

**The Kirk of Scotland Not Holy.**

[The following Extracts are taken from the Rev. Nicholas Gilbert's enquiry, whether "the Works of the True Church be applicable to Presbyterian Churches?"]

*Presbyterian.* I always understood that our first reformers were men of an irreproachable life, full of the Spirit of God, who had nothing in view but his glory, and the salvation of souls.

*Catholic.* It is with these fond, but deceitful notions, we have been amused from our infancy. But if you would look into the history of those times, you would soon be forced to acknowledge, that our first reformers were the most profligate characters in the world, men of whom any congregation or parish at present would be ashamed, and whom they would even banish from their society. But you will judge of it yourself from the following facts:—1. They began their work of the reformation by an act of revenge, and of the most shocking barbarity, viz, the murder of Beaton, archbishop of St. Andrews. I do not mean to excuse the excessive severities he had previously exercised against some of their friends. But if every Christian ought to forgive an enemy, and stifle in his heart the motions of anger, much more should those reformers have done it, who pretended to be under the immediate impulse of the Spirit of God, and to have been set up by him to reform his church. When, therefore, we see them transported with rage, break into the room of that old man, and, with savage fury, imbrue their hands in his blood, what can we infer from such anti-christian and barbarous conduct, but that they were rather under the influence of that hellish fiend, who was a murderer from the beginning. John viii. 44. Yet this is not all. 2. After the perpetration of this horrid deed, they exposed the mangled body of the Archbishop over the walls of the castle, wherein his palace stood, as a signal of their revolt; and being now joined by Knox himself, and several others of their party, and supplied from England with every thing that was necessary, they for many months stood in open rebellion against the regent of the kingdom, who in vain exhorted them to submit. Hear now how they went on. 3. Whilst they were yet in the castle, and the conditions on which they were to obtain their pardon were already agreed upon, Buchanan, a presbyterian writer, and himself a most zealous promoter of the reformation, informs us, that "they made a very bad use of this respite, which this temporary accommodation procured them; and that, notwithstanding the admonitions of Knox, they spent their time in whoredom and adultery, and all the vices of idleness."\* Yet this edifying assembly may be looked upon as the first presbyterian congregation or parish in Scotland, being a hundred and forty in number, with John Knox himself at their head. 4. But what were the terms of their accommodation with the regent? It was agreed, "that the government

should procure unto them a sufficient absolution from the Pope, and that themselves should give pledges for surrendering the castle, how soon the absolution was brought from Rome, and delivered unto them."† A manifest instance of their hypocrisy! For, as Mr. Guthrie observes, "We cannot imagine that a garrison, in which John Knox was an active leader, would have seriously accepted of an absolution from the Pope." 5. At last, after a long siege, during which we are told that the plague broke out among them as a punishment of their infamous excesses, being forced to surrender, they were all banished from the country. But they soon returned, and then continued to correspond with the enemy, to inflame the minds of the people against the government, and to raise insurrections. And after Mary, Queen of Scots, had returned from France, because she would not embrace the upstart religion, though she gave full liberty of conscience to her subjects, Knox and his fellow-Reformers preached up rebellion against her, though their lawful sovereign, loaded her with invectives and reproaches, both in their writings and from the pulpit; invented and circulated against her the blackest calumnies, and at last compelled her to flee into a neighbouring kingdom; where, instead of protection and comfort, she met with an aggravation of sorrows, and a cruel death. Such was shortly the true spirit and temper of our first Reformers, drawn, not from the accusations of their enemies, but from undeniable facts. And now, do you think, that murderers, fornicators, adulterers, conspirators, and hypocrites, were likely to be the men whom Almighty God would choose to reform his church? *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* Mat. vii. 16.

*P.* If the character you give here of John Knox, our chief Reformer, and the principal architect of our kirk, be true, it is difficult to imagine he has any thing but a seditious and turbulent spirit, and not such an instrument as the Almighty makes use of, in the ordinary ways of his Providence, for promoting his glory, and the salvation of mankind.

*C.* It is the character given him by all historians. Those of his party, no doubt, praise him for his piety, integrity, and indefatigable zeal. But you know these fine qualifications are of an equivocal nature. The Pharisees also had all the appearances of zeal, piety, and disinterestedness, and yet were no better than *whitened sepulchres*. It is from his actions, and the whole tenor of his life, his character must be drawn. "The glory of God, says Dr. Stuart, stimulated this Reformer to cruel devastations and outrages. Charity, moderation, the love of peace, patience, and humanity, were not in the number of his virtues. Papists, as well as popery, were the objects of his detestation; and though he had risen to eminence by exclaiming against the persecution of priests, he was himself a persecutor. His suspicions that the Queen was determined to re-establish the popish religion, were rooted and uniform; and

upon the most frivolous pretences, he was strenuous to break that chain of cordiality which ought to bind together the prince and the people. He inveighed against her government, and insulted her person with virulence and indecency. It flattered his pride to violate the duties of the subject, and to scatter sedition. His advices were pressed with heat, his admonitions were pronounced with anger; and whether his theme was a topic of polity or of faith, his knowledge appeared to be equally infallible. He wished to be considered as the organ of the divine will. Contradiction inflamed him with hostility, and his resentments took a deep and lasting foundation. The pride of success, the spirit of adulation, the awe with which he struck the gaping and ignorant multitude, inspired him with a superlative conception of his own merits. He mistook, for a prophetic impulse, the illusions of a heated fancy; and with an intemperate and giddy vanity, he ventured at times to penetrate into the future, and to reveal the mysteries of providence."\* So far Dr. Stuart. If this be not the complete character of the most egregious impostor, I am at a loss where to find it.

*P.* Was not George Buchanan a man of great parts and irreproachable life; in short, one who reflected great honour upon our Reformation?

*C.* The superiority of his literary talents cannot be questioned. But, says Dr. Stuart, "while his genius and ability adorned the time in which he lived, and must draw to him the admiration of the most distant posterity; it is not to be forgotten that his political conduct was disgraceful to the greatest degree, and must excite its regrets, and provoke its indignation. His zeal for the Earl of Murray overturned altogether his allegiance as a subject, and his integrity as a man. His activity against Mary in the conferences in England was a strain of the most shameless corruption; and the virulence with which he endeavoured to defame her by his writings was most audacious and criminal. They involve the charge of ingratitude, rebellion, and perjury."† "Mary had invited him to Scotland with a view that he should take the charge of the education of her son; and till James should be of a proper age to be chief magistrate, she appointed him in the university of St. Leonard's college, and St. Leonard's college in St. Andrews. Her aim a year or two to stop there; she granted him a year's pension of five hundred pounds."‡ "The man, who, with the most premeditated malice, persecuted her throughout her life; and by his forgeries and detestable falsehoods, contributed more than any other in defaming her character, and bringing her at last to the scaffold. He wrote against her a work, entitled, *The Detection of Mary, doings*, wherein, says Dr. Stuart, "in the place of information and truth, he substitutes a most poisonous facility of assertion, and the most malignant rancour. An admirable but pernicious consequence, misrepresentations, and the business of calumny, characterize

his work; and it remains an illustrious monument of the wickedness of faction, and the prostitution of wit."\* "It was by his aid that those letters were framed, which the regent (Murray) and his cabal were to impute to Mary, and by the operation of which they thought finally to accomplish her ruin;† as in them they represented her to the public as an infamous adulteress, and the murderer of her husband. For he was "an original genius in lying," according to the character given him by Whitaker, in his *Vindication of Mary*. "He felt his mind impregnated with a peculiar portion of that spirit of falsehood, which is so largely possessed by the great father of lies, and which he so liberally communicates to some of his chosen children. And he exerted this spirit," both in his *detection* of Mary's doings, and in the *letters* just alluded to, "with the grand view, which he uniformly pursued in both, that of abusing Mary, his patroness and benefactress; of branding her forehead with the hottest iron of infamy which his understanding could provide, and of breaking down all the fences and guards of truth, in the eagerness of his knavery against her. But Mary herself has told us a circumstance concerning him, that serves sufficiently to account for his flagitious conduct. Buchanan, she said, *is known to be a lewd man, and an Atheist*. He was one of those wretched men, therefore, who suffer their passions to beguile their understandings; who plunge into scepticism to escape from sensibility; who destroy the tone of their minds, while they are blunting the force of their feelings; and at last become devoid equally of principle and of shame, and capable of any operation of falsehood, Thus far Mr. Whitaker in *villainy*."

*P.* What kind of man was that Earl of Murray, who seems to have been the principal support of our kirk when she was yet to struggle against the combined efforts of her enemies?

*C.* Like Knox, Buchanan, and indeed all the rest of our Reformers, he was an apostate from the church of Rome. He had been a clergyman, under the name of the Prior of St. Andrews. But "when the Reformation broke out in all its wildness and strength, he put on," says Whitaker, "the sanctified air of a Reformer; he wrapped himself up in a long cloak of puritanism, he attached all the popular leaders among the (reformed) clergy to him, and he prepared to make them his useful steps to the throne."§ For he had formed the ambitious and criminal project of dethroning Mary; who was his sister, being himself a bastard to James V. "He had the address to make the most cunning and most ambitious of his contemporaries to be subservient to his cunning; to make them commit the enormities themselves, which were necessary to his purposes; and even to dip their hands in murder, that he might enjoy the sovereignty. But he displayed an address still greater than this. Though he had not one principle of religion within him, though he had not one grain of honour in his soul, and though he was guilty of those more monstrous crimes, against which God has peculiarly denounc-

\* Guthrie's Hist. of Scot. V. p. 397. † Ibid; p. 306. \* I. p. 415. † I. p. 289. ‡ Mary Q. of Scots Vindicated, II. p. 82. § Hist. of Scot. I. 24.