

and not to every other Protestant church in christendom. Each of these Churches will confess that they have a distinct government in things sacred; and though there are various modes of fixing the line of demarcation, yet each will affirm that there is a line of demarcation between the civil and ecclesiastical powers—a department which one claims as its own, and with which the other cannot interfere. But the war-cry of our adversaries—the law of the land—which has been resounded in our ears from all quarters, and has been lately repeated—I am sorry, but not surprized, to observe—by Sir Robert Peel—would swallow up and confound all these distinctions—would efface the line of demarcation by trampling it under foot, and would not leave one inch of that peculiar territory on which the government of the church alone can stand. This appears to me to be the point of the misconception and misunderstanding which exists between the two parties. The law of the land carries all before it. We say so too; but then we add the qualification, that it is so only in matters of civil effect, this is either not listened to, or regarded as a mere quibble and cobweb argument. The distinct government of the church is an idle fancy under such a regulation as this; and though it has had a place on the statute book for the last 150 years, yet just because of one decision in the *Auchterarder* case, it is now to be held as an airy nothing and a dream. Yet these legalists, or law-men, if pressed with the possible case of an admission, by the Civil Courts to the communion table, would recoil and escape from the supposition—not however, by denying the power or the right of the secular authority, but by denying that such a case could happen, or by telling us that that would never do (hear). At this rate the liberties of the church depend upon a mere volition—upon an understanding, mistaken though it be—or, in other words, upon a contingency in which all practical securities for our independence are taken away. I do not sympathise in the faith of those people who tell us that one contingency or another will never happen. It is astonishing when once a course of deviation from right conduct has been entered upon, to find how soon both actors and spectators get reconciled to the boldest and farthest stretches of power—how much farther than either at first had imagined it possible. At the beginning of this controversy, for example, the interdict in the *Lethendy* case was regarded as an act unprecedented since the days of William and Mary—it excited universal surprise, and a unanimous Commission testified against it. But now we find that two hundred and sixty declarationists can be found to hold up their faces for it (hear). Then came the interdict not against the actings of a Presbytery, but against the actings of the people; and though all hands were raised in astonishment on account of it at first, yet men learned to swallow it. Then came the inter-

dict against preaching, in which the church acquiesced at first without a murmur, because when we came to examine into its terms, we found that it only tied us down from the use of the church, and the churchyard, and the school, and finally the bell, all of which being of the genius civil, and consequently within the compass of the civil jurisdiction, we at once deferred to the decision. But then after every one thought the Court of Session had done its uttermost, there came forth what is called the extended interdict, under which we are forbidden to preach in the district of Strathbogie at all, and the ministers of the church of Scotland a body acting under the authority of the General Assembly, are debarred from preaching in a whole country side, where Seceders, Unitarians, Socialists, and the apostles of infidelity and sedition may in this land—(loud cheers)—in which all people of the classes I have enumerated, may, in this land of unbounded toleration take their full swing. When this last interdict came forth, I believe that the strictest legalist in the Parliament House was struck and thrown aback, as by a momentary glare of conviction, that the matter had now gone too far, and it was said that the instigators of this violent outrage meant it as an experiment, and that they did not intend to follow it out or to act upon it. However this may be, the sensation has gone off, the interdict has been renewed; and whether or not they mean to act upon it, we, the church and the ministers of the church, have no choice but to act against it (applause). We must stand out against this series of aggressions, thus rising in magnitude one above the other, else the innermost recesses of the sanctuary will be opened to the invader and trampled under foot. I know the obloquy which will be heaped upon us. I have heard the odious names which will be given to us for this resistance; and I am prepared for them. If not an impartial public, at least an impartial posterity, will tell whether we are rebels or they are persecutors (loud applause). Here I may say one word to those who express the hope, and I observe that Sir Robert Peel is among the number (laughter), that we will yet give up our personal feelings and do otherwise than this. To what personal feelings he refers, he does not specify—whether it be the feeling of irritation or of false honor—the pride of men who have committed themselves, and gone too far to retract without shame and degradation. If so, never was an appeal made wider of its object. These personal feelings have no existence with us, or if they have, it is in such a slight degree that they are altogether overborne by principles of a depth, and height, and breadth, and length, sufficient to engross and occupy the whole man. The principles—whether our adversaries comprehend them or not—which are the only moving forces that have told, and still tell, upon the Assembly, are the full security of our spiritual independence