he, "some will suggest great things of going a middle way, in divinity, between dissenters. But what is the issue, for the most part, of such proposals? After they have, by their middle ways, raised no less contention than was before between the extremes, (yea, when things before were in some good measure allayed,) the accommodators them-

“selves, through an ambitious desire to make good and defend their own expedients, are insensibly carried over to the party and extreme to which they thought to make a condescension.” After giving some instances of this, he adds, “I can freely say, that I know not that man in England, who is willing to go further in forbearance, love, and communion with all that fear God, and hold the foundation, than I am; but this is to be done upon other grounds, principles, and ways, and by other means and expedients, than by a condescension from the exactness of the least apex of gospel truth, or by an accommodation of doctrines by loose and general terms. Let no man deceive you with vain pretences: hold fast the truth as it is in Jesus, part not with one *iota*, and contend for it, when called thereunto.” [See the Preface to *Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*, page 64.]



CHAPTER X.

Of the Constitution of the Associate Reformed Synod,

THE articles, by an agreement in which the union, described in the former chapter, was effected, were defective, and some of them ambiguous. But these soon gave way to what was still more defective and ambiguous, viz. the constitution framed by a synod of these united brethren, 1783. This last is one of the most dubious professions of the faith we remember to have seen made by any church. Almost every article of it is expressed in such a manner as it may be understood in different senses; and we have reason to believe that it was thus framed with that very design. Thus the scheme of a coalescence with the Reformed Presbytery has led the brethren, who were lately in communion with us, to reject, as wrong, or at any rate useless, all that the society they had left had done for maintaining the truth of the gospel, and for transmitting it pure to posterity. If the Associate Reformed Synod, as these brethren, and their new friends style themselves, proceed in the same course of reformation, as they have done, since they took that designation to themselves, who knows where they will end.

The adherence to the Westminster Confession, expressed in the constitution of this new synod, is, to us, equally dubious as that expressed in the adopting act of the synod of New-York and Philadelphia, which we have already considered. The profession made by the first of those synods, is in no one respect preferable to that of the last. And we cannot but consider those as more blamable, who go directly back from the profession of the truth, which they had once made, than others who never did acknowledge it in such an explicit and solemn manner.

The fairest construction which can be put upon what this new synod says, about the obligations they are under, "to avoid unnecessary criticisms on the Westminster Confessions," is, that the members of that synod will judge themselves bound to make no other criticisms on that confession, than such as any of them may judge necessary: and who knows what these may be? If they are persuaded that the whole doctrine of that confession is the doctrine of the word of God, and that no criticisms upon it are necessary, it is reasonable to suppose, that they would either have said so, or said nothing at all about *criticisms*. We are all under the most sacred obligations to make no unnecessary criticisms on any good book, which may come in our way, lest, by so doing, we injure the truth contained in it. But, after all, we may find room for many necessary criticisms on books of this character.

No well ordered church of Christ ever denied its members the privilege of communicating their scruples or objections, about any part of its profession, to their brethren; or denied it to be a duty to endeavour the removing of these objections, by calm dispassionate reasoning; or ever proposed any other way of censuring members for their offences, than by first trying whether they were guilty. The proposals of this new synod, about these matters, contain nothing but what Protestants generally acknowledge to be just; but two questions are left undetermined: The first is, Whether this synod will bear with those who persist in objecting against the Westminster Confession? The second is, If so, how far this forbearance is to extend? They speak indeed, about objections to any article or articles of that confession; but we have the charity for our brethren to believe, that they would not hesitate long about casting out of their society, those who would object to some articles of it.

All that is required of ministers, elders, and deacons, belonging to that society, at their ordinations, as a profession of the principles of Christianity, or as an evidence of their soundness in the faith, is that they approve the principles exhibited in this constitution, and profess a resolution "to adhere thereto, in opposition to all Deistical, Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Neonomian, and Sectarian errors, and all other opinions which are contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness." The utmost that can be learned from this is, that so far as their constitution and the Westminster Confession, with the necessary criticisms which the members of that synod may make upon it, are opposite to these errors, so far they will oppose them: but how far this may be we know not. We know, that many, by the help of what they have thought a few necessary criticisms on the Westminster Confession, have continued to profess an adherence to it, while they have gone far into errors nearly allied to some of these mentioned, if not the very same with them. Further, this new synod has no where, in the declaration of its principles to the world, told us (though elders and deacons may, without any reflection on their qualifications, be supposed to need information) what these errors are, or what opinions deserve to be accounted Deistical, Popish, Arian, &c. Concerning this, the professed opposers of Deism, Popery, Arianism, and of the other systems of error mentioned, are far from being agreed. Many who profess an opposition to Popery have gone, less or more directly, into the Popish doctrine concerning justification and faith. Others, who profess to oppose Arminianism, do, however, maintain this Arminian principle, "That Christ died not for the elect only, but for all mankind." At a time when truth and error are so much confounded, it is necessary to declare, not merely the designations of these heretics, whose opinions we testify against, but the opinions themselves; that people, being warned, may watch against them, in whatever form, or by whatever denomination of men, they may be published.

It is a sorry compliment this new synod pays to our ancestors, by saying, "That the covenants they entered into were well intended engagements." This may be readily allowed by those who hold them to have been unlawful engagements. This good intention is also said to be the support of "civil and religious liberty." And is it so indeed,

that our ancestors had no farther view in these engagements, than what they might have had, though Pagans: for these last have a right to civil and religious liberty, and may be allowed to join themselves in a covenant to preserve both. Were not the preservation, the increase, and the promoting of the kingdom of Christ, and the confirming, encouraging, and assisting of one another in the good ways of the Lord, “that they, and their posterity after them, “might, as brethren, live in faith and love: and that the “Lord might delight to dwell in the midst of them,” the declared ends; and were they not the chief ends our ancestors had in view, when they entered into these engagements? Most certainly, unless we were to consider them as agreeing, in the most awful manner a people ever did, to lie to God, and to deceive the world!

It is said by this new synod, “That it is their real intention to carry with them all the judicial testimonies “against defection from the faith, once delivered to the “saints, which have been emitted, in the present age, by “their brethren in Britain, as far as these testimonies serve “to display the truth.” We may suppose, that the judicial testimony of the Associate Presbytery, now the Associate Synod, of Edinburgh, is one of these here meant, but how far it serves to display such truths is not said. That it displays it so far, cannot well be denied by any who profess to be Christians. Our brethren, however, may adhere to the decrees of the council of Trent, in the same form of words. Doubtless, our fathers, when they left the church of Rome, carried with them the testimony maintained by that antichristian church, so far as it served to display the truth; and it did serve to display it so far, as it maintained the divine original of the Scriptures, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the immortality of the soul, against Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and Arians.

This new synod tells us, “That they will avail themselves of every call, to bear a pointed testimony against “the errors and delusions which prevail in this country.” It is here acknowledged, that errors and delusions prevail in this country; but the *pointed testimony*, promised by our brethren, is not yet to be seen. Do they suppose that no such call as that, of which they speak, is yet given them? If so, they may wait for it long enough. But as their words admit of different senses, it may be, they intend no more than this, that they will in their sermons, testify against

prevailing evils. This will be so much, if they study to do it faithfully; but no more than what some, in the most degenerate of the Protestant churches, are doing. It will, however, be no testimony for the cause of Jesus Christ, by them as a church. And while they cannot agree in a joint testimony, neither will they agree in their particular testimonies: one will destroy what another builds. If they are of one mind about the matter, that should be the subject of their testimony, why do they not openly, and with one voice, assert those truths which are denied or perverted in *this adulterous and sinful generation?*

This new synod profess, that they are "bound to honour the religious denominations in Britain, to which they formerly belonged, on account of their zeal for the purity of the gospel, and of their laudable endeavours to promote it, not only in Britain and Ireland, but also in America." If the missions, sent to this country from the Associate Synod, are here intended, they are in this, as in other things, inconsistent with themselves. We desire they would shew us, whether, according to the profession they now make, there ever was any reason for sending missions to a place where there was a church whose profession, whatever we may, on our principles, judge defective in it, they cannot, on theirs, deny to be as good as their own? If there be any difference between them and other Presbyterians here, it would be reasonable, first, to tell us what it is; and next, to shew us, that it is a just cause of maintaining a distinct communion.

As to the missions of the Reformed Presbytery, though we wish well to the people of that denomination, and esteem whatever we see good in them; yet we much doubt whether their attempts to increase their party ought to be acknowledged as flowing from zeal for the purity of the gospel, and as laudable endeavours to promote it. Had they succeeded to the declared extent of their wishes, it would have been no desirable event to us and others, whom they accounted enemies to the Lord's work. If any one desire to know how they would instruct their duly qualified magistrates to deal with such, he may consult their Testimony.

What the Associate Synod of Edinburgh have done, to maintain a testimony against the encroachments of the civil powers upon the kingdom of Christ; to prevent their people from swearing contradictory oaths; and to secure

them from being led astray from their duty, as men and as Christians, by very unjust and dangerous notions about civil government, is represented, by this new synod, as nothing more than *local controversies*, or *unnecessary disputes*. These, they say, they will not suffer to be introduced into their church. If they have a power to hinder these, or other controversies from entering into it, it is more than other churches have. But truth and error, right and wrong, are the same every where. Does this new synod now approve such professions of religion as that established by the civil powers in Scotland, which most of them once testified against, as, in various instances, amiss or defective, yea or not? And what does it say about the duty of Christians towards the civil powers, under whom Providence may order their lot? Though this question may, in the judgment of some, seem a very useless one, and fit only to produce unnecessary disputes; yet we know the apostles, Paul and Peter, were of another mind; they took it under consideration, and desired all Christians to do so.

According to the fifth article of this new synod's constitution, a minister is not to be excommunicated, and may not even be deposed from his office, for any violations of the law of God, unless they are what the synod judge notorious; not for any errors, unless they are such as the synod judge, do unhinge the Christian profession. Seeing they evidently make a distinction, they ought to give us some direction how to apply it, by informing us what is, and what is not, to be called a notorious violation of the law of God; and likewise what errors do, and what do not, unhinge the Christian profession; for about these things the professors of Christianity differ exceedingly. After all, what good end does an assembly of ministers, professing to meet in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to act by authority from him, propose by telling men, naturally prone to vice and error, that they will not apply the highest censures he has appointed in his church, against those who shall be guilty only of lesser vices and lesser errors.

They have, indeed, prescribed a censure for what they reckon small offences, which to us appears abundantly severe. It is a dissolution of the connection between their synod and the offender. We cannot distinguish between this and excommunication. What more can they do, in

the case of any offender, than dissolve the connection between their synod and him? Excommunication, or putting one out of a society for his offences, are so very like one another, that we would be obliged to these brethren, if they would shew us the difference. And, if they judge there is any, we would, next, desire to know what they mean by excommunication? And what Scripture-authority they have for this other censure? And, if they plead none, what authority they have to add to the censures which the Lord Jesus hath appointed in his church, as if these were not sufficient?

This new synod, so far as we can understand the sixth and seventh articles of their constitution, have one set of terms on which they will admit people to what they call fixed communion; another set of terms on which they will admit people to what they call occasional communion: one door by which a man may enter and stay with them; another by which he may enter, if he is soon to go out again. This scheme of occasional communion we do absolutely reject, as having no place in the word of God, and as having been unknown in the churches of Christ; till some, to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ, or to promote their worldly interest, devised it. It began to be frequently practised in England, by those dissenters who, during the reign of Charles II. and that of his brother, chose to evade the penalty of some of the persecuting laws, by communicating sometimes with the established church, rather than to suffer affliction with their brethren. And after the persecution was over, there were some, who practised the same expedient, that they might, according to the laws of that kingdom, be qualified for places of public trust, and who, when this end was too selfish to be plainly avowed, pretended catholic love; and others, who had no such sinister ends, were drawn into the snare. Ever since, the scheme has had many advocates, both in Britain and in America. But it carries in it a manifest inconsistency. If we may enter into church fellowship, with any particular society or description of men, for one day, why should we not have fellowship with them, (supposing that they continue the same) the next, a third, and so on to the end of our lives?

The last article of this new synod's constitution, in which they profess to be extremely tender of encroaching on the congregations of other Presbyterians, may serve to impress

people with a favourable apprehension of their candour; but we very well know, that one of their presbyteries, whose proceedings we have best access to know, do not make it the rule of their conduct towards the few congregations belonging to us. If they think a detail of the facts, on which this charge is founded, will do them any credit, it may be given.

These remarks upon the Constitution of the Associate Reformed Synod we judge necessary, as a warning against that *latitudinarian scheme* which it is calculated to promote; and as a vindication of the conduct of this Presbytery, in refusing to agree to that union which produced it. Upon the whole, it is absurd for any to allege, that the brethren who left us, stand on the same ground they formerly did. With their private sentiments, or their hearts, we have no business; but their profession we do assuredly know to be not the same which it was, while they were connected with us. They either were then, or are now, in a wrong course.



CHAPTER XI.

Reasons why the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania have stated their Principles in the manner they have now done.

THE necessity of stating the testimony which we maintain, in such a manner as may, in this part of the world, best answer the ends designed by it, has been long acknowledged. The brethren who have left us know that such a statement was proposed and agreed to by the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, in 1776. It could not, however, be quickly effected in the confusions of that time; and, after the scheme of uniting with the Reformed Presbytery was set on foot, those who favoured this measure, gave themselves no farther concern about the statement which had been proposed, and which would have served to instruct and establish the people, adhering to us, in their profession.

What was necessary formerly, we still find more so now. Our principles have been industriously misrepresented, and

the Judicial Testimony, the Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace, and other proceedings of the Associate Presbytery, now the Associate Synod, being in the hands of few, and being also, through many references in them to affairs well known in Britain, but not so here, less plain to the people of this country, such misrepresentations have succeeded in leading numbers, who once professed adherence to the cause in which we are engaged, into a very opposite course.

When the secession was first made from the established church of Scotland, the scattering of the flock of Christ, by the intrusion of hirelings upon it; the tyranny of the ecclesiastical courts towards those who studied faithfulness in testifying against the prevailing apostacy of the times; and the submission of those courts to grievous encroachments of the civil powers; were justly considered as leading evils, and were, therefore, largely insisted upon in the Judicial Testimony, agreed upon by the Associate Presbytery, 1736. The occasion of these evils, viz. a civil establishment of religion, not existing here, we have not a call to say so much concerning them. We do, however, most readily concur with our brethren, in Britain and Ireland, in asserting the rights and privileges of the church of Christ, against every sort of opposition.

But these evils were not the greatest of those which gave rise to the Secession. In the established church of Scotland the truth was condemned; damnable heresies were not properly censured; grievous errors were considered as deserving no reproof; and from the admission of so many hirelings to the ministry, together with the negligence of the judicatories in not casting out the scandalous, an impure communion necessarily followed. The Associate Presbytery judged it necessary to give several instances, in which it appeared, that these evils were justly chargeable upon the judicatories of the established church: it was necessary also, in their circumstances, that the proof should be full and particular. They were not without hope of being, in some degree, useful to reclaim the ministers and people of that church from their backslidings; and their hope was not altogether in vain. Though the ringleaders in apostacy, and, with them, the majority, went on in the same pernicious courses as before; yet a very considerable number was gathered to the standard lifted up for the truth.

The evils last mentioned, have, for many years past,

spread and increased in the Protestant churches, and he who sees them not in America, is so far unable to *discern the signs of the times*. The opposition to the cause and testimony of our Lord Jesus, is the same here as in Scotland; only it assumes a different form, according to what the leaders in it, taking every advantage from the circumstances of time and place, judge most effectual for promoting their own ends. The testimony, we and our brethren in Scotland maintain, is the same; and the great design of it is the preservation of the doctrine taught in the word of God. We regard Confessions, Testimonies, and Covenants, of former and present times, only as subservient to that design.

We have been, and expect to be, reproached as narrow minded and uncharitable. But this ought not to seem strange to us, or to move us from our duty. The way the Lord approves is scarcely ever fashionable; and those who walk in it are, so far as they are known to the world by an open profession of the truth, a party *every where spoken against*. We are not conscious of being narrow minded, while we approve all that we can see good in any; nor of being uncharitable, while we regard all those as Christians who trust in the Lord Jesus alone for salvation, as he is *made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*; and who manifest the truth of their faith by a conversation becoming the gospel. In refusing to enter into church fellowship with such of them as hold principles we cannot approve, or oppose what we believe to be duty, we cannot see that we act uncharitably towards them. An opposite conduct would confirm them in what is wrong, and hurt us; seeing, in the present state of things, it would be considered as an evidence that we were gone into the prevailing indifference of the age, esteeming all these truths, which are subjects of controversy among Christians, circumstantial, or small matters, not worth contending for; an opinion which we judge contrary to the word of God, and exceedingly pernicious to his church. To do any thing which implies a disregard to the truth, is not the way to bring others to a proper acknowledgment of it. To give countenance to corruptions is not the way to remove them.

Whatever expectations have been expressed by some who do not wish well to the cause in which we are engaged, that it would come to nothing in this part of the world;

and whatever such have done to place it in a contemptible light; yet, persuaded that it is the cause of truth, we are not afraid nor ashamed to appear in it; if it were to fall, better to fall with it, than to rise upon its ruins. They have much to answer for, who, by their deserting and misrepresenting it, have brought it so low.

We have, in this narrative, and in the testimony which follows it, studied, according to the solemn engagements we are under, to discharge our duty in maintaining that banner the Lord has given, to be displayed because of the truth. In this course we desire to persevere, depending on the Redeemer and Head of the church, *who giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might increaseth strength*, and from whom alone is all the success which attends the labours of any in the service of the gospel. May his kingdom come, and the promise be further accomplished, that, *from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, his name should be great among the GENTILES!* AMEN.

Declaration and Testimony,

FOR THE

Doctrine and Order

OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST,

And against the

ERRORS OF THE PRESENT TIMES.

Act of the Associate Presbytery,

APPROVING THE DECLARATION AND TESTIMONY.

Pequea, August 25, 1784.

THE Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, having found it necessary to state the Testimony they maintain, for the Doctrine and Order of the Church of Christ, in such a manner, as would render it more plain to people in this country; better adapted to the circumstances in which they are placed; and more directly pointed against the errors of the present time; did in May last, enter upon that work. And, having had several meetings for prayer and conference upon the subject, in the course of this summer, a draught of this work was presented; which, having been considered at several meetings, was at last finished. On this and the preceding day, it was carefully read by paragraphs; then the question being put, "Approve of the Declaration and Testimony, for the Doctrine and Order of the Church of Christ or not?" it was carried, unanimously, "approve:" Wherefore, the Presbytery did, and hereby do, judicially APPROVE this *Declaration and Testimony*, as containing their views of *present truth and duty*, and as a *Confession* of that faith to which, through the grace of our Lord Jesus, they are resolved to adhere.

This, by order of Presbytery, is signed,

WILLIAM MARSHALL, *Moderator.*

Extracted by

JOHN ANDERSON, *Presbytery Clerk.*

Declaration and Testimony.

PART FIRST.

Concerning God's goodness to his Church, and the Testimony for Truth maintained by her.

I. *ONE* generation shall praise the works of the LORD to another, and shall declare his mighty acts;* the fathers to the children shall make known his truth.† Instructed in our duty, and encouraged to study a faithful performance of it, by these and other like precious promises of the great Head of the church, we publish to the world, this TESTIMONY and DECLARATION of our principles; in which our design is, *First*, To express our thankful remembrance of what the Lord hath done for his church in former times; especially what he hath done for that particular church with which we are most immediately connected, and concerning which we may say, *O God, we have heard with our ears; our fathers have told us the works thou didest in their days, in the times of old.*‡ *Secondly*, To declare our adherence to the *testimony* maintained for the truth of the gospel, by the churches of the reformation, in the confessions of faith, especially to the *testimony* maintained by that particular church with which we are most immediately connected, in its best and purest times. This adherence is not, however, an implicit assent to all that any church has said or done; it is not to be considered as extending beyond what we do in our testimony assert. *Thirdly*, To vindicate the truths expressed in our Confession of Faith; particularly in those articles of it which have been perverted; and of which the plain and genuine sense has been denied, by some who profess to receive it, as the confession of their faith.

II. We being, therefore, authorised by the commandment of God, encouraged by his promise, and moved, we trust, with some degree of zeal for the glory of his name,

* Psalm cxlv. 4.

† Isaiah xxxviii. 19.

‡ Psalm xlv. 1.

do make this joint, open, and express acknowledgment of the truth revealed in his word, and of the loving kindness manifested in his providence, towards the church, in opposition to those who contemn or deny the one or the other.

III. We desire to celebrate the mercy of the Lord, because he remembered us in our fallen, wretched state, and gave to our first parents, after they had sinned, a promise of grace and salvation, in the intimation made to them of a Redeemer, who should *destroy the works of the devil*, and rescue a chosen seed from the bondage in which that adversary held them. In the first gospel promise the *day dawned*, and in the further revelations made, during the Old Testament dispensation, the light increased, till CHRIST, *the Sun of righteousness, arose with healing in his wings*.

IV. We do, therefore, testify against those who affirm, that the immortality of the soul, and an eternal state, were not made known in the Old Testament scriptures; and that the people of God had, in those times, no other promises than such as belong to the present life. The teachers of these errors too plainly follow the Sadducees, in their opinion of the Old Testament scriptures, and, though bearing the Christian name, do arrogantly presume that they are better able to interpret the sacred oracles, than our Lord Jesus, who confuted the Sadducees, and proved the doctrine of another state, after death, from the books of Moses, the first of the inspired writers.

V. We desire to celebrate the mercy of the Lord, in making the *day spring from on high to visit the Gentile nations, giving light to them who sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death*; thus accomplishing what he had long before spoken, by the mouth of his servants the prophets, *concerning the gathering of many nations to Christ. God the Lord hath shewed us light! Let us render to him the sacrifice of thanksgiving.**

VI. We testify against all who make light of this merciful visitation, either by ascribing the rapid progress of Christianity, after our Lord's ascension, to the political abilities, or to the eloquence, of those employed in spreading it; denying that display of Almighty power and grace, whereby the nations, till then slaves of Satan, were moved to yield a willing subjection to the Lord Jesus; or by alleging, that, though Christianity be a blessing, yet, men

* Psalm cxviii. 27.

may be saved who have no knowledge of it, if they are diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the laws of that religion which they profess.

VII. We do acknowledge the goodness of God in preserving his church in the worst of times; particularly under the long, the dark, and the dreadful night of antichrist's reign. *He gave power*, that is, authority, zeal, and ability, *to his witnesses*; though few in number, and beset with subtle and furious enemies, to testify for his truth, against the horrible errors and abominations of that *synagogue of Satan*, called, by men, the Church of Rome; but called by the Holy Spirit, in the New Testament prophecies, *the great whore drunk with the blood of the saints—the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth—a mystery of iniquity*; and which the Holy Spirit farther describes by the names of *Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon*; signifying that impurity of life, heaven-daring pride, and extreme cruelty towards the people of God, would be its distinguishing characters.

VIII. We adhere to the testimony maintained by these witnesses:—1. For the doctrine of salvation by free grace, through Jesus Christ, in opposition to the antichristian doctrine of salvation being partly merited by our works.—2. For this truth, That the traditions of men ought, in every case, to give place to the word of God. His word is the only rule by which all doctrines are to be tried, and according to which all things in the church are to be regulated.

IX. We are bound to remember and acknowledge with thanksgiving, the works of the Lord, the right hand of the Most High, in the reformation, by which our fathers were delivered from the darkness, the superstition, and the deadly errors of the Romish Antichrist. What was the duty of Israel, is our duty, *to keep in mind the multitude of the Lord's mercies*, how he delivered our fathers from a worse than Egyptian bondage, restoring to them that light of the gospel, which through the fraud and tyranny of antichrist, had long been hid as under a bushel; and by them transmitting to us the knowledge of the truth, liberty to profess it, and many valuable privileges which we at this present time enjoy. *This was the doing of the Lord*, and should be *marvellous in our eyes*, as the most remarkable deliverance wrought for the church since the days of the apostles. Though this deliverance was effected in a way less

miraculous than that by which the Lord brought his ancient people out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, yet it was not less gracious, not less the work of God, and not less worthy of admiration and praise.

X. We therefore judge it necessary to testify against those who refuse to acknowledge any other hand than that of men in this great event. Who disposed the minds of men, in different places, to concur in attempting a reformation? Who led them forward to it, while frequently they took one step without knowing what should be the next? Who made the learning, the politics, and even the confusions of the times favor its progress? Who but *He who ruleth in heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, God our king from the beginning, working salvation in the midst of the earth? He looked down from the height of his sanctuary: from heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoners, to set them free whom the man of sin had appointed to death,** that they might declare his name and his praise in the church.

XI. We adhere to that express and glorious testimony, for the doctrine of salvation by free grace, through Jesus Christ, which the Reformed churches did then so zealously maintain; and for which the witnesses of Jesus, in these times, did, many of them, suffer unto death. This doctrine we believe to be of God, as being plainly taught in his word; and are fully persuaded that he never did, nor ever will, bless an opposite doctrine in his church. By no other doctrine has any church been reformed, or the power of godliness made to revive and flourish, and Christians carried triumphantly through trials of mocking, and scourging; imprisonment, and death, for the name of Jesus.

XII. The apostacy of many, in the reformed churches, from this doctrine, and the negligence of others, in not contending earnestly for it, we testify against, and desire to lament as grievous sins, on account of which the Lord is, in many instances, leaving men to walk in their own ways, and after the imagination of their own hearts; so that they go from evil to worse, denying the leading articles of revealed truth, one after another, till many of them do plainly avow their entire rejection of the Christian faith.

XIII. Farther, we adhere to the testimony maintained at the reformation for this truth, That the worship, government, and discipline of the church of Christ, is to be

* Psalm cii. 19, 20.

learned from his word, not from the traditions or commandments of men. The rubbish of ages, could not, indeed, be all removed in one day: if the circumstances of the times, particularly the ignorance of the common people, who had been brought up in darkness, the false policy of some of the civil powers, and the imperfect views of the reformers, who, like other men, had to learn one thing after another, hindered the reformation from being carried to such perfection as it might otherwise have attained: it does not follow, that we ought to copy the blemishes of the first Protestant churches: they are no friends to the reformation who have laboured to stop its progress; much less are they friends to it who have rejected the doctrine of salvation by free grace, so purely taught, and so eminently blessed; in the churches at the reformation, and have earnestly contended, even to the persecuting of their brethren, for that antichristian form of church government, and those superstitions which the first reformers in some churches were not able to remove. Such is the character which many of the advocates for the Episcopal church of England justly deserve. The reformation was very imperfect in that kingdom; the lordly dominion of bishops, and a number of Popish ceremonies, were not taken away; which evils have since proved a snare, and, while they continue, will do so, to the churches in Britain. Attachment to these remains of antichristianism being like that of Israel to the high places; the more sinful, the more plainly and fully the Lord has testified against it.

XIV. We declare our adherence to the whole doctrine contained in the Confessions of Faith and Catechisms agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, with commissioners from the church of Scotland, and received by said church. And we, being a branch of that church, and still having an immediate connection with our brethren in that country, (the ministers and people belonging to the Associate Synod,) do join with them in the testimony they maintain for the doctrine expressed in the said Confession and Catechisms, for the divine right of Presbyterian church government; for the spiritual privileges of the church, particularly this, That it is not bound to acknowledge any other head than Christ, or any other law than his; for the warrantableness and perpetual obligation of the covenant-engagements, which the church of Scotland came under, to abide by the principles of the reformation:

And likewise we join with them in adhering to the testimonies of those, who, during former times of apostacy, and during the persecutions which have formerly raged in Scotland, witnessed and suffered for the truth; so far as these testimonies had the maintenance of the principles of the reformation which we profess, for their leading design.

XV. We judge it necessary, however, in professing our adherence to the Westminster Confession, to declare, as our brethren in Scotland have done, our mind concerning the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, more particularly than that Confession does.

We do, therefore, assert, that, as the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, acknowledging no other laws, and no other rulers than he has appointed in it, so the civil magistrate, as such, is no ruler in the church of Christ; and has no right to interfere in the administration of its government. He is bound to improve every opportunity which his high station and extensive influence may give him, for promoting the faith of Christ, for opposing the enemies of this faith, for supporting and encouraging true godliness, and for discouraging whatever in principle or practice is contrary to it. But to accomplish these ends, it is not warrantable for him to use any kind of violence either towards the life, the property, or the consciences of men: He ought not to punish any as heretics or schismatics; nor ought he to grant any privileges to those whom he judges professors of the true religion, which may hurt others in their natural rights: his whole duty, as a magistrate, respects men, not as Christians, but as members of civil society. The appointed means for promoting the kingdom of Christ are all of a spiritual nature. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty, not through the force of human laws, compelling men to that which they dislike, but, through God, by his almighty power and grace, making the obstinate and rebellious yield a cheerful submission to it.*

XVI. If any article of our Confession of Faith, seems to give any other power to the civil magistrate, in matters of religion, than what we have now declared to be competent to him, we are to be considered as receiving it only in so far as it agrees with other articles of the same Confession, in which the spiritual nature of the church is asserted, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven denied to belong to the civil magistrate; and in so far as it agrees with this declaration of our principles.

XVII. We maintain, with the Westminster Assembly, that God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men; and declare that no man possesses a right to compel those who are under his civil authority, to worship God contrary to the dictates of their own conscience. This freedom from compulsion, whether it be called privilege, liberty, or right, cannot be denied to men, under any pretence whatsoever, unless we adopt the principle, that men should serve God, not according to their own conscience, but according to the will or conscience of those who are over them, in power or authority. Yet this right cannot be pleaded in behalf of principles or practices destructive to civil society; therefore the civil magistrate does not go beyond the limits prescribed to him, when he lays those under restraint who teach that it is their duty to destroy the lives of such as they judge heretics; that they are not obliged to fulfil promises made to persons whom they consider in that light; and that they may lawfully break their oaths, if they obtain a dispensation for this purpose from the pope of Rome. The safety of society renders it necessary to guard against persons of this description, not because they are of a false religion, but because they are enemies to the rights of mankind, and would use their liberty to destroy that of other people. Thus the magistrate, in discharging his duty to civil society, is often the instrument, in the hand of God, for protecting his church from the fury of persecuting enemies.

XVIII. The civil magistrate not only may, but ought to restrain those vices which are destructive to civil society, and for which none can plead as what they are bound in conscience to practise, seeing the light of nature testifies against them: he ought to be *a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them who do well*. Thus the proper exercise of his office is, in its consequence, beneficial to the church.

XIX. It is the duty of Christians, plainly and frequently enjoined upon them in the word of God, and acknowledged in the Confession of all the Reformed churches, to submit to the government of that country in which providence has ordered their lot. The civil magistrate, being an infidel, or of what we judge a false religion, does not, as our Confession most justly declares, free us from an obligation to acknowledge his authority, and to obey him

in all lawful commands. Civil societies may, and ought to preserve their rights and liberties; and to them it belongs to set up these forms of government, and those magistrates, whom they judge most proper. It is a sad truth, that in doing so, nations frequently neglect to acknowledge God, and give things injurious to religion a place in their civil constitutions. Against these evils, Christians ought to testify, as the Lord gives them opportunity. But they ought, by no means, on account of such blemishes in any government established by the consent of a nation, to refuse submission to it in all lawful commands, especially while it grants the same protection to them, as to the other members of the community.

XX. As we acknowledge that it was not only lawful, but highly expedient, for the church of Scotland, to enter into the most solemn engagements, as she did in the National Covenant, and in the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations, to abide by the doctrine taught, and the order established, in that church; to study the preservation of the reformed religion, the removing of those corruptions and disorders which hindered its progress, and the uniting of its friends in the same profession of the faith; and to study that purity of life and conversation which becometh the gospel; so we acknowledge these engagements to be still binding on us. Not that we judge every thing in the manner of covenanting, used by the church of Scotland in former times, a proper example for us to follow; or that we judge the form of words they used still binding as an oath upon us. As to what may be called the civil part of these covenants, it is what we neither have, nor ever had any thing to do with. Nothing of that kind has a place in the bond which our brethren in Scotland use in covenanting; they judged it improper to mix civil and religious matters in such covenants, and we are of the same mind with them.

XXI. But, that we may not be chargeable with deceiving, either the world, or one another, by a general profession of adherence to these engagements of our ancestors, not explained:—

1. We do more particularly declare, that, as our ancestors engaged to hold fast and defend the doctrine received by them, and by the other churches of the reformation, against those who were at that time its most remarkable enemies in Britain, viz. the Papists, and others, whose

zeal for Episcopal power, and for superstitious ceremonies, together with their persecuting spirit, made them be justly considered as enemies to the reformation; so the same engagements lie on us to hold fast and defend the same truth, against all who do now, or afterward may oppose it, in that part of the world where we live.

2. We declare, that as our ancestors engaged to study the preservation, the purity, and the increase of the church of Christ in Britain; so the same engagements lie on us to study the preservation, the purity, and the increase of the church of Christ in the United States of North America, or wherever providence may order our lot.

3. We declare, that as our ancestors engaged to assist each other in maintaining the cause of Christ against its adversaries; to study personal reformation; and to perform the duties incumbent on them, as members of civil society, towards superiors, inferiors, or equals; so the same engagements lie on us to walk, in all these respects, worthy the vocation wherewith we are called.

4. Finally, We declare, that it is our duty, relying on the grace that is in Christ Jesus, to engage jointly in a public solemn covenant, as our ancestors did, to endeavour a faithful performance of these and all other duties which the word of God requires; especially of those duties which men are most apt to neglect, or, through fear of reproach, and hurt to their worldly interests, to be deterred from.

XXII. Our brethren in Scotland justly reckoned it an absurdity to swear these covenants as framed in a former period of the church, and full of references to persons and circumstances which do not now exist. They renewed them in a bond suited to the time and situation in which they were placed. In doing so, they followed the example of the church of Scotland in times of its greatest purity. The national covenant had been several times renewed, but always in a bond suited to the circumstances of the church, and the mercies and judgments passing over it, at the particular time when such engagements were entered into; but the matter and design being still the same in the chief articles of all these bonds, each of them was very properly called a renewing of the first solemn covenant of the Reformed church of Scotland.

XXIII. The engagements which are binding on a church are binding on all the members of it. The circumstance of their being gathered out of different nations can make no

difference. Whatever was the duty of Christians in Britain, is the duty of Christians all over the world, whenever the Lord calls them to it, and gives them an opportunity to perform it. No church can make that a duty, by engaging in solemn covenant to do it, which was not a duty before. We must not add to what the Lord has commanded, nor is the uttermost of what we can do in serving him, more than is required of us. Thus our covenant engagements, as already stated, being nothing more than what the Lord requires of every one; and nothing more than what all who confess the name of Jesus in sincerity and truth, do materially acknowledge to be a duty; so every one, of whatsoever nation he be, who joins himself to that particular church which owns them as binding upon it, comes under the same engagements with his brethren, though he may not have an opportunity of declaring this in public covenanting.

PART SECOND.

Concerning the Doctrine of the Church of Christ.

WE would not think it necessary to add any thing concerning the doctrines taught in our Confession of Faith, were it not that many of these doctrines are perverted or denied by some who profess to receive it as the Confession of their faith. It is, therefore, our duty to bear testimony for the truth, against these and other enemies with whom they join in opposing it.



ARTICLE I. *Of the Necessity of Scripture Revelation.*

I. We declare, that we receive the holy Scriptures, not merely as a sufficient rule, but as the *only* rule, of faith and obedience. There is no other revelation made, either

by the light of nature, or by an universal tradition, from which men may learn, that God will be gracious to sinners, will forgive their transgressions, and receive them into his favour. The entrance, the evil, and the extent of sin, and the only propitiation by which it is taken away, are all unknown where the Scripture revelation is unknown. There is no salvation in any other than our Lord Jesus Christ; and he is *the Saviour of his body the church*, not of those who live in heathen darkness, or who rebel against the light of his word. The Lord either sends the gospel to those whom he hath appointed to salvation, or he brings them to some place where it is made known. The Heathen are described, by the Spirit of truth, as *sitting in the shadow of death, as led captive by Satan working in their hearts, as children of disobedience; and therefore, without exception, children of wrath.*

II. The light of nature, together with the works of creation and providence, does, however, so far manifest the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, as to render the Heathen inexcusable. Impressions of the divine law still remain on their hearts. Their consciences do, in some degree, bear witness that there is a Judge higher than any on earth, by whom their actions are tried: and the visible works of God do manifest to their minds his perfections, invisible to the bodily eye, *even his eternal power and Godhead: so that they are without excuse; because they do not improve the knowledge of God which they have, in glorifying him as the Creator, Governor, and Judge of the universe; are not thankful for what of his goodness is displayed to them; go into foolish imaginations, quite contrary to the light given them; do those things which their own consciences declare to be evil; and change the truth of God into a lie; worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator; the object of their fear, esteem, and adoration, being dumb idols, things inanimate, departed spirits or devils; not Jehovah, the only living and true God.* Because they do not give glory to God, according to the knowledge they have of his great and holy name, he justly leaves them to proceed from one degree of idolatry and wickedness to another; so that they become exceeding vile in their lives, and exceeding mad in their superstitions.

III. We do, therefore, reject the opinion of those who teach, that all knowledge of the Supreme Being to be found in the world, is learned from the revelation of grace made

to man since the fall; and that so much of this knowledge as we find among those who have not the written word, has been communicated to them, and preserved among them by tradition only. This opinion is contrary to the Scriptures, and is designed to pave the way for other and greater errors: as, *First*, That there is a revelation made to all, though more obscurely to some. *Secondly*, That the revelation of grace being universal, all of every class, Mahometan, or Heathen, will be saved, who study to frame their lives according to the light they have, though they never saw or heard of the written revelation we have, and know nothing about our Lord Jesus Christ. And, *Thirdly*, as a consequence of these two errors, That it is men's improvement of the means they enjoy, not the free grace of God manifested in Christ Jesus, which makes the difference between those who are saved and those who perish.

That the Heathen may be saved, by living according to the light they have, we do reject, as an opinion directly opposite to the Scripture, which assures us, that *by the deeds of the law shall no flesh, no one* of the human race, Jew or Gentile, without or within the church, *be justified in the sight of God*; and as an opinion which proceeds upon a supposition of that being true, which the Scripture assures us is absolutely false: For no one of the Heathen ever did, and, by reason of the entire depravity of nature which is common to all, no one of them ever can, live according to the light he has, or obey the law of God so far as he knows it. The Lord, beholding from heaven the children of men, declares, that *they are gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one.**

ARTICLE II. *Of the Trinity.*

I. As we adhere to the doctrine expressed in our Confession of Faith concerning the Trinity, we do reject all contrary opinions; particularly, the error of those who deny that our Lord Jesus Christ is necessarily existent, which is the same as to deny that he is equal with the Father, and one with the Father, *God over all blessed for ever.* The works done by our Redeemer shew him to be the supreme Jehovah; *by him all things were made, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*†

* Psalm xiv. 2-3.

† John i. 3.

He speaks, and it is done: he commands, and it stands fast,—the sole prerogative of the Most High. He raiseth the dead; which he could not do, if he were not God omnipotent. He will judge the world in righteousness; which he could not do, if he were not God omniscient, knowing all things which have been thought, said, or acted in the world, from Adam to the last of his posterity.

II. A steadfast belief of this truth, that our Redeemer is God infinite in all divine perfections, is absolutely necessary to that confidence in him, and love to him, which the Scriptures require of us. We are commanded *to honour him, as we honour the Father;** which, compared with that other commandment, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,*† plainly shews us, that he is both a distinct person from the Father, and one in essence or being with the Father, the object of the same love, adoration, and praise. If we know the depth of that misery into which we have fallen, and the greatness of that salvation which we need, we will acknowledge that none but an Almighty Redeemer can save us: if Jehovah, the eternal God, is not our help, we must perish in our sins.

III. We believe our Redeemer to be the Son of God by eternal generation; and reject the opinion of those who, denying this truth, teach, That he is so called, either on account of the relation he, as the head of the redeemed, stands in to the first Person of the Trinity, or on account of his assumption of human nature. The Scriptures teach, that *God sent his Son to redeem us;* plainly intimating, that the Redeemer was the Son of God, abstract from the consideration of his undertaking as a surety for us, or of his entering upon his mediatory work: His mission supposes his sonship; his sonship does not arise from his mission: *And in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*‡ *He spared not his own Son,* (his Son in a sense absolutely different from that in which any other is so) *but gave him up for us all.*§

IV. We do also believe, that the Holy Spirit is God equal with the Father and the Son, and one with them; because the Scriptures of truth teach us, that he gives those gifts which none but God can give; searcheth the heart, and has that perfect knowledge of it, which none but God

* John v. 2, 3.

† Matth. iv. 10.

‡ 1 John iv. 9.

§ Rom. viii. 32.

can have; is every where present, which none but God can be; and is the object of that worship which is due to God, and to none else. And we do reject the errors of those who deny him to be a distinct person from the Father and the Son, together with all opinions contrary to that revealed truth, *There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.**

V. We do, moreover, reckon it our duty to be on our guard against receiving any pretended new explications of the doctrine of the Trinity; which may have a shew of wisdom, but which speak not according to the oracles of God; because the Lord hath said to us, *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.†*

ARTICLE III. *Of Predestination.*

I. We believe, that God did from eternity choose some of fallen men to everlasting life in Christ Jesus; not on account of any goodness which he foresaw would be found in them, rendering them more worthy of his choice than the rest whom he passed by, but according to his sovereign good pleasure. *The Lord hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.* The number and aggravations of men's sins are not the cause of any being passed by in the decree of election; for God hath chosen some of the chief of sinners: nor is the comparative fewness of men's sins the cause why any of them are appointed to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ; for every sinner deserves eternal death; and no sinner is saved but by free grace.

II. God, who is infinite in goodness, exercises it freely, according to the counsel of his own will. His choosing of some to eternal life is a display of unmerited goodness to them; and the rest of fallen men whom he passed by and left to perish in their sins, are not hereby injured; God, who is just and good, withholds nothing from them which they can claim as due to them. He gave men eminent rank among his creatures, endowing them with rational and immortal souls; and they employ all these endowments, which render them higher *than the beasts of the field*, in rebellion against their Creator and Lord. He

* 1 John v. 7.

† Col. ii. 8.

gives them many good things belonging to the present life, and these they employ in sinning against him. He is long-suffering towards them, and they become so much the more hardened in their iniquities. He condemns, and at length, casts them down under his wrath; but the reason why he thus condemns and punisheth them, is not his passing by them in the decree of election, but their own wickedness; and this wickedness is voluntary. Though the Lord is said to *harden them*, he does so, only by leaving them to the power of their own evil inclinations; by not bestowing on them that grace which softens the heart, the giving of which depends upon his sovereign pleasure; and by permitting snares and temptations to stand in their way. They sin without any force compelling them. When the Lord gives up men to their own heart's lusts, they walk in their own counsels, choosing and loving that way, *the end of which is death*.

III. This doctrine we judge necessary to be taught in the church. As it is of God, we need not be ashamed or afraid to avow it; and it is profitable for all to hear it; it lays the axe to the root of human pride, and teaches us to give the entire glory of our salvation to God; seeing this salvation is *not of him that runneth, nor of him that willeth, but of God who sheweth mercy*. The elect, being called, and having obtained that precious faith, the end of which is a perfect salvation, may know that God hath loved them with an everlasting love. And nothing will more powerfully and effectually induce them to love and serve him who has thus chosen them, *that they should be holy and without blame before him in love*, than this knowledge of their election. And others, who have not this knowledge, can never, in the present life, know that they are not elected; and therefore, cannot justly plead that this doctrine has any tendency to discourage them. If they understand it, and rightly improve it, it will have a quite opposite effect on them. Some are appointed to salvation, therefore, some shall obtain it; and every one may say, Why not I? Therefore I will seek it.

IV. If any allege, that all things being fixed by the decree of God, they need not use means: the answer to be given to this wicked and unreasonable objection is, That God hath indeed decreed whatsoever comes to pass: all things are as they are, because he decreed that so they should be. This all must confess, or find out some other

first cause of things, beside God. *The number of our days, the bounds of our habitation, our going out and coming in, our lying down and rising up,* with every circumstance of our life, are all absolutely fixed in the eternal and unalterable decree of God. He foreknew all things, and he foreknew them, because he decreed that they should be; yet the belief of this truth does not make us neglect the use of means for obtaining the ends we have in view in the ordinary business of our stations; and no more should it make us neglect to seek, in the use of appointed means, salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. The means and the end are inseparably joined in the decree of God; seeking salvation is the way to obtain it; neglecting to seek it, is the way to destruction.

V. We testify against all who, denying that election is *particular, certain, and wholly of grace*, teach, That it is *general*, of whosoever shall repent and believe; that it is *according to the works of men*, God having chosen such as he foresaw would distinguish themselves from the rest of mankind by a better improvement of the means of grace; and that it is *uncertain*, it being, according to the teachers of this error, possible that the elect may totally and finally apostatize from that faith and holiness, upon condition of perseverance in which, it is alleged, they were chosen to eternal life. These errors we abhor; as, by asserting them, men deny God the glory due to his name, and give it to creatures. These errors, so flattering to human pride, but so contrary to the word of God, began to spread in the Reformed churches about the beginning of the last century. They have ever since been working like a deadly poison, less or more, in all of them, and have prevailed to the great hurt of Christianity, yea, almost to its destruction in some of them.

VI. We do also testify against those who, though they do not oppose the received doctrine of the Protestant churches concerning predestination, yet allege, that it is not safe nor profitable to teach it; as if men were wiser than God; as if what he hath expressed in his word were to be kept a secret; or as if the abuse of any article of Scripture doctrine were a just reason for concealing it. The whole doctrine of the salvation of sinners by free grace, through Jesus Christ, is intimately and inseparably connected with the decree of God choosing them to salvation, not according to any foreseen merit of theirs, but according to his

good pleasure. And if this election of grace is not either plainly asserted, or considered as unquestionably true, the gospel cannot be preached; these questions cannot be asked, as a reproof to human pride. *O man who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou which thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?** nor can that song be sung in the church, *Not unto us, not unto our free will, not unto our good inclinations, but unto thy free grace, unto thy good will, O Lord, be the glory.*

ARTICLE IV. *Of Providence.*

I. We believe that the providence of God extendeth unto, and is concerned about, all things. The Lord who made does also uphold, rule, and, according to the counsel of his own will, order, the whole universe: a *sparrow falls not to the ground* unnoticed by him: *He numbereth even the hairs of our head.*

II. As to what some have called the certain and fixed laws of nature, they are no more than the usual methods by which the Lord makes one thing instrumental in effecting another. He works by means, without means, or contrary to ordinary means, as seemeth good in his sight. As to what is called *chance*, strictly speaking, there is no such thing: those events, which seem most accidental to us, are all wisely and justly ordered by the Most High. He puts down one, and sets up another; and not only does he raise up or cast down the mighty, but he takes notice of the smallest things, *he feeds the ravens.*

III. We do, therefore, testify against those who deny a particular providence; and against those who teach that the universe is like a clock or machine, which being once set a going by the hand of its maker, requires no more attention; and who affirm, that the constitution given to the world in its creation, necessarily produced every event and circumstance which have since or may afterwards take place in it, without the least concern or agency of the Creator. These errors are so plainly condemned by the whole doctrine and history of the Scripture, that no one who truly believes it, can be ensnared by them. They are not new errors; some of old maintained them, saying, *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil: The Lord seeth*

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

*not, neither doth the God of Jacob regard what is done. And the Holy Spirit describes these persons as the brutish among the people; more stupid than the greater part even of the wicked: and concerning such it is threatened, that their insensibility shall be removed by swift destruction from the Almighty; because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.**

ARTICLE V. *Of the Covenant of Works.*

I. God, having created man after his own image, capable of knowing, serving, and enjoying him, gave him a promise of a blessed and eternal life, upon condition of his perfect obedience to the divine law, threatening death as a just and necessary punishment of disobedience; by which death was meant, not only the dissolution of his bodily frame, but everlasting destruction, which consists in being cast out from the gracious presence of the Lord, and buried in hell under his wrath. The Lord made trial of man's obedience by a positive precept, (and by one which it was very easy to keep) allowing him to eat of every tree of the garden of Eden, where he was placed, except *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*, and intimating to him, *that in the day he ate of it, he should surely die*; a threatening, which, upon his transgression was verified, he dying spiritually as soon as he had sinned, and becoming liable to death in its utmost extent. To this, man undoubtedly agreed; the Lord proposed nothing but what was just and good; and it was impossible for man, in his upright state, to hesitate one moment about giving his consent. The words of Eve to the serpent, at first alleging the command of God against eating the forbidden fruit, plainly shew, that our first parents considered themselves as under the engagement which the Lord had proposed to them.

II. This transaction between God and man may be called *a covenant*. There was a promise, a condition, a penalty; and, it cannot be denied, an agreement on man's part to what God proposed. And though the life promised in this covenant was a reward far higher than the obedience of any creature could merit; yet, seeing the Lord, abundant in goodness and truth, promised life as the reward of man's obedience, it may justly be called *a covenant of works*.

* Psalm xxviii. 5.

III. We also believe, that in this covenant, Adam was the representative of his posterity, with whom they were to stand or fall, as he stood or fell. Of this we are convinced; by the comparison the holy Spirit again and again makes between the first man Adam, and our Lord Jesus Christ; declaring, *that as they all died in the one, so were all made alive in the other, that as, by the one, sin and death entered into the world, so, by the other, righteousness and life entered; and that, as, by the offence of the one many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of the other, many were made righteous;** which can only refer to the dying or living, the making sinners, or the making righteous, of those whom each of them did, as a public person, and as a covenant-head, represent.

IV. We do, therefore, reject the opinion of those who affirm, that there was no covenant made with Adam, or that he was not the representative of his posterity. This error is designed to prepare the way for denying original sin, and for perverting the whole order of redemption.

ARTICLE VI. *Of Man in his Fallen Estate.*

I. We acknowledge, that though man was made upright, yet, being left to act freely according to his own will, and, as a creature, being liable to change, he transgressed the covenant God had made with him; and this first man Adam being the representative of his posterity, we sinned and fell in him, and are now in our natural state, under the guilt of Adam's transgression, under the curse due to it, and liable to the eternal wrath threatened as its just punishment. *By one man's disobedience many were made sinners; not merely taught by his example to sin, not merely disposed to commit sin by having a corrupt nature transmitted from him to them; but made or constituted sinners, the guilt of this one man, their representative being imputed to them, or by the law accounted theirs.*

II. We also acknowledge, that we, being by nature *dead in trespasses and sins*, are as unable of ourselves to do any work truly good and acceptable to God, as those dead whom we see laid in the grave, are unable of themselves to rise and perform the works of the living. This depravation of our nature we confess to be the spring of all actual transgression. *The tree being evil, the fruit cannot be*

* Rom. v. 19.

good; nor can a *corrupt fountain* send forth any but bitter streams. *Every imagination of the heart of man, till changed by grace, is evil, from his youth evil, only evil, and continually evil; and it must be so; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?*

III. We do, moreover, acknowledge, that a sense of guilt, working in fallen unrenewed men a fear of God's wrath, their wicked minds are filled with enmity against him; and the more clearly they discern the holiness of his law, the extent of his commandments, and the righteous severity of its threatenings, this enmity of the heart becomes the more violent. Thus the *law, which is holy, just, and good*, and which shewed to innocent man an attainable and a plain path of life, is so far from leading fallen man to life, that his corruption takes occasion from it to work more vehemently. The more closely and plainly the law is urged on the conscience, the more does the rebellion of his heart against God, the law-giver, display itself in hatred at the holy commandment. The law is, however, to be preached to sinners along with the gospel. They who continue under it must hear what it saith to them, that they may be convinced of their inability to answer its demands: that they may see how dreadful their condition is; and that they, thus killed by the law, may be persuaded to listen to the gospel, which manifesteth Jesus Christ, the Saviour. *as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

IV. We do therefore testify against those who teach that there is no such thing as original sin; or that, if there be, it consists only in the want of that righteousness in which man was created; or, at most, in the depravation of our nature, not in our guilt by the imputation of Adam's first transgression to us his posterity. This error is designed to prepare the way for denying the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us for our justification before God. We also testify against all who teach, that we have suffered so very little by the fall, that it is in our own power, by the help of the external means given us, to repair our loss; and who deny that there is any absolute need of the all-powerful influence of the spirit and grace of God to renew us, and to work in us to will and to do that which is well-pleasing in his sight. Such we account deceivers, who would lead us away from Jesus Christ, the Lord who healeth us. *We have destroyed ourselves, but in him is our help.*

ARTICLE VII. *Of the Obligation of the Covenant of Works on Men in their Natural State.*

I. We do also acknowledge, as a truth plainly taught in the word of God, and necessarily connected with what we have already declared, that all men in their natural estate, are under the law given to Adam, and under it in the same form in which it was given to him, *viz.* that of a covenant of works. This law being as to the matter or substance of it, written on man's heart in creation, was afterwards expressed in the ten commandments given at Sinai, to put Israel in mind of their duty; to convince them of the absolute impossibility of obtaining acceptance before God by their obedience, seeing they came so far short of what was required; and to excite them to look by faith through the veil of the ceremonies and sacrifices which God then appointed in the church, to the promised Messiah, the salvation of Israel. And this law is the perpetual and unalterable rule of righteousness, particularly of the duty we owe to God, and to one another. Under it, in some form, all men must be; and men in their natural state can be under it in no other form than that in which they originally were in their first head. Though they fail in their duty, they are still bound to it; and bound to it under the same penalty and threatening of death as ever; *the promise of life still remains to the man who doth these things* which the law requires—*he shall live by them.* If any could satisfy the law for their offences, and fulfil whatever it commands, they would be accepted and declared righteous by God, the law-giver. But no one can do this. *By the deeds of the law*, that is, by such deeds as men are now able to perform in obedience to the law, *shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God.*

II. That men, in their natural state, are universally under a law, cannot be denied by any who believe the Scriptures, in which this is so often and so plainly asserted; and that this is not the ceremonial law, nor yet the moral law, merely as a rule of righteousness, is no less unquestionable. The ceremonial law extended to the Jews only; did not stop every mouth nor declare the whole world guilty before God. It is said concerning the law which men in their natural state are under, that *as many as are of its works*, that is, as many as adhere to it, and continue sub-

ject to it, *are under the curse*. This cannot be said of the ceremonial law; many who lived and died under it, were blessed of God and precious in his sight: It never brought any under the curse, except when they, not understanding the design of it, adhered to it as a part of the covenant of works, seeking life by their obedience to it; not by Christ to whom it directed them. Nor can it be said, that as *many as are under the law*, as a rule of righteousness, *are under the curse*; if they were, no rational creature could be delivered from the curse, without their obligation to love and serve God becoming void, which is impossible. Thus the law under which men in their natural state are, is neither a new law which God has given them since the fall, nor the law given to Adam published in any new form. All stand where he left them, till they are brought into a new state by our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. It is not the proclamation of the gospel, but the receiving that salvation offered in it, which sets men free from the law as a covenant, which may be thus illustrated: If a creditor direct his debtor to a surety who is able and willing to fulfil his engagements for him, yet if the debtor, though unable to pay, and bound in duty to follow the direction given him, be so obstinate and foolish as to refuse to employ the surety, he, in that case, remains under the same engagements as before; it is not the creditor's offer to deal with him by a surety, but his acceptance of the offer, that would set him free. Moreover, if there is any promise made to this debtor of some good thing which he should have, upon fulfilling his engagements, still, upon the performance of the condition, it would become due to him. It is our duty to lay hold on the covenant of grace, which the Lord proclaims to us, but if we refuse, we thereby avow our adherence to the covenant of works, declaring that we will seek life according to it only. Thus, to the unbelieving, the obligation of the covenant of works is far from being made void by the revelation of the covenant of grace.

IV. We do, therefore, reject the opinion of those who teach, that men, in their natural state, are not under the same covenant made with Adam, and debtors to do the whole law. The design of this error is, first, to prepare the way for denying the satisfaction of Christ; and, next, for introducing, into the place of the gospel, a new law, prescribing terms of acceptance with God, which are said

to be easier and better adapted to our fallen state than those of the first covenant. And we maintain that the Lord never did, nor ever will, accommodate his law to the sinful weakness of men; it being inconsistent with his holy nature to require less than a perfect obedience, or a loving him *with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves*: And besides, no accommodation of God's law to our weakness would avail, since our endeavours in our fallen state, to keep the least of God's commandments, are attended with such imperfections, as, in themselves, deserve eternal death.

ARTICLE VIII. *Of the Suretyship and Satisfaction of Christ.*

I. We believe that Jesus Christ, our surety, was made under the law which Adam broke, and which all men in their natural state are under, otherwise it could not be said that *he was made under the law to redeem them who are under the law*,* he came not only, or chiefly, to redeem the Jews from the burden of the ceremonial law, but to redeem both Jews and Gentiles from the curse of that law or covenant of works, which extends to all the human race in their natural state, and condemns them all to death, they being, without exception, transgressors of it. The Gentiles were, in no sense, under the ceremonial law. But Christ was made under the law, and made a curse for all whom he redeemed, that he might redeem them all from the curse of the law; without an interest in which redemption, neither Jews nor Gentiles could *receive the adoption of sons*.

II. Further, as those whom our Lord Jesus represented, owed both a debt of obedience and of suffering, neither of which they were able to pay, he, according to his engagement, paid both for them. It became him to fulfil all righteousness in the place of his people. All that was required, he, as their surety, performed. He left no one demand, which the law-covenant had upon them, unanswered. Thus all he did and suffered, from the time he was made manifest in the flesh, till he yielded up his spirit on the cross, was done and suffered, not merely on our account, or for our good, but *in our place*, by him as our *representative and surety*: and his whole righteousness con-

* Gal. iv. 4, 5.

sisting in his obedience even unto death, is imputed to believers for their justification before God; that is, it is accounted theirs as much as if they had performed it in their own persons. As, among men, the payment of a debt by a surety, is accounted by the law his payment for whom it was made; so Christ, by his obedience unto death, obtained for us not merely deliverance from wrath, but an heavenly inheritance, with all the blessings we need to render us meet for it, or to bring us forward to the enjoyment of it. *In him we are complete; he is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.**

III. Believing that this is the doctrine taught in the Scriptures of truth, and that the very existence of the Christian church depends upon holding it fast, and improving it, in drawing nigh unto God as reconciled to us in Christ, we testify against the following errors: First, That whatever Christ did and suffered was indeed on our account, and for our good, in as much as thereby he set us an example of holiness and patience, and attested to us the truth of the doctrine he taught, by dying for it; but that he did not obey and suffer in our place, and as our surety. This error manifestly contradicts the Scripture, which assures us, that Christ came *to give his life a ransom for many; that he is a propitiation for our sins; and that he, the Just, suffered for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.* It degrades our Lord Jesus Christ from the character of a Saviour to that of an eminent teacher, and places him on a level with the prophets, apostles, and other servants of God; who did also, in their lives, set us an example of holiness and patience, though not perfect like that of Christ, and attested the truth of the doctrine they taught, by dying as witnesses for it. Thus, what they did and suffered was on account of the church, and for its good: but never any of them were, what Christ is, the SAVIOUR of the church. Secondly, That Christ made a perfect satisfaction for none, but a general satisfaction for all; in consequence of which God, though fully reconciled to none, is willing to be reconciled to all or any who come to the terms of that which the teachers of this error call the *new law*, or gospel-covenant; but which may, with greater propriety, be called a new covenant of works devised by men, but utterly unknown in the revelation which God has given us of his will. Thirdly, That the

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

satisfaction which Christ made for us, consisted wholly in his sufferings, not in his active obedience to the law. The Scriptures make no such distinction; therefore we reject all opinions founded upon it, as doctrines of men. Christ was *made under the law*, not for himself, but solely for us. He is said to *have taken our infirmities* upon himself, and to *have borne our sickness*, while, in his active obedience to the law, he was serving God, and doing offices of kindness to mankind in healing their diseases. If his death is sometimes mentioned as expressing the whole of what he did for us, it is because it was the most remarkable and finishing part of his obedience. He did not merely take away our sins, but by his perfect righteousness, comprehending his conformity to the law, in nature, heart, and life, he obtained that we should *live and reign with him*; less than this could not have removed the curse, and opened the path of life to us.

ARTICLE IX. *Of the Extent of Redemption;*

I. Our Lord Jesus Christ was a representative and surety for the elect only, he died for them only, and for none else in any respect; and all for whom he died shall infallibly be saved. God is just, and will not require double payment for the same debt: had satisfaction been made by Christ for the sins of all men, none would have perished under the curse; death, the wages of sin, would not have been due to any, if Christ had suffered it for the whole human race. Our Lord Jesus himself tells us, *that he laid down his life for his sheep; that he knew who they were; that they should all hear his voice, that is, acknowledge him as the good shepherd of their souls; that he would give them eternal life; and that they should never perish; nor any pluck them out of his hand.** He also declares, *that they were given him by the Father, adding, that all who were thus given him should certainly come to him.* Nothing can be more evident, than that these assertions of our Lord concerning his sheep, express what is peculiar to a chosen number, and not what is applicable to the whole of mankind.

II. *God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.†* And shall that

* John x. 27, 28

† Rom. v. 8

love have no further effects on those for whom Christ died? Another text may serve as an answer to that question: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?** Yes, surely he will send the Holy Spirit to put us in possession of the benefits which flow from the death of Christ. That free love which gave Christ to die for sinners, will make all for whom he died, through the gift of his righteousness, and through the communication of his quickening Spirit, to reign in life by him and with him; for if, *when they were enemies, they were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, they shall be saved by his life.†*

III. When Christ is said to have *died for all*, and to be *a propitiation for the whole world*, these expressions are to be understood in a limited sense, (as they most certainly are to be understood in other passages of Scripture,) not as signifying that Christ died for every individual of mankind, or for every man in the whole world, but that he died for all the elect; for the whole world of the redeemed; for all of every nation, kindred and language, who belong to the election of grace; and that God hath set him forth to be *a propitiation, through faith in his blood*, to sinners of every description. We do not wrest the Scripture, while we thus explain what is more obscure in some texts by others where the matter in question is more expressly taught.

IV. Election, redemption, intercession, and eternal salvation, are inseparable, or of equal extent. He who has an interest in any one of these, has an interest in the whole. Christ's dying for sinners, is a manifestation of his love to them, which had no beginning, and will have no end. We do, therefore, testify against those who teach, that, though Christ died, in a special manner, for those who are saved, yet he died, in some sense, for those *who perish*. The Scripture makes no such distinction: the *some sense* which they plead for, has either no meaning, or else leads to other dangerous errors. We do also testify against the more common error of those who teach, that the death of Christ was not particularly intended for the redemption of any; but that the design of his death was to render salvation equally attainable to all. This error, like others, is designed to prepare the way for that scheme of doctrine,

* Rom. viii. 32.

† Rom. v. 10.

whereby men are taught, that the power of believing, repenting, and yielding sincere obedience, having by the death of Christ, been obtained for all, God will save them upon condition of their duly exercising that power. Thus, that error proves a removing from the grace of Christ to another gospel, which is not indeed the gospel, but bears so much of a resemblance to it, as may deceive the simple.

V. We do also reject the opinion of those who teach, that Christ did, by his death, purchase the benefits of this life, which are common to all men. For all the blessings purchased by Christ, are of that nature, that the Holy Spirit only can make us partakers of them; and they can be actively received by faith only, and they are ever described as such in the Scriptures. The common benefits of life are, we believe, given to the reprobate, as meat, drink, and clothing are given to criminals, lying under sentence of death, not to be put in execution till an appointed time. With regard to the elect, God preserves them in life, though wicked, and abusers of his common bounty, till the time of their conversion; and then being brought into his covenant of grace, as his blessing rests on them, so what provision they need for their outward state is given to them as to children, free from that curse which is upon *the basket and store of the wicked*; and thus all the good that is in these benefits to believers, flows from the death of Christ; the same provision might have been given them, though he had never died for them; but not with the same gracious design of the giver, nor with the same blessing attending it to them.

ARTICLE X. *Of the Gospel, and of the difference between it and the Law.*

I. We declare that the gospel, in the strict sense of the word, contains no commands nor threatenings, being only a promise of grace to sinners through Jesus Christ, or *glad tidings of great joy*, whereby God proclaims to us, that *he hath sent his son to save us; that whosoever believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation*; and that every one is warranted to believe on him, he being come to save sinners; the *chief* of whom applying to him, need not fear that he will reject them.

II. All *commands* belong to the law; those which enjoin faith, repentance, and other duties peculiar to men

under a dispensation of grace, not excepted. Disobedience to these commands is a sin which the law condemns: this it could not do, if they did not belong to it; for where there is no law, there is no transgression. Neither do these commands belong to any new law given since the fall. New revelations have been made to men, and duties have been required of them, agreeable to the Lord's dispensation towards them, and agreeable to the circumstances in which they stood as fallen and guilty, or as redeemed and saved; but no new law has been given them, for the first was perfect, and required obedience to God in all things and for ever. The law given to Adam enjoined every duty required of us now, in as much as it bound him and his posterity to believe not only what God had then revealed, but every thing which he might afterwards reveal; and to obey not only what God had then commanded, but every thing which he might afterwards command.

III. The law is subservient to the gospel, and therefore to be preached along with it. *By the law is the knowledge of sin.* It is useful for convincing sinners that they need salvation. It is useful for shewing believers what they deserve, and what they owe to God, rich in mercy, who sent forth his Son made under the law to redeem them from its curse. It is useful for teaching all, what fear, love, and service, the Lord requires of them. When our Lord gave his apostles a commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel, he intended that they should preach every article of revealed truth, the design of the whole being the same, viz. to lead sinners to him for that salvation which they so much need, and to shew them how, having received it, they should walk worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing, fruitful in every work, that he may be glorified in them and by them. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, being thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* Thus, every article of scripture-truth, being intimately connected with the gospel, and subservient to it, the whole may be, and justly is called the gospel; yet the law, taken by itself, is not the gospel, but is distinct from it. It is necessary to observe this distinction, lest we confound things that are so extremely opposite to one another.

IV. Though the law be taught, as it is expressed in the

word of God, yet if the design for which it is there recorded by the Holy Spirit, be neglected; if men are directed to seek eternal life by their obedience to it, and not warned to flee from it, as a covenant of works, to Christ the Saviour, the gospel is by such teachers thrust out of the church: to them who receive such doctrine, *Christ is become of none effect; seeking justification by the law, they avow an opposition to the grace of God manifested in him.*

V. We testify, particularly, against those who teach, that the gospel is a new law, having commands and threatenings peculiar to itself, and distinct from those which belong to the law given to Adam. This error subverts both the law and the gospel—the law; as it puts an imperfect law in the place of that holy law which God hath given us, and an imperfect obedience in the place of that perfect righteousness which his law requires—the gospel; as, according to the teachers of this error, it is no more the glorious gospel of the free grace of God, but a new law of works, prescribing conditions to be performed by men, upon the performance of which, they may claim eternal life as a reward, *not of grace, but of debt.* If salvation is *of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise grace is no more grace:* but if it be, as it verily is, *of grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise work is no more work.** These two ways of seeking salvation are opposite to one another: there is no reconciling them. If our works are in any degree the procuring cause of salvation, that distinguishing grace of God which plucks some brands out of the burning, while others are left to perish, has no share in it.

ARTICLE XI. *Of the universal offer of Salvation made in the Gospel.*

I. We believe that a free and unlimited offer is made, of salvation through Christ, to all who hear the gospel; and that this offer is not made upon a supposition of Christ's having died for all mankind, but by virtue of the commission which God has given, *to preach the gospel to every creature;*† that is, to every sinner of the human race, without exception. To preach the gospel is to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, as a message from God to fallen men. It is to tell them, that salvation is sent to them;

* Rom. xi. 6.

† Mark xvi. 15.

that *all things are ready*: here is a Saviour for them; forgiveness of sins for them; eternal life for them: all a free gift; which the most vile and unworthy may, without hesitation, and without fear of presumption, instantly receive and claim as theirs. Farther, sinners are to be told, that it is vain for them to delay, thinking they shall make some better preparations for coming to Christ. He requires them to come guilty and vile as they are; he receiveth such. *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that he came to save sinners.* Moreover, all such attempts of sinners to make themselves better, do not only fail of success, but while they delay coming to Christ the roll of their iniquities is increasing; they are *resisting the counsel of God*; and are every moment in danger of hell; destruction is hanging over their heads, and may fall on them in an hour when they think not of it. *He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him.**

II. If any object, That seeing some were before ordained to condemnation, were not redeemed by the death of Christ, and shall never believe, how then shall any man know whether the Lord intends him in the universal offer of salvation? The answer to be given is, the Lord intends all who hear the gospel, in telling them what is their duty: *This is the work of God*; the work which he commands and approves; *that we believe on him whom he hath sent.†* It is also a truth, *that whosoever believeth shall be saved.* As to *secret things*, they belong to the Lord our God, but *those things which are revealed, to us.‡* Never did any man accept this offer from an assurance given him before he accepted it, that he was ordained to life; for of this no one can be assured till it be made manifest by his faith. On the other hand, never did any man reject this offer, from an assurance given him before he rejected it, that he was ordained to condemnation; for of this no one can be assured, till he is cast into that prison, out of which there is no redemption. They who refuse the salvation offered in the gospel, are not moved to refuse it from this consideration, that they are not elected, or that Christ died not for them; since this is what they do not know. But they are moved to refuse it, by the enmity of their hearts against God; particularly by their deep-rooted aversion to salvation by free grace, through Jesus Christ, *who gave*

* John xiii. 13, 36.

† John vi. 29.

‡ Deut. xxix. 29.

himself for us, that he might redeem men from all iniquity. To be saved by grace is displeasing to their pride; to be saved unto holiness is displeasing to their carnality. They are also moved to reject this salvation, through that ignorance of it which prevails in all the haters of it. They are not careful to understand what they despise; and they are not of themselves able to learn. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.** Thus, none perish who hear the gospel, but through their own positive rejection of the counsel of God: it is not because Christ will not receive them, but because they *will not come to him*, that they fail of obtaining salvation. *No man, says our Lord, can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him.†* But why can no man come? What stands in the way?—Nothing. The way is open; but none, of themselves, are willing to come. The complaint our Lord brought against the Jews, *I will not come unto me, that ye might have life,‡* lies against all men, acting according to their natural principles and inclinations. Comparing the texts now mentioned, it is manifest, that our inability to come to Christ, or, in other words, to accept the offer of salvation, arises from the blindness and perverseness of our own minds. The consideration of these things should humble us, and put us on our guard against casting the blame of our unbelief on God. Are some ordained to condemnation? *Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into God's rest, any of us should seem to come short of it through unbelief.§* If we lay hold on the promise of God, which is declared as a ground of faith to all, in the gospel, we shall not find ourselves left out of the number ordained to eternal life. *Him that cometh to me, says our Lord Jesus, I will in no wise cast out.¶*

III. That the offer of salvation is to all who hear the gospel, will be found a truth by those who reject it. The Lord is now saying to them, *I will not come unto me that ye may have life.* Yet a little while, and to those who persevere in their obstinacy, he will say, *I would not come to me: Ye had an offer made you; I called, but ye refused. Ye would have none of me; therefore I do not acknowledge you as mine; depart from me, ye workers of*

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

§ Heb. iv. 1.

† John iv. 44.

¶ John iv. 37.

‡ John v. 40.

iniquity. Such will be condemned, *because they believed not on the name of the Son of God.* This would make no part, far less the chief part, of the charge against them, if they had not been called to believe on his name.

IV. The Lord, in calling sinners to receive salvation, makes no exception of any class of them. He says to the *stout-hearted and far from righteousness, Hearken unto me, I bring near my righteousness, and my salvation shall not tarry.* He says to the foolish, who are spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not, *Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.** The Lord Christ, who is still speaking from heaven, is saying to those who, like the unbelieving Jews, are remarkable for their insensibility, *My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven;†* and to the lukewarm and proud, as he did to the Laodiceans, *I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that ye may be rich; white raiment, that ye may be clothed; and anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that ye may see:‡* ye are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and know not that ye are so; take all of me as a free gift:— *Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.§* His call does not find men willing, but his Spirit and grace, accompanying it, make them so. He speaks to the dead; and his glory is manifested in this, that his voice awakeneth to life: *The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.¶*

V. It is a truth, that none will ever believe in Christ till they are so far convinced of their sins, as to be persuaded that they need salvation from them. They who think they are whole, will also think that they need no physician. Their insensibility, however, does by no means render them improper objects of that call; which, through the blessing of the Lord, is useful to awake them; nor does it lessen the obligation they are under, by the divine command, *to believe on the name of Christ Jesus.*

VI. We testify against those who teach, that the offer of salvation, in the gospel, is made to none but awakened and penitent sinners; especially against those who teach,

* Isa. lv. 2, 3.

§ Rev. xxii. 17.

† John vi. 32.

‡ John v. 25.

‡ Rev. iii. 18.

that it is men's repentance, their desires of salvation, or some other supposed good thing in them, that gives them a right, or, as some speak, qualifies them to come to Christ; and that sinners must not come to Christ, nor be exhorted to come to him, till they be prepared for receiving him.—The teachers of this error contradict the glorious gospel of the Son of God, which directs us to come to him, as the diseased did in the days of his flesh, that *we may be healed*; not first to heal ourselves, and then to come to him. Men deceive themselves, imagining they have come to Christ, while they are yet far from him: and it is necessary, in preaching the gospel, to lay open their deceit, and to warn them of their danger; but surely they cannot fly too speedily *for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.*

ARTICLE XII. *Of the Condition of the Covenant of Grace.*

I. We believe, that the new covenant, otherwise called the covenant of grace, being made with Christ, as the representative and surety of the elect, the condition of it was his perfect obedience to all that the law required of him in that character. Now the law required, that its precepts should be obeyed; that satisfaction should be made for the transgressions committed against it; and that both this obedience and satisfaction should proceed from a willing mind, from pure love to God, and from a supreme regard to his glory. Thus the condition of that covenant is justly said to be the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The law required righteousness of heart, righteousness of life, and righteousness in satisfying for offences: And he answered all its demands in the place of those whom he represented: to them this covenant, therefore, consists only of free and gracious promises. When God brings the elect actually into this covenant, no condition is required to give them a right to the blessings of it; he says to them, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people*: and he powerfully moves their hearts to say AMEN, *Be it, O Lord, according to thy word; Behold we come to thee; we trust in thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* The faith, by which they so speak, and by which they take hold of this covenant is not and cannot properly be called a condition of it: only there is such necessary connection between faith and salvation, as there is between the receiving and enjoy-

ing of a gift. Faith, which is expressed in the Scripture, by *taking, receiving,* and other such designations, is itself the gift of God, is wrought in the heart by his Holy Spirit, and is exercised only as the Spirit strengthens us. He does not give us a certain degree of power enabling us to believe, and then leave us to improve that power the best way we can. No. He is the *author and finisher of faith;* the beginning, the exercise, and the increase of it, are all from him; it is the effect of his grace, and the work of his Spirit. The promise of faith belongs to the glad tidings of salvation. *Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness, and in him have I strength.*—A willing people shall come to him, viz. believe on him; in the day of his power.* If faith were not comprehended in the promise, let the other blessings contained in it be ever so great and manifold, they would signify nothing to us, they being suspended on a condition which we are not able to perform: for *no man can believe, except it be given him from above.*

II. We reckon it improper to speak of faith as being on our part, the condition of the new covenant. Good men who meant no prejudice to the doctrine of free grace have called it so. We would not, however, do any honour to their memory by adhering to their language in this matter, seeing it is liable to be, and actually is, used to subvert the truth. The believing sinner gives nothing, offers nothing of his own, as any way entitling him to favour; claims no blessings as due to him on account of any thing he has done or can do. He comes as poor and needy, guilty and vile, giving himself to Christ to be washed, justified, and sanctified by him; claiming all blessing as a free gift offered to him in the gospel, as obtained for him solely by Christ *in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.†*

ARTICLE XIII. *Of Faith.*

I. We maintain, that true faith is a receiving the testimony of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, not merely as true, but as his testimony to us. It is a *receiving of Christ.* But how can we receive him, if not as given to us, and as our Saviour? It is a *trusting in him.* But how shall we trust in him, unless we are assured that

* Isa. xlv. 24.

† Ephes. i. 7.

he will help us? It is a *flying to him for refuge*. But how can we fly to him for refuge, unless we are assured that we shall find safety in him? He does not call us to come to him hesitating and doubting, whether he will receive us; so far as such hesitation and doubts prevail, so far unbelief, not faith prevails. The language of the gospel is, *I am your God*; the answer of faith is, *We are thy people*. *The promise is to you*, saith the Lord; the answer of faith is, We receive and believe it, as the word of him who cannot lie. It is to be observed, that it is not merely said, the promise is true; but *the promise is to you*. And if it be not believed as a promise to us, the truth of him who speaks is denied. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son: And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.**— Thus, there is no way left for gospel-hearers to perish, but by a positive denial of the faithfulness of the Holy One of Israel.

II. Every one knows that human faith is believing a human testimony. If any man should tell us that he forgave us a debt we owed him, and certain injuries we had done to him; and besides, that he made us a gift of an inheritance; if we really believed him, would we not believe the debt forgiven, the man reconciled to us, and the inheritance ours? Now, what else is divine faith, than believing a divine testimony? And what is our believing the gospel, but our believing God's testimony to us, that he forgives our sins, is reconciled to us, and gives us eternal life? Is the testimony of man worthy of more particular regard than that of God? It is most unreasonable to object, that we may be sure the man in the supposed case intends us a favour, but that we are not sure that God intends to make us partakers of salvation. The secret intention of the man, in the supposed case, must be unknown to us as well as the secret intention of God, in making the gospel-proclamation to us. In either case, it is only what is declared or revealed to us, that we have to do with. The Lord speaks to all; and none who believe him as speaking to them, shall be disappointed.

III. The faith of this, that Christ is able to save all, and willing to save some, is no more than what every one must have, who really believes the truth of the Scriptures; yet

* 1 John x. 10, 11.

this is a faith which wicked men and devils may have. But the great inquiry of an awakened sinner is this, Is God speaking in the promise to me? Is there forgiveness with God for me? And till the Holy Spirit persuades him that these questions ought to be answered in the affirmative, he can have no rest in his mind. The poor jailor might have continued in his fears, had he not received the gospel which Paul preached, as a message from God, particularly directed to him; which message is as particularly directed to every one that hears it, viz. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.**

IV. Faith is often weak. The body of death is often very strong in Christians. Hence their unbelief speaks louder than their faith, and they are disquieted with fears. Sometimes they are careless, and sunk in a kind of spiritual sleep; so that they are not much concerned to have their weak faith strengthened; but as faith is, so will assurance be. Where the one is weak, the other will be weak. But still where the one is, there will the other be also. Faith contains, in its very nature, an assurance of the thing believed; and that which true faith believes, is, that God is reconciled to us in Christ.

V. This assurance, which is in faith, is very different from the assurance, that we are already partakers of grace and salvation. This last is an answer to the inquiry, made by one in self-examination, Am I a Christian? Is my faith of the true kind? Do the fruits of it manifest it to be that which is the distinguishing faith of God's elect? The assurance of faith, is an answer to the inquiry, Does God give eternal life, not to others only but to me? May I trust not only that Christ will save some, but that he will save me?

VI. We testify against all who deny, that any persuasion, assurance, or confidence, that we, in particular, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved, belongs to the nature of faith; and who affirm, that faith is only a persuasion that God is merciful in Christ; and that Christ is able and willing to save all who come to him: And who further affirm, that we must first come to Christ, and know that we are already true believers, before we can claim Christ as ours in particular; and who deny, that such a claim belongs to the nature of faith. What such describe as faith, is much the same with the general doubtful faith,

* Acts. xvi. 31.

once universally rejected by Protestants, and reckoned among the errors of the Popish church. It is to be lamented, that Protestants have not left the generation of antichrist in the sole possession of it.

ARTICLE XIV. *Of Repentance.*

I. We declare, that evangelical repentance is the fruit of faith. The word *repentance* does, in Scripture, sometimes express the whole of that change which takes place in the conversion of a sinner unto God; as, when it is said, *Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.** In this sense it comprehends faith in Christ, sorrow for sin, love to God, and a disposition to obey him. It is also used, in Scripture, to express that sense of guilt, and fear of wrath, which may be found in the unregenerate; as, when Judas is said to have repented. But the repentance, which is mentioned as a distinguishing gift of God to his people, and as different from faith, must, in the nature of things, follow after it.

II. All repentance flows from some kind of faith; and according to a man's faith, so will his repentance be. If he is only persuaded that sin is terrible in its consequences, as exposing the transgressor to the wrath of God; then he will only repent of sin, not as evil in itself, but as evil in its effects; he will still love sin, though he hate its wages. Again, if a man is persuaded that sin is evil, as being abominable in God's sight, and deforming to the soul, he will loath it, and hate it with a perfect hatred: he will hate the work, as well as the wages of iniquity. True repentance, being a *sorrow after a godly sort*, flows from love to God; but there is no love to him in the soul, till, by faith, we are in some degree persuaded of his reconciliation to us in Christ. Hence, we find true repentance described in Scripture as following a gracious change: *After that I was turned, I repented.†* Now there is no turning to the Lord but by faith. When he draws us, we, by faith, come unto him. Likewise, in Scripture, when the blessings of the new covenant are described, the Lord is first represented as giving a new heart and a new spirit to sinners; and then, it is said, *They shall loath themselves for their iniquities, and for their abominations.‡* Christ

* Matt. iv. 17.

† Jer. xxxi. 19.

‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

is exalted, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the forgiveness of sins.* We are therefore, to seek both from him by faith.

III. We do not, however, affirm, that faith is first given, and repentance some time afterward. Though in the nature of things, the one must go before the other; yet, the instant in which a sinner truly believes in Christ, he repents of his sins in a right manner. And we do likewise acknowledge that some kind of repentance may go before faith. The sinner must see that his sin is destroying him, before he thinks of applying to the Saviour. But this repentance is no distinguishing character of the people of God. It is such a repentance as is found in many who perish; and would be found in all of them, if their consciences were awakened.

IV. We testify against those who teach, that we may not come to Christ, nor trust in him for salvation, till we have first repented of our sins. This doctrine entangles the consciences of men, and tends to discourage them from coming to Christ; since, according to it, they must first know that their repentance is true, before they may venture to trust in him. It is irrational; as it is, upon the matter, directing men, first to heal themselves, and then to go to the physician. It is contrary to the Scripture; which directs sinners to go, by faith to Christ, for all they need; and which represents them as first looking to him *who was wounded for their transgressions, and then mourning after a godly sort.*†

ARTICLE XV. *Of the Freedom of Believers from the Law as a Covenant.*

I. We declare, that believers in Christ are delivered from the law as a covenant of works; he having fulfilled it in their stead, and redeemed them from its curse. No sooner do they become, by faith, interested in him, than they are delivered from its commanding power, so as they are no more under an obligation to obey its precepts, with this design, that, by their obedience, they may merit, eternal life; and from its condemning power, so that their sins do not any more render them liable to the death which it threatens. If any were under its commanding, they would be also under its condemning power; for, *it is written,*

* Acts v. 31.

† Zech. xii. 10.

*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.** Believers are not perfect in that holiness and righteousness of life which the law requires; they do not continue in all things which it commands, to do them, with that purity of heart, arden-
cy of love to God, and single regard to his glory, which it requires. Therefore, if under the commanding power of the law as a covenant, they would be under its curse.

II. The Spirit of God has taught us, that they who truly believe in Christ, are no more *under the law*, they being *dead* to it, and it to them. It would be blasphemy to understand this, of the law as a rule of righteousness: believers are not *without law to God, but under the law to Christ.*† The exceeding riches of grace, manifested in their salvation, instead of weakening, strengthens their obligations to love and serve God. They are *dead to the law*, not that they may wallow in sin, as the swine in the mire, but that they *may live unto God*: Now this living unto him is a living according to his holy law. Every transgression of this law, is, in itself, worthy of death; and believers, being always in this life imperfect in holiness, and often chargeable with very grievous iniquities, if God *should enter into judgment* with them, according to their works, they *could not stand* in his sight. Their safety does not lie in this, that they commit no iniquity, or that their iniquities are so small that God will not count these worthy of death; but in this, that God will not *mark iniquity against them*; all their sins, both before and after the day of their effectual calling, having been laid on Christ, and taken away by him.

III. The law from which believers in Christ are set free, cannot be merely the ceremonial law; for, this deliverance is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of believers in Christ: but it might have been said to the whole Gentile world, saints and sinners, *ye are not under the ceremonial law*. It is also a privilege common to all believers; but those of the Gentiles who believed in Christ, never needed deliverance from the ceremonial law, for this plain reason, that they were never under it. They *who are not under the law are under grace*; but millions, not under the ceremonial law, are *under the curse*. They *who are dead to the law, live unto God, and sin has no more the dominion over them.*‡ But many to whom the cere-

* Gal. iii. 10.

† Cor. ix. 21.

‡ Rom. vi. 11, 14.

monial law never extended, are enemies of righteousness; children of the devil, and servants of sin. By the coming of Christ, the ceremonial law was no longer binding; the design of it being answered, it ceased. The church was then called to behold Christ, not through a veil of ceremonies, but as *evidently set forth crucified*; and to behold, not the *shadows of good things to come*, but the good things themselves, which *many prophets and righteous men had desired to see, but saw not*. The dispersion of the Jews, and the destruction of the temple, rendered the observation of the ceremonial law as impracticable as it was useless. It may now be said to the whole world, *Ye are not under the ceremonial law*; but does the infallible consequence of that deliverance from the law, concerning which the apostle speaks, belong to all? May it be said to men without exception, *Ye are under grace, and sin shall not have dominion over you*? Verily, no.

IV. The law from which believers are delivered, is that law, by which neither they nor any one living can be justified in the sight of God; and this cannot be merely the ceremonial law; for it is the law according to which all moral actions are tried. Justification by it, and justification by grace, are considered as directly opposite the one to the other; and these two are represented, in Scripture, as comprehending every supposable way in which men may be justified. It must be *by the works of the law, or by grace*; and if one is justified, *not by the works of the law*, the Scripture has taught us to conclude that he is *justified by grace*. But if the ceremonial law only was meant, the Scripture reasoning would be very defective, as a third way of seeking justification, viz. by obedience to the moral law as a covenant of works, would remain unnoticed. The doctrine of justification by works is in no wise rejected by asserting, that the ceremonial law is of no more use; that we are not under it; and that we ought not to expect acceptance before God on account of our obedience to what it enjoined.

V. The law, from which believers in Christ are set free; is that by which the unbelieving Jews sought righteousness; and this was not merely the ceremonial law. Blind as these Jews were, they did not expect that they would be justified by their obedience to the ceremonial institutions only. Their error was, that they did not consider these as directing them to the Redeemer, but as shewing them how

they might obtain eternal life by their own works. Thus they confounded the ceremonial institutions with the moral law in its covenant form; and imagined, that by such an obedience as they could give to the whole of the moral and ceremonial precepts God had enjoined, they would be justified. The young man who came to our Lord, inquiring *what good thing he should do that he might inherit eternal life*,* had been seeking it in the same way as the other unconverted Jews; and he had been seeking it by obedience, not to the ceremonial law only, but to the moral. Paul, in his epistles, frequently speaks of the law as comprehending both the moral and ceremonial precepts, because, among the Jews, the word *law* was commonly understood in that comprehensive sense; and because, though the ceremonial institutions belonged to the gospel, as they served to manifest Christ, and to lead sinners to him; yet obedience to them was enjoined by that law first given to man, which is full and perfect, requiring obedience to God in all things which he shall command.

VI. The first adversaries of Christianity did not mistake the sense of Paul's words, though they calumniated his doctrine: they said, he made *void the law*, and taught men to *continue in sin*. Now, as the ceremonial law prescribed the times and manner of worship, in the Jewish church, not those moral duties which belong to the law as it extends to all men, they would not have had even a pretence for their accusations, had he only taught that men were not justified by their obedience to it, and were not under it. The ground of their quarrel against him evidently was, his teaching, that free grace abounds to sinners through Jesus Christ, and that *they are saved, not by works of righteousness which they have done* in obedience to any law, but according to the mercy of God. The reproaches cast on his doctrine are the very same with those cast on the doctrine of free grace at this present time. Our cause is the same with his, and our enemies borrow the weapons of their warfare from the same lying spirit, as his did. And Paul's answer shows us what reply we should make to such. He did not tell them, that they quite mistook the sense of his words, that in teaching the freedom of believers from the law, and in warning all against the vain attempt of seeking life by it, he meant the ceremonial law only; no, he asserted and vindicated the

* Matt. xix. 26, 38.

doctrine of free grace through Jesus Christ. *Do we, says he, make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.** How did he establish it? by preaching Christ as fulfilling it in our place, as redeeming us from its curse, and thus *redeeming us from all iniquity, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of those good works* which the law requires; the Lord, forming his people for himself, according to the holiness represented in his law, they shew forth his praise by conformity to it in their heart and life. We do not make void, but establish the law, while we declare it to be magnified by the perfect obedience of our Lord Jesus; while we adhere to it as the unalterable rule of righteousness, every transgression of which, if not satisfied for, by a surety, must be punished in the sinner; and while we maintain, that conformity to it is a chief part of our salvation, holiness being essential to happiness. We, therefore, testify against all who teach, that believers are still under the law as a covenant of works, or that the law from which they are, in Scripture, said to be delivered, is no other than the ceremonial law.

ARTICLE XVI. *Of the Motives and Ends of acceptable Obedience.*

I. We believe, that the hope of reward and fear of punishment are not, to the true Christian, the chief motives of obedience. The love of Christ constraineth him to live, not unto himself, but unto that Redeemer who died for him and rose again. The love of God being manifested to us in Christ, we love him who first loved us. We love his commandments, we love his service, and are moved by love to him, rather than by self-interest, to do those things which are pleasing in his sight. The obedience, of which the chief motives are the fear of hell and hope of reward, is not acceptable to God: because it is not a serving of him *in newness of spirit.*

II. As love to God is the chief motive, so the glory of his name is the chief or highest end of acceptable obedience. The law requires, that, as the glory of God is the most worthy and important end we can have in view, so we should make it our chief end in all our actions: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.† This*

* Rom. iii. 31.

† Mark xii. 31.

is the first, and it is the great commandment. The Lord never did, and never will, require less of any than what is expressed in this commandment. He will not give his glory to another, and therefore will never allow, that we should prefer our self-interest, or any thing else to it. But he has wisely and graciously ordered, that, in seeking his glory, we shall find our true interest; he bids not any serve him in vain. He is not, and will not be a debtor to us. We can add nothing to him. We may declare and shew forth, we cannot increase his glory. Our services, when acceptably performed, do, through his blessing, profit ourselves; they cannot profit him.

III. We, therefore, condemn the following propositions.

1. That the fear of punishment and the hope of reward, are the chief motives of a true Christian's obedience.—
2. That our self-interest, or happiness, is the chief or highest end of all virtuous and religious actions. These opinions are contrary to the Scriptures; which teach us, that we ought to serve God from love, as children do a father; not from fear, as slaves do a task-master; that loving him above all things, we should not be influenced in his services by selfish considerations; and that, *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God.**

ARTICLE XVII. *Of the Work of the Holy Spirit.*

I. We believe, that there is no inclination or motion towards any thing truly good, but an utter aversion to it, in fallen men, till the Holy Spirit begins a special and gracious work in them. The elect are, by nature, disobedient, as well as others, and as obstinate in their disobedience as any. The power which brings them to Christ, and subdues them to the obedience of faith, must be almighty, and irresistible in its operations. They, as others, say, *We will not come*: the Lord says, *Ie shall come*; and the exceeding greatness of divine power makes them yield. All that can be said, concerning the goodness of God, the blessedness of those who trust in him, and the misery of those who reject his counsel; though said in the most engaging, affecting, and persuasive manner possible, will be addressed to sinners in vain, unless the quickening Spirit awakes them to hear it.

*1 Cor. x. 31.

II. Though the Spirit draws sinners by an irresistible power, yet not by violence. He overcomes their obstinacy in a most sweet and gracious manner. He opens the ears to hear his voice; he opens the eyes to see *the exceeding riches of the grace of God, manifested in his kindness towards us through Jesus Christ*; he opens the heart to receive the truth in love. Thus the rebellious sinner becomes all willingness. He is overcome, or persuaded, by what may be called divine arguments. A divine light shines into his mind; and it has a transforming influence upon him: he is renewed in the whole man after the image of God. Seeing access to God through Jesus Christ, and being heartily pleased with God's everlasting covenant of mercy, he acquiesces in it as all his salvation, as comprehending all he desires.

III. This change, called in Scripture, a *being born again*, is different, not merely in the degrees of it, but in the very nature of it, from any change which may be effected by the common operations of the Spirit, on such as continue in unbelief. Believers are *created again in Christ Jesus*; others are not. They know Christ, however, imperfectly; others know him not. They love him; others hate him. They are the children of God; others are the children of the wicked one. They are made light in the Lord, others are darkness. They hate sin; others love it. They obey God; others are in rebellion against him. This change is not gradual, but instantaneous; all either have or have not passed from death to life; none are in a middle state. These convictions which may go before conversion, cannot properly be called a preparation for it; as they are of the very same kind with the conviction which may be found in those who perish.

IV. The Spirit of God works by the word; therefore, the spirit which leads men into opinions not taught in the word, and which does not teach them to consider the word as *a light to their feet*, as their guide, and their counsellor, and which moves them to despise and speak lightly of the word, is not the Holy Spirit of God, but the enemy of mankind, leading them captive at his pleasure.

V. We testify against those who teach, that there is a common grace given to them who are not saved, different only in degree, not in kind, from that grace given to the regenerate, by which they are enabled to believe, love, and obey God. This opinion evidently leads to deny that

there is such a thing as distinguishing grace, or any favour, bestowed on those who are saved, for which they ought to thank God as his peculiar gift to them. We also testify against the blasphemy of those, on the one hand, who, pretending to hold by the word, deny and ridicule the work of the Spirit, in opening, and applying it to the hearers of the gospel; and that of those, on the other hand, who, under pretence of magnifying the work of the Spirit, despise and neglect the word, by which he works in renewing and calling sinners, and in preparing believers for *the inheritance of the saints in light*.

ARTICLE XVIII. *Of the Perseverance of the Saints**

I. We believe, that the Lord will never leave nor forsake any of his saints, so as they shall totally or finally fall from that blessed state into which he brought them in the day of their conversion. He puts his *fear in their hearts*, and he will preserve it there. They are received into his family, to abide in it for ever. They are *heirs of an inheritance not only incorruptible* in itself, but reserved in heaven for them; and who are *kept by the power of God through faith unto that salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*; when they shall enter on the full possession of this inheritance. They are united to Christ, members of his spiritual body, and shall never be separated from it: he will present it entire to God, saying, *Behold I, and the children whom God has given me; and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. The Father who gave them to Christ is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of his Father's hand.* Their Redeemer, who is also God mighty to save, declares *they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand.** The love of God did not fix on them, on account of any good thing in them. And it will not be taken from them because of any evil in them. The Lord will, indeed, *visit their transgressions with the rod; and their iniquities with stripes.* But he will not punish them as a judge executing the sentence of the law on criminals: he will as a father correct them only *for their profit*.

II. This doctrine belongs to those consolations of God which are neither few nor small. The song, put in the

* John x. 28.

mouth of his saints, has this note in it, *The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever*: and each of them may say, *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever*. That this doctrine tends to make saints negligent in the study of holiness, and even to encourage them in wickedness, is one of the reproaches devised and spread by the enemy of all truth and righteousness. The faith of the Lord's unchangeable love, expressed towards us by bringing us into his everlasting covenant, is a most powerful motive to the study of holiness. It is when believers, failing in the exercise of faith, forget this love, that they fall into sin.

III. We do, therefore, testify against those who deny the perseverance of the saints, as guilty of wresting the Scripture. In it we read of some who once appeared to be saints, manifesting themselves to be what they always were, enemies to God, and still *in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity*. We read of some saints who fell into very grievous sins, yet the Lord did not utterly take his Holy Spirit from them, nor suffer their faith to fail; but we never read of any who once were, and afterwards ceased to be saints. They are all *in the hand* of their gracious Lord who has promised that *he will preserve them from all evil; that he will preserve their soul, and that he will preserve them for ever*. If he did not keep them, none of them would persevere in the way to heaven.

ARTICLE XIX. *Of the Imperfection of the Saints in this Life.*

I. We acknowledge, that all the saints are imperfect in this life. So much sin cleaves to their best services, that no one action any of them ever did could be approved, if tried by the pure and holy law of God. A body of death presses them down to the dust. Of this they are most deeply sensible, when the Lord makes the light of his countenance shine most brightly on their souls. It is then each of them cries, with exceeding earnestness, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?** And it is then, that, thanking God, who giveth them the victory, they press, with the greatest ardour, towards the mark of the prize of their high calling.

II. We do, therefore, condemn the pride and blasphemy of them who say they are perfect, and are not, but are liars.

* Rom. vii. 24, 25.

While they say, *they have no sin, they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them.* By their presumptuous boasting, we may know that they are not of God; and that they know neither the holiness of his law, nor the corruption of their own hearts. They carry a mark of their antichristian extraction on their forehead, and are self-deceivers. *Because they received not the love of the truth that they may be saved; God hath sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.**

ARTICLE XX. *Of the Eternity of Punishments.*

We believe what the Lord hath most expressly declared, *that the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction.*† They can make no proper satisfaction by their sufferings, for the offences they have committed against the infinitely holy Creator and Lord of the universe. Besides their wickedness, continuing in full strength, they are, under their sufferings, sinning still more. *Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation!*‡ They will be miserably deceived, who expect another such time, another such day of salvation, on the other side of death. As the tree falleth so it must lie. Those who die in their sins will remain under the curse for ever. *They shall be cast out into outer darkness.* No ray of hope will alleviate their torments: *their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.* We do, therefore, testify against the opinion of those who have formerly taught, and of those who now teach, that the wicked will, at length, be redeemed from the torments of hell—as plainly contrary to the word of God, and extremely pernicious to the souls of men.

* 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.

† 2 Thess. i. 9.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

PART THIRD.

Concerning the Order of the Church of Christ.ARTICLE I. *Of Separation from Corrupt Churches.*

I. WE believe it to be not only lawful, but expedient, to separate from a church which is not merely corrupt, but obstinate in apostacy; and especially from a church which is daily proceeding from one degree of it to another. We are commanded to *withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly*:* if, from every brother, certainly from a church or society of brethren who walk so. That there may be a walking disorderly with respect to our profession, is plain from the charge which Paul brought against Peter, and those other Jews who dissembled with him, about the necessity of adhering to the ceremonial law. Observing their dissimulation about an article of the doctrine of Christ, which they would not avow for of fear offending certain Jews, Paul declared *that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel*:† and if they had persisted in this disorderly walking, the rule before mentioned, which the Spirit directed him to give the church of Christ, would have obliged him to withdraw from them.

II. If it is objected, that there were many disorders, much of the leaven of corrupt doctrine, and not a few scandalous persons in the churches of Corinth, Galatia, Thyatira, and others, mentioned in the New Testament; and yet we do not find that any Christians separated from them. We answer, that such evils entering into a church, do, by no means, warrant us instantly to forsake it, and form ourselves into a new church-state. It is our duty, first, to labour as the Lord gives us ability and opportunity, for a reformation of abuses; and in this, we ought to be patient, as well as earnest. None of the churches referred

* 2 Thess. iii. 6.

† Gal. ii. 14.

to in the objection, had, for a long series of years, persisted in error and disorder, contemning all warnings and testimonies against their corruptions. The evils complained of in them were mostly such as had entered and spread through the negligence of church members; not such as were persisted in, and defended by the church as a body. The church of Corinth, though very disorderly, was not obstinate. By a comparison of the first and second epistles of Paul to that church, it appears, that his exhortations wrought a considerable reformation upon it. And we may reasonably conclude, that the admonitions given to the other churches mentioned, produced the like effects upon them. If they did not, the only way for the faithful to escape the plagues threatened, as the just punishment of these churches, if they should persist in apostasy, was to *come out from among them, and be separate*. And truly, had a number of upright, zealous Christians separated from the superstition, the corrupt doctrines, and the human inventions, which, soon after the death of the apostles, stained the glory of the primitive churches, the testimony of Jesus had never been so much lost and buried as it was under the reign of antichrist. The Lord, in his adorable wisdom and sovereignty, ordered it otherwise; but it is plain that it would have been the duty of Christians, first, to have testified against the corruptions which crept into the primitive churches; and if their testimony had been despised, and of no effect, as to removing the evils against which they testified, then it would have been their duty to have withdrawn from backsliders who refused to return. Thus, the conduct of Christians in the early ages of Christianity, is so far from being a convincing argument with us, to continue in the communion of churches after they are become very corrupt, and refuse to return from the evil of their ways, that we may justly consider it as furnishing us with an affecting example, of the danger of continuing in the communion of such churches.

III. If our sentiments respecting separation from corrupt churches seem more narrow than those expressed by some eminent and worthy men, who lived at or soon after the reformation, their authority does not move us; while we have the word of God on our side. We deny, however, that any proper argument can be drawn from their principles or practice against us. In their time, the Reformed churches were generally studying to go forward in

removing abuses; and there was a reasonable hope, that a more perfect reformation might be attained. But the case is now altered; the abuses then generally acknowledged, and the removal of which was expected, are, many of them, defended and pleaded for, as worthy to be continued. The doctrine of the Reformed church, then pure, is now grievously corrupted, and no hopes of reformation remains; while the most part are, like Laodicea, saying, *I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*;* and will not acknowledge their true character, which is the very reverse, nor hearken to the counsel given them by the Lord Jesus.

IV. We testify against those who teach, that we ought not to separate from any church because of its corruptions and its obstinacy in them; while we have just cause to believe that the ordinances of grace dispensed, are blessed of God as a means of saving sinners and edifying saints. This is as much as to say, that we ought not to separate from a corrupt church, as long as we are not assured that we leave no righteous person behind us in it; that we must continue in it till we are assured that it is become wholly a synagogue of Satan; and that we must let a church-state utterly perish, before we take any effectual measures for restoring it. We testify also against all those who hearkening to such teachers, continue in communion with churches in which the truth is denied, its enemies not censured, and the testimony of such as adhere to it suppressed or despised; especially against those who, after a door is opened, and a call given them, yet refuse to come out from such corrupt societies.

ARTICLE II. *Of Church Communion.*

I. We declare, that those only ought to be admitted to the communion of the church, who have a proper knowledge of the truth, make a faithful profession of it, and whose conversation and practice become the gospel.

II. First, as the knowledge of God manifested to us in Christ is essentially necessary to the exercise of faith, repentance, love, and new obedience: so the grossly ignorant, may be justly reckoned *wicked*; they *know not God*, and cannot *put their trust in him*. They know not Christ; *how can they believe in him?* They know not the *truth*,

* Rev. iii. 17, 18.

how can they profess it? Not able to discern the blessings signified and represented to us in the sacraments, they would only profane these holy ordinances, and hurt their own souls by partaking of them. They are, therefore, to be excluded from the communion of the church, till they be instructed concerning the Lord and head of that society, their own wretchedness, the riches of his grace, and the laws and ordinances of his house. What measure of knowledge may be absolutely necessary to render persons fit for admission, cannot be very particularly determined; only it must be such as, according to the word of God, is essential to the exercise of faith in him, as reconciled to us in Christ. Due consideration is to be had of the natural abilities of different persons, of the opportunities which have been afforded them for receiving instruction, and of the capacity they have to express what they know.

III. Secondly, a faithful profession of the truth is necessary, to give persons a right of admission to the communion of the church. The Lord alone, who knoweth the hearts of all, knows whether men's profession is sincere as to the motives of it; but the church may know whether it be according to the word, as to the matter of it; that is, whether it be full, particular, and open:—*Full*, no part of the testimony of Jesus, designedly left out—*Particular*, in direct opposition to the perverters and despisers of the truth—And *open*, the persons making it declaring a readiness to avow it before the world, notwithstanding any reproach and hardship they may be exposed to in maintaining it. The Lord requires such a profession to be made by his people, that their unity may be known; that they may *strive together for the faith of the gospel*, and that all may know his truth; it being thus, by the church, held forth to the world, as a light is held forth in a candlestick.

IV. All church members have not the same degree of knowledge; some are weak; some have had few helps and means for instruction; some may labour under prejudices, which they cannot at once cast off. Towards all such, great tenderness should be used. If they appear to be Christians, are seeking farther instruction, and are not determined enemies to some article of truth or duty, they may, though labouring under difficulties about some part of the profession which the church makes, be received into its communion. But to receive those into communion,

who are determined in their opposition to any part of that profession the church makes, or who are careless and wavering, not studying to attain a more perfect knowledge and fixedness of mind about those matters concerning which they are in doubt, would be to destroy, not to build, the house of God. The admission of such is the destruction of Christian fellowship, among the members of a church. There can be no communion in prayers, in thanksgiving, in *striving for the faith of the gospel*, where there is no unity of *heart and mind* about that faith. When one is casting down what another is building up, there may be the name, but there cannot be the truth of Christian communion.

V. It is not consistent with faithfulness to God, to lay aside, as some speak, all these matters which have been debated among wise and good men, that by thus removing subjects of controversy out of the way, there may be no occasion of discord. This we may judge to be one of the most pernicious errors of the present time; and as plainly contrary to the word of God as any error which ever appeared in the Christian church. It puts the agreement of men, reputed wise and good, in the place of the Scriptures of truth; making it, not them, our standard. So that if some of this character deny any truth, though it be ever so plainly taught in the word of God, the church must cast it out of her public profession. If this rule were to be observed, and all those truths laid aside, which some men, generally reputed wise and pious, have, at one time or another, denied and questioned, little, if any thing, of Christianity would be left remaining.

VI. Our Lord Jesus hath, in the most plain and solemn manner, exhorted us to *take heed and observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded us, and to hold fast what we have received.** No where has he directed us to attend to the disputes of the wise and pious, and to drop that, as a matter of no importance, about which they might differ. If the truth of the gospel be perverted, it is no matter by whom. Whether the adversary be a saint or sinner, is not our immediate business; we are to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*, against those who attack any part of it. If they are persons of reputation for wisdom and piety, we ought to consider, that this reputation will only give them the greater opportunity to draw away people after them. It was Peter's

* Matt. xxix. 20. Rev. ii. 25.

character, as an apostle and an eminent saint, which drew Barnabas, and the other Jewish Christians at Antioch, along with him into dissimulation. Moreover, we are not to be awed into silence at the appearance of eminent piety, in the opposers of the truth, since we are warned of *wolves that shall come in sheep's clothing*, and of *Satan transforming himself into an angel of light*. Many adversaries of the truth, who seem pious, are not so. And let them be what they will, if *an angel from heaven* should teach any thing contrary to the doctrine we have received of the Lord, we ought to reject his testimony with abhorrence.

VII. Thirdly, none ought to be admitted into the communion of the church, whose life and conversation is not such as becometh the gospel. *The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, and have no right to those privileges which are peculiar to Christians, such as the sacraments, the seals of the covenant of grace, are; nor is it enough, that remarkably wicked and profane persons are refused admission; the careless, who neglect commanded duty, who remember not the Lord's day to keep it holy, and who neglect to worship God in their families, as they are visibly impenitent sinners, have no right to a place in that society which should consist of such only as visibly, or, according to the judgment of charity, are saints.

VIII. The admission of the visibly wicked into the church, is hurtful to other members of it. They cannot encourage and strengthen others in the good ways of the Lord; but they will draw others into their own sinful ways. It is likewise hurtful to themselves; as it tends to confirm them in the pernicious delusion, that they are Christians, while they are not. Thus, in admitting them whose wickedness is visible, office-bearers in the church, besides injuring it, act a most cruel part towards them, and become guilty of their blood, in so far as they do not give them faithful warning of their danger; but, on the contrary, harden them against all such warnings, by receiving and acknowledging them as visible Christians. Such watchmen are chargeable with saying, *Peace, peace*, to those to whom *there is no peace*.

IX. What we have asserted, respecting the admission of persons to church communion, is no wise contrary to our Confession of Faith; which declares, that "saints by profession, are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and

“communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other services as tend to their mutual edification.” Because, to enter into communion with the visibly wicked, with the promoters of error, and with the lukewarm, who will not openly and faithfully appear in the cause of Christ; or to enter into communion with those, who are obstinate in apostacy from the truth received, would be no *holy fellowship*, and would tend to our mutual hurt. We would neglect our own duty, and encourage others to neglect theirs. That communion, which our Confession says, “is to be extended to all, who, in every place, call on the name of the Lord Jesus,”* respects ministering to their outward necessities; as is evident to any who will consider the texts of Scripture referred to as proving that proposition. Nothing is more plain, than that the Westminster assembly, who framed that Confession, did not mean, that every man who professed to be a Christian, ought to be admitted to the communion of the church. Many parties, professing Christianity, were justly esteemed by them as its worst enemies. We do not, however, deny, that communion, in the fullest sense, may be extended to all “who call on the name of the Lord Jesus.” if that expression is understood according to the Scripture sense of it, as signifying an upright profession of the truth, a steadfast adherence to it, and a worshipping of the Lord according to the appointed order; while the profession made of receiving Christ, is, so far as men can judge, manifested to be unfeigned, by a walking in him, studying submission to his cross, and obedience to all his commandments.

X. Believing the truths now declared, to be of great importance to the true peace and prosperity of the church, we testify against that common and pernicious opinion, that the matters about which men, reputed wise and pious, differ, ought not to be made terms of communion in the Christian church; and against the practice of those, who, acting on this principle, and finding they cannot agree about many articles of truth, do, as a church, agree to lay aside a public and joint testimony for them; and thus, as a church, do what they can to bury them. We do, also, testify against the practice of those who admit the ignorant, the careless, and the profane, to the communion of the church. This evil hath done so much hurt already, that all who wish well to the interests of religion, should

* Confession, chap. 26, sect. 2.

the more earnestly oppose it. He must be a *stranger in our Israel*, who does not know, that one leading cause of the apostacy now prevailing in the Reformed churches, has been the want of due strictness and care in admitting persons into their communion. This *little leaven* has almost *leavened the whole lump*. The careless and corrupt, once admitted, have quickly opened a door to others of their own character.—We do also testify against what some call *occasional communion*; by which they mean, the admission of people into their religious fellowship for a time, whom they do not reckon qualified to continue in it. We have neither precept nor example in the word of God, authorising such a practice. It is manifestly absurd: we can reasonably admit none to communion at one time, who, while they abide in the same faith and practice, may not be continued in our communion.

ARTICLE III. *Of Excommunication.*

I. We believe, that the Lord will bless no censurés which he hath not appointed in his church; and also, that no church can prosper, if it despise those censurés which he has appointed, or if it neglect the application of them when necessary. Persons who give offence, are to be excluded from communion till they give credible evidence of their repentance and amendment. But if the offence is very great, or if the offending person is obstinate, and will hear no admonition, he ought to be entirely cast out of the church; which last sentence is commonly called the *greater*, as the former is called the *lesser excommunication*.

II. The ends for which very grievous or obstinate offenders are to be cast out of the church, are these:—First, Its preservation. This is the appointed way to deliver it from the pernicious influence of such as persist in error, or in apostacy from the truth, which they had formerly professed to receive, or who are grievously scandalous in their practice.—Secondly, The good of those who are thus cast out. This censure, rightly applied, is a due and proper testimony against their sin; and, therefore, an appointed mean of bringing them to repentance.

III. The greater excommunication is no more than a casting out of the church, or a judicial declaring the offender no more of that society. The *delivering to Satan*, by which excommunication is sometimes expressed in Scrip-

ture,* means nothing more than a casting out of the visible kingdom of Christ, into the society composed of the rest of the world, who are described as Satan's visible kingdom, and among whom he rules, though not without control. *The destruction of the flesh*, mentioned in Scripture as an end of excommunication, is the destruction of those lusts and corruptions which are often called in Scripture, *the flesh*, and are opposed to *the spirit*, or renewed man. In the present divided state of the church, those whom one denomination of Christians cast out are often received by another; but surely, when we cast out one from our communion, we do, upon the matter, declare, that no other church, if it were what it ought to be, and acted as it ought to act, would receive him; that he ought to be considered by every Christian as a *Heathen*, or one who deserves no place in the visible church of Christ, till he manifests his repentance.

IV. In excommunication, we have nothing to do with the state of persons before God, but with their behaviour in the church. It is not necessary to delay excommunication till the offending party give evident signs of his being *in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity*. The matter to be considered is, whether or no, according to the word of God, he deserves that censure. We doubt not but real Christians may, in some instances, prove such troublers of the church, and such pernicious members of it, that it is necessary to cut them off from its society. All due tenderness, however, should be used towards offenders. No marks of rashness and anger should appear in our proceedings against them. We ought, as far as possible, to manifest to them; that it is not hatred towards them, but a regard to the welfare of the church, and a desire to reclaim them, which moves us to censure them.

V. The adding of civil pains and penalties to excommunication, is a scandalous abuse of this spiritual ordinance, and a remnant of antichristian tyranny, which was retained too long in some Protestant countries, and is retained in others to this day. We testify against this, and every other abuse of that censure; as also, against them who deny that it may be applied to any offenders, except those whose wickedness is absolutely inconsistent with their being real Christians. If this opinion was just, men might trouble the church, and pervert its members ever so long,

* 1 Cor. v. 5.

and yet we might never venture to cast them out of it, not having positive evidence of their being in an unregenerate state.

ARTICLE IV. *Of Confessions of Faith.*

I. We declare, that a confession of faith, or some public declaration of the principles of the church, is necessary to its well being. The church of Christ is bound to testify to the world what is her faith and practice; that such as would learn, may have an opportunity; that such as are disposed to enter into her communion, may know into what kind of society they are entering; and that she herself may be assured of the sound mind of such as she receives, by their adherence to that declaration or confession of the faith of Christ made in his church. An acknowledgment of the Scriptures as the word of God, the only rule of faith and practice, would be abundantly sufficient for this purpose, if the Scripture doctrines were opposed by none but Jews, Pagans, Mahometans, and other avowed enemies of Christianity. But, we know, that, as formerly, so now, many professing to receive the Scriptures, wrest them sometimes to their own hurt, sometimes to their own destruction. It is necessary, that we should testify plainly against such, declaring, that we do not understand the Scriptures according to their perverse apprehensions about what is contained in them; and, as we would be found faithful to the Lord, in keeping his truth pure and entire among us, we ought to inquire of those who ask admission into our communion, Whether they do understand the Scriptures in that sense which we judge to be the mind of the Holy Spirit? Without some public, joint confession of the faith, there would be no keeping out the worst heretic that ever appeared, bearing the Christian name, from communion with us. Yet the suffering of such to enter into our religious fellowship, or to continue in it, is a sin for which the Lord reproves churches otherwise commendable, as appears from the epistles to those of Pergamos and Thyatira.*

II. Confessions of faith may be, and often are, wrested by the adversaries of truth: and when they are so, it becomes necessary to declare the doctrine of Christ, as it stands in opposition to new errors, or to old errors in a new dress. The confession of the church needs not, by

* Rev. ii. 12, 15.

such new declarations, to be enlarged, so as to render it more perplexing and burthensome for Christians to understand it. The truth maintained against former errors, we ought still to hold fast. But when errors are either extinct, or nearly so, and when there is no apparent danger of their being revived, there is not such a necessity of enlarging on the truth which stands in opposition to them, as when they were high in repute, and daily spreading. The errors which have troubled the church in former and latter times, are indeed materially the same, and the truth to be testified for, against them is the same, only it ought to be stated in such a manner, as, by it, we may condemn the errors of our time, and express our adherence to the Scripture, in opposition to the present perverters or neglecters of it.

III. Confessions of faith are no imposition on the conscience, except when men in power force others to receive such a confession of faith as hath been framed for them, threatening, and employing fines, imprisonment, and other penalties, if they refuse. This is a compelling of men to come to the church, by means entirely opposite to the spirit of the gospel. The gospel compels, but it does so, only by exhorting, entreating, and persuading. The abuse of confessions of faith is to be lamented and condemned; but it says no more against the necessity and usefulness of them, than the abuse of the Scriptures does against the divine original of these sacred oracles.

IV. We do, therefore, testify against all, who, being enemies to a public, joint confession of the faith in the church, would have the door set open to the worst heretics, and the most dreadful perverters of the Scripture, to enter into it. Such often decry confessions of faith, pretending that they do it from a regard to the Scripture; but they take a very improper way to express their regard to it, while they oppose what is so necessary for preserving the Scripture doctrine, and for opposing its adversaries.—Moreover, it is no breach of charity to say, that the regard many such express for the Scripture, is feigned; since we find them insisting on little else in their discourses, and writings, than those duties which the light of nature discovers to us, but which it does not afford us strength to perform.

ARTICLE V. *Of Public Covenanting.*

I. We have already declared, that public, solemn covenanting by a church, is not merely lawful, but, when the Lord gives an opportunity to set forward in it, exceeding useful for promoting the interests of religion. The reasons which convince us that this is a duty, are such as the following:—First, The divine command to *vow unto the Lord*; which cannot be restrained to a private vowing to him, any more than the command given us to pray to him, can be restrained to a doing so in secret.—Secondly, The practice of the Israelitish church; whose covenanting cannot be considered as any part of their obedience to the ceremonial law now abolished. It was neither commanded in that law, nor did it peculiarly respect the observation of ceremonial institutions, but chiefly that obedience to God, that adherence to his truth, and that uprightness in walking before him, which are as much our duty as that of any former generation. Whatever different circumstances may render necessary, between covenanting as practised by the Old and by the New Testament church, the duty is still the same. It was not a shadow of good things to come, but was necessary then, and is necessary now, as an appointed mean of maintaining purity, zeal, and steadfastness, among church members. We have also reason to conclude, that a public solemn engagement to abide by the truth, and to assist each other in promoting it, was intended, when it is said of some New Testament churches, *that they gave their own selves to the Lord*.^{*} This giving of themselves to the Lord was distinct from the profession they had made at their first entrance into the Christian church. The engagements they came under by joining together in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, could not be intended; else what they did would not have been more than the apostles expected. Thirdly, The Scripture prophecies and promises shew it to be a duty; and also a duty which shall be attended to, and practised with success in New Testament times. *The Egyptians*, it is said, *shall know the Lord in that day, and shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it*;[†] that is, such as were of old enemies to the church, and aliens from it, shall, in the day of the enlargement of Christ's king-

* 2 Cor. viii. 5.

† Isa. xix. 21.

dom, solemnly avouch the Lord to be their God, and engage by covenant to serve him. Though sacrificing to the Lord is mentioned in some Old Testament prophecies, along with vowing and swearing to him, we are not to suppose that these last, like the former, are only figurative expressions of what was to happen in New Testament times; since it can never be proved that they were types of things to come, any more than the knowledge of God and prayer to him, which are mentioned in the same prophecies. Nor is it foretold in one passage only, that this duty should be observed in the New Testament church, but in several; as when it is said, *Men shall swear, not merely by the Lord, but to him; that they shall subscribe with the hand** unto him, and that they *shall join themselves to him in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten.*† All which promises have a special respect to that dispensation of grace which we live under.

II. Vowing to God is a reasonable service. If we may lawfully engage by oath, as is generally allowed, to maintain a civil cause, much more may we do so to maintain the cause of God. If we swear allegiance to a civil government, may we not with still greater propriety, swear to be faithful to the supreme Governor and Judge of all the earth? The profession of the faith is such, as we can never make too openly and solemnly. The engagements we are under to the Lord, cannot be avowed in too direct a manner. The duty we owe to each other, as to our civil interests, is, in various instances, engaged to by oath; and doubtless, we may lawfully so engage ourselves to the religious duties we owe one to another.

III. Covenanting has been practised, some time or other, though not always in the same manner, by most of the Reformed churches. Something of this kind is essential to the very being of a church, as the members of it must more or less explicitly acknowledge themselves to be under engagements to the Lord and each other, binding them to abide by the profession of the faith they have made, and to assist each other in maintaining it.

IV. We are not answerable for what may be found defective, amiss, or foreign to the nature of the kingdom of Christ, in the manner of covenanting used by some churches in former times, while we do not approve nor imitate their blemishes. It is surely no argument against a duty,

* Isa. xl. 5.

† Jerem. i. 5.

that it has not been always observed with due attention to the Scripture rules. As little is the common prevailing hatred of this duty, any argument with us to reject it, as unnecessary. We have reason to conclude, that the great adversary of the church hates it, and is afraid of it, since he stirs up so many to rail against it. If some good men have appeared against it, this is neither new nor strange. Good men have at times, appeared in a bad cause; but we know, the first who in later times appeared against public covenanting, were generally a malignant, ungodly, profane, generation, who hated it in proportion as they hated the pure reformed doctrine, which the church has engaged by covenant to maintain and promote. The hatred of this duty has become more general, as the power of godliness and zeal for the truth has declined.

V. Covenanting is useful for uniting church members; for strengthening them by their union; for testifying to the world their steadfast adherence to the truth; for impressing their minds with a sense of their duty: and for giving glory to the Lord, by such a solemn acknowledgment of their subjection to him. It is not unnecessary, because we were bound to perform the same duties before we engaged by solemn covenant to perform them. In every profession of faith which Christians make, either when they enter into the church, or when they join together in celebrating the Lord's death at his table, they do but acknowledge that to be their duty which was so before; they do not bind themselves to any thing which they might otherwise have lawfully neglected. But we hope none will say that such professions are, for this reason, useless.

VI. We testify against those who oppose this duty, either by pleading, that it is unseasonable in the present divided state of the church, or by asserting, that it ceases to be a duty in New Testament times. They do not take the proper way to heal the divisions of the church, who neglect an appointed mean for uniting and strengthening its members; nor do they rightly understand the nature of the New Testament church, who deny, that it is proper for it to acknowledge its subjection to the Lord, in as public and solemn a manner as the Old Testament church did.

ARTICLE VI. *Of Singing the Psalms of David.*

I. We declare, that the Psalms of David are proper to be sung in public worshipping assemblies, and in families; and that we believe they were designed for this purpose by the Holy Spirit. Every human composition must be as much inferior to them, as the writings of the best men are inferior to the word of God.

II. That imitation of the Psalms of David, which is, by many, substituted in their place, we reject, for these reasons: First, We reckon it a very daring presumption for any man to give us an imitation of a part of the Scripture, pretending that it is more worthy of our acceptance, and more proper to be used in the worship of God, than the Scripture itself. Let the writings of fallible men contain ever so many valuable truths, still we are not ashamed to declare, that *never man spake like God*. Secondly, In that imitation, some of these excellent psalms, precious to the saints, as songs of praise, which the Lord their God put in their mouths, are quite left out. Thirdly, These psalms, of which an imitation is given to us, are, many of them, so disordered and mangled, that one can see little resemblance between the imitation and the Scripture songs. By this, contempt is put upon the order of matter which the Holy Spirit judged the best. Fourthly, One declared reason of substituting that imitation in place of the Psalms of David, is, that many things in the latter are affirmed to be contrary to the spirit of meekness, forgiveness, and love to all men, which is said to be peculiar to the New Testament church. This is an injurious reflection on what the Holy Spirit says in the Old Testament.

III. That the commandment, to forgive and love our enemies, was never heard of, nor practised by the people of God, till our Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh; and that the Old Testament doctrine is contrary to it, is a wicked opinion, long ago maintained by the Socinians, these enemies to the divine glory and free grace of the Redeemer, but justly condemned in the Protestant churches; and we do reject it with abhorrence. The Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David: his *psalms* are again and again mentioned in the New Testament, as the sayings of the Holy Spirit; and he spake nothing by David, or by any other of the Old Testament prophets, which he denied

or contradicted, under the New Testament dispensation. The Spirit of the Lord exhorted men to exercise the same love and forgiveness towards enemies, under the Old as under the New Testament dispensation: *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:** *Rejoice not, when thine enemy falleth; neither let thine heart be glad, when he stumbleth,*† were commandments made known of old; and were binding on men, as well before as after the coming of Christ. Such commandments were neither unknown to David, nor unpractised by him. He delivered *the man, who without cause, was his enemy*: for the truth of this he appeals to God.‡ If he sometimes failed in his duty, so also do Christians under the New Testament, being still very far from perfection in holiness.

IV. What are, by some, reckoned curses and imprecations in the Psalms, are nothing more than a declaring of the righteous judgments which God will execute upon the wicked; and a saying, *Amen*, to all he does, as just and holy; this is no way contrary to the doctrine of the New Testament. Paul did not forget the command to love his enemies, when he prayed, as to some of them, that *the Lord might reward them according to their works.*§ He knew that command did not forbid him to pray, that the Lord would vindicate his own cause, and defeat its malicious obstinate adversaries. The whole New Testament church is, in the Revelation, represented, as joining in a song of praise, which they who object against the Psalms of David, might, with equal reason, represent as contrary to the spirit of forgiveness: *After these things, says John, I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, that is, the visible church, saying, Alleluia, Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; for, true and righteous are his judgments,* (the terrible plagues mentioned in the former chapter,) *for, he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*¶

V. We use, it is true, a poetical version of the Psalms; and it is scarcely, if at all, possible to form a version of this kind, as strictly agreeable to the letter of the original as a prose one can be formed. But this defect cannot be remedied by departing still further from the original, in an

* Prov. xxv. 21.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 14.

† Prov. xxiv. 17.

¶ Rev. xix. 1, 2.

‡ Psa. vii. 4.

imitation which bears but a very faint imperfect resemblance to it. We have the original matter, and the original order of the matter, in the version used by us: and we are not ashamed to prefer this matter to the best sayings of men; and this order, to any, men ever did, or ever will devise.

VI. If there are, in the Psalms, *some things hard to be understood*, so there are in some other parts of the Scripture. Prayer and study are means appointed to lead us into the mind of the Holy Spirit in such passages. It belongs to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ to *open our understandings, that we may understand the Scriptures*,* and we ought to trust in him that he will do so. If we, in some instances, find ourselves unable to perceive the sense of the sacred oracles, we ought humbly to confess our ignorance and incapacity to discern the things of the Spirit of God. We ought not to represent the language of the Holy Spirit as improper, or too obscure for general use in the church, nor to throw aside our Bible, as too difficult for us to understand, substituting an imitation of it in its place, which may be thought more plain. The more exactly any version expresses the sense of the inspired writers, and the more closely it follows their manner of speaking, it is so much the more valuable.

ARTICLE VII. *Of Swearing.*

I. We maintain, that, when duly called to swear an oath, we should swear, as the Scripture directs us, with our hands lifted up to the MOST HIGH GOD. We testify against the custom of swearing by kissing the Gospels, the Bible, or any other book, as improper and superstitious; of a Popish, if not of a Pagan original; and destitute of that solemnity, which should be used in appealing to God for the truth of what we assert.

II. We do, likewise, testify against all oaths, in which the swearer engages to keep secret what he does not know—something not being revealed to him, till he engage by oath to conceal it. Such oaths are insnaring, as they may contain what a man cannot, without sin, perform; and are such as our conscience cannot approve of as lawful and proper, since we do not know what we are engaging to do. They ought, therefore, to be carefully avoided by such as would *walk blameless in the commandments of the Lord.*

* Luke xxiv. 44.

We do not, however, deny, that persons employed in the civil government of their country, or in its defence in case of war, may lawfully swear to conceal the public business, lest the knowledge of it, being conveyed to the enemy, should hurt the interests of the community.

ARTICLE VIII. *Of Presbyterian Church Government.*

I. We adhere to Presbyterian church government, as that which Christ has appointed, and which no power, ecclesiastical or civil, may lawfully change. Our Lord Jesus hath expressly forbidden any of his servants to act as *lords over his heritage*, or to *exercise dominion* over their brethren.* Bishops, claiming the sole or chief power of ordination, and ruling over their fellow servants, are therefore usurpers and intruders in the church of Christ; he never appointed them; and he never will bless that power and authority, which they take to themselves, above what they have a right to do in common with other ministers of the gospel. The same persons are in the New Testament called *Bishops* or *Overseers*, and *Presbyters* or *Elders*: so that the distinction between these has not the least shadow of authority from the word of God, and owes its rise to those times when the church had degenerated from its first purity and order. All the ministers of the gospel are of the same order, and have equal authority in the house of God.

II. Our Lord Christ has also appointed, that there should be *elders* to assist in the government of his church, besides those who labour in word and doctrine;† also *deacons* to attend to the concerns of the poor:‡ and, as this last office is comprehended in each of the two former, there is nothing unreasonable in the same person acting as a ruling elder and as a deacon, if he can conveniently fulfil the duty of both offices.

III. All office-bearers in particular congregations, whether ministers, elders, or deacons, ought to be chosen by the people, and by such of them only as are in the full communion of the church. The privilege of choosing their own office-bearers belongs to Christian congregations by a divine right, being authorised by the examples we have in the New Testament of this power being exercised by church members. Such office bearers as thrust themselves into

* Peter v. 3. Matt. xx. 25.

† 1 Tim. v. 17.

‡ Acts vi. 1—6.

the church, the people not consenting to their admission, are to be considered as *hirelings* and *intruders*, till they manifest their repentance, and obtain the approbation of those among whom they exercise their office. It belongs to the judicatories of the church to try those who are chosen by the people; and, if they are found qualified, solemnly to set them apart, and ordain them to their office.

IV. Any number of ministers and congregations, may so join together as to be one church, under one government, making one confession of the faith of Christ, and following one order in the worship of God; and where a number of congregations can attain this, it is their duty so to unite, for strengthening one another's hands, and encouraging one another's hearts in the work of the Lord. The Christians of a particular place are often mentioned in the New Testament as one church, though in sundry instances where they are so mentioned, they were so numerous, that it is unreasonable to believe they all assembled to worship God in one congregation. This association of particular churches or congregations into one body, may be extended as far as may be judged practicable and conducive to the prosperity of the kingdom of Christ.

V. The office-bearers of the church of Christ may and ought to meet together, not merely to consult and give advice in matters of difficulty, but to judge and determine controversies which may arise about the doctrine and order of the church. The word of God is their rule: they ought to judge and determine every thing according to it; if they do not, their decisions are not to be received. But their determinations, if agreeable to the Scripture, and warranted by it, ought to be submitted to by the church. Though every man has a right to judge for himself concerning the determinations of church judicatories; yet as the peace and unity of the church are matters of great importance, we ought to judge deliberately, to examine matters by the word of God, to beware of prejudice; and not to oppose any decision of the courts of Christ, unless we are fully persuaded in our own minds, that his truth and cause would suffer by our silence.

VI. In the present divided state of Christians, every one ought carefully to inquire what particular church is holding the truths and ordinances of Christ most pure and entire; and this consideration, not worldly interest, conveniency, the influence of friends, or the circumstance of

his being educated among such a denomination of Christians, should determine his choice. It is a mercy to be educated in a church where there is an upright and faithful profession of the name of Christ, and many examples of the power of godliness to be seen in the lives of church members; the Lord thus ordering our lot, where the light of the gospel shines clearly, we have an opportunity to know his truth in our early years; and great will be our sin, if we despise this privilege, and draw back to the society of the corrupt. It is not, however, the circumstances of our education among Christians of a certain denomination, but the truth itself, as expressed in the word of God, which ought to determine us as to what particular church we should enter into. If we continue in the church in which we had our education, it should not be because we were educated in it, but because we find it a distinguishing privilege to have been so, it being a church agreeable to the pattern given us in the word of God.

VII. As we adhere to the form of Presbyterian church government, and do receive and observe the order described and agreed upon by the assembly of Divines at Westminster, 1645, entitled, "The form of Presbyterial Church Government and Ordination of Ministers;" so we reckon it a matter worthy to be contended for, as belonging to the *faith once delivered to the saints*: and we testify against those who break it down, as enemies, in this part of their conduct, to the interests of religion. A scriptural church government is a hedge which God hath set about his vineyard; if it is taken away, the wild beasts will enter and make a prey of the vine.—We do, particularly, testify against the following opinions, as contrary to the word of God, and injurious to the kingdom of Christ: First, That our Lord Jesus appointed no form of government in his church; but left it to men—to ministers of the gospel, according to some—to civil magistrates, according to others, to appoint in it whatever kind of government they should think most proper. Secondly, That there ought to be, in the church, an order of bishops distinct from teaching elders or presbyters, and superior to them; and that, to these bishops, the sole or chief power of ordination and the government of the church do belong, either by authority from Christ, as some affirm, or by authority from the civil magistrate, who, as others affirm, has a right to create such spiritual lords. Thirdly, That there is no warrant

or necessity for ruling elders distinct from ministers of the gospel. Fourthly, That a particular church ought to consist of no more than one worshipping assembly or congregation; it being, according to the advocates for this opinion, improper for different congregations to unite themselves into one church, subordinate to one Presbyterian government. Fifthly, That the power of ordaining office-bearers, of censuring scandalous persons, with the entire government of the church, belongs to the whole community of church members.

ARTICLE IX. *Of the Order of Worship.*

I. The order which we observe in the worship of God, is that prescribed in the Directory, agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, in 1645, except in some few particulars, for which we have no other rule than this, *Let all things be done to edifying.*

II. We testify against the following customs, as contrary to the Scripture, and to the order of the most purely Reformed churches: First, That of baptizing privately, or where no public assembly is called to attend on the dispensation of word and sacrament. What may be done in extraordinary cases, and in times of persecution, is no rule. It is plain, that, as by baptism one is solemnly received into the visible church, so it ought to be performed publicly. The custom of dispensing it privately, must either arise from carelessness, or from a superstitious opinion of the absolute necessity of baptism in order to salvation. As the infants of believing parents are members of the visible church, and as the promise is to them; so such parents should esteem it their privilege, that they may bring their children to the Lord Jesus, and publicly devote them to him in baptism. Secondly, The reading, instead of the preaching, of sermons in public, is another custom against which we testify. It is directly opposite to the Scripture pattern. Never do we hear, either in the Old or New Testament, of public teachers taking a written paper and reading it to the people for their instruction. It is a *burying of talents in the earth*, if the teacher has them; and if he has them not, he is unfit for this office. It is not calculated to promote general edification; and never was practised in any church, till the power and life of religion was, in a great measure, decayed.

CONCLUSION.

I. No testimony which we maintain in our profession, will be accepted of God, or useful in his church, if we contradict it in our practice. "Faith is known by works, as the tree is by its fruit." Such as make a good profession, but contradict it in their practice, are to be numbered among the worst enemies of Christ. Through their wickedness, the "good ways of the Lord are evil spoken of;" the avowed enemies of his cause are hardened in their opposition to it; the weak of his people are made to wander and stumble; and the hearts of the upright are grieved.

II. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation," will effectually teach them who truly receive it, to "deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope" of the redeemed, and the appearing of the glory "of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ." As Christians ought to abstain from every appearance of evil, so they should ever follow that which is good. It is not enough that they cannot be accused of doing what the Lord forbids; they should be studious to do what he requires.

III. Our Larger Catechism, in describing the duties required, and the sins forbidden, under each of the ten commandments, is an excellent comment on that summary of the divine law, and ought to be carefully studied by Christians, that they may learn what is, and what is not approved in the sight of God. Those who profess an adherence to that catechism, as a part of the confession of their faith to the world, if they are found still cleaving to these evils, which, by their profession, they have solemnly renounced; and neglecting those things which, by their profession, they acknowledge to be a duty, stand, in a special manner, self-condemned.

IV. The example of Christians, who, abounding in faith, are "careful to maintain good works;" do not think highly of themselves; endure tribulations of every kind, "as seeing him who is invisible;" and are animated by a heavenly zeal for the glory of God, is exceeding useful in the church: being a mean which the Lord frequently uses to

convince others, and to draw their attention to his word. The exhortation of Christ should therefore abide on the minds of those who call on his name; "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* It is thus, that Christians "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," and make those "ashamed who falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ."† It is thus they approve themselves "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and a perverse nation, among whom they shine as lights in the world."‡ "This is the will of God," the sanctification of his people, that they may glorify him in their "bodies and spirits which are his."

V. As it should be the study of Christians to "do good to all men," so, in a special manner, "to the household of faith. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works."§ We should consider the distresses of others, that, according to the ability which the Lord hath given us, we may relieve them: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"¶ We should consider what is worthy of commendation in others, that we may imitate and encourage them in it. We should consider what is blamable in others, that we may avoid it; that we may, in a friendly manner, warn them of it, and that we may do what in us lies to prevent the evil effects of it.

VI. Christ's "yoke is easy" and his "burden light." Those who profess to have taken it upon them, act quite out of character, while they express a continual uneasiness at the restraint which their profession lays them under, from joining with the world in its foolish and pernicious ways; and while they are, upon every other occasion, going as nigh what is forbidden as they possibly can, without rendering themselves directly chargeable with it, or thus liable to church censure. Such are guilty of misrepresenting to the world, those "ways of wisdom" which "are pleasantness," and "her paths," all of which "are peace."

VII. We do earnestly beseech all into whose hands this our Testimony may come, to examine the matters contain-

* Matt. v. 16.

§ Heb. x. 23, 24.

† 1 Pet. iii. 16.

‡ 1 John iii. 17.

‡ Phil. ii. 15.

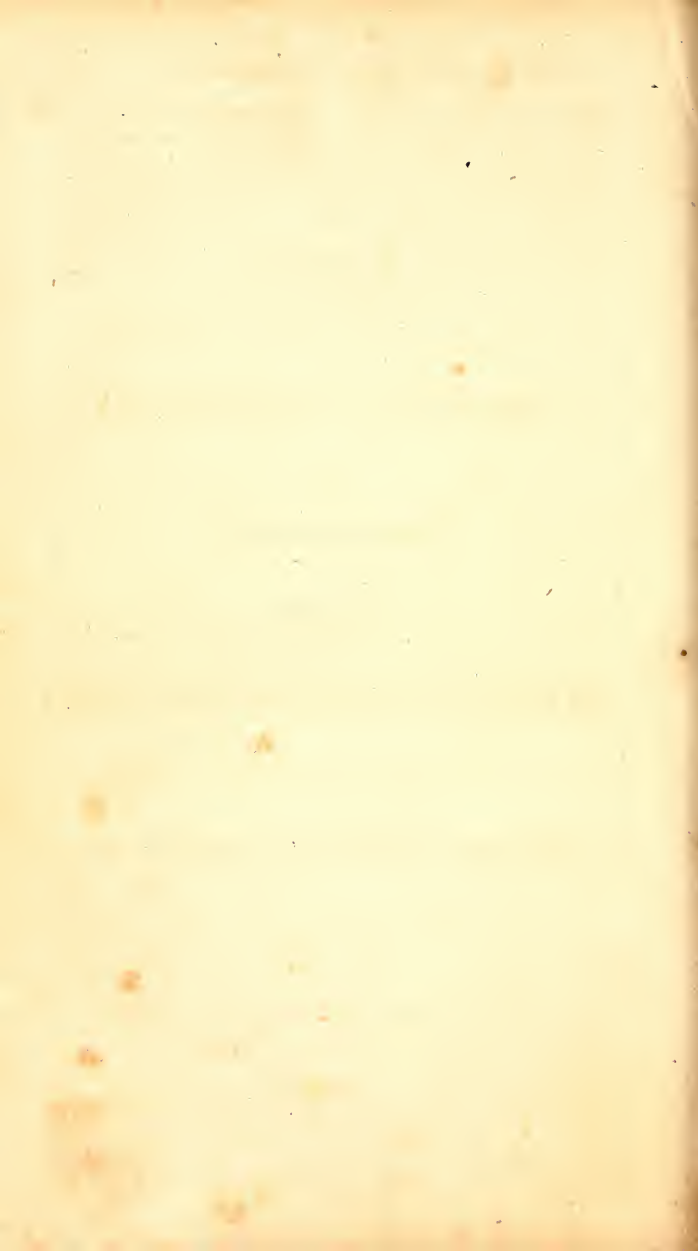
ed in it by the word of God, to weigh them in the balance of his sanctuary, and judge whether the Lord is not calling them to confess, hold fast, and testify for the truths expressed in it, against those enemies who are labouring to deprive the present and following generations of the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. Let not the smallness of our number, our obscurity in the world, or the failings of those who adhere to our testimony, prejudice any at the duty to which the Lord is calling them. We do, particularly, entreat those of our brethren in Christ, who are zealous to withstand the general opposition made, in this age, to the doctrine of salvation by sovereign free grace through Jesus Christ, and who adhere to the PRESBYTERIAL FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT, to judge whether it is not their duty to join with us in testifying against that LATITUDINARIAN scheme which has wrought and is still working so much mischief, by representing one truth after another as not worthy to be contended for, till the whole is subverted, and particular churches ruined.

“Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered: let them that hate thee flee before thee.”* “Plead the cause that is thine own. Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.”† “Do good, in thy good pleasure, unto ZION: build thou the walls of JERUSALEM; so shall sacrifices of thanksgiving be rendered to thee in thy church.”‡
AMEN.

* Psal. lxxviii. 1.

† Psal. lxxiv. 22, 23.

‡ Psal. li. 18, 19.



AN
ACT
OF THE
ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY
OF
Pennsylvania,
CONCERNING
Public Covenanting;
UNANIMOUSLY
Agreed to at Philadelphia, April 29, 1791.

Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God.
Psalm lxxvi. 11.

The Notes, for illustration, were added by a
member of the Associate Presbytery.

INTRODUCTION.

THE work in which we desire to set forward, though much opposed and reproached, has a divine warrant. The glory is due to the Lord, and to him shall the vow be performed. He hath expressly commanded us to give this glory to him: *Vow, saith he, and pay unto the Lord your God.* It is, indeed, a reasonable service. We engage by oath and covenant, on many occasions, to be faithful in things pertaining to God, who has a primary and unlimited right to our obedience and service. He calls us to serve him openly, and in the bond of fellowship with one another; therefore, we vow not only each one by himself, but jointly and publicly, as the people of God did in ancient times. The records of the Old Testament shew us, that this was frequently done; and done for such reasons as are of equal force at this day. The covenanting of the church in those times, was not a shadow of good things to come; neither was it a matter peculiar to Israel as a nation; but it was a giving glory to the Lord, by his people openly, solemnly, and with one accord, avouching him as their God, acknowledging their dependance on him; confessing their faith in the promise of salvation through Christ; and engaging to observe all his commandments. It was a mean of gathering Israel under the Lord's banner after their backslidings. And they hereby became witnesses against themselves, if they should afterwards forsake the Lord's ways, or corrupt his worship. For such reasons as these, we are called, in like manner, to engage ourselves to the Lord.

We are further confirmed as to the warrantableness of this service, by the promises which respect New Testament times. Gentile believers, it is said, *shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and shall perform it.** They shall *swear the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness.†* They shall *join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.‡* The grace held forth in these, and other promises of the same nature, encourageth us to essay what the Lord hath commanded us. The duty he requires, he will according to the covenant of his mercy give strength to perform.

When the Lord visited his people, and brought them out of antichristian darkness, he made the isles which our fathers inhabited to wait on him and trust on his arm. The danger of becoming a prey to the generation of antichrist, and of being seduced from the right ways of the Lord by other evil instruments, moved the professors of religion, in those troublesome times, to enter into solemn engagements to stand by one another in defence of the true reformed religion. This they did on various occasions, but especially about the year 1580, in the national covenant of Scotland, the tenor whereof follows :

* Isaiah xix 21.

† Jer. iv. 2.

‡ Jer. l. 5.

AN ACT

CONCERNING

PUBLIC COVENANTING.

“WE, all and every one of us, underwritten, protest, That after long and due examination of our consciences in matters of true and false religion, we are now thoroughly resolved in the truth by the word and Spirit of God: and therefore, we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm before God and the whole world, that this only is the true Christian faith and religion, pleasing God, and bringing salvation to man, which is now, by the mercy of God, revealed to the world by the preaching of the blessed evangel; and is received, believed, and defended by many and sundry notable kirks and realms, but chiefly by the kirk of Scotland, the king’s majesty, and three estates of his realm, as God’s eternal truth and only ground of our salvation; as more particularly is expressed in the Confession of our faith, established and publicly confirmed by sundry acts of parliaments, and now of a long time hath been openly professed by the king’s majesty, and whole body of this realm both in burgh and land. To the which confession and form of religion, we willingly agree in our consciences, in all points, as unto God’s undoubted truth and verity, grounded only upon his written word. And, therefore, we abhor and detest all contrary religion and doctrine; but chiefly all kind of Papistry, in general and particular heads, even as they are now damned, [i. e. *condemned*,] and confuted by the word of God, and kirk of Scotland. But in special, we detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman antichrist upon the Scriptures.

of God,¹ upon the kirk,² the civil magistrate,³ and consciences of men;⁴ all his tyrannous laws, made upon different things, against our Christian liberty;⁵ his erroneous doctrine against the sufficiency of the written word,⁶ the perfection of the law, the offices of Christ, and his blessed evangel;⁷ his corrupted doctrine concerning original sin,⁸ our natural inability and rebellion to God's law,⁹ our justification by faith only,¹⁰ our imperfect sanctification and obedience to the law;¹¹ the nature, number, and use of the holy sacraments; his five bastard sacraments;¹² with all his rites, ceremonies,¹³ and false doctrine, added to the administration of the true sacraments, without the word of God:¹⁴ his cruel judgment against infants de-

1 By which he pretends to give them authority for their meaning, add to, or take from them, dispense with their obligation, forbid or allow the reading of them as he pleaseth.

2 Pretending to be her infallible spouse and Lord, having power to appoint whatever offices, officers, laws, ordinances and ceremonies of worship, or even objects of adoration as he thinks fit.

3 In claiming a power to admit them to, or depose them from their office, and requiring them to act as his tools, on pain of absolving his subjects from all allegiance, if they do not act as he requires.

4 In requiring them to submit implicitly to his authority, and submit to his censures, whether agreeable to the word or not.

5 In forbidding to eat flesh on Fridays or in Lent, to labour on certain days which God hath ordered us to work in, and to marry persons allowed by the Scripture.

6 Pretending that the Old and New Testaments are in themselves obscure, and not a proper rule of faith and manners without the Apocrypha, and the decrees of popes and councils, and the sense of them fixed by the Church.

7 Pretending that saints can merit eternal glory for themselves and others. That saints and angels are joint intercessors with Christ. That priests share in his priesthood while they pretend to offer him up as an atoning sacrifice in the mass—setting up images instead of the gospel, to manifest Christ unto men—and good works in place of his justifying righteousness.

8 Pretending that an inward disposition to evil thoughts is no part of it; and that this is done away in baptism.

9 Asserting that in an unregenerate state we can so far keep God's law as to merit saving grace.

10 Maintaining that it is founded on our inherent holiness and good works, and not by the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

11 Pretending that believers may in this life be as perfect as the law requires.

12 Affirming that the sacraments actually work saving grace in us: and beside baptism and the Lord's supper, there are other five, viz. marriage, ordination, confirmation, penance, and extreme unction. None of which have any divine appointment as seals of the covenant of grace, and the last three, as used by papists, have no warrant at all from Scripture.

13 Such as marking the baptized with the sign of the cross on the forehead and breast, exorcising the devil from him, blowing three times in his face, putting salt in his mouth, anointing his nostrils with spittle, and his breast and shoulder blades with oil, and the crown of his head with ointment, putting a lighted candle in his hand, and a white robe upon him, &c.

14 Viz. that they of themselves, or by the good intention of the administrator, do abolish sin, and confer saving grace.

parting without the sacrament:¹⁵ his absolute necessity of baptism: his blasphemous opinion of transubstantiation, or real presence of Christ's body in the elements, and receiving of the same by the wicked, or bodies of men;¹⁶ his dispensing with solemn oaths, perjuries,¹⁷ and degrees of marriage forbidden in the word:¹⁸ his cruelty against the innocent divorced;¹⁹ his devilish mass: his blasphemous priesthood: his profane sacrifice for the sins of the dead and quick:²⁰ his canonization of men:²¹ calling upon angels or saints departed;²² worshipping of images,²³ relicks,²⁴ and crosses; dedicating of kirks, altars, days;²⁵ vows to creatures:²⁶ his purgatory, prayers for the dead;²⁷ praying or speaking in a strange language:²⁸ his processions, and blasphemous litany;²⁹ multitude of advocates or mediators:³⁰ his manifold orders;³¹ auricular confes-

15 Affirming that infants that die without baptism, are excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

16 Affirming that Christ's flesh and blood in the Lord's supper, are eaten and drunk by all the communicants, however wicked, as any other food.

17 Allowing men, for money, services, or other advantages to the church, to swear oaths, or enter into engagements which they intend not to perform; or to violate their lawful oaths of allegiance, treaty, marriage vows, or other engagements which they have contracted.

18 Allowing uncles, nieces, nephews, aunts, or even brothers and sisters, by affinity of blood, to marry one another.

19 Holding them guilty if they marry while the criminal party is alive.

20 Pretending, by the hand of the officiating priest, with a multitude of antic ceremonies, to offer up Christ in the consecrated wafers and wine of his supper, as an atoning sacrifice to the Father for the sins of such as are in purgatory, or still alive on the earth.

21 Ceremoniously enrolling them in the list of saints fit to be worshipped, and served as subordinate gods.

22 Praying to them for mercies needed, and thanking them for favours received.

23 Such as pictures or statues of divine persons, angels, saints, crosses, &c.

24 Such as bones, hair, garments, houses, graves, &c. said to have once belonged to Christ or his saints.

25 With much ceremony, pretending to put the former under their protection, and render them the property of some divine person, saint, or angel; and make the latter sacred and venerable.

26 Directed to some angel or saint, binding the person vowing to their service and worship.

27 Pretending that persons who in life were neither sufficiently fitted for heaven, nor bad enough for eternal damnation, are, after death, confined in a state of torment, till by their own miseries, and the indulgences, prayers, and masses of priests on earth, their sins are fully expiated and done away.

28 That is, their performing public worship in the Latin language, which the people, and sometimes the priest, do not understand.

29 Addressing angels, saints, crosses, especially the Virgin Mary, in prayer and thanksgiving, as if they were divine persons.

30 Pretending, that angels and departed spirits plead our cause with God, avert his wrath, and procure his favour.

31 Of regular and monkish clergy; such as Benedictines, Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, Jesuits, and of secular clergy, whether cardinals, archbishops, bishops, deans, priests, deacons, subdeacons, acolyths, conjurers, readers, porters.

sion:³² his desperate and uncertain repentance:³³ his general and doubtful faith:³⁴ his satisfaction of men for their sins;³⁵ his justification by works,³⁶ *Opus Operatum*;³⁷ works of supererogation,³⁸ merits,³⁹ pardons,⁴⁰ peregrinations,⁴¹ and stations;⁴² his holy water,⁴³ baptizing of bells,⁴⁴ conjuring of spirits,⁴⁵ crossing,⁴⁶ saying,⁴⁷ anointing,⁴⁸ conjuring,⁴⁹ hallowing of God's good

32 Every member of the Romish church is bound at least once a year to make confession even of their most secret sins, by whispering them into the priest's ear, in order to receive a judicial absolution.

33 Which, however great and sincere, leaves men without any solid hopes of escaping the punishment of their sin in hell, at least in purgatory.

34 According to the Popish general and doubtful faith, we can make no particular application of God's promises of pardon and salvation to ourselves in particular: it is a faith that includes no solid persuasion of God's gracious grant of salvation in the gospel, nor believing expectation of the fulfilment of his promises; nor is it attended with assuring marks by which persons may certainly know their state of grace or their special relation to God as his children.

35 By donations to clergymen, pilgrimages to images, churches, tombs, or the like; self macerations by hunger, hard labour, lying in purgatory.

36 Pretending that though the sufferings of Christ, be the meritorious cause of justification, yet our inherent holiness and good works, constitute us formally righteous before God as a judge, and entitle us to eternal life.

37 Pretending that the mere external reception of the sacraments is effectual to forgive or abolish by-past sins, and to justify us, or confer real grace or holiness.

38 In which some saints, as is pretended, perform more obedience, and gave more satisfaction for sin than the law and justice of God demand for themselves; which overplus is put into the pope's treasury; that along with the superabundant merits of Christ, it may, by the pope and his deputed priests, be imputed to such as have not a sufficiency of merit for themselves.

39 Of congruity or suitableness, by which the good works of unregenerate men are said to deserve saving grace; and of condignity and equal value, by which the good works of regenerated persons deserve the eternal happiness of heaven.

40 In which, at a certain rate of satisfaction by money, services, masses, or the like, the pope and his agents pretend judicially to absolve professed penitents, not only from ecclesiastical censures, but from all obligations to divine punishments in time and eternity.

41 In which persons travel to, visit some church, image, tomb, or the like, pretended to pertain to Christ, or his saints, in order to procure pardon for sin, avert impending calamities, or obtain singular favours.

42 Weekly fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays, or little chapels to pray in for obtaining indulgence in or pardon of sin, also singing anthems before Christ and his mother.

43 Consecrated for sprinkling persons or things, to sanctify them for public worship, or to protect them from satanical influence.

44 Washing, anointing, and naming them after some saint, with manifold ceremonies, benedictions and prayers, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and all this to make them sound comfortably and edifying to Christian souls, and terrible and confounding to devils.

45 Ceremoniously charging them to come out of possessed persons or places, or to answer questions put to them.

46 Marking with the sign of the cross.

47 Sprinkling with holy water, or repeating charms like prayers over persons or things.

48 Viz with consecrated oil or chrism.

49 Ceremoniously charging storms, diseases and other troubles to depart, as if produced by the devil.

creatures,⁵⁰ with the superstitious opinion joined therewith:⁵¹ his worldly monarchy,⁵² and wicked hierarchy:⁵³ his three solemn vows;⁵⁴ with all his shavelings, of sundry sorts:⁵⁵ his erroneous and bloody decrees, made at Trent,⁵⁶ with all the subscribers or approvers of that cruel and bloody band, conjured against the kirk of God.⁵⁷ And, finally, we detest all his vain allegories,⁵⁸ rites, signs, and traditions,⁵⁹ brought into the kirk, without or against the word of God, and doctrine of this true reformed kirk; to the which we join ourselves willingly, in doctrine, faith, religion, discipline, and use of the holy sacraments, as lively members of the same in Christ our Head: promising and swearing by the great name of the LORD our God, that we shall continue in the obedience of the doctrine and discipline of this kirk, and shall defend the same according to our vocation and power, all the days of our lives, under the pains contained in the law, and danger both of body and soul in the day of God's fearful judgment.

“ And seeing that many are stirred up of Satan, and that Roman antichrist, to promise, swear, subscribe, and for a time use the holy sacraments in the kirk deceitfully, against their own conscience; minding hereby, first, under the external cloak of religion, secretly to corrupt and subvert God's true religion within the kirk; and afterwards, when time may serve, to become open enemies and

50 Consecrating persons or things, water, oil, salt, ointment, priests' garments, altars, temples for worship, &c. to render them holy and effectual means of annoying the devil and his agents.

51 Viz. that, being thus sanctified, they deserve a religious veneration.

52 In which the pope acts as a civil prince, and claims an unlimited power over the kingdoms of this world, particularly professed Christians.

53 In which the pope, as heading the subordinate orders of cardinals, archbishops, bishops, &c. pretends to govern the spiritual concerns of the church, as the vicar of Christ.

54 Viz. perpetual celibacy, voluntary poverty, and implicit obedience to clerical superiors.

55 Monks or friars of different orders, who have their heads shaven in different forms to mark their distinguished holiness.

56 At the council of Trent, held between 1545 and 1563, the abominations of popery were publicly and solemnly established in the name of Christ and his Spirit, and a curse, extending to all the miseries of time and eternity, denounced against every Protestant on Thursday before Easter.

57 Viz. the creed of Pope Pius the IV. formed for the full confirmation and perpetual establishment of the decrees of the council of Trent; the articles of which all that enter into office or military orders, in the Romish church are sworn to believe, maintain, and teach their people, under pain of the displeasure of Almighty God, and his holy apostles, Peter and Paul.

58 In the interpretation of Scripture, or in the dispensing the eucharist.

59 All which are sinful and superstitious:

persecutors of the same, under vain hope of the pope's dispensation, devised against the word of God, to his greater confusion, and their double condemnation in the day of the Lord Jesus. We, therefore, willing to take away all suspicion of hypocrisy, and of such double dealing with God and his kirk, protest, and call the Searcher of all hearts for witness, That our minds and hearts do fully agree with this our confession, promise, oath, and subscription; so that we are not moved with any worldly respect, but are persuaded only in our conscience, through the knowledge and love of God's true religion, imprinted in our hearts by the holy Spirit, as we shall answer to him in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed.

“And because we perceive, that the quietness and stability of our religion and kirk doth depend upon the safety and good behaviour of the king's majesty, as upon a comfortable instrument of God's mercy granted to this country, for the maintaining of his kirk, and ministration of justice among us: we protest and promise with our hearts, under the same oath, hand-writ, and pains, that we shall defend his person and authority with our goods, bodies, and lives, in the defence of Christ, his evangel, liberties of our country, ministration of justice, and punishment of iniquity, against all enemies within this realm or without, as we desire our God to be a strong and merciful defender to us in the day of our death, and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory eternally. AMEN.”

After much defection and backslidings, this covenant was renewed in a bond suited to the circumstances of the time, in the year 1638; and in the year 1643, the steadfast friends of the reformation cause in Great Britain and Ireland, being at the same time engaged in a severe conflict for civil rights and privileges, entered into a covenant, entitled, “The Solemn League and Covenant of Scotland, England, and Ireland.” The tenor whereof follows:

“WE, noblemen, barons, knights, gentlemen, citizens, burgesses, ministers of the gospel, and commons of all sorts, in the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ire-

land,¹ by the providence of God, living under one king, and being of one reformed religion, and having before our eyes the glory of God, and the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the honour and happiness of the king's majesty, and his posterity, and the true public liberty, safety, and peace of the kingdoms, wherein every ones private condition is included : and calling to mind the treacherous and bloody plots, conspiracies, attempts and practises of the enemies of God against the true religion, and professors thereof in all places, especially in these three kingdoms, ever since the reformation of religion; and how much their rage, power, and presumption, are, of late, and at this time, increased and exercised, whereof the deplorable state of the church and kingdom of Ireland, the distressed estate of the church and kingdom of England, and the dangerous estate of the church and kingdom of Scotland, are present and public testimonies; we have now at last (after other means of supplication, remonstrance, protestations, and suffering,) for the preservation of ourselves and our religion from utter ruin and destruction, according to the commendable practice of these kingdoms in former times, and the example of God's people in other nations, after mature deliberations, resolved and determined to enter into a mutual and solemn league and covenant, wherein we all subscribe, and each one of us for himself, with our hands lifted up to the Most High God, do swear :

“I. That we shall sincerely, really, and constantly, through the grace of God, endeavour, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in the church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, against our common enemies; the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches; and shall endeavour to bring the churches of God in the three kingdoms, to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, directory for worship and catechising; that

¹ It is alleged by many in this land, that none of the inhabitants of Ireland entered into the solemn league and covenant. This is far from being true, for the English parliament made an ordinance requiring the Protestants in Ireland to take the covenant; in consequence of which, about the year 1643, near one hundred thousand did enter into it. See BROWN'S HISTORY of the church in Ireland, page 313.

we, and our posterity after us, may as brethren live in faith and love; and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us.

“II. That we shall, in like manner, without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation² of popery, prelacy, (that is, church government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors, and commissaries, deans, deans and chapters, archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers, depending on that hierarchy) superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine, and the power of godliness: lest we partake in other men’s sins, and thereby be in danger to receive of their plagues; and that the Lord may be one, and his name one, in the three kingdoms.

III. “We shall with the same sincerity, reality, and constancy, in our several vocations, endeavour with our estates and lives, mutually to preserve the rights and privileges of the parliaments, and the liberties of the kingdoms; and to preserve and defend the king’s majesty, person, and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion and liberties of the kingdoms;³ that the world may bear witness with our consciences of our loyalty, and that we have no thought or intentions to diminish his majesty’s just power and greatness.

“IV. We shall also, with all faithfulness, endeavour the discovery of all such as have been, or shall be, incendiaries, malignants, or evil instruments, by hindering the reformation of religion, dividing the king from his people, or one of the kingdoms from another, or making any faction, or parties amongst the people, contrary to this league

² The extirpation spoken of, is not of popes and prelates, but popery and prelacy, (that is, church government by archbishops, &c.) not by fire and sword, but according to the word of God, every one in his place and station. It means no more than what was said by our Lord, Matt. xv. 13—“Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” The Secession church disapproves all persecution for conscience sake, and as the word is understood by some in a sanguinary sense, we do not make use of it in covenanting.

³ Our reformers did hereby swear, that as their main aim was to act, in the preservation and defence of the true religion, and liberties of the kingdom, so they were resolved to defend the king’s person and authority as far as the cause of his person and authority could consist with, and be subordinate to that main end. To allege that those who adhere to the solemn league in a suitableness to our circumstances, in these United States, are bound to the king and parliament of Great Britain, is as ridiculous as to say, that because we adhere to the Old Testament, therefore we are bound to the ceremonial law; if any obligation arise from our solemn covenants, with regard to civil government, it would apply only to the government under which we live.

and covenant; that they may be brought to public trial, and receive condign punishment, as the degree of their offences shall require or deserve, or the supreme judicatories of both kingdoms respectively, or others having power from them for that effect, shall judge convenient.

“V. And whereas the happiness of a blessed peace between these kingdoms, denied in former times to our progenitors, is by the good providence of God granted unto us, and hath been lately concluded, and settled by both parliaments; we shall each one of us, according to our place and interest, endeavour that they may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity; and that justice may be done upon the wilful opposers thereof, in the manner expressed in the preceding article.

“VI. We shall also, according to our places and callings, in the common cause of religion, liberty, and peace of the kingdoms, assist and defend all those that enter into this league and covenant, in the maintaining and pursuing thereof; and shall not suffer ourselves, directly or indirectly, by whatsoever combination, persuasion, or terror, to be divided and withdrawn from this blessed union and conjunction, whether to make defection to the contrary part, or to give ourselves to a detestable indifferency or neutrality in this cause, which so much concerneth the glory of God, the good of the kingdom, and honour of the king; but shall all the days of our lives, zealously and constantly continue therein, against all opposition, and promote the same according to our power, against all lets and impediments whatsoever; and, what we are not able ourselves to suppress or overcome, we shall reveal and make known, that it may be timely prevented, or removed: all which we shall do as in the sight of God.

“And, because these kingdoms are guilty of many sins and provocations against God, and his Son Jesus Christ, as is too manifest by our present distresses and dangers, the fruits thereof; we profess and declare before God and the world, our unfeigned desire to be humbled for our own sins, and for the sins of these kingdoms; especially that we have not, as we ought, valued the inestimable benefit of the gospel, that we have not laboured for the purity and power thereof, and that we have not endeavoured to receive Christ in our hearts, nor to walk worthy of him in our lives, which are the causes of other sins and transgressions so much abounding amongst us; and as our true

and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour for ourselves, and all others under our power and charge, both in public and in private, in all duties we owe to God and man, to amend our lives, and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation; that the Lord may turn away his wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these churches and kingdoms in truth and peace. And this covenant we make in the presence of Almighty God, the searcher of all hearts, with a true intention to perform the same, as we shall answer at that great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; most humbly beseeching the Lord to strengthen us by his Holy Spirit for this end; and to bless our desires and proceedings with such success as may be deliverance and safety to his people, and encouragement to other Christian churches, groaning under, or in danger of the yoke of antichristian tyranny to join in the same, or like association and covenant, to the glory of God, the enlargement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the peace and tranquillity of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths.”

In consequence of this very solemn engagement, jointly to defend and to promote the interests of the kingdom of Christ, against which the malice of so many enemies was then working, a Confession of Faith, a Larger and Shorter Catechism, a Form of Presbyterial Church Government, and a Directory for the Public Worship of God, were agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, with Commissioners from the church of Scotland, that, in a joint adherence to these, this union of the churches through Britain and Ireland, might be confirmed, and that they might *stand fast in one spirit, and in one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

The kingdom of Christ not being of this world, revolutions and changes in civil governments do not alter our duty as church members; “as we acknowledge that it was not only lawful, but highly expedient for the church of Scotland to enter into the most solemn engagements, as she did in the National Covenant, and in the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations, to abide by the doctrine taught, and the order established in that church; to study the preservation of the reformed religion, the removing of those corruptions and disorders which hindered its progress, and the uniting of its friends in the same pro-

fession of the faith; and to study that purity of life and conversation which becometh the gospel, so we acknowledge these engagements are still binding on us. Not that we judge every thing in the manner of covenanting used by the church of Scotland in former times a proper example for us to follow, or that we judge the form of words they used, still binding as an oath upon us. As to what may be called the civil part of these covenants, it is what we neither have, nor never had any thing to do with. Nothing of that kind has a place in the bond which our brethren in Scotland use in covenanting; they judged it improper to mix civil and religious matters in such covenants; and we are of the same mind with them.

“But that we may not be chargeable with deceiving either the world, or one another, by a general profession of adherence to these engagements of our ancestors, not explained:—1. We do more particularly declare, that, as our ancestors engaged to hold fast and defend the doctrine received by them, and by the other churches of the reformation, against those who were at that time its most remarkable enemies in Britain, viz. the Papists, and others whose zeal for Episcopal power and for superstitious ceremonies, together with their persecuting spirit, made them be justly considered as enemies to the reformation; so the same engagements lie on us to hold fast and defend the same truth, against all who now do, or afterwards may, oppose it, in that part of the world where we live.

“2. We declare, that as our ancestors engaged to study the preservation, the purity, and increase of the church of Christ in Britain; so the same engagements lie on us to study the preservation, the purity, and the increase of the church of Christ in the United States of North America, or wherever providence may order our lot.

“3. We declare, that as our ancestors engaged to assist each other in maintaining the cause of Christ against its adversaries, to study personal reformation, and to perform the duties incumbent on them, as members of civil society, towards superiors, inferiors, or equals; so the same engagements lie on us to walk, in all these respects, worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

“4. Finally, We declare, that it is our duty, relying on the grace that is in Christ Jesus, to engage jointly in a public solemn covenant, as our ancestors did, to endeavour a faithful performance of these and all other duties which

the word of God requires, especially of those duties which are most opposed, and the performance of which church-members are most apt to neglect, or through fear of reproach, and hurt to their worldly interest, to be deterred from."*

The Associate Presbytery (now the General Associate Synod) in Scotland, consisting at that time of about twenty ministers, did, in the year 1743, renew these covenants in the following bond, to which was prefixed an acknowledgment of sins :

“ We, all, and every one us, though sensible of the deceitfulness and unbelief of our own hearts, and however frequently perplexed with doubts and fears anent our actual believing; yet desiring to essay, in the Lord’s strength, and in obedience to his command, to glorify God—by believing his word of grace contained in his covenant of promise; and in the faith of his promise, to devote ourselves unto the Lord in a covenant of duty: WE DO, with our hands lifted up to the MOST HIGH GOD, hereby profess, and before God, angels, and men, solemnly declare, That through the grace of God, and according to the measure of his grace given unto us, we do, with our whole hearts, take hold of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as the only propitiation for our sins; his Righteousness, as the only foundation of our access to and acceptance with God; his Covenant of free and rich promises, as our only charter for the heavenly inheritance; his Word, for our perfect and only rule of faith and practice; his SPIRIT, for our alone guide, to lead us into all truth, revealed in his holy word—unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. We avouch the LORD to be OUR GOD. And, in the strength of his promised grace, we promise and swear by the GREAT NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD; that we shall walk in his way, keep his judgments and commandments, and hearken to his voice: And particularly that we shall, by the Lord’s grace, continue and abide in the profession, faith, and obedience of the aforesaid true reformed religion—in doctrine, worship, Presbyterial church government and discipline; and that we shall, according to our several stations, places, and callings—contend and testify against all contrary evils, errors, and corruptions; particularly, Popery, Prelacy, Deism, Arianism, Arminianism, and eve-

* See Declaration and Testimony, page 70, 71.

by other error subversive of the doctrine of grace; also Independency, Latitudinarian tenets, and other evils named in the above confession of sins.

“In like manner, we promise and swear, that, by all means which are lawful and warrantable for us, according to the word of God, the approved and received standards of this church, and our known principles—we shall, in our several stations and callings, endeavour the reformation of religion in England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God. And to promote and advance our covenanted conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, Form of Church Government, and Directory for Worship—as these were received by this church.

“And in regard we are taught by the word of God, and bound by our covenants, National and Solemn League, to live together in the fear of God, and in love to one another, and to encourage one another in the work and cause of the Lord; and that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world: Therefore, in dependence on the Lord’s grace and strength, we, in the same manner, do promise and swear, That we shall, in our several places and callings, encourage and strengthen one another’s hands in pursuing the end and design of this our solemn Oath and Covenant; and that we shall endeavour a life and conversation becoming the gospel of Christ: And that, in our personal callings, and particular families, we shall study to be good examples to one another of godliness and righteousness; and of every duty that we owe to God and man: And that we shall not give up ourselves to a detestable indifferency and neutrality in the cause of Christ; but denying ourselves and our own things, we shall, above all things, seek the honour of God, and the good of his cause and people: And that, through grace, forsaking the counsels of flesh and blood, and not leaning upon carnal confidences, we shall endeavour to depend upon the Lord, to walk by the rule of his word, and to hearken to his voice by his servants. In all which, professing our own weakness, we earnestly pray God, who is the Father of mercies, through his Son Jesus Christ—to be merciful unto us; and to enable us, by the power of his HOLY SPIRIT, that we may do our duty, unto the praise of his grace in the churches. *Amen.*”

Since that time none have been admitted by that Synod to the ministry, who have not entered into that bond. Such of the people under their inspection, as have willingly offered themselves, and were found to have a competent measure of knowledge, to be free of scandal, and to have a life and conversation becoming the gospel, have been admitted to enter into it. None have been excluded from church communion, for not joining in that duty, except those who were known to be despisers, contemners, and, slights of it. To admit persons of this description into our fellowship, would be to defeat the great design of our covenanting, which is to unite church members in the same confession of the truth, to the glory of God, and their own mutual advantage.

Thus the church of Scotland did long ago engage itself in a very solemn manner to the Lord; and though manifold backslidings, and fearful breaches of covenant have taken place in that church, yet, through the mercy of the Lord, a testimony has still been maintained against the backsliding party; a remnant has been preserved in times of general defection; and one generation after another have been appearing as witnesses for God, acknowledging, and at certain seasons renewing, their covenant obligations to him.

Though we are removed far from that place of the world where our fathers served the Lord, we have the same encouragement to trust in him which they had, and we are under the same obligations which they were under to be steadfast in his cause, and faithful in his service; and these obligations, primarily arising from the law of God, have been directly acknowledged by us, in professing our adherence to the principles of the church of Scotland, as they were stated in times of reformation, and contended for by the Lord's witnesses in times of backsliding.

The Lord's way is described in his word, and marked by the footsteps of his people: Concerning it, this direction is given, *Stand ye in the way, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls.* Jer. vi. 26.

Acknowledgment of Sins.

THEREFORE, in obedience to the call of God, who is saying, *Return, ye backsliding children;* in reliance on his promise, in which he is saying, *I will heal your backslidings;* and after the commendable example of his people in former times, we desire to be found returning to him, acknowledging that *we have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly,* Psalm cvi. 6.

The mercy of the Lord toward his church, and toward that part of it with which we stand more immediately connected has been exceedingly great. *We will mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord; according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them; according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses.* He brought our fathers out of the horrible darkness of the antichristian kingdom, into his marvellous light, by making known the glorious gospel of his Son Jesus Christ among them. He gave them pastors according to his own heart; men zealous for God, and ready to face danger, distress, and death in his service. The word was preached in much purity, and with the Holy Spirit from heaven; and though enemies were afflicting the church of God in the land of our fathers from its infancy, yet they prevailed not against it. The power of the mighty failed, the Lord brought down their strength to the earth. The wise were taken in their own craftiness; the Lord turned their counsels into foolishness.

This deliverance from the damnable heresies, the horrible idolatries, and the cruel bondage of the Romish antichrist, the Lord wrought for our fathers, while they were in no wise better, or more deserving of that favour than other nations, whom he at the same time passed by, which we desire to acknowledge to the praise of the glory of his grace. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* Rom. xi. 33.

The Lord magnified his mercy to the isles of Britain and Ireland, particularly to the church of Scotland, in carrying on his work, till its purity in doctrine, its good or-

der in worship and government, and its reformation from the Romish superstitions and abuses, made it a praise in the earth: Nor ought we to forget, that he manifested great kindness after a general apostacy, by raising up a body of witnesses, who appeared against it, and with whom we in this land are particularly connected.

But our fathers, though they saw, yet the greater part of them understood not the works of the Lord; they remembered not the years of the right hand of the Most High. In the day when he delivered them, they provoked him to anger. Some of them lusting after evil things, set their face to go back to that wretched servitude, out of which the Lord had mercifully and wonderfully brought them: Many sought their own things rather than the things which are Christ's: and many expressed an aversion to submit themselves to the order of the Lord's house. In all which evils we, their children, have been too much inclined to follow them: Many among us have returned, if not to Popery, yet to some one or other of the abominations of Popery; particularly those abjured errors of the Romish antichrist, which stand in a manifest opposition to the doctrine of free grace through Jesus Christ. The interests of the kingdom of Christ are regarded by few, except in so far as men suppose a pretended regard to these will be subservient to their own worldly interests. The Lord's commandments are counted grievous. The rules he hath given to direct us concerning the worship, discipline, and government of his church, are generally neglected or opposed; and in their place are substituted the devices of men. Mercies of ancient date being graciously continued, are new to us every day. The streams of the water of life which the Lord made to break forth among our fathers, still flow to us; but we have not been thankful, and have been disposed to observe lying vanities, forsaking our own mercy.

The Lord brought our fathers under solemn covenant engagements to be his people, to abide in the profession they had made of his truth, to walk in his ways, and to stand by each other in opposing the abominations of antichrist, in defending themselves from the bloody rage of the Popish faction, and in promoting the reformation of religion according to the rule of the word: But a great part of them lied unto God with their tongues, for their heart was not right with them; temptation arising soon

made this manifest; they were not steadfast in his covenant; fear of the cross of Christ, and love to this present world, together with a deceived heart, turned multitudes aside from following the Lord. And though we in this age have not been exposed to such fiery trials as they were; yet we have in like manner broken the Lord's bonds, and cast his cords from us. These solemn engagements to the most high God, were ignominiously burnt in the last age; and they are ignominiously buried under manifold reproaches in this age. Our fathers turned aside like a bow that shoots deceitfully. Falling from the good profession they had made, they submitted, many of them willingly, to the usurped authority of princes and prelates over the house of God, to rites and ceremonies of men's devising, to the ministry of those who were not sent of God, or who were not faithful in his service, and to oaths and engagements inconsistent with the solemn covenant engagements they had come under to him, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords; and these iniquities are either approved, or made light of, by the body of this generation.

When our fathers turned aside from the right ways of the Lord, whosoever among them departed from evil made himself a prey. Those who openly testified against the iniquities of the times, who kept the word of Christ's patience, and who confessed the truth which his enemies denied, viz. that he is the only King and Head of his church, had trials of cruel mockings, of imprisonments, of tortures, of banishments, and not a few of them were persecuted unto death; and many of the present generation are bringing the blood of these witnesses of Jesus on their head, by reproaching them as fools who suffered in vain, and by speaking evil of the cause in defence of which they laid down their lives.

The Lord hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. It would have been just with him to have left our fathers under that yoke of Episcopal tyranny, which they had so sinfully taken upon their necks; yea, as by this apostacy they had set their faces towards the antichristian church of Rome, and were once and again at the very borders of that kingdom of darkness, it would have been just with him to have left them to the will of those who were intent to draw them into it; but *he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea, many a time he turned*

his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. He rose for their help, and delivered them from those who were too strong for them. They had, and we have, good cause to sing that song, *If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord who hath not given us a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth, Psal. cxxiv.* But many never observed, and others soon forgot, the mighty works of the Lord: after they had rest they did evil again before him. The privileges transmitted to us as the fruits of these deliverances which the Lord wrought for his church in former times, are not, we confess, esteemed and improved as they ought to be by us; we have not been duly humbled for the iniquity of our fathers; we have been adding to the roll of our public sins, and increasing the causes of the Lord's controversy, by the hand we have had in the trespass of our own day. The judgments which our sins deserved, have been turned away, and mercies have been multiplied to us. The Lord hath smitten us, but not so as to make a full end; he hath stayed his rough wind in the day of his east wind: yet for all this we have sinned still.

We further confess, that such of us as have continued to acknowledge the lawfulness of the covenant engagements, already mentioned, and the perpetual obligation of them upon us in this church, have not kept them duly in mind, nor walked according to them, framing our lives according to that holy profession we have made. Many of us have first slighted, and then more directly contemned the oath we were under to the Lord God of our fathers. Because of this perfidy, a dark cloud hangs over us. *O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble: thou hast broken it; heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh. Thou hast shewed thy people hard things; thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee: that it may be displayed because of the truth, Psal. lx. 1—5.*

We also confess our negligence in not labouring more in our places and stations to prepare the way for renewing our solemn covenant engagements in this land, where the ends of them are so much opposed by apostacy from the faith of Christ, by a multitude of heresies, by the prevailing of a lukewarm spirit, and by a general contempt of the commandments of the Lord. The breaches and scatterings which have lately taken place, by which we are reduced to such a small and weak handful, we acknowledge to be a sad fruit of this negligence, and a warning to us to be on our guard against it in time to come.

Endeavouring to search and try our way, we find just cause to confess that innumerable evils have compassed us about. The great and leading sin of this, as of former generations living within the bounds of the visible church, is the rejection of Jesus Christ the Lord, who is come to save sinners. They have forsaken him who is the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. By unbelief they turn away from the only Saviour, count the God of truth a liar, and seal their own condemnation. The multitude are manifestly treading in the footsteps of the unbelieving Jews, who despised Christ; and we all desire to take shame and confusion of face to ourselves, as partakers with them *who esteemed him not*. That knowledge of him, for the excellency of which Paul counted all things loss, is greatly wanting among us. The faith of many who profess to believe on him, is feigned; for they have not their fruit unto holiness: and real Christians are not strong in faith, giving glory to God: their leanness testifies against them.

We confess, that as to an humbling sense of our weakness and emptiness, a constant and entire reliance upon the God of all grace, a cheerful submission to his will, a fervent zeal for his glory, and a habitual conformity to his word in our practice, we come far short of what the Lord requires, of what is attainable by believers, and of what many of the saints who have gone before us have attained. We have dragged along very heavily; while the lively faith of the love of Christ would have sweetly constrained us to run in the way of his commandments.

The land we live in is full of sin against the holy One of Israel. The Lord's day is almost every where profaned: the morality of it, is by many denied, his name is awfully blasphemed; his word is neglected; the institutions

of his house are despised. Many worship him not at all; and many in ways of their own devising. The truth of the gospel is quite unknown to multitudes; and by others it is denied or perverted. A deluge of abominable heresies overflow the land, and the blackest vices either enter with them, or follow after them. Very few lament the spiritual plagues which are wasting the generation; yea, rather being accustomed to see the evils mentioned, and others of the same kind, we have lost a due sense of the hatefulness of them. Because iniquity hath abounded, the love of many hath waxed cold. It is a rare thing to find one among us whose exercise is like that of him who, appealing to God, said, *I beheld the transgressors and was grieved, because they kept not thy word*, Psal. cxix. 158.

The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that joyful sound, is yet heard in our land. Our candlestick has not, as that of other apostatizing churches, been removed out of its place. But as to many, the word preached has not profited them, not being mixed with faith in them who heard it: it has been a savour of death unto death to them.— Though the Lord hath called them earnestly and frequently: though he hath spoken to them by his messengers, rising early and sending them; though they, more hardened in sin, have farther departed from him: Yet the corruption of their nature, that root of bitterness, so springs up in many even of those who daily attend on the ministry of the word, as to shew that the strength of sin was never broken in them. And though the Lord has made the word effectual to the salvation of some; yet we confess, that, in us all, there remains an enmity against *the exceeding riches of his grace, which he hath manifested in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus*, Ephes. ii. 7. We have rebelled against the counsel of the Most High; we have loved strangers, and in the obstinacy and perverseness of our heart, said, that after them we would go.

One of Satan's principal devices is, to render the ministry of the gospel contemptible: and, in the righteous judgment of God, he has been suffered to practice it very much in this land, to the ruin of an ignorant and careless generation, who regard not the institutions and the order of Christ's house. Many take upon them to carry the Lord's message, concerning whom he says, *Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies and by their lightness;*

yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord, Jer. xxiii. 32. The church has not called them; but in the height of their presumption they have judged themselves fit for the work of the ministry: though while they desire to teach others, they neither understand what they say, nor whereof they affirm. Knowing that they neither had nor could obtain the ordinary call which ministers of the gospel have in the choice of the people, in their ordination after trial, and ordination by a presbytery, they have pretended an extraordinary, or immediate call, by the Spirit of God; but *they have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith; and he hath not sent them, Ezek. xiii. 6.* It is the sin of multitudes in this land, that they have hearkened to such, while the gospel of Christ could obtain no place among them. Thus they have verified what was foretold by the Holy Spirit, *The time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables, 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.* Thus the blind lead the blind, till they both fall into the ditch. *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land, the prophets prophesy falsely, Jer. v. 30, 31.* And one sort of deceivers pave the way for another; and the people love to have it so. We confess, that this evil being common, though on this account it ought to have been so much the more lamented, yet it has seemed light to us: and we have not expressed a due sense of the injury done by it to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, in suitable endeavours that the snare laid by these fowlers might be broken, and the souls they have caught delivered.

Instead of being ready to forsake all for Christ, many in this land, without duly considering whether the necessity was such as would justify them in the sight of God, have left his church, his ordinances, and the society of his people: thinking to better their worldly circumstances, they have removed out of the hearing of the gospel, and few of them have manifested any proper concern to enjoy it again. Hence their children, growing up in ignorance of the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, either live as heathens, or become a ready prey to seducers.

As we desire to lament the manifest neglect and contempt of the means of grace in the land, so we acknowl-

edge, that in this, as in other articles of the Lord's controversy with the generation, we dare not plead innocence: we have not duly valued the privileges belonging to the visible church, nor have we been so desirous as we ought to dwell where the Lord Jesus dwells. When at any time we have been situated far from public ordinances, and could not assemble with the Israel of God, to praise him in the gates of Zion, which he loves more than all the dwellings of Jacob, we have had little or nothing at all of that thirst for God, for the living God, which has made his people, in such circumstances, cry out, in the words of the Psalmist, *When shall I come and appear before God, Psalm xliii. 2. O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary, Psal. lxiii. 1, 2, 3.* Farther, we have done little; not what we might and ought to have done, for maintaining the ordinances of Christ in their purity, where they already are, and for promoting the knowledge of his name in dark corners of the land.

The discipline and government of the church, as taught in the word of God, and maintained, against the craft and malice of many powerful adversaries, by our ancestors, is become an object of contempt to the body of the present generation. The Lord's vineyard is exposed to the spoiling of all who pass by, the hedge thereof being broken down; and it is by many considered as belonging to the happiness of our times, that men are generally indifferent about these things. The divine institution of Presbyterial church government is denied by not a few, who still bear the name of Presbyterians. And to those who have erred from the faith, those who are irregular and offensive in their practice, yea, to the visibly wicked, the seals of the covenant of grace are administered; contrary to the commandment of the Lawgiver and Head of the church, who saith, *Give not that which is holy to the dogs, Matt. vii. 6.* Thus, many have been hardened in their evil way, by men of whom the Lord gives this account. *They say still unto them who despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you, Jer. xxiii. 17.* The exhortation has been forgot or contemned by many bearing the character of gospel ministers, which is directed by the Spirit of God, to every one

in that office, *If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth*, Jer. xv. 19. We confess, as to ourselves, that we have not been duly grieved for this evil; nor have we laboured as we ought, in our places and stations, to prevent the spreading of it. To many among us, the yoke of Christ has been a burden, and they have been restrained from evil rather by a fear of rendering themselves liable to church censure, than by a fear of offending God; and have been disposed to join with the world in revellings, in drunkenness, in filthy or profane conversation, and in unjust practices, when they imagined their sin might be hid from the courts of the Lord's house. We desire, each of us, to take shame and confusion of face unto ourselves, according to the hand we have had in these and other trespasses, by which the anger of the Lord hath been kindled against us.

The sacraments of the New Testament are slighted by many in this land; some absolutely deny them to be of standing use in the church; and a multitude of ignorant persons consider them rather as mere ceremonies, without meaning, than as visible signs and seals of the covenant of grace. We confess, that we have not observed and improved, as we ought, the grace of our Lord Jesus, signified, represented, and sealed to the children of the promise, in the sacrament of baptism. The fountain opened to the vile, and the promise of God confirmed to us, in this ordinance, in which he is saying, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you*, have been much neglected by us. Therefore are our spots so many, and so loathsome.

An earnest desire to meet with the Lord at his holy table, has not been manifested by us, in a careful examination of our state and exercise, according to the word; in fervent and frequent supplication at the throne of grace, that we might obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need; and in flying from all our labours and frames to the Lord Jesus, as the sure refuge of the guilty, God having set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood. Therefore, that ordinance has not been so sweet and so useful to us, as it is to those who, by a lively faith, discern the Lord's body. Our profiting by such solemn occasions has not appeared, in humility, in thankfulness, in fixedness of heart trusting on the Lord, in care to avoid all

appearance of evil, in readiness to do the commandments of the Lord Jesus, who died for us, *that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him*; and in desires after that full and uninterrupted communion with him which the saints have in glory.

The instruction of youth is grievously neglected in this land. Many, being ignorant and heathenish themselves, take no thought about the spiritual interests of their posterity; and many, unmindful of the solemn engagements they came under, when they publicly devoted their children to the Lord in baptism, have not been careful to season their minds with the knowledge of the truth, concerning the ruin of mankind in the first Adam, the grace of God manifested in Christ Jesus, and the duty required of us; and, instead of restraining them from that way which seems right in the eyes of foolish youth, (but of which the end is death,) many parents, unfaithful to God, and injurious to the souls of their own children, have readily yielded to their joining with vain persons, and to their hearing the instruction which causeth to err. An evil example is set before children, by parents who neglect family and secret prayer, remember not the Lord's day to keep it holy, and do in no wise frame their lives according to the rule of the word; and children, following their parents in carelessness and wickedness, at length exceed them: so that one generation rises up worse than another. We all confess that, as heads, or as members of families, we have failed in our duty, and have not been concerned, as we ought, that race after race should serve the Lord. We confess, that the ignorance, vanity, and aversion to godliness, which prevail among the rising generation, is a lamentable fruit of this negligence, and a spiritual plague, by which the Lord is punishing the sin of such as neglected the proper season for instructing them, and is one of these signs which give us just cause to fear, lest there be a more dreadful outpouring of the Lord's wrath, than has hitherto taken place in this land.

The Spirit of prayer remains with few in this generation. The greater part absolutely neglect the duty; and others go through a form of it, rather as a burthensome task, and as a work which they imagine will merit salvation to them, than as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked sinners, taking hold of the promise of God, and pleading it as the ground of their hope. We confess, that

the sin cleaving to our prayers is more than enough to condemn us. Ignorance, self-confidence, wavering thoughts, want of due reverence of God, and unbelief, which counts him a liar, have run through our prayers, and have rendered these, like our other services, so defective and impure. Farther, we have frequently grieved the Holy Spirit, and quenched his motions, so that we have been much left alone in this duty, have become careless in the performance of it, and have not waited on God for an answer to our requests; and finding the exercise, thus managed, unprofitable to us, we have been tempted, if not persuaded, to lay it aside.

The earthliness of our minds has manifested itself many ways; particularly in vain and unprofitable conversation on the Lord's day; attending ordinances with little concern about the presence and blessing of the Lord, we have not heard his voice, nor seen his glory, nor enjoyed that refreshing communion with him, which has been the attainment of many of the saints who have gone before us. Impressions made on our minds by the word have not been retained. Convictions of sin have too frequently ended in carnal security. We have often been as the door on its hinges, moving backward and forward, yet still remaining in the same place; though favoured with a greater abundance of the means of instruction, than almost any age or generation before us.

The Lord hath given us a large and good land, and hath preserved us in the enjoyment of many valuable privileges; the continuance of which is the more to be esteemed, as it is a remarkable instance of divine goodness, and long suffering towards a very guilty people. But like Israel, we have not discerned the hand that distributes these blessings to us. Many waste the bounties of providence in drunkenness and revellings; and set their hearts chiefly on earthly things, making these their god. Few are humbly and thankfully acknowledging the goodness of God in providing for their outward subsistence; or patiently bearing the rod, when afflicted by worldly losses; and many are sinning so much the more, according to the abundance bestowed on them; their table has become a snare, and their prosperity a trap.

Many lamentable instances of hypocrisy and instability have appeared among us; offences have abounded; great occasion has been given to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. Thus common prejudices against the cause and

testimony of Jesus have been strengthened, and a careless ungodly generation hardened in sin. Yet after all the injury we have seen done to the interests of religion by the untenderness and unholiness of others, we have not duly attended to the exhortation of the Holy Spirit, *Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.* We have many times been puffed up in the conceit of our own innocence and steadfastness, and have not been grieved when we saw transgressors injuring the church, destroying their own souls, and provoking the Lord to anger. Neither has the out-breaking of sin in others, led us to those humbling views of the deceit and desperate wickedness of our own hearts, which it ought to have done.

Instead of labouring as we ought for the good of our neighbours and of our brethren, we have often been a snare to them. Out of our own hearts have proceeded sinful words and the poison flowing from our tongues has infected others; there has been little in our speech and behaviour which could profit others; and much of a pernicious tendency. Many watch rather to triumph over the falls of their brethren, than to prevent them. Malignity is often visible in hard speeches and ill-grounded surmises. The love which thinketh no evil, which envieth not, which seeketh not its own, is scarcely to be found.

We confess, that the light of the gospel having shined so brightly in this church, and we have come under so many solemn engagements to abide in the profession of the truth, to bear witness to it in the midst of those who oppose or despise it, and to frame our lives according to it, our sin is exceeding great before the Lord. He hath many times warned us, chastised us, and, contrary to men's expectation, raised us up when we were brought very low for our iniquities; yet, like our fathers, after we had rest we have done evil again before him. Thus as our transgressions are most heinous in the sight of God, he might justly make our plagues wonderful. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* Our help is from the Lord who made heaven and earth. Desiring to lay hold on this help as brought near to every one of us in the promise, *He will not suffer thy feet to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber:* we proceed thus openly, and with one consent, to give ourselves to the Lord. *We will go in the strength of the Lord God; we will make*

mention of thy righteousness, of thine only, O God, our strength and our Redeemer.

Thus, endeavouring to have the eye of faith fixed on the Lord Jesus, who taketh away the sins of the world, and to loath ourselves in our own sight, for our iniquities and our abominations already mentioned, together with the other evils of our heart and life, which are more than can be numbered; and being persuaded that it is our duty in obedience to the Lord, and according to the commendable practice of his people in former times, in opposition to the course of a generation, who have deeply revolted from the God of their fathers, directly, publicly, and jointly, to engage ourselves by oath and covenant on his side; we now, therefore, agree to enter into the following solemn covenant engagement:

The Solemn Covenant Engagement unto Duties.

WE, all and every one of us, though weak in ourselves, yet knowing that we can do all things through CHRIST who strengtheneth us, in reliance on the grace contained in the covenant of promise, as sufficient for us in devoting ourselves to the LORD in a covenant of duty; We do, with OUR HANDS LIFTED UP to the MOST HIGH GOD, hereby profess, and, before God, angels, and men, solemnly declare, that we desire to give glory to the Lord, by believing with the heart, confessing with the mouth, and subscribing with the hand, that in him we have righteousness and strength. Desiring to be found in CHRIST, we acknowledge him to be the only propitiation for our sins; and through divine aid, according to the measure of grace given unto us, we do with the whole heart, take hold of his surety righteousness, as the only ground of our access to, and acceptance with GOD; we set our seal to all the promises of GOD, which are in him YEA, and in him AMEN, receiving them as our charter for the heavenly inheritance; we avow his word to be our perfect and only rule of faith and practice: and, confessing the blindness of our minds, through which we are inclined to err from the right ways of the LORD, we take his SPIRIT for our only guide, to lead us, in the use of appointed means, into all truth revealed in his holy word, renouncing all these pretended new revelations of the SPIRIT, and traditions of men, which add

to it, or take away from it. We avouch the Lord to be our God; and in the strength of his promised grace, we **PROMISE** and **SWEAR**, by the great and holy name of the **LORD OUR GOD**, that we shall unfeignedly endeavour to walk in his ways, to keep his commandments, and to hearken to his voice, in love to him who hath delivered us out of the hand of our enemies; and to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

And seeing many at this time in a state of progressive apostacy from the cause and testimony of **JESUS CHRIST**, and many snares are laid to draw us after them; though sensible that we are in ourselves as liable to go astray as any, yet, entreating the Lord to hold up our goings in his paths, that our footsteps slip not, and trusting that through his mercy we shall not be moved for ever, we do solemnly **ENGAGE** before Him who liveth for ever and ever, that in every place where we may in providence be called to reside, and during all the days of our life, we shall continue steadfast in the faith, profession, and obedience of the true **REFORMED RELIGION**, in **DOCTRINE**, **WORSHIP**, **PRESBYTERIAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT** and **DISCIPLINE**, as the same is held forth to us in the word of God, and received in this church, and testified for by it, against the manifold errors* and Latitudinarian schemes† prevailing in the United States of North America.

* The errors or heresies alluded to here and in the preceding acknowledgment of sins, are such as the following: That the light within men, or conscience, is the rule of faith and practice; that there was no proper covenant made with the first Adam, as the head and representative of his posterity; nor any proper imputation of his first transgression to them; that there is no such thing as original sin, or the corruption of our whole nature; but that all men have a natural capacity of willing and doing what is spiritually good and pleasing to God; that the election of such as shall be saved is not to be ascribed to God's good pleasure alone, but also to his foresight of their faith and good works; that Christ died for all mankind to obtain a possibility of salvation, or some other good for them; but not as a proper surety in the stead of a certain number given him of the Father, to obtain the absolute certainty of their actual and everlasting salvation; that persons may truly believe in Christ, or have a faith of the same kind or nature with the faith of God's elect, and yet finally perish: that there is no such thing as final destruction or everlasting damnation for any of the human race; that the offer of salvation in the gospel is made to none but awakened and penitent sinners, that no assurance or confidence, that we in particular, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved, belongs to the nature of saving faith; and other errors specified in the **DECLARATION** and **TESTIMONY** for the **DOCTRINE** and **ORDER** of the **CHURCH** of **CHRIST**, published by the **PRESBYTERY**.

† Latitudinarians are such as hold, that the opened and avowed errors, or evil practices of persons who, on other accounts, are charitably judged

And, in regard we are under the most solemn obligations, by the word of GOD, and by vows agreeable to it, lying on us in this church, to study the advancement of the kingdom of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, the good of his people, and the uniting of their hearts and minds in his service, we do, in the presence of GOD, who searcheth the heart, DECLARE our resolution, through his grace, to watch against these snares which either are or may be laid to draw us and our brethren into that defection from the LORD, and into that detestable neutrality in his cause, which prevail at this time: And, knowing that the cross and reproach of CHRIST must lie on us in following him, we shall, the LORD assisting us, go forward in his way, taking heed to ourselves, lest we be deterred from it by the revilings of men, or seduced from it by their fair speeches; and shall sincerely and constantly labour, in our places and stations, by all means which are of divine appointment, to promote the knowledge of CHRIST in this land, and to maintain the purity of doctrine and order in his church; each, and, all of us, according as the LORD calls us, endeavouring that those who are known and declared enemies to the truth, may neither be received into our fellowship, nor retained in it. We engage, in the strength of the LORD, to follow that peace which is founded upon an agreement in the truth, that we may

to be united to Christ, should not hinder them from being admitted to church communion, and to the sacramental seals of the new covenant. According to this scheme, a church can bear no consistent testimony against such errors or evil practices: nay, in a short time, she may have no members, but the approvers of them; such as having as free access to her communion as any other: according to this scheme, no church, as such, can hold fast what she has, as to doctrine, worship, discipline, or government; for surely a church cannot be said to hold in these respects, what she does not require her own members to hold. Latitudinarian terms of communion are wider than those which Christ himself has laid down in his word, by which means a door is set open for Satan to sow his tares. There are various sorts of Latitudinarians; 1. Some are for comprehending in one church communion, all who profess to believe in Jesus as the true Messiah, and to receive the Scriptures as the rule of faith, laying aside all creeds and confessions of faith. 2. Some are for comprehending in one church communion all Protestants, whether they be Episcopalians, Independents, Baptists, or Presbyterians; asserting, that to decline church communion with persons on account of the tenets by which any of these denominations are distinguished, is bigotry and party zeal. 3. Some plead for church communion with all who bear the Presbyterian name, notwithstanding their different opinions about doctrine, worship, and government; and notwithstanding that they refuse to join in a testimony for Presbyterian church order and government as a divine institution, against Episcopacy and Independency. 4. Some are for a sort of occasional communion with certain denominations of Christians with whom they refuse to have fixed communion.

stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; and to beware of every thing that has a tendency to break this desirable harmony and profitable communion among the members of CHRIST'S mystical body; and for this end we shall endeavour to mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which we have received, and avoid them; and shall take heed, lest, at any time, we be drawn into foolish and unlearned questions, which serve only to produce strife, or, by bitter and unadvised words, hurt the cause of truth, while we profess to defend it.

And as, through the corruption of our nature and the temptations of Satan, together with the influence of evil example, and the ensnaring councils of those who are themselves the servants of sin, we often fail in our practice, neglecting what the LORD requires, and doing that which he forbids; we profess, before GOD, that there is no relief for us but in JESUS, who saves his people from their sins, having given himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. That we may be set free from condemnation, delivered from the power of sin, and made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, we desire to depend wholly on the grace of GOD, which bringeth salvation; and which teacheth us, that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great GOD and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. And, in the sight of GOD, the Judge of all, we solemnly engage, that we shall, in the strength of his promised grace, study reformation in heart and life; endeavouring to have always a conscience void of offence towards GOD and towards man, attending to the duties enjoined in both tables of the law, and setting a good example to each other: that we may thus, by well-doing, put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and glorify GOD in our bodies and spirits, which are his. And when sinners entice us, we shall not, through the grace of GOD, consent to them, nor follow a multitude to do evil; avoiding, as far as possible, all occasions and temptations which may draw us to a joining with others in sin, we shall study to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise.

Farther, knowing that through many tribulations we

must enter into the kingdom of God, and that all who live godly in CHRIST JESUS, must lay their account to endure less or more persecution from this evil world, depending on God as a very present help in trouble, we shall, through his aid, study patience under the rod, meekness of spirit towards such as may injure us, and sympathy towards all men in distress, but especially those of the household of faith. In all which, calling God to witness the uprightness of our intentions, but professing our own weakness, we earnestly pray, that he who is the FATHER of mercies, may, through his Son JESUS CHRIST, be merciful to us, and strengthen us by the power of his HOLY SPIRIT, to do our duty, to the praise of his grace in the churches. AMEN.

Attested,

WILLIAM MARSHALL, *Moderator.*

JOHN ANDERSON, *Presbytery Clerk.*

[Agreeable to the design of the preceding Act, the above Solemn Covenant has been entered into by the Associate Presbytery, and by several of the congregations belonging to them; others of them are preparing to follow the example soon; and it is expected that all of them will join in this solemn work in due time.]

ACT

of the

Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania,

Concerning the Admission of Church Members to Communion, passed at Philadelphia, April 28, 1791.

THE PRESBYTERY having taken into their serious consideration, a petition some time ago laid before them, requesting more particular direction about the way in which ministers and sessions ought to proceed in the admission of such as apply to them for being received into church fellowship:

DECLARE, that though there is so much said in our DECLARATION and TESTIMONY, as may, with proper application to particular cases, be sufficient; yet, as far as possible to prevent disorder, and to assist all concerned in this matter, the Presbytery agree to transmit a copy of the following to the several sessions under their inspection:

The general rule of admission to the seals of the covenant, is a profession and a practice agreeable to the Lord's word. More than this none have a right to demand, and if less is accounted sufficient, we act not uprightly in the cause and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, who solemnly charged us to teach his church, *To observe all things whatsoever he has commanded us.*

In agreeableness to this general rule, the following particular rules ought to be attended to:

I. That in congregations where there is a session, none ought to be admitted to communion but by the session constituted.

II. That the profession of the faith required of those who desire communion with us, shall be an adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Form of Presbyterial Church Government, and Directory for the Public Worship of God, as these

are received and witnessed for by us, in our Declaration and Testimony: and also, that they profess their approbation of the said Declaration and Testimony for the Doctrine and Order of the Church of Christ.

III. That they profess their resolution, through grace, to continue in the faith; according to the profession they now make of it; and be subject to the order and discipline of the house of God; to be diligent in their attendance on public ordinances; to make conscience of secret prayer; of keeping up the worship of God in their families morning and evening, and of promoting the knowledge of Christ and his truths—as by other means, so more especially by a holy and spiritual conversation.

IV. That particular care ought to be taken that none be admitted to sealing ordinances, who are scandalous in their lives, or known contemners of any moral duty.

The Presbytery earnestly recommend to sessions, who are courts of Christ's house, to imitate him in condescending to the weakness of his people; and if it appears, that persons who apply for admission to sealing ordinances, are disposed to use the means of knowledge, are desirous of instruction, closing with the end of our association, according to the measure of their knowledge, and concerned to be kept in the Lord's way; though such persons may be, in many respects, of small attainments, and of little knowledge, or utterance: yet they are by no means to be excluded from our communion, but rather invited and heartily received, that such promising beginnings may be encouraged.

Attested,

WILLIAM MARSHALL, *Moderator.*

JOHN ANDERSON, *Presbytery Clerk.*

ACT

of the

Associate Synod of Scotland,

*Defining the Connection of the Associate Presbytery of
Pennsylvania, with said Synod.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE misapprehensions entertained by some, concerning our connection with our brethren of the General Associate Synod in Scotland, rendered it necessary that this connection should be particularly and distinctly stated; so that none might be at a loss to know how far it extended, and that misunderstandings concerning it might not arise among ourselves.—The Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania consulted the Associate Synod on that head in 1786, and the Synod agreed to the articles as here printed; which being laid before the Associate Presbytery, Nov. 3, 1788, they were unanimous in declaring their satisfaction with them, and their resolution to maintain the connection subsisting between them and their brethren, according to the terms of these articles.

W. MARSHALL.

At Edinburgh, May 7, 1788.

THE Synod having taken into consideration, an Act of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, dated June 2d, 1786, declaring the nature of their connection with this Synod; and also sundry other papers, transmitted by that Presbytery, relative to the same subject: and desiring to remove and prevent all misunderstandings, which might now, or afterwards, mar a profitable intercourse between those in this country—who are endeavouring to bear witness to the truth of the gospel against the common defec-tion, and those in North America—who are disposed to join with them in the same cause:—They declare, That the subordination of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylv-ania to this Synod, has, from the beginning, been no more than a scriptural union, according to the plan of Presbyter-ial church government: That, being wholly of a spiritual

nature, it never did affect any in their civil rights or interests; and consequently, that there was not the smallest ground or the adversaries of that Presbytery to reproach them, as subordinate to, and under the control of, a foreign jurisdiction; as holding the estates, that is, the churches they possess, at the will of persons beyond seas: That, in answering applications made to them from that part of the world, this Synod has been at no small trouble in sending ministers, and in procuring charitable contributions for defraying the expenses of such missions: That, in what they have done, they have studied a regard to the interests of the kingdom of Christ; neither receiving nor expecting any benefit, whatsoever, in return, farther than the testimony of their own consciences, bearing witness of their not being unwilling or inactive, when called to labour for promoting the knowledge of Christ in America, and for the assistance of such as there professed a desire of being found faithful in his cause: that the wavering and defection of many in that country, who once professed to join with this Synod, in testifying against such Latitudinarian schemes as they now approve, has not discouraged the Synod from assisting the remnant who have endeavoured to hold fast the profession of their faith:—Therefore, the Synod agree, That the intercourse between them and the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, shall, in time coming, be regulated according to what is expressed in the articles which follow:

I. That as to what relate to scandals, or causes of a personal or private nature, the Synod, from their intercourse with the Presbytery for about thirty-five years past, have no reason to expect, that appeals in such causes will be prosecuted; and they judge the prosecution of such appeals would be inexpedient and improper, at such a very great distance.

II. That in the case of any difference arising in the Presbytery of Pennsylvania, about the profession of the faith, or about any truth or duty, affecting their connection with this Synod, it is necessary for this Synod to know on what side truth and duty lie. The Synod therefore judge it equitable and necessary, that causes of this kind, may be brought before them by Reference or Appeal.

III. Though the errors in doctrine, corruptions of the

worship of God, and defections from the Reformation Testimony, prevailing in Britain and America, may be materially the same; yet, as these, in several instances, assume a different appearance, and are promoted under different pretences in the last of these countries: The Synod therefore judge it expedient for the Presbytery of Pennsylvania to state the profession of their faith, so as it may always be a direct and proper Testimony against the evils by which that part of the Lord's vineyard, in which they labour, is more immediately endangered; provided, that Presbytery do not give up any truth testified for by this Synod, nor enter into any connection with such as oppose themselves to any part of our Christian and Witnessing Profession.

IV. The Formula of questions to be put to ecclesiastical office-bearers at their ordination in said Presbytery of Pennsylvania, ought to contain an engagement to maintain the truth of the gospel, against such as oppose it in that part of the world. But the questions in said Formula, ought to be as near to those put by this Synod in Britain and Ireland as the state of the church in America will admit; and none of these shall contradict the Testimony maintained by this Synod. And farther, it is requisite, that the said Formula contain an engagement to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace—in contending for the faith and order of the church, as a part of the same Witnessing Body with this Synod.

V. As in making confession of sin, the Presbytery of Pennsylvania, ought to take particular notice of these offences, backslidings, and transgressions of the laws of God, which are to be found among themselves, and among the inhabitants of the land where they dwell; and as they cannot join in the very same confession of sins made by this Synod, in acts of humiliation and fasting, and also in public covenanting, by reason of some things in these peculiar to this country: The Synod therefore judge it expedient for that Presbytery, to proceed, as the Lord may give them opportunity, to renew their solemn covenant engagements in a manner agreeable to their circumstances: provided still, that the acknowledgment of sin, and engagement to duties made by that Presbytery, though necessarily different in words, be the same as to the principal matter and design, with the confession and engagement made in solemn covenanting by this Synod.

VI. If the Presbytery of Pennsylvania shall be found departing from the profession made by them, and acting contrary to these Articles; it cannot, in that case, be expected, that the Synod will countenance them in such a course, by sending ministers to their assistance. The offence must be removed, before the Synod can reasonably appoint any of their number to take part with that Presbytery. And on sufficient evidence that the said Presbytery were gone into a state of apostacy from their former Testimony, and Ordination Vows; the Synod claim it as competent to them to pass a judicial condemnation of the said Presbytery, as no longer a part of the same Witnessing Body. On the other hand, if the Presbytery of Pennsylvania shall find any thing in the proceedings of this Synod, which they judge contrary to truth and duty; they shall have the same liberty, as others connected with the Synod, to remonstrate, protest, or testify against the same.

VII. If the Synod shall be informed as to any Member belonging to the Presbytery of Pennsylvania, that he acts contrary to his profession and to these Articles; they shall transmit an account of this matter to that Presbytery; who shall inquire into it, and satisfy the Synod as to the accused, by shewing either that he was not guilty, or that he hath been censured according to the nature of his offence. And, in like manner, if the Presbytery of Pennsylvania shall find cause of complaint, as to any of the Brethren in this country; they shall inform the Presbytery to which the member complained of belongs, who shall judge of that matter according to the ordinary rules of procedure in such cases.

VIII. As, by the laws of Christ's house, we are bound to assist one another as the Lord gives us opportunity; particularly in the duty of maintaining a Testimony against the general and increasing defection of this generation, from the truth and cause of our Lord Jesus Christ: This Synod therefore resolve, That they will endeavour, as they formerly and of late have done, to answer the requests of the Presbytery of Pennsylvania, by appointing and sending ministers or preachers to their assistance, according as there may be need for other labourers in that part of the Lord's vineyard; and for this end, they shall use all proper means to persuade such as may be appointed for that service to undertake it.

IX. As the Synod shall communicate to the Presbytery of Pennsylvania, such of their acts as are of general concern, particularly such as respect the profession of the faith made by this Synod; so that Presbytery shall transmit to the Synod all acts of the same nature passed by them; And no new terms of communion shall be enacted by them, till the overtures concerning the same shall have been transmitted to this Synod for their consideration;—That, by these means, unity may be maintained, misunderstandings arising from want of due information, prevented, and the most speedy and effectual methods taken to remove any difference which may arise.

Farther, the Synod declare, That as, agreeably to this Act, the Presbytery of Pennsylvania shall have all the aid this Synod can afford—by sending ministers to their assistance when they may be wanted, and interposing their authority for this end; so they will endeavour to give speedy judgment in matters of faith, which may come before them by Reference or Appeal from the above mentioned Presbytery; and do every thing in their power for promoting the Testimony in North America: The design of these Articles being, in no instance, to hurt them, but to help them, and strengthen their hands in the work of the Lord.

Extracted by

JAMES MORRISON, *Synod Clerk:*

THE
ORDINATION VOWS
OF THE
Associate Synod of North America;
OR,
THE FORMULA OF QUESTIONS TO BE PUT TO MINIS-
TERS AND ELDERS AT THEIR ORDINATION.*

FOR MINISTERS AND ELDERS.

QUEST. I. Do you believe the SCRIPTURES of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT to be the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice?

QUEST. II. Do you believe and acknowledge the whole doctrine of the CONFESION OF FAITH, and CATECHISMS, Larger and Shorter, agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, with Commissioners from the church of Scotland; as these are received in the DECLARATION and TESTIMONY, published in the year 1784, by the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, now the Associate Synod of North America, to be the doctrine taught in the WORD of GOD; and are you resolved, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to maintain this, as the Confession of your Faith, against all contrary opinions?

QUEST. III. Do you acknowledge PRESBYTERIAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT to be of divine institution, and appointed by Jesus Christ, the only King, Head, and Law-giver of the church, to continue in it to the end of time; and do you adhere to the same, as stated in "The Form of Presbyterian Church Government and Ordination of

*This Formula was judicially approved at Philadelphia, November 4, 1784, by the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, now the Associate Synod of North America.

Ministers," agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and testified for by us: and are you resolved, by the Lord's assistance, to maintain and defend the same against all contrary opinions?

QUEST. IV. Do you adhere to the DECLARATION and TESTIMONY of the Associate Synod of North America, for the Doctrine and Order of the Church of Christ, and against the errors of the present time? And do you, in your judgment, disapprove the manifold errors and Latitudinarian schemes prevailing in these United States, which are condemned in that Declaration and Testimony, as contrary to the word of God, to the profession of the faith we make, and to the solemn engagements we in this church are under to continue in that profession?

QUEST. V. Do you acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the SOLEMN COVENANT ENGAGEMENTS, we in this church are under, as these have been explained in the Declaration and Testimony of the Associate Synod of North America; and are you resolved, through grace, to endeavour faithfulness in adhering to the Testimony maintained by the Lord's witnesses for these reformation principles we profess—in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and in attending to all these duties which the Lord in his word has enjoined upon us, and which we in this church are, by these our covenant engagements, bound to perform?

QUEST. VI. Do you engage to submit yourself willingly and humbly, in the spirit of meekness, to the admonitions of this Presbytery*—[of the Session of this congregation†] remembering that, while they act uprightly, they judge not for men, but for the Lord, who is also with them in the judgment; and do you promise that you will endeavour to maintain the spiritual unity and peace of this church, carefully avoiding every divisive course, neither yielding to those who have made defection from the truth, nor giving yourself up to a detestable neutrality and indifference in the cause of God, but that you will continue

* Since the erection of the Synod, they ordered the following words to be added after "Presbytery;"—"as subordinate to the Associate Synod of North America."

† The words enclosed, for Elders.

steadfast in the profession of the reformation principles maintained by us, and by our brethren of the Associate Synod in Scotland; and do nothing directly or indirectly to destroy our unity with them in the cause and work of God; and this you promise, through grace, notwithstanding any trouble or persecution you may be called to suffer, in studying a faithful discharge of your duty in these matters?

QUEST. VII. Do you sincerely aim at having the glory of God, love to our Lord Jesus Christ, and zeal for the edification of his mystical body, for your great motives and chief inducements for entering into the office to which you are now to be set apart, and not any selfish views, or worldly designs or interest?

QUEST. VIII. Are you conscious that you have used no undue methods in procuring your call to the office of the holy ministry* [in this congregation†] [to the office of eldership in this congregation?‡]

QUEST. IX. Do you engage, in the strength of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, to rule well your own family, [if it should please the Lord to give you one,§] and to live an holy and circumspect life, following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness?

FOR MINISTERS.

QUEST. X. Do you promise through grace to perform all the duties of a faithful minister of the gospel, in preaching it, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the purity and simplicity thereof, not ceasing to declare the whole counsel of God; as also in catechising, exhorting from house to house, visiting the sick, and performing whatever other duties are incumbent on you from the word of God, as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, for the convincing and reclaiming of sinners, and for the edifying of the body of Christ?

* For ministers ordained without a particular charge.

† For ministers ordained to a particular charge.

‡ For elders.

§ The enclosed words to be used as there is occasion.

FOR MINISTERS.

QUEST. XI. Do you accept of the call given you, to labour as a minister of the gospel in this congregation; and engage that, through grace, you will endeavour to act in it as a wise and faithful servant of Jesus Christ—maintaining a tender regard to his flock, rightly dividing the word of truth, and watching for souls as one that must give an account?

FOR ELDERS.

Do you accept of the call given you to the office of eldership in this congregation, and do you engage, through grace, diligently and cheerfully to discharge all the parts of that office; in endeavouring to act with a single eye, and an upright heart in judging about the matters of God; and labouring, by all means competent to you in the office to which you are called, for the edifying of the body of Christ?

FOR MINISTERS AND ELDERS.

And all these things you promise and engage unto, through grace, as you will be answerable, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints; and as you would desire to be found among that happy company, at his glorious appearing?



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A Display of the
Religious Principles of
the Associate Synod of
North America 1823

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