

*The Duty of holding fast the
Form of sound Words.*

Upon the PLAN of the
ASSEMBLY'S CATECHISMS,
AND

Confession of Faith;
And fit to Bind with them.

To which is added,

A LIST of the DIVINES in that ASSEMBLY:
The Vow taken by every Member at his
Entrance; with a Word of their Character.

ASSEMBLIES CATECHISM,

Question the Second.

Of the scriptures as our rule.

“ Quest. *WHAT* rule hath God given to direct
“ *us how we may glorify and enjoy*
“ *him?*”

Answer. “ The word of God (which is con-
“ tained in the scriptures of the *Old and New*
“ *Testament*) is the only rule to direct us how
“ we may glorify and enjoy him.”

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Q. 1. If the word of God contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is our only rule; are not publick catechisms and confessions of faith useles?

A. No; by no means: tho' the word of God contain'd in the scriptures, be our only rule, to say publick catechisms and confessions of faith fetch'd from the scriptures and founded upon them are useles; is to contradict experience, and offend against the generation of God's children.

Q. 2. Has it been the custom of the churches of Christ to have their publick confessions of faith and catechisms for the use of their ministers and people?

A. It has so; and a good custom it has been, notwithstanding it has been abused by Papists on one side, and is now so much decry'd by Protestants of loose principles on the other.

Q. 3. Is there any thing in the scriptures themselves to countenance such composures, and for a great regard to be had to them?

A. 'Tis St. Paul's expres command to Timothy, Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. i. 13.

Q. 4. What in this place may be understood by the form of sound words?

*A. The form of sound words may be understood either of the doctrine of the gospel in general, or else very probably of a collection of some of its principal heads, which the apostle had chosen, and put together in the order and dress he thought best; and either preach'd in Timothy's hearing, or drew up in writing, and committed to Timothy as a trust and treasure,
not*

not only for his own use and direction in preaching, but to transmit to others for the use and benefit of succeeding generations in the church of Christ, 2 Tim. ii. 2. *The things which thou hast heard of me amongst many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

Q. 5. Upon what accounts may the apostle call the form of which he speaks, a form of sound words?

A. 1. In regard of their *nature*, or what they were in themselves: and so *sound words*, are words that are pure, in opposition to any unwarrantable mixture.

2. With respect to their *influence*; and so *sound words*, are words that make sound, or conduce to the health of souls; as of *unsound words*, such as are not according to the purity of the gospel, we may say the contrary. We read of *sound speech that cannot be condemned*, Tit. ii. 8. And of *words that eat as a canker*, 2 Tim. ii. 17.

Q. 6. What, by the apostle's order, is Timothy's duty, as to the form of sound words deliver'd to him?

A. To hold it fast, i. e. Having such a form or collection of gospel doctrine, as a pattern for his direction both as a christian and as a minister, not to swerve from it himself, nor, as far as in him lay, suffer it to be corrupted by others; upon no terms to part with it, but firmly retain, and own, and be ready to defend it against all opposition whatsoever.

Q. 7. *Was the injunction given to Timothy only for himself?*

A. No; it equally concerns ministers and christians still. What the *apostle* says to *Timothy*, he is to be conceived saying to every one of us, *Hold fast the form of sound words.*

Q. 8. *What hereupon may be justly observ'd?*

A. That 'tis of great use and advantage both for ministers and private christians, to have the great truths of the gospel cloath'd in sound words, collected together and regularly disposed; and such composures are faithfully and affectionately to be kept; or *held fast in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.*

Q. 9. *What may be inferr'd from hence?*

A. That it is a justifiable practice of the churches of Christ, to have their publick forms of the fundamental articles of the christian faith, drawn up by the joint labour of their learned and godly divines, after much and solemn seeking of God by fasting and prayer, in the solemn profession whereof they all consent and agree.

Q. 10. *Besides the ancient creeds, what instances of publick confessions have been pointed out with approbation?*

A. Such are the confessions which most of the reformed churches have drawn up for their own use, comprehending the most necessary and fundamental articles of the christian faith, to be generally owned and asserted by all within their associations and jurisdictions, whether ministers or people.

Q. 11. *Among such forms of sound words, which*

which for excellency has been most admired and commended?

A. The *confession of faith* which was compiled by the reverend and learned divines of the *assembly at Westminster*, and presented to the two houses of parliament, as their advice in matters of religion, has, by many capable judges, had the first place assign'd it amongst all the confessions of the reformed churches, and their *longer* and *shorter catechisms* are equally valued.

Q. 12. *For what purposes serve such forms of sound words?*

A. Such forms of sound words are of special use.

1st, For the more easy instruction of the church and people of God in the most concerning and fundamental truths and principles of religion, set together in their mutual connection and dependance, so as to give light and lustre to each other, and beauty and order to the whole.

2dly, To be a test of truth and error, by which doctrines and * men are to be examined and tried, and so a bank to keep out error, and prevent dissentions amongst *pastors* and *teachers*, as well as amongst the private members of the same church, which cannot be avoided or easily

* The church of *Scotland* requires every one admitted into it as a minister, to subscribe the *Assembly's* confession of faith, as the confession of his own, having found its advantage in it as to purity and peace; and the adversaries of that confession shall be attended to, when they say what they would have in its room, or shew it inconsistent with the sacred scriptures, in any of the *articles* they have a quarrel with. In the mean time, *No man having drank old wine, straitway desireth new; for he saith, the old is better.*

stop, where there is no common standard of agreement; but every one takes the liberty of holding, and holding forth, what he pleases.

Q. 13. *Upon what accounts is the form of sound words, drawn up by the assembly, in the confession of faith and catechisms, a proper test of orthodoxy and error?*

A. The form of sound words drawn up by the assembly is a proper test of orthodoxy and error, as they assert nothing but what they produce scripture for, and with the greatest strength and clearness prove from thence, appealing all along to the law and to the testimony, the words which the spirit of God teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, 1 Cor. ii. 13.

Q. 14. *But is not the bible or scripture, test sufficient, and the subscribing this, enough to denominate a man orthodox?*

A. 1st, If so, none among the various sects that call themselves christians, could be called or counted erroneous, as they all pretend to own the bible, and will not refuse to subscribe it, and yet retain their various and contrary sentiments when they have done: and so a man may be Protestant or Papist, Calvinist, or Arminian, and no discovery made of him.

2dly, The calling any to the assembly's confession of faith, we by no means take to be a calling them from the scripture, but a putting them to the trial in what sense they understand the scripture; and when any, whom there is reason to suspect of different sentiments, refuses to own that confession, and this in the important articles between the Orthodox and Arminians, he plainly confirms

confirms that suspicion: and if the doctrine of the *assembly* be consonant to the scripture, and so found and *orthodox*, 'tis obvious what he is who dissents from it, let him call or count himself what he will.

The Names of the Divines in the Assembly, at Westminster, authors of the larger and shorter catechisms and confession of faith.

DR. William Twiss, *Prolocutor.*

Dr. Cornel. Burges.

Mr. John White.

Dr. William Gouge.

Mr. Robert Harris, *B. D.*

Mr. Thomas Gataker, *B. D.*

Mr. Oliver Bowles, *B. D.*

Mr. Edward Reynolds.

Mr. Jeremiah Whitaker.

Mr. Anthony Tuckney, *B. D.*

Mr. John Arrowsmith.

Mr. Simeon Ashe.

Mr. Philip Nye.

Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs.

Mr. John Lightfoot.

Mr. Stanley Gower.

Mr. Richard Heyricke.

Mr. Thomas Case.

Dr. Thomas Temple.

Mr. George Gipps.

Mr. Thomas Carter.

Mr. Humphry Chambers, *B. D.*

Mr. Thomas Micklethwait.

I

Mr.

- Mr. John Gibbon.**
Mr. Christopher Tisdale.
Mr. John Philips.
Mr. George Walker, B. D.
Mr. Edmund Calamy, B. D.
Mr. Joseph Caryl.
Mr. Lazarus Seaman.
Mr. Henry Wilkinson, sen. B. D.
Mr. Richard Vines.
Mr. Nicholas Proffet.
Mr. Stephen Marshal, B. D.
Dr. Joshua Hoyle.
Mr. Thomas Wilson.
Mr. Thomas Hodges.
Mr. Thomas Bayly.
Mr. Francis Taylor.
Mr. Thomas Young.
Mr. Thomas Valentine, B. D.
Mr. William Greenhill.
Mr. Edward Peale.
Mr. John Green.
Mr. Andrew Pern.
Mr. Samuel de la Place.
Mr. John de la March.
Mr. John Drury.
Mr. Philip Delme.
Mr. Sydrack Sympson.
Mr. John Langley.
Mr. Richard Cleyton.
Mr. Arthur Salwey.
Mr. John Ley.
Mr. Charles Herle.
Mr. Herbert Palmer, B. D.
Mr. Daniel Cawdrey.

Mr.

- Mr.* Henry Painter, *B. D.*
Mr. Henry Scudder.
Mr. Thomas Hill, *B. D.*
Mr. William Reynor.
Mr. Thomas Goodwin, *B. D.*
Mr. William Spuritow.
Mr. Matthew Newcomen.
Mr. John Conant, *B. D.*
Mr. Edmund Staunton.
Mr. Anthony Burgeffe.
Mr. William Rathband.
Mr. Francis Cheynel.
Mr. Henry Wilkinson, *jun. B. D.*
Mr. Obediah Segewick, *B. D.*
Mr. Edward Corbet.
Mr. Samuel Gibson.
Mr. Thomas Coleman.
Mr. Theodore Backhurst.
Mr. William Carter.
Dr. Peter Smith.
Mr. John Maynard.
Mr. William Price.
Dr. John Wincop.
Mr. William Bridge.
Mr. Peter Sterry.
Mr. William Mew, *B. D.*
Mr. Benjamin Pickering.
Mr. John Strickland.
Mr. Humphry Hardwicke.
Mr. Jasper Hickes.
Mr. John Bond.
Mr. Henry Hall, *B. D.*
Mr. Thomas Ford.
Mr. Thomas Thorowgood.

Mr.

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Mr. Peter Clark.

Mr. William Good.

Mr. John Foxcroft.

Mr. John Ward.

Mr. Richard Byfield.

Mr. Francis Woodcock.

Mr. J. Jackson.

Mr. Alexander Henderson.

Mr. George Gillespie.

Mr. Samuel Rutherford.

Mr. Robert Baylie.

Mr. Henry Robrough.

Mr. Adoniram Byfield.

Mr. John Wallis.

This was such a *body* of men, as it would be hard to find any to exceed: they may be truly call'd the glory of the *last age*; and 'tis to be hop'd will be more admired and followed in times that are yet to come.

If any thing need be added to engage a regard to the *form of sound words composed by them*, 'tis the solemn manner in which they enter'd upon it: every member admitted to sit in the *assembly* making the following declaration, *viz.*

I A. B. do seriously promise and vow in the presence of Almighty God, that in this assembly whereof I am a member, I will maintain nothing in point of doctrine, but what I believe to be most agreeable to the word of God: nor in point of discipline, but what may be most for God's glory and the peace and good of the church.

And

And 'tis observable they all join'd till they had drawn up the *confession of faith* and *larger*, and *shorter catechisms*, which no incompetent judge * was wont to call *the best book in the world, next the bible*; and accordingly spent a great part of his life in studying, explaining, and applying it. *And blessed is that servant, who when his Lord cometh shall be found so doing.*

* The Revd. Mr. *Thomas Doolittle.*

F I N I S.

