

A

DESCRIPTION

OF THE

TRUE NATURE

OF

SCHISM.

AS ALSO

A VINDICATION of the *Assembly's Directory*, our *Reformers*, and *Fellowship-Meetings*, from the malicious and groundless Aspersions of Mr. JOHN CURRIE.

By the late Reverend and Learned

Mr. WILLIAM WILSON,
Minister of the Gospel at *Perth*.

Mr. WILSON, in his Defence of the *Reformation Principles* of the Church of *Scotland*, in Answer to Mr. CURRIE'S *Essay on Separation*, shewing what was our Reformers, and what is the Scripture-Sense of *Schism*, argues thus,

Our Author likewise, p. 46. mentions the Act of Assembly 1647. intituled, *Act against such as withdraw-themselves from the publick Worship in their own*
Con-

Congregations. " In this Act (*says he*) for preserving "Order, Unity and Peace in the Kirk, and for preventing of Schism, they enjoined every Member in every Congregation to keep their own Parish kirk, communicating there in Word and Sacrament." This Act is frequently thrown up by our Author, with very indecent Insinuations against it. I shall in this Place offer what I intend for the vindicating and clearing of it. The Preamble to the Act declares the End and Design of it, *viz.* for preserving Order, Unity, &c. and for preventing Schism. I once designed to have given a more large Account of the Nature of Schism in a Section by itself; but, finding that this Book swells upon my Hand, I shall forbear it: Only, I must here observe, that we find the Word *Schism* used several Times by the Apostle in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, as Chap. i. 10. Now I beseech you, Brethren, — and that there be no Divisions among you. The Word *Divisions* is in the Original *Schisms*, Chap. xi. 18. I bear that there be Divisions among you, or SCHISMS. And if we require, What were these Schisms that were in the Church of *Corinth*? I answer, They were Divisions, Differences, and Janglings amongst the Members of that Church, who still remained joined together in external Church-communion, or in the same Church-Order, Discipline and Worship: The Apostle gives a particular Instance of their Divisions and Janglings, 1 Cor. i. 12. and iii. 4. One said, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos. There was a Siding amongst them about their Ministers and Teachers, who held the same Testimony of Jesus. And here I observe, that the Spirit of God in the holy Scriptures calls it *Schism*, when the Members of a particular organical Church put a Difference amongst their faithful Ministers and Teachers, who are holding the same Testimony of the Lord Jesus: As this is *Schism* in the Scripture-sense of the Word, so it ought to be condemned in all the Churches of Christ; and this is that Schism and Separation testified against by the above Act

of the Assembly 1647. Our Author, when speaking of it, p. 95. tells us, "That *many think* there wanted not a great deal of Tyranny in that Act of Assembly 1647, &c." But, whatever he or others may think, there wanted not a great deal of Scripture reason in it; in regard that all the Ministers of the Church of *Scotland* were at that Time holding the same Testimony against Popery, Prelacy, *Erastianism* and *Sectarianism*: They were, in their judicative Capacity, asserting and maintaining the covenanted Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline of the House of God in this Land, in Opposition to every Thing contrary to sound Doctrine and the Power of Godliness; the Confession of Faith compiled at *Westminster* was received and approved by this Assembly: And the Introduction to the Act our Author inveighs against runs in the following Manner; "Since it hath pleased God of his infinite Goodness to bless his Kirk within this Nation with the Riches of the Gospel, in giving to us his Ordinances in great Purity, Liberty, and withal a comely and well-established Order." If these Things are considered, it is plain that the *Schism* condemned by this Assembly is that which the Scripture calls *Schism*, namely, a separating from such Ministers as are holding the same Testimony of Jesus. But this will further appear, if we consider the Means that are enjoined by this Assembly for preventing *Schism*; and these are of two Sorts, the first concerns Ministers themselves, and the other concerns the People. Our Author thinks fit to report what concerns the People, and, after his partial Manner, he conceals the first Mean that is laid down by this faithful Assembly, "for preserving Order, Unity and Peace in the Kirk, and for maintaining that Respect which is due to the Ordinances and Ministers of Jesus Christ, for preventing *Schism*, noisom Errors, &c." But, tho' he thinks fit to omit what is enjoined Ministers for attaining the above valuable Ends, I think it very necessary to transcribe it, *viz.* The Assembly "doth
 " charge

“ charge every Minister to be diligent in fulfilling his
 “ Ministry, to be holy and grave in his Conversation,
 “ to be faithful in Preaching, declaring the whole
 “ Counsel of God, and, as he hath Occasion from the
 “ Text of Scripture, to reprove the Sins and Errors,
 “ and press the Duties of the Time; and in all these to
 “ observe the Rules prescribed by the Assembly:
 “ Wherein if he be negligent, he is to be censured by
 “ his own Pre-bytery.” Therefore this Act of As-
 sembly obliges Ministers and People to their mutual re-
 lative Duties: and, in order to prevent *Schism*, it in-
 joins not only every Member in every Congregation to at-
 tend the Ministry of his own Pastor, but it likewise in-
 joins every Minister in every Congregation to be a faithful
 Steward of the Mysteries of God. Hence I think it
 very evident, that the Separation condemned by this
 faithful Assembly, is a Separation from such Ministers
 who are holding the Testimony of Jesus delivered to his
 Church and People in this Land.

And the said Mr. WILSON, when vindicating
 our Reformers, the *Directory*, and *Fel-
 lowship-Meetings*, from Mr. CURRIE's ma-
 licious and groundless Aspersions thrown
 on them, argues thus,

I have now done with the Exceptions that our Au-
 thor lays against our Covenants, and the Proceedings
 of our reforming Period with reference unto them. I
 shall now briefly consider his Exceptions against some o-
 ther Acts of the said Period, which he brings as In-
 stances of the *Faults*, *Failings*, bad and *tyrannical* Acts
 of our covenanting Period. The first that I mention is
 the Account that our Author gives us of a Clause in
 the Assembly's *Directory*, August 24. 1647. for secret
 and private Worship, and mutual Edification, &c. Our
 Au-

Author mentions only the *seventh* Direction; but, in order to understand it, 'tis necessary that I first transcribe their sixth, *viz.* "At Family-worship, a special Care is to be had, that each Family keep by themselves: Neither requiring, inviting, nor admitting Persons from diverse Families; unless it be those who are lodged with them, or, at Meal, or otherwise with them upon some lawful Occasion." Then follows the *seventh* Article mentioned by our Author, *viz.* "Whatsoever hath been the Effects and Fruits of Meetings of Persons of diverse Families, in the Times of Corruption or Trouble (in which Cases many Things are commendable, which otherwise are not tolerable) yet, when God hath blessed us with Peace and Purity of the Gospel, such Meetings of Persons of diverse Families (except in Cases mentioned in these Directions) are to be disapproved, as tending to the Hindrance of the religious Exercise of each Family by itself, to the Prejudice of the publick Ministry, &c." Our Author gives it as his Opinion, that in the above Direction that Assembly declared against Fellowship meetings *for Prayer and Christian Conference.* I know not by what Spirit our Author is led in his Manner of Writing; there cannot be a more unjust Charge laid against an Assembly than this that is laid against the excellent Directions that this Assembly give for private and secret Worship. Any who is not blind may see from the above Articles, that the Direction here given by the Assembly is, That each Family by itself should keep up the Worship of God; and that which is condemned is, the Meeting of Persons of diverse Families together, to the *Hindrance* of the religious Exercise of *each Family by itself*; and this is what they had good Reason to condemn, as having a Tendency to all the bad Effects that they mention. Our Author tells us from *Guthrie* in his Memoirs, That the above Act or Conclusion was unanimously gone into by several eminent Ministers, some of whom he mentions, who met

to confer about that Affair in Mr. *Henderfon's* Chamber 1639: That is, An Act of the Assembly 1647 was concluded by several Ministers in 1639, even seven Years before it was enacted. Our Author tells us this Story from *Guthrie's* Memoirs. Several of his Readers, and these none of the weakest, have thereby been imposed upon, and thought that our Author told them this Story from one of these eminent Ministers, Mr. *James* or Mr. *William Guthrie*: But, to undeceive them, I must inform them, that this *Guthrie* was one Mr. *Henry Guthrie*, who made a considerable Profession of Zeal for our Reformation before the Year 1662; but at that Time he complied with Prelacy, and received the Bishoprick of *Dunkeld* as his Reward in the Year 1665. I have sometimes made use of his Memoirs for clearing or confirming some historical Facts; but in this Place * the Bishop tells us a very inconsistent Story, viz. Some (*says he*) came from *England*, who were supposed to favour the *Brownistical* Way; and others likewise came from *Ireland*, who had betaken themselves to Conventicles, having forsaken the publick Assemblies of the Church in *Ireland*: And he tells us, that they set up those Conventicles which they called private Meetings in *Scotland*; and that they were countenanced by Mr. *David Dickson*, Mr. *Samuel Rutherford* and others: But that the soundest of the Ministers, Mr. *Ramsay*, Mr. *Alexander Henderfon* and others (the Bishop thinks fit to name himself among them) were deeply affected with the said Conventicles, doubting that the Course might lead to *Brownism*; and therefore they purposed to have an Act of Assembly in the Year 1639 against the same; but Mr. *Dickson* and Mr. *Rutherford* opposed the Motion, and, instead thereof, moved for a Conference, that Brethren might unite upon the Question; and that hereupon a Conference was held in Mr. *Henderfon's* Chamber, wherein the above-mentioned Conclusion was taken. He likewise reports, that

* *Memoirs*, p. 67.

the Keepers of the said Conventicles or private Meetings having become more numerous and bold, the General Assembly at *Aberdeen* in the Year 1640 took Matter into Consideration; and that Mr. *Dickson* and Mr. *Rutherford* pleaded vehemently for the said Conventicles, till Mr. *Gutbrie* (that is, the Bishop himself) took the Paper out of his Pocket, which had been signed by Mr. *Henderson* and Mr. *Dickson* in all their Names: And then, says the *Bishop*, Mr. *Dickson* was silent; whereupon the *Act* pass unanimously against late Meetings.

But every Body may see that the above Account given by the *Bishop* is both false and inconsistent; there was no such *Act* as he reports pass at the Assembly at *Aberdeen* 1640. No Body that know the Characters of Messieurs *Rutherford* and *Dickson* will believe that they signed the *Brownistical Way*, or that they would oppose in an Assembly a Conclusion signed with their own Hands: It is plain that the perfidious Prelate has laid the whole Story with a Design to defame these excellent and worthy Men; and it is likewise plain that there was no such Meeting in *Henderson's* Chamber, concluded by an Article of our Directory, which had not a Being till 1647, that is, seven Years thereafter: Therefore, our Author had not a Design to impose upon the World when he cites *Gutbrie's* Memoirs, he has quoted them without any Manner of Judgment or Consideration.

Our Author tells us, He is far from condemning private Meetings for Prayer and Conference; he owns, that Fellowship-meetings, if rightly managed, are probable: But in the mean Time he insists only upon the Abuse of them; he never tells us wherein they are probable. He gives us a Quotation from Mr. *Durham's* Scandal, Part 3. Chap. 15. and we have only the first Half of what Mr. *Durham* says upon Fellowship-meetings, namely, what he says upon the Abuse of them; but what is said by that great Man upon the Use-

Usefulness of such Meetings, is entirely dropt by our Author: I shall leave it to the Reader to look into Mr. *Durham* himself. I shall only add, It is an unfair, and a very cunning Way of dealing, to commend the Practice of any Thing as profitable and useful, and yet to insist only upon the Abuses of the Practice, without giving any Instances of the Profitableness or Usefulness thereof.

Extracted from Mr. WILLIAM WILSON'S Defence of the Reformation Principles of the Church of Scotland
Pages 198, 199, 305, 306. 307, 308.

Advertisement.

The following Books are to be Sold at GEORGE PATON'S Shop in *Linlithgow*:

- I. A Collection of several remarkable and valuable Sermons, Speeches and Exhortations, preached by our Covenanting Reformers, at the renewing of the Covenants, from 1638; to 1650, explaining and applying the Covenants, and answering Scruples and Objections against the same; very seasonable and necessary for these Times.
- II. The Lawfulness and Duty of Separation from corrupt Ministers, and Objections explained and vindicated, by Mr. JAMES FRASER of *Brae*, late Minister of the Gospel at *Culrofs*.
- III. The Rules and Directions for Fellowship Meetings, by Mr. *Walter Smith*, and Mr. *John Hepburn*.
- IV. A Vindication of Fellowship Meetings, by Mr. *John Brown*, both which contains Scripture Warrants for the said Meetings.