

CONTENTS OF NO. 2.—VOL. VII.

	Page.
ART. I.—BARNES ON THE GOSPELS, <i>Albert Barnes</i> Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Gospels; designed for Sunday School Teachers and Bible Classes. By Albert Barnes.	149
ART. II.—THE DOCTRINE OF APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS, The Doctrine of Appeals and Complaints. By a mem- ber of the Synod of Philadelphia.	162
ART. III.—NEW ECCLESIASTICAL LAW. No. II. <i>Samuel Miller</i>	186
ART. IV.—THE SCOTTISH SECEDERS, <i>Amos Miller</i>	198
ART. V.—STUART'S GREEK GRAMMAR, <i>John Stuart</i> A Grammar of the New Testament Dialect. By M. Stuart, Professor of Sacred Literature, in the Theological Seminary, Andover.	233
ART. VI.—EPISCOPACY TESTED BY SCRIPTURE, <i>Samuel Miller</i> Episcopacy Tested by Scripture. By the Right Reve- rend Henry U. Onderdonk, D. D. Assistant Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Common- wealth of Pennsylvania.	239
ART. VII.—PRESBYTERIAN POLICY WITH RESPECT TO LEARN- ING, <i>Amos Miller</i> Annual of the Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States: a New Year's Offering for 1835. Edited by John Breckinridge, A. M. Cor- responding Secretary of the Board.	272
ART. VIII.—BARNES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, <i>Charles Hodge</i> Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Epistle to the Romans, designed for Bible Classes and Sunday Schools. By Albert Barnes.	285

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No. II.

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ART. I.—*Notes, explanatory and practical, on the Gospels: designed for Sunday School Teachers and Bible Classes.* By Albert Barnes. *In two volumes. Fourth edition—each edition contains two thousand.* New York and Boston, 1834, 12mo.

THOUGH we hardly have a right to notice, as a new work, one which has been so long in circulation, and with which so many of our readers are familiar, we feel ourselves called upon as Christian critics, to say what we think of Mr. Barnes's expositions. This we shall do as plainly and as kindly as we can. As our object is simply to characterize a book, which is likely to exert a very durable and extensive influence, we shall confine ourselves entirely to an enumeration of the points in which we think it worthy either of praise or censure. We have only to premise that our conclusions have been mostly drawn from the notes on Matthew and John, especially the former, though we have so far compared the rest as to remain convinced, that the first part of the work is a sample of the whole. Throughout our strictures, we shall endeavour to be pointed and specific, referring when we can, to individual examples, both of defect and merit, though it be at the risk of seeming sometimes hypercritical, a reproach which can scarcely

ART. III.—*The Scottish Seceders.*

IN the year 1733, Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrief, and James Fisher, having been deposed from the ministry by the COMMISSION of the General Assembly, formed themselves into an "Associate Presbytery." The Assembly of 1734 gave authority to the Synod of Stirling, to remove the censures which had been inflicted, and it was accordingly done; but they refused to return to the bosom of the church, and continued their secession. In 1736, they proceeded to publish an 'ACT, DECLARATION, and TESTIMONY,' in the Introduction to which they assign the reasons of the course which they had pursued. Their reasons for constituting themselves into a presbytery were, 1. That the keys of government and discipline are given to pastors, as well as the key of doctrine, with this difference, that the last can be exercised by each minister alone; whereas the key of government requires several to be associated; and there being four cast out at once, they considered it a call of Providence to associate presbyterially together, that they might be in a condition to exercise all parts of the pastoral office, received from the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. They were encouraged to take this step from the promise of Christ's presence, with two or three gathered together in his name, Matth. xviii. 20, which they applied to ecclesiastical proceedings. 3. They deemed it necessary to associate *presbyterially* to distinguish themselves from other sectarians, as the Independents, who lodge the keys of government in the whole body of the faithful; and refuse due subordination of congregations to superior judicatories. 4. The deplorable state of many congregations, groaning under the intrusion of ministers, had considerable influence in leading the Seceders to take this step. 5. They felt it to be their duty to give their testimony, not only doctrinally, but judicially, for 'Scotland's Covenanted Reformation,' and against all declensions from the same.

But while they resolved to associate as a presbytery, they at the same time determined, that they would not proceed hastily to any act of jurisdiction, but would wait to see whether the judicatories of the church would return to the *reformation-standards*; and therefore they met for a time merely to ask counsel of the Lord, and one another.

The seceding brethren gave, as a reason for not being

satisfied with the Commission, and acts of the Assembly of 1734, that these acts did not remove, in any degree, the main ground of their secession. For though this Assembly declared that ministerial freedom, in testifying against error and declension was not impaired; and permitted the Synod of Perth and Stirling, on certain conditions, to remove the censure of the COMMISSION; yet the act of 1733 remained unrepealed. And their declaration of ministerial freedom, being unimpaired by the decision of 1733, was a virtual confirmation of the grounds of protest. Their testimony against the act of 1732, so far from being justified, was condemned, and all the acts of the Assembly of 1734, however conciliatory in appearance, proceed on the supposition of the guilt of the four ejected brethren. Besides, as this Assembly lifted up no judicial testimony against prevailing errors, the "Associate Ministers" did not feel at liberty to re-enter the judicatories of the church; but, since this Assembly did put some stop to the unwarrantable proceedings of former Assemblies and Commissions, they judged it expedient to continue their meetings as before, without proceeding to any acts of jurisdiction.

The Assembly of 1735, they represent as less zealous for reformation than that of the preceding year. It appointed a national fast, but included in the act no explicit and full testimony against the defections of the times. And the Assembly of 1736, went still further back from any thing like true *reformation-work*. They directed a presentee to be settled in the parish of Denny, though a large majority of the elders and people were opposed to him; and treated Professor Campbell with a lenity altogether disproportioned to the enormous errors of which he was convicted. The Associated Ministers having waited for a considerable time, and seeing that the judicatories of the church neglected to lift up a particular testimony against prevailing sins and errors, judged it to be their duty "to emit a judicial declaration or testimony, for the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline, of the Church of Scotland; and against former and present defections from the same, for the following reasons, viz. 1. The iniquities and backslidings of former times have never been particularly acknowledged nor condemned by the judicatories of this church since the revolution. 2. Though a flood of error and profaneness, at present, overflows the land; yet a banner is not judicially displayed for the truth, and against the prevailing evils of the present

time. 3. And, therefore, a judicial testimony seems necessary, at this time, for the glory of God, for the conviction of the present generation, and for the information of posterity, and that truth may be transmitted to them with a suitable testimony; for it must be owned, that this is a debt which one generation owes to another, to endeavour to transmit to them the truths of God in their purity. And when truth is opposed, it should be delivered to posterity with a solemn and peculiar testimony. 4. The Lord, in his adorable providence, having permitted these four brethren to be cast out by the judicatories of the church, at a time when the current of defection was strong; and they having made a secession for reasons assigned in their protest, given in to the COMMISSION in 1733, and more fully, in their testimony afterwards published, and the grounds of their secession not being to this day removed; and they having entered into a presbyterial association, judge, that for the reasons assigned, the same adorable Providence calls upon them, to lift up the standard of judicial testimony for the truths of God, and against a course of backsliding from the same. And to this they feel themselves more especially called, when they consider, that a testimony of this kind has been so long wanting, and so much desired by many that fear the Lord, through the land; and as there appears no hope of obtaining it from the present judicatories of the church. 5. They were the more excited to emit this DECLARATION and TESTIMONY, that they might make an open confession of their principles, that the world might see what they own and acknowledge, and upon what foundation, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, they wish to stand. 6. They reckoned themselves still more obliged to this duty, by their ordination vows, to fulfil the ministry, which they received of the Lord, whereby they are bound, "to teach and observe all things whatever the Lord Christ hath commanded them; and that not only doctrinally, but judicially."

The ministers being met in Presbytery, appointed some of their number to prepare the draught of an *Act and Testimony*, asserting the doctrine, worship, and discipline of the church of Scotland, and condemning the several steps of defection from the same, both in former and present times. And the draught having been prepared, and laid before the Presbytery, it was, in several meetings, seriously and deliberately considered, discussed, and amended: and as thus corrected and amended, it was, at a meeting of Presbytery,

at Perth, Dec. 3, 1736, unanimously approved, and ordered to be published, under the following title:

“THE ACT, DECLARATION, AND TESTIMONY, *for the Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline of the Church of Scotland, AGREEABLE to the word of God, the Confession of Faith, the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Nations; and AGAINST several steps of defection from the same, both in former and present times: by some Ministers associate together, for the exercise of Church-government, and Discipline, in a Presbyterian Capacity.*”

The first pages of this testimony contain a summary of the reasons which influenced the Presbytery to put it forth. They then proceed to give a detailed analysis of the history of the Church of Scotland, from the era of the reformation, with a pointed censure of those acts of the civil or ecclesiastical governments, by which this blessed work was interrupted or retarded, especially, they bear testimony against the tyrannical proceedings of James I. and his son Charles I. in their attempts to introduce prelacy into Scotland, by force, and to impose on this church, “a service-book, and a book of Popish and Prelatic canons.”

But this Testimony not only censures what was unfavourable to the progress of reformation, but acknowledges with approbation, the kind interpositions of Providence in its favour, and the zeal and fidelity of those ministers who firmly opposed the torrent of defection in those trying times. The remarkable success of the gospel in the west of Scotland, in 1725, and the extraordinary out-pouring of the spirit, at the kirk of Shots, in 1730, are particularly mentioned. But they speak in terms of the strongest approbation, of the general revival of religion in 1737, by which a *check* was given to prevailing defections: and of the renewal of the National Covenant in Feb. 1638, when within a few months, “almost the whole land did cheerfully and joyfully, come under the oath of God.” They applaud the zeal and fidelity of the General Assembly of this same year, whose acts greatly tended to further the revival of religion, so that from this time until the year 1650, “the building of the house of God went on prosperously and successfully; and a seed was sown which twenty-eight years of hot persecution could not afterwards extirpate.” They next adduce as an evidence of God’s special favour to his church, that England and Ireland, provoked to pious emu-

lation, by the example of Scotland, joined with her in the solemn league and covenant. Another mark of divine favour, during this period of ecclesiastical prosperity, was the "Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Directory, agreed upon by the Assembly of divines met at Westminster; all which were speedily adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland." Several other acts of the Assembly are then spoken of, especially one passed in 1649, by which patronage was abolished; a yoke under which the church had groaned from the time that the reformation commenced.

"The above particulars," say they, "are some of the instances of the power and goodness of the most high God, manifested in the beginning and progress of the reformation in this land, which *this presbytery* judge it to be their duty to record." "But since the church, in its militant state, is imperfect, it is not intended to assert, that in the above mentioned period, there was nothing defective, as to the beauty and order of the house of God; or that there was nothing culpable in the administration. All that is designed, is, that this church endeavoured, and mercifully attained, a considerable pitch of reformation." "It would have been the happiness and glory of this church, if she had held fast what by the good hand of God upon her, she had attained; but how soon did her gold become dim, and how quickly her most fine gold changed!"

The first alleged step in the defection of the church, was the repeal of certain acts debarring persons disaffected to the reformation, from places of power and trust. About this time (it is also recorded) the church of Scotland (as a just punishment of her defection) was brought under the yoke of Oliver Cromwell, the usurper; under which she groaned ten years. "During this period," say the presbytery, "a most sinful toleration of sectarian errors was granted by Cromwell and his privy council." As soon as Charles II. was restored to the throne, and episcopacy was re-established in England, the laws passed from 1638 to 1650, were all repealed, and declared rebellious and treasonable; and the Solemn League and Covenant, and the National Covenant, were declared unlawful oaths; and an act of parliament was passed, dispensing with the obligations of these oaths, and the consciences of all who had taken them were declared to be free from their obligation. The doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, we

are informed, was now introduced, and screwed up to the highest pitch. Prelacy was established by the royal authority; for the parliament of 1662 had declared, that "the ordering and disposal of the external government and policy of the church doth properly belong to the king, as an inherent right of the crown." In consequence, they tell us, three hundred ministers were ejected from their charges, merely for non-conformity, and refusing subjection to the prelates; and the next year, (1663) the parliament enacted "that all non-conforming ministers, who should presume to exercise their ministry, should be punished as seditious." And in this same year, "the National Covenant, as sworn in 1638, and the Solemn League and Covenant, were most ignominiously burnt at Linlithgow, by the authority of the magistrates." "In this hour and power of darkness," no open or judicial testimony was lifted against the above tyrannical acts; but a universal silent submission. The judicatories of the church, synods and presbyteries were dissolved, and though some of them protested, they generally submitted. But the ejected ministers began to preach in private houses; and when by persecution they were driven from this method of instruction, they met in the fields, by which the prelates were so enraged, that they obtained the passage of an act, that the preacher who should be found presiding at a field-meeting should suffer death; and heavy penalties were threatened to all attendants on such meetings. Here *commenced* a scene of the most cruel persecution. "But notwithstanding these severities, the more the Lord's people were oppressed the more they grew; and when the gospel was preached at the peril of their lives from the sword, in the wilderness, the Lord gave remarkable countenance to his own ordinances, which were blessed to the conversion and confirmation of many."

The *Testimony* then proceeds to pass a heavy censure on those ejected ministers, who availed themselves of the royal indulgence, in 1669, as being a virtual acknowledgement of the king's ecclesiastical supremacy. And, it is declared, that the whole land was involved in guilt, by reason of sinful oaths imposed during this period of defection; especially the oath of allegiance, in which they were required to acknowledge "that the king is the only supreme governor, over all persons, and in all causes." Many other instances of unlawful oaths are specified. "During this period," says the document, "the witnesses for Scotland's co-

venanted reformation endured cruel mockings, and scourgings. They were chased about in deserts, and in mountains, in caves and dens of the earth;—destitute, afflicted, tormented.” Multitudes were banished; others suffered long imprisonment, spoiling of goods, and grievous tortures, that had not a parallel in any protestant country. Many resisted even unto blood, striving against sin. The most public cities of the nation were defiled with innocent blood; many were killed in the open fields, without any legal process. The martyrdom of the Duke of Argyle and of Mr. James Guthry is particularly mentioned. “Thus,” they go on to say, “in our skirts is found the blood of the saints, who suffered in this dismal period; and if the ordinary course of Divine Providence is observed, all ranks in Scotland have reason to fear, that a land defiled with perjury and blood, must be punished by blood; especially, when these heinous abominations have never been seriously considered nor mourned over.”

The instrument then goes on to recount the evils and dangers by which the protestant religion in the three kingdoms was threatened by the accession of James II. to the throne; and speaks in terms of strong reprobation of the insidious toleration granted by the arbitrary authority of the king, by which papists were freed from all the penal laws, which had been enacted against them. For accepting this toleration, the Presbyterian ministers of Scotland are here censured; and, especially, those of Edinburg, who sent to the king an address of thanks, July 21, 1687, in which they offer to the popish prince their sincere thanks, and bless the great God who put it into his heart to grant them the said liberty, which they received as a gracious and surprising favour; and promising an entire loyalty and obedience, in their doctrine and practice. “This unbounded toleration,” say the Associate Presbytery, “was, no doubt, contrary to the Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism of the church of Scotland.”

This part of the history of the defections of the church and nation, is concluded with the following solemn testimony: “The ministers associate together, being met in presbytery, judge it their duty, to testify and bear witness against all these heinous sins and abominations; and they did, and do hereby condemn all the aforesaid sins, backslidings, and steps of defection, from our covenanted reformation.” * * * “And they hereby declare, that they were

and are just causes of the Lord's righteous quarrel and controversy, with our princes, our nobles, barons, burgesses, ministers, and commons of all sorts, in the land; and that for the above heinous sins and provocations, all ranks of persons have reason to mourn before the Lord, lest by their continued and growing impenitency and obduration, a righteous and holy God be provoked to come out of his holy habitation, and visit the iniquities of our fathers upon us, in this generation."

The Associate Presbytery then proceeded to acknowledge the goodness of God, and the wonderful deliverance experienced, by his providential interposition, in the glorious revolution of 1688; by which the threatening dangers of popery were averted; and religious liberty restored to Scotland. But here they commence a heavy accusation against the nation and the church, first, because the parliament in the act in which they "abolished prelacy as a great and insupportable grievance," and established presbyterian government and discipline, instead of recognising and establishing the acts of reformation, passed between 1638 and 1650, merely placed ecclesiastical matters on the same footing on which they were in 1592; and not the least mention is made of the indignities offered to the National Covenant, and to the Solemn League and Covenant.

2. They pass a censure upon the General Assembly; which met in 1690, under the civil constitution adopted by the parliament; not on account of any acts which they passed, but for various omissions of what in their circumstances ought to have been done. They neglected to acknowledge the defections into which the church and nation had fallen; they lifted up no clear testimony against the "blasphemous" claims of supremacy; nor did they, nor any Assembly since, acknowledge the binding obligation of the National Covenant, and Solemn League and Covenant. They also censure the General Assemblies of several successive years for permitting ministers who had been put into place by the prelatists to retain their charges, provided they agreed to conform to the existing ecclesiastical constitution. 3. The third particular against which they lift up their testimony, is that clause in the Act of Union between the two kingdoms, in which it is declared, "that the maintenance of the hierarchy and ceremonies of the church of England should be a fundamental article of the union," which clause was entirely contrary to our covenanted engagements. 4. They censure

the multiplication of oaths; and especially, the frequency of custom-house oaths, and also the superstitious custom, introduced from England, of laying the hand on the book and kissing it; which is declared to be "a very corrupt innovation, in that act of worship." They also testified against the sacramental test, required of all persons serving his majesty in England and Ireland; and against some things in the "oath of abjuration." 5. They testify against "the boundless toleration, by which," say they, "the government and discipline of this church is greatly weakened," and which, they allege, is contrary to many scriptures, and inconsistent with that part of the "Larger Catechism" which enumerates "the sins forbidden in the second commandment." 6. In a very special manner, this document censures the act of the General Assembly of 1712, by which the right of patronage was recognised and secured; against which the church of Scotland had always testified and struggled, as subversive of the rights of Christian congregations, to elect their own ministers; and which was fully recognised in the Second Book of Discipline. The countenance given by parliament to holy-days in Scotland, by the vacation of the principal courts of justice, is also the subject of complaint. The Presbytery next proceeds to acknowledge the kind and effectual interposition of Providence, in quelling the rebellion, which threatened a return of all the former evils of tyranny and popery, to the three kingdoms. But this had no effect on the nation to lead her to retrace her backsliding steps; or on the body of the church, to awaken her from her slumbers. Instead of this, the defection went on increasing daily. "Damnable and pernicious principles," say they, "are propagated, which have a tendency to raze the foundations of our Christian faith. Arian blasphemies and Arminian errors have been vented in one of our most considerable seminaries of learning, where the youth are trained up for the holy ministry. Serious godliness, and the supernatural work of the Spirit, have been treated with ridicule; and the standard of a faithful testimony against the prevailing errors of the time, has not been lifted up by the judicatories of the church. A form of godliness, a shadow of religion, takes place of the power thereof, through the land. The keys of government and discipline given to the office-bearers of the church by her glorious Head, for the edification of his body, and preserving his institutions in their purity, have been perverted to quite opposite

ends. The power of religion is decaying among us, and the very form is despised by many, and rested upon by others."

They then proceed to give some particular instances of the progress and height of the present defection and back-sliding. The first instance is the case of Mr. John Simson, Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow; by whom the following dangerous errors had been owned and defended, in his answers to the charges brought against him, in the years 1714, 1715. "By the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, including tradition, God has given an obscure objective revelation to all men, of his being reconcilable to sinners: and that the heathen may know that there is a remedy for sin provided, which may be called an implicit and obscure revelation of the gospel. And it is probable, that none are excluded from the benefit of the remedy for sin, provided by God, and published twice to the whole world, except those who by their actual sin exclude themselves, and those who slight and reject the clearer light of the gospel revealed to the church, or that obscure discovery and offer of grace, made to all without the church. And if the heathen would in sincerity and truth, and in the diligent use of means that Providence lays to their hand, seek from God the knowledge of the way of reconciliation, necessary for their acceptable serving Him, and being saved by Him, He would discover it to them." Likewise, he affirms, "that there are means appointed of God, for obtaining saving grace, which means, when diligently used, with seriousness, sincerity, and faith of being heard, God has promised to bless with success; and the use of these means in the aforesaid manner, is not above the reach of our natural ability and power." "Which propositions," say they, "are directly contrary to the word of God, as held forth in the Confession of Faith."

On the subject of man's inability, they remark, that Professor Simson rejects the usual answer of reformed divines to the Pelagian objection, *that it is unjust in God to command what we have no power to perform*, which is, that we had power in Adam but have lost it by the fall: that though we have lost the power to obey, God has not lost the right to command. This Professor Simson thinks is an entirely insufficient answer; and in fact gives up the cause of truth to the Pelagians and Arminians; to the dishonour of God.

Professor Simson, moreover, held and taught, "That there was not a proper covenant made with Adam for himself and his posterity. That Adam was not a federal head to his posterity. That if he was made a federal head it must be by a divine command, which is not found in the Bible. That it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God to create a soul without original righteousness. That the souls of infants as they come from the hand of God, are as pure and holy, as the souls of infants would have been created, supposing man had not fallen; and that they are created as pure as Adam was, except as to those habits which he received, being created in an adult state. That it is more than probable, that all baptized infants, dying in infancy, are saved; and that if God should deny his grace to all, or any of the children of infidels, he would deal more severely with them than he did with the fallen angels: that there is no immediate, previous divine concurrence with all the actions of reasonable creatures; and that a regard to our own happiness, and the prospect of our eternal felicity, in the enjoyment of God in heaven, ought to be our chief motive in serving the Lord upon earth; and that our glorifying God being the means, is subordinate to our enjoyment of Him for ever, which is our ultimate end; and that were it not for the prospect of happiness, we could not, and therefore would not, serve God. That there will be no sinning in hell after the last judgment."

The above opinions of Professor Simson, the Associate Presbytery declare to be *dangerous and pernicious errors*. And they also condemned the following errors, which the said Professor Simson maintained, in his defence before the General Assembly in 1727, 1728, and 1729, viz. "That our Lord Jesus Christ is not necessarily existent. That the phrase '*necessary existence*,' is improper, in application to the Trinity. That the three persons of the Trinity ought not to be pronounced *numerically* one in substance. That the terms *necessary existence*, *Supreme Deity*, and *the only true God*, may be taken in a sense in which they express the personal property of the Father, and not of the Son." All which propositions they declared to be "damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought us," and subverting one of the principal foundations of the Christian faith—blasphemous indignities, done to the Person of the Eternal Son of God our Redeemer; as also unto the Person of the Holy Ghost, our Sanctifier and Comforter; whereby these

adorable Persons are robbed of their true and supreme Deity, and reduced to the rank of dependent, inferior beings. They also declared, that on account of these errors, the said Mr. Simson deserved, not only suspension from the ministry, but excommunication from all communion with the church and people of God, until he give evidence of his repentance and manifest sorrow for teaching the aforesaid dangerous errors.

This ACT and TESTIMONY also contains a strong censure of the errors of Mr. Archibald Campbell, Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of St. Andrews, which he had broached in his books and in his defence before the General Assembly. The errors charged on this professor, were, "That self-love is the spring of all our virtuous actions; and, indeed, of all the actions of every rational mind;—that men might refuse to worship God, unless their happiness could be thereby secured;—that self-love, as exercised in the desire of universal esteem, is the strongest motive to a course of virtuous action; and that as God acts for his own self-interest, we cannot act from any higher principle than our own self-interest:" which propositions are declared to be contrary to the Scriptures, and to the Confession of Faith; in proof of which, numerous passages are adduced, and commented on. Professor Campbell is also charged with casting indignity on the work of the Holy Spirit, in his "Discourse, showing that the apostles were no enthusiasts." And in the same discourse, he is charged with setting up human reason as our guide in matters of religion. Various other errors are laid to the charge of the said Professor Campbell; and the General Assembly is censured by the Associate Presbytery for overlooking some, and too slightly censuring others, of his errors. A large proportion of this tedious testimony relates to the process against this man, which is made entirely too prominent for a paper of this description.

The Seceders also lifted up their testimony against a work which had then been recently published, under the title of, "The Assembly's Shorter Catechism, Revised, and rendered fitter for general use." In this mutilated edition of the Catechism almost every leading doctrine was omitted or perverted; but as it was anonymous, and is now completely forgotten, it is unnecessary to notice it further.

The proceedings of the Assembly in regard to Professor Simson are detailed, and their remissness in this affair is

very justly censured. Mr. James Webster brought up the case, from *public fame*, and requested first the Presbytery of Glasgow, and then the Synod, to take cognizance of the matter; but both these judicatories declined taking it up; upon which Mr. Webster tabled charges before the General Assembly of 1714. The General Assembly, instead of entering on a trial of the cause, directed Mr. Webster and any who might wish to join with him, to bring in their charges before the presbytery to which Professor Simson belonged. This course, so evidently proper, is made matter of complaint by the Seceders against the General Assembly. Mr. Webster, accordingly, laid his charges before the Presbytery of Glasgow, and Mr. Simson having presented to that judicatory, his defence, the whole case was referred to the General Assembly of 1715; who appointed a committee to prepare it for trial; "still," observe the Seceders, "laying the weight of the prosecution on Mr. Webster." In 1716, the Assembly continued the process, and in 1717 the cause was issued. The *Testimony* complains, that the Assembly, instead of condemning the gross and dangerous errors owned by Mr. Simson, and censuring him for the same, did not even so much as rebuke him; but adopted the following act, viz. "That he had vented some opinions, not necessary to be taught in divinity, and that had given more occasion to strife than to the promoting of edification: and that he had used some expressions that were, and that are used by adversaries, in an unsound sense; that he had adopted some hypotheses, different from what are used among orthodox divines; that are not evidently founded on Scripture, and tend to attribute too much to natural reason, and the power of corrupt nature; which undue advancement of reason and nature, is always to the disparagement of revelation, and efficacious free grace. Therefore, they prohibit and discharge [forbid] the said Mr. Simson to use such expressions, or to teach, preach, or otherwise vent, such opinions, propositions, and hypotheses, as aforesaid."

The above sentence is, in the Act and Testimony, described, not without reason, as "excessive lenity, or rather sinful remissness and slackness, in not inflicting due censure upon one, who had given such evident discoveries of his corrupt and erroneous principles; and whom it was unsafe to trust any more with the education of youth for the holy ministry." And the Associate Presbytery allege, that this misjudged lenity "encouraged him to go on in venting and

teaching his pernicious errors, until at length, in a way of righteous judgment from the Lord on this sinful and lukewarm church, he was so far left of God as to attack and impugn the supreme divinity of the GREAT GOD OUR SAVIOUR. And though it was clearly proven, that he had vented and taught the above propositions; yet the censure of this church for this *foundation-truth* did rise no higher than a bare suspension from teaching and preaching, and the exercise of any ecclesiastical power or function. And this too, notwithstanding it was clearly proven, that he had controverted the injunction of the Assembly of 1717 in venting the dangerous errors, which they had discharged [forbidden] him to teach."

"The above omission of our General Assemblies concerning doctrine," say these protesting brethren, "must be reckoned the more culpable, as they have been frequently addressed by representations and instructions from synods and presbyteries; and also from ministers and elders, through the land, representing the necessity of a particular condemnation of the several dangerous errors, and blasphemies, vented by Mr. Simson; and that a solemn warning might be emitted, discovering the evil and dangerous tendency of the same; yet nothing of this kind is done. And though it is a debt, that one generation owes to another, to transmit the *truths* of God in their purity to posterity; and to deliver those truths that are particularly assaulted and opposed, with some peculiar and solemn TESTIMONY to them; yet injured truth continues to lie wounded and bleeding in our streets, without justice done her by the church-representative, to whom it belongs in a special manner, to publish and declare, to uphold and defend all the truths of God, delivered in his word, against open and avowed enemies, and secret underminers; and therefore, the above sinful omission must be reckoned an injury done to truth, an injustice done to our posterity, and of a very dangerous tendency towards the hardening of such as may be tainted with the above errors, as well as opening a door for the spreading of this corrupt leaven among others."

We have given the above extract from this document, because we approve of the sentiments which it contains; and though some of the opinions maintained originally by Professor Simson, were not, in our opinion, heretical; yet many of them were of dangerous tendency; and at length, as is usual, one error paved the way for another,

until this learned professor denied the faith. We agree, therefore, that there was a culpable remissness and lenity in the General Assembly, both in the first and second instance, when he was under process.

The Seceders go on to say, that since the wicked rebellion, pernicious errors, like a flood, had overspread the land, and that ruin from her own hands threatened the Presbyterian Church, of which several particular instances are given.

1. No due care had been taken in licensing candidates for the ministry. 2. In many cases where nearly the whole parish were opposed to the presentees, they had by church authority been obtruded on the people. 3. The General Assembly have not acted impartially in matters of doctrine; for although the evidence against Professor Simson was clear, yet, the processes against him were kept pending for several years; and the Assembly of 1728, instead of passing sentence upon him for the heresy of denying the supreme divinity of Christ, sent down the case to all the presbyteries, to obtain their judgment what censure should be inflicted on him. But in another case, the Assembly of 1720 condemned a bundle of propositions when they had been under consideration only at two meetings. This occasioned a remonstrance, the following year, from a number of ministers, who represented, that by the aforesaid act and summary proceeding, many gospel-truths were wounded; so that the Assembly of 1722 saw themselves obliged to enter largely into an explanation of these doctrines, and to express their views in the language of the Confession and Catechisms; but still, the Associate Presbytery complains that two propositions stood condemned by the Assembly, which are entirely conformable to the word of God. The first is, "*That, as the law is the covenant of works, believers are wholly set free from it.*" The second, "*That believers are free from the commanding and condemning power of the covenant of works.*" Now, although it is true that the Assembly of 1722 were constrained to declare, "That it is a precious gospel truth, that believers are free from the law as a covenant of works;" yet they did not repeal the act and sentence of the Assembly of 1720, which they ought to have done. 4. They next come nearer to their own particular case, and testify against the act of the Assembly of 1732, relative to the settling of ministers in vacant parishes, which gave occasion to the sermon of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, for which he was censured. Against all the proceedings of

the judicatories of the church, in relation to this whole business, they bear solemn testimony. 5. They show why they could not conscientiously return to the communion of the established church, though the Assembly of 1734 had repealed the act of 1732, respecting the settlement of ministers; because the said act was not condemned, as contrary to the word of God; and the other offensive acts of 1733 were not formally repealed. 6. They bear testimony against "abounding profanity, impiety and the vilest immoralities of all sorts, wherewith the land is greatly polluted." Among the evils complained of, are the "diversions of the stage, together with night-assemblies, and balls;" likewise, "an idolatrous picture of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, which had been well received in some remarkable places." The toleration of the mass, and other popish errors, is also distinctly mentioned. Also, the repeal of the penal statutes against witches. But especially, they complain of the decay of the power of religion, and contempt and neglect of the gospel, by which the Lord had been provoked to withdraw in a great measure from his own ordinances.

They next bring home their testimony to the different ranks and classes of men; the nobility, the burgesses, the commons, and the ministers in the house of God, are all described as guilty of the sad degeneracy which had taken place. Moreover, they complain, that even those ministers who felt and lamented the growing defection, had not zeal and courage to come forward, in their respective judicatories, to promote reformation. They then bring forward some instances of the want of strictness and fidelity in the exercise of discipline. These protesting brethren, however, were not satisfied with a testimony against prevailing errors and defections in the church, but judged it to be necessary to give an explicit confession of their own faith in regard to all the leading doctrines of divine revelation, which is little more than a repetition of certain parts of the Confession of Faith. The Associate Presbytery, however, in this instrument, take special care to claim for **IMMANUEL** the Headship of his own church, in opposition to all pretensions of popes or kings; and they also insist on the divine right of the people to choose their own pastors; and enter their formal testimony against the claims of diocesan bishops, and their superiority to presbyters. They assert the divine right of Presbyterian church government;

and maintain, that the power of the keys is given to the office-bearers, and not to the body of the congregation.

In like manner, they owned and asserted the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant of Scotland, and of the Solemn League and Covenant: and declare their adoption of the Confession of Faith, compiled by the divines met at Westminster, with the assistance of the commissioners from the church of Scotland. They also declare their adherence to all the testimonies, which had been held up by the church, against error and defection, in the purest and best years of her history; which testimonies are particularly enumerated.

This long and solemn TESTIMONY is concluded by an appropriate and fervent petition. "May the Lord himself return. May he look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine—the vineyard which his own right hand hath planted; the branch which he hath made strong for himself. May his hand be upon the man of his right hand; upon the Son of Man whom he hath made strong for himself; so shall we not go back from him. May he quicken us, and we will call upon his name. Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved!"

To this ACT AND TESTIMONY, of the Associate Presbytery, there is appended, an Act, concerning the admission of Mr. Ralph Erskine, and Mr. Thomas Mair; together with a DECLARATION OF SECESSION from the present judicatories of the church of Scotland, by Mr. Thomas Mair, which occupies 16 pages. Mr. Ralph Erskine also gave in his adherence to the same, and both these brethren were received as members of the Associate Presbytery.

A complete separation having taken place between the Associate Presbytery and the established church of Scotland, by the *Act of secession* on the one part, and the *Act of deposition* on the other, the new ecclesiastical body, (commonly called, *Seceders*, but by themselves, "The *Associate Presbytery*,") partly by the popularity of their principles, and partly in consequence of the zeal and activity of the seceding ministers, rapidly increased. Though their congregations had been declared vacant by the General Assembly, the majority of both their elders and people continued to adhere to them, and seceded with them from the established church. New churches of seceders were formed, in many places, and increased in numbers, daily. Thus prosperously

did the affairs of the Secession church proceed, till difficulties and divisions, of a perplexing nature arose among themselves. As they had borne testimony against the neglect of renewing the National Covenant, and the Solemn League and Covenant, it was felt by them to be incumbent on them, to perform this solemn duty, as an organized ecclesiastical body. Accordingly, they began to make preparation for a renewal of the covenants, and various meetings of the Associate Presbytery had this subject under consideration. But while they were proceeding in these preparatory measures, the Rev. Mr. Nairn, one of the seven ministers who had protested against the sentence of the commission by which the four brethren were condemned, and who afterwards joined the Secession, was the occasion of no small difficulty, and of long continued discussion in the Associate Presbytery.

A committee of the Associate Presbytery had prepared an "overture," in relation to the Covenants. When this was read before the Presbytery, Mr. Nairn objected to a paragraph, in which those who opposed themselves to the civil government of the country, are pointedly censured. He wished to enter his dissent at once, on their records, but the Presbytery prevailed on him to withhold it for the present, and to keep the subject under consideration, till the next stated meeting. In December of this year, they met again, and again reasoned and expostulated with Mr. Nairn, and entreated him to delay his dissent; but in vain. Accordingly, it was received and entered, but the further consideration of it was deferred, until the next meeting. In Feb. 1743, the dissent was taken up, and a committee appointed to deal with Mr. Nairn, "about retracting the dangerous and pernicious principles, contained in his dissent;" but Mr. Nairn saved them that trouble, by formally declining the authority of the Presbytery; and immediately withdrew. While he was going out, the Presbytery cited him to appear before them the next day. Mr. Nairn, not making his appearance, another committee was appointed to prepare an overture, containing an answer to his "reasons of dissent." This overture, though it was soon prepared, was not finally agreed upon, till Sept. 14, 1743, when it was twice read, and unanimously approved. This document, including Mr. Nairn's reasons with the Presbytery's answers, fills 96 closely printed pages. But as the whole of the dis-

pute proceeds upon the principle, that civil government have a right and power to regulate the affairs of the church; and that there exists a union between church and state; which principle is entirely discarded by all parties in this country, it is needless to notice this paper any further.

It may be as well to mention here, as any where else, that the Erskines, upon hearing of the preaching of the Rev. George Whitefield, in England, invited him to Scotland, where he preached for Mr. Ralph Erskine, at Dumfermlinc. Proposals were now made to this great evangelical preacher, to join himself to the Associate Presbytery, which he rejected in the most peremptory manner. The conversation which took place between the parties, on this occasion, may be seen in "Gillies' Life of Whitefield." Immediately upon this refusal, the Seceders rejected him and his ministry, openly, and pursued him with as much bitterness of persecution, as he received from any other quarter.

Mr. Adam Gib, minister of the gospel at Edinburgh, and a leading and able member of the secession, published in 1742, "A WARNING against countenancing the ministrations of Mr. George Whitefield," with an appendix, wherein are shown, that Mr. Whitefield is no minister of Jesus Christ, that his call and coming to Scotland are scandalous; that his practice is disorderly and fertile of disorder; that his whole doctrine is, and his success must be diabolical; so that people ought to avoid him, from duty to God, to the church, to themselves, to posterity and to *him*." All this is found upon the title-page of a pamphlet, which has long since sunk into oblivion while the character of the distinguished preacher so maligned, has been rising continually in the estimation of the religious world. In the Preface to this pamphlet, Mr. Gib says, "This man I have no scruple to look upon, as one of those *false Christs*, of whom the church is forewarned, Matt. xxiv. 24." Mr. Gib can by no means be placed among the prophets, at this day, although in the same Preface he said, "If what I said from the *pulpit* did set the bees of apostate and deluded professors a *humming* against me, I may expect, that what I now say from the *press* will set them a *stinging*; but be the consequence what it will, I dare not retract. I am apprehensive, that however uncouth my judgment anent Mr. W——d and his affairs may *presently* appear; yet that it will be the

common judgment, in a few years, when Providence shall further discover the *depths of Satan*, and chastise the delusions of men."

The "Warning" itself is brief, but the Appendix, which seems to have been composed some time afterwards, is extended through six sections, and a conclusion, occupying about 60 pages. But as we do not wish to revive prejudices which have been, we trust, long since buried in oblivion, we forbear to make any further extracts from this unfortunate production. The fact may serve as an example, to show to what lengths even good men may be carried by prejudice and bigotry.

The Associate Presbytery, by solemnly declaring that the judicatories of the established church were no judicatories of Jesus Christ, committed themselves in such a manner, that they were led to the adoption of many dangerous opinions, both doctrinal and practical, merely out of opposition to the acts of the establishment. Their bitter feelings and expressions in regard to Mr. Whitefield, must be ascribed to this cause. For his preaching having been attended with extraordinary success, in many of the churches of the establishment, the Seceders were led, upon the principle above-stated, to view all the effects of his preaching as a delusion of the devil. And for the same reason, the extraordinary work of God at Cambuslang and Kylesith, which although not commenced under Whitefield's preaching, was greatly promoted by it, were pronounced by these misled men, to be manifest delusions of the grand adversary, transforming himself into an angel of light. So powerful is the influence of prejudice, even over the minds of persons of eminent piety!

It is indeed, a wonder, that the very men who had solemnly protested against the national church, on account of the decay of vital godliness; and who, in their Act and Testimony, explicitly recognised the appearance of God for his church, by extraordinary outpourings of his Spirit, at the kirk of Shots, and divers places in the West of Scotland; and expressed the utmost confidence in the success of the gospel among the persecuted Covenanters when driven by the Cavaliers to worship on mountains and in the open fields, should now set their faces against a work of the same kind, and under the preaching of the self-same truths. It can only be accounted for, on the principle stated above, that the National Church being no longer a true church,

could not be the subject of special divine influences, until she confessed her backslidings, and by sincere repentance returned to her covenanted God. The reasoning by which they reached this conclusion was plausible; but it was a priori reasoning, and was built on an assumption, which they could not have adopted, without usurping the place of the Searcher of hearts, and undertaking to judge of the secret motives of their brethren. The established church, or her judicatories, had certainly not departed from the essential doctrines of Christianity; and however lukewarm and remiss they may have been in lifting up a standard against error, they still possessed the necessary evidence that they were a true church, and that their judicatories were really the courts of Christ's kingdom. But the Seceders having prejudged this matter, in the height of their exexcitement, were afterwards obliged to judge of every thing that related to this church, in conformity with their first solemn act. Here was the true source of all their consequent mistakes; and they were not few. If they fell into error on this radical point, their separation was schismatical, and that upon their own principles; for the Seceders always, to the best of our knowledge, vindicated their secession on the ground, that the judicatories of the church of Scotland, were not legitimate, or as they expressed it, "rightly constitute" judicatories of Christ. We do not wish to open wounds which by time have been partially healed, or to provoke controversy with those whose views may be different from our own; but in giving a brief history of the Secession-church, it seemed necessary to say thus much. We feel as if we stood between the parties; and while we cannot but censure the radical principles of the Secession, we are of opinion, that in the first instance the blame lies chiefly at the door of the established church. We cannot vindicate the harshness of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's denunciations; but when we now read his offensive sermons, which occasioned so much agitation, and so wide a breach, we are surprised that any church court should have deemed it necessary, or expedient, to notice them at all. We agree, therefore, with the Seceders, in their Testimony, that church authority was wound up too high; that the censure of Mr. Erskine for testifying against existing evils was a dangerous and unwarrantable proceeding, and that the whole process was conducted injudiciously. The point at which we are disposed to commence our censure of Mr. Erskine and his

associates is, the time when the door of reconciliation was opened wide, and they were earnestly entreated to return to the bosom of the church. This invitation many of their friends then, were of opinion, they ought to have embraced; and all impartial persons now, must think the same.

If it should be alleged, that the persons who had rudely thrust them out, were the same who now besought them to return; we answer, that a truly meek and Christian spirit would have made no obstacle of this. But such was not the fact. The church, then as now, had two parties; the one fond of raising church authority to its highest pitch, and little concerned for the advancement of vital piety; the other party in favour of the rights of the people, and the warm friends of evangelical doctrine, to which latter party all the seceders had belonged. Now it may be admitted, that in the Assemblies of 1732 and 1733, the counsels of the former prevailed. But when the more evangelical and popular party saw how things were going, and that a schism was in danger of taking place, they came forward in their strength, as really the majority in the church, in the Assembly of 1734, and several of the following years; and this accounts for the altered aspect of the General Assembly. Men who commonly avoided the agitations of public bodies, such for example as John Willison, now came forward, and did every thing which they could do, and more perhaps than they ought to have done, to heal the breach, and reconcile to the church the seceding brethren. Our meaning is, that their concessions were too great, and that they were wrong in removing the censures of the church from these brethren, before they had any assurance that they were disposed to yield. Indeed, the event evinced this error clearly enough, for the seceders refused to be reconciled to the church; and if we may judge from the reasons which they offered for not returning, it will not be uncharitable to conclude, that they had no desire to re-enter a church, which they were now ready to pronounce to be no church of Christ. They talk indeed of certain acts of former Assemblies which remained unrepealed, as furnishing the apology for their continuance in separation; but if these reasons had been obviated, they could easily have found other pretexts as plausible. The chief thing at which they aimed in publishing their reasons, was, to make an impression on the public. They were contending for the rights of the people,

and were considered to be the asserters of the doctrines of grace, and the friends of practical piety. Their success in obtaining adherents probably exceeded their own expectation, as it certainly did that of their opponents, who at first affected to treat their enterprise with contempt. To be looked up to as not only leaders, but *reformers*, has an intoxicating effect even upon good men. It is not unreasonable to suppose, that the first seceders were too much influenced by the high favour which they enjoyed, and the praises which they received from multitudes.

However this might be, it was not long before the evils of a divisive spirit were sorely felt among themselves. We have already noticed the case of Mr. Nairn; but another case soon occurred, of a much more important kind, and which shook the new ecclesiastical body to its very centre. We refer to the controversy respecting the burgesses' oath, by which the secession church was split into two nearly equal parts; a breach which continued for seventy years, and has only been healed within a few years past. Before we give the history of this new secession, we must take some notice of an important "Act of the Associate Presbytery, concerning the DOCTRINE OF GRACE." This act may be considered as next in importance to the "Act, Declaration and Testimony," of which an abstract has already been given; and like that, it begins with a historical detail. The object of it was plainly enough announced in the title-page, where, "Errors vented and published in some Acts of the Assemblies of the Church," are particularly mentioned.

In the Introduction, the Associate Presbytery give first, an account of the spread of Arminianism in Scotland, during the prevalence of prelacy; and then of the extensive influence of Baxterianism among the Presbyterians in England, which they represent as a more dangerous form of Arminianism, and which had crept into many pulpits in Scotland. The opposition to real antinomianism, and the outcry against the doctrines of grace, as though they were antinomian, greatly tended to promote Baxterianism; that is, the theory of theology broached by the celebrated Richard Baxter. The Introduction also contains a severe censure on Mr. William Wisheart, principal of the college of Edinburgh, for recommending Dr. Scougal's "Life of God in the Soul of Man." We confess that this little book is a favourite of our own; and until we saw the censure aforesaid, we had never known that by any set of evangelical men it had been placed

in the index of dangerous authors. The first objection made to it is, that "Mr. Whitefield's experiences are founded on it." This would not, to us, be a very grave objection; but they go on to say of it—"A book calculated to lead off from the righteousness of Christ without us, to a righteousness within us; and inward *sensations*, as a ground of pardon and acceptance with God." Now, we are bold to affirm, that none have more injured and dishonoured the doctrine of the righteousness of Christ *without us*, than those men who have endeavoured to separate it from a righteousness *within us*; not as a ground of pardon and acceptance, which Scougal never taught, but as the end of justification by the righteousness of Christ, and the only scriptural evidence that we have any participation of this righteousness.

We think we see already the tendency manifested to depart, as far as possible, from the commonly received opinions of the established church. It is true, that both parties agreed in holding the same Confession of Faith and Catechisms; but we do not need, at this time of day, to be informed, how wide the difference may be, between those who adopt the same formularies, by different modes of interpretation; and by starting or raising new questions, never thought of by the compilers of these standards.

Though, at first, the secession was not on account of false doctrines held by the established church, yet from the period when this event occurred, there was an evident divergence in their opinions from those of the older divines. They complain, in the Introduction already mentioned, that gospel doctrine got the name of a *new scheme*, and was every where spoken against. In the Act itself, they go back again to the case of Professor Simson, and complain of the partiality manifested by the Assembly in judging of his errors, which tended to Arminianism and Pelagianism; and in judging of other opinions which favoured the doctrine of *free grace*. They state, that the General Assembly of 1717, which treated Mr. Simson with such undue lenity, declared their abhorrence of certain propositions laid down by the Presbytery of Auchterarder, which were intended to counteract the extension of Arminianism and Baxterianism, within their bounds. The principal doctrine which they condemned so harshly, was, "That it is not orthodox to teach that men must forsake sin, in order to their coming to Christ;" which opinion they undertake at large to prove to be scriptural and correct: and in the conclusion of their

argument, they condemn the following propositions. 1. That men must forsake their sins before they come to Christ. 2. That man has any ability to forsake sin by the strength of nature; or that he can receive strength from Christ, before he comes to him. 3. That any good or commendatory qualifications are expected or required of sinners, before they come to Christ.

This was evidently a mere dispute about the exact order of exercises in the conversion of a sinner, while as to the nature and essence of the work there was no difference at all. Indeed, the exercises of faith and repentance are so contemporaneous and so mingled together, and involved in each other, that an exact order cannot be easily established. When a sinner comes to Christ, he comes either forsaking his sin, or cleaving to it. If the latter, can he be said to come to Christ to save him from his sin? Coming to Christ is a figurative phrase, expressing the motion of the soul to Christ; but it is a motion from that which we expect to be delivered from through Christ. Forsaking sin, therefore, is involved in the very act of coming. We admit that the simple act of believing is, in the order of nature, prior to all acts of penitence or love; but the scriptures enter not into these metaphysical distinctions. They often employ terms and phrases which include all the exercises of the turning soul, without specifying their order; and such distinctions savour more of the captious spirit of the schoolmen, than of the simplicity of the gospel.

But the more immediate object of this Act was, to censure the General Assembly for their treatment of a work, entitled "THE MARROW OF MODERN DIVINITY." This book was the work of one Fisher, and was first published in England, in the days of the Commonwealth, but had been republished in Scotland. In the year 1720, the book was brought under consideration by the General Assembly; and among the points condemned were, the author's doctrine concerning the atonement, which the Assembly considered to be favourable to universal redemption. The Presbytery undertake the vindication of the author in regard to this point, and endeavour to show that he held particular redemption, as to purchase; but that as to gift, Christ was in the preaching of the gospel granted, or made over to all mankind. But if the Assembly only misapprehended the meaning of the "Marrow," why pass so heavy a censure upon the whole church, more than twenty years afterwards?

If they did misapprehend the author's meaning, and yet were sound in their own opinions respecting the extent of the atonement, why bring this forward as a sign of great defection? That the author expressed himself obscurely on this point, any impartial man may be satisfied by a recurrence to the book. We are aware, that the excellent Boston wrote large annotations on this work, and makes out a safe and orthodox sense, even where the writer seems to betray an antinomian tendency.

The second opinion, in this book, which the Assembly of 1720 condemn, (and their act is supported by the Assembly of 1722,) is, that a saving faith essentially includes assurance that Christ and his benefits are mine; or, in other words, that an appropriating act is of the essence of faith. Various bold and unwarrantable expressions used by this author, were condemned by the Assemblies of 1720 and 1722. But the Associate Presbytery seem to consider the book as free from error; for they enter into an elaborate defence of every opinion to which objection had been made. As this controversy about the nature and object of faith is still *sub judice*, and is intricate and thorny, we do not intend to enter into it, further than to say, that in our opinion it has done no good.

The third error of the "Marrow of Modern Divinity" which the Assembly condemned, was, "that holiness is not necessary to salvation." Here again, the seceders strenuously contend that the author did not maintain that justified persons were under no obligations to lead holy lives; but only as a means of obtaining salvation, which they allege is a doctrine leading directly to Arminianism and Baxterianism. A fourth opinion of this book, condemned by the Assemblies aforesaid, is, "that the fear of punishment, and hope of reward, are no motives of a believer's obedience." The fifth proposition condemned is, "that believers are not under the law as a rule of life." In regard to this, the Presbytery go into a particular examination of the passages cited by the Assembly, and attempt to show, that the author's meaning was not impartially stated; and that it was his intention to teach, "that believers are not under the law as a covenant of works." This long Act, respecting THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE, is concluded by an explanation "of the obligation of obedience to the law, and the evangelical grounds thereof."

It is manifest, that the object of this Act was to defend

the "Marrow of Modern Divinity" from the objections and censures of the General Assembly; that is, from the censure of Assemblies which sat twenty years before. Upon a calm, and, we think, impartial consideration of this document, we feel much less approbation of its spirit and sentiments, than of the *ACT AND TESTIMONY*. There seems to be too much evidence of a captious temper, a wish to find some appearance of heresy in a church from which they had seceded; and we are constrained to say, too much leaning towards antinomianism, or rather too friendly a feeling towards forms of expression which are capable of an antinomian sense. If they had nothing worse, in regard to doctrine, to object to the established church, the ground of their secession is reduced to very narrow limits.

In 1743, several Acts were adopted by the Associate Presbytery for renewing the National Covenant, and the Solemn League and Covenant. One of these contained a particular confession of sins, for all classes of people. Many sermons also were preached, explaining and enforcing the duty of public covenanting, and the obligation of the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant, on the present generation.

On the 15th of February, 1744, the Presbytery adopted certain rules or principles to regulate this solemn transaction. After resolving to swear publicly to these covenants, they laid down the following rules: "1. That no one should be permitted to take the covenants but persons of mature age and competent knowledge, and free from all scandal, and having a conversation becoming the gospel. 2. That each congregation should, by their sessions, fix on a day of fasting, at a time most convenient, when, with penitent confession of sins, the covenants should be sworn. 3. That in each congregation two ministers of the Presbytery should be present to officiate. The National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant should be read. Then one of the ministers should lead in confessing the breaches of these covenants, and in prayer. Immediately after prayer, the *BOND* was to be read again. Then, all who were prepared and disposed to come under the oath of God, should stand up, with their right hands lifted up to the *LORD*; and then the solemn action to be concluded with exhortation and prayer. 4. The next day, a meeting to be held by one of the attending ministers, for prayer and exhortation, that the people might be steadfast to the oath and covenant of the *LORD*.

After worship, the covenant to be subscribed by the people who had sworn, in the presence of the minister."

The Seceders grew so rapidly, that as early as 1745, they were numerous enough to be divided into three presbyteries, and immediately constituted a Synod, to which was given the name of the "Associate Synod." But an event occurred, the very next year, which obscured the bright prospects of this new and growing church, and greatly retarded its advancement. This event, of which an account has already been given, was an unhappy breach in the Associate Synod, on account of a difference of opinion among the members, respecting the "Burgesses' Oath." This was no new affair; but an oath which had for a long time been exacted of all persons accepting public office, and which had never until now attracted attention, or occasioned scruples of conscience. The words of the oath are, "*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 authorized by the laws thereof; I shall abide thereat and defend the same to my life's end, renouncing the Roman religion called papistry.*"

The consideration of this subject occupied the Associate Synod long; and the discussions were attended with intense interest and great solemnity. Before a final decision, this subject absorbed the attention of the body for thirteen *sederunts*, most of which were very protracted. Three public fasts were observed on account of this affair. Thrice, meetings for prayer were held by the Synod; and, during the discussion, seven brethren were called upon, at different times, to offer up prayer to God for direction.

At length, on the 9th of April, 1746, a decision was formed, by which the Synod condemned the aforesaid *Burgesses' Oath*, as unlawful. Against this decision the minority solemnly protested. Persons were appointed to answer the reasons contained in the protest. But as they were in no hurry to do this, hoping for an amicable adjustment of the affair, the answers were not ready at the meeting in September. The dissenting brethren, however, insisted upon having their reasons entered on record. But questions now arose which involved the Synod in violent controversy. One was, whether the former vote by which the Burgesses' Oath was condemned, should be a term of ministerial and Christian communion. This question was introduced and urged by the brethren opposed to the decision of the Synod;

and while the other party wished to dismiss or delay the question, the minority strenuously insisted on a decision; and some of them declared they would not leave the house till the question was decided. A scene of great disorder and confusion now ensued. The committee before appointed to answer the reasons of the dissentients, were directed to lay their answers before the next meeting. Several, among whom was Ebenezer Erskine, repeated their adherence to their protest before offered; and the Synod were urged to come to a decision. Here, the question was, whether the case should be referred to the Presbyteries and kirk sessions, for their judgment. Against this proposition, Adam Gib and Alexander Moncreif protested. The decision however was in the affirmative, that the question should be sent to the Presbyteries and kirk sessions, for their opinion.

As soon as this decision was made by the majority of the Synod, the Rev. Thomas Mair arose, and read a protest against the same, and a declaration that the legitimate powers of the "Associate Synod," were by this vote, devolved on those members of the Synod, who had before passed the act, condemning the Burgesses' Oath; because the majority, notwithstanding the two solemn protests which had been offered, had passed a vote, by which they relinquished the principles of the "Act and Testimony;" and therefore, "I Thomas Mair, minister of the gospel at Orwell, do declare, and protest, that the aforesaid members ought in duty to the Lord and his heritage, to take up and exercise the power of the "Associate Synod," fully, and lawfully devolved upon them;—and for this end, to meet to-morrow, at Mr. Gib's house, at 10 o'clock, A. M., that they may regularly enter upon and proceed in the business of the Synod." These brethren, now in the minority, met according to Mr. Mair's appointment, and actually proceeded to transact business, as "The Associate Synod;" although a minority of the body then in session.

Having resolved to act as "The Associate Synod," it became necessary to legalize themselves, or to make a declaration asserting their right and claim to the name and authority which they had assumed. They therefore adopted the following overture or act, by a unanimous vote of those present. "That the Synod, according to the declaration and protestation aforesaid, should find the lawful power

and authority of the Associate Synod to be lawfully and fully devolved upon them, and lying among their hands; and themselves the only lawful and rightly constitute Associate Synod, with the said authority and power; and obliged in duty to the Lord and his heritage to exercise the same, for supporting and carrying on the TESTIMONY which the Lord has put into the hands of the Associate Synod, in opposition to the *material dropping* and allowing, at least for a time, the material ABJURATION of this TESTIMONY."

Thus the minority undertook to constitute, and did actually constitute themselves, by their own act, the identical body of which they were just found to be in the minority. If some other question had divided this self-constituted Synod, the minority might with equal right have declared themselves "The Associate Synod;" and so, another, and another minority, might have done the same, till only one person had been left to constitute a *Synod!* And why might not one person conclude that he was right and all the rest wrong, as well as any other minority? Such proceedings are a burlesque on ecclesiastical government. It would be better at once to resolve society into its original elements, and permit every man to do what was right in his own eyes, than to adopt the principle that the minority have a right to rule the majority. But it may be asked, what are the minority to do, when they are fully persuaded, that the majority are in error? If the error be such that they cannot conscientiously submit to it, their duty no doubt is to secede, or leave the body and form another. But when secession once begins, where shall it end!*

In April 1747 this newly formed Associate Synod adopted another "overture" or act, by which they declare that the Associate Presbyteries, not acting in subordination to this body, were not rightly constituted presbyteries; and that the ministers and elders who had participated in the unlawful votes of the preceding year, could not be acknowledged or received as ministers and elders of the Associate Synod, till they professed repentance for their sin. And as the

* Though we have taken it for granted, that at the meeting of the Associate Synod, at which the schism occurred, the Burghers, or followers of the Erskines were the majority, because the vote which produced the rupture, was decided in their favour: yet it does not follow of course that taking the whole Synod, absent as well as present, they had a majority of members. It is probable that at first they had not; for we find it repeatedly asserted by the Antiburghers that while they had with them 29 members, the Burghers had only 23.

Associate Presbytery of Glasgow had been forward in promoting the views of the Protesters; and the resolutions unlawfully adopted, it was enacted, that this Presbytery could not be recognised as an Associate Presbytery; nor could any of the members of this Presbytery be lawfully received into either of the other two; or perform any ecclesiastical act in them, or in any kirk session, till they should repent of their sinful steps and compliances. And that the young men on trial before the Presbytery of Glasgow, ought to be remitted to one of the other Presbyteries to finish their trials. All the ministers and elders censured were earnestly called upon to return to their duty, before process should be commenced against them. This self-styled "Associate Synod," also adopted two overtures or acts, condemning the resolutions passed by the majority of the Synod, of which we have already spoken. They also passed another act respecting the ministers and elders who were active in bringing about the aforesaid resolutions. In this, after a detail of circumstances, and laying down certain first principles, they came to the conclusion, that these brethren are "HIGHLY CENSURABLE, and by their maladministration, FALLEN from all right and title to any present actual exercise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, committed by the Lord Jesus to the office-bearers of his house; aye, until they be sensible of the sinfulness of their conduct, and acknowledge the same to the glory of God, and return unto their duty to him."

Thus the minority of the Associate Synod actually excommunicated the majority, or suspended them from the exercise of all government and discipline in the church, without the shadow of a trial, or even a regular citation to appear at their bar. This was truly a most extraordinary proceeding. But our business is to act as historians, rather than censors, of these transactions.

The members who protested against the sentence of the Associate Synod, condemning the clause in the burgesses' oath, were, Ralph Erskine, James Fisher, William Hutton, Henry Erskine, and John M'Cara, ministers; and James Wardlaw and William Robertson, elders; Ebenezer Erskine not being present did not join in the original protest; but he cordially agreed with the dissentients. Indeed, he was filled with indignation at the conduct of the majority, on that occasion, as appears by the protest which he offered to the Synod, in his own name, and in that of the Rev. David

Horn, against their proceedings. He commences his protest in the following words, "I cannot help thinking it a piece of the highest presumption and self-confidence for thirteen ministers of the Associate Synod, when one half of the constituent members and more were absent, and that in the face of a protestation of so many members present, to push on a condemnation of the first clause of some Burgess oaths, as sinful; when they knew very well, that the lawfulness of the oath and of that clause of it in particular, was a thing *hactenus judicata*, already determined, with the greatest solemnity, by the church of Scotland, in the purest times of her reformation. None can doubt of its being thus sustained by John Knox, or other worthy reformers, who first compiled it. As little can any doubt of its approbation by those reformed Burghs who received and retained it, ever since. But, beside this, it bears the evident approbation both of church and state in this land, as at the renovation of the national covenant, burgesses equally with other men, sacred and civil, were admitted to swear and subscribe the covenants. I cannot say, but it argues a vast assurance in the above thirteen members, to state themselves in a direct opposition to such a glorious cloud of witnesses, and that without the least apology for differing from their far superior judgment and determination. It is but a sorry apology to say, that though it might be lawful in their days, yet it becomes sinful in our day, through the variation of circumstances. For as the law of God and truth of God is ever the same, in all periods and revolutions of the world; so it will be found that what is once crooked in point of truth and duty, can never be made straight; and what is once straight according to the law and testimony, can never be made crooked: and I apprehend it will try the united strength of our brethren to flaw and crack that which was found straight in the days of our reformation. But it yet heightens my admiration at the assurance of these brethren, that they not only condemn the said first clause of the oath as sinful; but have the boldness to impose their judgment, materially, if not formally, on the whole church, as a term of communion.—So that no man can be admitted to church communion with us, if he has sworn it, or hereafter swear it, unless he acknowledge his sin in so doing. I fear this turning of things upside down, will be in the event as the potter's clay. Suppose the whole Associate Synod had been as one man in the con-

demnation foresaid; yet it would make an impartial person suspect they had lost their road.—But I see thirteen men of the Associate Synod, by a clandestine reference and as clandestine a determination carrying a matter by a thin meeting by a scrimp majority of four votes, not only against the mind of their brethren, but against the whole flock of Christ that have travelled the road to glory before us.” In such a strain does this man, impatient of control, and indignant at opposition, go on to reason against the decision of the Associate Synod. The new “Associate Synod,” which may now be called the *Antiburgher Synod*, drew up an elaborate answer to the ten reasons of the seven original protesters; and also to the protest of Ebenezer Erskine, included in five reasons for his dissent. The very ground of this controversy being now removed, there would be no utility in entering further into the arguments on either side.

The *Antiburgher Synod*, at its meeting, on the 6th of January, 1748, tabled charges against Ebenezer Erskine and other ministers, who, they alleged, had separated from the Associate Synod. This LIBEL, as it is called in their proceedings, is prefaced by a long preamble, and is drawn up with much formality; and annexed is a formal citation summoning to their bar Ebenezer Erskine, Ralph Erskine, James Fisher, James Mair, William Hutton, David Horn, Henry Erskine, John McCara, Andrew Black, James Johnston, John Smith, and David Telfer, ministers; and requiring them to *compear* before the next meeting of the Associate Synod, April 5, 1748, within the church of Bristo, *in the hour of cause*, with continuation of days, to answer to the several articles charged against them,” &c. The charges relate to the part taken by these brethren in passing the resolutions noticed above, and in separating themselves from the “rightly constitute Associate Synod.” There is in the document much earnest reasoning, and an abundant quotation of Scripture texts. How far they are relevant, we shall not take the trouble to determine.

The only one of the cited ministers who appeared at the April sessions, was William Hutton, who declared that he withdrew his protest against the Synod’s condemnation of the Burgess Oath; and requested to be permitted to read a paper which he had prepared. After some demur, the privilege was granted, and he read a paper, which the Synod denominate “a most audacious attack on the proceedings of

the Synod;" wherefore after full consideration, they proceeded to depose William Hutton, minister of Sturue, from all exercise of the gospel ministry.

The other ministers cited, not appearing, were declared to be contumacious, after which the charges, consisting of seven articles were taken up in order, and pronounced "proven." After finishing this process, they deliberated respecting the censure to be inflicted. The conclusion was, "that they DID, and hereby DO, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only king and head of his church, and according to the powers committed by him to them, as a court constitute in his name, actually SUSPEND all the said ministers from the exercise of the office of the holy ministry," &c. In the vote upon the suspension, one member was not clear in his mind to vote for it: but at the next session, he came forward and expressed his "freedom to concur with the Synod in the sentence passed against the said ministers."

The Antiburgher Synod met again in Aug. 1748, and took up the case of the suspended ministers, and after deliberation and prayer for direction, which seems never to have been omitted, they proceeded to pass sentence of DEPOSITION from the office of the ministry, and also the sentence of the LESSER EXCOMMUNICATION, debarring them from the communion of the church of Christ, in sealing ordinances." This sentence they directed to be published in the congregations of the ministers deposed.

In April, 1749, the Antiburgher Synod met in Edinburgh: at which meeting, several of the leading members came forward, and confessed their faults, during the trying events of the past year. Alexander Moncrief, Adam Gib, and William Campbell, presented themselves at the bar of Synod. Mr. Moncrief made a long confession of several distinct offences, but the chief was, "sinful eruptions of passion in this court." Mr. Gib also confessed, that he had reason to be humbled before the Lord for his intemperate spirit and language in sundry instances. Mr. Campbell expressed his "desire to be humbled for his frequent misbehaviour in the Synod; especially in the sinful eruption of passion," &c. Mr. Thomas Mair next came forward and made large confessions of his unsuitable behaviour in every part of his conduct, as a member of this Synod; particularly, in giving way to heat of temper. Then appeared James Thomson, Andrew Clarkson, George Brown, John Whyt, George Murray, James Scot, Patrick Matthew, and

William Mair, and made similar acknowledgments. The Synod upon hearing these confessions resolved that Mr. Thomas Mair and others should be rebuked by the moderator.

When the Antiburgher Synod met in August, 1749, they resolved after solemn prayer and deliberation to inflict at once the highest censures of the church upon Ralph Erskine, James Fisher, and William Hutton, as being the chief prompters and leaders of the existing defection; and accordingly the sentence of the GREATER EXCOMMUNICATION, was, on the 9th Aug. 1749, pronounced upon the aforesaid persons; "casting them out from the communion of the church of Christ;—delivering them unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh," &c.

It was also resolved, to inflict the same censure on all the rest of the suspended brethren, at the next meeting, if they should continue contumacious. Accordingly, at the meeting on the 14th Feb. 1750, the Synod proceeded to consider whether the greater excommunication should be inflicted on Ebenezer Erskine, James Mair, David Horn, Henry Erskine, John McCara, Andrew Black, James Johnston, John Smith, David Telfer, and Thomas Nairne; and upon taking the vote, it was determined in the affirmative with but one dissenting voice. The sentence was then drawn up with due form and solemnity; and after a sermon from Mr. Moncrief, it was pronounced upon the ten brethren, named above, and was followed by prayer for God's blessing on his ordinance.

These brethren thus awfully excommunicated, by a minority of their own body, who now claimed all the authority, as well as the name of the Associate Synod, were themselves meeting as a Synod, from the time when the schism occurred in 1747. This act of constituting a *pretended* Synod, was the fifth article of the libel charged against them. Their constitution was declared to be schismatical, and totally without legality or authority. We have not room, at present, to give any particular account of the proceedings of the Burgher Synod, and the acts which they passed in relation to the Antiburghers. Our attention may hereafter be given to these other transactions connected with the *secession*, both in Europe and this country. We would barely mention here, that in 1796, a dispute arose in the Antiburgher Synod, respecting the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, which produced a schism in 1799. The party which broke off, denominated them-

selves "The Original Assoeiate Synod!!" By others, they were called "Old Lights."

At length, in 1820, the two bodies of Burghers and Anti-burghers agreed to unite in one body, to be known as "The United Secession Church." Thus after the lapse of 70 years, was this sehism healed; but as all on both sides did not consent to this union, it has not diminished but rather increased the number of seeding sects.

J. S. Alexander

ART. V.—*A Grammar of the New Testament Dialect.* By M. Stuart, Professor of Sacred Literature in the Theological Seminary, Andover. 8vo. pp. 256. Andover, 1834.

As the title of this book is likely to excite the curiosity of many of our readers, who feel an interest in the study of the Bible, we think it right to let them know distinctly what it is. We rejoice that the taste for these pursuits and the conviction of their value are steadily increasing, and that there is a growing number of trained and active minds ready to catch with eagerness at every new facility for the successful prosecution of exegetical research. Among this class the name of Stuart at once commands respect, and ensures attention to every new production of his pen. To this presumption in favour of his books, Professor Stuart is certainly entitled. It is because we know the weight of his authority, that we think it proper to describe the work before us. It is because we know that many students of the Bible will be anxious to discover what new addition to their present apparatus has been furnished by this Grammar. As our sole design is to satisfy the minds of such inquirers, we shall study to be brief, and confine ourselves to the illustration of two remarks.

1. The first is, that the book before us is a highly respectable addition to our stock of school books. It is carefully compiled, judiciously arranged, clearly expressed, and correctly printed. Its exterior is marked by the usual elegance of the Andover publications. The author appears to have