

R E M A R K S

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O F

Church Communion

Published by the

REFORMED PRESBYTERY.

B E L F A S T :

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P R E F A C E.

SUCH as make sinful inclosures about themselves by imposing unscriptural terms of religious communion upon the members of their church, are very unjustifiable; more than Plato was, who would suffer no man to enter his school, who was unacquainted with geometry, as is clear from this inscription that was wrote upon the door of ~~his~~ school, *Nemo geometricæ ignarus ingreditor*: This is the case of these ministers who call themselves the reformed presbytery in the Church of Scotland; the terms of communion that they have published to the world are so narrow, that the author of the ensuing print hath admired that (so far as he knows) no remarks have been made upon them; and he being perswaded, that there is a great difference betwixt the terms of ministerial and christian communion, and being convinced of the unreasonableness of making them of equal latitude and extent in respect of articles of faith as the reformed presbytery have done, was moved

to publish to the world the following animadversions upon the terms of their communion, especially upon that part of it which is termed christian communion.

In regard an acknowledgment of the obligation of the solemn league is made a term of religious communion by the Reformed Preibytyry, though the author doth not approve such an use to be made of that covenant, yet he hath taken an occasion to remove the mistakes of many who cast groundless aspersions upon it; because the word extirpate is a rough, harsh and coarse term, they alledge that the solemn league did not only allow but oblige people who did swear it, to offer violence to the persons of prelates, which is a great mistake, as is shewn afterwards: Such as understand the difference betwixt the abstract and concrete, know that prelacy is the abstract of the word prelate; the Solemn League obliged to remove only prelacy or prelatical government out of the churches in Britain and Ireland, but not to banish prelates out of these lands; they were not obliged to fly out of these lands, as the Puritans were obliged to fly out of England, because they had not clearness to submit to the act of uniformity, and these terms of communion that
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were termed wholesome severities: History informs us that many families were ruined by imprisonments and banishment, and other severities, for refusing to subscribe bishop Whitegift's new articles. I do not find that any suffered so much hardship, cruelty and severity for refusing to swear the Solemn League, as many did for refusing to subscribe bishop Whitegift's articles.

The author also hath taken an opportunity to rectify a mistake that some who believe the obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant seem to labour under, namely, that all in Britain and Ireland are obliged by it to cleave and adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith: We are obliged by it to profess and adhere to the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, and to endeavour the reformation of religion in England and Ireland; but we are not under an explicit and formal obligation to adhere to our Confession of Faith by that Covenant, because it was sworn before our Confession was compiled: Our ancestors did not swear that Covenant with a blind implicit faith, as some in England did swear the *et cætera* oath, or as bishop Laud would have had the clergy in Scotland to swear to observe canons, before

fore they saw them; they did swear the oath with judgment and understanding, to adhere to the old Confession of the Church of Scotland, but not to adhere to our Confession before they saw it; nor did they swear explicitly and formally to adhere to it after they saw it, when they renewed the Solemn League 1648: So that it was a mistake that a minister laboured under when he signified in a letter to a brother, that all in Britain and Ireland should know that we are bound and obliged by solemn oath and covenant to cleave to our Confession of Faith.

R E M A R K S,

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R E M A R K S, &c.

AS every community or corporation hath terms of admission to the privileges of it; so the Church of God, being a spiritual corporation, hath terms of communion that should be observed and submitted to, in order to be intitled to her privileges. Some make the terms of her religious communion too wide, allowing a promiscuous admission of all sorts of christians to church privileges; others make them too narrow, as Messrs. John Mc. Millan and Thomas Nairn and their elders did, when they constituted that church judicatory in the Church of Scotland, which they called the Reformed Presbytery 1743: They at that time agreed to terms of religious communion both ministerial and christian, which were published to the world 1754, in a book intitled, “A serious Examination and impartial Survey of a Print designed the true State of the Difference betwixt the Reformed Presbytery and some Brethren who lately deserted them, &c.”

These terms or conditions of communion that are now published to the world are

are very exceptionable; especially their terms of christian communion; the first whereof is, their making the Westminster Confession of Faith a term of christian communion: This term debars from church privileges, all who are not able with judgment and understanding to declare their assent to and belief of every article contained in our Confession, which few private christians are capable to do after much pains taken upon them; for there are some articles in it hard to be understood by candidates for the ministry, much more by illiterate persons; such as, that article in the last clause of the first section of the third chapter, where it is said, that the liberty or contingency of second causes is not taken away, but rather established, (viz.) by the eternal decree of God. Which way the liberty or contingency of second causes is established by an eternal and unchangeable decree that hath determined and ordained every event to come to pass, is not easily understood even by men of learning. Secondly, That article in cap. 5. sect. 2d, where it is asserted, that "all things are ordered by Providence to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently;" to which proposition no man can safely assent, until he
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be acquainted with the difference that is betwixt necessary, free, and contingent causes. Thirdly, That article in cap. 8, sect. 2d, concerning the mystery of our Saviour's incarnation; where it is asserted, that his godhead and manhood are inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition or confusion. This article is levelled against two dangerous errors that arose in the Church, namely Nestorianism, which maintained, that Christ hath two persons since his nativity, not only his divine person which he had from eternity, but also a human person; because he took to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, which in every mere man makes a real person; and Eulychianism, which maintained, that the divine and human natures of our Saviour, were converted and compounded into one nature. Fourthly, That article in cap. 8, sect. 7, where it is said, that by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature. This article cannot be clearly understood but by those who have a right idea of what divines call *Communicatio Idiomatum*, i. e. the communication of properties, and therefore it is very unreasonable to excommunicate from christi-

League to adhere to all the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession, because they are founded upon, and are agreeable to the word of God, yet we are not under a formal and explicit obligation to adhere to them until we subscribe our faith or belief of them; because this Confession of Faith was not compiled when the Solemn League was sworn, nor is there any mention made of it when the Solemn League was renewed in 1648; so that it is very uncharitable to think that our ancestors did swear to adhere to the Westminster Confession before they saw it, as some seem to think so, else they think that the Confession was composed before the Solemn League was sworn, which is a wrong way of thinking, which proceeds from unacquaintedness with the history of that time.

Now from what hath been said it clearly appears, that the Westminster Confession was never made a term of christian communion by the established Church of Scotland, nor by the presbyterian Church in Ireland; and therefore it is most unreasonable to oblige private Christians to profess the faith and belief of as many articles of faith, in order to be admitted to church privileges, as it is to oblige candidates for the ministry to do before they be
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received into ministerial communion, and the care of souls be committed to them.

The second exceptionable term of their christian communion is, their making an acknowledgment of the perpetual obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant a term of it: I look upon that Covenant to be obligatory upon Britain and Ireland, in so far as it contains moral duties, for all Christians do own the perpetual obligation of the moral law; and I never saw any thing in it contrary to or inconsistent with the Law of God and the practice of the Jewish Church; and as parents have a right and power, and are allowed by God to dedicate themselves and their children to God when their children are baptised, and then come under solemn promises and engagements to bring them up in the fear of God, and to lay a good example before them; and as these promises and engagements are binding upon children when they come to the exercise of reason, so I look upon the Solemn League to be binding upon posterity, because it contains nothing but moral duties, and because our covenanting ancestors had (in my judgment) as good a right to dedicate not only themselves to the service of God, but also their posterity, as the Israelites had, to devote their children by a solemn vow to
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the service of God, Lev. xxvii. 5. (see Pool's judgment upon that place;) and because the Rechabites looked upon the injunction to be binding that their father Jonadab laid upon them to abstain from wine, which injunction they faithfully obeyed, for which they obtained the divine approbation, Jer. xxxv.

Now, since the Lord did approve of their being persuaded that their father Jonadab's commanding them to do a thing that was not a moral duty, was obligatory upon them, much more obligatory is a covenant upon posterity that fathers make, in their own name and in the name of their posterity, with God, to keep his commands, and to perform moral duties: and as the Rechabites did imitate the good example of their father Jonadab in his temperance, (and doubtless in other virtues) so it is the indispensable duty of all the children of religious parents to come up to their spiritual attainments; they are obliged to do so by their baptismal vows and engagements: and national covenants that are made for the defence and preservation of truth, and to lift up a publick testimony against errors, are superadded obligations to perform our baptismal covenant and keep the Law of God, Ps. cxix. 106. and consequently I look

look upon the Solemn League and Covenant, which obliges only to moral duties, to be binding upon Britain and Ireland; for it is a moral duty to extirpate all sorts of error out of the Church relating to doctrine, worship, discipline and government, i. e. to remove by lawful means, all errors in doctrine, idolatry and superstition, will-worship and human inventions in the worship of God, and prelacy in the government of the Church, and tyranny in the exercise of discipline. The Solemn League obliges to do these things, not by sinful methods, but in the use of lawful means, not by injuring mens persons or offering violence to them, as is clear from the English parliament's ordering the fifth part of the bishop's livings to be given them when prelacy was demolished and removed out of the Church, and from an exhortation that was published to the world Feb. 9, 1643-4, to take the Solemn League and Covenant, and was ordered by the English parliament to be printed, wherein are these words, "Nor is any man hereby bound to offer any violence to their persons, but only in his place and calling to endeavour their extirpation in a lawful way."

But though I believe the obligation of the Solemn League, yet I have not clearness to allow the acknowledgment of that obligation

obligation to be made a term of christian communion, because I have light to keep communion with many who are not sensible of that obligation, and yet have a right to it by the term of communion that is made by the Apostle Paul, Rom. xv. 7.

A third exceptionable term of their christian communion, is an acknowledgement of the divine right of presbyterian church government: this is indeed one of the proper terms of ministerial communion, but it should not be made a term of christian communion, because the most part of private christians are not acquainted with the controversies that have continued very long among presbyterians and prelatists, and independants, concerning the proper form of church government; and the determination of these debates is not essential to salvation; and many are in a state of favour with God in the prelatial and independent churches, and consequently should not be excluded from christian communion.

A fourth exceptionable term of christian communion is, the owning and acknowledging all the faithful testimonies and earnest contendings of the martyrs under the late persecutions, and of such as have succeeded them in the maintenance of the self same testimony, and particularly of the

renovation

renovation, of the covenants at Auchan-shaugh, 1712, and at Craford John, 1745, as agreeable to the Word of God, Confession of Faith, and Catechisms larger and shorter, and Covenants national and Solemn League.

This is a very uncharitable condition of religious communion, for it excommunicates all persons from both ministerial and christian communion who disapprove of the anti-government scheme, or own the present civil government. This term of communion doth virtually and materially excommunicate Christ and his Apostles, who did own the civil government under which they lived, that countenanced and supported the most abominable kinds of idolatry, which our present government loaths and abhors. Secondly, it excommunicates the Earl of Argyle and Mr. James Guthry, and other martyrs, who are named in Naphtali. Thirdly, it excommunicates all the Nobility and Ministers of the Church of Scotland who admitted King Charles II. to the exercise of his regal power by crowning him; for William Cuthill did protest and bear testimony against them all at his death, as is clear from the Cloud of Witnesses, page 111. Fourthly, it excommunicates all the Ministers of the Church of Scotland who were termed publick Resolvers, among whom were some of the greatest

and best Ministers in that Church, such as Messrs. Baily, Douglass, Dickson and Hutchison. Fifthly, it justifies the way and manner of taking away Bishop Sharp's life. Sixthly, it justifies the lawfulness and expediency of Sanquer and Rutherglen's declarations, wherein war was proclaimed against the civil government by a small handful of people, which at least was a very imprudent action, condemned by our Saviour, Matt. x. 16. Luke xiv. 31, 32; that proclamation of war, and the Bishop's death did irritate and provoke the government to make the persecution hotter than it was before: Our Saviour allowed his disciples to fly from their persecutors and hide themselves, as he himself did, for a time, and not to exasperate them by proclaiming war against them. God calls his people sometimes by his Providence to be mute and silent towards vile corrupters of law and justice, as Pool speaks upon the explication of Amos v. 13. Seventhly, it justifies the Torwood excommunication, whereby Mr. Cargill delivered over to the Devil, in a very solemn manner, some persons who had never been members of a presbyterian church. Eighthly, it makes an assent to all the contents of that which is called the Queen's Ferry Paper, that was found with Henry Hall, a term of communion, the heads whereof were only com-

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pendified (as^t the author of the Cloud of Witnesses saith, page 298) and published to the world by the author of the Hind let loose, and in the appendix to the Cloud of Witnesses: The author of that book doth not justify every expression in that Paper: and he saith that the most part of the sufferers did not adhere to it without the limitation [in so far as it was agreeable to the Word of God and our national covenants;] but there is no such limitation made by the reformed Presbytery in the terms of their religious communion; and that limitation made by the sufferers was needless, for we may assent and adhere to the Turk's Alcoran in so far as it is agreeable to the Word of God: therefore these martyrs who assented and adhered to the Queen's Ferry paper, without any exception against some things contained in it that were not published, were acted by an implicit faith, unless they had seen them in a manuscript, or heard them read; but whatever things they were, it seems that Mr. Shields did not think it expedient to publish them to the world.

Now from what hath been said concerning these terms of communion, it clearly appears to me, that some of them are unscriptural; they have no foundation in the Word of God, and consequently are human inventions; they are the fruit and conse-

quence of narrow principles that are the occasion of creating schisms and divisions in the Church; accordingly the reformed Presbytery is now rent and divided into two parties who will not keep communion with one another, and some that were their adherents have deserted and withdrawn their subjection to both sorts of their ministers.

Secondly, It appears that some of their terms of communion are not only unscriptural but antiscritptural; they are inconsistent with, and contrary to the advice and direction that the Apostle Paul gave to the Gentile and Jewish Christians, to receive one another, notwithstanding their different sentiments concerning the extent of christian liberty: their different sentiments and practices laid a foundation for contentions and divisions among them, which probably were ready to break out into a flame, to prevent which he gave necessary instructions to both parties how they should conduct and behave themselves towards one another; and particularly he gives them this seasonable and pacifick advice, "Wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God;" i. e. into your love, christian communion and fellowship, after the example of Christ, who hath received both believing Jews and
Gentiles

Gentiles into a state of union and communion with himself, Rom. xv. 7.

Thirdly, The reformed Presbytery's terms of communion are inconsistent with two articles in our Confession of Faith; the first is that one contained in cap. 23, sect. 4th, "Infidelity or difference in religion doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him;" the other is contained in c. 26, sect. 2, which treats of christian communion, which as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended to all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

Fourthly, Their terms of communion are unagreeable to the practice of the primitive Christians in the Apostle Paul's time, who kept communion with one another notwithstanding that some errors and scandalous practices were among them, as is clear from the instance of some members in the Church of Corinth, who denied the resurrection of the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 12, and some of them communicated at the Lord's table in a scandalous manner, c. xi. 17---22: Or the practice of the primitive Christians was very unagreeable to the terms of communion that are published to the world by the reformed Presbytery.

Fifthly, Their terms are inconsistent with the humility and self-deniedness of the

the martyrs, for I am perswaded that they never had a thought of allowing an acknowledgment of all their faithful testimonies to be made a term of church communion after their death; but the reformed Presbytery have such a veneration for them as if they had been almost infallible in their testimonies; I believe they were assisted by the Spirit of God to die cheerfully for the covenanted work of reformation; but though the substance or most material parts of their testimonies were good and laudable, yet I am perswaded that some of them were not acceptable to God, in so far as they approved of Sanguhar and Rutherglen's declarations; and this perswasion is strengthened by the acknowledgment that the Mountain People made when they renewed their swearing the covenants at Lismahago 1689; they did at that time confess and acknowledge that they had been guilty of extravagancies in the time of persecution; which confession (as Mr. Shields saith in his book, entitled Church Communion considered, &c.) was printed and published to the world.

Sixthly, From what hath been said it appears, that Mr. Mc. Millan and his brethren (who call themselves the reformed Presbytery) are pretending to a greater measure of light and purity than ever was professed

professed in the Church of Scotland, for there were not so many terms of communion in that Church in her purest times. When our ancestors did swear the Solemn League, they did swear allegiance to a rigid prelatist, who fought against them several years, and yet they never did cast off his legal authority; and therefore Mr. Mc. Millan and his brethren are chargeable with the same fault, that they have charged Mr. Hall and his brethren with, viz. that they are pretending to carry on reformation to a greater height than ever it attained to, and therefore should stike themselves the reforming Presbytery. Survey, page 43.

Lastly, From what hath been said concerning these terms of communion it clearly appears, that the most part of private Christians are acted by an implicit faith, who give their assent to some of them; this makes them stronger limbs of anti-christ, than these ministers are, whom a minister of the reformed Presbytery lately called limbs of anti-christ and the black indulged.

The reformed Presbytery call the terms of communion published by the Associates, sinful and unwarrantable restrictions, in their Act and Testimony, page 166; which is indeed very true, but they are not so much sinful restrictions

as their own terms are; and page 167, they call the Associates followers their implicit adherents, which character is as applicable to their own adherents. A Heathen said, *turpe est doctorem culpa redarguitursum*, i. e. it is a very unreasonable and unbecoming thing for a man to upbraid his neighbour for a fault that he himself is chargeable with: it is very natural to mankind to see the mote in their neighbour's eye, but not the beam in their own, which is the fruit of self-love that blinds the mind. And page 199, they discover as great a measure of uncharitableness to all sorts of presbyterian ministers, who are not of their communion, as to popish teachers; for they call their official ministrations corrupt, to which (they say) the Lord hath denied his blessing: this they apply to Mr. Hall and his brethren, as well as to others; so that they seem to be as uncharitable to all presbyterian ministers as the Romish clergy are. The impartial world may judge whether or not this narrow and uncharitable principle be agreeable to the advice that the Apostle Paul gave to the christian Colossians, chap. iii. 14, "Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." This narrow principle seems to be the original source and spring of the schisms and divisions that have sprung up among both the Associates and the members of the reformed Presbytery, which have weakened and dishonoured the work that they are appearing for, and endeavouring to support and carry on: it is very probable that no church will ever enjoy peace and unity while a testimony against every little disputable point is made a term of communion.

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