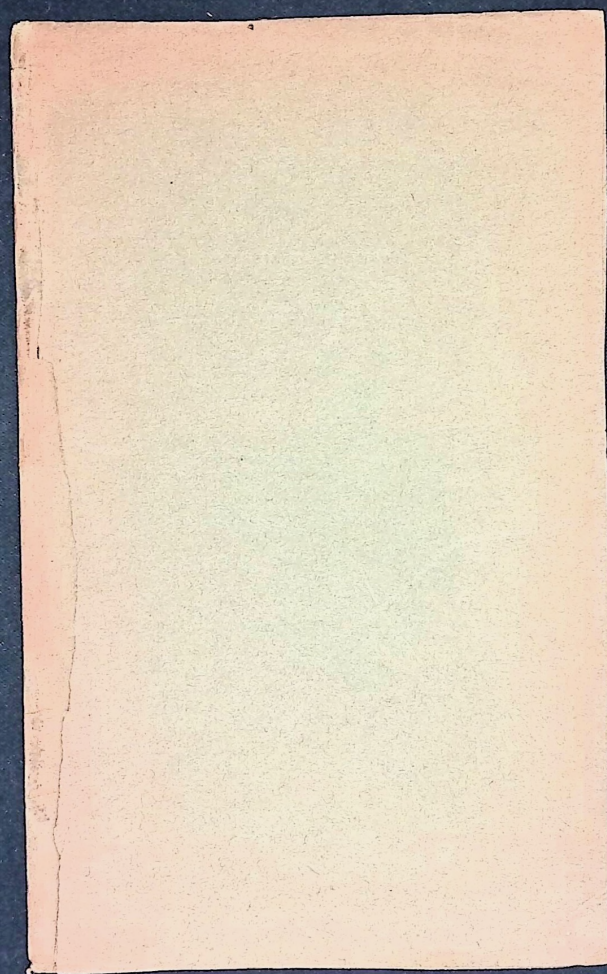




*Mr Jamieson 1 for self 412
for sale
at 1 each*

A

LETTER

From the ASSOCIATE REFORMED SYNOD; to the
ASSOCIATE PRESEYTERY of *Pennsylvania*;

AND

ANOTHER FROM THAT PRESBYTERY,

In ANSWER to the former.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A State of some Facts, relative to the Controversy now subsisting, concerning the SCOTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH in *Philadelphia*.

PHILADELPHIA:

Printed by YOUNG and M'CULLOCH, the corner of *Chestnut*
and *Second-streets*.

M, DCC, LXXX. VII.

*A State of some Facts, relative to the Controversy
now subsisting, concerning the Scots Presbyterian
Church in Philadelphia.*

THE confusions which have happened in the Scots Presbyterian church, or Associate Congregation of Philadelphia, are no secret. The place of worship belonging to it was seized upon on the 10th of June last year, by some members of that congregation, who wished to transfer it to the Associate Reformed Synod. Fifty eight was the number of persons of that congregation who were qualified to vote for trustees according to the charter of incorporation. Twenty-two, or not above twenty-four, of these took possession of the meeting house for themselves, excluding the rest. Mr. Marshall, who had been minister of that church nigh twenty years, was among the excluded. No determination being yet made by the Supreme Court, where the cause now lies, the party who have joined themselves to the Associate Reformed Synod, have held it since by no other right than what violent possession gave them; and this they have done with the approbation of the ministers of that Synod. These, pleased with the forward zeal of their new friends, readily consented to preach one after another in the pulpit from which Mr. Marshall was excluded, by no determination of any court civil or ecclesiastical, but merely by the violence of a mob; and this they did, though they had a meeting house and a minister of their own denomination in Philadelphia, and though all their adherents in that city would make but one small congregation.

It is scarcely possible that these ministers can persuade themselves that they have acted in this matter according to the divine rule, *Doing to others as they would that others should do unto them*. They would judge it hard measure to be expelled from the churches they now occupy by a part, and by the lesser part, of their people; and that on account of their adherence to these principles which they solemnly professed at their ordination, and in the maintenance of which their people at the same time engaged to stand by them. They would reckon ministers acting towards them as they have done towards Mr. Marshall and his congregation, guilty of something very like an avowed transgression of the tenth commandment; and say, that they *coveted an evil covetousness*. It would surely have been as like the meekness and patience of Christians, and as consistent with the professions of love and tenderness towards those of other denominations made by the Associate Reformed Synod, to have waited till it was determined by the courts of justice to whom the property of that place of worship should belong, and if judgment was given in their favour, they might then have entered it with more credit.

To colour their procedure with some appearance of equity, it is now asserted, that Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson were deposed from the ministry of the gospel, on the 14th of June 1782. This is said to have been done by those who at that time left the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, preferring the profession, the fellowship, and the designation of that party who have since been distinguished by the name of the Associate Reformed Synod. The paper to which they refer is quoted by the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, in a Narrative published by them; and it certainly speaks as if they had deposed these men from the ministry. It was ordered to be read in the congregation of Oxford, at that time vacant: whether shame, remorse, or policy, was the cause, it is certain what respected Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson was passed by in the reading of it there. The Associate Presbytery have said, that this was a "deposing of these men from the ministry of the gospel, only not according to the form of the Christian process observed in most of the reformed churches." Surely not according to that which the Associate Reformed Synod have agreed to observe, in the case of such as may object to any article or articles of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the most interesting not excepted. There is just reason to conclude that men of that description have been treated by them with more tenderness.

Ministers deposed by a Presbytery at whose bar they never appeared, whose constitution and principles they never acknowledged, by whom they were never called in any form to answer for themselves, from whom they never had the least intimation of the censure inflicted on them, and that only two days after the pretended ground of offence had been given, by these ministers refusing to go along with others in deserting the profession which both they and the brethren against them, had till that time jointly made, is a riddle which shall be left to those whose business it is to expound it.

The difficulty of this riddle is increased by what the Associate Reformed Synod say in the fifth article of their Constitution, viz. "That the abuse of ecclesiastical censures may be effectually prevented, the following general rule of discipline is unanimously adopted, viz. That 'netitious violations of the law of God in practice, and such errors in principle as unbridge the Christian profession, shall be the only scandals for which the sentence of deposition & excommunication shall be passed.' Is it so, then, that while this Constitution was printed for consideration, they deposed two ministers against whom no such errors or violations of the law of God were alleged by them? Or is it among them, as in some apostatizing churches, that these who endeavour to bear witness to the truth are counted the greatest offenders?"

In May 1785, the Associate Reformed Synod ordered an affectionate letter (as they call it,) to be wrote to the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania. If their conduct before and since that time be considered, it will be manifest that their affection to that Presbytery was very weak. So far as their power could reach, it has felt the effects of their anger. That letter being received was considered at a meeting of the Associate Presbytery, at which were present William Marshall, moderator, James Clarkson, and Thomas Beveridge, ministers; Robert Atken from Philadelphia, and Alexander Moor from Muddy Creek, ruling elders. An answer

answer was unanimously agreed upon, and both are now published, that whoever will may hear the one side and the other, and judge on which there is most consistency and truth.

It is not hereby intended to cast any blame on the writer of that letter, as if he designed to deceive his old connections. So far as is known he has taken no part in these violent measures by which Mr. Marshall and his congregation were compelled to seek another place of public worship.

As to what Mr. Logan says about the sad effects of division, we readily acknowledge, that the divided state of the church at this time is lamentable: but this evil will never be removed by one going after another into a backsliding course. When those who were once united, in the truth, go out of the straight path, they turn aside every man to his own way; the more apostacy causing still the more division, till all unite again in a wretched indifference about the matters of God. If the Presbyterian churches in Britain and America had with one consent listened to our Lord's admonition, *Hold fast that which thou hast*, a most desirable peace and unity would have remained among them to this day.

We know no better way to seek the peace of the church, than to endeavour steadfastness in the truth, which being received as it is in Jesus, is a bond of union among the members of his mystical body. We are heartily willing to bear with those who differ from us, so far as we can do it; without denying or slighting any part of that solemn profession we have made before God angels and men. It can be no pleasure to us to be accounted fools, and reproached as a people whose principles are divers from all others, as a sect which it is not for the profit of the state to suffer. But we desire, through grace to commit our cause to him who judgeth righteously; who will arise and have mercy upon Zion, and who for the oppression of the poor, for the fighting of the needy will arise, and set him in safety from him who puseth at him.

PHILADELPHIA, May 28, 1787.

To the rev. the Moderator of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, to be communicated.

WITH the greatest cheerfulness, I embrace the first opportunity of transmitting you, the following minute of the Associate Reformed Synod.

"Agreed, that Mr. Logan write an affectionate letter to the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, with a copy of our minute, appointing a committee to draw up notes, upon the Confession of Faith, &c. and inviting them to a friendly communication with said committee, in order that by the blessing of God a foundation may be laid for our happy union."

The minute referred to, is as follows: "Whereas, we have declared in our second article of the Constitution, that public and explicit covenanting with God is a moral duty, under the gospel dispensation, to which we are resolved to attend as he shall be pleased to direct; and that we will avail ourselves of every call, to bear a pointed testimony against the errors and delusions, which prevail in this country: and whereas we are bound to satisfy the just demands of the people committed to our care, by carrying these resolutions into execution; the Synod therefore resolve, that a committee be appointed to prepare short notes for illustrating the Confession of Faith, Catechisms larger and shorter, Directory for Worship, and Form of Presbyterial Church Government; and for pointing the truth exhibited in these tests of orthodoxy against the errors of the present time; and also for ascertaining the views the Synod have of the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of Scotland, England, and Ireland, more fully than has been done in the Constitution; and to prepare the form of a solemn covenant, suited to the circumstances in which God has placed us. Ordered, that Messrs Telfair, Mason, Smith, and Jamieson, be a committee for the above purpose, and that the different presbyteries or individuals be requested to make such communications to the said committee as may tend to further the execution of the business to them committed."

The

The committee meets at New-York sometime in October next, but to my remembrance the precise time was not determined. I may further inform you and the brethren, that if the plan above mentioned is well executed, the Constitution will of course be suspended, and so no longer a bone of contention between the Synod and you; therefore I would beg you would take the matter under your most serious consideration, that if possible we can see eye to eye in the things of God, and strengthen one another's hands in the work of the Lord: all of us may see what direful effects division among church rulers produce, and these are the more dreadful, as they carry along with them their influence to succeeding generations. In the present case I would suggest that it is not the plan to enquire, *who is in the wrong, who is in the right*; perhaps neither of us can sufficiently vindicate every mode of procedure; if we can agree in the truth in the execution of the above mentioned plan, it would be a desirable event unto many, and might greatly promote the Secession interest in this large Continent, and on this account generations yet unborn might praise the Lord. It will easily seem to you, that the presbytery may either appoint a committee to meet with the committee of Synod, or make what communications they think proper.

I would therefore beseech you, in the bowels of the Lord Jesus, that you interest yourselves in this matter in a proper time: if this plan be well executed, so that you and us can be united, we might still maintain all necessary connection with the Synod in Scotland. In the mean time what injury would the Presbytery sustain, by appointing a committee to meet the other? If the matter is not done according to your mind, your hands are not tied from taking such measures as to you may appear most consistent with truth and duty. Wishing you the direction of the Holy Spirit in this and all other things that concern the welfare of Zion.

I am R. D. B.

Your respectful humble Servant,

WILLIAM LOGAN.

Pequea, June 1785.

To the rev. Mr. John Mason, Minister of the Gospel at New-York, to be communicated to the Associate Reformed Synod, at their next meeting; or to any Committee belonging to that Synod, which may be employed in the business to which this refers.

Res. Dear Brother.

WE have received and considered the letter which Mr. Logan, by order of your Synod, wrote to this Presbytery. We could not answer it sooner, as our first ordinary meeting after the date of it, was on the 3d of this month. We are not informed by Mr. Logan of the precise time when your committee meets, and therefore could not address our answer to it.

The brethren of the Associate Reformed Synod may assure themselves that we are resolved, the Lord assisting us, to continue in the confession which we have made, and do make of the name of Jesus. Our solemn engagements made with an uplifted hand to the Most High God, will be a witness against us, if we are unsteadfast and unfaithful in the cause of Christ.

By the first of the two Minutes transmitted to us, we are invited to a friendly communication with a Committee of your Synod; and by the last we are informed that this Committee is appointed "to prepare short notes for illustrating the Confession of Faith, Catechisms larger and shorter, the Directory for Worship, and the Form of Presbyterian Church Government, and for pointing the truth exhibited in these tests of orthodoxy against the errors of the present time; and also for ascertaining the views the Synod have of the National Covenant, &c. more fully than has been done in the Constitution; and to prepare the form of a solemn covenant, suited to the circumstances in which God has placed them."

We are at some loss to know what our brethren mean by a friendly communication with them. Do they wish to know our principles? These were never a secret. Do they wish to know our judgment about the confession which the church is at this time called to make of the truth, in opposition to those

those who slight or deny it in this land? It is to be found in the Narrative, Declaration, and Testimony, agreed upon by this Presbytery. Are there any other matters relative to the interests of religion about which they desire to know our mind? Let these be named, and we shall endeavour to communicate our sentiments with all plainness and readiness.

As to the proposed scheme of notes for illustrating the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, &c.; and for pointing the truth exhibited in these against the errors of the present time, we do not well know what our brethren intend by it. If adherence to these notes shall be made a term of communion in their society, then they will be an addition to the Confession of Faith; and however proper an enlargement of that Confession might be, yet in the present state of things, we judge it best to let it stand as it is; proceeding no farther than to a vindication and defence of it, and of the rules and customs of the church of Christ, according as we find these agreeable to his word, in a separate work. If adherence to these notes shall be no term of communion among the ministers and people belonging to the Associate Reformed Synod, we do not perceive any considerable benefit the church will reap from them. A variety of authors have attempted to illustrate our Confession and Catechisms; and some of them have done so to as great advantage as we can reasonably expect the Committee of the Associate Reformed Synod will do.

As to pointing the truth contained in the Confession, Catechisms, Form of Church Government, and Directory for the Worship of God, against the errors of the present time, allow us to say, that we have little reason to expect this shall be plainly and faithfully done by the Associate Reformed Synod. The adherence of this Synod to these acts of the Westminster Assembly is extremely vague. On this we need not say, any more than we have already done in the tenth chapter of our Narrative. But as an amendment of this article of their Constitution makes no part of the scheme proposed by our brethren, it is not easy to imagine how such a vague adherence to the truth is consistent with a due application of it against error. Besides it is manifest, that though our brethren should make a loud cry against some very gross errors; yet others less dreadful, but very pernicious, are not much feared by them, or they would not appear so much inclined

clined to enter into church fellowship with societies in which various articles of the gospel are grievously perverted. Let our brethren remember, that there are little foxes which spoil the vines; lesser errors prepare the way for greater. If we admit those holding the former into our fellowship, they will draw those holding the latter after them. And let them remember also, that a mere slighting the truth is commonly followed with a denying of it.

We never had any connection with the Associate Reformed Synod; but some brethren now members of it were once connected with us, in maintaining a testimony against the errors of the present time. After having trode it under foot in the manner they have done, we have little hope of their ever appearing under any such banner again, unless a very remarkable change in their views should take place. It is often hard to keep the right way; but harder to find it when we have once gone out of it.

If the testimony these brethren maintained while in connexion with us, was not sufficiently pointed against the errors and delusions prevailing in this country, it was an ill way to mend the matter to cast it wholly aside. Their duty was to have stated it more fully and plainly in vindication of the truth, and in opposition to those who are at this present time, and in this place of the world, either contemning or denying it. This we have, according to the measure of light and ability the Lord hath given us, attempted to accomplish.

The Declaration and Testimony we have published is severely reprobated by some leading members of the Associate Reformed Synod. It is therefore manifest, in joining ourselves to that society, we behaved to fall from the profession we have made; and this we cannot do, till we are, from the word of God, convinced that it is wrong. Let these brethren give their judgment of our Declaration and Testimony as freely as we have done of their Constitution; and then it will appear whether or not there is such an agreement between us, as may be a foundation for our happy union. It will not suffice to allege, as some of these brethren do, that we are too contemptible to be noticed by them. Contemptible as we are in their eyes, they have noticed us so far as to order one of their number to write us. And if they design to recover us from what they judge the errors of our way, they

they must condescend yet a little farther; they must point out these errors to us.

As to the form of a solemn covenant which the Committee of the Associate Reformed Synod is to prepare, we can say little about it, till we see it. Only we observe that no mention is made of renewing our solemn covenant engagements. This we reckon necessary, as a testimony of the unity and steadfastness of the church, shewing that it is the same now that it was in the days of our fathers; and that we, as members of it, hold fast what thro' the mercy of the Lord, we have attained, and walk in the footsteps of the flock. Many imperfections may cleave to the church even in times of reformation. We do not insist on an approbation of every thing respecting the manner of covenanting used by our ancestors. No one can justly charge us with the fault often charged upon them, viz. the confounding civil and religious matters. Their peculiar circumstances plead for them; and if these do not excuse, they do, at least, lessen the fault of any mismanagement chargeable upon them. It is our duty carefully to avoid these things which might be blameable in their conduct; but it is our duty also, steadfastly to adhere to the Lord's cause in which they laboured and suffered, some of them even unto death.

The address made to us by Mr. Logan, is, we doubt not, well intended. But as it conveys to us only the mind of that brother, not of the society to which he belongs, we shall not spend time in making many remarks upon it. One thing we cannot help observing is, that he speaks another language than the minute transmitted to us does. It represents to us the Associate Reformed Synod as acting upon the Constitution, and building upon the foundation there laid. He tells us, that if the plan proposed in the minute be well executed, the Constitution will of course be superseded.

We cannot lay much weight upon the suppositions made by Mr. Logan: if such and such measures be well executed, he thinks we might be all happily united. But it will be soon enough to propose an union, when a foundation shall be laid for it in the Associate Reformed Synod's confession of the truth, and engagement of themselves to stand in its defence. What the notes they now propose to add, as an illustration of the Confession of Faith, may be, we cannot tell. We have reason

reason to fear, that these may tend rather to weaken the Confession, and to darken the truths contained in it, than otherwise. Our fears are grounded upon this, that we apprehend the brethren of that Synod have been wavering and going backward for some time past. The Articles of the Union were framed to supersede that particular testimony which we and some of these brethren once maintained against the defections of this age: these Articles were superseded by the Constitution: now we are told, at least by Mr. Logan, that notes on the Confession are to supersede it: and who knows but some other scheme will by and by supersede these notes also.

We do not know but this may be the last communication of the kind we may have with the Associate Reformed Synod. We entreat them, especially such of them as were once in connection with us, that as they regard the glory of God, as they would be found faithful in his house, and as they would promote the edification of his church, to beware of going down the stream of defection which flows so rapidly in our time. Opposing the testimony maintained by us, they may go farther and farther off the ground on which they once stood, and may go into what they had no thought of when they set out in the course they now follow.

Let them rest assured, that, for our part, we are ready to join them, whenever we see any satisfying evidences of their returning to what we judge to be their duty. There is no connection between us and our brethren in Scotland, which can hinder our union with those in this land who are friends to the reformation principles we profess.

We entreat the brethren of the Associate Reformed Synod to consider what we have said in this letter, as proceeding from a regard to the truth, to the welfare of the church, and to the commandment of him who says, "That which ye have hold fast till I come."

The rev. Mr. Mason will communicate this our letter, and we desire him to rest assured, that though we be not of the same mind with him in all things, we do still esteem him; and pray that the spirit of truth may be given to guide him and us into all truth.

Subscribed by order of Presbytery,
WILLIAM MARSHALL, Mdr.
 PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 4, 1785.

