

will receive, I am persuaded, as it merits, your most patient, conscientious, and impartial consideration. In this view, I feel happy that the dispute is now submitted to the arbitration of Brethren, in whom I feel a most perfect confidence, and of whom, I will say, in the sincerity of my heart, that I doubt not, impartial justice will be the sole rule and guide of their judgment; and impartial truth the sole end and aim of their investigation, in this interesting and momentous question. But this is not the view in which I am most desirous, or indeed feel it necessary, to present it to your consideration. There is, it appears to me, another view, which, if I mistake not, is of still greater importance. The decision of this question will prove, whether proceedings the most disorderly, in violation of the fundamental laws of our church, and subversive indeed of all government whatever; and acts of outrage and indecency are to be perpetrated, within our establishment and by persons professing obedience to its laws, with impunity; and our venerable church, with her goodly institutions, thereby brought into contempt and abasement. You have not only to investigate the right and wrong in the present question; but, what is even more, to assert with unflinching vigour and determination, the authority of our church, and to enforce obedience to her laws; and this duty, at all times so important, is doubly so at the present early stage of our Ecclesiastical Institutions, in order to prove that none who, in the spirit of faction or of selfish ambition and sordid avarice, dare to violate and infringe her laws, and still more to bid defiance to her authority, shall escape due censure and punishment. In the case now submitted, the constitution and law of our church will afford, so far as it is practicable to apply them, the only proper and safe course to a righteous decision; and how important it is, especially under existing circumstances, to make us feel that, next to the authority of scripture itself, we are amenable to this law, it is scarce necessary for me to remark. But I trust I shall meet with due indulgence, if I beg leave respectfully to suggest that those universal forms and maxims, which the experience of mankind in the lapse of ages has proved indispensibly requisite, to guide the judgment, the learning, the talents, and the genius of even the wisest and the best of men, can never be departed from, without the most imminent hazard of committing serious errors, and of being betrayed into perplexity, if not injustice. Need I say that these principles are to be found embodied in our civil and ecclesiastical law? By these principles you will, I doubt not, be guided in the present case; and, in the course and order of your proceedings, will adhere to the forms of our church courts, so far as may be practicable; and, having been invested by the synod, in this instance, with the powers and functions of a Presbytery, you will, I humbly conceive, fulfil the intentions of that venerable body, by acting in conformity with the salutary rules by which a Presbytery would and must have governed themselves in the present case. By acting in this capacity, you will fulfil your duty, in a manner

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