

# **The Reasons of Mr. Alexander Craghead's receding from the present Judicatures of this Church, together with its Constitution**

**By Alexander Craighead**

Christian READER,

I SUPPOSED it to be necessary for thy better Information, and to prevent thy being imposed upon by the Wiles and Policy of Enemies to a covenanted Reformation, that I should give thee a View of those Things which were the Ground of my Reasons, that so by a right Perusal of these Things you may come to understand whether the Ground is sufficient to build the Reasons upon or not: They are as followeth: Year 1729, To convince the Reader that we govern ourselves according to the Principles here asserted and pleaded for, we annex a Copy of the Synod's Agreement in the Point debated:

Although the Synod do not claim, or pretend to any Authority of imposing our Faith upon other Men's Consciences; but do profess our just Dissatisfaction with, and Abhorrence of such Impositions; and utterly disclaim all legislative Power and Authority in the Church, being willing to receive one another as {iv} Christ received us to the Glory of God; and to admit to Fellowship, in sacred Ordinances, all such as we have Grounds to believe Christ will at last admit into the Kingdom of Heaven: Yet we are undoubtedly obliged to take care that the Faith once delivered to the Saints be kept pure and uncorrupt among us, and so handed down to Posterity; and do therefore agree, that all the Ministers of this Synod, or that shall hereafter be admitted into this Synod, shall declare their Agreement in, and Approbation of the Confession of Faith, with the larger and shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster; as being, in all the essential and necessary Articles, good Forms of sound Words and Systems of Christian Doctrine; and do also adopt the said Confession and Catechisms as the Confession of our Faith. And we do also agree, that all the Presbyteries, within our Bounds, shall always take care not to admit any Candidate of the Ministry unto the Exercise of the sacred Function but who declares his Agreement in Opinion with all the essential and necessary Articles of said Confession, either by subscribing the said Confession of Faith and Catechisms, or by a verbal Declaration of his Assent thereto, as such Minister or Candidate shall think best. And in case any Minister of this Synod, or any Candidate of the Ministry, shall have any Scruple with respect to any Article or Articles of the said Confession, he shall, at the time of his making said Declaration, declare his Scruples to the Presbytery or Synod; who shall notwithstanding admit him to the Exercise of the Ministry within our Bounds, and to ministerial Communion, if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge his Scruples or Mistake to be only about Articles not essential and necessary in Doctrine, Worship or Government. But if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge such Ministers or Candidates erroneous in essential or necessary Articles {v} of Faith, the Synod or Presbytery shall declare them incapable of Communion with them. And the Synod do solemnly agree, that none of us will traduce or use any opprobrious Terms of those that differ from us in those extra-essential and not necessary Points; but treat them with the same Friendship, Kindness and brother Love as if they had not differed from us in such Sentiments.

Another of the Synodical Acts is dated 1734.

That we are a particular Church, and not to be a Part of any particular Church in the World with which we are united by the joint Exercise of Church-Government, and are not accountable to the judicial Enquiry of any superior, ecclesiastical Judicatures upon Earth; Therefore if we do not exert the

Authority inherent in us, maintaining the Purity of Gospel-Truth, it's not in the Power of any superior ecclesiastical Judicature authoritatively to call us in Question for our Neglect, or for our Errors or Heresies, if we should be corrupted with them.

Again, an Act or kind of an Answer to a Supplication brought into the Synod, when it was erected after the Division of the Synod, August 1741.

A Paper being brought in from several Subscribers, desiring us to do sundry Things chiefly relating to the solemn League and Covenant, for the Reformation of the Church, as they suppose, the Synod are of the Mind, that they are not called to any other Measure or Methods for carrying on a true Reformation and promoting real Godliness than they already plainly aim and endeavour after, they hope they are sincerely and, in some Degree, faithfully labouring to promote and establish the Purity of Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government and Power of Godliness; and therefore they desire and affectionately advise that the People subscribing said Paper be cautious and moderate in what they are about, and so much the {vi} more as they think they have Ground to suspect that some ill-designing Persons are craftily and secretly unsuspected by some of them encouraging their Procedure for no good End.

These Acts, with a Letter, which goes under Mr. Gilbert Tennent's Name, together with the Way and Manner that Church Government and Discipline are managed, is the Foundation of my Reasons.

I understand that some Ministers and People assert, that this Act of 1729 is repealed and dissanulled; and all Ground they have for the same is an Act of Synod, made June 17. 1736, by which they say it is done away: Which Act is as followeth.

An Overture of the Committee, upon the Supplication of the People of Paxton and Derry was brought in, and is as followeth, That the Synod do declare that inasmuch as we understand that many Persons of our Persuasion both more lately and formerly have been offended with some Expressions or Distinction in the first or preliminary Act of our Synod, contained in the printed Paper relating to our receiving or adopting the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, &c. that in order to remove said Offence, and all Jealousies that have arisen or may arise in any of our People's Minds on Occasion of said Distinctions and Expressions, the Synod doth declare, That the Synod have adopted, and still do adhere to the Westminster Confession, Catechisms and Directory, without the least Variation or Alteration, and without any Regard to said Distinctions. And we do further declare, That this was our Meaning and true Intent in our first adopting of said Confession, as may particularly appear by our Adopting Act: Which is as followeth, All the Ministers of this Synod, now present (which were 18 in Number) except one that declared himself not prepared, after proposing all the Scruples any of them had to make against any Articles {vii} and Expressions in the Confession of Faith and larger and shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, have unanimously agreed in the Solution of those Scruples, and in declaring the said Confession and Catechisms to be the Confession of their Faith, except only some Clauses in the 20th and 23d Chapters; concerning which Clauses the Synod do unanimously declare, that they do not receive those Articles in any such Sense as to suppose the civil Magistrate hath a controuling Power over Synods with respect to the Exercise of their ministerial Authorities, or Power to persecute any for their Religion, or in any Sense contrary to the Protestant Succession to the Throne of Great Britain And we hope and desire that this our synodical Declaration and Explication may satisfy all our People as to our firm Attachment to our good old received Doctrines contained in said Confession, without the least Variation or Alteration; and that they will lay aside their Jealousies that have been entertained through Occasion of the above hinted Expressions and Declarations as groundless. This Overture was approved nemine contradicente.

Seeing I have mentioned this Act before, I come to prove that the Act 1729 is not repealed by this Act, I shall hint at a few Things in it: And first, I seem to be at a Loss to understand what those Expressions in it are apply'd to, viz. 'Without the least Alteration or Variation.' If those Words are to be applied unto the Act of 29, then they are just a Confirmation of it, and discovers that the Synod was not resolved in the least to vary from it; which is not improbable, Liberty to come and go in Religion, it being so fashionable and so very agreeable to corrupt Nature: But if the said Words be applied unto the Confession of Faith, Catechisms and Directory composed by the Westminster Assembly, viz. that the Synod did not in the least {viii} Measure deviate from them, it is notoriously false, as is plain by the Exception they make themselves of Something in the Articles of the Confession in this very Act. It's plain also, that the Synod deviates from some of the Directory, in neglecting, according to it to oblige Persons, before their Ordination, to take the Covenants, national and solemn League, and in many other Things. Secondly, Some Things appear very strange in the Exception at the Close of the Act: First, That the civil Magistrate hath not a controuling Power over Synods in the Exercise of their Office. I readily grant it to be so, if Synods be in the right Exercise of their Office; but if they transgress, by violating of God's Holy Law, misusing their Office, it is not so; for in such a Case the civil Magistrate has a controuling Power, as is plain from the Example of King Josiah 2 Kings 23.4, and from the very Design of Magistrates, which is to be a Terror to Evil-Doers, and a Praise to such as do well.

Secondly, That the civil Magistrate has not Power to persecute any for their Religion. Certainly he has Power to punish Persons for entertaining erroneous Principles,[1] as well as wicked Actions, let them term them Religion or not; otherwise he cannot be termed a nursing Father to the Church. It's true that no Magistrate has just Power to punish or persecute any for maintaining any Principles agreeable to the Divine Law, this being the Reverse of the Design of them.

Thirdly, I suppose that the infallible Direction of Magistrates in the Execution of Justice is the Word of God, and not the Protestant Succession to the Throne.

I come now to prove that the synodical Act of 1729 is not yet repealed with relation to receiving of the Confession of Faith by any synodical Act; which is undeniable from those Particulars in this Act of the Synod, by which it is said the Act of 29 is repealed: {ix} First, That this Act speaks of the Act 29 is clear from their terming it the first or preliminary Act contained in the printed Paper relating to their receiving the Confession of Faith; out of which Paper I took those Things which I observed in my two first Reasons. Secondly, That this Act nowise repeals the Act of 29 is evident from the Synod's own express Words in this Act, which are these, 'We hope and desire that this our synodical Declaration and Explication, &c.'

This must either be an Explication of something or of nothing: An Explication of nothing is an Absurdity: If it is an Explication of Something, it either must be of the Act of 29, or of something else: If it be of something else, it cannot be a Repealing of the Act of 29: Or if it be an Explication of the Act of 29, it cannot be a Repealing of it; for the Design of an Explication is to set the Thing in a clearer Light than it was before; but the Design of Repealing an Act is, the Dissanulling of it, destroying of it, taking away the Power or Obligation of it. So that it is evident that the Act of 29, relating to the Synod's reciving or adopting the Confession of Faith, is nowise repealed nor abridged by any synodical Act to this Day, but stands in as full Force as ever. From the Whole of this Act, and that of 29, I cannot find that either or both of them bind the Adherers to them so firmly unto the Confession of Faith, Catechisms and Directory, composed by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as the formula did bind the Adherers to it: which formula, or adopting Act, was composed by the indulged Ministers in the Reign of King William, for receiving the Curates into ministerial Communion with them; which Act

many of the Curates complied with.

There is one Thing that I would warn the Reader of, which I spoke of in my Reasons, viz. That in no other Method or Manner ever was or is the Confession received, either synodically or presbyterially, than agreeable unto the Act of 29: That the Reasons were written {x} some time before the Presbytery sat, at the Time that I declined to join any longer; as also, I never did, nor do not yet suppose that for Ministers, either in Synod or Presbytery, just saying, without any more to do, that they adopt or receive the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms and Directory, as the Confession of their Faith, to be an actual receiving of it as their own; when there is no Promises nor Obligations taken, binding them that takes it to maintain and promote the Principles therein contained against all Opposers of them, and in Doctrine and Practice to conform to that which they own: For without this, or something equivalent to it, I look upon it as a mere empty Compliment for Ministers only to say they adopt or receive the Confession, &c. It looks indeed, altho' they own the Westminster Confession, as if they had no just Right to it, as the very Word adopt properly signifies.

Again, It is asserted, that the Reasons which were taken from those synodical Acts of 29 and 34 are not to be regarded as any Reasons for receding from the Presbytery of New-Castle, of which I was a Member: Because these Acts were made before some of them were Ministers, and they are now a separate Body, and so they have no Concern with these Acts. All that I shall say in Defence of this, is only to desire the Reader impartially to compare the Act of our Synod, after it was separated from the other, and the Act of New-Castle Presbytery, when I receded from it, with those two former synodical Acts, together with the Explication of them all, and consider if there is not so much of an Agreement between them as gives me sufficient Ground to mention the Act of 29 and of 34, so as to found some of my Reasons of receding upon them.

Again, It's said that Mr. Gilbert Tennent's Letter was no just Ground of a Reason for receding from the Presbytery, he being no Member of it. To this I answer, my Design was not nor is not only to recede {xi} from the Presbytery only, but also from the Synod, as plainly appears from my Reasons; so that I look upon the Reasons of the one to be sufficient for the other, they being a conjunct Body.

I come now to consider of the Minutes of the Presbytery, at the Time when I gave in my Reasons of receding from it: Which is as followeth.

Mr. Craghead having given his Reasons for Withdrawing from Communion, and having proposed, as Terms of his continuing in Union with us, that we should explicitly declare our Adherence to every Article in the 33 Chapters of the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the larger and shorter Catechisms, as the Articles of our Faith; that we declare our Adherence to the Westminster Directory, and the Sum of saving Knowledge; that we own and acknowledge the national and solemn League and Covenants, as a Tie binding upon us, as materially and formally considered unto the Whole of the Presbyterian Religion, &c. that we testify against the Defection in King Charles the Second's Reign; against the prelatical Government in the Church; against all synodical or presbyterial Acts, against or inconsistent with the whole Confession of Faith, or any Part thereof, &c. The Presbytery considering, that altho' they have already declared their receiving the Westminster Confession of Faith as the Confession of their Faith, without Exception of any Part of it, as by our Minutes will appear; yet seeing it is not thought sufficient by Mr. Craghead, that he may have no colourable Ground of Justice for separating from us upon that Head, and that Unity and Peace might be preserved amongst us, which we earnestly desire; the Presbytery declares as follows, viz. That we, and every one of us, do unfeignedly, as in the Sight of GOD, take and receive the Whole of the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the larger and shorter {xii} Catechisms, as the Confession of our Faith, believing all the Articles in them as

the Truths of God's Word, in the plain and obvious Meaning of the Words whereby they are express'd in said Confession and Catechisms; yet so as the latter Clause of the third Article of the 23d Chapter shall not be so interpreted as if the civil Magistrate had a Power of a negative Voice over Synods in their ecclesiastical Transactions, or had, as a civil Magistrate, any ecclesiastical Authority in them. The Presbytery also declares, that they adhere to the Plan laid down in the Westminster Directory for Government and Discipline, as the Plan established by Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of the Church: And we heartily believe the Sum of saving Knowledge as a brief Sum of the Christian Doctrine contained in Holy Scripture. As to the Covenants, we agree to the Whole of our Declaration made presbyterially at Middle-Octarara, April 14. 1742, which is as follows, Upon the Address presented by Part of the People of Middle-Octarara, and some others, concerning the solemn League and Covenant, desiring the Presbytery's Judgment concerning the Obligation and Bindingness of these Covenants upon them the Posterity of the Covenanters desiring the Presbytery's Judgment of this Matter, as their Commissioners declared for their own Light and Satisfaction about it: The Presbytery, after a long Discourse upon the solemn League and Covenant, which contains and comprehends the Substance of the national Covenant in it, concluded as follows, namely, that Religion which was established and so solemnly engaged to by the said Covenant in all the Branches of it, both as to Doctrine and the Plan for Government, Worship and Discipline in the Church, is the true Religion contained in and taught by the Word of God; and that all Things condemned and rejected in the said Covenant {xiii} are Errors contrary to the Word of God, and consequently the said true Religion, contained in that Covenant, is still obligatory and binding upon all People and Persons where the Light of the Gospel comes by the Authority of God's Word. The Presbytery further declares, that their entering into the solemn League and Covenant, by the Body and Strength of the Three Kingdoms of Britain and Ireland, was a hopeful and promising Expedient for the Establishment and Preservation of the same true Religion of Jesus Christ in them; and the Breaking of the said Covenant afterwards, with that Establishment of a prelatical or episcopal Church-Government, contrary to it, and that furious Persecution and shedding of the Blood of the Saints that ensued upon it, were very crying and awful, aggravated Sins before God; for which we have still Reason to fear the awful Stroaks of his righteous Judgments: Yet the Presbytery freely owns and declares there may be Protestants of other Denominations, besides the Presbyterians, sincerely, godly, true Believers in Christ, and dear to him; and we doubt not there are many such, notwithstanding they believe and maintain some Things, through human Imperfection in this present State, which are erroneous, who therefore ought not to be looked upon as Heathen Men and Publicans, but loved as the Children of God and Members of the Body of Christ, seeing they are sound in the main Essentials of Religion, and afford hopeful Evidences of sincere Piety. Finally, the Presbytery judge it may be very needful for Ministers, upon proper Occasions, to give Warning to their People of the great Danger that those Kingdoms which we are related to, and ourselves with them, stand in of the severe Judgments of God, on the Account of the aforesaid Scene of Perfidy, Cruelty and Opposition to the Interest of Christ's Kingdom. And we likewise freely and {xiv} openly declare and testify against that dreadful Apostacy under the Reign of King Charles the Second, and the Oath of Supremacy, and all other sinful Bonds and Oaths then imposed. We likewise declare against all prelatical and episcopal Government in the Church; all human Rites and Ceremonies in Worship; and against all synodical and presbyterial Acts contrary to the Confession or Directory.

I shall make some Remarks upon this Minute: And First, remark what is said by Way of Rehearsing the Terms of my Re-union with them, differs much from the Terms themselves, as the impartial Reader may easily perceive; to whose Consideration I leave it. Second Remark, That the Presbytery has complied in any Measure but with a few of the Terms proposed, as, perhaps, may further appear. Third remark, That the Presbytery asserts they had received the Confession of Faith, without Exception of any Part of it; I readily own, that it is common for Ministers to say in Presbyteries or Synods, that they

adopt or receive the Confession of Faith as their own in Cumulo, without making any particular Exception against any Part of it; yet I cannot look upon this as a right Receiving of the Confession of Faith; for these Reasons, First, Because all such Declarations, I suppose, have a Reference to that sinful Act of [17]29, it not being yet particularly repealed, and it being formed as a Rule or Direction whereby the Confession should be received, and there being nothing else, since the Formation of that dreadful Act, for directing Persons how to receive the Confession of Faith. 2. Because I look upon such verbal Declarations as a very insipid and luke-warm Manner of receiving such a very valuable Book entirely unbecoming the Importance of the Thing. 3. I cannot see what good End such Declarations are for, without any solemn Promise or Obligation to conform unto what they receive in Doctrine, Government, Discipline and {xv} Practice. 4. Because several Ministers, that have declared so, do preach, pray, argue, act in Government, Discipline and Practice the Reverse of what they pretend to receive.

Fourth Remark is, That the Presbytery [makes my] Dissatisfaction the Ground of this Procedure of theirs; so that if they extended any further in this Act than usual, it is owing to their Compassion upon me; but did not flow from a true Sense of the Necessity of those Things in their own Nature, or from their Sense of the low, mournful and doleful State of this Branch of the Church of Christ in these Parts; which indeed I am affraid that this is the naked Truth of the Matter, until the eternal God brings a Soul to see the distressed State of his Church, how it lies like a ruinous Heap. Altho' he should freely own every Word contained in that valuable Book termed the Westminster Confession of Faith, it would all be but in a great Measure in vain; for it could not be otherwise but the Heart and Practice contradicting the Profession.

Fifth Remark is, The Presbytery acknowledges the Directory to be the Plan for Government, and to be established by Jesus Christ; and yet does not oblige Candidates, before their Ordination, to take the Covenants, as the Directory expressly requires. It is really exceeding wonderful, yea, amazing to me, how Persons that truly fears God dare, for their Souls, wilfully neglect such a material Injunction in the Directory, which they assert is established by Jesus Christ, while the Thing required is actually in their Power to perform. A parallel Example of this is difficult to find an Instance of the like in the Book of God of his own Children: If this Practice does not contradict the Profession I leave the unprejudiced and understanding Reader to judge. Oh! does not this appear too much like an industrious and wilful Blinding of the Eyes of the poor Populous? pretending to receive the whole Directory, {xvi} and not excepting against one Sylable contained in it, and yet avowedly neglecting this and several other Things therein. Oh, Christian Reader! consider that it is by such Pretences, Wiles and Stratagems that the Church of God has been betrayed ever since the doleful Breach of our Holy Covenants: And, alas for it! we that are in the Room of Teachers have had the chief Hand in leading poor Souls astray; and indeed I cannot clear myself of the Charge, for which I would desire to mourn before God and the World, Night and Day.

Sixth Remark: The Question asked in the Supplication was, whether the Covenants were binding upon us or not? But not one Word of a direct Answer is given to the Question proposed, altho' it is a very importunate Question in this degenerate Age, and altho' almost one Word might have fully done it; yet this could not be obtained, but instead of it a mere Evasion or a waving the Question, as is plain, to a Demonstration, from the very Minute itself.

Seventh Remark: It is true Religion which is contained in the Covenants that the Presbytery asserts to be still obligatory, and not the Covenants themselves. Again, this true Religion is obligatory by the Authority of God's Word; but not by the Covenants, which was not the Question proposed; for none, as I know of, question this, viz. that the true Religion contained in the Covenants is binding by the

Authority of God's Word. Again, neither was the Question, If the Religion contained in the Covenants be the true Religion or not? For many of us have no Doubts or Hesitation whether it be the true Religion or not; for we are convinced in our Consciences, by the Spirit of God, speaking in his Word, that it is the true Religion. Again, neither was the Question properly about Religion at all abstractly considered; nor about one kind or another of Religion. Again, neither was the Question whether the true {xvii} Religion be binding upon all in a special Manner. This is certainly so; but none of all these Things were ever in the Question, but entirely foreign from the Question. But the Question was, whether the Covenants are binding upon us, Yea or Nay. Oh! Christian Reader, here you may clearly see (if Prejudice has not blinded your Eyes) what needless Shifts and strange kind of Turns is taken to avoid only one of two Words, either Yea or Nay. Does not this plainly discover the Badness of the Cause? For if those Covenants are binding, might not the Presbytery have said they were so? A better Answer we should not have desired. And if they looked upon them not to be so, this would have been a clear Answer. My dear Reader, for the Lord God's Sake, and for thine own Soul's Sake, what is all this but a mere Quibbling in the Affair.

Again, altho' there is not a direct Answer given to the Question; yet, I imagine, one may justly be gathered from that which was given in the Room of one, viz. That the Presbytery does not look upon the Covenants as binding upon us. This is plain, from their asserting that the true Religion is still obligatory by the Authority of God's Word wherever the Gospel comes. This intimates, that this true Religion is nowise binding upon us by the Covenants; because this Obligation by the Word of God to this true Religion extends equally unto all Nations where the Gospel comes; for it cannot have more Authority in one Nation than another, it having [still] the Authority of the same unchangeable God. Now it is altogether impossible that these Covenants should be binding upon one Soul that is not of the Posterity or Nation of the Covenanters, until the Person binds himself; so the real Thing is, if they are not binding on other Nations than the covenanting Nations, they are not upon them either; for there is the same Equality of Reason, according to this Minute here, for the one as the other. They assert that they own the Covenants {xviii} materially, but not formally. This is a philosophical Distinction whereby many poor People are beguiled: To own the Covenants to be materially binding, is to own that those Things which are contained in them are binding. To disown them to be formally binding, is properly to deny them to be binding at all as Covenants. Two Things are essential to all kind of Writings which are valuable, viz. Matter and Form, and take away either of these and you destroy the Writing; so take away the Form of the Covenants, then they cease to be Covenants; and for Instance, take away the Form of a Note or Bond and it is no more a Note or Bond. You may alter the Form of a Note or Bond many Ways, and they remain to be either good or bad, according as they are altered either for the Better or the Worse.

Eighth Remark. It appears to be no small Wonder to me how the Presbytery can assert that these Covenants were not only materially good, but also were promising and hopeful Expedients for the establishing of vital Godliness, when they were composed, and the Matter of them still good and binding by the Word of God; but not as they are Covenants. Now it's imagined that there is no need of these Covenants now. What can be the Reason that we don't need them now as well as ever? Is it because we have no need of that true Religion which was and is established by them? or rather that our Hearts and Minds are so alienated from God that we hate and abhor such a strict, true and undefiled Religion as it is? or is the Religion become worse? or have Persons, by being bound to it by solemn Vows, learned it so well as rightly to perform it with a loose Foot that they can come and go in it at their Pleasure? or is it because we have complied with Prelacy? which, by the Word of God and those Covenants, is condemned; the Prevalency of which was one of the greatest Motives to excite our worthy Ancestors to compose them, that thereby this dreadful Error might {xix} be rooted out. But some may say, wherein have we complied with abjured Prelacy? In supporting the Professors of it and

Compliers with it; in submitting and swearing Allegiance unto the Promoters and Upholders of it, and in not bearing a publick Testimony against it as an Usurpation of Christ's Royal Prerogatives. Again, the Form of the Covenants is asserted by the Presbytery to be once good; and sure there is no Change or Alteration in the Form of them? and what has taken away their good Form? or has the Mutation or Change of Government done it? It's true that the Alteration of Government was the Cause of their Violation and Burning of them; yet those that escaped the Flames remain the same that they were. Again, it seems strange how all Things in or Matter of these Covenants should be binding by the Word of God, and yet not binding in themselves: This must be because Covenants are not of a binding Nature, or because these are not so; or because altho' they have been binding in their own Nature, yet they have lost their Obligation. 1. That Covenants are of a binding Nature, is unquestionable, the very Notion of a Covenant proves it; for what is a Covenant but a Contract or Agreement by which each Party covenanting obliges themselves to the Performance of whatsoever is contained in the Covenant? Both Scripture and Reason proves this; nay, it's impossible to be a Covenant and not to be binding in its own Nature. 2. I know it's granted that these Covenants were binding upon them that entered into them. 3. I suppose it will be allowed, that the Covenants are still of a binding Nature in themselves, otherwise they must cease to be. But all the Question lies in this, Whether they are binding upon us? To which I answer: If they are not binding upon us they are not our Covenants; for if they were they could not cease to bind us, they being of a binding Nature; and if so, we may justly disown them altogether, and cast them away or burn them. {xx}

Ninth Remark is, That the Presbytery asserts that we have still Reason to fear the awful Strokes of God's righteous Judgment, for the Violation of these Covenants and other Evils which accompanied the same. If we have still Reason to fear the Stroke of Justice for the Breach of those Covenants and other Evils which accompanied it, then either we are some way guilty of this Breach and the other Evils, or the Holy Ghost must be charged with Injustice, which is terrible Impiety, or this Part of the Minute is false: And if we are guilty of the Breach of the Covenants, it must be by their being binding upon us; for if they are not binding as Covenants, it's impossible we should, by spotless Justice, be charged with the Breach of them as Covenants; and thus this Part of the Minute appears entirely to clash and contradict the former Part of it, the one Part intimating that the Covenants are binding, the other Part that they are not.

Tenth Remark. The Presbytery puts themselves to a needless Trouble in asserting that there are Persons of other Denominations besides Presbyterians, which are godly; for this is not doubted but there is such.

Eleventh Remark. The Presbytery appears to give Toleration to Errors, by asserting, that erroneous Persons should not be looked upon as Heathens, or the like. How this agrees with those Scriptures, I leave the judicious and unprejudiced Reader to judge. Titus 3.10. A Man that is an Heretick, after the first and second Admonition, reject. Matt. 18. Latter Part of the 17th Verse. But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an Heathen Man and a Publican. 1 Cor. 5. Latter Part of the 6th Verse. Know ye not that a little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump?

Twelfth Remark is, That the Presbytery asserts that those erroneous Persons should be looked upon as the Members of the Body of Christ, is strange; for by {xxi} the Body of Christ here is undoubtedly intended his visible Church. Now that any erroneous Person, while he upholds his Errors, should be looked upon as a Member of Christ's visible Church, is diametrically opposite to the fore-cited Scriptures, Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Directory, Covenants, and many other Scriptures. It is certain that Persons may be the Children of God, and yet justly cast out of Christ's visible Church, and be looked upon as no Members thereof, until they repent and return from their evil Course, as is plain



Again, It is really grievous unto me, that I am obliged to open up, in any Measure, the Nakedness of the Church of God in these Parts, and how open it lies unto the Enemies of God: Yet when I consider, until the ruinous Heaps in Zion be discovered, that even the Sons and Daughters thereof can easily pass them by, without any Lamentation; but when they are once observed, it cannot be so. And altho' these few Lines may appear to have less Tendency for this End, than the Sounding of the Rams-Horns had to the Overthrowing the Walls of Jericho; yet, who knows what God will do with them?

Again, Some may take Liberty to say, that I am very fickle, and want to promote Divisions, and forsake the Presbyterian Religion, and the like: May GOD forgive such Persons, as I hope I shall freely do. I suppose my Fickleness in Principles, cannot yet be discerned, and much less proved. It has been, for many Years past, and still is my Principle, and steadfast Resolution, to walk as agreeable as I can, in Doctrine, Practice, Government and Discipline, unto the holy Word of God, and to every Part contained in the Confession of Faith composed by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster; and I should esteem it as a very great Mercy, and a rich Privilege, to have the Opportunity to wait on Presbyteries and Synods which were guided by the Directory for Government of the Church. {25}

My REASONS for declining,

are such as these:

First: Because I suppose that the Confession of Faith, which was composed by the Rev. Assembly of Divines at Westminster, was never as yet received in this Province, either presbyterially or synodically, as the Confession of our Faith in every Article thereof even, to speak of no more at present; but the 33 Articles therein contained at self, which have not all been received: As may perhaps appear from the following Particulars.

(1) You will find no presbyterial or synodical Agreement in this Province before the Year 1729, to receive or adopt the Confession of Faith at all; and few Years before this, scarcely almost any thing spoken of it.

(2) When in the above-mentioned Year there was a synodical Act for some End of receiving the Confession of Faith, yet then all the 33 Articles at self were not all received; as is undeniably evident by the synodical Act for the same, of which Words are these:

And do therefore agree, that all the Ministers of this Synod, or that shall hereafter be admitted into this Synod, shall declare their Agreement in, and Approbation of the Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as being in all the essential and necessary Articles, good Form of sound Words and Systems of Christian Doctrine; and do also adopt the said Confession and Catechisms as the Confession of our Faith.

Here is a Part of that Act; I shall have Occasion to mention more of it. By this it's evident, that all the Articles in the Confession were not received by this Act, but only those that were {26} Essential and Necessary; which discovers that they then looked upon some of them not to be so, and thence not to be received. These Articles are not particularized whether they are many or few, whether some or all, but left to the different Sentiments of Persons, to add or diminish: And, for my Part, I can see no Reason why any Quaker, Papist, or what they will, may not receive the Confession upon the same Terms; for I see no Bounds set to marr any of them.

(3) That the Westminster-Confession of Faith was not, nor is not received in this Province as the Confession of our Faith by any presbyterial or synodical Act, is further plain, by another Part of the same synodical Act above spoken of, which is as follows:—

And in case any Minister of the Synod, or any Candidate of the Ministry, shall have any Scruple with respect to any Article or Articles of the said Confession, he shall in the Time of his making said Declaration, declare his Scruples to the Synod or Presbytery, who shall notwithstanding admit him to the Exercise of the Ministry within our Bounds, and to ministerial Communion, if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge his Scruples or Mistake to be only about Articles not Essential and Necessary in Doctrine, Worship and Government.

Here you may observe, that Scruples may be at any Article or Articles in the Westminster Confession of Faith: And if the Presbytery or Synod judges the Scruples or Mistake to be only about Articles not Essential and Necessary, then it is to be concluded so, altho' the Scruples be about any Article or Articles in the Confession of Faith; yet it's all one, if the Presbytery or Synod judges them not to be essential or necessary, they must infallibly be so, without any Peradventure, and then the Synod or {27} Presbytery is made Judge, what our Confession is to be; and we have no more ado, according to this Act, but look what the Acts be either of a Presbytery or Synod, and there you may find our Confession of Faith; and if the Presbytery or Synod be sound in Faith, your Confession will be the better: But tho' ever so erroneous, if it goes under the Name of a Presbytery or Synod, yet their Act must be your Confession. Thus you may perceive, that the Westminster Confession was not received by that Act, but the Acts of the Presbyteries and Synods received in its room, and it most basely vilified, as tho' there were Articles in it neither essential nor necessary in Doctrine, Worship, or Government. And Oh! what a dreadful and abominable Slur is cast upon such an excellent Assembly? How can a more intolerable Act be formed than this, by any that has the Shape of a Man?

(4) That the Westminster Confession of Faith was not entirely received by this Act, is further evident, because only the Articles and Catechisms are mentioned in it, and not a Word of the Directory for Worship and Government, the Sum of Saving Knowledge, nor the Covenants. And indeed it's little Wonder; for there has been not only very small Use made of any of those Things, but also many Things in them denied and ridiculed most awfully, as if they were ridiculous, altho' they were all at least approved and received by the same venerable Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as a Part of Uniformity in Religion; as is evident by the Acts of Assembly in the same Year in which the Confession was received, and afterwards the Covenants were frequently renewed.[3]

Second Reason of my receding from the present Ecclesiastical Judicatures of this Church, as they are {28} now constituted, is, Because the aforesaid abominable Act is still the very Ground and Foundation of the Church in these Parts, it being the very Terms upon which it is pretended that the Westminster Confession of Faith was and is still synodically and presbyterially received; and in no other Way, Method or Manner was ever the Westminster Confession yet received, either synodically or presbyterially, neither is there any other Method prescribed for receiving the Westminster Confession presbyterially or synodically in this Province, but by the aforesaid Act; it being the very constituting Act of the Church in these Parts; as is evident from the very Act itself, some of which has been mentioned, and is as follows, "And do therefore agree, that all the Ministers of this Synod, or that shall hereafter be admitted into this Synod, &c." This is further evident from the Adopting Act, or Formula, which Formula, or Adopting Act, is undeniably taken out of, and founded upon the aforesaid pernicious Act, altho' a little more polished; yet by comparing that sinful Act of 1729, with the Adopting Act or Formula, you will find them, as to the Substance, the very same Thing.

Third Reason of my receding or withdrawing from the present Judicatures of this Church, as they are now constituted, is, Because of another corrupt synodical Act, made in the Year 1734, yet unrepeal'd, which is as follows,

We are a particular Church, and not to be a Part of any particular Church in the World with which we are united by the Joint-Exercise of Church-Government, and are not accountable to the judicial Enquiry of any superior Ecclesiastical Judicatures upon Earth; therefore if we do not exert the Authority inherent in us, maintaining the Purity of {29} Gospel-Truths, it's not in the Power of any superior Ecclesiastical Judicatures, authoritatively to call us in Question for our Neglect, or for our Errors or Heresies, if we should be corrupted with them.

There appears to me, in this Act, several strange Things: First, how our coming over the Sea should dis-join our Union with that Church which we and our Fathers were born in, and many of us baptized in that Faith, and some liv'd a great Part of our Lives there? I cannot perceive, if this Act be true, but we have renounced our baptismal Vows in some Measure; for then and there we were received as a Part of Christ's visible Church in our native Land: And if Baptism be a receiving of a Child or an adult Person as a Member of Christ's visible Church in that Place, which none will deny that owns the Sacrament; then, unless in extraordinary Cases, it is at least a Bordering upon it. Secondly, There is here a manifest Denying of our being a Part of any Church on Earth, and thus a Denying of our being any Part of the Church of Scotland. It's true this Church is not particulariz'd, but it's certain that we did never pretend to be a Branch of any other Church; which makes it plain that this Church in particular is intended by the Act, and thus this Act is an evident Disowning of the Westminster Confession, entirely, in all the Parts of it. If this Act and the aforesaid Act be true, it would appear to me, to be what has been long alleged by many People, that we have formed a new Confession of Faith: For if we are nowise united to the Church, as is peremptorily asserted, how is it possible that we can be of one Faith with it? Can any one Thing on Earth be one with another Thing without any kind of Union? Again, when a Part of one Thing is taken away to another Thing, surely that Part which was taken away and joined to another Thing, {30} it may still justly be termed a Part of that Thing from which it was taken away; for if otherwise, that Part which was taken away, must be annihilated, or cease to be, by its being remov'd; which is absurd to imagine. And thus our very Persons, at least, by the Permission of God, are removed from our native Land hither, and we have pretended to bring the Principles there with us; and now, when both ourselves and our pretended Principles came from thence, it seems wonderful how in the mean time we are, or can be said to be no Part of that Church. But for my Part, I look upon this Part of the Act as notoriously false. Thirdly, In this Act wonderful Pride is discovered, but one Step below the awful Arrogancy of the Pope of Rome; he arrogates a Power over all civil and ecclesiastical Authority; the Synod are beyond all ecclesiastical only. Again, by this Act there appears to be a real Encroachment upon the Royal Prerogatives of the Son of God, who alone has all the Power and Authority of his Church inherent in himself; neither ever had the best Synod or Presbytery on Earth, nor ever shall have, any Power or Authority over any Part of God's Inheritance inherent in them; No, no; the Power is in Christ alone; he alone is Lord over his Church: The Power or Authority that any Synod or Presbytery has, is derived from Christ; he is the Spring and Fountain, they are only the Instruments, appointed by him for exercising of it, at his Command and Will. And thus you may see what a notorious, bold, presumptuous Act this is, bewraying the most dreadful Pride: These are a few of our synodical Acts, whereby you may rationally consider, of what Sort the rest must be, and what a lamentable State this Branch of the Church of God is in. {31}

Fourth Reason why I cannot in Conscience join with our present Judicatures, according to their Constitution now, is, Because, altho' there was a Supplication from many private Persons the last Year at our Synod, to know our Minds in respect to the Westminster Confession in the several Parts of it,

altho' every Part of it were not particularized, yet this was the Design of the Supplication; but all the Answer which was obtained, was to this Purpose, To wit, That they supposed they were not called unto any other Measure or Methods for the carrying on a true Reformation, and promoting of real Godliness, than they already plainly aim at, and endeavour after, &c.

This Answer I look upon as worse than none: 1. Because it contains no Answer unto any one Particular in the Supplication. 2. Because all the Reformation in Principles that ever was in this Province synodically or presbyterially, is agreeable unto the aforesaid Acts of Synod; and the World may judge what Sort of a Reformation in Principles the said Acts have established in these Parts, and I suppose it will be difficult to produce one synodical or presbyterial Act, since these were composed, for the Reformation of this Branch of the Church in Principles, but is agreeable unto these pernicious Acts. 3. Because by this Answer one of two Things seems to be evident, either that the Synod imagines that where there is a Degeneracy in Principles, that in order for a true Reformation there is no Necessity to be reformed in them, or that they are not sensible that this Branch of the Church of Christ is degenerated in Principles; and if either of these Things be so, I look upon it as very melancholy: For the 1st, I hope that there is no Professor of Christianity will be so absurd as to maintain it: And for the 2d, That this Branch of the Church {32} of Christ is degenerated in Principles, will manifestly appear unto any unbiased Person, whether the Synod is sensible of it or not, from two Things, 1st, If we will consider the Apostacy of the Generality of the whole Nation in the Reign of King Charles the Second, when the whole Work of the Reformation was overturned; the Covenants burnt by the Hand of the Hangman; Presbyterianism dethroned, and Prelacy enacted by a Law in the Room of it; the Presbyterian Ministers turned out of their Places, fined and punished even unto Death, and Prelates violently thrust into their Room against the Minds of the People; dreadful Oaths imposed upon Presbyterians, such as that of Supremacy, of Abjuration, and the like; all which the Generality of Ministers and People took; and such as did not, were persecuted for it according unto the Will and Opportunity of their Enemies.[4] And now ever since this time, even unto this Day, there never has been a general Acknowledgment, by Persons professing to be Presbyterians, of this grievous Apostacy, nor ever a general Testimony given against it as an Evidence of our turning from it; neither was there ever a particular Acknowledgment of these awful Steps of Back-sliding from our Principles; nor a Testimony bore against them by this Branch of the Church of Christ unto this Day: So that it appears evident, even to a Demonstration, that we in this Age and in these Parts (as well as many other Parts) are treading in the very same Steps and holding on in the very same Course (or rather worse) of Apostacy, Back-sliding and Defection from the Principles that those Ministers and People did tread in who complied with all the Defections in the Reign of King Charles II. which Defection almost the Universality of the Nation tacitly approves of it, to wit, by their Silence in this Affair, and many among us {33} pretending to be Presbyterians, avowedly vindicates Ministers and People complying with that dreadful Apostacy: The Words of our dearest Lord Jesus are very applicable unto these Things, and confirming of them, which are mentioned Luke 11.47, to the End of the 51st Verse, Wo unto you: For ye build the Sepulchres of the Prophets, and your Fathers killed them. Truly ye bear Witness that ye allow the Deeds of your Fathers: For they indeed killed them, and ye build their Sepulchres. Therefore also said the Wisdom of God, I will send them Prophets and Apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: That the Blood of all the Prophets, which was shed from the Foundation of the World, may be required of this Generation; From the Blood of Abel unto the Blood of Zacharias, which perished between the Altar and the Temple: Verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this Generation. Secondly, The two synodical Acts above spoken of, clearly prove that this Branch of the Church is awfully degenerated from the Principles of true Presbyterians, both of them being opposite thereunto, as is evident from what has been said of them, and which to this Day stand unrepealed as an undeniable Proof of our Apostacy in Principles.

Fifth Reason of my receding from the present Judicatures, is, because I imagine that neither the Government nor Discipline of the Church is rightly managed by us: I shall give Instances of these; and first, I think we were blame-worthy in Government, when we were thrust out by a Part of the Synod, and erected ourselves under the Name of a Synod, that we did not then begin to consider something of our Principles, and consider of some Plan that we would adhere to in the Government of the Church, especially as we were excited to it by {34} several People, as was hinted, and as it has been the commendable Practice of the best reformed Churches, and particularly it was the Practice of the Godly Erskines, and their Companions, who were in much of the same State with ourselves, they soon came to consider the State of the Church. Secondly, This Year I think we were entirely to blame, because altho' we had appointed a synodical Meeting, we trifled away our Time, doing nothing until the Generality of People were quite wearied out, and several Ministers also, and obliged after all to go as we came, without any Benefit to the Church; and indeed it is lamentable to consider how poorly the Times for such Judicatures are frequently spent. Thirdly, It is too evident that there is little or no Church-Discipline exercised towards Mr. Rowland, for all his Irregularities. And, Fourthly, When it was told that one of our Presbytery had said, that whosoever swore unto the Directory he or they were perjured, yet this must be buried and brought to no Trial, altho' sponisible Evidences were offered to prove the same: And when one was blamed for not attending several of our Presbyteries and Appointments, the Presbytery knows whether if there was any Censure, whether it was proportionable to the Fault or not. By such Means we are Instruments of causing Sin to lie on one another, and are Partakers of one another's sins, and terrible Perverters of God's Institutions in such Cases.

Sixth Reason of my receding from the Judicatures in these Parts, is, Because hitherto there is no such Thing has been obtained as to get either Synod or Presbytery plainly to tell judicially what Part or Parts contained in the Westminster Confession they do own and maintain, or what Part or Parts {35} thereof they disown and deny. It is true indeed that there are several particular Ministers that give dreadful Hints of their Mind concerning the Confession: Some intimating, that they don't know but it would have been as good for the Church if it had never been composed: Others terming it Bigotry to promote and maintain the same: Others term these that would vindicate the Confession Idolizers of it, and that they [themselves] value it no more than other Books of human Composure; and yet all these Persons pretending to own the Confession as the Confession of their Faith; so that for my Part I cannot but admire what Principles we are generally of, or whether we have almost any.

Seventh Reason of my receding from the Judicatures in these Parts, is, Because the Generality of Ministers among us, do not only not acknowledge some Part of the Directory and Covenants formally, but also in Words deny Part of the Directory and our Obligation to the Covenants considered as Covenants; and by this Means, at least in Effect, they deny, and endeavour to overthrow the whole covenanted Reformation; the establishing of which has cost many of our Forefathers their Lives.

Eighth Reason of my receding from the present Judicatures of this Part of the Church, flows from a Letter, which goes under Mr. Gilbert Tennent's Name, published lately in the News-Papers; in which Letter and Postscript many Things might be observed, some of which I shall hint at. In the Letter, first, he expresses his Grief for the Division or Separation that was in the Synod, in very extensive Words, 'I would to God the Breach were healed; my Soul is sick of these Things.' It's true indeed that neither Division, Separation or Quarrelling {36} among Ministers, especially in themselves, are desireable at all, yet according as the Circumstance of Affairs was, Mr. Tennent I suppose himself did once praise God for the Separation, and many others did, and do, and I hope will thro' Eternity praise the holy Name of God for it. 2dly, He says, 'It's a Shame that Ministers, who are in the Main of sound Principles of Religion, should be divided and quarrelling.' It's true it is a Shame, but we should inquire where it lies; whether at their Door or at ours? But at once to join with all that are of sound Principles

in the Main, this I think would open the Door of the Church too wide, viz. To all pretended Presbyterians, to all Independents, to Churchmen and Anabaptists. Now to put a Stop to this Division and Quarrelling, a Question might be proposed, to wit, Whether we should turn unto all those, or they unto us? or whether every Party should comply a little? If the first of these should be, to wit, That we should turn with them all; God alone knows what kind of a Church there would be! And if the 2d, to wit, That all would turn unto all the Principles of the Presbyterian Religion; our Souls would rejoice therein. If the 3d, to wit, That every one should yield something; I doubt [suspect] the Division would be wider, and the Quarrelling more, by such a Proposal. In the Postscript, 1st, the Author tells us, 'The late Method of setting up separate Meetings, upon the supposed Unregeneracy of Pastors of Places, is enthusiastical, proud and schismatical.' This is manifestly against all the separate Societies and Congregations which have been erected, or might have been, in the Land; for the Terms are indefinite, without any Limitation or Restriction to any one Place or more. What can a Person have more of another, but a Supposition that he is unregenerated? We cannot {37} infallibly know, that he which robs in the Highway, is unregenerated; because there is no Sin so great (the Sin against the Holy Ghost alone excepted) but a regenerate Person may fall into it: This and the like wicked Actions are a just Ground to suppose that the Acter of these Things is Unregenerate: And so when an experienced Christian has frequent Opportunities either of a Minister or another Person in religious Discourse, Prayer or Preaching, and can find nothing but Carnality, Formality or a legal Strain, no Relish of internal Piety, he has just Ground to suppose that he is unregenerated: 2 Tim. 3.5, Having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof: From such turn away. Indeed for one to turn away from another without any just Ground, but merely a groundless Supposition, is irrational: But certainly there are many Ministers and People which have had all of the aforesaid Reasons and many more for their Supposing that those which they have turned from are Unregenerate: And hence it appears, that the Charge is unjust, and the Terms vile. 2dly, The Practice of openly exposing Ministers, &c. if Ministers gives Ground to suppose that they are unconverted, they ought to be opposed publicly as well as privately, it being a Part of the ministerial Function to warn People of false Teachers: Titus 1.13, Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the Faith. The Apostle seems not to be of our Author's Opinion, to wit: That the Rebuking of Ministers publicly only tended to provoke them; but that it is a Means of God's Appointment to bring them to be sound in the Faith. And in Order to bring People to understand who we mean by false Teachers, we should inform them that it is all erroneous Teachers, all scandalous and immoral Teachers, and all legal Teachers, who teaches to do, {38} and little or nothing of the Gospel, or not making a Distinction between the Law and the Gospel, and all carnal Teachers that do not, will not or cannot open up, in some Measure, clearly and distinctly, the Nature of experimental Godliness, the Way and Method of the Holy Spirit's Operation on the Soul of Man, in Beginning and Carrying on of this great Work of Regeneration, while the Soul is in Time. This is so far from lording it over our Brethren that I don't see how we can be faithful to God and the Souls of Men without this, unless we had Ground to believe that there are none but faithful Ministers at all; which certainly is not our State. 3dly, As to sending unlearned Men into the Ministry, even altho' they are pious, ought not to be vindicated: But certainly let them have what Learning they can have, according to the Word of God, if they are not truly gracious, they ought not to be admitted into the Ministry, because while they are unholy it is impossible for them to be qualified for the Work of the Ministry: 1 Tim. 4.12. But be thou an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity. Surely no graceless Creature on Earth can come to this? For if he has true Love to God, the Spirit of Christ in him, justifying Faith and Purity of Nature, he cannot be graceless; and if he has not these, he cannot be an Example of Believers in them. 4thly, That which is said concerning the Abhorring of all immediate Inspiration or following immediate Impulses of the Spirit, appears to be contrary unto the Holy Word of God in general, and in particular unto the eighth Chapter of the Romans, which saith of Believers, That they are in the Spirit, the Spirit dwells in them: If they have not the Spirit they are none of his: The Spirit is Life: By the Spirit they shall be raised: By the

Spirit they mortify Sin: Led by the {39} Spirit: Received the Spirit; and the Spirit bearing Witness with their Spirits. Now, if all these Things can be so, and a great many more, without any Inspiration or Impulses of the Holy Spirit, it is wonderful to me, as our Author must alledge, or write wilfully and knowingly against the express Word of God. But to conclude, I am persuaded that it has given a deeper Wound and a greater Blow to experimental Piety than any one Piece, yea, than all the Writings which have been published in these Parts in Opposition of the same. The Whole of this Letter, if the Author be gracious, looks like a Person under deep Desertion, strong Temptations, and great Delusions, and discovers what Man is when left to himself. Oh! that the Author may come to a true Sight of his Sin, and of the Wrong done to the Church of Christ by this Letter, and make his Acknowledgment as open and publick as the Letter is, to the Glory of God, and the Good of his Church.

I would now answer a few OBJECTIONS

against this.

Objection 1. These Things are opposite unto what you have published in respect unto the Communion of the Saints. Answer 1. Any unprejudiced Person may easily perceive, that I have several other weighty Reasons besides a not Owing the Covenants, which was only spoken of it in that Piece; which constrain me to recede, for the present, from the ecclesiastical Judicatures of this Church. But in this I was wrong, in not making a Distinction between constant and occasional Communion; between a not Owing and a Denying the Covenants; between a not seeing thro' them, and a wilful Carelessness about them.[5] 2. According to my Opinion, there are unquestionable Saints, not a few, of each Side of the Question, that are for and against the covenanted {40} Reformation: Hence there is an unavoidable Necessity of not joining in some respect with all that I believe to be Saints; for I suppose, no less than Almighty God can bring us all to be of one Mind in these Things. And would any Person have me to forsake those Saints that profess and maintain clearly and openly the very same Principles that I profess and maintain; to join those Saints that will not discover their Principles, what they are, whether good or bad, and do deny several Particulars which I am obliged in Conscience to own and maintain? This makes my Way clear. Indeed were there all Saints on the one Hand, and none on the other, it would alter the Case.

Objection 2. The holy God seems remarkably to countenance and bless several of both Ministers and People who are not strict Presbyterians, yea, perhaps know little what a Presbyterian is; yea, Independents, Anabaptists, and Churchmen: And why should not we join with them, when God appears with them? Answer. 1. If you join with those that are Independents, Anabaptists, or Churchmen, you cast a Stumbling-block in the Way of many of God's Children, that cannot in Conscience join with you, while you join with those that are of another Persuasion, or in their own Lax. Christ tells us, Wo to the Man that offend one of these little Ones that believe in me. Now I believe none will dare to say but that several strict Presbyterians or Covenanters, as to what Man can see of them, live as near God as any upon Earth. But you will say, let them be as good as they will, they are wrong in this, and they should be instructed so: I grant a Possibility of even gracious Men, sound in the Faith, over-straining in some Points; but then who mars your instructing of them if they are wrong. You will say that you cannot convince them that it is so, altho' {41} you have perhaps out-reasoned them, and therefore you will forsake them, they are too stiff. But beware, Dear Friends, that you don't offend one of these little ones, by your turning away. You will say, Why, what shall I do? Consider what it is they are stiff about? Is it about the Principles of the Presbyterian [Re]formed Religion? or is it some erroneous Principle? If it be about an erroneous Principle, after the first or second Admonition we are to reject, Titus 3.10. If they are earnest in contending for sound Principles, why, they contend for nothing but what you profess to believe; and if so, why should you turn away? We are commanded to contend

earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints, Jude 3. And several Presbyterians believe that the Principles, which they profess, is this Faith; and if any Person pretends to be a Presbyterian, and does not believe that their Principles are that Faith, or it contained in them, they sin against the Light of their own Conscience. Again, you will turn away from strict Presbyterians, i.e. such as profess and maintain the Whole of the covenanted Reformation: Why will you turn away? They are too narrow, stiff, biggoted and censorious. This you imagine, but perhaps it's hard to prove. Well, you will turn with Independents, Anabaptists, Churchmen, and the like; why do you so? Why, we find good Men among them, and the Lord appears with them. Well, and don't you find good Men among Presbyterians, and that the Lord has as signally countenanced and blest them, as ever you heard of any Profession since the Days of the Apostles until now, and now also? I suppose none will deny this. If they do, it can easily be proved to be so. You will say, that you dislike something in the Presbyterians Practice. Well, do you find nothing that you dislike among the Independents, {42} Anabaptists or Churchmen? If so, why do you call yourself a Presbyterian? None compel thee to this. But perhaps you will own, that you dislike the Way and Manner of the above-named Governing the Church, in them all, and many Things that they maintain besides, because contrary to the Word of God: Yet you cannot find any thing like this with sound Presbyterians; yet you will leave them; leave the latter, and cleave to the former. What Shadow of Reason can be given for this? When the one is sound in the Faith, the others corrupt in Principles, and as liable to Failings in Practice as those that are sound? Is not this contrary to the Command of God to Jeremiah, Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. Jer. 15.19. Answer 2. You will find, since God has remarkably appeared with his Word, that frequently those who were more loose than many others, have been bro't home to God: And would not you look upon it as a dreadful Conclusion, from this to conclude, that Looseness of Life and Debauchery to be preferable to a sober Life? Is not this to do Evil that Good may come of it? Rom. 3.8. which is awful! And is not this like the Case in Hand, viz. A Leaving those that are sound in the Faith, to join with those that at best are lax therein. 3. I suppose it is the Word of God which should be the Rule of our Direction, how to walk, and what to profess and practice, and not God's Ways of Dealing with People, whether in giving Grace or with-holding of it. Isaiah 8.20, To the Law and to the Testimony: If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them. Whatsoever Principles or Practice are contrary to this infallible Rule, are to be rejected, yea, tho' it were in a Peter. 2 Thess. 3.6. Now we command you, Brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from {43} every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received of us. It is not every Heathen, but every Brother.

Objection 3. "We shall never be asked what Principles we are of, if we are in Christ; and so it's no Matter what Profession we are of: A Profession, or sound Principles, will not save us: If we are Believers in Christ, all will be well; and without it, nothing will be so."

Answer 1. I would ask of you two Questions: 1. Is not Soundness in the Faith a Command of God? Sure it is; and dare thou slight it? 2. Is not an Error in Principle, a Breach of the divine Law, as well as an Error in Practice? Then surely Principles should be regarded as well as Practice, yea, in some Cases more; for Principles have great Influence upon Practice. 3. Principles will not save you, it's true, neither your Works do it. Will not thou there[fore] do what thou canst? Remember, O vain Man, that Faith without Works is dead. So you will find your pretended Believing, without endeavouring after Soundness in Principles, to be only a bold Presumption.

Objection 4. Many good Men have been Independents, Anabaptists and Churchmen; and why may not I join with them?

Answer 1. There is no just Ground to doubt but it is so; but what then? is there not also many good

Men who have been guilty of many terrible Sins? such as David, Peter, and many others: And wilt thou do so too? All of them are still guilty of sinning; and wilt thou allow thyself to do so too? There is a vast Difference between Sins of Ignorance and wilful Sins; between Sins of Infirmities, and between Sins that by Temptations prevail, and Sins deliberately committed. 2. There is a great Difference between a Person born and brought up {44} among Independents, Anabaptists and Churchmen, that perhaps scarcely ever had the Opportunity of perusing, or being instructed in almost any other Principles than his own, and a Person who has been born, brought up, and instructed in the Principles of the Presbyterian Persuasion, falling in with those other Principles; who may justly be termed a Backslider: And there is no Part of the Lord's Armour provided for the Back, [See Eph. 6.11-17]; which discovers the doleful Danger of Backsliding.

Objection 5. Strict Adhering unto any one Set of Principles, occasions Divisions in the Church of God, and sometimes among the Children of God.

Answer 1. I confess it is so, and indeed it is very awful when it occasions Divisions among the Children of God. But the Reason why it is so, is, because corrupt Nature wants to come and go; it cannot bear a being bound to any thing that is good. Yet this is no new Thing, for it was so with Peter and Paul, with Paul and Silas, with Luther and Calvin, and many others. 2. In doing of Duty we are not to be guided by the Effects that the Doing of it may have, but by the Command of God, let the Effects be what they will; the Duty is ours, but Events belong unto God, who can and will over-rule all Things to his own Glory and Good to his Church.

CONCLUSION.

Reverend Fathers and Dear Brethren in CHRIST JESUS,

I PUT no Question but these Things may be surprizing unto you, on the Account of the Divisions that is probable will ensue this receding of mine from your Meetings: Yet I suppose it will scarcely be more so to any one of you than it has been to me: I have been for some Weeks, yea, Months, that I could not tell what to do or how to {45} turn myself; my Conscience raged when I had Thoughts of being silent a little longer, and on the other hand, I did not know how to part with your Society. This has been my Difficulty, when none on Earth knew of it: Let these Things appear in others Eyes as they will, they are very weighty to me. God has evidently got Glory to his own Name out of the first Division which fell out among us, and much Good to his Church, by delivering many of his Children from carnal and blind Guides, and discovered to many what a sad Plague these have been to the World: And now I hope God is about to discover unto many the mournful State of Zion, how open it lies unto all Kinds of Birds of Prey. Altho' I have not lik'd the State of our Church these many Years past, yet I must confess, that I never imagin'd that it lay in such a desperate, ruinous Heap as I find upon Search it does. It is my real Opinion, that never any People, since God created Man upon the Earth, that enjoy'd such Light as we do, were ever so infatuated, bewildered, and, if I may use the Terms, so bewitched about the Affairs of any Branch of his Church, as we in this Age and in these Parts, who have made ourselves fond under the Notion of our having embraced the Westminster Confession of Faith as our own, when indeed it is not so; for all the Pretences this Way have been only a Piece of mere Jugglry or an Heap of Confusion, and instead of these I know not any one Set of Principles that we have that ever was professed by any People; nay, I suppose that there is not one on Earth that can tell what our Principles generally are. Oh! Tears of Blood are too little to lament the distressed Case of our Zion. I have, in some Measure, opened up to you my Mind, dear Brethren, and I suppose upon a Review of what has been said you will conclude that I have sufficient Ground at {46} the present, until these Lets be removed from your Meetings, to withdraw; and altho' we should never be united in one while in time, let us endeavour

each of us so to strive to glorify GOD on Earth that when we have finished our Course here below we may come to enjoy a happy Eternity together in the Kingdom of Glory above, where our Discord will all be at an end, and we united in one, each one endeavouring to sing Hosannas, Love-Songs and Songs of Praise upon the highest Key. Farewell.

TERMS propofed by Mr. Alexander Creaghead for Re-union with the Pref- bytery of New-Caftle, to fit at White- clay-Creek, the Second Wednefday of September, Anno 1742.

Reverend Fathers and Dear Brethren,

THAT it may conspicuously appear unto you and all other People as it truly and really is, that I have no Desire, Design or Intention to recede from your Meetings, Appointments or Communion, if I could, with a good Conscience, enjoy the same: I think I can boldly say, as in the Sight of the Heart searching God, that I do not want to promote Divisions nor mine own Character in this Affair; but singlely and only the Cause of God, which has been sealed by the Blood of many Martyrs: And in Testimony of the Truth of what is said I shall lay down the following Particulars, which, if complied with, will fully satisfy my Conscience, and I shall be ready to join with you in all Ministerial and Christian Communion.

First. If you are sincerely and heartily willing to receive and embrace every individual Particular contained in the 33 Articles, together with the Catechisms, {47} larger and shorter (according unto the plain Meaning and Intent of them) composed by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster as the Confession of your Faith.

Secondly. If you are sincerely and heartily willing to take the Directory in Worship and Government, which you will make your Guide therein, and if you do approve of the Sum of saving Knowledge as a short altho' a full and comprehensive Description thereof.

Thirdly. If you are sincerely and heartily willing to own and acknowledge the national and solemn League and Covenants as a Tie binding you together with all other Presbyterians materially and formally considered unto the Whole of the Presbyterian Religion; and to oppose all Error, these Covenants being renewed by the aforesaid Assembly in the same Year which the Confession was received in as a Part of the Uniformity in Religion.

Fourthly. If you are sincerely and heartily willing to give a Presbyterial Testimony; First against that dreadful Apostacy in King Charles the Second's Time, and all the Defections from the Presbyterian Religion, and in particular against the Complying with that Time, by taking those sinful Bonds, Oaths and Indulgences first or last. 2dly, Against Prelacy in its self as it is an Invention of Men contrary unto God's Holy Word. Against the Exercise of Prelacy by one Teacher ruling over another Teacher; yea, and over others; against the Exercise of it over the Church of Christ, which he has redeemed; and over the Consciences of Men, which none but GOD is Lord over: Against these as they are an Encroachment upon and an Usurpation of the Royal Prerogatives of the Son of God. 3dly. Against all synodical and presbyterial Acts which have been enacted by pretended Presbyterians, against or inconsistent {48} with either the Whole Confession of Faith or any Part of it contained within that excellent Book; against all kind of Practice contrary to the same; against all diminutive Discourse of this Book, and of Persons in as far as they endeavour the Propagation of the Truths therein contained. All those Things [the four Terms] I look upon as undoubtedly agreeable unto the Holy Word of God, and to the Christian reformed Religion; and without a Complying with which I cannot understand how we can maintain, propagate and vindicate every Particular in the 33 Articles, and in the Catechisms, larger and shorter,

composed by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster; some Part of which Articles and Catechisms binds us to almost every if not all the Particulars mentioned under the last Head, besides our additional Obligation unto them all by the Directory and Covenants, national and solemn League.

Please to insert this, together with my Reasons, in your Minutes of the Presbytery.