

heaven." (chap. 23. § 3.) "The keys of the kingdom of heaven" include all the power exercised in the church, under Christ, its sole king; not only that which is ordinarily exercised in the government of particular congregations and in censuring offenders, (chap. 30.) but also the power "ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his church, to receive complaints in cases of mal-administration, and authoritatively to determine the same." (chap. 31. § 3.) The Confession teaches that magistrates cannot warrantably assume to themselves the power of doing these things, and what it adds must be understood in a consistency with this declaration. It is true, that it allots to the magistrate a care of religion, and asserts that "he hath authority, and it is his duty to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church," &c. But is there no order which he can take for having these things done by the persons and in the way which they ought to be done, without taking the doing of them into his hand, and thus assuming what does not belong to him? The Confession asserts that there is, and proceeds to say: "For the better effecting whereof* he hath power to call synods." And is there any good reason for absolutely denying him this power? When "the unity and peace of the church" are broken and endangered in any country, "the truth of God" is depraved, "blasphemies and heresies of almost every kind are spreading," "corruption and abuses in worship" are abounding, and when the church being disorganized, there is no general authority of an ecclesiastical kind to use means for remedying these evils, may not the civil government of that country warrantably call a synod for that purpose? When the state of the nation, as well as of the church, may be convulsed, and its convulsions may be in a great degree owing to religious disorders, is it not a high duty incumbent on him to take such a step, provided he finds it practicable and advisable? Was not this the state of matters in England when the Westminster Assembly met? Was not the state of matters similar in many respects at the Revolution in Scotland? And may not a crisis of the same kind yet recur? Was there any rational ground to think, at the period of the Westminster Assembly, that such a synod would have met, or, supposing it somehow to have been collected, that it could have continued together until it had finished its business, if it had not been convulsed, maintained, and protected by the Parliament of England? Do many of those who deny the power in question reflect, that they owe those books which they still, in one degree or another, own as the subordinate standards of their ecclesiastical communion, to a synod which was thus convoked? Do they reflect, that by means of them the interests of religion have been promoted to an incalculable degree, "unity and peace preserved in the church, &c. from the period of their compilation down to the present day, in Scotland, in England, in Ireland, and in America? Or, recollecting these things, are they prepared to take the pen and insert their absolute veto—"The civil magistrate—for the better effecting thereof, hath" not "power to call synods?" At the same time it may be observed here, on the former objection, that it is not asserted, that the magistrate may exercise this power on all occasions and in all circumstances, or whenever there are evils of a religious kind to correct. It is sufficient that there may be times and circumstances in which he may warrantably exert this power. It is true that the Confession, in another place, (chap. 31. § 2.) is not sufficiently full and explicit in declar-

* "For the better government and further edification of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called Synods or Councils:" i. e. for attaining the end better than can be accomplished in smaller meetings of church officers. (Conf. chap. 31.)

ing the intrinsic right of the church to convocate synods. But this defect was supplied by the Act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland receiving and approving of the Confession; * and in the Formula used in the Secession from the beginning an approbation of the Confession is required "as received" by that Act of Assembly.

After stating that the magistrate has power to call synods, it is added, "to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them, be according to the mind of God." Nor to insist here, that these words ought, in fair construction, to be understood of such synods as have been convoked by the magistrate, what reasonable objection can be made to his being present? May he not claim a right to be present at any public meeting within his dominions? May he not be present in a synod to witness their proceedings, to preserve their external peace, to redress their grievances, or (why not?) to receive their advice or admonitions? But, if it be supposed that his presence is necessary to give validity to their proceedings, and that he sits as preses of their meeting, or as director of their deliberations and votes, I shall only say that the words of the Confession give not the slightest countenance to such claims, which are utterly inconsistent with the common principles of Presbyterians, and in particular with the well-known and avowed principles of the Church of Scotland. A similar answer may be given to the objection against the last clause of the paragraph. May not any Christian whatever his station be, "provide that whatsoever is transacted," even in synods, "be according to the mind of God?" If the legislature or government of a nation have a special care about religion, or if there is any particular duty at all which they have to discharge respecting it, and particularly if they have power in any case to call synods, must it not in a special manner be incumbent on them to see to this? Nor does this imply that they are in possession of any ecclesiastical powers, or that they pass a public judgment on true and false religion. Their private judgment is sufficient to regulate them in their public managements in this as well as on many other subjects, about which they exercise their authority, without sustaining themselves as the proper judges of them, as in the case of many arts, sciences, &c. which they patronize and encourage. Must not Christian rulers, judges, and magistrates provide that "whatsoever is transacted" by themselves, "be according to the mind of God?" Is it not highly fit that they should be satisfied, and that they should by every proper means provide that the determinations of synods be according to the mind of God, if they are afterwards to legalize them, or if they are to use their authority for removing all external obstructions out of the way of their being carried into effect; both of which they may do, without imposing them on the consciences of their subjects? And, in fine, are there not various ways in which they may provide as here stated, without assuming a power foreign to their office, or intruding on the proper business of synods, or ecclesiastical courts? But, if it be supposed that the magistrate, as the proper judge in such matters, is to controul the deliberations of the ecclesiastical assembly, to prescribe and dictate to them what their decisions shall be, or that, when they have deliberated and decided, he may receive appeals from their decisions, or may bring the whole before his tribunal, and review, alter, and reverse their sentences, I have only to say, as formerly, that the words of the Confession give not the slightest countenance to such claims, which are utterly inconsistent with the common principles of Presbyterians, and in particular with the well-known and avowed principles and contendings of the Church of Scotland.

* See Act of Assembly, prefixed to all our copies of the Confession of Faith. Agreeably to this Act was the Confession ratified by the Parliament of Scotland.

But though I consider these objections as destitute of a solid foundation, yet, as the construction on which they proceed has often been put on the passages to which they refer, I, for my part, can see no good reason why an explanation should not be given of these passages, or of the doctrine contained in them, with the view of preventing all misconception of the sentiments of those who approve of the Confession; provided the two following things are attended to. In the first place, that this declaration do not fix on the Confession the obnoxious sentiments which are disclaimed. And, in the second place, that it do not, under the cover of general and ambiguous expressions, invalidate or set aside the general doctrine respecting the exercise of civil authority about religion which is recognized in the Westminster Confession, and in those of all Protestant Churches. Explanations of this kind were given in the early papers of the Secession, which are sufficient to shew that they entertained no principles favourable to persecution or injurious to the liberties and independence of the church, and that they did not view the Confession as containing such principles*.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Extracts from an Address by J. Durie, Esq., Bytown, will appear in our next. We are glad that the subject of ministerial support is beginning to attract more general notice. The arguments so forcibly expressed by Mr. D. have over and over again been urged in behalf of some general scheme of Sustentation. When these arguments are appreciated and the Church awakened to her duty and interest, our ministers will not be left to pine on a wretched pittance for want of such a scheme.

We again repeat that communications should be in our hands before the 20th of the month, in order to their appearing in the following Record.

Several communications came to hand too late for this number.

The Record.

KNOX'S COLLEGE.

We make yet another appeal on behalf of our THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE. A few congregations have already responded to the call addressed to them through the pages of the *Record* and otherwise, and have forwarded, in part at least, their annual contributions. Others have promised early attention to the subject. We are very unwilling to appear urgent, and still less would we be understood as indicating any distrust in promises made, we presume, in good faith. But, as the funds in hand are very far from meeting the obligations of the Treasurer, and as it has been suggested that, in many parts of the Province, the nature and importance of our Theological Institution are very imperfectly understood, we submit the following statement to such as may have been less conversant with the history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, or with the benefits already derived by it from Knox's College; in the hope that the claims of the latter to a liberal and cordial support, may commend themselves to the understandings and consciences of all the friends of

* Act and Testimony, apud Display, i. 156-159. and Answer to Nairn, ibid. p. 311-314.