

IV.—The weapons of the Church's warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. In themselves they are ineffectual. They have all their might, power, and effect from God. Through Him they are so powerful as to pull down strongholds.

Strongholds are usually built on elevated ground. They are positions that are strengthened and fortified with all possible ingenuity that they may effectually resist attack and secure those who entrench themselves within them. Satan has his strongholds. They are strongly fortified and widely distributed.. He has his stronghold in the heart of every man and woman. He entrenches himself there and strengthens his position by the heart's enmity to God, by spiritual pride, lofty imaginations, and carnal reasonings that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, that is, the gospel of Christ. He strengthens his position by spiritual darkness, unbelief, hardness of heart, and unwillingness; and by a false estimate of one's own imagined goodness and holiness. With these bulwarks Satan fancies his position amply buttressed; but there is a stronger than he, Who is able to deprive him of the weapons in which he trusts. Christ puts forth His irresistible power through the weapons that He puts into the hand of His delivered people; and bringing every thought into captivity to render obedience to Himself, He snatches the soul from the enemy's hand. He thus pulls down the strongholds of Satan, never to be put up again, and He enthrones Himself in the heart.

The fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust."

2. He has his strongholds in the visible Church. He has them in the public creed of many of the Churches throughout Christendom. A public creed is high ground on which Satan succeeds to rear his strongholds. They are fortified by legislation, and the Churches concerned give them the support of all the influence and authority that they can command. It is only in error that Satan can have his strongholds; and when error makes its way into the public creed of a Church, there he entrenches himself. Think of the strongholds that he has in the Church of Rome, and he is rapidly gaining positions in the Church of England as well as in several of the Scottish Churches. Think of the desperate efforts that he is now putting forth through so many willing agents to get the Church of Rome to be the State Church in this land, so that he may have his strongholds in both Church and State. We are in extreme danger. It is, however, with the weapons that the Gospel supplies that Christ will yet, through His mighty power, pull them all down. He shall consume the man of sin "with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming." He shall yet completely demolish the strongholds of error that are spread all over Christendom in the present day.

3. He has his strongholds in the world. He has them in the organised forms of evil set up in Gospel lands; he has them in the

long-established forms of idolatry in heathen lands. Much has recently been spoken and written about the heathen; but the weapons of carnal wisdom and carnal contrivance, that discard the absolute integrity of the Scriptures, are not the weapons that will pull down the strongholds of heathenism at home or abroad. The weapons furnished in the Gospel alone will do it, through the forthputting of the almighty power of God. When His time comes, the light of the Gospel will flash throughout all lands. In spite of all opposition, Christ will have the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. In conclusion, we have reason to bewail many shortcomings. We see little of the Lord's work anywhere in our Land. The Holy Spirit is grieved. There is a general falling away from the faith once for all delivered to the saints. There is a process of retrogression persistently going on from purity of doctrine and practice. There is a growing indifference to true religion and undefiled. There is a wide-spread apathy to the inroads of the Papacy that aims at depriving us of our civil and religious liberties. There is a false charity that is more careful of not offending the protagonists of error and falsehood than the God of truth and righteousness. Our duty, however, is clear. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. His truth is the same. Let us, therefore, value more and more the weapons that are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, and unflaggingly conduct the warfare to which the Lord has called us, in the strength of His grace, and with a single eye to His glory. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Amen.

A Declaration anent Reformation Attainments, and the Church's Relation thereto.

By THE SYNOD OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

THIS Synod would humbly record, with gratitude to Almighty God, the great goodness and mercy with which He graciously visited Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the Reformations from Popery and Prelacy, the spirit of wisdom and understanding He bestowed on the men who were instrumentally used in accomplishing His will during those memorable periods, whereby they were led to grasp, with eminent light and ability, the great doctrines and principles of religious, social, and civil liberty contained in the Bible, and the magnanimity, fortitude, and patriotism wherewith He enabled them to uphold and vindicate the same against inveterate enemies. The Synod feel under special obligation at the present time to set up this stone

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of gratitude and testimony in view of the attacks, more or less open, that are now being made by Papists, Ritualists, and others upon the attainments of Reformation times.

Scotland had been for centuries sunk in ignorance, superstition, physical degradation, and spiritual slavery (a state of things which always obtains in nations under the baneful yoke of the Papacy), till set free from that galling bondage by the First Reformation. Efforts were made from time to time by one person or another who had become more enlightened than his neighbours, to spread rays of Gospel light among the people, but the Papists, who had supreme power in civil and religious matters, cut off, by the most cruel death, every one who had the courage to speak a word against the idolatrous faith and worship of the Church of Rome. This absolute power which she possessed was used with a vengeance to keep the light of God's truth from the people. When John Knox appeared and declared that the Papacy was not the Church of Christ but the antichrist depicted in the Word of God, he had to contend against the powers of the Royal House of Stuart and the Papacy combined. His preservation, the readiness with which the people—high and low—received the light of the truth, and the wonderful reformation wrought by it upon the hearts and conduct of men, must be attributed to the presence and power of the Holy Ghost.

No sooner did our fathers taste the Gospel of the grace of God, and the peace and freedom it brought to their souls, than they determined to abide by its life-giving doctrines, whatever loss or sufferings that might entail. When their enemies endeavoured to deprive them of it, they bound themselves by a solemn oath that, by the grace of God, they would stand faithfully by each other in upholding it for themselves and for their posterity, and that—even should they lose all their worldly goods and their life in the attempt—they would joyfully suffer the loss of all things rather than part with the Gospel of Christ. This was the beginning of covenanting in Scotland. The oath annexed the Confession of Faith of 1581 was known ever after as the "National Covenant of Scotland."

The Royal House, assisted by inimical Papists and men of no religion, did their utmost, by passing and enforcing tyrannical laws, to annihilate both the Reformers and the Reformation; but the work was of God, and therefore they were not able to bring it to nought. On the contrary, God, in His holy providence, helped the Reformers, so that the Protestant and Presbyterian Church of Scotland was, by an Act of the Scottish Parliament, established as the National Church, and her spiritual independence ratified in 1592. This period of its history is generally called the First Reformation. The most determined efforts were made during the next forty- six years to change the Church into a Prelatic or Episcopal one. Our fathers found the renewing of the National Covenant

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repeatedly during this period a source of much strength in their opposition to their enemies and of maintaining unity among themselves. At last the infatuated and despotic King Charles I., backed by the Romish intrigues of Archbishop Laud, made a desperate effort to force a semi-popish liturgy on the Church of Scotland; but the greater bulk of the people rose up and swore by the "Great Name of the Lord our God," to abide by the profession of the faith, as settled by Statute, in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This was done in the year 1638. They had immediately to grasp the sword in defence of their lives, property, and religion, The Lord prospered them so that, without shedding of blood, they got the King's reluctant and feigned consent to hold a General Assembly at Glasgow that year. In this Assembly, notwithstanding the King's opposition thereto, the incubus of Prelacy was thrown off the neck of the Church, and she became the Presbyterian Church of Scotland (Free). The last words spoken by Alexander Henderson, Moderator of that Assembly, are well worth recording: "We have now cast down the walls of Jericho. Let him that rebuildeth them beware of the curse of Hiel, the Bethelite." The National Presbyterian Church of Scotland in that Assembly nobly, fearlessly, and piously vindicated the sole sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ, her only divine Head and King. This is historically denominated the Second Reformation.

The King, determined to reduce the Church and people of Scotland into compliance with Prelacy, declared :— "That covenant of theirs 1 They have treacherously induced many of our people to swear to a band against us; which band and covenant, or rather conspiracy of theirs, could not be with God, being against us, the Lord's anointed over them. But it was and is a band and covenant pretended to be with God, that they may, with the better countenance, do the work of the devil, such as all treasons and rebellions are." But the Covenanters of Scotland were more enlightened than to sacrifice their civil and religious liberty on the altar of the so-called divine right of Kings. After a period of many incriminations and threatenings, and an appeal to the sword on the King's part, and self-defence on the part of our fathers, God prospered their efforts, so that, by an Act of a Parliament convened at Edinburgh by the King's authority in 1641, all the laws passed against the Presbyterian Church of Scotland since 1592 were abrogated, and the Act of that year, called "The Magna Charta of Presbytery," was restored to its place and honour on the Statute Book. The Lord manifested His approval of the faithfulness of our fathers also by awakening the English Parliament, with a very numerous following, to a realisation of the designs of the King and the Prelatic faction to overthrow the Reformed religion in Great Britain, so that they sent Commissioners to the Estates and General Assembly of the Scottish nation, craving their assistance. To this appeal the Presbyterians of Scotland listened, and drafted

the Solemn League and Covenant as the basis of mutual agreement. The direct purpose of the Solemn League and Covenant was to secure a basis upon which the Churches of Christ in Scotland, England, and Ireland might be united in the truth, and might secure "the preservation of the Reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, the Reformation of religion in England and Ireland, and the extirpation of Popery and Prelacy." The immediate result of the Solemn League and Covenant was the Westminster Assembly. That Assembly's work consisted mainly in producing (r) a Directory for Public Worship, (2) a Presbyterian Form of Church Government, a Confession of Faith, a Larger Catechism, (5) a Shorter Catechism. These documents, which were meant to be the basis of a covenanted uniformity in religion between the Churches of Christ in the three kingdoms, were received and adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in the years 1645, 1647, and 1648. Readers are referred to any ordinary copy of the Westminster Standards for the Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland adopting those five documents. The Synod accept and adhere to those documents in the sense in which they were received by the Church of Scotland in the years specified.

England proved untrue to her solemn oath and turned back to Episcopacy with results which proved very distressing to the Church of Scotland, and the baneful fruits of which that nation reaps to the present day. Whether these documents be considered as an expression of the real face of the Apostolic Church as set forth in the New Testament, or as a masterpiece of the sagacity of our fathers in an honest effort to bring the British nation into unity in the truth, their guileless aim and wisdom are clearly seen and bear witness that they were moved by the Spirit of Christ. Had they succeeded in their noble efforts, much blood and floods of the tears of widows and fatherless would have been spared in the three kingdoms, and the House of Stuart would have continued till this day on the British throne. King Charles II. swore with the utmost solemnity when he ascended the British throne that he would uphold the Reformed Presbyterian faith thus happily established in Scotland, England, and Ireland, but his intention was quite the reverse as he very soon proved. The British nation had to learn by the most painful and sad experience that no faith can be placed in the oath of a Jesuit. In the years 1650 and 1660, Charles swore that he would uphold the cause and Covenants of Scotland, England and Ireland, and in 1661 he caused the Covenants to be burnt by the hand of the common hangman in London; and at Linlithgow, in 1662, the same proceedings were repeated with fiendish profanity. A parliament was called together in Edinburgh, known in history as "Midleton's Drinking Parliament," which framed an oath of allegiance to ensnare those for whom it was intended, forbade the Covenants, and passed the infamous Rescissory Act. This Act

cut off from the Statute Book all the Acts of the preceding twenty years in favour of the Presbyterian Church, thereby annihilating with a single blow the civil and religious liberties of the people. The Presbyterian Church of Scotland was not only disestablished but outlawed, and a semiPopish one set up in its place as the future Church of the Scottish Nation! The Presbyterian Church of England fared nothing better. This Parliament passed the Abjuration Oath in 1662. The design of this Act was, by abjuring and condemning the Presbyterian practice, to force adherence to the semi-Popish system. Both the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant were to be abjured as unlawful oaths. This oath of abjuration had to be taken by all persons holding public office in the kingdom. The Privy Council met in October of that year, and passed an Act declaring all who had not complied with these oaths to have forfeited their livings, interdicting them from preaching, and charging them to remove from their parishes on the first of November. The last Sabbath of that October was long remembered in Scotland as the day on which the Presbyterian ministers of Scotland warned, exhorted, and comforted their congregations for the last time. The tears of our fathers and mothers, both ministers and people, bedewed the floors of our sanctuaries that day. Wodrow writes :—"Scotland was never witness to such a day as the last on which those ministers preached; I know no parallel to it save the 11th of August, 1662, to the Presbyterians in England." The pulpits of these godly men were filled with profane, ignorant, and openly vicious curates, but the people would not attend their ministrations. Acts were passed to compel the people to comply, but they magnanimously and courageously refused, with the consequences that open and violent persecution began. The history of Scotland's sufferings during the following twenty-six years is that of men, women, and even children hunted and killed by a brutal soldiery, like wild beasts on the mountains and in the valleys of this land. They were hanged as traitors, burned at the stake, drowned in the sea, slain with the sword, shot dead in the presence of their wives and children, banished out of the kingdom; they wandered in caves and dens of the earth clothed in sheepskins and goatskins. Why was all this inhuman cruelty? Was it because our fathers refused to obey lawful authority? No, but because they held the privileges of the freedom, wherewith the truth made them free, more precious than to surrender them at the caprice of a profligate and perjured king and his sycophants. These were the men and women that made the history of Scotland ever since the repository out of which men have been drawing examples of heroism, patriotism, and genuine piety. What the poor Presbyterians suffered during twenty-eight years of horrid cruelty surpasses any man's power of description. It ought to serve as a sufficient warning to the British nation, in all time coming, of the great danger of allowing

a Papist to occupy our throne, or of allowing the barriers still left us, to prevent such a calamity, from being removed. No man can look at the knife by which his father has been assassinated without horror, neither can any man, possessed of human feelings, think of the atrocities of the Papacy without shuddering. The present apathy about that bloodthirsty system among Protestants springs either from ignorance of its past history, or from irreligion. But it was proved up to the hilt in Scotland that liberty of conscience, according to God's Word, in civil and religious concerns must suffer under such a system, in other words, that none but absolute slaves can live under it. We are the children of men and women who refused to become slaves; therefore let us value the inheritance they left us.

When God, of His infinite mercy, awoke the British nation in 1688 to realise the absolute necessity that lay upon them to deliver themselves from such inhuman barbarity and tyranny they rose like one man (Papists excepted), and drove the House of Stuart from the British Throne. It was high time. By this act, this nation proved that the disposal of the throne is in the hands of the subjects, and that dream—the divine right of Kings, as held by our sovereigns for centuries—perished. The British Nation called William and Mary to the throne, and what is known in our history as “The Revolution,” took place. We take the following long quotation from “The Act and Declaration,” Free Church, 1842:—“Passing over the dark period of the closing years of the Stuart dynasty, and descending along the line of history to the era of the glorious Revolution, we find the Church, which had been twice before brought out of great troubles in her contentings against Popery and Prelacy, once again rescued from the oppression of arbitrary power, and lifting her head as the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The bloody acts of the preceding time were repealed; on the petition of the ministers and professors of the Church of Scotland, the civil sanction was given to the Confession of Faith; Presbyterian Church Government was re-established in the hands of those who had been ejected by Prelacy in 1661; and to the wonder of many, and the confusion of her enemies, this Church rose from her ashes, and was recognised as the same Church which, whether in freedom, or in bondage—whether under the shade of royal favour, or hunted as a partridge on the mountains—could trace its unbroken identity downwards from the very beginning of the Reformation. “That the ‘Revolution Settlement,’ by which the liberties of the Church were secured, under the reign of William and Mary, was in all respects satisfactory, has never been maintained by this Church. On the contrary, various circumstances may be pointed out as hindering the Church from realising fully the attainments that had been reached during the Second Reformation. Not only were the three kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland unprepared for prosecuting the work of reformation and uniformity in religion, to which they had pledged themselves, but even in

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Scotland itself the reluctant concessions of statesmen were limited to what a people, worn out by a heavy tribulation, were barely willing to accept as a relief, and did not thoroughly undo the mischief of an age of misrule. Thus, for instance, in the civil sanction then given to Presbytery, the Parliament of 1690, overlooking altogether the higher attainments of the Second Reformation, went back at once to the Act of 1592, and based its legislation upon that Act alone as being the original charter of the Presbyterian Establishment. Accordingly, it left unrepealed the infamous 'Act Rescissory' of King Charles, by which all that the Church had done, and all that the State had done for her, in the interval between 1638 and the Restoration, had been stigmatised as treasonable and rebellious. Thus the Revolution Settlement failed in adequately acknowledging the Lord's work done formerly in the land; and it was, besides, in several matters of practical legislation very generally considered by our fathers at time to be defective and unsatisfactory. Some, and these not the least worthy, even went so far as to refuse all submission to it.

But for the, most part, our fathers, smarting from the fresh wounds of anti-Christian oppression, *weary* of strife, and anxious for rest and peace, either thankfully accepted or at least acquiesced in it, in the hope of being able Practically to effect under it the great ends which the Church had all along, in all her former contendings, regarded as indispensable. For it would be in a high degree ungrateful to overlook the signal and seasonable benefits which the Revolution Settlement really did confer upon the Church, as well as upon the nation. Not only did it put an end to the cruel persecution by which the best blood of Scotland had been shed in the field, on the hillside, and on the scaffold; not only did it reinstate in their several parishes the pastors who had been unrighteously cast out in the reign of the second Charles, and set up again the platform of the Presbyterian government; but, by reviving and re-enacting the Statute of 1592, the original charter and foundation of Presbytery, it recognised as an inalienable part of the constitution of this country the establishment of the Presbyterian Church. It secured also effectually, as was then universally believed, the exclusive spiritual jurisdiction of the Church and her independence in spiritual matters of all civil control. And by the arrangements which it sanctioned for the filling up of vacant charges, it abolished those rights of patronage which had been reserved in 1592, and made provision for enforcing the fundamental principle of this Church—that no pastor shall be intruded into a congregation contrary to the will of the people." The Synod heartily concur in the above statement of the Church in 1851, and they declare that, in their humble judgment, the fact that the "Rescissory Act" has been left unrepealed on the Statute Book leaves the Presbyterians of Scotland in a dangerous position, and that effective steps should be taken for its repeal along with all the other pernicious cognate Acts of that period of our history.