

WILLIAM WILSON  
(1690-1741):  
CHURCHMAN AND THEOLOGIAN

A Thesis  
Presented To  
The Faculty of Divinity  
University of Edinburgh  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for  
A  
Doctor of Philosophy Degree



George William Carson, A. B., M. A., B. D., Th. M.

1961

# ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Name of Candidate GEORGE WILLIAM CARSON

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Degree Doctor of Philosophy

Date

May 25, 1961

Title of Thesis WILLIAM WILSON (1690 - 1741):

Churchman and Theologian

The purpose of this biography, as stated in the Preface, is to endeavor to pay tribute to one who, in a period of severe storm, witnessed for the truth as he understood the truth, and utilized his gifts, experiences, and labors in order that God might "have all the glory".

Our subject appeared upon the stage of history at the close of an explosive century - the 17th. Although he was not born until two years following the Revolution, yet the effects of this - and other events - served to mould his life, his teaching, his ministry. The Introduction sets forth the condition of the Church and State at the time of his birth.

Your author leans heavily upon Andrew Ferrier and John Eadie for biographical data. But Wilson's ministry is mentioned in a number of other publications, as a close examination of the Bibliography will reveal.

Although the writings of the Pastor of Perth manifest deep theological convictions, he is afforded a niche among his colleagues of the Scottish Church because of his quality of leadership. He, more than any of his fellow Seceders, was best able to frame cogently and succinctly, the arguments and principles of the Secession Movement. Many of these principles find their roots in the devotional and academic disciplines which he formulated at the outset of his commitment to the ministry. His boundless zeal and unwearied efforts as a servant of Christ - in the Established Church and in the Secession Church - are treated in the three chapters relating to his life.

The characteristics which give Wilson a noteworthy position among his Brethren are these: a power of calm, clear reasoning; an eminent, judicial cast of mind; his limitless persistency in application. These qualities impart a marked value to his contribution to Secession literature, which that portion of the Thesis treating his Churchmanship seeks to express.

Wilson was the pen of the Seceders. As an Apologist he set his writings over against those of his chief antagonist - John Currie of Kinglassie. This literary controversy labels Wilson as a leading exponent of the Secession cause, and places his writings among the historic documents of the Church.





## Trinity United Presbyterian Church

Eighth Avenue and Eleventh Street  
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania

May 18, 1961

To My Examiners:

This Thesis, which was submitted in 1952, was returned in November of the same year with the following comments:

Unnecessarily long.

The original presentation has been reduced by some 200 pages, thus allowing a more judicious selection of materials. Quotations have been reduced; the whole subject has been tightened up.

The need of independent critical judgment.

My text has been re-written with this in mind, thus giving greater focus to the issues involved.

Obvious but curious typing errors.

Some quotations contain oddly framed words copied in the spelling of the day. Undoubtedly, there are yet some undiscovered spelling errors which my repeated readings have failed to detect.

While giving heed to the required changes, I have been constantly encouraged by the commendation given in 1952 for the "extensive investigation"; the "exhaustive research"; and the "thorough study". I trust that while these have been preserved, the other areas have been brought into harmony with the University standards.

Respectfully submitted,

Address: 109 Rama Road  
Gravenhurst  
Beaver Falls, Pa.

George W. Carson

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE . . . . .	i - ii
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1 - 24
I YEARS OF PREPARATION (1690-1713) . . . . .	1 - 28
II MINISTER OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH (1713-1733) . . . . .	29 - 58
III YEARS AS A SECESSION MINISTER (1733-1741) . . . . .	59 - 95
IV WILSON AS PREACHER AND TEACHER . . . . .	96 - 120
V WILSON'S EARLY CHURCHMANSHIP . . . . .	121 - 141
VI WILSON'S LATER CHURCHMANSHIP . . . . .	142 - 167
VII WILSON AS AN APOLOGIST . . . . .	168 - 215
VIII SOURCES OF WILSON'S THEOLOGY . . . . .	216 - 227
IX CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE . . . . .	228 - 245
APPENDIX . . . . .	1 - 28
BIBLIOGRAPHY .	

PREFACE



## PREFACE

The author's first acquaintance with William Wilson of Perth was given him in 1947 by Professor Hugh Watt, when the latter was Principal of New College, Edinburgh. His remarks about this man so challenged my thinking that I accepted the task with eagerness and expectation. The copy which I submitted in 1952 was returned with two major criticisms: - "unnecessarily long" and "too little criticism". In the interim of eight years I have undertaken a liberal reduction of the Thesis; have looked upon Wilson and his friends with a keener critical judgment; and have sought to bring into sharper focus the points at issue. At no time during my study, research, and revision - spanning more than thirteen years - have I been disappointed with my labors. They have been rewarding to my knowledge of my forbears.

To offer a Thesis under the proposed title is, in many respects, a task in itself. Even among his own descendants there are few particulars preserved for the student of history. It is hoped that the facts which are offered in this Thesis will prove gratifying to many. The high estimates which have been placed by others upon Wilson's worth, and the outstanding ideas expressed concerning him, all seek for recognition in this work.

In order to understand fully Wilson and the measures

for which he stood, it is necessary to speak about the state of the Scottish Church before and in his time. That will comprise the bulk of the Introductory Chapter. Due to the scarcity of biographical materials, we are forced to depend largely upon Andrew Ferrier's "Memoirs", and John Eadie's "United Presbyterian Fathers". A study of Wilson as a "Churchman" is all the more important and the interest further heightened when he is regarded as Truth's defender "by the pen...the pulpit...and the chair." Wilson - though a theologian in his own right - can in no way be compared to Rutherford or Brown of Wamphray, but from his sermons and other writings we find that Theology need not always be set down in a systematized form. The bulk of his theology, however, finds root in three major sources: Calvinism, The Marrow of Modern Divinity, and the Confession of Faith - each of which will reveal itself in his life and teachings.

In drawing the work to a close, I have endeavored to make this character stand out in such a way that the influence manifested two centuries ago may serve as an inspiration to all who take this work in hand.

## INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

Between the years 1639 and 1690 there occurred a series of the most memorable events in Scottish History. During that time "Charles I died upon the scaffold; our government passed through every grade of change from the open republicanism to the most uncontrolled despotism - there was the despotism of the army; the despotism of Cromwell. It was an era of the war-struggle for supremacy between Protestant episcopacy, Protestant dissent, and popery, in which James II was ejected from the throne and a new dynasty was admitted; All which events were the consequence of the great principle that came then to be decided - whether the will and interests of the people or of the king, are to be most consulted in the conduct of our National affairs."<sup>1</sup>

The new state of affairs which had been brought about in Scotland by the Assembly at Glasgow did not meet with the keenest approval and disposition of Charles. Viewed in the light in which he stood, it was an open challenge by the Scottish Covenanting group against the throne. The presumptive air with which the King had assumed autocratic powers had so aroused the anger of the English Parliamentarians that they united with the Covenanters in the Solemn League and Covenant.

---

1. Burnet, Bishop, History of His Own Time, Vol. I, p. iii, (Introduction).

This document maintained the rights and privileges of Parliament and visioned the establishment of Presbyterianism in England, as well as Scotland. It "speaks as a manifesto of the three nations of Scotland, England, and Ireland binding each to preserve the Church of Scotland and assimilate to it religion in England and Ireland; to extirpate likewise all forms of heresy, including Popery and Prelacy; to maintain the rights of Parliament and the King...and preserve...an attitude of mutual peace and defence."<sup>2</sup>

The initiation of the Scots into English domestic affairs resulted in the adoption of a policy by the King which had as its motive a complete uniformity between the churches of England and Scotland. "His father had regarded the form of Church government as a thing in itself unimportant."<sup>3</sup> It ought to harmonize with civil government, he declared, and episcopacy agreed best with absolute monarchy. Charles, however, believed in a divine right of Episcopacy, and "he was obsessed by that passion for complete uniformity which has so often worked mischief in human affairs."<sup>4</sup> The Presbyterians of Scotland, moreover, were equally confirmed in their belief of the divine right of Presbytery.

In July, 1643, the English Parliament "in consideration

---

2. MacKenzie, Agnes Mure, The Kingdom of Scotland, p.213.

3. Rait, Robert S., The History of Scotland, (Home University Library), p. 158.

4. Rait, op. cit., p. 159.

of the lameness of religion, both in doctrine and government, thought fitt to convene the assembly of divines at Westminster by whose advice they resolved to reform the Church. They called men of all persuasions, some Episcopal, some Erastian, and thither also they invited the General Assembly to send their commissioners for assistance. The Assembly, to further so good a work, sent Mr. Alexander Henderson, eminent for his grave prudence; Mr. Samuel Rutherford, for his heavenly gifts; Mr. George Gillespie, that eminent disputant; Mr. Robert Bailie, a man for communications; and Lord Maitland, afterwards Earle and Duke of Lauderdale, a man of excellent parts, had they been blessed and improven, but as then his reputation was entire. The Assembly sat diverse years, and ended rather by a consumption than a dissolution; they agreed upon an excellent confession of faith, and two catechisms, with full harmony till they came to the government, where they were both constrained to omit the decision of the great question concerning the power of congregational eldership, forbearing for lack of harmony to determine the great question, Whether a single congregation may excommunicate or not? and when they came to define the dependance of congregations upon presbyteries as subordinate thereto, they met with the famous dissent of the seven independent brethren, so renowned for learning and piety."<sup>5</sup> Under the Moderatorship of Dr. Twisse, the Assembly

---

5. Kirkton, John, The Secret and True History of the Church of Scotland, pp. 41-42.



arrived eventually at the adoption of those great documents to which Wilson attributed so much - the Directory for Public Worship, the Form of Government, the Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

In the meantime, internal war had broken out. An army of Scots was dispatched to the South to battle on the side of Parliament, while in Scotland Montrose exerted himself beyond measure to propagate the cause of the King, until he came to his end at Philliphaugh. Charles surrendered to the Scots in May, 1646, and they in turn handed him over to the leaders of the Parliamentary party.<sup>6</sup>

The Scots might have let the King escape to return with what foreign aid he could, but they chose to yield up their Sovereign with the understanding that a portion of that which was due them would be paid. "They were in a difficult position, and it is not a pretty story, but it is more just to say that the English bought him than that the Scots sold him. The agreement included a stipulation that no harm should come to the royal person."<sup>7</sup> "Had Charles complied with their conditions concerning Presbyterianism, the Scots would gladly have forfeited the arrears of the English payments and defied the English Parliament and the English Army. Their King was sold, indeed, but it was for a different price, and one which was never paid:

---

6. Rait, HCS, op. cit., p. 226.

7. Ibid.

the enforcement, urged by some on prudential, and others on mystical grounds, of an alien Church polity which was rapidly becoming anathema to the English nation.<sup>8</sup>"

On January 30, 1649, Charles was executed by the English Independents. "He was a tragic figure because he was born into times which he could not understand and to a task which was too hard for him."<sup>9</sup> If twelve thousand volumes were written in his praise, it would still remain an undeniable fact, that Charles reigned unlawfully and despotically for twelve years. He seized his subject's goods and money at his own pleasure. He punished according to his unbridled will all who ventured to oppose him. "It is a fashion with some to think that this man's career was cut short; but I must say myself, that I think he ran a pretty long one."<sup>10</sup>

When the son of Charles made his appearance in the country, the royal sentiment was manifest in great rejoicing. It was late at night when the news of his landing (June 26, 1650), reached the ears of the Estates of Parliament, sitting at Edinburgh. "All synes of joy wer manifested...by setting furth bailfyres, ringing of bellis, sounding of trumpettis, dancing almost all that night throw the streitis. The pure kaill wyfes at the Trone sacrificed their mandis and creillis, and

---

8. Buchan, John, Montrose, p. 276.

9. Buchan, John, Oliver Cromwell, p. 267.

10. Dickens, Charles, A Child's History of England, (Collin's Classical Edition). pp. 404-405.

the verie stooles thai sat upone to the fyre."<sup>11</sup>

Charles II was declared to be King, and at Scone, on January 1, 1651, his coronation was held, but not until he had affixed his name to the Scottish Covenants. Many contemporaries were more than pleased with the proceedings. "We have done what I earnestly desyred and long expected, crowned our noble King with all the solemnities, so peaceable and magnificent-<sup>12</sup> lie as if no enemy had been among us. This is of God."

By the use of rigid acts, Protector Cromwell soon had the land of Scotland as much in his control as he had mastery below the Tweed. He met and defeated the King at Worcester on September 3, 1651, and for the next seven years he wielded a more despotic hand than any ruler before him. Sad as the scene was, these years were by no means empty and fruitless from a spiritual standpoint. Kirkton declares that more souls found Christ in that short time than in any season since the Reformation, "though of treeples its duration". Never had there been such purity and plenty of the means of grace. People were diligent in their spiritual exercises. Great multitudes of worshippers listened to the preaching of dozens of ministers. "And the people continued, as it were, in a sort of trance, for three dayes at least,...a solemnity unknown to the rest of the world ...Also it was found, error made no great progress in all of

---

11. Nicoll, John, Scottish Diaries and Memoirs, pp. 147-148.

12. Baillie, Robert, Letters and Journals, Vol.I, p.170.



Scotland, the genius of the people being neither curious nor easily changed as truly religion was at that time in very good case, and the Lord present in Scotland, though in a cloud."<sup>13</sup>

But the autocracy did not endure for long, for the Scots were soon looking for the sceptre of monarchy. It was with a good feeling of relief and genuine satisfaction, therefore, that these people heralded the Restoration of 1660. This event was looked upon as the most "prodigious act of Providence" since the Red Sea.<sup>14</sup> In Edinburgh, the scenes of rejoicing exceeded those of ten years before when Charles had come to the throne. No sooner was the proclamation given at the Mercat Cross, May 14, 1660, than the solemnities began - bells, fires, trumpets, cannons - and all other tokens of joy to show their preference for their King. "Quhairat, also, their was much wyne spent, the spoutes of the croce rying and venting out abundance; placed thair for that end; and the magistrates and councell of the toun being present, drinking the King's helth, and breaking numberis of glasses."<sup>15</sup>

The purpose of this merriment is not far below the surface. Republicanism was another word for alien domination to the average Scotsman. It was not oppressive or coercive, but it was "galling to the national spirit." Their great desire -

---

13. Kirkton, STHCS, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

14. Clarendon, Earl, History of the Rebellion, VI, p.691.

15. Nicoll, SDM, op. cit., p. 181.

national independence - appeared to be bound up within monarchical rule, and to them, the return of the King at this time implied the recovery of independency in Scotland. The end result of this desire, namely, that the independence was to be nominal only, did not show itself to the Scots until Charles II had taken his place upon the throne.

For the most part, all of Scotland was pleased to welcome the new sovereign, but Charles II soon brought an end to their joy, Little did the people realize that the bells that clanged their welcome from the steeples of Edinburgh were ringing in years of deep misery and humiliation. "The ablest, least scrupulous, and most popular of the Stewarts, he began to reign with two objects: the emancipation of the crown from control as far as possible, and the emancipation of the Roman Catholics from their position of political inferiority; but the pursuit of both objects was strictly conditioned by a determination not to embark on his travels again."<sup>16</sup>

Immediately he endeavored to re-introduce Episcopacy upon the life of the Scottish Church without giving any regard to his word he had made. He revoked the Covenants, and declared that anyone swearing allegiance to them would be charged with treason. He appointed bishops, and the Episcopal secession was handed on, as in 1610, by England, to which four Scottish presbyters repaired to receive consecration at the hands of the

---

16. Pollard, Albert F., History of England, p. 133.

English bishops. The King was resolute for bishops, notwithstanding his oath "to the contrair." He knew that his courts would never be reproved by them, and they had made the first article of their Catechism: "non-resistance". "They were the best tools for tyrannie in the world; for, doe the King what he would, their daily instruction was, kings could doe no wrong, and, that none could put forth a hand against the Lord's anointed and be innocent."<sup>17</sup>

Charles knew he could depend upon the votes of the Episcopalian brethren in Parliament, regardless what he desired. He believed they would plant ministers in the Scottish Kirks who would instil into the minds of the people principles of loyalty until they had made them slaves and then beggars. All of them were for the absolute power of the King. They taught the people that the Monarch was lord of all their goods without the consent of Parliament. Thus, the Episcopal followers "were so much the darling of our King, that James was wont to say: No bishops, no King; so bishops the King would have at any rate."<sup>18</sup>

We come now to one of the blackest periods in Scottish Church history. No period of modern history for so long a time can compare for wickedness of government. By the most ruthless methods, Charles became determined to repress all opposition to

---

17. Kirkton, STHCS, op. cit., pp. 130-132.

18. Ibid.



his policies. The Scottish Church must become subservient to his desires, and he was prepared to go to any end to accomplish his goal. Men of the most depraved character were accepted into his staff. He bestowed his grace and favor upon such commissioners and agents who could scarcely be called human beings. Only by a prince who was incapable of conceiving what duties actually devolved upon his office could such commands have been allowed and executed by a succession of satraps. "Between Middleton, the soldier of fortune; Rothes, the illiterate debauchee; and Lauderdale, the brutal cynic and voluptuary, it would be most difficult to say which was most unfit to govern a serious people."<sup>19</sup> Few in Scotland would have anything to do with the moderate form of episcopacy which was erected. Many withstood this intrusion to the death. In 1660, some of the leading pastors issued a paper in which they asserted "episcopacy and other forms are man's devices, but presbyterial government is a divine ordinance". Many conceived Episcopacy to be an "Appian Way" to Rome, and Scotland's hatred for the Holy See was beyond expression.

In 1661 the Estates of Scotland passed the Recissory Act, which restored the status quo of 1633, and the labors of all the Parliaments which sat since that time were declared to be null and void. Even the sessions over which Charles himself had presided - 1650-1651 - were included in this sweeping act.

---

19. Hume, David, Surveys of Scottish History, pp. 69-70.

The King was proclaimed "Supreme Governor of his Kingdom over all persons and in all causes". This Act was followed by another, in 1662, declaring that ministers refusing to accept Episcopacy must forfeit their charges. No fewer than three hundred - mostly from South-West Scotland - left their parishes in the hands of raw curates, most of whom were lamentably ignorant, and some were openly vicious. "The new incumbents, who were put in the places of the ejected ministers, were generally mean and despicable in all respects. They were the worst preachers I ever heard; they were ignorant to a reproach. They were a disgrace to their orders, and were indeed the dregs and refuse of the northern parts. Those who rose above contempt or scandal were men of such violent tempers, that they were as much hated as the others were despised."<sup>20</sup>

Another reports it after this manner: "They were mostly young men from the northern shires, raw, and without any stock of reading or gifts; these were brought West in a year or two after they had gone through their philosophy in the College, and having nothing to subsist upon, were greedily gaping after benefices...Great numbers were as void of morality and gravity as they were of learning and experience, and scarce had the very appearance of religion and devotion."<sup>21</sup> Little can we understand the contempt with which they subjected the ordin-

---

20. Burnet, HHOT, op. cit., p. 103.

21. Wodrow, Robert, History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, p. 131.

ances of Christ, or how men "scunnered and egged" at their meat being conveyed to them through such vessels. Some affirmed that the curates' preaching had more influence upon the damnation of souls than to the converting of them. These preachers were the most scandalous haters of godliness, persecutors, mockers, covetous, "tiplers", and sensual.

The King exercised his power to the limit to blot Presbyterianism out of Scotland; to destroy the soul of the Covenanters; and to establish Episcopacy. Even those who loved Presbyterianism but a little admitted that the methods employed by the King made it appear "as if Satan himself had suggested" the  
<sup>22</sup>  
 oppression.

These were days of cruelty against the bodies of Christians, giving them chase upon the fields and slaying them on the spot without any sentence. These were days of butchering, hanging, heading, mangling, dismembering alive, quartering upon the scaffolds, imprisoning, lying in irons, torturing by boots, thumbkins, fire-matches, cutting pieces out of the ears, banishing and selling as slaves old and young men and women in great numbers, oppressing many others in their estates, forfeiting, robbing, spoiling, pillaging their goods, casting them out of their habitation, interdicting any to reset them, under the pain of being after the same manner.

At times, these measures were slightly relaxed in strict-

---

22. Scott, Walter, Tales of a Grandfather, ii, p. 265.



ness, and this brought a gleam of hope to non-conformists. But these were but ominous signs of more peril and persecution. Matters grew worse until 1679, when - after the murder of Archbishop Sharp at Magnus Muir - the Covenanters entered into a period of unparalleled suffering; a period which has been spoken of as "the most foul and damnable persecution which has ever blackened the history of a civilized country."<sup>23</sup> Their victory over Claverhouse at Drumclog was rendered null by a rout from Monmouth at Bothwell Bridge. Thereafter, there were bitter persecutions and trials for anyone apprehended and convicted of being a sympathizer with the Bothwell affair. The experiences of these years are as painful and heart-breaking as they are glorious and inspiring. Every sovereign measure was designed to obliterate the covenanting zeal and replace it with the formalism of princely worship. Such was the state of affairs when Charles II left the scene and James VII ascended the throne in 1685. Few instances can be cited where a full-scale attempt was made to break the spirit of a people, or compel a whole nation to an absolute will. "Charles left with the nation more vitiated and debauched than any other monarch, before or since."<sup>24</sup>

For any man to take up the reins of government that fell, February 8, 1685, from the hands of profligate and perfidious Charles, would be no easy matter; and for his brother James to

---

23. Warr, Charles, The Presbyterian Tradition, p. 325.

24. MacKenzie, KS, op. cit., p. 247.

do it could not fail to be a matter of extreme difficulty. From the beginning of his public life the Duke of York had been dis-trusted - suspected on too good grounds of leaning toward the creed and worship of Rome. He was a fanatical adherent of Romanism - as firm a Catholic as Renwick had been a Presbyterian. It is alleged he requested Jesuits "to assist him in the conversion of the nation, which he was resolved to bring about or die a martyr in endeavoring it; and he would rather suffer death for carrying on that than live ever so long and happy without attempting it."<sup>25</sup>

Half the nation would probably have yielded to the growth of despotism under James, if he had not ostentatiously ignored the wisdom of his brother. Charles, too, was a convinced Romanist, but James differed by making no effort to conceal his religious predilections. He might have reigned much longer than he did had he been more discreet. He began his reign with everything in his favor: a Tory Parliament; a discredited opposition which further weakened its case by rebellions under Argyll and Monmouth; a great reputation for honesty. All these advantages were forfeited within a couple of years by reviving his brother's policies. Further, he alienated the Anglican Church - by whose support along he could hope to rule as an English despot.<sup>26</sup>

---

25. MacLean, Donald, The Counter-Reformation in Scotland, p. 166.

26. Pollard, HE, op. cit., cf., pp. 135-136.

When the glittering pageant and idolatrous service of popery became coercive policies, James selected Scotland as his sphere of operations. His missive to the Scottish Estates declared his aim with great lustre: "to maintain and protect the religion established by law". The Episcopal faction proved obsequious to his desires. Scotland speedily learned that neither by Popish King nor persecuting prelates would that statute remain inoperative. The suffering under James was as great as under Charles. To illustrate: mere attendance at a Conventicle was regarded as a capital offence. But within two years things were relaxed. Penal laws against Roman Catholics were rescinded, and Presbyterians found benefit under the new Toleration. With a pliable Parliament, James sought to gain legal recognition for other papists than himself. This was 1686. The next year he issued a letter asserting royal rights and prerogatives. Ecclesiastical bodies were dealt with by varying degrees of indulgences or severity. Toleration was granted moderate Presbyterians to meet in private homes to hear indulged ministers, providing nothing be said or done seditiously. Conventiclors were to be rooted out and punished. Quakers were to worship at appointed places. Laws against Roman Catholics were to be suspended, and they were to be as free as any Protestant. An Oath of Allegiance was framed - the First Indulgence. Then came a Second, and a Third, stating that if Presbyterians would take the first, indulgence would be granted without oath; and "leave



was given for all to serve God after their own way".<sup>27</sup>

Throughout the territory North of the Tweed, hardships continued (1687) upon countless Presbyterians, especially in the West and South. Several were fined for non-conformity; a goodly number were banished to the plantations. The judiciary went on in forfeiting of some and of processing others; and part of the old spirit is to be found in the privy councils working against the Conventicles. But the great thing for which that year was remarkable is the liberty granted by the King, to the papists first, and with them - under restrictions - to the Presbyterians, who still refused it, till, after several shapes, "in July it came unclogged with any thing gravaminous to their consciences, and this put an end to the sufferings of the greatest part of them".<sup>28</sup>

With Toleration, there appeared also a skeleton of presbyterial polity. But James - partly because of his slackening of religious persecution and partly because of several relaxations - brought nemesis upon his head. With the birth of a prince, both of whose parents were Romanists, the Protestant succession to the throne was seriously endangered. In due time, the babe was baptized in accordance with Roman ritual. Steps were now taken to avert the calamity of a papist succeeding to a Protestant throne. A paper was dispatched, June 30, 1688, to

---

27. Wodrow, HSS, IV, op. cit., p. 404.

28. Ibid.

William Henry, Prince of Orange and Count of Nassau, informing him of the prevalent dissatisfaction. Nineteen-twentieths of the people implored him to take action with the least possible delay. On October 19, 1688, he sailed for England, with his frigate carrying a flag which bore the motto: "I will maintain" - to which was added the deftly chosen words - "The liberties of England and the Protestant religion". His ship put in at Torquay Harbor on November 5.

With the tide running hard against him, James began to think of concessions, which were - in his language - "a mere feint." The people's fears of his political ambitions, and their suspicions of his ecclesiastical ambitions, had robbed him of his crown. He was conscious of the handwriting on the wall. The twin objects of his policy: absolute monarchy and the conversion of England from Protestantism to Popery, were thoroughly akin; yet, happily for the nation, one crossed and wrecked the other.<sup>30</sup> The Second Charles had been a Catholic at heart, but he realized that for reasons of State he must carry the Anglican Church and the bulk of the people with him to become absolute. James II failed to recognize this. He forgot that even to the irreligious and politically servile Englishman, as well as to the Anglican clergy and the non-conformists,

---

29. William was married to Mary, the King's eldest daughter, and was looked upon as the champion of Protestantism in Europe.

30. M'Crie, SPPIR, op. cit., p. 175.

Popery was an anti-nationalistic despotism - obnoxious on both religious and political grounds. He pursued these aims with what has been characterized as "that stupid obstinacy which is so frequently fatal to a man without talent; and the Revolution was due first and foremost to the folly of the last Stewart King."<sup>31</sup>

Although the King was willing to yield on many points, his real design was to gain time. He first sent his wife and son out of the country. On a dark and stormy night they were taken to Gravesend and thence in a yacht to Calais. On the morning of October 11, James disappeared from his bed-chamber; crossed the Thames; and went aboard a hoy at the Isle of Sheppey, with the intention of journeying to France. One week later, William entered London, and took up residence at St. James. Substantially, the Revolution was accomplished. The work of Settlement was now to be done.

The State Church of Scotland received legal recognition and sanction, in so far as they could be given by Acts of Parliament, on June 7, 1690. The Confession of Faith was ratified, and Presbyterian Church government settled. This Act of 1690 provided for the receiving, ratifying, and perpetual conforming of all laws, statutes and Acts of Parliament made "against Popery and Papists, and for the maintainence and prosecution of

---

31. MacPherson, Hector, The Covenanter Under Persecution, pp. 23-24.



the true reformed Protestant religion; and for the true Church of Christ within the Kingdom; it established "the Confession as the public and avowed Confession of this Church"; it declared the government and discipline - Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General Assemblies - to be ratified after the pattern of 1592. It allowed Church government to be exercised by "those Presbyterian ministers who were outed since the first of January, 1661, for non-conformity to Popery, and such ministers and elders as they have admitted or received, or shall hereafter admit or receive." Finally, it appointed "the first meeting of the General Assembly of this Church as above established, to be held at Edinburgh, the third Tuesday of October next to come."<sup>32</sup>

Thus, Presbyterianism was again restored; the Covenanters were at last permitted to worship God freely and openly. William seems to have entertained ideas of recognizing Episcopacy as the established form of Church government throughout the Kingdom, but for the daring interpositions of William Carstares, who was constantly on hand to check the King from settling upon a decision which would alienate those people most devoted to him. "To Principal Carstares, one of the ablest men who ever took part in the ecclesiastical affairs of the Church of Scotland, we owe it that the question of Church government and doctrine in this country was so peaceably and satisfact-

---

32. M'Crie, SPPIR, op. cit., cf., p. 197.

orily settled".<sup>33</sup> He united great scholastic attainments with great aptitude for civil business, and the firm and ardent zeal of a martyr with the shrewdness and suppleness of a consummate politician. There was no post to which he might not have aspired if he had been a layman, or a priest of the Church of England. He was named Chaplain to their Majesties for Scotland; but wherever the King was - in England, Ireland or the Netherlands - this most trusty and prudent of courtiers was by his side. He received a modest competence from the Royal bounty; he desired no more. "But it was well known that he could be as useful a friend and as formidable an enemy as any member of the Cabinet; and he was designated at the public offices and in the ante-chambers of the Palace by the significant nickname of 'The Cardinal'".<sup>34</sup>

It was fortunate that the questions which excited so many strong passions, and had diverse points of view, were decided by such men as William and Carstares. The King listened to Episcopalians, Latitudinarians, Presbyterians, the Dean of Glasgow - who pleaded for apostolic succession, to Burnet - who represented the danger of alienating the Anglican clergy, to Carstares - whose hatred for prelacy was as deep as the screw marks upon his thumbs. Surrounded by these eager advocates, and King remained calm and impartial. He was eminently

---

33. Moncrieff, James, Church and State, art., "Church and State From the Reformation", pp. 108-109.

34. Macauley, Lord, History of England, II, pp. 25-26.

qualified by his personal qualities to umpire that great contention. He was ruler of a prelatical kingdom. He was prime minister of a Presbyterian republic. His unwillingness to offend the Anglican Church - of which he was the head - and his unwillingness to offend the Reformed Churches on the Continent - which regarded him as a champion against French tyranny - balanced each other and kept him from leaning unduly on either side. His conscience was neutral, for he did not believe that any form of ecclesiastical polity had Divine sanction. He dissented equally from the schools of Laud and Cameron; from the men who said there could not be a Church without Bishops, or a Church without Synods. He believed that mere expediency should dictate which form of government was adopted. He would have preferred a temper between the two rivals: a hierarchy in which the chief spiritual functionaries were something more than moderators and something less than prelates. But wisdom cautioned him against settling the issue according to personal taste. He determined, therefore, that if the sides were disposed to compromise, he would act as mediator. But if the public mind of England and Scotland appeared to take the ply in opposite directions, he would not force either nation into conformity with the other. Each would have its own Church, and he would restrain both from persecuting non-conformists, and from encroaching upon the functions of the civil magistrates.

The Convention of Estates, 1689, had - by the Claim of Right - deposed James VII, and offered the throne to William



and Mary upon condition of the abolition of Episcopacy, affirming that Prelacy and the superiority of any office in the Church above presbyters "is and hath been a great insupportable grievance to the nation, and contrary to the inclinations of the generality of the people since the Reformation..." By October, 1690, when the General Assembly met for the first time since 1653 (when Colonel Cotterel had disbanded it with military force) Episcopacy had been set aside. No longer was it a peril to be a Presbyterian in Scotland; "the spirit of the Covenants had been vindicated; the struggles with the Crown were ended; the liberty of the Church had been secured."<sup>35</sup>

The most burdensome of all burdens - Patronage - was abolished. The election of Pastors was now placed in the hands of Kirk Sessions. This calm procedure, and "moderation", recommended by William, were not disregarded by the 180 who comprised the Assembly. The fact that, when all was in confusion ecclesiastically, the State took the initiative and did not consult the Church, illustrates a principle of sound divines: that much may be allowed to civil magistrates in troublesome times.

However, the Settlement was not perfect. It partook largely of the nature of a compromise in which the State took too much upon itself and the Church asserted too little. The civil supremacy was not absolutely condemned; the sovereignty

---

35. Warr, TPT, op. cit., p. 327.

of Christ was not expressly asserted; and the binding obligations of the Covenants were not explicitly acknowledged. But, in the words of a statesman of the day: "Men must take what they can have in a cleanly way, when they cannot have all they would."<sup>36</sup>

But let us not overlook the signal and seasonable benefits of 1688. The importance of the Settlement and its far-reaching effects are seen in the future history of the Scottish Church. It marks an epoch in the history of the Church. The stormy processes which began in 1560 were now concluded. After 130 years of controversy, Scotland had at last obtained a stable order of things in Church and State. "The Revolution Settlement worked satisfactorily for more than two hundred years. It secured...a freedom no other Protestant Church has enjoyed, in which both the Church was protected against the State and the individual member of the Church was protected against the tyrannical actions of the Church courts."<sup>37</sup>

On the whole, the people of the Church were content to accept the work of Settlement. The watchword became "Toleration"; Episcopacy and Presbyterianism existed side by side; and except for old hatreds here and there, "the rabble of the curates", for example (which cannot be condoned but can be easily understood), the land knew such peace which it had not known for years. Not only did it put an end to the cruel per-

---

36. M'Crie, SPPIR, op. cit., p. 205.

37. Campbell, Andrew, Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland, 1707-1929. pp. 17, 19.

secution by which the best blood in Scotland had been shed; not only did it re-instate those pastors who had been cast out in the reign of Charles II, and set up again that platform of Presbyterianism; but by reviving and re-enacting the statutes of 1592 - the original charter and foundation of Presbytery - it recognized as an inalienable part of the Constitution of the nation the establishment of the Presbyterian Church. It secured, effectually, the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church, and her independance in spiritual matters of civil control. On all these grounds, the Church was well entitled to rejoice in the deliverance wrought out for her.<sup>38</sup>

And so one hundred years of the 17th century, filled with storm and stress, persecution and untold killings, intolerance, acts of glory and disgrace, came suddenly to a conclusion. During this century there was no peace and no charity; no insight and a meager amount of statesmanship, but a century rich in enthusiasm and courage, as well as romantic and picturesque incidents of the covenanting martyrs. This was the century, and these were the conditions - political and ecclesiastical - into which our subject, William Wilson, was born. The working out of many of these reflections and influences shall be ours to see as we turn to study the life of him whose sole aim was that truth might "have the victory, and let God have all the glory."

---

38. M'Crie, SPPIR, op. cit., p. 207.



"I do devote myself, with all my heart,  
to serve God in the Gospel of His Son."  
"Memoirs", p. 43.

## CHAPTER ONE

### "YEARS OF PREPARATION" (1690 - 1713)

Wilson's father, Gilbert, was born in 1644, and had become a proprietor of a moderate estate near East Kilbride, in Lanarkshire. When a youth he became acquainted with the celebrated martyr, James Guthrie, whose adopted daughter, Isabella Ramsay, he afterward married.<sup>1</sup> Being so earnestly convinced of his reformed principles, he was - like many others - persecuted for conscience's sake. Civil authorities deprived him of all his property; all personal movable items were confiscated and sold at auction in Glasgow at the Mercat Cross.<sup>2</sup>

When Mr. Wilson reached manhood, he openly identified himself with the persecuted remnant. After the Battle of Bothwell Bridge, some of the Covenanting party who escaped were given refuge in his house. This becoming known - although Gilbert Wilson had not been at the Battle - his name was thenceforth closely identified with the party. He was declared an outlaw and his apprehension was eagerly sought by the persecutors. On this account he found it necessary to quit his habitation and conceal himself for an entire winter in a cave in the extensive moorlands known as Mearns Muir. During this season of seclusion he was regularly attended by a woman of the name of Margaret Glass,<sup>3</sup> his faithful servant.

---

1. Ferrier, Andrew, The Canadian Presbyterian Magazine, art., August, 1851. See Apendix.

2. Ferrier, Andrew, Memoirs of William Wilson, p. 29.

3. Ferrier, CPM, op. cit.

Along with the required daily nourishment, she brought him news of his enemies and information needed to lessen the difficulty of his escape. When the vigilance of his enemies had nearly detected his hiding place, he embraced the opportunity of sailing to Holland (then an asylum for the persecuted) where he lived for several years. When the Revolution took place in 1688, he returned in the train of William, Prince of Orange.

He made his residence in Glasgow until he was appointed Comptroller of Customs in Greenock, three years later. During this three year period he had married Isabella Ramsay, daughter of Mr. James Ramsey of Shielhill, who owned considerable property in Kirriemuir, Forfarshire, and was a strict communicant of the Episcopal faith. While in Glasgow, and on the ninth of November, 1690, the only son and child of Gilbert and Isabella Wilson was born. They named him William, in honor of the King. They dedicated him to the things of the Lord, and greatly cherished the hope that he might some day be a bulwark of defence within the Church. "Wilson was deeply impressed with religion at an early age and was distinguished by elevated devotional feelings...and a high degree of maturity..."<sup>4</sup>

When about the age of twelve, William visited his uncle in Shielhill. During the conversation between the uncle and William's mother, the question arose as to her son's future. She answered that her fondest ambition was that he should be a minister in the

---

4. Wodrow, Robert, Correspondence, II, p. 229.



Scottish Church. Whereupon the uncle revealed considerable hostility and asserted that no Presbyterian would be the holder of his property. Although William was the nearest heir of this unmarried landowner, the mother remained steadfast to her ambitions, and declared that she would seek to educate her son in the ministry of the Church.<sup>5</sup>

At the age of fourteen, Wilson entered the University of Glasgow. The following January, 1705, his mother passed away and, six years later, his father died. But, he pledged himself to walk in the steps of his parents and carry out their wishes in regards to his work in the ministry. In the early part of 1704 he had joined the fellowship of the Church, and began to record regularly "his spiritual exercise on sacramental occasions, or impressions left by them."<sup>6</sup> The summary contained in this personal memorandum is composed largely of brief and disjointed expressions of the mercies received from God, and numerous confessions of sin. He makes special mention of his mother's departure, and prays that this loss may be a means of sanctification within his life.

Throughout his records as a youthful believer there is to be noted a deep humility and sincere meekness. At times he sensed "much deadness of soul" and "languor of spiritual exercise." But on other occasions he experienced "something of the Lord's goodness" which he exhorts his soul to "remember." The concern which this godly youth revealed so early in his Christian life by setting down

---

5. Eadie, John, United Presbyterian Fathers, cf. p. 100.

6. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 35. See Appendix.

the feelings of "deadness" and "revivings" certainly may be considered as conclusive evidence of the working of the Spirit within him. During the twenty-eight years following the death of his mother Wilson kept a regular Diary, the bulk of which was written in his own shorthand and in two small volumes.<sup>7</sup>

Wilson studied his course in a "right spirit." Religion had become to him the "one thing needful." "It directed his thoughts, animated his movements, and inspired his energies. It gave tone to all his engagements."<sup>8</sup> Throughout his college career, in the customary branches of its curriculum, Wilson studied earnestly and successfully. "He soon distinguished himself, both as a scholar and as a Christian," says Mr. Ferrier. Although we have no reason to doubt the truth of this statement, there is "no information about him as a student."<sup>9</sup> Be that as it may, his ambition and proficiency are indicated by the fact that after he had concluded his study of literature and philosophy, he "took out his M. A." on June 27, 1707.<sup>10</sup>

As Wilson got further into his work at the University, especially from the time of his consecration to the ministry, he entered once and again into a solemn league with God. Most of these secret covenants have a bearing upon his work as a ser-

---

7. See Appendix.

8. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., pp. 101-102.

9. Fordyce, Professor C. J., Clerk of Senate, University of Glasgow.

10. Scott, Hew, Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae, IV.

vant of God and the exalting official duties to which he looked forward with great eagerness. "Often did he sit in judgment upon his own state; and his decisions are generally tinged with severity against himself. He looked to the unerring verdict of Divine law...Nothing he dreaded more than being the dupe of any lurking bias or the victim of any secret process of self-satisfaction."<sup>11</sup>

In his spiritual moods there are to be found sudden and repeated variations; rapid alterations of light and gloom, gladness and perplexity, apparently arising from the various moods of self-inspection. Of this Dr. Eadie remarks that his "habit of tracing religious phases might have been corrected by looking less within, and looking more above - to cease from putting his soul under the microscope in order to fix his gaze more often in Christ."<sup>12</sup> But these religious exercises were worthwhile to Wilson, for they deepened his faith and consecration for future days. Religion was more than belief; it was heart-work. The acts of devotion indicate that the secret covenants were more than a look "within"; they represent a sincere and irrevocable surrender to his Creator "above." In this period of Wilson's life there are to be found two special marks: a general profession of faith, and an acceptance of God in Christ as his God, with desires and resolutions to live after His glory. Further, there is "a special surrender of self to Christ for services of ministry, on his entrance of the study of Theology under Simson of Glasgow - which took place at this time."<sup>13</sup>

---

11. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 102.

12. op. cit., p. 104.

13. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 41.



Wilson wrote down peculiar spiritual wants, as well as blessings, he longed to possess. This is made clear from the following excerpts:

"In the presence of Almighty, Gracious, and Blessed God, I declare my faith in Jesus Christ...and my acceptance of Him as the only Saviour. As I was dedicated and given away to God...so now, though I have departed...I this day desire to return...to receive the Redeemer...as my all in all. I do here consent to part with all my lusts and idols, and I do protest against that part of my soul that is unwilling to be obedient to Him. And here...I take Him for the only witness of my covenant...I desire quickening and reviving. I desire that God will help me keep this covenant, for without Him I can do nothing. And I do promise, in His strength, to endeavor against all things that would dishonor Him, and to act in everything for His glory."<sup>14</sup> He then continued in still another vein, dedicating body and soul to the great task of "holding forth the word of life." "Also," he affirmed, "a solemn dedication of myself to God's service."<sup>15</sup>

Two days later he recorded: "I also have given myself to God in a special covenant...in the great work that I have set myself upon...I have thought fit to dedicate myself to Him in this work... and do declare that my coming, and now entering on the study of Theology, is for God's glory, and the good of souls, and that I now...do beg that He may be pleased to give me capacity, memory,

---

14. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

15. Ibid.

and other qualifications, for this end, and...give me prudence and resolution to apply my mind to study, that I may not linger, but come through with credit and success...And I do promise to spend my time better than hitherto, and not to trifle the same away, but lay it out for God, improving it for His glory.

"I do devote myself to serve God in the Gospel of His Son... to guard against seeking myself in this most solemn work, and pray for pardon through the blood of Christ, for all my past sins, and to be kept from wavering in my studies; and, in hope of God's gracious assistance in promoting my end, and giving all that is necessary for the study..."<sup>16</sup> His delay in affixing his name until the following Monday would indicate that he meant it to be no rash vow but a definite step after deliberate examination of his estate before God. This declaration probably came on the day he enrolled himself as a student in the Divinity Hall.

The prayers of "Monica" are found answered in these remarks. Isabella Wilson had "given him away to God" and now, if it be the will of God, her son wished to "betake myself to that study" and serve, if the Lord so willed it, as an "instrument of glory." Wilson thrilled at the challenge which lay before him, and was deeply grateful to God for "determining him to surrender" to this field of service. At this early stage, Wilson struck the keynote of his entire life, namely, "everything for His glory." This phrase was exemplified on numerous occasions in his life and work.

---

16. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

With such spiritual exercises as these - and others - his mind became so disciplined and his heart so seriously exercised, that he soon became a useful servant of God. The more experiences he enjoyed in the Divine life, the stronger and abler he became. He recognized that which all students of the ministry must consider: that to be Christ's is the best preparation for preaching Christ. Only then can one instruct and edify. All the fruits of solemn dedication did, in time, become Wilson's capacity, "memory, prudence and resolution." Above all, he was a man "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the solemn covenants into which he entered, it was not uncommon for him, just prior to his reception at the Lord's Supper, to give himself a special examination, and make a detailed account of his reasons for coming to Christ in the Sacrament, and the many desires which had been laid upon his heart. To these he appended a list of sins, and the things he needed for growth in grace. By subscribing to these particulars he believed he would be granted a special holy excitement as he approached Communion. All these were written with great care. He designated this exercise as "errands in Christ"; and formed the habit of writing them down in advance of the Sacrament in order that he might meditate upon them and have them well before him at the Table. Because of such errands, one was led - in later years, to say of him: "He was a pious and a godly man..."

---

17. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., cf. p. 105.



a venerable and much esteemed minister."<sup>18</sup>

The manuscripts of Wilson are composed largely of more devote exercises comparable to those afore mentioned, with an occasional interpolation of his soul's state on the ordinary Lord's Day as well as everyday life. In these special sections of his personal documents the reader is able to detect a particular manifestation of God's presence and power, and a reasonable growth in grace. Wilson disliked any known sin to be present in his heart. Such, to him, was a "dead lump of corruption" and an offense unto God resulting in loss of spiritual power. At times he was greatly dissatisfied and craved to have his religious frame and experience renewed by the Spirit, and to be endued with more grace in order that he might not act unworthily in his high calling. Now did he want to relinquish his spiritual exercises and the blessed consequences resulting therefrom. All that was burdensome to his heart was to be removed.<sup>19</sup>

From all that Wilson has left us concerning his "spiritual exercises", he appears never to have lost sight of the need for simple faith and trust in Divine grace for the quickening of his talents. This, he believed, was needed to press forward in Christian faith and practice. Two exercises which occurred in 1709 point out the weighty character, views, desires and endeavors of their writer; and further, they serve as illustrative material of the utter distrust of self and complete dependence upon God.

---

18. Cowan, Samuel, The Ancient Capital of Scotland, II, p. 290. See Appendix.

19. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., cf. p. 47.

"I betake myself to Christ for pardon of all my sins, and... do confess that I am entirely indebted to Thy grace, and that I am without righteousness to justify me; and I do desire to come to Christ for the bright robe of His righteousness to cover me, and pray to be kept in Thy fear, and enabled to take Christ for my all...in the hope that He may yet<sup>20</sup> call me to His service in the Gospel." Four months later he wrote, "Glorious Lord, I, having deeply backslidden from Thee do come this day for forgiveness of sin through Christ. I do this day confess my own unrighteousness and...desire to be clothed with the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ...I desire that everything in me may be for Him, all the powers of my body, and all the faculties of my mind...May He rule in my soul, extending His sceptre over me, and subduing all my corruptions; and, especially may my pride and self-conceit be brought down, and rooted out, and may I be wholly for His glory. Lord, let me be for Thee, and be Thou mine only God. Break down all my lusts, and all my idols; and enable me to live, not for myself, but for Thy praise, and honor, and glory, in my day and generation."<sup>21</sup>

In such a frame of mind and spirit, Wilson carried forward his diligent study for the ministry. These devotions undoubtedly played a great part in instructing his mind for the vital duties he was soon called upon to perform. But we must not exclude his diligence in Theology, for there was more to his life than devotional exercises. Divinity was a primary branch of his education, and he

---

20. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 49.

21. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

sought to excel in it in order that he might appear before men for their advantage and his blessing in the things of God. As evidence of his consecration we present the following schedule to which, we have no doubt, Wilson gave faithful adherence: "Rise at 6 in the morning, in the summer at 5. Time divided: - From rising to 9 - prayer and Scripture reading. From 9 to 11 - Natural Philosophy and Biblical Criticism. From 11 to 12 - Latin. From 12 to 2 - Hebrew and Greek. From 2 to 5 or 6 - Systematic Theology. From 6 to 7 - History. From 7 to 9 - Common place book, The rest in prayer. Prayer also at 10, at 2 and at 6, at lying down and rising up; read three chapters of the Bible every day, read through the Hebrew Scriptures, three chapters a day."<sup>22</sup>

It was through perseverance in this daily exercise that he soon became proficient in Hebrew. His scholastic ability in other languages - as well as the various branches of education- was indeed something worth noting. He retained Latin easily and spoke it fluently. The fact that this schedule has no allotment of time for meals leads one to suppose that he was so diligent in his solitary situation and so devoted to his course of study that he quickly consumed his food in order to get back again to his work.

On the first of June, 1711 - six and one half years after the loss of his mother - his father, Gilbert, passed away. "On the back of my father's death I would take notice of the following signal mercies of God: - 1. God's goodness in providing for my father and mother when they were destitute. 2. God's goodness

---

22. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 52.



in casting their lot in a place where I had the opportunity of a good education. God's gracious goodness in restoring to my father, before his death, that comfort of mind which had been, for a time, interrupted."<sup>23</sup> Wilson had heard his father relate the tales of his suffering, and his youthful heart would leap with interest as he listened to the account of the "killing times". "I communicated here today," he continued, "I am weary to get a solid pardon of sin; but alas! I am never winning to brokenness of mind and contrition of spirit for my sins; especially my sins against a kind father, by grieving and vexing him."<sup>24</sup>

Near this time, Wilson made a visit to Kilbride - the vicinity of his father's birth and early childhood. There is something very natural and interesting in the exercises of his spirit while there. On the fast day before Communion, he listed the grounds of his humiliation: "My sinful carriages toward my relations...My lightness, instability of spirit, slighting the reading of the Scriptures, formality in prayer, dullness and deadness in duties...not laying myself out for the glory of God."

"At the Communion Table I desire to pray for - A concern for the glory of God. A loosing of bonds; a broken heart and a contrite spirit. A great inclination to surrender myself wholly to God; to be for Him and not for another. To seek qualifications for serving God in the work I have before me. To get a soul strength-

---

23. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 53.

24. Ibid.

ening meal, and a desire for spiritual things wrought upon my soul. To put my unstable lot in the Lord's hand, that I may be brought in-  
to a proper frame."<sup>25</sup>

Having been bereaved of both parents, he laid plans to visit the close friends of his mother. With few relatives from whom to seek consolation, he turned toward them as a substitute for his home. In this matter he sought guidance from the Lord. In the Mearns (Renfrewshire) Communion he sought a lively sense of God upon his soul, and a more holy and heavenly frame of spirit. "In a word, I desire to meet with Christ, to get true faith made up in Him, and all needful blessings from Him."<sup>26</sup> One week later, he enumerated the "errands on humility" he planned to have before him at the Barony Communion. They were, "my wanderings and imperfections...my careless hearing of the Word of God...my wearying in sacred services...my misimproving of the Gospel...May God give me qualifications," he added, "for serving Him. If He pleaseth, let Him further my north-country journey. May He bless me with His presence at all times and in all places."<sup>27</sup>

Such a writer of these lines must have been deeply consecrated. In spite of the apparent nearness of God which he enjoyed, he was constantly seeking higher and more blessed foundations. Particularly vital to him was this trip to the North-country. The Communion Table was to him, as it was to multitudes of his day, the highlight of spiritual living. The religious life of the

---

25. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

26. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 56-57. See Appendix.

27. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 58.

people, as far as it was spiritual and free, depended largely upon the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the observance of which was a distinctive feature of eighteenth century Presbyterianism. "The observance was not a parochial one. When a celebration was intimated in any one parish, hundreds and often thousands of people poured in to it from the neighboring parishes and remained for three, or four or five days, listening from morning till night to a series of sermons which culminated in the sacred rite."<sup>28</sup>

In the Barony experience there was a feeling of satisfaction, as revealed in the notations of the following day. Wilson acknowledged with fear that "the Lord was made known to me in the breaking of the bread yesterday. I was helped, in some manner, to surrender myself to God in covenant." A week later, his prayer for direction in the North country journey was answered. In July, 1711, he departed from his home in Glasgow for Angus, where he remained for almost a year. It was during this interval that an event came to pass which exemplified his uprightness.

It will be recalled that his uncle had declared that no Presbyterian would be the recipient of his property. The estate would become Wilson's only if he took upon himself the orders of the Episcopal Church. Refusal to do this would mean that the property would be passed to other relatives. Notwithstanding these demands, Wilson would not be bribed into giving up his convictions. He flatly declined to renounce Presbyterianism, whereupon his uncle declared he would never leave his estate to "a

---

28. MacEwen, A. R., The Erskines, p. 12. See Appendix.



Whig minister."<sup>29</sup>

In the Spring of 1712 Wilson returned to Glasgow to complete his study in Theology. He spent the following summer in the city in the hope that he would be taken on trial for licensure. In view of the state in which the Church of his day found itself, and to which he makes pointed references, his expectations were delayed for a time. "The Presbytery of Glasgow seemed to have no liking for this young aspirant to the ministry. The evil genius of Professor Simson swayed them. There seems to have been in the West of Scotland a spirit of hostility to evangelical religion, with a malignant effort to discourage all manifestations of its power and longings in candidates for the pulpit."<sup>30</sup>

There were no opportunities given to Wilson to be licensed in his own Presbytery. In fact, countless obstacles were placed in his way. The privilege of taking his trials was received from another section. During the latter part of 1712 he was visiting within the area of Dunfermline with some fellow ministers of high evangelical fervor. Since their relations were of the friendly kind, they suggested that he bring his testimonials from his home Presbytery and place himself under the care of Dunfermline. "Accordingly, I went and procured them, and sent them in a letter to that country, about the beginning of December."<sup>31</sup> The men of Dunfermline Presbytery proceeded immediately to put him through his trials. The record of December 24, 1713, states, "The Pres-

---

29. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 60. See Appendix.

30. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

31. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 63.

byterie received sufficient testimonials from the Presbyterie of Glasgow and Professor of Theology there...and appoints Mr. McGill to write to the Presbyterie of Coupar, and Mr. Ralph Erskine, Moderator, to write to the Presbyterie of Kirkaldy showing the design of this Presbyterie to enter the said Mr. Wilson on trials desiring them if they know any reason why he should not be entered on trials they may signify the same to this Presbyterie."<sup>32</sup>

Several weeks passed, and "I was greatly perplexed at not hearing, and thought the Lord had put some block in my way to punish me for my sins. About the latter end of January I received a letter, wherein I was informed that my testimonials were approved of, and this afforded me great satisfaction."<sup>33</sup> In spite of the readiness with which he was received, Wilson weighed the issue carefully. He concluded, "there are two things in my eye which move me to think of entering upon trials at this time, and in this Presbytery. The gloomy and ~~ruining~~-like dispensations of this day and time wherein we live. I do not know how soon I might be deprived of an opportunity of coming forward, were I to enter upon trials in some of the Presbyteries I have been in."<sup>34</sup> Beneath these words we are shown how deeply party lines were then drawn, and how high party spirit had run in the Church of Scotland.<sup>34</sup>

The reasons for objecting to his application are not far

---

32. Minutes of Presbytery of Dunfermline, 1712, IV, p. 292.

33. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 63

34. M'Crie, C. G., Studies in Scottish Ecclesiastical Biography, cf., p. 2.

below the surface. "Two influences may have contributed to them," analyses M'Crie. "First, Professor Simson." It would not be very difficult for the occupant of the Divinity Chair to perceive that he did not command the respect or assent of his student from Gallowgate, and this doubtless caused him to look upon Wilson with keen disfavor. His influence in the Glasgow Presbytery may have been exercised in a positive obstructive manner, as Ferrier leads us to think. But, Dunfermline Presbytery had recorded "sufficient testimonials from the Professor of Theology there."

"Second, the nature of the view he was known to hold regarding the Abjuration Oath." A minority had refused to burden their consciences with what they regarded as imposed in the interests of Episcopacy. "Wilson opposed the Abjuration Oath, and the Presbytery of Glasgow (mostly Jurors) wouldn't enter him on his trials."<sup>35</sup>

"The Presbytery of Dunfermline is an honest Presbytery," wrote Wilson. "Not one of its members have taken the Oath of Abjuration, and very few have behaved so honestly, since the Reformation, as that Presbytery."<sup>36</sup> This Oath had caused no small disturbance among the members of this Presbytery. It is interesting to note that in the same meeting in which Wilson was accepted for trials, a declaration was drafted and accepted for transmission to Their Majesties, the tenor of which ran

---

35. Wodrow, Corr., op. cit., II, p. 229.

36. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 63.



thus: "We had no clearness to take the Oath as it is now framed... our not taking does not proceed from any apprehension we have of the said Pretender, his having any right to the royal authority, or from any doubt of Their Majesties' right and title...but from the form of the Oath, the manner of its imposition..."<sup>37</sup>

It is evident from the foregoing statements, that the Church of Scotland was losing its evangelical fervor. For such a relaxation to appear in the land so soon after the Revolution seems impossible, but here it was, acting as a stumbling block to such conscientious men as Wilson. From the sufferings which Christians had endured during the twenty-eight years of slaughter, even the many advantages of the Revolution might be over-estimated. The churches were left in the hands of men who were destitute of power and godliness. With such to shepherd the flock, it is not surprising that "her character was injured at the very outset, from which she did not speedily recover; and the ground work was thus laid of that system of coercion and maladjustment which drove, at no distant period, from her communion, multitudes of her best ministers and members."<sup>38</sup>

One of the chief regrets of the Settlement is that there was no strenuous determination made to secure the rights for which those of the Covenanting years had contended so bravely. The Church did not have the power and zeal to assert her rights of government and promotion of the things of Christ. The General

---

37. MPD, op. cit., IV, p. 292.

38. M<sup>3</sup>Kerrow, John, History of the Secession Church, p. 4.

Assembly was charged with complying with the wishes of those in power - favorers of Erastianism - renouncing the Covenants, and causing the Reformation to recede rather than advance. "What was expected of them was, that the Church would have taken, as their model, the Assembly which met in 1638; that, like the nobles and ministers of that reforming period, they would have asserted their independence as a spiritual court, and protested in decided terms against every attempt on the part of those in power to interfere or control their proceedings, - that they would have sisted at their bar, and deposed and excommunicated, the bishops and others who had been the ring-leaders in the past defections..."<sup>39</sup>

Another source of division, among ministers and laymen alike, was the imposition of certain oaths by the government. Many considered them as unwarrantable encroachments upon the freedom of the Christian Church, and opposed to the spirit of the Confession of Faith. Therefore, many refused to bind themselves to these oaths because of conscientious scruples. The ferment upon this subject reached its peak with the introduction of the Oath of Abjuration, which provided that "the person succeeding to the Crown shall be of the Communion of the Church of England, and shall maintain the English hierarchy as established by law."<sup>40</sup> The limitation of this clause was interpreted by Presbyterians as extending not only to the persons and families that were to

---

39. M'Kerrow, HSC, op. cit., p. 5.

40. M'Kerrow, HSC, op. cit., p. 6.

succeed to the crown, but also the conditions upon which the Crown was to be held by them. Such ministers as those of Dunfermline Presbytery found it impossible to take an Oath which, so far as the spirit of it was concerned, was so opposed to their beliefs.<sup>41</sup> Some interpreted the Oath as a recognition of the Queen's (Anne) supremacy in religion, and those who bound themselves to this pact were to declare that they did so "willingly and cheerfully." Many were prepared to surrender their parishes rather than act contrary to conscience. All, however, were not animated by the same spirit and motive, and after they had explained away those clauses which were called "doubtful", they yielded. M'Kerrow calls this "salve to their consciences."<sup>42</sup>

The division among the ministers continued to widen. The Assembly that met in 1713 called upon all pastors to exercise "mutual forbearance, love and charity" in order to prevent any threatening division within the ranks of the Church.<sup>43</sup> Many of the pastors were strong enough in evangelical doctrines but the defects of the Settlement had proven to be "the leaven of corruption, for the reins of government were exceedingly relaxed and errors were practised."<sup>44</sup> Wilson boldly disapproved of this, and other oaths, declaring that no Presbytery could place itself

---

41. See Appendix.

42. M'Kerrow, HSC, op. cit., p. 7.

43. Minutes of General Assembly, XIX, 1713.

44. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 70.



under such a bond. It is therefore understandable why his home judicatory refused to enter him upon trial, and why he so eagerly accepted the offer of Dunfermline. There had been great perplexities over the ~~several~~ oaths and this caused some animosity against his becoming a minister. "Since the beginning of November, 1712, the Oath of Abjuration has been taken by many ministers, yea, by the greatest part in Scotland. I have been greatly troubled about it, and concerned that godly men should have taken it."<sup>45</sup>

By the 28th January, 1713, the Presbytery had received adequate replies from "the neighboring presbyteries," who were satisfied about Wilson. "They (Dunfermline) appoint him to be present at their next meeting."<sup>46</sup> When Wilson received this invitation, he set aside a time to seek Divine direction and blessing. "Altho' doubting much of my fitness for the work...I think I am not altogether void of a talent, though it is little that I know, and little that I can do."<sup>47</sup>

About the time Wilson was to enter upon his trials, a new problem confronted him in the death of his uncle. His confusion of mind is revealed by the memorandum of February, 1713, at Grennock. "I read a letter informing me of my uncle's death in Angus. I was advised to go thither to see how he had ordered his affairs."

---

45. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 74. See Appendix.

46. MPD, IV, op. cit., p. 294.

47. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 78.

This he did one week later, and found that his uncle "had disposed of all that had belonged to him (i. e., heritable and movable goods) to my aunt. The most of my friends were convinced of the injustice of this, and advised me to institute a law process, but to this I was very much averse."<sup>48</sup>

His second journey through Angus took him through Fife, and there he met and conversed with a Mr. Plenderleith of Saline. He rejoiced to learn that the Presbytery of Dunfermline at its last meeting had appointed him "to deliver a homily on Genesis 49:18."<sup>49</sup> "I was much troubled about the meaning of the dispensation, that when I was taken on trials, I should be so much plunged into worldly matters." Added to this perplexity was the constant urging of his friends for action against the will of his uncle. His intimate friends urged him to travel to Edinburgh and seek legal advice concerning this property. He was frank to admit, "I am perplexed about this Angus business. Oh, that the Lord would be pleased to rid me of it, and to give me a way of escape from trouble and anxiety of this kind." It would seem that he had little interest in this affair, and, one is inclined to conjecture, if it had not been for the voices of friends, he would never have entered into this "Angus business."

He did, nevertheless, decide to make the journey to Edinburgh, but prayed first for "strength of body" and a way

---

48. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 80

49. MPD, op. cit., IV, p. 296. See Appendix.

that would be "easy and pleasant." This petition was evidently answered, for he later recorded, "the Lord provided me with a friend in Edinburgh, and I was very kindly entertained."<sup>50</sup> It is not surprising that this legal affair, coupled with the anticipation of his trials, brought about a nervous tension in the heart and mind of this twenty-three year old youth. Consequently, "my spiritual frame was very low." Sometimes it seemed as though God were replenishing his soul with good things, and his weak faith was strengthened "to take hold of Christ." For the most part, however, "my spiritual condition was trying and perplexing." There was a constant dullness, lifelessness, and insecurity.

Wilson was tempted to enter the case at Edinburgh, and contest the will of his uncle. But a certain twist of events prevented his doing so. He visited the home of Mr. Alexander, an advocate in the city, for the purpose of seeking legal advice. No sooner had he stepped to the door of the lawyer's home, than a servant confronted him with the astonishing news that the master of the house had just passed away. This shocking incident had a two-fold consequence upon Wilson's life. First, his mind became deeply impressed with the fact that it is not the things of this world that matter. So strong was this impression that he forfeited all thoughts and claims toward his uncle's property.

---

50. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 81.



The second result brought him a prize of far more value than anything he had expected, for he met one of the Alexander daughters whom he eventually married. But the chief causes which led him to renounce all parts in this issue were far deeper than the two mentioned, for there had come at last to his soul that tranquility for which he had been praying. In view of this inward peace and persuasion given him of the Spirit, he concluded that - as a servant of the Lord, - such procedure in a case at law would be only unsuitable to his station, and have more damage than benefit. Thus, he dismissed the issue altogether.<sup>51</sup> The decision of his deceased uncle was to remain.

With the inconvenience of travel in the eighteenth century, and with the uneasiness and diversion of mind to which Wilson was subjected, one would hardly supposed his thoughts would function properly when he stood before the Presbytery for licensure. However, his mind seems to have possessed the elements of peace and accord as he looked forward to this event. In making preparation to stand before the Brethren, he "engaged in earnest prayer for...a prosperous journey...that God would help me to deliver my discourse."<sup>52</sup>

His keen mind was able to pick up the vital points of his Genesis verse, and he "delivered the homily that was appointed and was approven; he is appointed to have a ~~com~~mon head to that

---

51. See Appendix.

52. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 83.

question, Quale fuerat foedus cum Adamo mitum in statu instituto?

The Presbyterie also appoint some time with him to converse anent the principles of religion, in which he gave them great satisfaction."<sup>53</sup>

Along with this doctrinal subject "another was prescribed, on Hebrews 3:14-15." And, he added, "May the Lord help me to complete this discourse."<sup>54</sup>

In May he went before the Presbytery "and delivered my discourse." The documents of Presbytery confirm this in the following manner: "Mr. Wilson delivered the exercise and addition (Hebrews) as appointed, and was approven."<sup>55</sup> Whereupon he was given a third selection, this time from Ephesians 3:16. When Presbytery adjourned, Wilson went to Glasgow, but returned in due time and "delivered my discourse." Then he was appointed "to lecture on the 13th chapter of Hosea the next Presbyterie day." The pressure of exposition and travel took their toll upon him, for he said, "There was a great terror upon me and confusion, yet none perceived it. The Lord carried me through the delivery, and the discourse was approven. Another was appointed." "O Lord," he cried - as if for strength and patience - "give light; fit and qualify me for public service."

Two entries are made for the month of July, one concerning his public appearance before Presbytery, and the other having to

---

53. MPD, op. cit., IV, p. 298. See Appendix.

54. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 84. See Appendix.

55. MPD, op. cit., IV, p. 304.

do with a time set apart for self-examination and meditation with God. In July, he delivered his lecture before **Presbytery**, and was approved, "and another subject was appointed on Genesis 6:16."<sup>56</sup> "O, may the Lord give me light upon this text." He was to be prepared with a popular sermon with this verse as a basis. At this same time, he entered into a period of devotion, prayer, and self-scrutiny, "that He may fit me for my public work."<sup>57</sup> The direction of his mind upon the Genesis verse caused him to think anew of "the curse that the Fall had brought down upon man." He became greatly troubled over "my actual transgressions and their aggravations."<sup>58</sup> It is little wonder that this man became such a bulwark in the Church of Scotland. Humility; a keen sense of the things of the Spirit; a high love for the Word - these are the virtues which equipped him for leadership in the work of the Church.

During the latter part of August, and most of **September**, Wilson spent much of his time in the West making final preparation for the remainder of his trials. Even though he was applying an extra measure of attention to these assignments of Presbytery, he did not lose contact with the duties belonging to personal edification. He attended Communion at Eastwood (in August) "and in view of commemorating the death of Christ...

---

56. MPD, op. cit., IV, p. 306.

57. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

58. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 85.



desire chiefly that the Lord would revive His mind and work in my soul...so I may know how to preach Christ, and the Gospel of Christ; and that the Lord may fit and furnish me for His own work, worship and service."<sup>59</sup> Just how far these desires were fulfilled, one would hesitate to say, for he followed this request with words of despondency and spiritual languor. "In communicating...I was not enabled clearly to discern the Lord's body, nor to exercise a lively faith in Him for salvation." But, though he often found times of melancholy and spiritual laxity in his soul, he always came to the place where he would exclaim: "I was helped...I saw."

It was September 23, 1713, that Wilson made his final appearance before the members of Presbytery, and completed his parts of trial and was licensed. "I delivered a sermon," he remarked pleasingly, "and was carried through the rest of my trials; and, after an exhortation by Mr. Erskine (Ralph) Minister at Dunfermline, to depend upon the Lord, and to seek His glory, he said, that the Presbytery having now tried me, they judged me fitted for preaching the Gospel of Christ, and so, as the mouth of the Presbytery, he licensed me, to preach the Gospel, either in this Presbytery, or wheresoever I should be lawfully called. And another minister said, 'Look to the Lord, who says, My grace is sufficient for thee.' O Lord, enable me to look to Thyself for

---

59. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 89.

faith, to depend wholly upon Thy grace, and to go in the strength of the Lord God, and to make mention of His righteousness; even of His only.<sup>60</sup>"

Thus, we have traced Wilson's movements, insofar as they can be traced, as he undertook his obligations before the Presbytery. We have endeavored to stress the particular views and desire he had in this eight-month period. We close this chapter with those words which authorized him to perform as a licensed probationer for the ministry: "Mr. Wilson delivered his popular sermon and was approved. Post Meridie...Mr. Wilson sustained the disputes and questions, and was also examined anent his skill in the languages, in all which he acquitted himself. He being removed, the Presbytery took the whole of his trials under consideration, and his fitness to be licensed to preach the Gospel, anent all which they were abundantly satisfied, and he being called in and interrogated anent his sentiments of church government, and resolution through grace to adhere to the government and discipline of this Church; and to shun all divisive courses, to all which he gave satisfying answers; and having subscribed the Confession of Faith coram, the Presbytery did, and hereby do, license the said Mr. William Wilson, to preach the Gospel in their bounds, and wherever he shall be orderly called. Extracted forth of the records of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, and signed in their name by George Mair, Moderator. John Gib, Presbytery Clerk."<sup>61</sup>

---

60. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 91.

61. MPD, op. cit., IV, p. 310. See Appendix.

"I loved peace and quiet, but the Lord saw  
meet to order quite the contrary lot for  
me." "Memoirs", P. 214.



## CHAPTER TWO

### "MINISTER OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH" (1713 - 1733)

For three months Wilson acted in the capacity of a probationer. The Presbytery of Dunfermline then presented him with a certificate containing statements of character and qualifications.<sup>1</sup> There is little doubt but that he entered immediately into his work. We are inclined to believe that he entered his task with courage and humility.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of 1714 Wilson went to the West, and, with a few exceptions, remained there nearly two years. He preached in various places, and officiated frequently at Glasgow - which seems to have been his residence at this time. At one service, held at Barony, he said, "I could get but little studied. I scarcely had as much as would have served the fourth part of an hour; but I preached both forenoon and afternoon with much enlargement. The Lord pitied and helped me in His work and service, for which I have reason to bless His Name."<sup>3</sup> He impresses one with the diversity of his views and feelings. There is a constant seeking after "a sight of Christ" and "concern" for the things of the Kingdom. But his excitement of spirit was of no avail when he participated at Airth. "Alas!"

---

1. See Appendix.

2. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 111. cf.

3. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 117.

he exclaimed, "I met with no enlargement. My sins do take such hold upon me that I cannot lift mine eyes."<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding, "I had some enlargement," for a certain woman reported that "she blessed the Lord for that exercise, and I desire to bless the Lord that she got good."

During most of September, 1714, Wilson was confined to his room in Glasgow because of illness. He accepted this sickness as an act of God, and set himself "seriously to search and try my own ways, and to inquire how matters stood betwixt the Lord and my own soul."<sup>5</sup> He was convinced that "the Lord Jesus has been revealed to me," but as to the "precise time when His grace shone upon my mind and soul" he had no certainty. "Yet He has sometimes humbled me and emptied me of self."<sup>6</sup>

The existence of parties and partisanship influence within the Church were soon impressed upon Wilson as he came to consider settlement as an ordained minister. Dalry, in the Presbytery of Irvine, fell vacant, and the people desired to hear Wilson with an end of calling him to be their pastor. They had approached the patron on hearing Wilson; their hearts had become knit to him; and they indicated their desires to the Presbytery.<sup>7</sup> But the members of this Presbytery were not of the same mind as the brethren of

---

4. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 118.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. M'Crie, SSEB, op. cit., cf. p. 4.

Dunfermline Presbytery. There were few evangelical exponents to be found, and their uneasiness caused them to erect obstacles and opposition. The word of Dalry's interest reached the ears of Simson, who exerted himself to render this call abortive, by writing letters to the Irvine Presbytery. He endeavored to work on the jealousies of its members by warning of the dispersing and thinning effect such a call would have. He said the people would so flock to hear Wilson that the churches would be ruined. The majority of Irvine Presbytery had no liking for the views of Wilson and therefore readily subscribed to Simson's endeavors to thwart the call to the Church at Dalry.

Being so opposed by the Presbytery, the people of Dalry appealed to the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. "According to a desire expressed in a letter sent by the Patron of the Parish of Dalry, to the Synod, the Presbytery did appoint me to come to their bounds, and preach two Sabbaths with them. The people...are very much knit to me...The Presbytery care not much of it, fearing I be of different principles." Five months later, he wrote, "The opposition I have made to Professor Simson is at the bottom of all. But I look to a higher hand...If it be not for His glory, let it be fairly broken...He will make mountains<sup>8</sup> plain."

These remarks indicate to a large extent the conditions of the Church in Wilson's time. "Unless a young candidate found

---

8. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 128-129. See Appendix.



means of ingratiating himself with those parochial 'lord's over God's heritage'", says Eadie, "or some interested friend recommended him, all spheres of public usefulness were closed against him. The autocrat laid his hand upon the pulpit, and none were allowed but his own creatures or nominees."<sup>9</sup> People were given a negative Gospel and Parliamentary enactments. The faith of the earnest Christian was poisoned, and his privileges were wrested from him.

Glasgow had refused Wilson; Dunfermline saw his proficiency and zeal and pious ardor and licensed him; Irvine was hostile to his presence among them because of "principles different from themselves." It fell to still another Presbytery to help him get started in the work of the ministry. It was in Perth that his sphere of labor was to be marked out. He had been given an opportunity to preach in this ancient capital of Scotland, and had been so widely accepted that the people expressed their wishes strongly in his favor as third minister of the Parish. Perth lost no time in acting on their choice. The Session of St. John's Middle Kirk "having this day unanimously agreed...appoint...to wait upon the Presbytery to meet in this place tomorrow and earnestly crave that they may be pleased to appoint one of their number to moderate in a call for a third minister..."<sup>10</sup>

---

9. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 112.

10. See Appendix.

11. Minutes of St. John's Church, Perth, 1716, p. 20.  
See Appendix.

The petition was granted by the Presbytery of Perth, and, Mr. John Colquhoun of Dron was appointed to preach in Perth, "and after sermon to hold a meeting with the Magistrates, Town Council, Heritors, Elders, and all concerned...and to moderate a call to a fit and well qualified person..."<sup>12</sup>

The Kirk Session was not alone in this matter. Before two weeks had passed, the civil authorities met to discuss this affair. On Wednesday, August 22, "the Magistrates and Town Council of the Burgh of Perth being convened with Mr. Fleming (Mr. Black, the other minister, being necessarily absent) and the Elders of the Kirk Session there, in order to the calling of a third minister there to take part in the ministry, after prayer by Minister of the Gospel at Dron, it was reported that due and timious intimation of this day's meeting was made to both churches. Then all persons being called upon...to compear, consult, vote for and elect a fit and well-qualify'd person to be third minister ... thereafter, rolls of the members of the Town Council and Kirk Sessions were produced and read, and those being put upon the Leet: Mr. William Wilson, Probationer in the Presbytery of Dunfermling, Mr. Francis Archibald, Probationer in the Presbytery of Auchterarder, and Mr. James Glog, Probationer in the Presbytery of Perth.<sup>13</sup> Rolls were call'd, and votes mark'd, and by an unanimous voice the said Mr. William Wilson was chosen..."<sup>14</sup>

---

12. Minutes of the Presbytery of Perth, VIII, p. 46.

13. See Appendix.

14. MSJK, op. cit., pp. 22-25.

The Kirk Session agreed to lay the aforesaid call before the Presbytery, and appointed a Committee "to attend the Presbytery, to meet in this place tomorrow and to join those commissioned by the Town Council to lay the said call...and to crave their concurrence...and to endeavor to have him settled third minister in this place with all convenient speed."<sup>15</sup>

Wilson was in Edinburgh when news reached him of the call to Perth. "I heard...that there was a unanimous call moderated for me...and I got a letter from their Moderator to wait upon their Presbytery at their next meeting."<sup>16</sup> A month later "I came to Perth, and when I was in the Presbytery, the Moderator told me that there was a unanimous call...to take part in the ministry there. I presented my testimonial, and they were satisfied. The call was put into my hand, and I delivered it into the clerk's hand, and said that I had need of sympathy, that the Lord might make His way plain before me. They prescribed a thesis to me, upon 'The Reasons of Faith'" which he delivered "with approbation."<sup>17</sup> "I preached on the 23rd," says Wilson. "I had an exercise and admonition prescribed me on I Thessalonians 2:3. A lecture and popular sermon were also assigned." He preached again on September 30. His popular sermon, assigned by the Presbytery, was delivered the following week.<sup>18</sup> For two

---

15. MSJK, op. cit., p. 27.

16. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 136. See Appendix.

17. MPP, op. cit., p. 50.

18. See Appendix.



successive weeks - October 7 and 14 - he preached in St. John's. On the 17th, "I delivered my lecture and my other trial discourses, and was subjected to the ordinary exams. I was, in all, safely carried through."<sup>19</sup>

A more detailed report of these exams are found in the records of Presbytery. "Mr. Wilson lectured on the twentieth Psalm, and had his popular sermon on the seventh verse." At three o'clock "the Presbytery proceeded to take the rest of Mr. Wilson's tryalls. And he, having expounded his Hebrew as appointed, and a portion of the Greek New Testament...; and, having given an account of his Chronologie, defended his theses and answered his catechetical questions, thereafter he was removed. And the brethren, being particularly inquired how they were satisfied with these and all his other parts of tryalls, they answered that they were well satisfied. The Presbytery appoints the day for his ordination at Perth to be a Thursday, come fourteen days, being the first day of November, and Mr. Thomas Black, one of the Ministers at Perth, to preach; and orders the edict of the said Mr. Wilson to be served in both churches of the Burgh of Perth on Sabbath next after Divine worship in the forenoon, and the same to be returned to the Presbytery to meet in this place fourteen days against four o'clock at night, to be then call'd that, if any person or persons have anything to object, they might compear, and make known the same."<sup>20</sup>

---

19. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 137.

20. MPP, op. cit., p. 60.

As the day of his ordination drew near, Wilson assumed his policy of self-inspection concerning his call and the weighty work which lay before him. In conformity to his previous experiences, he set aside October 30 as a definite time to consider the step he was about to take. "I have a great work before me...I cannot say that I want the grace of Christ altogether. I think He has done good to my soul. He has proved and helped me."<sup>21</sup> He considered also the question that was of immediate importance: his call to the Parish of Perth. On this subject, he listed seven very thoughtful reasons for going to Perth. He was settled in his heart that the door now open at Perth was the portal through which his Lord wanted him to enter upon the work of the Kingdom.<sup>22</sup>

The great day of his life, November 1, 1716, was filled with joy and exuberance. On this eventful affair we are told, "the congregation being convened, the brethren went to Church to hear sermon, and ordain the said Mr. Wilson. Sermon being ended... the Brethren met again in Presbytery and Mr. William Wilson was added to the roll. Then the Clerk was ordered to mark that the Congregation being punctually convened, the Reverend Thomas Black preached upon Galatians 1:15-16."<sup>23</sup> He "insisted chiefly upon the first part of the 16th verse, 'To reveal His Son in me.' The

---

21. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 137.

22. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., cf. p. 138.

23. MPP, op. cit., VIII, p. 68.

Lord gave His countenance and His presence to His servant, in the whole of the work. He was enlarged in preaching; and when he came to the solemn action, he was much enlarged in praying.<sup>24</sup> Thus he concluded: "I was this day solemnly set apart for the ministry. Oh, for grace from above, that, miserably qualified and unworthy as I am, I may serve the Lord in this great and weighty work of the Gospel of His Son."<sup>25</sup>

The comfort of Perth must have been grateful in contrast to the unmerited opposition he had received from other quarters. The pastoral duties in such a cosmopolitan Burgh would be many. But Wilson assumed them with vigor and humble dependence. "A feeling of weariness and despondency often crept over him; but he gradually surmounted all difficulties and was speedily enabled with unfettered energy to do the work of an able minister."<sup>26</sup> His practice of self-examination was continued, which included special searchings just prior to Communion. At such times he inquired diligently into his views and desires. In addition, he expressed his sense of imperfection for the duties of the ministry, and his great concern for souls.<sup>27</sup> We are supplied with two experiences which occurred in July, 1719, both of which testify to the deep consecration and humility of this youthful Pastor. The first expresses a desire to receive a deep blessing in the coming

---

24. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 139.

25. Ibid. See Appendix.

26. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 120.

27. See Appendix.



Communion. "Oh, that the Lord may turn me more to Himself," he cried, "and may make this Communion the beginning of better days to my soul; let me not forsake the God of my youth. Enable me to grow in grace; to die unto sin and live unto righteousness. Oh, that on this solemn occasion, the Lord may give me some token for good, some sense of His presence and blessing in public work, and some gracious help in going forward in it." <sup>28</sup> In the second ~~he~~ he related the results of his Communion experience, and spoke thus: "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed today. I preached on II Corinthians 5, verse 20. I had some enlargement in my preaching," he said confidently, "and in the whole of the work. But my soul is not sufficiently melted for sin, nor brought completely to close with Christ." In conclusion, he exhorted his soul "to get application made of the blood of Christ for the pardon of sin...to get more true concern about my people's spiritual state...to be kept by the Lord in the way of duty..." <sup>29</sup>

The Senior Minister - Mr. Thomas Black - has already been mentioned, and the harmonious relations and pleasant fellowship which Wilson had with him throughout his ministry in Perth. The second minister was Mr. John Fleming, who had been settled in Perth three years before Wilson's ordination, but whose work was brought to a pre-mature end when he passed away early in 1721. The person selected to replace him was a certain Mr. Stewart of

---

28. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 146.

29. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 148.

Blairgowrie. Wilson opposed this measure, for the two belonged to two conflicting ecclesiastical parties. Although Wilson accepted the inevitable, and prayed for the pastor-elect, the settlement was unhappy for all concerned. "Mr. Stewart is to be settled here shortly. Oh, that he may come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, and be an instrument of much good in this place."<sup>30</sup> So long as Stewart had been pastor in a rural charge, he had been esteemed; but he agitated for a change to a larger parish; and when settled in Perth, he caused religious matters to go from bad to worse. He had formerly complained of the fatigue of rural life; but now he longed for the barony of Blairgowrie, that "fair gift even for a queen to give."

It is hardly to be expected that when three men - although given to the work of Christ's Kingdom - are brought together in such close relations, that they should have the same temperament. Black was the mature, retiring type of character, ready to mediate in all pastoral quarrels. Wilson's temper was mild and tranquil, and he possessed no little charity toward his fellow laborer. But the second minister "was a source of continued annoyance," and his "irritating nature was provoked and discontented."<sup>31</sup> He spent his time testing Wilson by his proud demeanor, and sought to over-shadow him by conceit.

Stewart's former parish was willing to recall him, but the Synod refused, so he rendered himself as unpleasant as he could

---

30. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 150.

31. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 121.

to all his associates, and made Wilson the special recipient of his spleen. He contradicted everything in the evening service that Wilson had preached in the morning.<sup>32</sup> At one time Wilson found it so

unbearable that he sought an outlet for peace and contentment.<sup>33</sup>

This outlet, however, took on disagreeable aspects and caused no little concern in the life of Perth's third minister. It had to do with a call to the parish of Rhynd, which will be discussed in due time. It is sufficient to say just now that although he wearied and accused himself of murmuring against the providence of God, yet he forbear for eleven years in a meekness that did him infinite credit.<sup>34</sup> Relief finally came to Wilson's mind in the death of Stewart, which occurred January 17, 1733.

Wilson's sketch of his colleague is both graphic and severe. "My colleague died," he said simply. "He was ordained to the ministry at Blairgowrie, where he continued for many years laboring, not without success, in the ministry of the Gospel; and, when he was there, he was beloved by his own people, and much esteemed by his brethren. He was transported to this place in July, 1721; and, though he had discovered too much eagerness for his transportation, being wearied and spent, as he alleged, with the fatigue and toil, the burden and weight, of such a numerous and extended country charge as Blair; yet he was not long here when he showed us much keenness to return to his old charge; and

---

32. See Appendix.

33. See Appendix.

34. M'Crie, SSEB, op. cit., p. 6.



the winter after his settlement here, the people of Blair agreed to recall him; but the Synod of Perth and Stirling having refused to transport him, the affair was not pushed further."<sup>35</sup>

It is a tribute to Wilson that he was a man with a mild and forgiving temper, for, in a collegiate charge, much may occur to create strife and jealousy. The work during these years might have proven a privilege and blessing had these men been happily associated. But, the situation being what it was, the Lord had given Wilson wisdom and humility throughout the severity of the burden he bore so meekly. There is every reason to expect that he would feel unequally yoked and uncomfortable, and wish for a change of surroundings himself. "But Infinite Wisdom determined otherwise. I behooved to stay in Perth, - a new scene of difficulties and trials, and those of another kind, opens unto me, as I shall afterwards narrate."<sup>36</sup>

Following the death of Stewart, Wilson went about his pastoral duties with much peace and satisfaction. But "my outward peace was very short. A new storm soon broke upon me. I loved peace and quiet, but the Lord saw meet to order quite the contrary lot for me." This storm - which fell upon the whole Church, - had its beginning in the action of the Assembly which met in 1730. In that year, a step was taken toward an impending crisis. An edict was set forth tending toward the suppression of individuals

---

35. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 211.

36. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 212. See Appendix.

making protest against the evils of the day.<sup>37</sup> An opportunity had already been given the oppressed and aggrieved parties to obtain some measure of relief for their consciences by giving in, and having duly recorded, their protests and dissents. The frequent use of this by ministers had come to be looked on by the Assembly as a nuisance that had grown intolerable, and those who guided the procedures of the Church determined to put it away. The Supreme Judicatory showed its mood by depriving minorities of "the cherished right of placing on record 'reasons for dissent.'<sup>38</sup>" The minds of many became irritated, and that a revolt should take place was nothing more than should be expected. The dominant party seemed intent at bearing down all opposition, and demand that men submit without making any attempt to emancipate themselves. We have no right to expect such from human nature. "This way of escape was opened up by the Secession...from the judicatories of the Established Church."<sup>39</sup>

In 1731 a more momentous step - in the form of an overture - was taken by the Assembly, which did not a little to ferment the public opposition, and cause the minority in the Church to regard its position as one of increasing hardship. This was unquestionably the most serious of all the advances by the ruling party. It was with the intention of crushing the right of the

---

37. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1730.

38. McEwen, TE, op. cit., p. 65. See Appendix.

39. M'Kerrow, HCS, op. cit., p. 46.

people to elect their own minister that an overture was introduced which declared - by the Act of Planting Vacant Churches - that "whereas patrons might neglect or decline to exercise the right of presentation, the minister should be chosen by a majority of the heritors, being Protestant, and the elders."<sup>40</sup> The name of the person elected was given to the congregation for approval or disapproval. If they disapproved, they were to lay their reasons before Presbytery, by whose determination the calling and entry of the minister should be concluded, according to the rules of the Church.

The avowed object of this overture was to produce a uniformity in the method of settling vacancies in those places where the right devolved upon the Presbytery. It was done in such a way as to give no countenance to popular election. In previous years Presbyteries had many times given the people all the freedom they wished. Now, however, the ruling party was resolved to render it imperative upon all Presbyteries to pursue the same restrictive rule. Alarm spread further when it was learned that heritors were not even required to be resident in the parish, or members in the Church. They might be sworn enemies of the Church and its Constitution; they might be infidels; they might be ignorant, immoral, or profane; they might choose by proxy; but, if they were Protestant, that was the only qualification for choosing the minister. This was the content of the Overture handed down to

---

40. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1731. See Appendix.



the Presbyteries for action at the ensuing Assembly, 1732. If the lower courts refused to act on the matter, it was to be submitted to the Assembly just the same, in compliance with the **Barrier Act**. "No other proof is necessary to convince us that in their administration of Church affairs, they were under the influence of a secular spirit."<sup>41</sup>

When the Assembly met in May, the minority presented two objectionable features to this piece of legislature. First, the place it assigned to the people in the settlement of a minister. The initiative was to be taken by heritors - many of whom were Episcopalians and malignants - and elders. The congregation was asked if it acquiesced or not, and the final decision was rendered by Presbytery. Secondly, they objected strenuously to the power given to heritors to influence the election of a minister, provided they answered to the general description of a Protestant. Because these pieces of legislation gave rise to so much alarm, a "representation and petition" to the Assembly began to be spoken about and a draft was submitted at Perth which, after a revision, was signed by all eighteen present.<sup>42</sup>

The treatment of this document by the officials before whom it was laid was both discourteous and discouraging. The Committee on Bills refused to transmit it on the strength of the Act, 1730. The desire of the signers to be heard was stiffly refused. Their protestation was treated in a similar manner. Even a laity's

---

41. M'Kerrow, HCS, op. cit., p. 50. See Appendix.

42. M'Crie, SSEB, op. cit., p. 16. See Appendix.

protest, drawn up with warm expressions, and complaining of the same ends "could not get the credit of a transmit to the Assembly."<sup>43</sup> When the subscribers petitioned to appear before the bar to ask for a reading, they were refused. It soon appeared that the Overture did not meet with such approval as would justify passing it into a standing law. In the vote that was taken in 1732, only six were in favor of it as it stood; twelve asked for certain modifications; thirty one made a negative reply; from eighteen Presbyteries there was no decision expressed. An Act of 1679 had stated that an overture must have "the more general opinion of the Church" before it became a standing law.<sup>44</sup> In no way could the General Assembly say that the more general opinion of the Presbyteries was in favor of the Act. However, by regarding the silence of the eighteen as an example of "silence gives consent", the Assembly declared that "in case the Presbyteries neglect to send up their opinion, the Assembly would pass it into a standing Act or not, as they saw cause."<sup>45</sup> By adding the eighteen, either absolutely or conditionally favorable, a majority of the Court so manipulated the returns as to make it appear 36-31, in favor of the Act.

The storm clouds which for months had been but the size of a man's hand, were now ready to break. The popular party within the Church deemed it a duty to testify from the pulpit against this Act. This was a privilege they had long enjoyed, but the ruling

---

43. Ibid.

44. MGA, op. cit., XVIII, 1698.

45. M'Crie, SSEB, op. cit., p. 18. See Appendix.

party had other thoughts, and resolved to stretch forth the rod of authority to prevent the exposure of their rash proceedings. "The individual whom they fixed upon for the purpose of making this experiment was Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, one of the ministers of Stirling."<sup>46</sup>

It was at Perth, October 10, 1732, that Erskine, as Moderator of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, preached the opening sermon of a three-day session. The townspeople must have been stirred by the active debates which arose in this open meeting, and all the more so when it was known that one of their ministers - Wilson - was prominent in the affair, and making common cause with his accused brother from Stirling. This sermon was "remarkable for the way in which it ruffled the temper of its hearers. A few passages might be said to be preaching to the times, and some remarks went home. The words glanced as a ray of light on the conduct of some present, in fact, it touched sore points and spoiled their tempers."<sup>47</sup>

During the course of his preaching, Erskine had uttered "many things...which gave offense," and several ministers represented this feeling to the Synod which, in turn, agreed to appoint a committee to have these "particulars under consideration" and place their reflections before the Synod at its next diet.<sup>48</sup> The Committee appointed a sub-Committee to call Mr.

---

46. M'Kerrow, HCS, op. cit., p. 57.

47. Hunt, Colin, Origin of the Secession in Perth, p. 5.

48. Minutes of Synod of Perth and Stirling, VI, p. 126.



Erskine and tell him that the strain of those expressions "gave offense...and to deal with him to see if he will acknowledge that he was in the wrong...and promise that he will not express himself on public occasions in time coming after that manner...In case Mr. Erskine refuses...the Committee recommends that the members have their own thoughts" concerning the issue.<sup>49</sup>

When this report came before the meeting of Synod, the Committee stated that they had "endeavored to show the inconsistencies and unlawfulness of several expressions," but that the defendant had told them "he was fatigued for want of sleep and much speaking, and unfit to enter upon any argument...and when the Committee... desired...a further opportunity...he told them it was in vain, for he was fixed."<sup>50</sup> The sub-Committee gave in a paper with several expressions and remarks, and the Committee decided to submit it to Synod after amendments, and with no judgments upon them. In an evening session, the paper was read. It asserted that "the strain of a good part of said sermon appears to compare the ministers of this Church with the most corrupt teachers under the Old Testament." The question was then considered, Are the expressions censurable? and it carried in the affirmative that he was guilty of "indecorous expressions, tending to disquiet the peace of the Church, and impugning certain acts of the Assembly and proceedings of Church Judicatories."<sup>51</sup>

---

49. Ibid.

50. MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 127.

51. MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 131.

At the morning session, Erskine presented a paper to his brethren disowning the versions and inferences presented by the Committee. "The strain of a great part...is not, nor can be proven..." he asserted, "for I know there is a great body of faithful ministers...I deny looking upon all ministers as thieves and robbers for I know that a vast many of them have both God's call and the Church's call...I dare not retract my testimony against lodging the power of election in heritors and elders..."<sup>52</sup>

A vote by the Synod was taken, and the majority called for a censure, whereupon Alexander Moncrieff protested and Wilson adhered. Erskine was publicly rebuked, and from this action he appealed to the ensuing Assembly.

But what connection had Wilson with this affair? He had not preached a sermon to arouse the fury of the Synod, but in these three days of debate he was neither "silent nor supine."<sup>53</sup>

In performing a yoeman's service for Erskine, he endeavored again and again to have the discussion dropped. Failing in this, he more than once vindicated the right of speech and judicial criticism of the Acts of Assembly. His bold challenge brought upon him the scowls of many, and because he protested and appealed against the sentence of Erskine - this became his offense. It is important to keep before us at this point a very vital fact: that those who protested against this action of Synod were not

---

52. MSPS, op. cit., VI, pp. 133-134. See Appendix.

53. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 149. See Appendix.

professing to justify all the language and terminology used by Erskine, but rather they were declaring "their inability to accept the position that the Assembly's decisions were above criticism."<sup>54</sup>

The mind and feelings of Wilson must have passed through various states of agitation and perplexity between the Autumn of 1732 and the Spring session of the Assembly. Such a man of prayer would do nothing less than commit the problem to Divine disposal. He was not pleased to think of a disturbance of official duties and the calmness that had been his since the passing of Stewart. He regarded the pending process with keen apprehensiveness, but still maintained his diligence and zeal for the service of the Kingdom. What it was that finally aroused him to attend the Assembly, we do not know. At one point he hesitated, for he felt he had discharged his duty by dissenting. "When the General Assembly met," he wrote, "I did hesitate a little about going to Edinburgh. I thought I had exonerated myself sufficiently by my dissent from the sentence of Synod..."<sup>55</sup>

With the coming together of the Commissioners in 1733, one of the foremost topics to be discussed was that of Erskine and his followers. The Assembly decided to hear the protest of Wilson, Moncrieff, and James Fisher, as well as that of Erskine himself. After hearing the latter, the Assembly confirmed the

---

54. M'Ewen, TE, op. cit., p. 74.

55. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 215.



actions of the Synod by declaring that "those expressions... with the answers...to be offensive," and they "appointed him to be rebuked and admonished by the Moderator in order to terminate the process, which was done accordingly."<sup>56</sup> The Assembly desired to conclude the case, and therefore treated it with contempt and ridicule. They did not enter into its character as a cause of pure Christianity. They gave no consideration to the answers submitted by Erskine, nor would they allow Wilson and Moncrieff to state their reasons of dissent, and so defend their conduct. The Assembly cared not for Wilson's oratory "and relished not his intrepidity."<sup>57</sup>

"Although I have a very great and dutiful regard to the Judicatories of this Church," declared Erskine solemnly, "I find myself obliged to protest against the said censure... craving that this my protest may be inserted in the records..." To this, Wilson and Moncrieff added: "We, the underscribing ministers, dissenting from the sentence...do hereby adhere to the above protestation...and asserting our privilege and duty to testify publicly against the same, or like defections."<sup>58</sup> The Assembly refused to receive this instrument of dissent, so the Four (James Fisher was now numbered among them) placed it upon the Clerk's table and absented themselves from the room.

---

56. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1733.

57. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 149.

58. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., ftn., pp. 217-218.

The paper fell from the table to the floor and was picked up by "a certain fiery man in the corrupt measures of that time" who had been sitting beside the table. Having read it, with an evident kindling in his countenance, "he passionately called the Assembly to pause in the business to which they had proceeded, and to consider the insufferable insult committed upon them in this paper."<sup>59</sup> The Assembly listened, and appeared "to be all in a flame." The Four Brethren were surprised to be recalled to the floor of the Assembly, but more surprised to be asked to withdraw their protest. "Wilson, Moncrieff, and Fisher...craving and protesting...and refusing to withdraw it...were ordered to the next diet, a committee was appointed to consider the paper and their conduct, and to bring in an Overture."<sup>60</sup>

The Assembly performed in a strict, arbitrary manner, by allowing the Four no word of defense, and by passing the Overture of the Committee into an Act.<sup>61</sup> Their action is almost unparalleled in severity. It reads like this: "The General Assembly ordains that the Four Brethren aforesaid appear before the Commission in August, next, and show their sorrow for their conduct... (M'Ewen adds, 'and misbehaviour') in offering to protest...and that they then retract the same. And in case they do not appear and retract...the Commission is empowered...

---

59. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1733.

60. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1733. See Appendix.

61. See Appendix.

to suspend...from the exercise of their ministry...In case the Brethren shall be suspended...the Commission is hereby empowered at their meeting in November to proceed to a higher censure... and the General Assembly do hereby appoint the several Presbyteries...to report to the Commission in August...their conduct and behaviour."<sup>62</sup>

In the intervening months between May and August, Wilson spent considerable time preparing a representation to be presented to the Commission. Also, the Kirk-Session of Perth had dispatched a respectable remonstrance to the Commission, in which they described Wilson's multifarious labors and urged lenity and forbearance until Wilson should obtain more light.<sup>63</sup> These documents stated the complete case without color or reserve. Wilson was firm and mild, yet respectful and dignified, and well worth consideration. Together, he and Moncrieff enumerated the reasons for their dissent; they vindicated with a meek dignity the various points of their procedure; they asked pointed questions concerning the places where they were accused of being in error; they declared unashamedly that all ministers were - or should be - free to exercise freedom of speech; they rededicated their fullest allegiance to the preaching of the Gospel, despite the penalties inflicted by any ecclesiastical body; and they concluded with the following pregnant statement:

---

62. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1733.

63. MSJK, op. cit., p. 62. See Appendix.



"Whatever bad effects may follow upon the course taken with us, we shall not be chargeable with them."<sup>64</sup>

These statements were given in to the Commission, but were denied a reading. The "rising storm" to which Erskine had referred "which would make all to stagger" was rapidly forming on the horizon. "The Committee took the affair under consideration ...and with great violence hastened to a decision...These Four Brethren were suspended..."<sup>65</sup> Wilson and Moncrieff laid before the Commission a protest claiming the sentence of suspension "null and void," and that they would carry on their work in spite of the censure, and any person forced upon them would be considered as an "intrusion."<sup>66</sup>

Wilson continued, in determination, to exercise his sacred office, and carry on his official duties. He resolved that his people should have a thorough acquaintance with the several causes of the dispute. Between August and November the fundamental issue developed into deepest concern. Wilson's foresight could ascertain with regret, that the Commission intended to push the dispute to extremities. "A total separation and schism; a great open breach, would be the result of imperious action."<sup>67</sup>

---

64. Wilson, William, and Moncrieff, Alexander, The Representations to the Commission of the Late General Assembly. p. 62.

65. Fraser, LDRE, op. cit., p. 64. See Appendix.

66. Wilson and Moncrieff, RCLGA, op. cit., p. 62. See Appendix.

67. M'Ewen, TE, op. cit., p. 76.

But he could not conscientiously retract his statements; nor did he feel that he could enter upon an unhallowed compromise. He was resolved, that whatever the outcome might be, he would perform his duty through the grace given to him. With enlightened fidelity, he addressed his people and gave them a full and impartial view of the entire movement. His statements were dispassionate and judicious as he spoke of the part he had taken. He was not ashamed of this nor of the course he had pursued. He was so sure that the cause for which he contended was the cause of the Gospel, that he needed not to write with any degree of suspicious reserve. All he asked was a candid hearing from those who accused him of subverting the Word and Standards. With complete confidence, he threw himself upon the Divine Testimony - upon the Constitution of the Church of Christ - upon his sermons and exhortations dealing with the vital points of ecclesiastical freedom and suffrage. It came to his attention that the Presbytery had founded ~~its~~ report to the Commission upon a sermon which he had preached following a Communion service. Accordingly, he published the sermon two months later. In fulness of heart, he wrote: "Unto the inhabitants... that ye might know the truth as it is in Christ, and that ye might be rooted and built up in Him, and may be established in the faith."<sup>68</sup>

The November meeting of the Commission was beclouded with

---

68. Wilson, William, Stedfastness in the Faith, p. xxviii. See Appendix.

perplexity. At first, the case of the suspended Brethren was tabled. "The members who were for a delay argued...that forbearance here was advisable...To process to rigorous measures might occasion schisms. Others said...that if lenity were allowed it would be ex gratia; that it was far more probable divisions would ensue from continuing these men." <sup>69</sup> The Four were called before the Commission and interrogated. They replied that they would go on as if nothing had happened, "holding themselves justified by the protest taken at the time of suspension." <sup>70</sup> They declared they would feel as free to preach and labor as if no sentence had been imposed. Their conscience, they declared, would not warrant subjection to the sentence.

Protestations from various Presbyteries were coupled with long hours of heated debate among the members of the Commission. When the question was put to a vote, it came "to a par," so that the deciding vote was cast by the Moderator. By a single vote it was resolved to proceed to a higher censure. Attempts were made to effect a compromise; the Four were entreated to withdraw their protest, on the understanding that the Commission would recommend the following Assembly to declare that the liberty of ministers was unimpaired; but the Brethren replied that they could not evade the plain fact: the Assembly had "restrained their ministerial freedom and faithfulness, and that their pro-

---

69. CM, op. cit., November 15, 1733.

70. M'Crie, SSEB, op. cit., p. 32.



test against this restraint must stand."<sup>71</sup>

On Thursday afternoon, one member of the Commission said he had reason to believe the Four Brethren, or at least some of them, stood disposed to have their mistakes removed. A Committee, appointed to pursue this rumor, reported that the Four asked the indulgence of the Commission till the next day, in order that they might consider an Overture made to them by the Committee. "Friday. The Four continued as inflexible as ever. Some urged a delay till March next...that the Assembly had not tied down the Court to proceed further till that time. 'Twas answered, the Four had thrown away all the tenderness shown...no room for further delay...it was high time to purge the Church of such men. The question carried by a vast majority - Depose."<sup>72</sup>

Seven men of the Commission protested that the Four were in their own right when they uttered complaint against the sentence, and of the Acts of Assembly which occasioned it. They went further by saying that the Brethren might hold communion with their brethren as though no decree had been leveled upon <sup>73</sup> them. The Four were called in, however, and the Moderator intimated to them the decision of the Commission.

But the Four protestors, too, had their own ideas of dutiful conduct. When the sentence against them had been completely

---

71. M'Ewen, TE, op. cit., p. 77. See Appendix.

72. CM, op. cit., November 19, 1733.

73. John Currie of Kinglassie was one of the seven.

read, they stepped forward with their document of protestation, which, undoubtedly, is one of the outstanding historical papers of the Scottish Church, and doubtless the product of Wilson's hand. On these grounds we give it in full, as an appropriate conclusion to this Chapter: "Edinburgh, November 16, 1733. - We do hereby adhere to the protestation formerly entered before this court, both in their last meeting in August, and when we appeared first before this meeting. And, further, we do protest, in our own name, and in the name of all and everyone in our respective congregations adhering to us, that, notwithstanding of this sentence passed against us, our pastoral relation shall be held and reputed firm and valid. And likewise, we do protest, that, notwithstanding, of our being cast out from ministerial communion with the Established Church of Scotland, we still hold communion with all and every one who desire, with us, to adhere to the principles of the true Presbyterian, covenanted Church of Scotland, in her doctrine, worship, government, and discipline; and particularly with every one who is groaning under the evils, and who are afflicted with the grievances we have been complaining of; who are, in their several spheres, wrestling against the same. But in regard the prevailing party in this Established Church, who have now cast us out from ministerial communion with them, are carrying on a course of defection from our reformed and covenanted principles, are suppressing ministerial freedom and faithfulness in testifying against the present backslidings in the Church, and inflicting censures upon ministers for witnessing,

by protestations and otherwise, against the same. Therefore we do, for these and other weighty reasons to be laid open in due time, protest, that we are obliged to make a SECESSION from them, till they see their sins and mistakes, and amend them. And, in like manner, we do protest, that it shall be lawful and warrantable for us to exercise the Keys of Doctrine, Discipline, and Government, according to the Word of God and Confession of Faith, and the principles and constitutions of the Church of Scotland, as if no such censure had been passed upon us. Upon all which we take instruments. And we hereby appeal unto the first, free, faithful, and reforming General Assembly of the Church of Scotland." <sup>74</sup>

---

74. M'Kerrow, HCS, op. cit., I, pp. 83-84.



"I am now a wonder to many, and my  
mother's sons are angry with me, yet  
I have peace that I am in the way of  
duty." "Memoirs", P. 265.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### "YEARS AS A SECESSION MINISTER" (1733 - 1741)

There is little doubt that as he journeyed from Edinburgh, Wilson experienced mingled feelings of injury and a conscious rectitude; sorrow, and a soothing satisfaction. From the chatter of Assembly halls, he turned to the joys of a peaceful family. From scenes of open criticism and debate, he entered the secret closet of prayer. More than this, he was on his way to enter again the ministerial functions among a flock which, by an ecclesiastical decree, was no longer his to shepherd, but in a very real sense, was as much his as ever it had been because of the consent and affection of the godly. His status as servant remained as before, and certainly he had added considerable honor and dignity to his calling.

The temper and intention of Wilson and his friends was placed beyond immediate dispute by their subsequent actions. They did not appeal to the Church Courts or the people, but, when they parted, agreed to meet in three weeks for prayer and conference, "knowing that every step they took must be measured and devout."<sup>1</sup> The meeting place selected by the Four was a roadside hamlet, Gairney Bridge, situated three miles south of Kinross. This village was chosen because it was a central meeting place of the four parishes and offered considerable seclusion.

---

1. MacEwen, TE, op. cit., p. 79.

On Sunday, December 3, Wilson went "to the Bridge of Gairney ...where he and his other three brethren spent all day in prayer and conference..."<sup>2</sup> Wilson wanted "clearness to go forward", and after an interval of retirement to seek Divine guidance, he gave his voice.<sup>3</sup> After much deliberation, the Four met (December 6) "and there, after about 2 o'clock, came the resolution of constituting themselves into a Presbytery, which accordingly they did..."<sup>4</sup> Thus, after violent agitations and the tyrannical perversions of justice, the Secession Church was born. These men laid the foundation of a Church, national in its ideal, conservative in its creed, and orderly in its procedure, even when casting off parliamentary influences and asserting the rights of conscience. Then they "did refrain from proceeding to acts of jurisdiction till they should see whether the Courts of the Church would return to their duty."<sup>5</sup>

Wilson had consented to the formation of the Associate Presbytery because he considered it a logical follow-up of the design of their protestation before the Commission, in which he and the others had declared they would exercise the keys of the Kingdom in spite of the sentence. By uniting in collegio with

---

2. Fraser, LDRE, op. cit., p. 172.

3. Carruthers, J. W. D., The Ter-Jubilee Book of the North Church of Perth, p. 8.

4. Fraser, LDRE, op. cit., p. 172.

5. MacEwan, TE, op. cit., p. 80.



his brethren, he was acting in consistency with his professed principles of belief in Presbyterianial government, than if he should act separately and independently of the others. Further, in view of the state of the National Church, he felt prompt measures should be taken to provide relief for those who were groaning under the yoke of patronage. He felt, also, that there was not the sure promise of the Head of the Church among them until they had come together in His Name. "There was some danger, if they dismissed on the present occasion, without coming to any final resolution, that they might become disunited amongst themselves, and might not be favored with another opportunity, equally convenient with the present, of forming themselves into a presbytery."<sup>6</sup>

Wilson and Moncrieff were appointed to prepare Reasons of Protestation, which had been made before the Commission. "They executed this task with great care and ability and prepared elaborate statements," says M'Kerrow of the document. This draft of their testimony, however, was mainly to justify their course. This, together with the formation of the Associate Presbytery, was regarded as temporary by the Seceders. Each of them hoped for a return, and Wilson entertained this hope more than any of the others. "The ingominy and injustice heaped upon Mr. Wilson, did not destroy within him all hopes of adjustment and filial reconciliation. He would not credit the notion that the Church was so fallen and perverse."<sup>7</sup>

---

6. M'Kerrow, HSC, op. cit., I, p. 94.

7. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 164.

When the Presbytery of Perth convened, November 28, 1713, a letter from the Commission was read showing that Moderator John Gowdie had enclosed an extract of the proceedings by the Commission with respect to the Four Brethren. The express purpose of this letter was to notify the churches of Perth of the sentence made by the Assembly. But this Presbytery went beyond their wishes. "The question had been strenuously debated before, those who were for a delay arguing, That the decision of the Commission did not require them to declare the Church vacant before the first of January, next." It was proposed that "at their next ordinary meeting they should proceed to declare the Church vacant without further delay or debate; and this question being put, it was in like manner carried in the negative."<sup>8</sup>

The following month, when the Presbytery sat, the sentence against the Seceders was read again. It was proposed by the Moderator that a list be submitted of those who were willing to intimate the sentence to these churches. Whereupon, a motion was made, asking for a previous question to be considered, viz., Whether or not the Presbytery thought it convenient to intimate the sentence. Inasmuch as this was the last day in which Presbytery could act in harmony with the terms of the sentence, the majority were in favor of putting the question, but the Moderator, James Mercer, refused. A discussion followed in which it was decided that the Moderator should leave his chair, but before

---

8. CM, op. cit., December 6, 1733. See Appendix.

he stepped down from the official rostrum, he entered his protest against the sentence.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Pilmur, the retiring Moderator, declined the invitation to take the chair. The Clerk called the roll, and the question was put: "Who shall be Moderator?" and Mr. Pilmur - much against his will - was forced to occupy the chair. He cleared himself by declaring that his occupancy was not to be taken as an intrusion upon the present Moderator.

The matter of intimations against Wilson and Moncrieff was again resumed. When it came to a vote: "Proceed to intimate or not?", Mercer and his followers **desired** to have it recorded that they declined to vote in the question, as matters then stood. In spite of this, the vote was stated, and it carried in the negative - Not intimate. "Therefore, the Presbytery did, and hereby do, refuse to intimate the Commission's sentence, considering all circumstances of this affair that have been reasoned upon as it now lies before the Presbytery..."<sup>10</sup>

When Presbytery met, January, 1734, the first item on the agenda was the sentence against Wilson and Moncrieff. A Committee was appointed to prepare answers to the letter given in from the Commission. These answers spoke of having had the extracts under consideration but because of the "peculiar importance" of the affair, they had delayed action. The Presbytery was not "unsensible" of the position these Four had taken, nor of the Commission. "We are far from approving any unwarrantable stiff-

---

9. See Appendix.

10. MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 279. See Appendix.



ness...But," and this reveals a high degree of hesitation on the part of the Presbytery, "we, with the Reverend Commission, have been pleased to delay further censure, till their meeting in March. Who knows what might have fallen out 'twixt and that time to the healing of our breach."<sup>11</sup>

In the March meeting, the Commission "heard a letter from the Presbytery of Perth" concerning their failure to intimate the sentence of the Commission against Wilson. They appointed Mr. Adam Fergusson to intimate their sentence from the pulpit of the Old Church of Perth, on or before the fourth Sunday of April.<sup>12</sup> On the 19th of April - one week before expiration date - he made his way to Perth to fulfill his duty. He was met at the suburbs by several of the inhabitants, who fell upon the gentleman, "tho' vested with supreme authority, and, attended with several armed men; yet they were all severely cudgell'd, and obliged to retire, re infecta."<sup>13</sup>

All eyes were focussed upon the Assembly of 1734. In preparation for the same, many Presbyteries and Synods instructed their Commissioners to weigh matters tactfully before voting in any harsh way. The Presbytery of Perth, in view of its genuine regard for Wilson and the cause he espoused, instructed the Commissioners to use their "utmost earnest and sincere endeavours" with the Assembly to have the sentence removed, and the Four re-instated. They

---

11. MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 282.

12. See Appendix.

13. CM, op. cit., May 2. See Appendix.

referred woefully to the "meloncholy breach made by the Commission" and unless something constructive were done they feared that the schism might spread to "other corners of the land" with disastrous results. They had no intention of judging, but had in mind the edification and "peace of the Church" rather than the credit of judicatories or reputation of particular men. "Where the safety and peace of the Church are concerned, other things of life's moment should be dropped." In conclusion, they reminded the Assembly of its initial mission of coming together - "to fall on such ways as will" put an effectual stop to "preaching in a legal strain" and a "high flowing style consisting of words of men's wisdom."<sup>14</sup> This was accompanied by a paper from the Synod of Perth and Stirling, which spoke of "particulars which ought to be condescended upon." Chief among those items was the conduct of the Commissions, "which have given no small offence," and they entreated the Assembly to "put a stop to such violent proceedings which have produced so many bad consequences."<sup>15</sup> Such was the general feeling when the Assembly convened in 1734.

The friends of the Four were mustered strong, and even some of the opposition seemed ashamed of the violent proceedings the year before. In the light of the great anxiety among the people, there was need to act with extreme caution, lest the spirit, of disaffection spread. "The proceedings of the Assembly were of

---

14. MPP, op. cit., XII, pp. 292-293.

15. MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 197.

a more popular kind and discovered more of a spirit of reformation than any that had characterized the meetings of Assembly for some time past."<sup>16</sup> There was need of calmness and wisdom of judgment. Sympathy must be had with evangelical brethren. The friends of the Brethren felt that in the critical atmosphere of the times, the path of sternness should not be harsh. Few would refrain from admitting that steps should be taken to retract certain offensive measures.<sup>17</sup>

For these reasons, therefore, the Assembly found little dissent in the repeal of the Acts of 1730 and 1732, and declared: "to prevent misapprehension and for the satisfaction of all, that due and regular ministerial freedom was still left entire to all ministers, and that the same was not, nor should be held or understood to be, anywise impaired or restrained by the late Assembly's decision in the process against Mr. Erskine."<sup>18</sup> The Act of Planting Vacant Churches, and the Act prohibiting the recording of dissent - both were repealed; the deed of the Commission, in erecting a sub-Committee to receive the trials and proceed to the ordination of a Presentee, while both the parish and the Presbytery under whose jurisdiction the matter came, opposed the settlement - this was reversed. Two Acts were passed, the one explanatory of the deed of the last Assembly; the other empowering the Synod of Perth and Stirling

---

16. M'Kerrow, HSS, op. cit., I p. 108.

17. Warrick, MCS, op. cit., cf., p. 315.

18. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1734.



to reinstate the Four to the Communion of the Church, and to restore them to their respective charges.

Here are some of the most inconsistent actions on record. They are very important, but also very strange. The Assembly of 1733 had instructed the Commission to do all that had been done. The Assembly of 1734 commands the Synod to reverse all these actions, but with one express proviso: "The Synod shall not take upon themselves to judge of the loyalty...of the former proceedings of the Church in relation to this affair, or either to approve or censure the same."<sup>19</sup> By what principle, then, should the Synod proceed? If this sentence levelled against the Four was based on just and proper grounds, how, then, could the Assembly warrantably remove the sentence? If the Assembly of 1733 had done wrong, why not admit it? This could be the only logical act of justice. If the Assembly of 1733 acted on solid grounds, then their Act should remain valid, and no other Assembly could admit these men without penitence. The tenor of the Acts, 1734, would reveal that the Assembly was moved from a sense of fear.

In compliance with the action of Assembly, the Synod did, in July, 1734, read through the Act giving them the power to proceed and "do what they shall find most justifiable and expedient" for restoring the peace and preserving the authority of the Church. The Synod felt that a restoration would "very much tend" to bring about the desire of the Church "and hereby

---

19. MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 200.

do with one voice and consent, take off the sentence, declaring the same to be of no force and effect in the future." A copy of this Declaration was given to the Brethren, and a similar draft was forwarded to the Presbytery of Perth which, on July 31, also pronounced these sentences to be "of no force or effect."

The line of policy thus taken by the Church caused Wilson to review his position and seriously consider the possibility of return. As soon as the Assembly rose, he corresponded with Ebenezer Erskine and discussed the practicability of this reunion. (His position at that time is clearly stated by himself in two of his controversial writings published some years later.)

This shows how he regretted a break in the ranks, and how much regard he had for the Acts of the Church. No step was taken without conviction, and if he could see it his duty to make a return, he would rejoice for the opportunity. His hopes arose from a high integrity, and made him as reluctant to suspect, as he was prompt to condemn. "Though he did not soon lose hope of a positive reformation in the Judicatories, he saw the utter insufficiency of all that they had done."<sup>20</sup> "The proceedings of the Assembly 1734 made me charitably hope that the Judicatories would set about reformation work; but, alas! their<sup>21</sup> after conduct gave me ground to fear..."

The work of the Secession moved into another phase when, at the twenty-first meeting of the Associate Presbytery, the

---

20. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 279. See Appendix.

21. Wilson, William, A Continuation of the Defence, p. 358.

question was debated, "Proceed to acts of jurisdiction, or not?" The motion carried in the affirmative. However, out of deference to Wilson's desire to avoid all precipitation and the appearance of such, the other three, who were clear for immediate exercise of the keys of government and discipline, "did not proceed to any step of jurisdiction."<sup>21</sup> It is quite evident, therefore, that the first difference of judgment to arise among the Seceders was on this subject and at this point. It is to Wilson's credit that he made no concealment of this when setting forth his Defence.

At this time, the Associate Presbytery was receiving numerous calls for preaching. These men had preached a few times as opportunity permitted, but were restrained to license young men to preach. With all hopes of a return to the National Church gone, they felt it imperative to give this serious consideration. Even though they were in the process of issuing manifestoes, the Associate Presbytery wanted to meet the requests for ministrations among the Praying Societies. In a single visit a Secession Church would be founded.

Also, at this juncture, Wilson and the Secession party received an important accession. It came about thus: Some weeks prior to October 21, 1736, the Town Council of Perth had expressed a desire to meet with the Elders to act on the vacancy left by William Stewart. A meeting was held, but the Elders

---

21. Wilson, C, op. cit., p. 482.



moved that before they could come to any resolution in the matter, they would like a private discussion. With such a "weighty and momentous" subject in hand, and considering that this was the first time such a topic had been discussed among them, they felt it right that they be given time for "deliberation."<sup>22</sup>

The motion was discussed, and the Council was removed. After some debate among the ministers and Elders, the issue was postponed until their next ordinary meeting. It was agreed that the two ministers - Thomas Black and Wilson - meet in the Clerk's chambers to peruse the records of Session to determine the steps of calling a minister.

The Session met the following week, and the ministers "brought in their report in write" and read it. After much discourse, the Session was informed that the Town Council "have agreed to petition the Presbytery to meet in this place tomorrow for the moderation of a call," and they "expect the concurrence of this Court in applying the Presbytery to the effect." After a long discussion, the Session adjourned until afternoon.

When they resumed debate, the question was put, "Apply the Presbytery tomorrow for a moderation, or that they grant a delay for some time until the matter be more fully advised in order to obtain a desirable harmony?" It carried by a great plurality, "Petition for a delay." They agreed that if

---

22. MSJP, op. cit., p. 2.

the Magistrates applied to Presbytery to moderate a call, that a Committee from the Session, headed by Provost Colin Brown, should wait upon the Presbytery and represent unto them that the Session did not consider the time to be "ripe" for such a call.<sup>23</sup> Brown and his Committee complied, and reported that they had waited upon Presbytery, but in spite of their heavy protest concerning a call, the desires of the Town Council had been granted for the moderation of the same.

There was great debate when this subject reached the October meeting of Presbytery. Both parties were removed from the floor, and the vote was taken. It was decided that such a moderation should be made and that the decision should be announced from the pulpits of both churches in Perth after the forenoon service of the following Sabbath, the 31st. The Presbytery set up a Committee to tell the non-residing heritors of the moderation, and suggested that since there was friction between the Council and Session, that the Committee meet with these bodies in an effort to bring about harmony. The parties were called in, and the decision intimated, whereupon the Lord Provost gave "heavy thanks."<sup>24</sup>

The next month the Committee reported that non-residing heritors had been informed, whereupon Colin Brown entered his protest that the franchise of such persons was contrary to the

---

23. MSJP, op. cit., cf., p. 13.

24. MPP, op. cit., XIII, pp. 299-300.

Presbyterian principles. The Committee replied that since all non-residing heritors had received word, they were permitted a vote though unable to attend. Brown, and eleven adherents, affirmed that no man "not of our communion" had a right to vote.

The Presbytery, however, called the roll of electors and marked their names. The Town Council and heritors compeared and their Chairman, Walter Miller, produced a commission empowering him to vote and sign a call for Mr. David Black - son of the Senior Minister. This was sustained by the Committee. The rolls were made up and approved, and the Committee gave out the following leet: David Black, George Blackie and John Faichney. The Session of Perth protested this move, but the protest was refused. The question of a minister was put to a vote, and it carried, "David Black", 37 to 16. A call was presented for Harry Lindsay, but the Committee refused that also, until the call for David Black was made up. Those who protested Black's call were not allowed to be heard. Whereupon, they declared they would appeal to Synod. Black's call<sup>25</sup> was placed in his hands, and he lodged it with the Clerk.

Certain charges were made against Black. "His voice does not reach several places of our church...he will never recover those who have been ensnared...he has been friendly with one under scandal and overcome with licquor..."<sup>26</sup> Presbytery dismissed these charges and moved to censure those who made them.

---

25. MPP, op. cit., XIII, p. 304.

26. MPP, op. cit., XIII, p. 306. See Appendix.



Time did not permit consideration of censures against the objectors, so the matter was referred to Synod. Their decision, and the subsequent decision of the Assembly, was brief and judicious. They approved David Black's call to Perth, and ordered Presbytery "to proceed to his settlement in the ordinary way with all convenient speed."<sup>27</sup>

But there was not to be the unity and peace which the Church longed to see. At the meeting of Session, at which David Black's name was placed on the record, Wilson entered his protest, and nine members of the Session adhered.<sup>28</sup> Wilson declared he was not able to sit in Session with David Black, "nor any meeting where he sits as a member," for the reasons contained in his declaration entered at the previous meeting of Session.<sup>29</sup> "This would not be," said he, "a right constitute Session," and he would feel within his right, "to meet and constitute immediately in Session with any of the Elders and Deacons who could not submit to Black's pastoral relations!"<sup>30</sup>

In the first meeting of the Associate Session in Perth, the members stated that their "protestation containing the grounds and reasons of their Secession from the present Judicatories, together with their present constituting in Session,

---

27. MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 13.

28. See Appendix.

29. See Appendix.

30. MSJP, op. cit., p. 62.

be recorded."

At a meeting four days later, the fourteen members of this Session decided to take a more important step, i. e., of joining the Associate Presbytery, and "agreed to intimate the Secession to this Presbytery." They also appointed a Commission to draw up and lay before the Presbytery of Perth "a just copy of the paper containing a Secession from the present Judicatories ...and...that this...be recorded in the books of the presbytery..."<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, a meeting was held by the Kirk Session of Perth, at which answers were written to Wilson's protestation. The Elders registered their sorrow that they ever had occasion to "enter the lists" with Wilson, and felt they had given "abundant evidence...by their silence." But, since he had been so "prodigall" in preparing and submitting declarations and protestations to be read and recorded, the Session declared that he could not expect them to remain silent. "That therefore posterity, by inspecting our records, may see how groundless these, his declarations and protestations, are, we are constrained for our own vindication to make some answers..."<sup>32</sup>

It did not seem at all surprising, they stated, that Wilson "cannot sit in our Session," seeing that "several years ago he and some of his brethren seceded from the Established Church." Black's sitting in the Session was "a mere pretence" for Wilson

---

31. MWC, op. cit., p. 10.

32. MSJP, op. cit., p. 71.

to leave it. "We approve the judgment of the Presbytery, the Synod and the General Assembly, who concurred in fixing his pastoral relations, and this, we apprehend, is more sufficient to counter-balance" his (i. e., Wilson) judgment.<sup>33</sup> As he has "kindled the fire " in ~~the~~ Church, contrary to ordination engagements when he promised not to follow divisive courses, "so he has a deep hand in kindling the fire of schism and division in this congregation." "...they have involved themselves in the guilt of an open schism and breach of the good order and peace of this place."<sup>34</sup> The Session of St. John's appointed three of its number "to convene with Colin Brown...and the Elders and Deacons who have seceded...to get a distinct and preemptory answer" concerning their return.<sup>35</sup>

The Session of the Associate Church, "taking this into their serious consideration agreed...that this Session is willing to appoint a committee of their number to commune with them."<sup>36</sup> Before the groups met, instructions were given to those of Wilson's camp. They were to point out that "their Secession from the present judicatories was on account of the violent settlement of Mr. David Black in this place, and for other weighty grounds and reasons contained in their declaration."

---

33. MSJP, op. cit., Cf., p. 74.

34. MSJP, op. cit., p. 82. See Appendix.

35. MSJP, op. cit., p. 88. See Appendix.

36. MWC, op. cit., p. 19.



The Committee was instructed to read the aforementioned document, and consider the particulars therein, and to "satisfy them," that the contents were not substantial enough for a Secession, "and to condescend upon the particulars...that are not dissatisfying to them."<sup>37</sup> As late as January, 1738, there was "no report from the brethren of this Session who have seceded." The Committee continued, however, with a view to further conferences. No union could be affected, and the Session of St. John's delayed their judgments of the Seceders "until they shall think fit to resume it." (the conferences).

About this time, the Associate Session carried further its plan to unite with the Associate Presbytery for the purpose of "contending against the present defections of this Church and land." They resolved "that an Elder should be sent" to transact this matter "because the said Reverend Presbytery are endeavoring in this sphere to testify against former, and to contend against present, defections." Provost Brown was delegated to make the journey to Kinross, and "to take with him... a copy of the Session's Declaration and Secession."<sup>38</sup> There was an informality to this adherence, and they had omitted to mention their belief in the Act, Declaration and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery. Brown declared his personal adherence to it, and stated he knew the mind of the Session to be one

---

37. MWC, op. cit., p. 22.

38. Ibid.

with himself. He was "put to the Confession," however, in that "he had been left to fall into some steps...(Oath of Abjuration) and being witness to some of the sinful steps of the Assembly's procedure without duly protesting. He was heartily sorrowful,"<sup>39</sup> whereupon the Presbytery registered its satisfaction by extending the right hand of fellowship, and added his name to the roll.

The strained relations among the Ministers and Elders of Perth came to a head in October, 1737. In this month there was transmitted to Synod a reference of a complaint against Wilson. Presbytery had referred the matter to them, "to do therein as they shall see cause." Wilson was summoned but refused to appear. The reference from Presbytery was read, along with Wilson's Declaration; also the Minutes of Perth and the answers made to Wilson. After some reasoning, they "appointed some of their members to retire and draw up an overture...the tenor whereof follows: Synod finds these four guilty of many divisive and disloyal practices...therefore, appoints a committee to draw up a libel and summon them unto the meeting of Synod..."<sup>40</sup>

This libel was submitted to Synod in February, 1738, and stated: "You have been guilty...by Secession...joined with others in erecting a Presbytery, independent...you did emit a paper in which there are several passages contrary to your duty to the Church and injurious to the civil government..."<sup>41</sup>

---

39. M'Crie, SSEB, op. cit., p. 39.

40. MSPS, op. cit., VI, pp. 104-106.

41. MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 115.

The next day the question was raised, What is to be done toward the four? There was an overture drafted to the ensuing Assembly which mentioned the "deplorable and dangerous situation" in which the Church was lodged. "Their continuing in a Secession with all the aggravating circumstances thereof...irregular practices...injurious reflections..." are threats to the unity of the Church "and we hope something can be done."<sup>42</sup>

The decisions of Synod were passed to the Associate Session through Wilson. "He and his other three brethren were cited to appear before the Synod...this day (February 21 1738) and answer to several articles to libel." Further, Wilson informed the Session, "the said three brethren and he had come to a resolution to give in a Protestation and Declinature, with the grounds and reasons thereof."<sup>43</sup> The Session unanimously approved of these documents, and appointed Colin Brown "to syne the same in their name." But the Synod did "neither call him nor any of his three brethren...and therefore they had no occasion to give" these manifestoes.

When the Assembly convened, May, 1738, the subject of the Four was brought to the front early in the session, due to the Representation submitted by the Synod of Perth and Stirling. It soon became manifest that stronger measures than suspension were in the mind of the majority.<sup>44</sup> In a Committee of the whole

---

42. MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 116. See Appendix.

43. MWC, op. cit., p. 25.

44. M'Crie, SSEB, op. cit., Cf., p. 42.



Assembly, an Act was passed "Concerning the Ministers Seceding from the Church..." The Preamble lists several acts of disaffection charged against them, beginning with their Secession, "without any justifiable grounds and are continuing" notwithstanding their ordination vows. And although their churches were "at a considerable distance from one another yet they have assumed the power of associating and electing themselves into a Presbytery..." The Four were reminded of the privilege they possessed, i. e., the Assembly, to "proceed to the due exercise of discipline", yet they chose to show all manner of "meekness, brotherly love, and forbearance," by ordering the Commission "to prepare and ripen the case" for the decision of the next Assembly.<sup>45</sup>

The meetings of the Commission in November, 1738, and March, 1739, gave effect to the instructions of the Assembly, by ripening the case for further consideration. The Presbytery had endeavored to get the Four to meet with them, but "had for answer from one of them, that he had not freedom to converse with any brethren that came to him on the footing of the Act of the late Assembly; from the other he (i. e., the Moderator) had no return..."<sup>46</sup> The first meeting of the Commission accomplished nothing. In answer to the appeal from Presbytery, they acknowledged that "certain facts...are not specially set down and circumstantial as to time and place, nor the witnesses

---

45. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1738.

46. MPP, op. cit., XX, p. 319.

for proving such facts condescended upon." They would, nevertheless, draft a Libel, if the Presbytery "would send over distinct accounts of what has been of late observed in their bounds blameable in the conduct of the brethren, with lists of names, witnesses, and designations for proving the same."<sup>47</sup>

In the March meeting of the Commission, a Libel was presented and examined more thoroughly than had been done by the Act of Assembly, 1738. In it the eight brethren<sup>48</sup> were charged with "Secession...and administration...(which were) high crimes ...and citing them to appear before the General Assembly...to answer for their conduct." Meanwhile, the Associate Presbytery was in session near Kinross, discussing their strategy for the coming days. They were joined by "not a few of their adherents, with all the eldership, excepting one, fifty heritors, and the body of the people of the town of Kilmares..."<sup>49</sup>

As the situation moved toward a head, more and more people were being admitted into the ranks of the Secession. On the agenda of the Perth Presbytery, March 28, 1739, "there was a letter produced and read by some elders of Tibbermuir," stating that they, and others of the Parish, had submitted to the jurisdiction of the Associate Presbytery. Some of these men admitted that for some time after the Secession of their

---

47. Ibid.

48. See Appendix.

49. CM, op. cit., March 22, 1739.

brother Elders they had "continued to keep Session...a considerable time...and would have stayed if the rest had not left..."<sup>50</sup>

The next day, the Commission's letter of the 15th was read from the floor of the Presbytery. This invective was directed against Wilson and the others, and executed "in order to sist these brethren before the next General Assembly." They determined to "pursue such gentle methods to reclaim them as shall be thought fit to use." They called on the Clerks of the Presbyteries in question to place before the Assembly all materials concerning the Seceding ministers, subsequent to May, 1734. Several attempts were made to "bring them back to their duty," but to no avail. The Synod sought to bring them to a place of meeting, "to converse with them at any time and place that they shall be pleased to name," and wrote to them of that purpose, stating that "in case they do not return an answer...the Synod will construct this as a declining of the authority of the Church, but got no reply from them."<sup>51</sup>

With little time for deliberation, the Associate Presbytery met, April 13, in the house of the Laird of Culfargie, and resolved to appear before the Assembly as a constitute court, but only to present a Declinature, which Wilson, Moncrieff, and Fisher had drafted, and which was adopted in 1739 at Edinburgh. This, and the libel, were well timed, for they brought about a sharper line of distinction between the two

---

50. MPP, op. cit., XX, p. 331.

51. MSPS, op. cit., VI, pp, 162, 170.



parties. By holding their parish churches, the growth of the Associate Presbytery was hindered. Their success as a separate Judicatory depended upon their ridding themselves of the links which had held them to the Established Church. This, the Declinature and Libel served to accomplish.<sup>52</sup>

Differences of opinion characterized the Assembly of 1739. Some demanded a minimum of discipline, urging that the cause of the Secession was losing its force, and that the labors of these men would suffer collapse before any censure could be inflicted. Others maintained that the only thing that would prevent a "spreading wound" was conciliation. For two days the matter was debated, and when it was put to a vote, only a margin was in favor of calling the Seceders to the bar. The Associate Presbytery had met only minutes before this summons, and after prayer and meditation, went forth to the Assembly halls. The Moderator, John Bannatyne, addressed them briefly, assuring them that, notwithstanding all that was past, the Church was willing to receive them within their ranks, and let the past be forgotten. But, they stated through their Moderator, Thomas Mair, "that they had come as a Presbytery, constituted..." and that he had been appointed to deliver the mind of that Court.<sup>53</sup> Mair was allowed to read his paper, and which declared that the present Judicatories of the National

---

52. Hunt, OSP, op. cit., p. 21.

53. MacEwen, TE, op. cit., Cf., p. 102.

Church were not "lawful nor constitute Courts of Christ." The Seceders declined "all authority, power, and jurisdiction that the said Judicatories" might claim over the Associate Presbytery "or any of the members thereof, or over any that are under their inspection." When Mair had finished, he delivered the document into the hands of the Moderator. Bannatyne exhorted them "to consider their disorderly courses and to submit to that Church to which they had vowed obedience."<sup>54</sup> He pleaded that they be not deaf to the voice of reason and Scripture.

The Seceders, however, turned away from these supplications. They left the Assembly and went to their place of meeting, and, having seriously considered the direction and assistance they believed the Lord had been pleased to give them, they declared their decision: "Non possumus." They determined to remain by their "essay at this time...and the meeting was concluded with thanksgiving and prayer."<sup>55</sup>

After the Seceders had withdrawn from the floor, a heated debate took place. The decision to delay carried by a slim margin, and deposition was stayed for the present. The Assembly, however, expressed the opinion that these brethren rightly deserved such a censure. They limited their actions by passing an overture, naming the Libel relevant to deposition. These Brethren were charged with "unparalleled boldness" in appearing as a Presbytery, and "to speak in most injurious, disrespectful,

---

54. Morren, Nathaniel, Annals of the General Assembly, I, p. 7.

55. M'Crie, SSEB, op. cit., p. 47.

and insolent terms concerning the highest authority." Yet, the Assembly hoped to reclaim them from "most unwarrantable and schismatical courses," which were ruining religion in the Church.<sup>56</sup> The Assembly, therefore, gave them "a further time to return to their duty. Their persisting in the state of Secession, said the Assembly, would render them the more inexcusable." With this, the Court referred the matter to the ensuing Assembly, "to which this Assembly do earnestly recommend to inflict the censure of deposition without further delay upon such ...as shall not...retract the said pretended Act and Declinature and return...to this Church."<sup>57</sup> It did not require the foresight of a prophet to predict, nor the insight of a profound to divine what the conclusion of the process would be the following year. The apparent cause for delay in 1739 seems to have been due to the strong leanings of some who felt that the hastiness on the part of the Assembly might lose more members to the cause of the Secession.<sup>58</sup>

It was on Saturday, May 10, 1740, that this case of such magnitude was taken up by the Assembly. Three times the Seceders were called to appear before their bar, but none obeyed. On Monday "the eight ministers of the Associate Presbytery were again called to the Assembly's door, but, none of them appearing, they read the Libel against (them), charging divisive courses relevant to incur the highest censures. It was argued

---

56. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1739. See Appendix.

57. Ibid. See Appendix.

58. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., Cf., p. 334. See Appendix.



that as the late Assembly had not finished its work, it might not seem so proper for this Assembly to do it for them...to depose men of a harmless and holy life. It was insinuated, as one means to regain these...that some expedient might be proposed to repair the breaches made by violent intrusions and settlements...and if the Assembly should proceed to extremities, that those who did this ought to provide some means to guard against the dire consequences. The answer was made that as the late Assembly had recommended this one to complete her work, to do this would restore the peace of the Church...; last year's forbearance only rendered these eight men more inexcusable. The vanity of these was a slender proof of their holiness of life, as their coming to the bar of the last Assembly...was of their orthodox principles. **It** would be agreeable for the Assembly to hear what they can propose that might prevent 'violent intrusions.'<sup>59</sup>"

On Thursday, the 15th, after sisting these men to the bar, the Assembly proceeded to enact a statute which severed the eight from any relationship with the Established Church. "After full reasoning upon the expedient thereof, and prayer to God how to judge in this weighty affair, and for His blessing on such decision as the Assembly should come to, it was agreed to put

---

<sup>59.</sup>

59. CM, op. cit., Cf., May 13, 1740.

the question, Depose, or not? And rolls being called, and votes marked, it carried by a very great majority, Depose: and, therefore, the General Assembly, in respect of the articles found relevant and proven therein...do...by virtue of the power and authority committed unto them by Him, actually depose...from the office of the holy ministry, prohibiting and discharging them...to exercise the same...within this Church; and...declare all the parishes vacant..." Copies of this sentence were<sup>60</sup> to be sent to the various Presbyteries which, in turn, "are hereby ordered to send copies hereof to the kirk-sessions..." Further, the Moderator was to send letters to the Magistrates<sup>61</sup> and enclose a copy of the sentence.

It did not seem expedient to ~~kindle~~ the flames by depositing, as there was no porportion between their enormities in separating, while there were confessedly some grounds for separation yet unredressed, and the high sentence of deposition. Those who favored deposition answered, that there was no more danger to be anticipated in cherishing them longer than by deposing them. They declared it was the duty of Assembly to proceed accordingly. Nonetheless, it was a sad day when these men were driven out of the Church. One of the most inspiring chapters of Scottish National history would never have been written, if the testimony and achievements of the Secession leaders had no place in it.

---

60. See Appendix.

61. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1740. See Appendix.

It was at Perth and Stirling that the authorities showed the greatest alacrity in giving effect to the Assembly's Act. The letter of the Moderator reached the Magistrates on Sunday, May 18. They were obsequious to the Kirk Session and resolved on that very day to enforce it. Wilson and his family were in a state of "uncommon concern." He had been made aware of the movements by the Town officials, and fortified himself by prayer. As he left the house, Margaret Glass - the lady who had stood by his father - approached him and said, "Take care what ye're doin', Mr. William, take care what ye're doin', for I fear if things gang on this way, I'll get ye're food to carry to the muir, as I did ye're father's before ye."<sup>62</sup>

Nerved and resolved, Wilson went forward to the main entrance of the Church. He passed through the immense throng, which was amazed and perplexed. The Magistrates had arrived early "to guard the Church door, and when they saw their minister coming, they shut the doors upon him."<sup>63</sup> The Pastor directed his remarks to those who guarded the entrance, demanding - on an authority greater than theirs - the freedom to enter. "In the Name of my Divine Master," he said, "I demand admission into His Temple." Three times these words were spoken, and three times he met with a curt and firm denial. By this time the multitude, "heaving in wrathful commotion," was beginning

---

62. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 338.

63. Burgh Records of Perth, 1740.



to stir as one person, and those who had heard the consecutive demands for admission, became restless and impatient. A low murmur rippled through the assemblage: "Mr. Wilson is kept out of the kirk." A storm was rising; one minute more and it would burst. It was the impulse of the group to stone the officials who had blocked the path of their Pastor. When Wilson knew of this, he turned to them, and with a serene countenance and tranquil attitude, he stayed the execution of their purpose. In tones of earnest and impressive calmness, he said, "No violence, my friends; the Master whom I serve is the Prince of Peace."<sup>64</sup>

Mr. Andrew Ferrier, a respected gentleman of Perth, accompanied Wilson to the Church, and protested to the authorities of their conduct. He reminded them that they would not be able to justify themselves before God or man for their actions. They replied, "they would take men in their own hands, and would answer to God when they were called." At this point the Deacon of Glover's Corporation stepped forward and offered Wilson the opportunity of holding services in the Yard of the Corporation. He accepted the offer without comment, and thence he departed, with a vast concourse adjourning with him. It did not take long to set up a temporary pulpit from which to conduct the service. From the building from which Wilson had been ejected "Mr. John Haly, then a Probationer, employed by Mr.

---

64. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 340.

David Black to preach that day, being attended by the said Mr. Black, was, with the assistance of the Magistrates, thrust into the pulpit."<sup>65</sup>

Throughout these incidents, Wilson remained calm and self-possessed. His usefulness was extended more that day than it ever could have been had he preached in the Church of St. John's. The multitude was larger than the Kirk could have accommodated. Undoubtedly, many followed out of curiosity, but the majority went because of their interest in the events of the case, and their devotion to their Pastor. There was something extremely appropriate in the Scripture lesson he selected for the occasion:

"He was no foe that reproach'd me,  
Then that endure I could;  
Nor hater that did 'gainst me boast,  
From him me hide I would.

But thou, man, who mine equal, guide,  
And mine acquaintance wast;  
We joined sweet counsels, to God's house  
In company we pass'd." 66

Hundreds felt the truth of these words; they felt the bitter pang of exile. It was not the world, but the Church which reproached them. His pastoral prayer was perhaps breathed with a spirit of humility and resignation to God's will, and how even these untimely happenings might fall out to the furtherance of the Kingdom. The reading of his text must have produced a real experience in the heart of everyone present, as he

---

65. Wilson, C, op. cit., p. 419.

66. Psalm 55:12-14.

uttered those expressive words: "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp; bearing His reproach." The deep solemnity in which they were spoken, and the manner in which he awakened the people, were a most vivid commentary on his text. This service was a living illustration of the duty inculcated by the Epistle.

It fell to Wilson, by rotation, to officiate in the afternoon service at the Old Church, Perth. But immediately after worship in the forenoon, the Town Deputy Clerk - Walter Miller - approached him with two of the Town Sergeants and "discharged him to enter the Church of Perth to preach there that afternoon, or any time afterwards." Wilson's reply was, that he was ready to obey in things lawful, but "he conceived the above prohibition to be unjust and unlawful," and declared he would attend and officiate in the pulpit of Perth until by "force and violence he was kept from it."<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the doors of the Church were shut "about a quarter of an hour before the beginning of public worship." The Magistrates, together with David Black and John Haly, entered the Church and rang the bell a few minutes before the "ordinary hour." Upon hearing the bell, Wilson (so he later reported to the Session) made his way toward the Church, and found some baillies of the town standing without, "they having caused the wicket door to be shut," when they saw him coming. The baillies continued preemptorily to

---

67. MWC, op. cit., p. 60.



refuse him access, whereupon he retired to the Glover's Yard and preached "without the least disturbance or indecency."<sup>68</sup>

When he completed his report, the Session unanimously resolved, that while the situation remained as it was, "they would continue...in the Glover's Yard...both forenoon and afternoon every Lord's Day."

Wilson's followers were determined to maintain the witness of the Gospel through him. Steps were immediately taken to secure, by purchase, a convenient site upon which to build a Church. This was on May 19, and four days later there were one hundred eighty subscribers to the building fund.<sup>69</sup> This work was so vigorously prosecuted that by the end of November, 1740, the congregation was worshipping in the new building - known to us as the Wilson Church. As the weeks passed, the Church was not able to contain such "as are willing to wait upon Gospel ordinances," and it became necessary to erect lofts to fulfill the need. To meet the expense for this project, the Session recommended that the public offerings be used. At a later meeting it was decided there was need of a Session house, to be used by themselves and their minister. "Considering how much has already been subscribed by the congregation for building the Church and the lofts, the Session agrees to meet the cost of the Session house out of their box."<sup>70</sup>

---

68. MWC, op. cit., p. 62.

69. See Appendix.

70. MWC, op. cit., p. 73. See Appendix.

The construction of the Church and lofts was carried on rapidly. The congregation gathered funds liberally, but it "has not been sufficient for so great a work." The Session recommended, therefore, that a "voluntary collection" be taken at the Church doors - the sum of which was 27 pounds, 2 shillings, and 2 pence.<sup>71</sup> During these weeks of work upon the Church, Wilson had preached in the open. This strenuous activity, combined with the inclemency of the weather, had their telling effect upon him. His constitution became weakened by the chilly days. Fatigue and exposure made themselves visible in his body, and the downward path he was now following took away certain energies which he never again regained.

Wilson was spared but a short time to minister to the Associate Church of Perth. He was but fifty-one years of age at the time of his death, yet at that time he was pre-maturely old. The passage from which his last sermon was preached is engraved on his tomb at Greyfriars Churchyard.<sup>72</sup> The theme of the text was quite obvious in his sermon of the previous week (Septemner 27, 1740.) He had "dispensed the Lord's Supper, and preached with ordinary emotions and impressiveness." There was hallowed solemnity in his voice as he meditated upon the words of the Psalmist. From that hour on, however, he became increas-

---

71. MWC, op. cit., p. 79.

72. See Appendix.

ingly indisposed. His intimate friend, Moncrieff of Culfargie, visited him and urged that he take a rest in his country home, but the relaxation and change brought little amelioration, and gave only temporary respite. At the end of a week, he returned to his home in Perth. Increased debility prevented him from climbing the sublime brow of the breezy summits. There was no active disease or infirmity; his nervous energies had been expended; and he pined away beneath that which Eadie calls "a drooping lassitude."

On the first Sunday of November, he baptized the twins, lately born into the home of James Fisher. This was his last piece of public ministerial work. Within eighteen months of his deposition, his robust body had given way to tension and sickness, and he sank beneath the weight of toil. <sup>73</sup>

The announcement of his death came as a shock to the congregation. A week later, the Session met under the Moderatorship of Ebenezer Erskine. "Since the last time the Session met," states the Minute, "when the death of Provost Brown was marked, it pleased a Sovereign Lord upon the 14th current, likewise, to call home to Himself our dear and worthy Pastor, who has exercised his ministry for about twenty-five years, to the great comfort and edification of the mystical Body of Christ in this place, with which meloncholy dispensation the Session desire to be deeply effected and to reverence the Lord's Name." <sup>74</sup>

---

73. See Appendix.

74. MWC, op. cit., pp. 89-90. See Appendix.



Wilson's last resting place is identified by a large table stone which has for ornamentation two cherubim faces and an open Bible. Around the edges are the names of those members of his family who are buried with him. They are: Margaret, his wife; Marjory, Catherine, Thomas, George, Gilbert, Elizabeth, and James.<sup>75</sup> The epitaph on his tomb was composed by his friend and brother, Ralph Erskine. It is in two parts, the first of which is Latin pentameter, and the second in English couplets. The entire inscription reads thus:

"Monumentum Mri. Guilelmi Wilson,  
Pastoris Perthensis, Qui in Domino Suo  
Jesu Christo Oblit, Anno 1741  
Aetatis Suae 51

Nuper eras Pastor divus, Doctorque disertus,  
Nunc super astra volas, hic licet ossa cubant;  
Magnum edunt nomen tua dicta, didactica majus,  
Caelica vita comes maximum et uberius.

"More brave than David's mighty men,  
This champion fought it fair.  
In truth's defence, both by the pen,  
The pulpit, and the chair.

"He stood with his associates, true  
To Scotland's solemn oath,  
And taught to render homage due  
To God and Caesar both.

"Earth raging, from his sacred post  
D'barred the worthy sage;  
Heav'n frown'd, and sent a furious host,  
To 'venge the sacrilege.

"Mourn, Zion! Your Elijah's gone,  
And wafted to the skies;  
Mourn! till his fiery car brings down  
A soul of equal size."

Thus did William Wilson, exponent of the Covenant, live and die. His influence in the Church, and in the theological think-

---

75. See Appendix.

ing of his day, we can never fully ascertain. But we shall seek to examine the work of this man in relation to the Scottish Church and his influence upon it.

"He that preaches, must seriously consider, that the great design of preaching is to gather in souls to the Saviour of sinners..." "Memoirs", P.98



## CHAPTER FOUR

### "WILSON AS PREACHER AND TEACHER"

In Wilson's private devotional periods there is to be found a spirit that marks him as a preacher of the Scriptures. Throughout his ministry he was conscious of the magnitude and honorable nature of his task and the responsibility which had been laid upon him to preach truth and righteousness as he believed they should be preached. His stature as preacher and teacher, therefore, can be measured by his deep consecration and faithfulness for gaining personal holiness and having his heart right in the Lord's sight.

The day after his licensure he visited Saline where he was asked to deliver the week-day message. "I did not know well what to do. I had no clearness to refuse the call, and in prayer I met with some enlargement on that text in the sixty-eighth Psalm. The Lord brought to my mind nine observations from it which I had written; and then I went to the pulpit and delivered them with great freedom."<sup>1</sup>

His first Sunday Sermon was preached September 27, at which time he recorded, "I discoursed on these words of the sixty-first Psalm...I was straightened in the morning, but met with some enlargement in the afternoon."<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 95.

2. Ibid.

At the outset of his ministry, Wilson put down certain rules which he as a preacher determined to observe. They were listed under the heading: "Remarks concerning preaching the Gospel, and directions in order to my right management of this great and weighty work." These sum up succinctly his impressions of the ministry. "The work of a preacher...is to stand for God and to speak for God...He must be clear that he has the call of the Lord ...to bring up souls in the faith...The preacher of the glorious Gospel should be much occupied in meditation and prayer, much employed in studying the Scriptures, and much concerned in living near God, and drawing nearer God...Depending upon the Lord for method and matter, seek that He may direct thy mind to conceive, and thy hand to write."

"Go into the pulpit...with a holy awe and dread of God... depending upon the Lord Jesus for strength and support...Deliver the truth of God as the very truth of God, and not as the word of man."<sup>3</sup> These, and other directions, reveal how well his early training had equipped him for the work into which he was now entering.

In Wilson's experience there are two interesting factors which ought to serve as stimuli for every preacher of the Gospel. The first is: Wilson sought to put all he possessed into his sermons and so receive for himself and the congregation some degree of spiritual blessing. **Second**, he exercised the habit of seek-

---

3. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 96-101.

ing guidance from God, not only in choosing a subject, but in the composition of the message. He was careful to review the state of his soul while in the pulpit, in order that when he looked for God to help, he might receive the necessary strength to guard against wrong doing in His service. On some occasions, "the Lord was present with me and enlarged me very much." Other times, he found "little or nothing" of faith in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Wilson's ability in the pulpit came to the fore in his Moderatorial sermon, preached at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling at Perth, April 11, 1727. His topic, based upon Psalm 90:17, was entitled: "The Watchman's Duty and Desire, or, The Prayer of Faithful Ministers for the Lord's Beauty on His Church, and Success in Their Work." There are three things which contribute to the Church's beauty. There is the Beauty of Purity, which consists in the conformity of the Church's doctrine, worship, government and discipline to the Word of God. "The Beauty of Power is much to be desired likewise." This consists in the special presence of the Lord in the Church with the ordinances of His own institution and appointment.<sup>5</sup>

He continues: "The Beauty of Unity is much to be desired also." This is to be found in the "harmony in doctrine and practice amongst her members...knit together in love and affection to one another." With these positions laid down and enforced, the discourse goes on to show that it is "the duty of the Church's

---

4. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 109-112.

5. Wilson, William, Sermons, No. 4, p. 8.



watchmen, in a special manner, to be concerned that the beauty of the Lord may be upon His Church." With respect to Purity, there is a special charge to the watchmen that "the Church receive no spot." With respect to Power, it is the duty of the watchman to plead for the Divine Spirit to "consider them." With respect to Unity, it is incumbent upon the watchman "to maintain it where it is, and to endeavor to recover it when in any measure it is lost."<sup>6</sup>

He reminds his hearers that the Church's watchmen are employed under two heads: "gathering in...and building up," which, in that day "is very much at a stand."<sup>7</sup> The Church, thought the Preacher, was under many threatening providences that presage a night, yet these very providences indicate that a morning is coming. One cannot but feel the power of his message as he nears his conclusion. The foundations of the Reformation are "boldly struck at, not only by openly avowed Atheists and Deists, that deny all revealed religion, but also by some who...are not afraid to move debates, concerning Christ's Deity...Take heed that ye weaken not the workmen's hands...stumble not at the Lord's work in our hands...look well how the Word of God thrives in your hearts...Join with us in this holy importunity."<sup>8</sup>

This is not only a fair sample of Wilson's pulpit minis-

---

6. Wilson, S, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

7. Wilson, S, op. cit., p. 26.

8. Wilson, S, op. cit., pp. 28-30.

trations, but also presents a very important fact - this concio ad clerum in the beginning of the eighteenth century was one of the important institutions of the day frequently employed to be the manifesto of a party, and from which, in the absence of magazines, monthlies, reviews and such like, the currents of ecclesiastical life and the direction they were taking, could be discussed. This sermon had successors, as well as predecessors, though it could hardly be said that there was one more worthy in theme and author. As the practice of testifying from the pulpit became common among evangelical ministers, the irritation and hatred of their opponents arose.<sup>9</sup>

We have the substance of several of Wilson's sermons, preached during 1729 and 1730, under the title, "The Spiritual Seed of Christ Preserved in all Ages," which were found after his death, corrected with his own hand; an incontestible evidence that he designed the publication of the same. In this collection he developed the thought that the "day shall never dawn wherein it can be said that Christ's spiritual seed do altogether fail."<sup>10</sup> To convince his hearers of this, he goes on to show what is meant by "Christ's spiritual seed." "All that are ordained unto eternal life" are included in this number, as well as those who are "effectually called." These persons are called Christ's seed because "they spring from Him...they have all their spirit-

---

9. See Appendix.

10. Wilson, William, Sermons, No. 3, p. 5.

ual being from Him...they resemble Him in the new nature...in the Spirit."<sup>11</sup> This seed is preserved "by the concurrence of the Holy Spirit and the Word," and by the testimony of those who are Christ's. His sermon is concluded by lashing out at the enemies of the Church. "All the parts of our covenanted Reformation are at this day assaulted," he declared, "the foundations of doctrine are undermined. There is a universal degeneracy at this time from the power and life of religion. Corruption in practice prevails exceedingly...Sins of all kinds abound both against the first and second tables of the Law. The spiritual glory is very much departed from all the churches of Christ...Lukewarmness and indifference are very epidemic at this day."<sup>12</sup> He calls upon those who are Christ's spiritual seed to beseech God to "vindicate His own truths," for the truth which Christ had committed to His seed is "a sacred trust...the most valuable treasure we can leave behind."

In his sermon entitled "Stedfastness in the Faith," Wilson prefixed a "Short Account of the Occasion" for publishing his discourse. He termed the Act, 1732, - Concerning the Settlement of Churches - "the Shibboleth of our divided and distracted times," - and enters to considerable length upon a scriptural proof of the position that "to impose a minister upon a reclaiming and dissenting people...appears to me to be contrary to apostolic example and practice recorded in the New Testament."<sup>13</sup>

---

11. Wilson, S, op. cit., pp. 11, 14.

12. Wilson, S, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

13. Wilson, William, A Vindication and Defence of the Christian People's Divine Right to Choose Their Own Ministers. p. 7



He warns against what may follow as a result of the sentence of August, 1733. He anticipated further trouble, and hoped that his people would never be ashamed of his bonds. "That ye may know the truth as it is in Christ, and that ye may be rooted and built up in Him, and that ye may be established in the faith, is the prayer of him who is one of your pastors."<sup>14</sup>

The sermon itself is of a strong practical turn, abounding in wise counsels, such as might fitly be addressed to those who had just been at the Lord's Table, some of them for the first time. The references to the ecclesiastical difficulty of the day are not numerous, neither are they strongly worded. Speaking of the Kingly office of Christ, and the Word of His patience "given unto the Church of Scotland in a particular manner to contend for," Wilson said, "And, therefore, if the Church authority is exercised beyond the line of the Word, or in a contrariety unto the laws and institutions of Christ the only Lord and Lawgiver unto His Church, 'tis not to be regarded."<sup>15</sup> In anticipation of the question, "To whom it belongs to give testimony unto controverted and opposed truths?" he replied, "...Ministers are the watchmen set upon the Church's walls; and, if they see danger coming...the authority of the Lord Jesus obligeth them to speak...All the inhabitants ought...bear witness unto opposed truth."

---

14. Wilson, PRCM, op. cit., p. 8.

15. Wilson, William, Sermons, No 5, p. 14.

These are the only statements to be found in the sermon that can in any way be construed as reflections upon the actions of former Assemblies, and they are not in any way of such nature as to incur a large amount of ministerial misdemeanor. The remainder of the sermon sets forth propositions and principles concerning the steadfastness of the believer in the faith of Christ. "Live upon Christ your living Head...Put on the whole armour of God... Let truth in the inward parts be your guide...It is by this that you must make your way through a host that may encamp against you."<sup>16</sup>

Wilson deemed it his duty to expose any fraud. Such plain speaking and faithful witnessing in the interests of morality secured for him the cordial dislike of some. Especially was this the case with a club of free thinkers, or, as Wilson phrased it, "gentlemen of the Deistical principles," who had determined to let him know and feel the weight of their resentment. Accordingly, one Tuesday evening there was sent to his house "by an unknown hand" and anonymous document which bore several malicious insinuations and ungenerous imputations. Among the charges was one which labelled him as "the author of a riot and insolence" committed by a mob which threatened violence to an exhibitor of paintings dealing with sacred objects, whose exhibitions Wilson had publicly denounced. A travelling showman had brought to Perth a picture of the suffering Christ for the purpose of pro-

---

16. Wilson, S, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

fitting by the exhibition of the work of art. But, retorted Wilson, "I spoke nothing but what my duty and office obliged me unto."<sup>17</sup>

Numerous copies of this "unsubscribed missive" had been promiscuously distributed throughout the environs of Perth. But the assailed minister proved himself quite equal to the requirements of the occasion. At the time the attack reached him, he was preparing "a short summary of the truths of the Gospel," which he set forth under the topic: "The Blessedness Lost in the First Adam to Be Found in the Second Adam."<sup>18</sup>

The Preface of this sermon is written with great plainness and force. He is persuaded the Deists know "that there is no truth in any of your wicked and railing insinuations." He is not surprised of their treatment of him, for "I am warned of it; I have the honor to be His servant by office, who has told me." He is well aware that he has been attacked only in order that through him revealed religion may be assailed; the doctrine of the Gospel which he proclaims being denounced by them as "airy speculations concerning faith; mere phantoms of religion which are no where to be found but in a School-Divinity, or in the brains of a hot enthusiast."<sup>19</sup> He was not without knowledge of what was at the bottom of their resentment against him, and he

---

17. Wilson, William, Sermons, No. 7, p. v.

18. See Appendix.

19. Wilson, S, op. cit., p. iv.



proceeded to "unriddle" a great part of the missive by stating testimonies against the laxities and immoralities of the day. After reading this trenchant composition, the Deists of Perth would probably consider it unwise to malign Wilson again by unsubscribed missives; certainly, we do not read of any more trouble from that quarter.

This sermon is possessed with considerable power and reasoning in enforcing the argument. Almost like a chain of compacted scriptural demonstrations is this pithy message to those who boasted natural religion and spurned the Divine oracles. One needs only to be found in Christ to know of His blessedness and the "insufficiency of natural religion to lead men to happiness." "A set of men in the present age, who have rejected the Bible...affirm, That there is sufficiency in what they call natural religion for obtaining eternal felicity and blessedness."<sup>20</sup> "From this it is to be assumed," declared Wilson, "there is no necessity of Divine revelation." To believe that the common notices we have from Nature are sufficient to conduct men to blessedness is to hold the identical principles "upon which the ancient heathen philosophers rejected the Gospel of Christ." Is it possible for these Naturalists to give us any mean by which sin is pardoned and repair done to the dishonor of God? "The last resort and shift of the miserable and Deist, for quieting his guilty conscience, is his notion of the general

---

20. Wilson, S, op. cit., p. 38.

goodness of God. God, says he, is infinitely good, and therefore, if we repent our sins, that is, if we are sorry for them, and return to our duty, He will surely pardon and forgive." <sup>21</sup> "Is repentance a sufficient atonement for their heinous rebellion against the sovereign of heaven and earth?" asked Wilson. When the way to blessedness, which God has given in Christ, is rejected, what security can miserable man have for obtaining peace and reconciliation with God? With a keen sense of value for the spiritual things, Wilson warned his people against any pretended picture of Christ which was shown for money under the pretence of showing "a fine piece of paint." "This," he asserted, "is a most profane prostituting of the sacred mysteries of our holy Christian religion." By exhortation and advice he called upon his congregation to seek the blessedness that is found in Christ. By clearness of thought and beauty of expression, replete with pointed applications of the Divine truth, characterized by large and practical views of nature, did Wilson set forth in this sermon the lessons of peculiar events of his own period.

The sermon entitled "The Church's Extremity, Christ's Opportunity" uses the travail of a woman as illustrative of the conflicts of the Church of Scotland. Though beset by conflicts she shall "have a promising and glorious issue." Before the people of God are delivered, He will try their "faith and their patience...that God's hand may be seen in giving the deliverance

---

21. Wilson, S, op. cit., p. 36.

...that He may refine and purify the daughters of Zion."<sup>22</sup>

His text is most expressive of the existing situation: "Are we not cast out of the bosom of the present established Church by their iniquitous Acts and Procedures? But then... we may be made to dwell in the field, yea, brought even to Babylon."<sup>23</sup> But, warned the Preacher, "You shall smart for your opposing a testimony...Ye are blinded as to the cause of Christ...Is this not a threatening sign that we shall go even to Babylon before we be delivered?"<sup>24</sup>

The language of this sermon is eloquent in its concinnity and terseness. It carries a dynamic that was needful for the situation, and is filled with insight into the basic issues of the day. In his thought, "the Church lies open to the wild beasts of the field," and, unless God return in power and righteousness, the cause of Christ shall be retarded. It is with heart-felt passion that he concludes: "Oh, may the time come... May He build up Zion, and appear in His glory!"

In August, 1738, Wilson preached at Orwell, the Communion sermon on the 6th, and the Monday-sermon. The substance of both messages have been preserved for us under the topic "The Lord's Retinue Attending Him Whithersoever He Goeth."<sup>25</sup> Both are filled with Christian love and earnestness. Noticably absent is the tir-

---

22. Wilson, William, Sermons, No.1, pp. 21-22.

23. Wilson, S, op. cit., p. 30.

24. Wilson, S, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

25. Wilson, William, Sermons, No. 2.



ading upon the state of the Church. Instead, he called for sincere living and true consecration. The sermon which he preached at the Table is one which the communicant would enjoy at such an occasion. He turned first to "the Worthy Lamb" who, "by price and power redeemed His followers," from the darkness and death of sin. "The soul can never have solid rest, until it be pointed toward the Great Pole, Christ Jesus the Worthy Lamb."<sup>26</sup> Those who follow the Lamb have a new song, the Object of which is the Lamb Himself, and the matter of which is a mystery known only to those who are redeemed. "It is just a song of the grace of God manifested and displayed in the face of Jesus Christ; it is a song of the seasonableness of mercy," which only those who by faith have received a new heart and a new spirit can sing. "He hath given Himself for you; go ye, then, and take a view of the Worthy Lamb in the Sacrament, in the Ordinance of His Supper. Go, and there behold the Lamb of God."<sup>27</sup>

The next day, he exhorted his hearers to have a "close correspondence with the Lamb," for only those who have frequent meditations and entire subjection and obedience can follow Him. In an effort to account for His position, Wilson said, "There are, no doubt, some good men and ministers, who have got their mission from Christ, who condemn our present Secession from the Judicatories of this Church, as a thing quite needless; but when the truths and institutions of the Lamb are so manifestly attacked

---

26. Wilson, S, op. cit., p. 16.

27. Wilson, S, op. cit., p. 29.

as they have been, is it not highly reasonable and necessary?"

The remainder of the sermon is filled with exhortations to those who are the "professed followers of the Lamb," to lay down their life with Christ and follow whithersoever He may lead. This is a strong message, filled with challenging statements, and with pointed questions. They are the words of a mature and pious mind.

The following Summer, Wilson preached again at Orwell, and used as a topic: "The Evening Time of the Church of Christ Issuing in Light". This sermon was taken in writing as it was delivered, and is peculiarly suited to the times. Wilson saw, and warned, against the "false lights" which had arisen, and aimed his remarks against them. A spirit of error, heresy and gross delusion is now spreading in many corners of the land... the truths of Christ are now impugned and blasphemed... 'tis evening time with us... Let us rejoice even among all these dismal appearances, 'That at evening time, it shall be light.'<sup>29</sup> His hearers were strengthened in the truth that "though the spirit of error and delusion prevails mightily" yet out of it shall issue the blessing of God and the glory of Christ. The sermon is concluded on a note of hope and confidence. "The Church has His promise for it; His faithfulness and veracity are pledged; and the Church's faith may stand firm and secure on the faithfulness of God, that cannot lie."<sup>30</sup>

---

28. Wilson, S, op. cit., p. 39.

29. Wilson, William, Sermons, No. 8, pp. 17-18.

30. Wilson, S, op. cit., p. 44.

The first recorded sermon preached in "the new Church of Perth" is dated September 20, 1741 - two months before Wilson's death. "The day of a Sinner's Believing in Christ" is brief, but filled with the type of devotion which should be possessed as one approaches the Lord's Table.<sup>31</sup> Throughout this spiritual dialogue, he shows the relation existing between Christ - who is represented under the notion and character of a Bridegroom - and the Church - which is represented under the character of a Bride. The day of believing is a day of Christ's espousal unto the sinner. He acknowledges Christ to be what He really is, "...the Lord Christ." In believing, one expresses a cordial subjection to Him, submitting to His rule, government, and law as "a rule of life and obedience." "Be not afraid to come to Him, be not shy to come to Him, just put yourself into His hand, that you may partake of His goodness, share in His grace and spirit, and be safely carried through, honestly borne up in the dark and winnowing day wherein we live."<sup>32</sup>

Thus is closed this most earnest and vital sermon which preceded the Communion. Of his preserved messages, Wilson is more passionate in this than any other, possibly because of the immediate prevailing circumstances and the great strain upon his own life. There are four discourses annexed to this sermon which were delivered on the same occasion. On the evening of the Fast-

---

31. See Appendix.

32. Wilson, William, Sermons, No. 6, Cf., p. 28.



day, September 17, he called upon those who are "under a load of guilt" to come to Christ and receive His rest.<sup>33</sup> At the Preparatory service two days later he urged his people to "draw near unto God in Christ." "You have heard much of Christ; but, my friends, you have heard but very little of Him in comparison of what He is; He is a Saviour of God's making, the manifold wisdom of God."

At the First Table, Wilson presented them "a whole Christ" in the Sacrament of the Supper, and called upon them to "subscribe with the hand of faith unto the Lord." "Go from the Lord's Table, leaning and depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and may His grace and spirit be with you."<sup>34</sup> After this solemn work was ended, he met with his people "to drop a few things." In his remarks, he recalled with emphasis the various thoughts contained in his meditation and three discourses. "Our duty is to keep by the Lamb and to pitch our tents where He sets up His standard." "I do not say you must approve of every step we take; but cleave to the covenanted order and government of the covenanted Kirk of Scotland in opposition unto a course of defection from the same."<sup>35</sup>

Though the printed works of Wilson are not numerous, a powerful ministry is exhibited in these sermons. In spite of the

---

33. Wilson, S, op. cit., p. 37.

34. Ibid.

35. Wilson, S, op. cit., pp. 57-59.

many pastoral duties, and the time which public labors consumed, he preached four sermons weekly. All his messages are distinguished "not by graces of finished composition, but evangelical fulness and fervor."<sup>36</sup> Any one of these sermons reveal numerous divisions and digressions which render them lengthy and protracted. He lacks the animation and power of Ebenezer, and the imagery of Ralph Erskine; yet, each sermon is filled with simplicity and practical effects. The style is plain. There is an aloofness to scholastic refinement. He sought only to present Christ and salvation as freely and as directly as did the Scriptures. John Brown of Haddington testified thus to his power in preaching: "I can recall that, while sitting on the Brae of Abernethy hearing him, I got more insight into that marrow of the Gospel, 'My God,' than ever I got before or since."<sup>37</sup>

As a preacher, he was decidedly evangelical. After obtaining the knowledge, and experiencing in his own soul the salutary power of the doctrine of grace, he declared them clearly and boldly to others, and gave them all the prominence which their vast importance required. His ardent attachment to these doctrines, and his resolution to make them the chief topic of his sermons, are strongly and happily expressed. His discourses,

---

36. Eadie, John, United Presbyterian Fathers, p. 37.

37. Brown, John, Gospel Truths, p. 194. See Appendix.

at the same time, are by no means mere abstract reasonings on evangelical truths. He was careful to make a close application of the truth to the conscience and heart, and to illustrate its sanctifying influence on all walks of life. His preaching was not old and lifeless teaching but the good news of salvation. He did not fail to commend Christ to his congregation with an earnestness and devotion that revealed the love of his own heart. He called upon his hearers to repent and believe; with no uncertainty, he set forth the doom of the impenitent. He insisted upon holiness of life and character, for the end of the Gospel was goodness and purity. He laid an impressive emphasis upon the personal response of the individual, to transact for himself with God, the great business of the soul.

His appearance and manner were, no doubt, conducive to the acceptability and usefulness of his public ministrations. His portrait reveals a manly and interesting countenance, and, undoubtedly, a strong, yet pleasing voice. His sermons are alluring, grave, and impressive. His whole demeanor, in short, was characterized by a singular dignity, well suited to the sacred office of a messenger of the Lord, and to the important and delightful message he announced. An extract from a Mrs. Balderston's "Diary", written in Edinburgh, serves to show the estimation in which Wilson was held by the pious, as a preacher who invited a commanding majesty with a heavenliness and mildness.

"Heard Mr. Wilson was to preach in his mother-in-law's. I went away rejoicing..."<sup>38</sup>

---

38. Fraser, Donald, Life and Diary of Ralph Erskine, p. 143.



Wilson's messages are free from juvenile excrescences, but filled with piety and maturity. On one occasion, Ralph Erskine noted: "I was quickened and refreshed in the time of Mr. Wilson's sermon. I heard with pleasure and joy, without weariness, and with much application." And again: "This day...the new Presbytery...sat in my house (February 7, 1734)...Mr. Wilson of Perth preached here on 'Christ Our Hope' and was well helped. Much of the Lord seemed to be with him."<sup>39</sup> At another time he recorded: "The Lord pitied in hearing Mr. Wilson on Saturday while he preached...One special mark he gave of the believer, was, that he loved the plan of salvation the better, that God in all His glorious attributes is glorified thereby."<sup>40</sup>

One of the Acts of Jurisdiction taken by the Associate Presbytery, August, 1735, closely affected the minister of Perth. Up to this point, they had refused to license young men for the ministry, but, feeling that all hope for reconciliation with the Established Church was gone, they directed their attention to this "complex affair, and that there be a looking to the Lord for light and direction in this important step."<sup>41</sup> These Four had left behind them in the Established Church those who might have been satisfied with a rude and loose style of pulpit oratory, and with a grade of ministers who had passed

---

39. Fraser, LDRE, op. cit., p. 112.

40. Fraser, LDRE, op. cit., p. 172.

41. Minutes Associate Presbytery, p. 101.

no course of university training. But the Four decided upon a Theological Hall which grew up with their Church, which trained and tested every young man aspiring to exercise her sacred functions. Thus, on February 4, 1736, the motion passed that one of their number be directed "to take the inspection of the youth that should offer themselves to be trained up for the holy ministry."<sup>42</sup> The vote carried unanimously that this trust should be committed to Mr. Wilson, their present Moderator.<sup>43</sup>

In appointing Wilson, the Associate Presbytery could not have made a better selection. He was eminently qualified. His modesty led him to regard any of the others as possessed of far higher claims as a preference. "His acceptance placed him in a sphere of new labor. He was, indeed, the right man."<sup>44</sup> His excellent natural talents had been thoroughly trained by intense study during his earlier years. "He was possessed of the most amiable dispositions," says M'Kerrow, "and his character stood high in the country for integrity. He was a person of the most ardent piety, and thoroughly versed in a knowledge of the Scriptures."<sup>45</sup>

In the meeting of the Presbytery, January, 1737, the theological tutor, "having desired that Mr. Moncrieff, the last Mod-

---

42. MAP, op. cit., pp. 101-102.

43. See Appendix.

44. Landreth, J., United Presbyterian Divinity Hall, p. 36.

45. M'Kerrow, History of the Secession Church, I, p. 132.

erator, take the chair, represented to the Presbytery, that since they had laid it on him to instruct the youth who should offer themselves to be trained for the holy ministry, it would be expedient that intimation be made of the time they might expect he should wait upon them."<sup>46</sup> It was decided that the three months March-May be used for Divinity training, and due notice was given in correspondence to the various Societies to send those students whom they would commend.<sup>47</sup>

The brief period from November 1736 and March 1737 was not long to prepare for the discharge of this new function; for he was largely occupied by ministerial and other labors - visiting, catechizing, preaching - and he was intrusted by the others with the composition of the elaborate "Testimonies" and "Defences." The theology then in favor was that which had come from Holland. Many Scottish ministers had been students at Leyden and Utrecht, and had brought back with them a liking for the solid and ponderous tones of Dutch theology. So, Marck's "Medulla", "an accurate, lucid, and illustrative treatise, replete with striking and compressed illustrations,"<sup>48</sup> was used, the contents of which Wilson had first contacted under Simson at Glasgow. With this he examined his students thoroughly upon outlines and details of its theological system, and occasionally gave lectures on its card-

---

46. MAP, op. cit., p. 104.

47. See Appendix.

48. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 170.



inal doctrines. From this book he constructed his own lectures. Following the example of his former teacher, Simson, he required "that an intimate knowledge of the Latin language was necessary on the part of those who attended,"<sup>49</sup> for he not only read his lectures in this language, but conducted the entire class business of instruction and examination after the same manner. As his prelections were in Latin, it was necessary for him to ascertain that they were attentive to and fully understood his instructions. He took care that his questions were met, not with an easy "Yea" or "Nay", but by answers that contained the propositions and arguments that had been inquired about. The clothing of these answers in extempore Latin was an exercise that would test and improve their scholarship. This in itself, was proof of Wilson's scholarship, and the labor he undertook.

The learning and judgment which he possessed would be of utmost value to those who enrolled in his classes. His habits of study which had been formulated in earlier years had fitted him for patient and prolonged investigation, and he could well bear such labor, for he was now in the prime of life. "His mind, more than any of the Four Brethren, was adapted and trained to academic labor. Possessed of a vigorous intellect, having command over extensive stores of theological knowledge, endowed with prompt facility of illustration...he justified the confidence reposed in him and proved a skilled and successful

---

49. M'Kerrow, HSS, I, op. cit., p. 132.

tutor in the school of the prophets."<sup>50</sup>

The importance of his task continued throughout his term of service. Ten years earlier, when delivering his moderatorial sermon before the Synod of Perth and Stirling, he had declared: "a corrupt ministry has ever been the ruin of the Church...it belongs to us to look well whom we receive, that they may be such, who, as far as we can discern, have some feeling and experience of the Word of God upon their own hearts, and who seek into the ministry, not merely to obtain a livelihood, or to make a trade of preaching, but who have higher and more noble ends before them, even the glory of Christ, and the salvation of others."<sup>51</sup>

His application to severe and continuous mental toil had become easy to himself, though it seemed remarkable to others; and to all the tasks to which he was called, by brethren, friends, conscience or inclination, he persevered with regular and unremitting energy. "Yet, somehow, as in Wilson's case, the strongly built frame that enshrines an intensely studious mind, is more easily shattered and overthrown than the weak and sickly bodies of other intellectual labors."<sup>52</sup>

His career as a Professor was brief - it ended after the fifth session. He had burdened himself to benefit his people, his students, and the common cause. It was an early death for

---

50. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 169.

51. Wilson, S, No. 4, op. cit., p. 20.

52. Landreth, UPDH, op. cit., p. 39.

a Divinity Professor. Few die as early as fifty-one, because few are chosen at that age, "for the wish of churches is...in a professor...experience rather than power; cautious gravity rather than enthusiasms; gathered leaves of prowess, rather than the fresh vegetation that makes the whole tree a mass of foliage; and the careful gleanings of age, rather than the flush and luxuriance of the prime."<sup>53</sup>

It is not, however, in the work and writings of Wilson, viewed simply as a minister and teacher of the Gospel, that we find our chief interest. During his term as teacher, he - and his students - concentrated their energies upon theology. Their aim was to strengthen, develop, and direct their preaching powers. "Wilson had determined not to have the cause of the Secession injured by novices."<sup>54</sup> There are no quarrels with the admirable way he performed his duties. But, excellent and faithful as his ministrations in the pulpit and lecture room were, nothing discovers itself in these to warrant us giving the Perth Pastor a place in our study. Wilson was more than an exemplary preacher and professor of the Gospel in an important midland Scottish town. He was largely identified with what constituted the burning ecclesiastical question of the time. He played an important, guiding part in one of the great movements of the eighteenth century. It is to that movement

---

53. Landreth, UPDH, op. cit., p. 65.

54. Landreth, UPDH, op. cit., p. 10.



and the Churchmanship of Wilson in regard to it, that we next direct our thoughts.

"As to the present...matters look with  
a very dismal and threatening aspect...  
in all corners of the land."  
"Memoirs", P. 168.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### "WILSON'S EARLY CHURCHMANSHIP"

Our interest in the Pastor Perthensis, as he is styled on the tombstone, is not only personal but ecclesiastical. We are not called upon to form any general estimate of his character and abilities, nor are we bound to criticize the estimation of those who have considered it their duty to furnish readers with a sum of his excellencies. There is obvious exaggeration in Brown, that Wilson had all the excellencies of both Erskine's and some peculiar to himself; and there is an inappropriateness in the designation applied to him by an Aberdonian, according to which he was "the tongue of the Associate Presbytery." Although, having regard to Wilson's share in drawing up the standards, and to his apologetic writings, it would not be out of place to style him the pen of the body. The same tendency to undue laudation can be traced in the remark attributed to a member of the Secession: "He was at once the master spring of the whole brethren, and the regulator which kept them going together." It is quite possible to give the first Professor of Divinity in the Secession credit for a painstaking discharge of the duties of a theological tutor without ascribing to him "profound and extensive erudition," as does Ferrier, or, "command over extensive stores of theological learning," coupled with "dignity of demeanor, equanimity of temper," which is



mentioned by Eadie.

The characteristics of Wilson which gave him a distinct position among his brethren seem not difficult to specify. Originality of conception, imaginative powers, brilliancy of finish or style - of these there is no trace in the sayings attributed to him, or in the writings that perpetuate his name; but there is to be found a power of calm, clear reasoning; an eminently judicial cast of mind, conjoined to that infinite capacity for taking pains or limitless persistency in application, which brings the man of talent within measurable distance of a child of genius - these, without question, are the qualities which impart a marked value to Wilson's contribution to Secession literature, and the Scottish Church.

To trace the rise and progress of Wilson's churchmanship, however, we must have a concise and candid narration of the circumstances in which the Secession Church arose. These have been touched upon in the Introduction, et alibi, but a closer examination will serve to exhibit the special Commission which Providence put into his hands, and by viewing his actions from a distance of more than two hundred years, we shall be able to judge whether they were prompted by a dishonest fear and reckless partisanship, or whether they ought not be reckoned among the most important and beneficial events in the ecclesiastical history of Scotland.

The seeds from which the Secession of Wilson and the others eventually grew began to be sown almost at the Reformation Settle-

ment, and it is at this point that investigation must begin if Wilson and his churchmanship are to be properly understood.

"Among the divinely-excited movements," begins Ferrier, "for promoting the designs of the Reformers were: the vigorous efforts of the faithful, between 1638-1650; the unwearied struggles of the heroes between the Restoration and the Revolution; and the determined stand of the Four Brethren, in whom the Secession Church originated. These...were among the genuine followers of the Reformers, and endeavored...the defence and progress of true religion."<sup>1</sup>

As has been mentioned before, William of Orange, when he became ruler of the three kingdoms, was not disposed to recognize what the Church had only faintly asserted. Although a friend of religious liberty, he either imperfectly understood those opinions respecting the intrinsic power of the Church, or was little disposed to respect them when they interfered with his own political designs. To conciliate those of the hierarchy and presbytery he urged General Assembly to adopt such measures as to receive curates as Episcopal incumbants. These measures cannot be estimated by looking at their general features of oppression and intrusion. Repair could have been made if these men had possessed the qualities of evangelical sentiment, and earnest spirit. But, "the zeal of these was naturally not very warm. The country was backward and poor after twenty-eight years of persecution. The

---

1. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 24.

Industrial Revolution, which had begun, effected Scotland as well as England, and engrossed men's minds. Religious zeal decayed in people, and the era of Moderatism began. Zeal was called fanaticism, and was frowned upon. The clergy taught that human nature was naturally good, and salvation could be gained by good behavior, in obdience to the conscience and good reason."<sup>2</sup>

Many who had taken an active share in the scenes of persecution were admitted without acknowledgement of their crimes, to occupy the seats of the high courts of the Church, and, consequently, sway the decisions and destinies of a Church which they - by whatever methods they might use - had endeavored to prostrate. The result was, as one might suppose, two parties appearing in the Church; one preaching the doctrines of her Confessions and faithfully discharging the pastoral duties; the other, latitudinarian in doctrine and earthly in spirit; the one guarding with anxiety the liberty and independence of the Church from civil power; the other seeking the favor of the Court and pliant to its wishes. "Since they were not very good to begin with, the best were not ready to conform...they were not merely cold in reference to Church but low in moral and spiritual tone...They formed the bulk of the Moderate party and communicated the temper and temperature to others. They were inclined to work the Church to State ends and private interests."<sup>3</sup>

---

2. Wellwood, Sir Henry M., Life of Erskine, Cf. p. 420.

3. Rainy, Robert, Lectures on the Church of Scotland, p.75.



This party became dominant in the counsels of the Church, and under their influence one is able to follow the various steps of defection until the injured conscience of Wilson, and others, found balm in the Secession. The Church had lost ground during the commotions of the past, and these men were eager to recover it. But this, too, influenced the Moderates toward a greater momentum. All went to the work of "recovering," and their enterprise fell in with the tempo of the times. New impulses were moving men to new paths, e. g., politics, science and education. All wanted a change of method. So, in theology, the experimental was now the guide...Preaching strove to speak in a tone undeniably sensible and practical, laying the stress of the moral elements in Christianity; on Christian virtues and its advantages."<sup>4</sup> Reason was considered plain; life was to be harmonized with some fundamental note. If it is to culture, then Christianity needed modification; in any case, it must accommodate itself to the exigencies of other interests. This, men persuaded themselves, was the true, the meek, the perfect Christianity. Culture came before truth and life. Theology sank to insignificance and, in many cases, became hateful. Conversion became a notion of general improvement and moral culture. This was the age into which Wilson was to throw himself and make the best of it.

Even before Wilson appeared on the scene there were public events which caused much contention. One was the Oath of Abjuration; the other, the Law of Patronage. When ministers were

---

4. Rainy, TLCS, op. cit., p. 77.

called upon to take the Oath on or before November 1, 1712, many voices were raised in protest in General Assembly; but this was of little effect, and - by and large - ministers took the Oath unwillingly. In spite of the urging by Wodrow, et al., Wilson maintained his antagonism to the Oath, and declined to sign. But, "for fear of provoking him (King William) the Church minced matters, as far as conscience permitted."<sup>5</sup> "This," remarked<sup>6</sup> Campbell, "was the first sign that the weather was changing."

The restoration of the Law of Patronage dealt an even heavier blow to the liberty of the Church. The right to elect persons to ecclesiastical offices had been claimed by the people as a right yielded to them by the State. This right had been fully recognized at the Reformation-Settlement, i. e., that the Church of Scotland was "to continue without any alteration to the people of this land in all succeeding generations."<sup>7</sup> Such an Act was destined to have great influences on the Church and in the lives of its ministers. The Assembly sought to point out what an "inevitable obstruction" such an Act would be to the work of the Gospel. When ~~these~~ words are read in "the light of the next century... (they) seem almost prophetic in their import."<sup>8</sup> The Assembly sought to allay the irritation through the customary

---

5. Brown, John, An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Secession, p. 13.

6. Campbell, Andrew J., Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland; 1707-1929, p. 40.

7. MGA, op. cit., XIX, 1711.

8. Thomson, OSC, op. cit., p. 10.

royal letter, but Queen Anne was firm "to maintain the Church of Scotland as established by law."

The sad effects of Patronage did not come immediately, because when persons were presented they refused to accept without the accompanied call of the people. It was not until strong feelings, favorable to its operation, arose in the ecclesiastical courts that conflict came. Possession of endowments and support of the State produced a party which caused extreme views; who relied on the favor of the nobility and gentry rather than the people. It was this party that finally gained "control of the Assembly."<sup>9</sup> The word "Moderate" was not heard as yet, but the germs of the division were perceptible. At this time, when Wilson was entering upon his ministry, there was a want of fidelity in the Presbyteries which he laments, and "the gloomy and ruinous like dispensations of the day and time."<sup>10</sup> In opposition to this were such men as Wilson, to whom the truth of the Gospel and ministerial freedom were no less dear than the maintenance of the liberty of the people to choose their pastors.

The year before Wilson entered upon his pastoral duties at Perth - 1715 - a matter of grave importance faced the Church. One of the signs of declension from the doctrinal side was the tolerant attitude of the Church toward Professor of Divinity, John Simson, of Glasgow University. The process against Simson

---

9. Grub, George, Ecclesiastical History of Scotland, p. 645. IV.

10. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 72.



was not finished until 1717, but for three years, much was made of the subject. John Stirling, Moderator of the Assembly, 1715, could not help having a good deal to do with the case. His position was made delicate by the fact that Simson was married to his niece. "His heart was torn between loyalty to the truth and interest in his relative."<sup>11</sup> He pressed the case against Simson uprightly, and was regarded as an enemy by the latter.

In April, 1716, Wilson remarked: "This month the Committee met about that weighty affair of the Professor's. The greater part of the Committee labored to bring the Professor off by palliating his errors, and coining senses upon his erroneous propositions. Yet, the Lord...helped six members of the Committee to give faithful witness for truth against these errors."<sup>12</sup>

In spite of considerable dissent, the Committee came to the conclusion that he was free of the error charged against him by Mr. Webster. "The Professor accepted against me, and I was rejected from being a witness in this business."<sup>13</sup>

In the Assembly of 1717, it appeared in evidence that Simson taught unsound and unscriptural tenets.<sup>14</sup> His opinions denied the Word and the Confession, as well as the orthodox divines. Many of the Assembly accepted these statements as characteristic of Pelagianism, and reaching to the very founda-

---

11. Warrick, MCS, op. cit., p. 208.

12. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 139-140.

13. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 131.

14. See Appendix.

tion of revealed truth. Yet, no serious condemnation was brought to bear upon the offender; no censures inflicted; no error explicitly condemned. Simson refuted these rumors and denied their veracity. The Assembly, therefore, thought it sufficient to caution him to be more guarded of his language in the future. Thus, they "prohibit and discharge the said Mr. Simson to use such expressions, or to teach, preach, or to otherwise vent such opinions, propositions, or hypotheses, as aforesaid."<sup>15</sup>

Such a decision might well be regarded as an acquittal, if not a victory. The sentence, it is to be remembered, did not find him innocent, but it found his errors almost harmless and possible of misinterpretation. But, not many years were to pass before he was again summoned before the bar of the Assembly, when it was found that his earlier heresies had matured into bloom. Many earnest consultations were held by many faithful ministers to discover the best means whereby the tide of defection could be stemmed. The publication of old works, written in an evangelical strain, was suggested, because they felt this would combine the greatest efficiency with the least offence. This resulted in a controversy which - because it involved many of the most eminent ministers - excited no small degree of interest among the people, and had far reaching repercussions.

---

15. MGA, op. cit., XIX, 1717.

Thomas Boston - then a young minister recently settled in the Parish of Simprin and a Commissioner to the Assembly of 1717 - turned to his friend, Mr. Drummond of Crieff and spoke to him of a book he had recently read, entitled The Marrow of Modern Divinity. "It was a Biblical treatise illustrating Ruk-  
in's words, 'It is not the weariness of mortality but the streng-  
th of divinity that we have to recognize in all mighty things.'<sup>16</sup>"

The Marrow was the production of a Mr. Edward Fisher, a gentleman commoner of Oxford. It is composed largely of quotes from Luther and others of the Reformation period, chiefly illustrative of those two points which form the theme of the Epistles, viz., the Gospel method of justification and sanctification. These quotations are presented by way of dialogue between "Evangelista", "Nomista" (a Legalist), "Antinomista", and "Neophotus" (a young Christian.) The first of these is the one to whom the rest refer their differences and difficulties, and who is to be understood as expressing the sentiments of the author.

A pious soldier, coming into Scotland at the close of the seventeenth century, had brought a copy with him which he had left in a farm house in Simprin, Berwickshire. While performing his pastoral duties in this community, Boston chanced to visit this farm house. The book attracted his attention, and his mind was won by the sweet evangelical flavor. His friend,

---

16. Woodside, David, The Soul of the Scottish Church, p. 8.



Drummond, received it and, after reading it, recommended it to others. In 1718 it was published with a preface by James Hog, Minister at Carnock. These evangelical ministers felt this was the antidote for the erroneous teachings, for in it the covenant of works and the covenant of grace were clearly defined.

The outstanding opponent of The Marrow was Professor Hadow of St. Andrew's who, in his sermon at the opening of the Synod of Fife, fulfilled the request of his brethren, and preached on this subject, and called forth some well timed replies from those of opposing sentiments. Mr. Hog tried to stay the tempest by publishing "An Explanation of the Passages Excepted Against...", but it was no longer a matter of dry dogmas, but of religious convictions. A complaint was made to the Assembly making mention of books of unscriptural contents. No mention was made of The Marrow as such, but instructions were given to the Commission of the Assembly to "inquire into the publishing and spreading of books and pamphlets...inconsistent with our Confession of Faith; and that the recommenders be called to answer for their conduct..."<sup>17</sup> The Commission acted immediately, and set up a Committee for the Purity of Doctrine.<sup>18</sup> Before the year (1719) was out, the four leading Marrowmen were summoned to appear Before the Committee.<sup>19</sup>  
<sup>20</sup>

---

17. See Appendix.

18. MGA, op. cit., XIX, 1718.

19. See Appendix.

20. See Appendix.

When the Assembly sat in 1720, the Committee reported by way of an Overture, stating that some propositions were "contrary to the Scriptures and the Confession of Faith," and that the book was "harsh and offensive." The condemned passages were placed under five heads,<sup>21</sup> but were so ingeniously withdrawn from their collection as to convey a most incorrect impression. The Marrowmen claimed they had no other idea than to set forth wholesome and evangelical truths in their five heads.<sup>22</sup> The Assembly refused to go beyond the passages already submitted by the Committee, and "strictly prohibited and discharged (ministers)...to say anything in favor of it...but...exhort their people...not to read or use the same."<sup>23</sup>

The Pastor of Parth had been ordained only a year when the edition of The Marrow appeared, and was in the third year of his ministry when the book was prohibited. It would not be expected that he would have taken an important place in this controversy, but in this early stage of his pastorate he gave a faithful testimony by being present at many of the meetings of the Marrowmen. The condemnatory action by the Assembly led to a series of conferences to determine the line of approach at the coming Assembly. "I went to Edinburgh," said he, "to meet with some ministers who were to consider about some griev-

---

21. See Appendix.

22. See Appendix.

23. MGA, op. cit., XIX, 1720.

ances - particularly the affair of the last Assembly, concerning The Marrow. We met, and discoursed, and prayed together. . We had such sweet satisfaction in so meeting, and in our praying and conversing together. At length, it was agreed that a representation to the Assembly should be drawn up, and signed, complaining of their condemnation of several precious doctrines contained in the book..."<sup>24</sup> Unknown circumstances prevented Wilson from taking part in the proceedings of this group, and also in the signing of the Representation, but that he was as strong a Marrowman as any of the twelve, he abundantly verified. This petition was laid before the Assembly of 1721 by Ebenezer Erskine, and before it was brought to the Court for action, the King's Commissioner became ill and a dissolution of the Assembly was made necessary.

At the meeting of the Assembly, 1722, the action formerly taken against the Marrowmen was modified, but they were denounced and "prohibit...under pain of censure...the teaching of the portions condemned...and their Moderator...rebuke and admonish them,"<sup>25</sup> They appeared before the bar of the Assembly and, after censure, protested against this condemnation, and lodged the same, stating that they had been accused of so-called "groundless aspersions cast upon the Church," and asserted they would still bear testimony in spite of Assembly's action.

---

24. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 153-154.

25. MGA, op. cit., XIX, 1722.



This incident might well be considered a remote cause of the Secession, but historians have not estimated the extent to which this cause operated. Some think it had little influence, since only two of the Four were on the scene when the Representation was drawn up. It would carry us beyond our limits to trace the extent in which it operated directly or indirectly in originating the Secession, but its influence was neither so limited nor so weak as one might suppose. That controversy was indeed settled, as far as the General Assembly was concerned, thirteen years before the Secession, but its influence was not destroyed or arrested, but simply confined within a narrower sphere. Friends of evangelical truth came into closer fellowship. "As they came from distant parts of the country, this encouraged the practice of a multiplicity of weekday preachings... By such frequent intercourse, the distinction of party was more confirmed, and became more visible."<sup>26</sup>

The lenity which had been shown to Professor Simson operated in a way that might have been anticipated. Rumors were abroad that he was **now** teaching Arianism, which had been revived by Dr. Samuel Clarke in the Church of England. Simson<sup>27</sup> had become infected with it. Several Presbyteries had over-  
tured the Assembly in 1726, whereupon Assembly appointed a Committee of its leading members to work in conjunction with

---

26. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 155-156.

27. Cunningham, CHS, op. cit., II, Cf., p. 405.

Glasgow Presbytery, and submit their report at the next meeting of Assembly.<sup>28</sup>

The Committee and Presbytery set to their task. Students at the University were questioned, and errors were noted. Libels were produced of the doctrines Simson had denied, and he again refused to own them, saying he had been ill at the time of their utterance.<sup>29</sup> Another year passed and, in 1728, the charges were substantiated, but Simson claimed adherence to the Confession and belief in the "necessary existence" of our Lord. Many of the Assembly were in favor of deposition, but the offender had many powerful friends who would do all they could to sway the verdict in his favor. "Since Mr. Simson's process began, the Lord in His Providence has removed a great many who were firm in point of doctrine...and opposers of him and his innovations...these make a dreadful gap in the Church."<sup>30</sup>

The Committee of Assembly was directed to prepare an Overture aimed at uniting all thoughts upon the matter. When they handed in this report, it was accompanied by a paper written by Simson in which he declared his evangelical piety in language as orthodox as could be found. He retracted everything. The Committee's report gave the most generous interpretation upon his words, yet admitted the impugment of truth. The

---

28. See Appendix.

29. See Appendix.

30. Wodrow, A, op. cit., IV, p. 140. See Appendix.

Assembly would not acquiesce for deposition, but did "after mature deliberation...agree to suspend...from preaching and teaching...and all exercise of any ecclesiastical power or function, until another General Assembly shall think fit to take off the sentence."<sup>31</sup> The proceedings of the Assembly were made available to the Presbyteries, who were ordered to instruct their Commissioners to the next Assembly what they desired done in the issue. Decisions were returned in 1729, and it appeared that only a handful of Presbyteries wanted to maintain Simson as a minister, but the case was concluded with the sentence of perpetual suspension.<sup>32</sup>

During all these months, Wilson - by this time well established in his parish at Perth - was taking an off-the-scene part in these controversies. His mind was working in a groove of its own. He was slow to abandon his loyalty to the Assembly, yet, he was not willing to identify himself with a Church filled with defection. Consequently, his mind was filled with dissatisfaction. The problem of patronage; the matter of enforced settlements; the harsh treatment given to ministers who refused to submit to the arbitrary enactments of the Church - these provided cause for more confusion and controversy, and opened the door for Wilson and his colleagues to express themselves.

It is a sombre picture that Wilson paints of the sad state of affairs. He had observed the movements within the

---

31. MGA, op. cit., XIX, 1728.

32. See Appendix.



Church, and took notice of the deplorable situations. "As to the present state and conditions, circa 1731, of the Church of Scotland, matters look with a very dismal and threatening aspect. Ministers are thrust in upon vacant churches, contrary to the wishes of elders and people, in all corners of the land. Disaffected heritors interest themselves everywhere in the settlement of parishes, and they introduce such ministers as elders and people are adverse to. Our congregations are thus planted with a set of corrupt ministers, who are strangers to the power of godliness."<sup>33</sup>

"About this time," - November and December, 1731 - "a few ministers met to consider what might be proper for them to do in the present juncture. I was with them at all their meetings.<sup>34</sup> After prayer and confession, we agreed upon a representation and petition...against the present courses that have such a visible tendency to ruin the Church."<sup>35</sup> Wilson and the others drafted the Representation, craving the Assembly to take the necessary steps to check the growth and spread of error; the intrusions into the ministry; and the procedures of the Commission.

One such intrusion which came at this time had to do with the parish of Kinfauns. The people of the congregation had objected to the settlement of Mr. Charles Phut, and had

---

33. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 168-169.

34. See Appendix.

35. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 176.

presented a representation to Presbytery. The heritors had voted for Phut; the elders wanted David Black; some of the members were interested in a certain Mr. Blair. Those who were disposed toward Black complained to Wilson as Moderator "of some acts of injustice, in bringing in seven heritors for subscribing the call to Mr. Phut."<sup>36</sup> The Committee of Assembly would not allow any paper to be read unless there were "relevant objections", in accord with the Overture of the Assembly. Presbytery voted to sustain the call, and Wilson was appointed to preach at Kinfauns "and commune with the elders and people and endeavor to bring them to harmony."

But no such harmonious relations were to be had. Five of the seven elders threatened to "dismiss" if Phut were settled among them. At Presbytery, four Elders presented a petition against such a call. Moncrieff protested that it was not out of order with the rules of the Church to read this paper, in spite of the interim Act of the Assembly. Wilson adhered to this, and Presbytery agreed "to delay the whole affair until their next meeting."<sup>37</sup>

In February, 1732, the Presbytery considered settling Phut in Kinfauns. Those who protested were looked upon as "parties" in the case. Wilson, as Moderator, left the chair, and craved at the bar that they were not to be looked upon as parties,

---

36. MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 177.

37. MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 181.

but should be considered as reasoning in the affair. They were asked to leave the room, and the question was put and carried, by a plurality: "Sustain them as parties in the case." Whereupon, Wilson "did in his own name and in the name of his brethren protest against the sentence of the Presbytery excluding those who are constituent members from their just and right privilege of judging and voting in the question," and appealed to the April session of Synod.<sup>38</sup> The question was put: "Appoint Mr. Charles Phut's ordination, or not? and it carried by a plurality - appoint."<sup>39</sup> "In the month of March, Mr. Charles P\_\_\_\_ was ordained at Kinfauns, upon a call signed by seven heritors, and life-renters, one of them, viz., Mr. C\_\_\_\_\_ of Glendoig, was an Elder. All the rest of the Elders, being six, together with the whole congregation, were reclaiming against the settlement."<sup>40</sup>

Wilson had entered his dissent from the deed of settlement for Mr. Phut because he felt duty bound to do so. He was absent from the April 5 meeting when the Committee read its answers to his reason for protest and dissent. His reasons and answers were re-read; the judgment of Presbytery was asked; and the members replied they were satisfied.<sup>41</sup> Three weeks later, in a meeting of Presbytery, answers were prepared to the reasons

---

38. See Appendix.

39. MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 186.

40. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 181. See Appendix.

41. See Appendix.



of appeal taken by Wilson. These were read and approved. Also was approved was the dissent entered by Moncrieff, viz., the refusal of Presbytery to take in and read the representations and petition from Kinfauns, yet Presbytery's answers thereto were read in open and approved.

During these early years of "much noise" Wilson was girding himself for more strenuous battles. Even then, "our most valuable ~~in~~terests were basely betrayed...men of lax principles were chosen...congregations were rent and broken...deistical principles prevailed, profanity and wickedness abounded through the land."<sup>42</sup> Agitation was on the increase. The tension within the Church was rising, and a crisis - THE crisis - was inevitable. "Our nobility and gentry, for the most part, had not even the form of godliness. Many of them had drunk in deistical principles... they were altogether careless and indifferent about the worship and government of the Lord's House...few of the young men who are entering the ministry have any acquaintance with systematic Divinity; yea, they despise it; and what is worse, many of them appear to be strangers to the power of godliness. They are puffed up with airy speculations, and their heads are filled with new notions."<sup>43</sup>

Were not men resolved to be faithful in such days of crisis, their ministerial liberties and freedom would have suffered immeasurably. Some were willing to follow the lines of least

---

42. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 184-185.

43. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 185-186.

resistance; a few were determined to vindicate truth and freedom. The stand of such men as Wilson was prompted by such convictions. The channels of constitutional protest had been closed; only the pulpit remained free. It was all but impossible to prevent a schism. "The dominant party in the Church might have abated, and the aggrieved might have laid their resentments aside. Erskine's denouncing added fuel to the flame; and his sermon fanned it into a blaze."<sup>44</sup> It was at that point that Wilson's most effective and vital contributions were made in the work of the Church. For that purpose, we turn to examine his later activities within the Church Courts themselves.

---

<sup>44</sup>. Hetherington, W. M., History of the Church of Scotland, p. 641.

"...the Secession was not declared till  
some ministers were thrust out, - they  
have not gone out with haste; neither  
have they gone out by flight."  
"Defence", P. 32.



## CHAPTER SIX

### "WILSON'S LATER CHURCHMANSHIP"

The agitation caused by Erskine's sermon was a fair index to the state of the Church, and the sensation it created proved how much it was needed. It was not, however, unworthy of a minister of the Gospel. The subject was timely; the text was suitable. He did not spend himself to get at his personal objections, but kept close to his subject. It cannot be thought that he intended any violence or confusion. His sole aim was to warn against what he believed to be the evils of the times. It is necessary to understand this much if we are to wholly understand Wilson's actions in behalf of his colleague. If there had been any serious objections to the sermon, Wilson would hardly have registered his approval. From the day Erskine was declared censurable, and through the months of trial that followed, Wilson stood by his side and strengthened his hands.

It was because "something fell out" at this time "which occasioned many thoughts to my heart, and brought me into a situation that I had not hitherto been in...and which...had no small influence on affairs through this Church...I judged it my duty to act...I know not what the end may be."<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 194.

Wilson was impressed with the importance of the cause and regarded it as a matter for all to consider. Calmly, though resolutely, he uttered words in the defense of truth. He spoke often in behalf of his intimate friend. He manifested strong opposition to any censure, which might prove injurious. He sought the Synod to let the matter rest, but when the opposition showed itself determined to censure, Wilson entered more actively into the cause. During the course of debate, he sought to reiterate the complaint taken earlier, viz., that Erskine's words were incorrectly reported, and that to condemn him for preaching against the Act of the late Assembly was not only to inflict serious injury upon an individual, but would introduce a new and obnoxious term of ministerial communion - that "no minister should preach against any Act of a General Assembly, even though he might be convinced in his conscience that it was unscriptural in principle and subversive to the liberty and purity of the Church."<sup>2</sup> To imagine all the Acts of Assembly to be standards of discipline was to enslave the conscience to the decisions of men.

Wilson's declaration was answered thus: "Ministers are bound to submit to the public Acts of General Assemblies; and if any of them are offensive, they ought not to preach against them..."<sup>3</sup> To this Wilson replied: "Our formula bound us to

---

2. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp.198-199. See Appendix.

3. MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 152.

submit only to such Acts as were agreeable to our Presbyterian form of government and discipline...to maintain and support our Presbyterian Constitution. A rent in the Church would inevitably follow if the Judicatories should censure Mr. Erskine for the faithful freedom he had used in his sermon."<sup>4</sup>

At the meeting of the Presbytery of Perth, July, 1734, it was reported that the offenders belonging to that Judicatory had not obeyed the injunction of the late Assembly, viz., to refrain from protesting against the decisions of the Assembly. "There is not only a common fame, but some members of the Presbytery who have heard the two brethren preach, so declare that they continue in their sermons to reflect upon the proceedings of the late and preceding Assemblies."<sup>5</sup> It was appointed that this report be read to the Commission of the General Assembly. From the tenor of this action, it would appear that Wilson and Moncrieff had few to sympathize with them, and that the majority of their co-presbyters had concluded that they were guilty.

In August (1734) Wilson and Moncrieff appeared before the Commission and, in a firm, but mild manner, offered their Representation. This documents is a **tremendous** help in understanding the thoughts and motives of its authors. "Having urged the reverend brethren to make the most favorable construction" upon their case, they laid down some of the

---

4. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 199-200.

5. MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 211.



"reasons that led us into this quarrelled and condemned step."

The decision of the General Assembly, says Wilson, is a "plain inhibition" upon the ministers of the Church for it prohibits them from speaking against Acts of Assembly, however unlawful and unwarrantable. There is no law "restraining us" from the exercise of this privilege and duty. "We are ordained to compare before this meeting of Commission...but we are not conscious to ourselves of anything done against our brethren that deserves a severe censure from them. When we dissented, we were refused a hearing; we protested, but were not allowed to speak on the relevancy of the crimes alleged. There is no parallel to this in history.

"If in no case the ministers and members of the Church may give in a protestation against a sentence, act, or decision, of the supreme Judicatories, then an absolute and irrefragable power and authority is set up in the supreme Judicatory, to which all ought to submit, without gain-saying or counter-acting...If we retract our paper, we give up our just liberty and privilege of testifying publicly... We cannot be deprived of our ministry, or the exercise of it, unless we are found guilty of such a transgression of the laws and institutions of Christ, either in doctrine or practice, as forfeits our commission, or renders us unworthy of this sacred character...

"Upon the whole, we cannot but declare before the reverend Commission that we have no freedom to submit to them. Any censure that may be inflicted upon us, affecting our

ministerial office, or the exercise thereof, shall be considered as null and void in itself. Any minister or probationer who shall exercise any part of our ministerial work shall be held and reputed as an intrusion...and the people of our respective congregations shall not be obliged to own, acknowledge, or submit unto such. Whatever bad effects may follow upon the course taken with us, we shall not be chargeable with them."<sup>6</sup>

In view of such a stand, there was but one path of duty for the Commission. It drafted a letter to the Presbytery of Perth, stating that Wilson and the others had appeared before them, "and did decline to show sorrow for their conduct and misbehaviour"; and appointed the Presbytery "to take care to supply their charges."<sup>7</sup> Several of the Presbytery wanted this, but when the question was put: "Shall the Presbytery appoint supplies? It carried in a great negative: Not appoint..."<sup>8</sup>

In the October (1734) meeting, the Presbytery of Perth appointed a Committee to prepare a draft of answers to the Commission's letter sent up regarding the two suspended brethren. Also, a two-fold question was put: Obey the Act of the Assembly, and report the behaviour of these brethren to the

---

6. Wilson, and Moncrieff, RCLGA, op. cit., pp. 38-62.

7. MPPF op. cit., XII, p. 216.

8. MPP, op. cit., XII, pp. 221-222. See Appendix.

Commission? and the vote carried: "Not report."<sup>9</sup> Already, the Synod of Perth and Stirling, conscious of "a ferment in our bounds, and we are threatened with a schism..." named a committee to prevent the same. Further, an Overture was drafted to the Commission, stating Synod was deeply effected "for the melancholy situation of this Church...we entreat the Commission to delay..."<sup>10</sup>

In such circumstances, Wilson was wont to say: "This National Church, though she bears the Presbyterian name...is exercising a lordly power...The present Judicatories are guilty of a series of tyranny in the administration...screening the erroneous...turning the edges of discipline against such as endeavour a faithful and conscientious discharge of their duty..."<sup>11</sup>

The causes of the Secession had long existed, and were gathering force. The action against the Four Brethren had only fixed the date. Thus, their minds were fully prepared, and their first Testimony, wherein is given their reasons for protestation, forms the basis of their Secession.<sup>12</sup> "The cause thus stands with the seceding ministers," wrote Wilson, "they were formerly in ecclesiastical communion with the present

- 
9. MPP, op. cit., p. 226. See Appendix.  
 10. MSPS, op. cit., VI, pp. 169, 183.  
 11. Wilson, D, op. cit., pp. 374, 118.  
 12. See Appendix.



judicatories; they found a course of defection...and tried all means that lay in their power for stopping the current; they joined in Presbyterial instructions...; they tried petitions, representations...testimonies...dissents..." And well might he add, when vindicating his group from the stigma of schism: "the Secession was not declared till some were thrust out, - they have not gone out with haste, neither have they gone out by flight."<sup>13</sup>

The first business of the Four Brethren was to issue a precise and full explanation concerning the step they had taken, and the reasons which had influenced them. Within three months after their Secession, Wilson and Moncrieff published that which became known as The Extra-Judicial Testimony. From the internal evidence, we infer that the greater part of the writing devolved upon Wilson. This elaborate and extended statement had been promised in their Protest which they laid upon the table of the Assembly. It was a product of much ability. "It contains the deliberate and authoritative exposition of their case, and may be considered as affording the best means of ascertaining the true nature of the Secession, and judging of the validity of its grounds."<sup>14</sup> It is not to be considered a new standard, but a plain declaration of a pure sense, and a proper application to conduct,

---

13. Wilson, D, op. cit., pp. 362, 32.

14. Thomson, OSC, op. cit., p. 93.

as opposed to the defections of the day.

In the Introduction, the authors give a detailed account of the proceedings against Erskine. They then proceed, in the first section, to speak of the goodness of God upon the land through "the light of the everlasting Gospel." But, many evils have come which have "blunted the edge of the Church." "Corruption in principle and practice...Arian errors have been vented in one of our considerable seminaries...Such is the state and there is no outward appearance of any change..."<sup>15</sup>

In section two, they asserted their allegiance to the doctrines and standards of the Church, and declared that their warranted Secession is not from those who are cleaving to the covenanted principles, but from "a party" which had taken the management of the Church into their own hands. "...we are sorry we have so much ground. It is not very pleasant to lay open the sinful steps, but we judge it our duty to exoner ourselves..."<sup>16</sup> Against this prevailing party they lodged five specific charges, all of which are substantiated by well known facts.

The first charge speaks of the long series of inroads that have been made upon the constitutional rights and liberties of the Church. The Church had long taught that Overtures should

---

15. Associate Presbytery, A Testimony to the Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline of the Church of Scotland: or, Reasons for Protestation. pp. 39-40.

16. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 42.

be approved by "all at home" and passed only on the "general opinion" of the Presbyteries; but..."the Act of 1732...was far from being approved by all or agreeable to general opinion, yet it passed."<sup>17</sup> Secondly, legislative powers were usurped "in making laws that have no warrant...; binding conscience and threatening highest censures..." The opposing party had "inflicted one of the highest censures, even from sealing ordinances, upon those who have not freedom to submit to intrusions." (In the Presbytery of Dunfermline, none were to be granted the sealing ordinance from Kinross without the permission of the incumbent of that parish).<sup>18</sup> "Church authority is screwd up to an uncommon height...Is a protestation censurable by the Word?"<sup>19</sup> No person could be a member of a court where dissent was denied, for this was the only place where a man could exonerate his conscience. Thirdly, to say the decisions of Assembly were irreversible made their will and pleasure the rule for right and wrong. "They have taken power to erect sub-committees, and given them powers which the Assembly could not give, i. e., to invade Presbyteries and settle a minister without the consent of the congregation or the judgment of the Assembly."<sup>20</sup> The powers of superior courts are not private but cumulative, and these had been taken from

---

17. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 44.

18. See Appendix.

19. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 49.

20. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 51.



the Presbyteries, and invested in a court that had no scriptural basis.

The second charge levelled against the ruling party was: "pursuing such measures as have a direct tendency to corrupt the doctrine contained in our Confession." Gross errors and erroneous persons were countanenced and encouraged, in so far as no suitable testimony had been raised against them. Pernicious errors were proven against such persons, but "the Assembly (1729) passed over in profound silence." <sup>21</sup>

The third charge dealt with sinful and unwarrantable terms of ministerial communion, which were imposed to restrain testifying against any course of defection. This limitation was unreasonable in its nature and inconsistent with ordination vows.

The fourth charge is: "These corrupt courses are carried on with a high hand, notwithstanding that the ordinary means have been used to reclaim them... We are told the Assembly has no time..." <sup>22</sup> to hear complaints.

The fifth charge was contained in these words: "We are excluded from keeping a proper testimony against the prevailing party, in a way of ministerial communion with them." <sup>23</sup> If these men protested in a doctrinal way, they were rebuked; if they protested censure, they were suspended. If they re-

---

21. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 56.

22. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 62.

23. Ibid.

fused to yield obedience, they were cast out. Proper testimony was not allowed by the courts; therefore, "we are laid under a necessity to lift up a testimony" by way of Secession from them.<sup>24</sup>

The language in which the sentiments of this document are clothed is often homely and uncouth; but the sentiments themselves are dignified, numerous, and scriptural; and are filled with an ardent devotion to the best interests of the Church of which they were members. The bold tone of remonstrance spread no small amount of alarm throughout the membership of the Church. "The Testimony of the Seceders shows that the Secession was really a revolt against the spirit of a new age, which was rapidly obliterating all the landmarks of the Covenanting period."<sup>25</sup>

The prevailing party was startled and perplexed by the attitude and procedure of the Brethren. Many sympathized with the Four and regarded them as martyrs. The Church Courts began to repent, and, in an effort, to retain the Seceders, they adopted a policy of conciliation and concession. The reforming party, headed by Willison of Dundee, was especially encouraged. It is certain Wilson would have returned, had he not been withstood by Erskine. However, after repeated meetings of the Associate Presbytery, its members concluded that

---

24. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 67.

25. Campbell, TCCS, op. cit., p. 59.

it was impossible for them to return on the terms proposed. They reviewed their Testimony, and discussed whether the deeds of the Assembly and Synod were consistent enough to warrant a return. They admitted the repeals had removed some grounds, but the one or two principle grounds remained as valid as ever, and thus they would remain in a separate state until a more extensive reformation came to pass.

The Seceders should have been restored to the Church, not because of "lamentable circumstances" as declared by their Synod, but because of the injustice of the Acts against them. The Assembly had declared in 1735 that "due and regular ministerial freedom" was to be left open to all, but the Assembly did not clarify this sufficiently in the minds of the Four. The tenor of the Act appeared to them to mean, "We have freedom, providing it is not used publicly."<sup>26</sup>

Certain measures must be taken to remove the difficulties out of the way of the Seceders. "A reasonable warning ...against the gross errors...; the sentence censuring Mr. Erskine...be rescinded, and...be declared null and void; the decision of the Assembly (i. e., against the Presbytery of Dunfermline) be also rescinded; and that it be declared lawful for any minister of the Church to dispense sealing ordinances to those who have had ministers intruded upon them;

---

26. Associate Presbytery, Reasons by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Fisher: Why They Have Not Acceded. p. 23.



that no minister shall be settled in any congregation without the call and consent of the majority of that congregation who are in full communion; that Presbyteries...admit none to trials ...but such as have the qualifications required in Scripture; that there be an acknowledgement of the great guilt of this land..."<sup>27</sup> If these were carried out "we might have a comfortable prospect of a pleasant and desirable unity and harmony with our brethren, in concurring with them...in all other necessary steps toward a further reformation."

The resolution not to return to the Established Church was a bitter disappointment to many friends of the Seceders. Some branded them as obstinate and pertinacious; others became cool toward them. Still others expressed a spirit of keen opposition because their view was such that no matter what abuses had crept in, it was still the Establishment, and this should be sufficient reason for toleration of error and defection.

There are many things to be said, both for the Seceders and the Assemblies which handled their case. As it was very unwise for Synod to proceed against Erskine in such a judicial manner, so it was for the Assembly to resent the protestation. Such protests were not regarded as criminal in former times. One is inclined to feel that it would have been in the interests of peace if, in 1732, the Church had followed the example of its predecessors. But, authority

---

27. Associate Presbytery, RNA, op. cit., p. 25.

had been "screwed up" to a higher pitch than at former times, and the Church resorted to a Commission at carry out its dictates.

As the Judicatories seemed to act with heat and severity, so the Four showed no little stiffness in opposing them. They looked away from the sentences, and gave no ear to friends. Many wished Erskine had withheld the tartness of expression - and this was the only thing many quarrelled over; but Erskine yielded not at all, even though Wilson and Moncrieff said they did not "pretend to justify his modes of expression", and granted that in several places it was proper to use soft words in maintaining the truth. There would have been no loss to truth had the Four shown more respect. Though many were offended, there was a great plurality in 1734 for restoring the Four; and no Assembly ever did approve the hard sentences meted out against them by the Commission.

Wilson and his friends would have done well just to protest in November, 1733, but instead, went on to Secession. They ought to have been willing to meet with the faithful - who were willing before 1734 - but the above mentioned act, coupled with the constitution of a Presbytery, were two steps in the wrong direction, and greatly effected the whole body. "Considering how touched the whole Church was for them, 1734 might have been the first, free General Assembly to which they had appealed."<sup>28</sup> Many of the pious hoped, in 1734,

---

28. Willison, John, Fair and Impartial Testimony, p. 81.

that matters would be cleared up. That Court made many repeals which served to open the door. Though many Commissioners laid their pleas before the Four to return, they were at the same time distraught that these Seceders - who had taken such a stand - would refuse to return.

By refusing to accede (1735) the Brethren lost many who had been their friends. The proceedings of General Assembly were filled with a mixture of things, but they in no way affected the sentiments of the Four. Several of the Presbyteries had instructed their Commissioners to take "such regulations as shall be suitable a check to any student of divinity who may be so daring as to vent anything contrary to sound doctrine."<sup>29</sup> And the Assembly took praiseworthy action in this direction by asking Presbyteries and ministers "when they come to know any error or vice in students of divinity, to give notice thereof to the professor under whom such students are taught."<sup>30</sup> Further, the Commission of Assembly was charged to consider some offensive remarks published by Archibald Campbell, Professor of Church History and Divinity at St. Andrew's, and report in 1736.

During the Assembly of 1736, Wilson and his colleagues stood aloof, watching the proceedings of the Church; some of which gave the Seceders a distrust of the sincerity of the

---

29. MSPS, op. cit., XII, p. 299.

30. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1735. See Appendix.



Assembly, and served to confirm their resolution to remain separated. "The Assembly...dealt leniently with the first full-fledged Moderate who had to answer at the bar for heresy - Professor Campbell, the author of a pamphlet with a sufficiently descriptive title, 'The Apostles No Enthusiasts.'<sup>31</sup>"

Professor Campbell had ellegedly taught that men were able by natural powers to learn of the Being of God; that the laws of nature were sufficient to guide men to happiness; that self-love is the sole motive of all religious actions; that the disciples expected a worldly Kingdom while Christ was alive, and immediately after His death they thought Him to be an imposter, and immediately before His Resurrection they had no thought of His Deity. Such tenets struck at the roots of the faith; the eliminating of supernatural revelation; making God only a subordinate end; and casting aspersions upon the disciples.<sup>32</sup>

The Committee for Preserving the Purity of Doctrine reported it thought it sufficient to caution against error that "some at first sight supposed Mr. Campbell was guilty of, without giving any judgment or formal sentence, and appoint that the matter rest here."<sup>33</sup> Such a decision drew a sharper line in Wilson's thinking. He who had been most reluctant to abandon the hope of a favorable change in the councils and

---

31. MacEwen, TE, op. cit., p. 87.

32. Moncrieff, Alexander, A Review and Examination of Some Principles Laid Down By The Reverend Mr. Campbell, cf., p. 53.

33. MGA, op. cit. XX, 1736.

measures of the Church, opening the way for a return, ceased from this time on to indulge in such fond desires. He became cleared and confirmed that the state of Secession should remain. Much of the delay of the Associate Presbytery had been on his recommendation and influence. He had persuaded the rest to delay acts of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. "This was the only material difference that was amongst that little body after their Secession from the Judicatories. But by the good hand of the Lord upon them, they were kept united; the other three Brethren, who were clear for the procedure, did not proceed to any steps of jurisdiction till after the Assembly of 1736, when all Four were convinced, that not only was it duty, but that it was high time for them to proceed to the exercise of government and discipline."<sup>34</sup> One of the charges contained in the first Testimony had made the condoning of Campbell's errors a ground for Secession. "The pernicious principles vented..." declared Wilson and Moncrieff, "subverts revealed religion, and exposes serious godliness, under the notion of enthusiasm. These errors have been exposed, yet he is cherished and countanenced."<sup>35</sup>

In August, 1735, Wilson, together with Moncrieff and Fisher, had been appointed to draw up an assertory act, or extend the first Testimony and included a judicial condemn-

---

34. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 481.

35. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 56.

ation of the steps of defection. This elaborate document was presented to the Associate Presbytery at its meeting in Perth, December 3, 1736, at which time it was approved and enacted, and published, circa, March 1737. To distinguish it from the first Testimony it bears the name Judicial Testimony.<sup>36</sup> The first Testimony had stated the defection only in so far as it was ground for Secession; this document exhibited the reasons for thus testifying.

The Judicial Testimony widened the breach between the Seceders and the Established Church, and became known to all as the authoritative document of the opinions of the Seceders. It traces the history of the Church; its reformation from the Papacy; its struggle with Episcopacy; its covenanted triumphs; its dismal persecutions; its time for favor at the Revolution. It declares the covenants to be perpetually binding upon all. It broods over the toleration of Prelacy by James. It mourns especially the period following the Revolution, when the divine right of Presbytery was not declared; the covenants were not renewed; many Episcopal pastors were allowed to remain and pollute their parishes; the Union was inconsistent with the old covenant union, and the maintainence of Episcopacy in England was the primary aim within it. As a result, boundless toleration was established by law; patronage and the Christmas recess were ordained. "For these reasons, we declare they are

---

36. See Appendix.



causes and grounds for the Lord's quarrel."<sup>37</sup> But that was not all. Heterodoxy had crept in; it sat in the Professor's chair; it found shelter in the Assembly; the Marrow was condemned; Simson was not excommunicated; Campbell had escaped without rebuke. The land was polluted with profanity and immorality; there were night assemblies and balls. An idolatrous picture of Christ had been received in many places. Penal statutes against witches had been repealed. "This document opens to us the real cause for Secession. The Synod sermon was really slight. There were strong counter currents in the Church. Some were throwing off the narrow notions of the covenanting times and attaining a milder religion of Christ. There were others who had inherited the bigotry and fanaticism of the Covenanters."<sup>38</sup> Such is the estimate one might give of this whole Secession enterprise.

These Testimonies were a necessity to the Seceders' position. They were not intended as new standards, but as assertory and declaratory Acts, setting forth the truths long held by the Church. They were too long to be properly called ecclesiastical standards. They were manifestoes such as anyone would use to indicate the course of error in an opposite course from their own. "Having continued waiting," wrote Wilson, "and finding, from the conduct of the

---

37. Associate Presbytery, ADT, op. cit., p. 42.

38. Campbell, TCCS, op. cit., p. 444.

Assemblies, 1735 and 1736, that instead of reforming, they were going on in their backsliding course, and that truth had gotten a new and deep wound, particularly by the conduct of the said Assembly, 1736, they found themselves at last obliged to emit their..." second Testimony.<sup>39</sup>

While the processes of General Assembly brought occasions which compelled separation, they were not the causes. To know these we must study the Testimony of the Seceders. While we do not treat at length the large causes of the Secession, yet Wilson has given us a fair picture of the ecclesiastical policy of the Seceders in these two manifestoes.<sup>40</sup> He believed it was his duty to witness to the truths committed to the Church. He believed the Church to be free from human authority, and subject only to Christ. This principle of freedom clearly defined the attitude of the Seceders toward the Established Church. It severed all connection because of the submission to the State, as, viz., the reading of the Porteous Act. For a Church to be subordinate to civil power, was "to buy Establishment at a costly rate." He recognized the civil magistrate as perserver of order in society. "The civil powers are employed for the support and defense of the office bearers of the Church in the faithful discharge of their duty, in all their several just rights and privileges."<sup>41</sup> The blessings which magist-

---

39. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 410. See Appendix.

40. See Appendix.

41. Associate Presbytery, ADT, op. cit., p. 71.

rates can confer upon the Church is to secure to it peace and quietness to do its own work, and otherwise, to let it alone.

Wilson stressed the government of the Associate Presbytery and claimed that it was agreeable to the Word of God. He did not consider himself shut out from the inheritance of the Catholic Church, neither did he think that he and his friends were separated from the life and history of the Church of Scotland. Their particular position was, viz., they sought to give a fuller manifestation to the principles of the Presbyterian Church than existed in the Established Church. Wilson had no intention of adopting "new notions" at variance with the accepted Presbyterian principles, but sought to give a new glow and vitality to the old. Especially was he anxious to restore the conception of Church life, which looked upon individuals as part of the Church, with duties to discharge and truths to maintain. Thus, he had seceded from the Established Church, not from the "free, faithful, and reforming" Church of Scotland.

When the Assembly sat, 1738, a protest was given from the Synod of Perth and Stirling, asking for action against the "disorderly practices of certain seceding ministers from this Church."<sup>42</sup> The roots of the protest are found in the July meeting of the Presbytery of Perth, a meeting which Wilson

---

42. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1738.



refused to attend. Certain of his elders "represented that his prayers and preaching tended too much to divide the congregation and encourage unhappy differences and animosities."<sup>43</sup> The General Assembly condemned their "dangerous schism" and appointed their Commission to take the protests under consideration, and, if they deemed it necessary, to take proper steps for summoning the Seceders before the bar of the 1739 Assembly. At the same time, the Assembly called upon all the ministers "to endeavor by conference, and other gentle means of persuasion, to reduce and reclaim the Brethren to their duty and to the communion of the Church,"<sup>44</sup> and to seek to reclaim those led away by the schism.

Wilson refers to this procedure in the following manner: "It is an Act of a very extraordinary nature. It...loads the Seceding Brethren in a very grievous manner, without any sufficient evidence brought against them...condemns their Judicial Act and Testimony...yet there is not one particular in it...contrary to the Word of God...To condemn them(thus)...is a dealing with them by mere authority...without condescending upon any erroneous principle maintained by them. They declare the grounds of their Secession to be unjustifiable; but what these grounds are, they have not told...The Assembly speaks of meekness, brotherly love, and forbearance...and yet at the same time they (the Seceders) are condemned as schismatics...

---

43. MPP, op. cit., XIII, p. 311.

44. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1738.

Is this to treat them in the spirit of meekness? Are these gentle means of persuasion? Who could...enter into conference with any upon the above terms, whereby...the whole of their conduct is condemned...without any regard for what they might offer for their own vindication?...it cannot be expected that they should act an inconsistent part with the Testimony that they are bound in duty to hold."<sup>45</sup>

In its November meeting, the Commission decided to serve the Libel, which was accordingly done in March, 1739. The Brethren were called upon to meet the Assembly "the 10th day of May, 1739, in the hour of cause."<sup>46</sup> This Libel contained charges of: unwarrantable secession; persistence in secession; constituting a Presbytery; publishing Testimonies which condemned the Judicatories of the National Church; leaving their parishes and going to others; licensing men to preach the Gospel - all of which were characterized as "high crimes." To this Wilson later made answer: "If the Judicatories of this Church had done their duty, the Seceding Brethren would not have had ground either for their association or for such a procedure."<sup>47</sup>

In April, 1739, the Associate Presbytery met at Culfargie, and agreed to appear before the Assembly to submit

---

45. Wilson, D, op. cit., pp. 169-172.

46. MGA, op. cit., Unprinted Index, 1739.

47. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 171.

their declination. Each of the Brethren had a copy of the Libel, together with answers to the charges it made. Their answers stated that "Judicatories are counter-acting solemn acts and promises by tyranny in the administration; by dismissing the erroneous from their bar. They charge we are contrary to Scripture. In every well-regulated court the charges are usually listed, but they haven't pointed out one particular text which is contrary. The Libel says: we have seceded from this Church. We reply: our Secession is from the Judicatories, not from the communion of the Church of Scotland. The Libel says: we are guilt of erecting a Presbytery and publishing a Testimony. We reply: Our Testimony is condemned without any one particular set up as contrary. Our duty is to point out the deviations of the Judicatories. The Libel says: we are guilty of leaving our parishes and dispensing sealing ordinances to others. We reply: we wish we did not have to do it, but the Judicatories are breaking down and scattering, and we feel obliged to give to those who voluntarily leave the Judicatories. The Libel says: We are licensing and ordaining ministers. We reply: people are groaning and can find no relief. We are constitute into a Presbytery in the name of Christ, and doubt not that we have warrant to commission men to preach."

At the same meeting, Wilson, Moncrieff, and Fisher were named to draft a paper declining the invitation to return to

---

48. Associate Presbytery, The Libel, pp. 19-22.



the Established Church. This was to be ready at their next meeting in Edinburgh in May. This was done, and just prior to the opening of the Assembly (May 10) the Brethren met and adopted that which these three laid before them. In this Declinature they set aside "all authority, power, and jurisdiction" of the Judicatories over the Associate Presbytery. The National Church had refused to purge out intruders; many gave offence by scandalous practices; arbitrary laws had been enacted. This was an appropriation of Christ's authority, and the Seceders declared themselves unyieldingly loyal to the Headship of Christ. "The present Judicatories cannot be competent judges on principles from which they have so deeply swerved; and any act...done by any...shall be held as null and void."<sup>49</sup>

The sentence of 1740, though it dislodged Wilson and his friends from their churches and deprived them of their stipend, it made the separation final. Such a breach made any union impossible, or at least, improbable. Wilson was looked upon as a turbulent person and, in some places, met with a keen spirit of hostility and acts of aggression.<sup>50</sup> "The press also teemed with angry pamphlets against the Secession. Messrs. John Currie of Kinglassie and John Willison of Inveresk took the lead in this species of warfare...The person who stood

---

49. MGA, op. cit., XX, 1739.

50. See Appendix.

forward as the chief defender of the Secession against the attacks that were made upon it through the medium of the press, was the Rev. Mr. Wilson of Perth. His Defence and Continuation of it, in reply to Mr. Currie, have long been justly admired as excellent specimens of controversial reasoning.<sup>51</sup> It becomes our task to consider Wilson's controversies with Currie of Kinglassie.

---

51. M'Kerrow, HSC, op. cit., pp. 185-186.

"It is not sessions, presbyteries, synods  
and general assemblies that make us truly  
a Presbyterian Church, but the free access  
of Church members with their grievances  
unto these courts..." "Defence", P. 58.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### "WILSON AS AN APOLOGIST"

The chief antagonist of the Secession movement was John Currie of Kinglassie, who had entered the ranks of authorship as early as 1720 with his Jus Populi Vindictum, and again in 1727 with is Jus Populi Divinium. The latter is a fine commentary on Currie's early views, and reveal a striking similarity with the views of Wilson and the other Brethren.<sup>1</sup> His valuable contribution to Presbyterian apologetics was completed in 1733, when he published A Full Vindication of the rights of people in the matter of electing pastors. These writings are remarkable for evangelical warmth; and are bold in speaking out against modernism. He reminded his readers that as an unpleasant sound comes from a cracked bell, "so a cracked minister is less meet for calling souls to Christ; if we neglect to preach Christ, we neglect our main work." He lamented the prevalence of that style of preaching in which the doctrines of grace were wholly, or, for the most part, suppressed. He spoke in strong, condemnatory terms of the Act of 1732, and looked upon it as nothing better than "extended patronage;

---

1. See Appendix.

a direct crossing of Christ's institutions; and robbing the people of their bequeathed right."<sup>2</sup>

Such a man was found on the side of the Four Seceders. He had subscribed to the Representation of 1732; he had been one of the seven members of the Commission of 1733 to protest against the sentence of the Assembly. But this was all he would do; this was as far as he would go, for when Wilson and his friends seceded, Currie condemned their conduct and withdrew from any connections with them. This must have been a severe trial indeed, because of the intimacy he had among his fellow presbyters. To the credit of Currie, however, he possessed his soul in severe trial. But consideration and regard was not maintained by all. Bitter hostility and affrontery have been laid as charges against the vindicator of the Church of Scotland, and one biographer does not scruple to compare him to Judas.<sup>3</sup> But Currie is to be credited with keen discretion in stopping short of a secession, as much as Wilson is for going on. There is no moral delinquency in refusing to adhere to actions one feels not necessary or justifiable. Of course, one needs to be careful as to the language he employs, and Currie may have allowed himself, in the heat of debate, to write in strong terms against those who had been friends.

---

2. Currie, John, The Defection of the Church of Scotland, p. 9

3. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 191.

However, the liberty of dissent should not be denied merely on the basis of personal friendship. The controversy into which these two good and able men entered was both voluminous and protracted. In following the scheme of attack and defense, one is able to see clearly the line of argument as it unfolded itself.

Currie is the first to take the pen, and in so doing, he endeavors to show that the chief principles set forth in the Testimonies of the Secession are not sufficient grounds for separation. "Separation from a true Church, as still the Church of Scotland is, 'tis so great a sin, that I have that duty to show the evil."<sup>4</sup> Though the chief ground for Secession is allegedly a scandalous and unparalleled apostasy from the Church of 1638-1649, yet the practice of Judicatories then could be as little justified as the action of those in the present. "Her conduct in that period is not to be our rule, but as it agrees with the Divine Testimony."<sup>5</sup> If the failings of former reformation periods were not grounds for separation, then how can separation be justified now? To dwell upon the several faults of the Church, even though they were committed during the reforming period, can do no harm to those of the present. But the undue extolling of that period with a design to depress the Church of Wilson's day is, declared Currie, "highly prejudicial...to the Gospel."

---

4. Currie, John, An Essay on Separation, p. 1.

5. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 2.



In spite of the grounds the Brethren claimed for lamentation, Currie would not grant them sufficient warrant for separation. It is with a real desire to make known his friendship with Wilson and the others that he remarked, "What I have said against their conduct is not from the least prejudice of any of their persons. In converse, I have sundry times vindicated them from the things laid to their charge. I have been intimately acquainted with these Brethren...their principles are what I cannot approve...nor...can they be justified upon Presbyterian principles and scriptural grounds."<sup>6</sup>

In considering the fundamentals of the Brethren's Testimony, Currie could find nothing that would warrant Secession. He uses great freedom, therefore, in writing his Essay.

"Either these Brethren are to be condemned for keeping separate...; or we are to be condemned...who follow not their example."<sup>7</sup> He urged the Seceders to use charity in dealing with him, for if they wrote and preached separation from point of conscience, they should permit others to act against it from the same principle. Since it is the duty of ministers to show how great a sin schism is, Currie's "duty" is to attempt to discover the evil of it and show that those who adhere to the Church of Scotland have an abundance to say for

---

6. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 3.

7. Ibid.

their vindication.

Currie began with the premise that the Church of Scotland was a true Church, from which one ought not separate. All the marks of a true Church are to be found in her. If Christ is not purely preached, it is not the fault of the Church. Sacraments are as purely administered as ever. Discipline, even though it is not exercised as it ought to be, does not make a false Church. "A Church is to be accepted a true Church<sup>8</sup>... while her standards are pure...and generally professed." If the Church requires no sinful terms of communion, then, declared the author, there can be no separation without "the hainous sin of schism." He reminds Wilson that the latter had adhered to Erskine's Protestation at the Assembly of 1733, in spite of his affirmation, viz., "a very great regard for<sup>9</sup> the Judicatories, to whom I owe my subjection in the Lord." Further, when the Seceders appeared before the Commission the same year, they maintained their protest was not an impugning of the power of supreme Judicatories. If, then, the Church was regarded as just by Wilson and his colleagues in 1733, then it certainly could not be worse, seeing some steps were taken to check the chief grounds of complaint, viz., violent intrusions.

There may be differences of sentiments without separation, said Currie. One ought to forbear, therefore, in things

---

8. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 6.

9. Wilson, and Moncrieff, RCLGA, op. cit., p. 12.

not fundamental. There is a difference, said he, between separation from a Church and separation from the faults of a Church. "To separate from the corruptions is one thing; to separate from the corrupt is another."<sup>10</sup> Some faults are more noticeable in a declining day than in a day of reformation, and - reminded Currie - Wilson and his committee had observed this with favor.<sup>11</sup> "The corruption continued for many years...yet... several eminent...withheld." They testified by way of Church communion, not by separation.

Some grounds are serious enough for fasting, but not for separation. Errors which are of a "hainous nature" are not sufficient, even though they go uncensured. With apparent reference to Simson and Campbell, he remarked, "Though there may be corrupt members, yet they will not warrant separation."<sup>12</sup> The fact that men go uncensured does not pollute the ordinances for others. The Judicatories may arrive at adverse decisions, but these cannot be regarded as sufficient grounds for separation.

Currie joined with the Brethren in condemning the Act of 1732, but denied that there was any more warrant to separate because of it than to separate because of the Act of 1642, which required each Presbytery to send a list of six men of outstanding qualifications to the patron of the parish. Even

---

11. Associate Presbytery, ADT, op. cit., cf., p. 17.

12. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 16.



Wilson concurred in this, for in the Representation to the Commission, 1733, the Seceders referred to this Act, saying,<sup>13</sup> "The greater part of the Presbyteries...were against..."

The Brethren later affirmed that this Act was "so far from being approved...the most part of the Presbyteries did declare themselves against it."<sup>14</sup> Thus, concluded Currie, the Seceders ought to have remained within the National Church, seeing the Standards are pure, and no sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them.

Currie admitted, however, that existing circumstances may bring about separation. "Deadly and capital errors" which strike at the heart of faith and salvation - but no one can point an accusing finger at any such errors in the Church, not even Simson and Campbell. "Idolatry in worship" is sufficient, but - defended Currie - there is none to be found in the Established Church, and if there is any, "that is their sin" for the Church does not approve it. "Tyranny" in government is sufficient, but Currie exempts the Church from this accusation. He is not unmindful, however, of the objections raised against the Assembly, 1733, which cast out four ministers for honest testimony. He confessed, "I am sorry such a sentence was ever passed, yet some think their ejection was not the deed of this Church, but a mistake was the means of

---

13. Wilson, and Moncrieff, RCLGA, op. cit., p. 17.

14. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 60.  
See Appendix.

ejection, for many did not understand the import of the sentence."<sup>15</sup>

Intrusions are surely grounds for lamentation, but since there had been considerable stop, such cannot be used for the grounds of separation. Currie would differ between an intruder who actively participates in getting his presentation and settlement, and he who has nothing to do with it, but who owes the Judicatories a submission in the Lord. "I am far from vindicating violent settlements made since 1712...there is ground to lament over...patronage, yet she (the Church) hath done more to have it abolished than any group of men since the Reformation."<sup>16</sup> Wilson and his committee had stated, "from 1641 the house of God went on prosperously and successfully till 1650."<sup>17</sup> But, retorted Currie, if robbing the people of their right is building the Church, "I'm mistaken."

The Seceders complained that a court, which was not a court, had been set up "to entrust the affairs of the Church ...from which there can be no appeal...and which has many bad effects."<sup>18</sup> Currie replied that Commissions had many times handled affairs as were not convenient for the Assembly. Eminent Presbyterians had regarded it as a Court of Christ.

---

15. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 29.

16. See Appendix.

17. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 19.

18. Associate Presbytery, ADT, op. cit., p. 49.

There had been bad decisions, admitted Currie, but that did not prove them evil in themselves.

Wilson accused the Church of being tyrannical in government. Currie condemned this view but added, Suppose the ejection of the Four was tyrannical, what are they to do with the Act, 1638, which forbade any speaking or writing against any Act of any Assembly? Sundry Acts of the extolled period could be summoned to prove the Judicatories to be as guilty then as in the present. "Concerning 1707, I have always thought it a fault...but it can never be laid to the charge of Scotland..." Commissions addressed themselves against it, which even the Seceders admitted and gave witness in their <sup>19</sup>  
Testimony.

Wilson had charged that the Oath of Allegiance was sinful because it was unlimited and exclusive. But, answered Currie, neither are the National Covenants limited with respect to the means of defending religion, though the means may be sinful and the thing urged good and lawful. To declare that the taking of the Oath of Abjuration was the same as joining with the Oath of Allegiance, was a mistake. "I will not debate whether the Oath of Abjuration is lawful or not," remarked Currie, "but I will give some propositions."<sup>20</sup> Worthy men have taken and refused it, yet they remained

---

19. See Appendix.

20. Currie, AES, op.cit., p. 104.



friendly toward the Revolution-Settlement. To say the Oath of Abjuration abjures the Covenants and sanctions, is unfair, and does not have the support of those who took the Oath.

Even Fisher had asked, "Is it vastly more agreeable to the law of Love and Charity to put as favorable a construction upon man's words as they can possibly admit of?"<sup>21</sup> Ought not the same love and charity be used here? asked Currie. The Act and Testimony seems charitable at this point, for it states, "The most part of the ministers of this Church, apprehending that it brought them under no other allegiance but allegiance to the sovereign, and an engagement against a Popish pretender...had freedom to take the Oath."<sup>22</sup> Currie taunted the Seceders that though they branded this Oath as a National sin, yet they did not bar any from communion who took it. That none have used it for a ground of separation is evident from that fact that in 1718, Wilson and his friends drew up a Declaration in which they stated "it was no small satisfaction to us to understand that our worthy and dear brethren whom we judge in charity have acted according to their light and conscience, in taking the said Oath..."<sup>23</sup>

Currie launches into a lengthy excursus on Wilson's objection that the Church is erroneous in doctrine, and that

---

21. MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 192.

22. Associate Presbytery, AF, op. cit., p. 21.

23. MPP, op. cit., VIII, p. 144.

it is sinful to hold communion with her. The Perth Pastor based his conviction on the condemnation of the Marrow in 1720. "I'm far from vindicating that Act, yet I think the Church was far from designing a countenance to error, as evident by her explanation of the Act in 1722."<sup>24</sup> So, reasoned Currie, if the Assembly was unsound in 1720, she was orthodox in 1722.

The Church was unsound, said Wilson, because Simson was not censured. He had been acquitted in 1717 with an admonition; and merely suspended in 1729. "In my opinion he was too easily passed," admitted Currie, "I think it was a fault of the Church..." But it was not true that the Assembly rested in the suspension of Simson for, reminded Currie, in 1729 the Assembly had decided, "it was not safe that he be further employed in teaching Divinity."<sup>25</sup>

Wilson led the Seceders in the objection against the lenity shown Campbell. To this Currie answered, "In my opinion Campbell deserved a rebuke." In the Judicial Testimony, Wilson accused the Assembly of adopting Campbell's principle of self-love. This, defended Currie, was an oversight, for there were many in the Assembly who had zeal for the truth, and who would never have allowed this to pass had they noticed it.

---

24. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 114.

25. MGA, op. cit., XIX.

Wilson objected that the Acts of faithful Assemblies between 1638-1649 were not revived. He looked to this period as prosperous and successful; filled with "beautiful and pleasant harmony", but no word is mentioned of any place where the Church failed.<sup>26</sup> Further, what would be the advantage of reviving any of these Acts? Currie is quick to agree to the lack of faithful testifying against the sins of the times, and the just ground of complaint taken by these men; and the Church was not too careful to license only the orthodox. "It cannot be denied, and a warning might be very reasonable, yet ...it cannot be denied that the Act 1736, about preaching, is assertory of most of the great truths being controverted."<sup>27</sup>

Currie conceded that there were many things that called for reformation, but separation was not the way to achieve reform. Sometimes people are deceived by impressions, and these ought to be examined in the light of Scripture. "I own ministers should give testimony; but they ought to be sure it is on defections." Otherwise, asserted Currie, the Church is charged with something of which she is not guilty. Wilson spoke only of the years 1650 et seq., with no word of the period 1638-1645, and Currie cited several Acts which he believed should have been testified against. If it be true that the Act concerning ministerial freedom be not rescinded, and

---

26. Associate Presbytery, AT, op. cit., p. 35.

27. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 142.



that "nothing less than formal repeal"<sup>28</sup> will suffice, then, they should consider if they have been faithful in their treatment of the period, 1643-1649.

Testimony ought to be plain, agreed Currie, but Wilson and his committee are under censure for designing to get the people to separate from the National Church. He inquired of Wilson, Why not be as plain for separation in the Testimony as he is in his sermons? The Brethren, claimed Currie, have some things which are not factual. They are correct in their complaint "that wrestlings and testimonies of late times have not been justified,"<sup>29</sup> but testimonies cannot replace the Bible. To which Wilson replied, If separation is such an evil, why was the Assembly not more cautious in 1733? Why hasn't this Act been rescinded and a fair, open door set before the Brethren? "I'm sorry such a sentence was ever pronounced, but Erskine should have taken the Synod's rebuke in silence. I heartily wish they had rescinded it."<sup>30</sup> Many thought the door was opened when the Assembly authorized the Synod to take off the sentence. This was not a formal, but material rescinding. The Assembly did not see the necessity for judging the legality of the sentence, seeing what a strong party it had to struggle against. This might have taken the entire time of

---

28. RNA, op. cit., p. 22.

29. ADT, op. cit., p. 9.

30. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 162

an Assembly. But, replied Wilson, "As long as that Act stands unrepealed, it stands as a rule of the Church."<sup>31</sup> Such reasoning is beside the point, returned Currie, for the Assembly of 1734 meant the preceding Assembly did not design to restrain due ministerial freedom. Those who condemned Erskine did so because of his way and manner; not for his speaking against the Act 1732. And, queries Currie, did not Wilson himself say he did not pretend to justify every mode of Erskine's expression? "If I'm not mistaken," went on Currie, "they would never have made Secession if they had not been cast out. If a ground was not sufficient at first to warrant Secession, it cannot be considered so afterward to continue the same."<sup>32</sup>

Currie called upon Wilson and the others to return and testify as to what they saw amiss. They could not blame the Church, inasmuch as the offending Acts had been materially rescinded in 1734. Defects may be faults, he analyzed, but they do not make a Church no Church. Some members of the Church believed the Seceders would be of little benefit were they returned, but, said Currie, "they could keep their consciences free till better times. I hope they are men of more self-denial and religion than to be looking for personal credit."<sup>33</sup> Receiving those who were discontented with their

---

31. Associate Presbytery, RNA, op. cit., p. 25.

32. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 173.

33. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 179.

local churches appeared to Currie an Independent scheme - gathering churches out of churches.

The Acts, 1732, being materially rescinded, could not be a term of communion to any other. The decision against the Presbytery of Dunfermline, having to do with the administration of sealing ordinances to any from Kinross, was "an Act in a particular case," and so was not a term of communion upon any other. However, affirmed Currie, this was not as strict as the Act, 1647,<sup>34</sup> which called upon all to take the ordinances from their own parish. No one ever regarded that as a sinful term of communion. "I know of a letter under one of the Brethren's hands, that some of them will not allow their people to partake of the Lord's Supper with ministers of the Established Church." Some were so convinced that the Testimony was a term of communion, that they would not join with anyone who did not approve it. This would seem to be as coercive as any Act they complained about. In substance, this is a sentence of excommunication.

Wilson regarded it dangerous "to depart from the least part of the Testimony."<sup>35</sup> Currie regarded it still more dangerous to adhere to something you have never read and do not properly understand - as was the lot of many of the Seceders. It is possible to be a disapprover of the Associate Presbytery

---

34. Associate Presbytery, ADT, op. cit., cf., p. 57.

35. Associate Presbytery, ADT, op. cit., p. 24.



yet be a servant of God. He urged those who anticipated joining the Secession to consider carefully the grounds used for separation; and those who remained outside the open door of the Seceders, that they give care before they enter the "wilderness" as a member. The departure of the Four had raised considerable ferment and indignation among the churches of the land. To postpone communion with the Church until all grievances were redressed had neither precept nor example. "I believe the Church would not interfere with their Testimony, and would allow recording them."<sup>36</sup> "Now let the world judge if separatists are correct...I am still of the mind that no sufficient ground hath been given, and the Brethren should not be displeased with them that cannot see...the same light."<sup>37</sup>

The order of defence was taken up by Wilson in a letter dated May 15, 1738, to Reverend James Wardlaw of Dunfermline, to which is attached a Postscript to Currie.<sup>38</sup> Wilson had evidently written to his friend circa 1737, and received an answer on "23rd January". (It was now April 8). Wardlaw had joined with him in condemning the action of Judicatories since 1734; the indignant proceedings regarding Simson and Campbell;

---

36. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 197.

37. Currie, AES, op. cit., p. 223.

38. Wilson, William, A Letter From a Member of the Associate Presbytery to a Minister in the Presbytery of  
D ne, cf., p. 1

and the dishonor done to Christ by the Porteous Act. "Yet... your missive imports that you do not see it your duty to bear testimony by way of Secession from the Judicatories."<sup>39</sup> His friend had laid before him certain Scriptural grounds for continuing in the National Church, and Wilson replied to show why he had testified judicially and by way of Secession, and hoped his observations would be approved by Wardlaw.

When a Church is declining, began Wilson, testimony ought to be given to those truths injured and oppressed. The steps of deviation should be marked out in contrast to the points of reformation previously attained. No truth should be purposely "let go." Then - as though he wanted to vindicate his own position - he said, "When the bulk carry on defection, the smaller part ought to use petitions, representations, and doctrinal testimonies as a means of reclaiming their sinning brethren before associating together to exercise the Keys."<sup>40</sup>

He assailed the Judicatories for using their authority for destruction and not edification; dismissing the erroneous with light censures; their unwillingness to acknowledge petitions and testimonies, "even though backsliding has been carried on with a high hand." The only recourse for the faithful is to band together and display a judicial testimony. Dissents have been useless, said Wilson, but "we do not stretch

---

39. Ibid.

40. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 7.

out ourselves to the uttermost." He who refuses to join in said testimony is not doing what he might do, for there is no striving together without a joint testimony. The faithful should band together and testify, for the Church government has assumed primitive authority which has "unhinged" the Presbyterian constitution.<sup>41</sup> "It is the duty of all churches to purge...by censure...then the grounds of our Secession would be removed, and we might have the comfortable prospect of a pleasant and beautiful unity and harmony in carrying out the work of the Lord."<sup>42</sup>

Wilson had no intention of publishing his letter until he saw the Essay which, thought he, "perplexed and involved the question so much...I thought it necessary to do something ...until we have time to vindicate our conduct from unjust aspersions, and this will be no difficulty, in spite of Currie's voluminous Essay."<sup>43</sup> He charged Currie of failure to enter the argument as it is laid in the Testimony, although the letter does mention some "disputable points and palpable mistakes." The challenge is flung at Currie to present any principle whatsoever that can be proven contrary to the Word and Standards. In answer to Currie's statement that the Church of Scotland is a true Church of the Lord, Wilson

---

41. See Appendix.

42. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 22.

43. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 28.



indulges in critical humor by answering, "A Church may be a true Church, and still not have ~~the~~ marks." If a Church has the grounds for separation, listed by Currie in his Essay, then, said Wilson, the marks of a true Church are not there. "His whole performance is criticism of this kind...but I hope the Seceders will never trifle..."<sup>44</sup>

Wilson agrees with Currie as to the marks of a true Church, but differs as to their application. The first mark, that of preaching the Word of God, is an instituted means for gathering and constituting a visible Church. It includes maintaining and professing the true doctrine and the true faith - which can be done judicially as well as doctrinally. It is true, Wilson agreed, the standards of Doctrine are pure, yet because of errors vented, "it will be found to be a gross mistake that the Judicatories allow no error in doctrine."<sup>45</sup> Truth had been managed in such a way in Simson's case that his principles were never declared contrary to Scripture, but merely that they were "not evidently" founded upon it. So, one is left to decide for himself, just what the Assembly meant by these hypotheses and propositions. The Assembly declared, 1727, that there was the most perfect agreement as to the Trinity, but these doctrines were not asserted in terms

---

44. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 34.

45. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 35.

opposite to Simson's impugning. "You might know Simson would subscribe to the Assembly's Act, according to his own sense and meaning, without disclosing his own propositions."<sup>46</sup>

What is applicable to Simson, concludes Wilson, applies with equal force to Campbell, who escaped censure and condemnation, even when he appeared before the Supreme Court of the Church.

"Mr. Currie will have to prove that in spite of the above, the Judicatories maintain true doctrine..."<sup>47</sup>

The second mark of a true Church is "the right administration of the Sacraments," but they are rightly administered only when done by "lawful ministers...appointed for the preaching of the Word..."<sup>48</sup> Can Currie deny that there have not been many intruded upon parishes who were not lawfully chosen? Anything administered by them, therefore, cannot be called Sacraments of Christ. This is precisely the opposite of Currie's remark in the Essay, q. v., that the seals of the Church are as purely administered in the National Church as in any other.

The third mark is listed by both as "ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered." Currie had stated that no Church had a "more exact form" for discipline. "Currie still waves the true question, whether of design, or he has not duly considered the controversy. Charity leads me to think the latter."<sup>49</sup> The question is: have the Judicatories

---

46. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 37.

47. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 39.

48. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 40.

49. Ibid.

properly administered ecclesiastical discipline? Strict Acts mean nothing as long as the perversion of truth continues. Currie does not admit any tyranny. He simply says he is "sorry" such an Act (1733) was ever passed against the Brethren. "Currie knows we have not seceded because of a few Acts, but habitual tyranny in administration, whereby Judicatories have been ruling with vigor."<sup>50</sup>

In contending that considerable stop had been put to intrusions, Currie made a gross mistake. Surely he cannot affirm this, declared Wilson, when the contrary is evident. From the outset, the Seceders had alleged the Act 1733 imposed new terms, "but Currie has not enervated any of the proofs of this, nor does he deny..." He "trifles", says Wilson, by saying these sentences were not sinful to all, inasmuch as just the Four were effected by them. "But Currie has not so much as touched the chief grounds upon which we argue - that those sentences were never formally or materially repealed."<sup>51</sup>

Currie sought to use the Reasons For Not Aceding as an argument against Wilson but, said the latter, "he has miserably perverted and torn asunder; he doesn't understand what he was attempting to confute." The refusal of the Assembly to inquire into the steps taken against the Four indicated that the objectionable Acts were not repealed. No reasonable objection can be

50. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 42.

51. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 43.



objection can be given why the Assembly, 1734, did not declare the Acts of 1733 as illegal.

Wilson evaluated the whole situation in the following manner: "I don't think when Currie took the field, he thought the dispute would run so deep; and other questions will come out when we engage more closely into the controversy...He never really enters into the argument, though in his 'expostulations' he pours out in a flood of words..."<sup>52</sup> In order to discredit the Act and Testimony, Currie loads them (the reforming period) with "odious proceedings." But the Seceders meant only "that this Church endeavored, and mercifully obtained, a considerable pitch of reformation." "When Currie is in a pinch", insinuated Wilson, "he throws this, (viz., 1638), up for relief."

In order to discredit the reforming period Currie extenuated the defects of the present. He did not acknowledge habitual tyranny, decried Wilson, which is a protection of error. "In order to rub our conduct and disclaim out Testimony, he tries to make them inconsistent with themselves through papers printed years ago. There is a vast difference between the Church then and now. How does it support his cause to do this?...He scatters 'hearsays' through his book, which is an unmanly way. I hope we do not go so low as to rake into such dunghills. I am sorry for Currie's bitterness of spirit I see breathing in the Essay. Whatever contempt he may pour, and hard names he

---

52. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 48.

bestows, I wish he had treated their cause with more meekness and fear...Currie has given ground for irritation from the way he managed the argument. May our contendings be singly for the truth..."<sup>53</sup>

Currie seized upon this letter, together with its Post script, and one week later let be known he "thought it duty to vindicate myself and trust" by making a few remarks without "meddling with that letter."<sup>54</sup>

There isn't a word in the Essay, he said, that labelled the Seceders as Separatists from the true Church, but from the Church of Scotland, which is one particular Church of Christ. "'Tis one thing to separate from a true Church and another from the true Church." Currie fails to find any ground for Wilson's statement, viz., a Church can be a true Church and yet want the marks. Only when a true Church degenerates to be thus guilty, is a separation warranted. It is a mistake to say the Church has allowed error in doctrine, and Currie seeks to vindicate the Church at this point; "though 'tis much to be wished her zeal against them were greater."<sup>55</sup>

Currie accuses Wilson of laboring in error in the matter of a minister "lawfully chosen", but it would seem Wilson has the issue well in hand and his explanation sufficient. It appears that Currie has strained the point for the sake of argu-

---

53. Wilson, LAMP, op. cit., p. 54.

54. Currie, John, A Short Vindication of the Essay on Separation, p. 1.

55. Currie, VES, op. cit., p. 2.

ment when discussing "a right call for a right administration". The entire argument is quite beside the point, and there are many words written which might have been saved. Currie does admit that it is "an oppressing of Christians to thrust in pastors", but holds that the administration of Sacraments by them are as valid as those dispensed by others. "This begets perplexing questions in serious people, to question whether they were ever baptized or need to be again. This wild doctrine must be exploded for it is opposite to all Protestant churches."<sup>56</sup>

Currie refuses the unfairness of Wilson in the dispute about Reasons For Not Acceding. It is possible to mention a thing as a matter to be complained about - as Currie had done - without thinking of it as a reason for not acceding. Wilson had omitted the first word, claimed Currie, which would have laid open the real meaning. If he thinks there is a perversion of words, says the Minister of Kinglassie, let him look to the Act, 1690, and its perversion, which is cited in the Act and Testimony. "Any person of ordinary capacity", said Currie, could see the meaning of his Essay, in spite of Wilson's reference to it as "unintelligible stuff." "I know my capacity is far from being great," he stated humbly, "yet the subject is such that mean intellects could comprehend Wilson's conduct;...he has made such a clamor about little or nothing..."

---

56. Currie, VES, op. cit., p. 4.



and could get little or nothing to fix upon."<sup>57</sup>

The author of the Essay denies he ever mentioned bad Acts of other periods with a purpose of "extenuating" the sins of the present. He concurs with Wilson regarding the habitual tyrannical intrusions, but "he can never prove I'm inconsistent with myself, asserting the Church of Scotland is guilty in Christians choosing ministers, or any other thing." He may be accused of apostasy, but his views on separation remain the same. His design was not to jumble the facts of the Testimony, but to answer with the best methods possible. "I had no design to misrepresent...writings; truth needs no such support," concludes Currie tauntingly.<sup>58</sup>

He denies that he harbors any bitterness or contempt, and calls it "unjust and groundless." He challenges Wilson to find any place where such is found, in order that rectification can be made. "There's not so much in Wilson's Postscript to an unbiased reader; and I would never have noticed it but for the fact that some might think he has effectually refuted the Es<sup>59</sup>say." If Wilson plans to make a "fuller answer", challenged Currie, "I hope he minds the merits of the cause;...not to amuse people with mere sounds. Unless there be more material than Wilson has used in his Postscript, the world will forgive

---

57. Currie, VES, op. cit., p. 9.

58. Currie, VES, op. cit., p. 14.

59. Ibid.

me if I let it stand unanswered." Currie had thus mustered all his abilities to demolish the cause of the Secession. His assailing produced a great result, for it called forth from the pen of Wilson a most able, learned and Christian defense of the cause for which he stood. With Wilson as his antagonist, Currie's efforts to check the progress of the Secession proved fruitless. This reply to Currie - the Defence, together with the Continuation - "is one of the most luminous and dispassionate controversial books in the English language."<sup>60</sup> It was the principal work of Wilson and became the recognized apology of the Secession Church. The general argument followed can be stated briefly: that the Secession was justified because of public and flagrant failure on the part of the Established Church to maintain the historical principles of the Reformation.

The reason for this enlarged testimony, says Wilson in the Preface, is the abundance of gross and dangerous errors, which trample down many revealed truths. "The most part of his (Currie's) quotations are applied in a manner contrary to the intention and design of the worthy authors (Seceders)"<sup>61</sup>. He holds that Currie has gained nothing by mentioning the bad Acts of former periods, except to harden the present generation in its iniquity. Wilson does not appear alarmed over the Essay, for he is sure that not all who read it will be persuaded the

---

60. Struthers, HS, op. cit., p. 25.

61. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. viii.

reports are true and matter of fact.

The chronological account which led to the Secession is given in Wilson's Introduction. Here is mentioned the laxness of the Church against Simson - even though a great part of the Presbyteries urged his disposition. Nevertheless, he was dismissed. Representations and protestations were refused, "yet the Reverend Mr. Currie, who signed...has not in all his Essay found the present Judicatories guilty of one single act of tyranny in the administration."<sup>62</sup>

A national Church, declared Wilson, could fall into such a state of inactivity that she would no longer answer the purpose of her erection - the support and defense of the truth. The Church is instituted as a public witness of the truth; the keeper and notifier of the same. Therefore, he would not agree that violent intrusions was the chief ground of complaint. The Secession was a struggle chiefly against Arminianism by the forces of evangelical truth. "Violent intrusions were indeed one of the grounds of complaint; but many other steps of defection were complained of; as appears from what has been narrated in the Introduction; and amongst others, the injury that was done to many important doctrinal truths by the conduct of Judicatories, when gross errors were brought to their bar. And, I humbly judge, the blow that was given there to the truths, held forth from the Word of God in our Confession of

---

62. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 28. See Appendix.



Faith, deserves to be reckoned amongst the chief grounds of complaint..."<sup>63</sup> It was not violent intrusions, then, or the Act of 1732, but "a complex course of defection," in doctrine, government, and discipline, which Wilson maintains were the grounds of his separation.

Currie is ambiguous in some places, especially in speaking of those faults and corruptions under which separation is warrantable. Wilson does not concur in these places, because Church communion is placed upon a negative basis, "whereas something positive is required." Such propositions are regarded by Wilson as lax and dangerous, for every corruption of truth aims at the very soul of religion. The author of Essay lists tyranny as a ground for separation, but he is not clear as to the degree. Therefore, concluded Wilson, unless there is the most cruel and habitual tyranny there can be no ground for separation. "It is not sessions, presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies that make us a truly Presbyterian Church, but the free access of church members with their grievances unto these courts...If power and authority are not exercised...what remains but a Prelatic government..."<sup>64</sup>

Currie is accused of diverting a little with his criticisms when writing upon the term "Secession", in order that he might give release to some kind of grudge against the powerful

---

63. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 39.

64. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 58.

congregations among the Seceders. It is shown, however, by the Defence, that there is a difference between a departure from a party within the Church and the separation from the communion of a Church. "Therefore, the question under our consideration is not concerning Secession from the Church of Scotland, but concerning Secession from the present Judicatories of this National Church."<sup>65</sup> Separation due to the walk and conversation of members is one thing; separation because of defection is another. The matter of Secession by way of separation is not a matter of setting up a distinct Church; or breaking away from a reforming Church; or particular steps of defection; but, it is a matter of the divine right to associate together for the exercise of the keys in a distinct capacity; it concerns Judicatories which refuse to be relaimed; it concerns a series of backslidings.

Wilson opens his second chapter by narrating his views on the National Church and showing that, as represented in the present Judicatories it does not have the scriptural character of a true Church. The latter "ought to maintain, uphold and support the truth, against all such errors as may spring up in the Church."<sup>66</sup> But, a scheme of principles had been presented to the bar of the Courts, and no manner of notice was taken of them. The author thus concludes that the Established

---

65. Wilson, D. op. cit., p.65.

66. Wilson, D. op. cit., pp. 76-77.

Church does not have the characteristics of the true Church, "in regard she does not...assert and confess the truth, in opposition unto the many dangerous errors that have been vented among us."<sup>67</sup> He urges Currie to remember that the Four did not break away simply because due censure was not laid upon the erroneous, but especially for the dismissing of the same from their bar without specific assertion of the truth, and a condemnation of error. "Our Secession," Wilson stated firmly, "is stated upon commissions as well as omissions." There is much quibbling over mere words, but Wilson carries the field.

Wilson's position is very impressive in showing that the National Church, as represented, is not a confessing Church. The Judicatories had refused to do justice to truth, in condemning particularly and expressly many "gross and pernicious errors" brought before them. This, said Wilson, is a perversion of the Word and the Confession. The erroneous are dismissed from the bar, either without censure or without censure proportionate to the offense. The Judicatories were tyrannical in their administration - not in a few instances only - but in a series of violent acts upon many congregations. Ministers are intruded upon churches, and these are appointed to give the right hand of fellowship to reclaiming parishoners. "They appoint and ordain that the members of the Church should submit to the ministry of those who are imposed upon them...or other-

---

67. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 86.



wise be deprived of the seals of the covenant."<sup>68</sup>

Several Acts and deeds, principally the Kinross case, are mentioned to show the unwarrantable terms of ministerial communion. Further, the Church Judicatories had subordinated themselves to the civil government, in which case the "Sabbath of the Lord was profaned," but no manner of testimony was laid against "this grievous usurpation." Rather, there was a silent submission unto the same. Moreover, declared Wilson, the Church courts continue to withstand the ordinary means to reclaim them. "If it is so, as I have already proven, that the Judicatories of this Church are carrying on a course of defection...then it is the duty of such...to come out...in a way of Secession..."<sup>69</sup>

The third chapter dwells upon Currie's arguments against Secession. These are drawn from three sources: Scripture, human authorities, and the conduct of faithful ministers between the years 1596 and 1638. Wilson shows up the absurdity of his opponent's reasoning and declares "such a union and conjunction as it pled for...binds us up from transmitting unto them (viz., the Judicatories) such a testimony as is necessary."<sup>70</sup> As for the many quotations from Calvin, Rutherford, M'Ward, et al, "I must own, that I cannot see that the words...are either plain or pointed against secession...it is after our author's

---

68. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 175.

69. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 157.

70. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 187

partial manner, he stops when he comes to anything he thinks may make against him."<sup>71</sup> As for the worthy ancestors, circa 1596 to 1638, Wilson casts out the claims made by Currie, viz., that backsliding was carried on by them. Quite the contrary, "the Church of Scotland was at this time contending with great faithfulness and zeal for their just rights and privileges, in opposition unto the greatest violence."<sup>72</sup> There is a vast difference between the conduct and practice of the two periods. The defections carried on during the years 1596 et seq, were by manifold acts of force and violence by civil powers from which the Church sought a free and lawful General Assembly. The defection of the present, said Wilson, is carried on by the Judicatories themselves. "It is evident that the present course of defection is carried on...in their (Judicatories) ecclesiastical and judicative capacity...; whereas the course of defection from 1596-1638 was carried on by outward violence and force from the secular powers..."<sup>73</sup>

The fourth chapter treats at length the injurious reflections cast upon the reformation period, 1638-1650. "I know none," confesses Wilson, "that have not both writ and spoke honorably of this period, till the author of the Essay

---

71. Wilson, William, A Description of the True Nature of Schism, p. 19.

72. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 208.

73. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 210.

on Separation appeared upon the field."<sup>74</sup>

After relating a detailed account of that period, the author concludes with a few observations: The year 1638 was marked with deep humiliation and mourning; all ranks of persons were sensible to their backslidings. In 1690, however, there was no express mention made of steps of defection from the Confession and Covenants. The entire Church returned to the Lord in 1638; but, at the Revolution, the National Church was not a covenanting Church. There was no searching for the Lord in 1690; "hence, the above omission...was a dropping of a material part of the testimony of this Church."<sup>75</sup> The rights of the Kingdom of Christ were expressly asserted in 1638; but such was not done by the Assembly of 1690. "Though he abounds in his authorities," argues Wilson, "yet he has not given us one authority to support the charge he has laid against such a reverent and faithful body of men."<sup>76</sup> Wilson admits that some of the Assembly, 1638, may have complied with Prelacy, but he refuses the charge that the aforementioned Court consisted "mainly" of those who had subjected themselves - in greater or lesser degrees - to Prelacy. The accusations of Currie against this Assembly are introduced after his "usual ambiguous manner."

The final chapter treats the complaints made by Currie

---

74. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 226.

75. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 262.

76. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 282.



against the Act and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery. Currie had thought it fitting to complain against them, and laid upon them serious accusations. He alleged the Brethren took the liberty of altering the words of Parliamentary Acts, and made them mean what they were never intended to mean. He charged they asserted things in the Testimony which were not matter of fact, "but", retorted Wilson, "the Brethren say no such thing as our author alleges." "Whether he has read the Acts of Assembly or not," wrote Wilson sarcastically, "I shall not determine; but if he has read them, he seems to me to have designed to palm it upon the world, that the Assembly 1649 had as little regard for re-newing the Covenant as the present Judicatories seem to have."<sup>77</sup> The Seceding Brethren never did pretend to emit a perfect Testimony, and any one of them would have acknowledged many defects.

It is evident that Wilson had read Currie's Essay over and again, and noticed everything deserving of attention. The bulk of Currie's writing caused Wilson's to be swelled to a greater bulk. He apologized for writing at all, but felt convicted to vindicate the cause of which he was a part, "as also for discovering our author's misrepresentations." Naturally, some things escaped his notice, but "if there is need for it, I may afterward publish an appendix to this book." It is his feeling that Currie is "neither manly nor decent" in handling

---

77. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 320, 223.

his cause. "I wish the Reverend Mr. Currie...would reflect, with serious sobriety and calmness, upon the lax principles he has vented, concerning Church communion, as well as upon the injuries he has done to a reforming period..."<sup>78</sup>

This Defence was regarded by Currie as "a common enemy to the success of the glorious Gospel", and thus warranted a reply.

He wrote, therefore, "not to add oil unto the flame, but to vindicate the truth, and the Church of Scotland, from unjust accusations."<sup>79</sup> Wilson, said he, had cast his writing into such

a form that few would be able to pass judgment whether he had given sufficient answer or not. "He plainly indicates that I have written against the Brethren's conduct from a disobliging and irritating spirit...This is an unjust reflection, and groundless slander."<sup>80</sup> The bulk of the Defence seems infected with a poisonous breath, and many expressions are filled with a spirit of bitterness and, concluded Currie, of all the authors he has ever known, none have been more guilty of groundless and uncharitable judgments. He earnestly contends that he had no intention of "blackening" the Assemblies of the reforming period in question, but merely to vindicate the Church of his own day. "Though the chief ground, urged by some for separation

---

78. Wilson, D, op. cit., pp. 329-330.

79. Currie, John, A Vindication of the Real Reformation Principles of the Church of Scotland, p. 1. See Apendix.

80. Currie, VRRP, op. cit., p. 6.

is...unparalleled apostasy...yet, the practice of the Judicatories at that time...can as little be justified in sundry things<sup>81</sup> as the practice of the Church of Scotland in later times."

The author of A Vindication discusses Wilson's first chapter at great length. Whereas Wilson had charged him of mistaking the question, Currie calls upon him to show in what way. There was no mistake in saying "violent intrusions were the chief ground of complaint", for, said Currie, he was as much opposed to this as any other. "We ought to testify against everything which is amiss in a Church, whether it respect<sup>82</sup> doctrines or discipline;...but in a way of Church communion." To say the separation was from the Judicatories and not from the Church is "a mere blind or falacy." Currie looks with disdain upon such a narrow spirit, as to exclude all from communion who would not subscribe to the Testimony. It is true that error might creep into the Church Standards, but as long as one is not required to subscribe to these errors, "I could not think it duty to separate."

Wilson had affirmed that his Secession had been from the Church Courts and not from the Church. "I could never but wonder what the Brethren meant," mused Currie. If they claim to be the true Church, "can she be a Presbyterian Church without<sup>83</sup> Judicatories?" It is not possible for one to be a member of

---

81. Currie, VRRP, op. cit., p. 26.

82. Currie, VRRP, op. cit., p. 43.

83. Currie, VRRP, op. cit., p. 71.



two constitute Churches. "A Presbyterian Church within a Presbyterian Church is a strange monster; the one must unchurch the other, destroying the unity of the visible Church of Christ, and hatching the monster of Presbyterial Independency."<sup>84</sup>

"It will not be an accountable charge" that the Church of Scotland does not have the character of the Church of Christ. Wilson and his associates, accused Currie, have sought to use this as a means of drawing disciples after themselves. To affirm that some have been dismissed from the bar who were ever-sive to the foundations of the Church is, said Currie, "a gross slander, and untruth." "The reason why our Assembly have passed errors the more easily, is, because they saw it would not be easy to overtake the whole of such or such processes in the time of an Assembly."<sup>85</sup> Let the Seceders deny as much as they wish, Currie stoutly insisted that erroneous doctrine was as firmly denied in 1717, 1728 and 1729 as any other matter that came to pass in those Assemblies. It is evident and clear to Currie that the Church of Scotland is a true Church, since it had declared that erroneous doctrines are "always to the disparagement of revelation and efficacious free grace."

As for tyranny in the Church, Currie would not recognize any as grounds for Secession. Though Wilson may "clamor" because the Act 1732 was not rescinded, yet the power of it was

---

84. Currie, VRRP, op. cit., p. 81.

85. Currie, VRRP, op. cit., p. 94.

taken off by repeal. Both men admit the injuries heaped upon the Church through the restoration of Patronage, but the Church has not been "habitually guilty" of intrusions. It is possible, said Currie, for an intruder to be a lawful minister, but he does not encourage men to enter upon their work as ministers without the call of the congregation. After considering all that Wilson has to say on the grounds for separation, Currie concludes, "he has neither brought any clear text of Scripture, nor any approven precedent, nor the judgment and authority of any eminent divine, showing that when a Church refuses to emit a Testimony against some errors...that these things, whether taken separately or conjunctly, are ground sufficient for Separation from a Church..."<sup>86</sup> Currie waxes verbose in his refutations and challenges of many of Wilson's points, and at last concludes that "Mr. Wilson hath been guilty of unfair dealings, when transcribing my words." "His manner of dealing has been very unjust."

Shortly thereafter Wilson retaliated with what might be considered as his weightiest document for the Secession cause. In view of "the several things which are neither truth nor matter of fact," as spoken by Currie, he deemed it necessary to publish this writing. In fact, the attempt to deceive others by mistating the Secession cause, strengthened Wilson's belief in Currie's "bitterness of spirit."

---

86. Currie, VRRP, op. cit., p. 95.

Wilson first points out the verbosity of Currie - "This great man says so, and the other great man says so." And he shows how Currie mis-uses these quotes in ways not intended by the authors, e. g., leaving out such sentences as are necessary to give the complete detail or the true sense. But, let Currie quote as he will, "I cannot look upon any of them as militating against the Associate Presbytery, till Mr. Currie give more satisfying proofs...that the present Judicatories have a just claim to the Scripture-characters of a true Church..."<sup>87</sup>

As for the charges of "uncharitable heart judgments" and "inconsistencies", Wilson replied that he had not spoken maliciously but with firmness of purpose, for he realized that so many were obstinate of heart that they would not see the truth. "If he lays himself open in this manner of writing to my just observations upon him," then he is himself to blame for what he regards as a blackened character. It would seem, said Wilson sarcastically, that Currie thought himself to be such a champion of the faith that all the Associate Presbytery would come out to battle him, but they didn't consider him that important. "He has only to deal with one...who reckons himself more insufficient than any of his brethren." "I own, that after the meeting of the Assembly, 1734, I was in much perplexity, about our continuing in a state of Secession; it occasioned many thoughts of heart unto me...but...when I have ob-

---

87. Wilson, William, A Continuation of the Defence, p. 342. See Appendix.



served...I have been gradually cleared...that it is our duty to  
 continue..."<sup>88</sup> It is, then, with all scruples against separation  
 removed, that he takes the field against Currie.

By way of review, Wilson reminds Currie that the Seceding  
 Brethren - when in communion with the Established Church - sought  
 by all known means to curb defection, and after a series of such  
 contendings, they were gradually led "by the providence of God"  
 into their present stand. Separation was not stated upon "any  
 one step of defection, considered abstractly and by itself," but  
 rather by a complex course and a high hand. "Our Secession...  
 is not an erecting a Presbyterian Church within a Presbyterian  
 Church, but departure from ecclesiastical communion with an  
 ecclesiastic body, who refuse, in their ecclesiastical capacity,  
 to make a public judicial confession of many important and  
 weighty truths...in opposition unto the open and manifest in-  
 juries that have been done to the same;..a departure from the  
 corrupt part of the catholic, visible body, upon the account  
 of their defections;...from ... (those) who not only refuse to  
 confess and acknowledge many of the above principles...but...  
 walk contrary to them...who are exercising a lordly dominion  
 over the flock and heritage of God..."<sup>89</sup>

As for the doctrine of the Church, said Wilson, his own  
 argument for Secession "stands good." Errors, subversive to the

---

88. Wilson, C, op. cit., pp. 357-358.

89. Wilson, C, op. cit., pp. 374-376.

standards of the Church, are condoned by the highest Church Courts, even though such errors have been brought to her bar and shown to be disagreeable with Scripture and the Confession. Therefore, the Established Church does not have the mark of a true Church, viz., the maintenance and profession of the true doctrine and the true faith. The conduct and management of the Church belie their profession to the Standards. The Judicatories are not guilty of one or two instances "but of an habitual tract of tyranny" over the entire household of faith. If this be refused by Currie, he is then inconsistent with himself, for he had formerly called intrusions "impious robbery, rapine, and sacrilege."<sup>90</sup>

The breach is widened between the National Church and the Seceders, said Wilson, because of restrained testimony on the part of the faithful, and the thrusting out of some from ministerial communion, and the pronouncement of highest censures against them. "Mr. Currie sometimes nibbles" at the manifestoes of the Secession, such as Reasons For Not Acceding, et. al., - "but he never once pretends to enter into the argument." "The singular and extraordinary sentence" of the Assembly, 1740, "is a special instance of the tyranny of the present administration" for the Church never did examine the grounds of Secession, but condemned "summarily...and...in bulk."<sup>91</sup> As a consequence,

---

90. Currie, JPD, op. cit., p. 22. See Appendix.

91. Wilson, C, op. cit., p. 415.

the Brethren were deposed by a mere arbitrary will and pleasure. "I pray the Lord may give them repentance...that it may not be laid to their charge."

Those who are intruded upon congregations ought not to be acknowledged as "lawful ministers," and any administration of Sacraments by such is lacking in purity and rectitude. An ordinary, outward calling has two special parts: election and ordination. When a man is settled over a congregation, one thing is sure: he has had the call and consent of the congregation. According to Currie, fellowship should be held with a Church whose minister is an intruder, upon the basis of his ordination, which is "supposed to be essentially valid." But is not the particular Church a part of the Catholic body? asks Wilson. "Hence a scandalous entry...effects...the whole catholic body."<sup>92</sup> Such an ordination may have purity and rectitude as to the matter but not as to the outward form which the divine institution requires. A man may deliver sound doctrine, but if he lacks the outward call, he is running unsent.

Currie states things of the Act and Testimony which are neither truth nor matter of fact. Wilson calls upon the world to "hold him as a false accuser and a bold calumulator, unless he condescend upon the particular expressions...contrary to the Word of God."<sup>93</sup> The exceptions which Currie makes are - in

---

92. Wilson, C, op. cit., p. 433.

93. Wilson, C, op. cit., p. 478.



most instances - puzzling. "When I consider how Mr. Currie... alleges the Seceding Brethren have not given any sufficient evidence of positive backslidings...when he reckons the charge of defection...to be slander...when I consider the lax principles he has vented upon Church communion; I may justly conclude that he deserves the Church's censure, rather than the support of her public funds in his writings; which 'tis judged are appointed for other ends and purposes."<sup>94</sup>

Currie met in Wilson an opponent who was more than his match. The latter was admirably qualified to give battle. After reading his Defence one is impressed with the complete calmness and shrewdness of its author. He follows Currie from one argument to another with favorable refutation. Much of Currie's writings have little interest. Page upon page contain little better than personal trifles. On both sides there is much time consumed in controversy over each other's estimate of particular periods of history and Acts of various Assemblies. There is to be found on both sides the usual amount of repetition and circular motion. In matter of literary skill and adroitness of fence, Currie is indeed apt. His is readable and racy, and imparts a bright color to what would otherwise be pale and featureless. This is done by narrating a doing or a saying of a Seceder, or by dropping a terse saying, such as "Sin is always bad cement for those who are God's building",

---

94. Wilson, C, op. cit., p. 500. See Appendix.

or by a happy metaphor, or by an occasional touch of kindly banter around those associated with "our dear brethren."

Currie's position was a difficult one for Wilson to impugn, seeing he had gone so far in agreement with the Seceders. He had admitted Simson was "too easily passed" when libelled in 1717; he was sorrowful over the intrusions of 1732 and 1733. When Wilson argued that such concessions were grounds for joining the Secession, Currie replied, they are grounds for complaint but not sufficient for separation. Once he had launched upon that line, it was easy for Currie to expatiate upon the mischief and sins of schism, taking care to fortify his position by biblical references, and copious quotes from the Reformers.

Wilson's qualities as a controversialist were less showy but more solid in character. Although faced with the problem of self-defence in dealing with many petty details not related materially to his main thesis, he manifested a desire throughout his polemics to deal with first principles, and to explicate the merits of the controversy by a fair statement of the question. In that respect, his Defence is of sterling value. This, coupled with the Continuation, form a masterful vindication of the principles and procedures of the Secession movement. His candor and equanimity are to be admired. He did not imitate the "rude dialect" of Currie, nor "misapplied quotations, with his reported private stories." Many of Currie's pages are "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Wilson's serenity of nature was unruffled, and he looked down

with composure upon the spiteful efforts of his antagonist. His character and mind are clearly discerned in his writings. There is little originality, but much clearness and forcefulness. His reasonings were not always brilliant, but he had a firm grasp on the situation. He was never at a loss as to the meaning of his cause. Now that the personalities and side-issues of the Secession have disappeared like so much mist, the central positions for which Wilson contended stand out unassailable.

The first of these is: that the four were justified in separation from the communion of the National Church at the time they did. There had been considerable testifying against defections by way of communion. No change for the better had resulted. Currie, the vindicator of the Established Church, was forced to admit sorrowfully that his lot had fallen in evil times, when not a few of the younger clergy were "poisoned" by bad principles; when sins respecting the entire Church were found among ministers and laity alike; all of which were symptoms of a dangerous case. If that was his conviction, how much more strongly was it felt by the Seceders. The entire stream of doctrine and government flowed unfavorably, and it was morally impossible for Wilson to continue in that stream, and yet speak and act in the liberty of conscience. The Secession, then, was not grounded upon any one matter. Intrusions, doctrinal declensions, ejections, - these merely gave rise to the occasion of declaring a Secession. The real foundation of the



Secession was looked upon and spoken of as "a complex course of defection" in doctrine, government, and discipline. It is unfair, then, to select statements from the Act and Testimony or the Act, Declaration and Testimony, and hold them up as grounds for separation. Likewise, it is a thin spun philosophy to believe that a Synod sermon was the origin of the Secession Church. However long delayed, the Secession movement was inevitable, due to the policies of the dominating party. Those men of Wilson's calibre were sure to come face to face with ejection at some time or another. Such a separation as Wilson and his Brethren made had narrowly escaped being executed during the Marrow controversy.

The second position Wilson defended, and wisely, was: the Seceders would have stultified themselves, and seriously injured the interests at stake, had they returned to a Court whose authority they had renounced. The pleas of 1734 were, without question, made with a sincere desire to heal the breach, and - at first sight - it would seem as though the tide had turned. But what was present in the letter was absent in the spirit, and subsequent events justified this conviction. Matters did not improve, and had the Seceders returned, there is nothing to cause us to believe actions would have been changed.

With such defensive armor as that which Wilson carried, it should not be surprising that some faults should be seen here and there. One such fault was the theory of the remnant, and of the relation in which the Seceders stood with her. He was

anxious to show that there was a difference between Secession from the Established Church and from the "prevailing party." The National Church courts were not lawful; they had broken the bonds of ecclesiastical union. This was doubtless the sword he wielded during the melodramatic scene (1740) in Perth, when he stood at the gates of the Church. A minister had a perfect freedom to tend his flock, for the Act of Deposition issued against him came from a Court which had no distinguishing marks as a Court of Christ.

Wilson had no intention of unchurching the Church, but appealed to the first, free, reforming Assembly. Until then, the Church was to be found in Scripture, the Constitution, and the Reformed principles. Such a position caught the notice of Currie, who immediately reminded Wilson that these do not make the Church. The Church is composed of men and women owning these principles. "Can she be a Presbyterian Church without Judicatories?" No answer could be made to this by Wilson. With all his clearness of conception and statement, Wilson could not keep himself from confusion and contradiction when seeking to prove the above position. More than once he admits that the majority in Church Courts must be taken as representing the Church. Since "the very great majority" cast the Four out of the Church, that same "majority" must be considered the Church.

Equally paradoxical was Wilson's position regarding the Associate Presbytery. Its members never claimed to be the

Church of Scotland de jure any more than de Facto. They contended only for the right to constitute a judicatory with distinct judicial duties. All who are commissioned by Christ have a right to the keys, not as individuals, but when two or three agree and act conjointly or in collegio. If defection is carried on by the majority, it is the duty of the minority - if only more than one - to unite to exercise the keys.

In their replies to the Libel, 1739, the Seceders did not impugn any one charge, but claimed the right to exercise the keys. From their point of view, they were justified in their course. When they resolved, August 21, 1735, to exercise their right, they acted on these lines from that time forward. But we cannot completely vindicate them. Their complete position was paradoxical. They wanted to form a Presbytery independent of any authority the National Church might claim. At the same time, they wanted to be included in the rights and privileges which could be received only by being a member of the National Church. These two positions were destructive of each other, and the course of the Assembly was clearly marked when, in 1740, it discharged the Seceders from functioning "within this Church." It is easy to be wise after the crisis is passed, and the issues become clear in the light of historical unfoldings. But of this we are confident: up to the measure of light possessed by Wilson and his associates, they walked without fear or reproach. They had infirmities; they made mistakes; but they sought to act as they believed God and conscience directed.



"Come, then, in under the shadow of  
this perfect righteousness...There  
is room in this worthy Lamb for thee."  
Wilson, Sermon No 2, P. 72

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### "SOURCES OF WILSON'S THEOLOGY"

It is impossible to read Wilson without concluding that nine-tenths of his theology is concerned with Orthodox Calvinism. It is quite clear that he had no desire to break away from the Calvinistic system. Especially in his sermons, one discovers a loyalty to its distinctive tenets. His debt to Calvin, and the great exponents of his theology, (e. g., Rutherford and Durham) was very great. He mentions the Westminster Standards repeatedly, especially the Confession of Faith. At no time did he concede that the teachings of the Church might differ in any essential point from the Confession or Catechisms. Yet, the Confession "amounted, in a word, to a clear-cut Calvinistic symbol - unyielding and unmodified on the subject of the Divine decrees, and of the restriction of the redemption to the elect."<sup>1</sup>

It is not necessary to dwell at length on Wilson's debt to Calvinism, or the place it held in his life and thought. Its "relentless logic struck a chord in them (i. e., the Seceders) which had never vibrated before; it was to become the greatest single influence for good and ill that operated on the mind of

---

1. Shaw, W. A., The Westminster Assembly (Cambridge Modern History, IV) p. 362.

this people; they caught them and wrought them at the supremely malleable moment of their history; and left an impress upon them which centuries have not been able to erase."<sup>2</sup>

The Sovereignty of God. This was a cardinal doctrine in Wilson's theology. He held that "God's kingly sovereignty, was ...the prime concern of all human interest."<sup>3</sup> It extended over all persons, even from eternity to eternity. He thus believed that God's glory and majesty were very real, and he sought to advance those Divine characteristics. "The sovereignty of God, even His absolute dominion over the works of His own hands" is seen in the preservation of the spiritual seed of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Scripture. It was a fixed principle with Calvin that he would not go beyond what the expressed teaching of Scripture authorized. Every doctrine that presented itself for acceptance had to submit to the test of the touchstone of the Word. "The whole Scriptures are given to be the standard of truth for the resolving of controversies; to be the infallible rule of faith and practice to the Church in all ages and periods."<sup>5</sup>

Man. Calvin's view is that propagated by Wilson. The former had held that man was created in the image of God but, because of the Fall, the soul became "void of God", and the

---

2. Thomson, G. M., Short History of Scotland, p. 128.

3. Walker, Williston, John Calvin, p. 410.

4. Wilson, S, op. cit., No. 3, p. 42.

5. Wilson, S, op. cit., No. 1, p. 45.



"will is unchained." "Ye are, every one of you, under the curse of the Law...under the sentence of a broken covenant of works."<sup>6</sup>

Salvation. Calvin maintained that in this man was unable - because of his black legacy and original sin - to do anything, but finds help through the mercy of God in Christ, who is the Prophet, Priest, and King. "Christ, in His death, was offered to the Father as a propitiatory victim...Not only was the body of Christ given up as the price of redemption, but that which was a greater and more excellent price - that He bore in His soul the tortures of condemned and ruined man." "The hopeless corruption and degradation of human nature have rendered necessary the redemption of Jesus Christ, through whom alone salvation is possible...By His death, He not only bore the death sentence for us, but destroyed the power of death and bequeathed the power of a new life in the death of the old man, the mortification of the flesh."<sup>7</sup> Justification was the judicial act on the part of God, which is ours by the holiness of Christ, who, being equal with God, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. "Come, then, in under the shadow of this perfect righteousness...there is room in this worthy Lamb for thee."<sup>8</sup>

Predestination and Providence. "The doctrine of pre-

---

6. Wilson, S, op. cit., No. 1, p. 38.

7. MacKinnon, James, Calvin and the Reformation, pp. 236 - 238.

8. Wilson, S, op. cit., No. 2, p. 72.

destination deals with God's relation to the ultimate destinies of the individual man; Providence with His treatment of men here and now. Providence is concerned with the world and this life, though its issues pass beyond into the next; it is the experimental side of the Divine decrees. Predestination, in its limited sense, is concerned with the fate of men hereafter, though it in turn takes this life into view as providing material for justifying the ways of God with men. It constitutes the metaphysical side of the Divine decrees. Predestination defines the relation of God to the world; Providence is the working out in detail of that relation. Predestination fixed the gaze upon the eternal destinies; Providence deals with the links in the chain of events.<sup>9</sup> Calvin thought of God's sovereignty as manifested in the guidance and oversight of man's works.

In this Wilson concurred. Men were chosen or rejected not because of merit, but because of God's pleasure to reject and save; what He does is to His glory - this is justification enough. So, Wilson would declare, "Election is unconditional; there is and can be nothing in the creature that moves God to the exercise of His grace; He saves because it becomes His mercy, and He judges because it becomes His justice, though, of course, neither were possible without sin."<sup>10</sup> The election of some and the reprobation of others are alike due to the

---

9. Hunter, TJC, op. cit., pp. 130-141.

10. Fairbairn, Andrew M., The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 168.

eternal decrees and predestination of God. They are not actuated by any consideration outside His omnipotent, arbitrary will and good pleasure. They are merely a matter of Divine Pre-science in the sense that He elects or rejects in accordance with what He forsees will happen. They are due solely to His eternal decrees, apart from any consideration of man's character or conduct. "All that are ordained unto eternal life are Christ's spiritual seed...He undertook from all eternity to pay the price of their redemption...The elect...are united... and are made joint heirs with Him...all the elect are given by the Father unto the Son..."<sup>11</sup>

As much at home as Wilson seemed with Calvin, his own theology is much like that of The Marrow of Modern Divinity. This theology has as its aim the vindication of the doctrine of grace against the charge of legalism on the one hand and antinomianism on the other. "The real, and abiding and imperishable value of this book is to be found in this: that it is an English embodiment of the Federal idea of Revelation; that scheme of Systematic Theology which conceives of God's relation in mankind under the form of a series of covenants."<sup>12</sup>

Wilson was hostile to any error which robbed the Gospel of the system of remedy and restoration. "Doctrines, whereby the Federal Headship of the first Adam was impugned and denied,

---

11. Wilson, S, op. cit., No. 3, pp. 6, 7, 13.

12. M'Crie, C. G., The Marrow of Modern Divinity, Intro., pp. xix, xx.



and consequently the true and proper imputation of his first sin to his posterity is overthrown; doctrines, whereby the heinous desert of original sin imputed and inherent is diminished; so also doctrines, whereby universal grace is established, that there is an implicit offer of grace, and an obscure revelation of the remedy provided for sin, made to those who live without the Church, by the works of creation and providence including tradition, as likewise, in so far as a connection is established, either from the gracious nature, or from the promise of God, betwixt the serious endeavor of the heathen and a fuller and clearer revelation of the remedy unto them; and betwixt the endeavors of those within the Church, and special and saving grace; doctrines also whereby the absolute dominion of God over the actions of the rational creature, and the creature's absolute dependance upon Him in working, as well as in being, are subverted, and consequently a special part and branch of Divine providence impugned."<sup>13</sup>

It would be tedious and unprofitable to enter upon a full discussion of all the points at which Wilson agreed with the Marrow Theology. We will, therefore, mention only a few.

Law and Gospel. The Marrow controversy on this subject may be said to be a repetition of the controversy begun in the apostolic times, when the Pauline doctrine of grace was set against the legalism of Judaism. The Marrowmen certainly held

---

13. Wilson, D, op. cit., p. 79.

to the Pauline doctrine of the Law and the Gospel. They were not Antinomians, those who would magnify grace in order to get conscience at ease respecting the claims of holiness, and vindicate a liberty to themselves to sin that grace may abound. Wilson held no such doctrine. His whole contention - in his sermons and other writings, was against the legalism that was all too surely finding a place in Scottish preaching.

Nature of Saving Faith. This doctrine had been hotly debated at the Reformation. Roman Catholic theologians held that faith was simply an assensus to Divine truth, and had its seat in the intellect. The Reformers admitted this, but went further and included fiducia. While it is true that Wilson - in so far as he identified himself with the Marrow controversy - was one with the Reformers, yet he and his Brethren would differ as to the nature of fiducia. The Reformers held that this "trust" included the assurance of the believer that he was a saved person, and that this assurance was of the essence of faith. The Westminster Divines guarded against this, and asserted that the assurance of faith did not belong to the essence of faith. The Marrowmen were in full sympathy with the Divines, but differed in one point. To put it in a tautological form: You cannot believe without believing; that is, in the very act of saving faith, or believing, assurance, or appropriating persuasion, enters into it. In eagerness to have the Reformers on their side, the Marrowmen failed to note that the Reformers had used "assurance" in a different sense.

The Extent of the Atonement. This is intimately connected with the foregoing, and is the sinner's warrant to believe. In answer to the question: What is that warrant? the Marrowmen replied: It is the Father's "deed of gift and grant of His Son to sinners." It was this expression that laid them open to charges of teaching universal atonement, but in reality, the crucial point of the controversy was not so much the extent of the Atonement as the effort on the part of the Marrowmen to solve the old problem of a universal call and a definite Atonement. Never before, perhaps, in Scottish preaching, was such a stress laid upon a free offer of the Gospel to every sinner in the human race. Whether they were unsuccessful in solving the question has been seriously debated, but our interest lies in their attempt to do so and the share Wilson had in propagating their convictions. His whole conception of salvation arose out of this belief of a universal but limited Atonement. It was a process in which the sinner renounced "all hopes from the hills and multitudes of mountains, and a cheerful submitting unto the salvation by the free grace of God through Christ Jesus; It is just a sinner's subscribing himself a debtor unto rich and free grace...It is only those who have seen with the eye of faith that can endure."<sup>14</sup>

Arminianism. This was a revolt against certain aspects of Calvinism, especially against the rigidity of the idea of

---

14. Wilson, S, op. cit., No. 2 pp. 35, 36, 61.



Divine decrees. This Leyden Professor "clearly perceived that the doctrine of the absolute decrees involved God as the author of sin; that it unworthily restrained His grace; and, leaving myriads without hope, condemned them for believing that for them there was no salvation either intended or provided in Christ. He saw, moreover, that it gave to them who believed themselves to be the elect a false security based upon no sufficient ethical principle."<sup>15</sup>

Calvinism declared that God would save no man except by consistency with His own purpose. Arminius replied, God cannot and will not save any man without the permission and assistance of man's free will or without our performance of an infinitely impossible condition of true faith and Gospel repentance, produced by a carnal mind at enmity with God. Calvin asserted that the Divine purpose lay no bar in the way of our free will's performing its duty; whosoever believeth shall be saved.

Arminius declared there was universal Atonement in the sense that it is intended - although not actually efficacious - for all. Calvin taught that Christ suffered for none but the elect. To this doctrine and position Wilson subscribed. The offer of life and salvation is unto men as sinners, and, as such, they received the unspeakable gift of God. God was moved by nothing but His free love to mankind, and whosoever receives

---

15. Hutchinson, Matthew, Reformed Presbyterian Church, pp. 194-195.

His gift by a true and lively faith shall not perish. "The retinue of the worthy Lamb are a people that are called from darkness to the Lord's marvellous light."<sup>16</sup>

Where the Atonement was concerned, it would seem that Wilson knew nothing except a limited Atonement; or, an Atonement confined to the elect, and to them alone, and for them its efficacy was regarded as absolute so that they could not fail to be saved. The only way in which the followers of Christ can sing this new song is by a new heart and a new spirit: regeneration by the Holy Spirit. "How is this song sung? It is sung in faith...for faith is just a giving glory and praise to God; glory to the worthy Lamb."<sup>17</sup> Arminianism declared universal, or infinite value, designed for all accomplished for all, rendering the salvation of all men possible, the result in every case conditioned by faith. Christ died for all, but only believers were to receive the benefits of His death.

Finally, Arminius asserted that the grace of the Holy Spirit is sufficient for continual victory over temptation and sin; but it left the necessity of the final perseverance of all believers to be a doubtful matter. Wilson maintained, however, "that the Church and the people of God are brought into extreme straits for this end, that God's hand may be seen in

---

16. Wilson, S, op. cit., No. 2, p. 11.

17. Wilson, S, op. cit., No. 2, p. 19.

giving the deliverance."<sup>18</sup>

Total depravity to a Calvinist such as Wilson, was the complete bondage of the will, and utter inability to do any spiritual good. He would refuse to make any distinction between the imputed guilt and the inherent depravity. Arminianism looked upon total depravity as a bias, which leaves the will free, and makes man responsible for his own destiny through the choice of faith or unbelief. There is a clear distinction made between actual and original sin. It was denied that the sin of Adam was imputed to his posterity in the sense of their being guilty of, and chargeable with, that sin. It was with a view to check the progress of such errors and to diffuse correct sentiments among the people, that led Wilson and his colleagues to protest. His concern arose because of the general state of affairs in the Church which tended toward such theology.

He was critical of the ungracious way in which Christ's Godhead had been vindicated in the Simson case. Those who had been so culpably lax in regard to the truths of the Gospel in their leniency toward a member who was obviously a stubborn heretic, were in hot pursuit of the men who had avowed attachment to The Marrow. Further, Wilson resented the way in which the mantle of the Church's charity had been thrown over the heterodoxy of Professor Campbell. The easy way in which ir-

---

18. Wilson, S, op. cit., No. 1, p. 21.



regularities were dealt with were in striking contrast to the way in which the rod was laid upon Wilson and the others.

From the texture of his thought, Wilson seems to have been not a whit behind the ablest of the Four in theological matters. He seems to a reader to lay more stress on a pure Church, rather than on the true, in matters of the visible unity of fellowship. Though abler than Currie, he does not make out his plea on the older Scottish doctrine of preserving the unity of the true Church. Currie was well read in the older Scottish Divines, and argues along the lines these saints would have taken a century before. Wilson "kept alive the witness for the Reformed faith when the State Church came under the blight of a ministry that had no place in its message for the gracious salvation."<sup>19</sup> He called no man master, but sought only to glorify his Lord and Redeemer.

---

19. MacLeod, John, Theology in the Early Days of the Secession, (Records of the Scottish Church Historical Society, VIII, Part I), p. 13.

"...be concerned to cleave with and  
abide by Christ." "Memoirs", P.354.

## CHAPTER NINE

### "CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE"

"It is easier to record the facts of a man's life than to appreciate the traits of his character."<sup>1</sup> The life and work of Wilson has been traced, as it pertained to the Established Church. It remains to look at some of the characteristics of Wilson as a man. As far as his published works are concerned, there would be little to bear upon our time. Yet, his life carried a tremendous message and, consequently, we may regard Wilson as one of the most striking figures of his time. He was a man of apostolic fervor, yet tempered by a rare and guileless prudence. As a result, he was very successful in his field of labor, and was respected by the friends of the Gospel wherever he went as a servant of the Lord.

These characteristics are best illustrated by the following story. One evening while passing along the streets of his home city, Perth, three soldiers - who were quartered there - were walking behind him. Their conversation was filled with blasphemous language. One of the men declared he wished God would condemn his soul to Hell for all eternity. Wilson turned, and with dignity and compassion, said, "Poor man, and what if God should say Amen, and answer that prayer!" Wilson moved

---

1. Watson, John, The Scot in the Eighteenth Century, p. 259.



on, but the man seemed perplexed and petrified. He went on to his quarters, but he suffered such distraction of mind and feeling that he knew not to whom to turn. Not long after, he was taken with a fever, under which he continued to suffer the most awful awakenings of conscience and forebodings of eternal misery. Many Christians went to visit him, and to each one he expressed his belief that he was beyond the mercy of God, and that the Almighty had sent an angel to tell him. Attendants recognized the man's description of the "angel" who pronounced the doom as being that of Wilson, and asked the young man if he would like to see him again. "Oh, I would wish above everything to see him, but he will not come near a wretch like me." "Wilson was brought," said Ferrier, "and he told him of the way of salvation, through Christ crucified, and pled for him to lay hold on this hope. His words were accompanied by Divine power, and the poor soldier believed, and received peace and comfort. He recovered and was a fine Christian." Wilson helped him obtain his discharge, and he settled in Perth and became a member of Wilson's Church. He became a comfort to his Pastor, and was an ornament to the Christian profession.

Not long after his going to Perth, there occurred an incident that bespeaks the Character of Wilson. At the time of his appointment as third minister, there was no money for him. The Town Council was in a dilemma. There were authorized

---

2. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 158.

funds for two ministers, but they knew not how to pay for the third. Out of desperation, they appropriated funds from a benevolence account. When Wilson heard of this he was very indignant, and refused to accept the money. The question was raised as to whether or not the Council had the right to use the money in this manner. The judge decided in the negative, but then inquired as to how the question arose at all. When informed of Wilson's stand, he decided this minister must indeed be of noble character, and proposed that the City be assessed to raise an adequate sum.

Wilson sought also to encourage and demand a life of holiness in others. Late in 1732 it was found that Alexander Stewart and Margaret Butler had carried on illicit relations. Presbytery had appointed Stewart to attend Wilson's Church and be publicly rebuked. Before the appointed time, Wilson called the offender to remind him of his obligation. The latter acknowledged his summons, but "utterly refused" to do it. In the evening he appeared and said he would comply, but not in the place where scandalous persons were usually rebuked. Wilson refused. Whereupon, Stewart left. The next forenoon after sermon Wilson told the congregation of the matter and that Stewart "gave great suspicion of adultery" because of his "scandalous cohabitation" with the woman in question. Wilson, then, read the sentence and called upon Stewart - who had been sitting at the Elder's table during sermon - to take his place. His refusal was reported to Presbytery, which called him to ap-

pear "the next Sunday for rebuke."<sup>3</sup>

A further feature of Wilson's character was his complete resignation to the Will of God. He was able to bow his head to this Will for all his domestic affairs. Amidst the numerous bereavements, he was supported by the grace and meekness of Christ.

"In the month of August, 1729," he wrote, "there was a great distress in my family. Sometime in July, Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's daughter came to my family sick. Her sickness proved to be small-pox. She was very ill, but the Lord restored her. As she recovered, all my four children fell sick, My daughter Isabella on the 11th, George and Marjorie on the 13th, and William on the 14th. They were all very ill. I was in great distress about them.

"On Sabbath morning, about 4 o'clock, on the 24th of August, the Lord was pleased to remove by death my son George. The night before I was helped to pray with some earnestness, for his eternal salvation, and to part with him to the Lord. I was helped to be silent under His stroke, and to hope that the Lord had taken him to Himself.

"This morning, my other children, especially Marjorie and William, seemed to be in great danger. No hopeful symptoms of recovery appearing in them, I went alone...I laid them down at His feet, and said, Let Him do what seemeth right in His sight, only give them their souls for a prey. I was much

---

3. MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 174.



enlarged about my son William. I cried that he might not be spared, unless it were for the service and glory of God. I was helped to give him away to the Lord; and if he should live, I did dedicate him to serve the Lord, in the Gospel of His Son - praying that the Lord might call him, and furnish and fit him if it were His holy will, for that great and honorable work. I came from prayer, no more uneasy about my children. I preached that evening with some measure of enlargement, and buried my son George the next day. It pleased the Lord that my three children recovered. Oh, that they might live before the Lord.<sup>4</sup>"

These records picture Wilson as anxious and loving for those whom he had enjoyed in his family. He gave them to God without a murmur. From the depths of sorrow, he rose to the elevated heights of peace and assurance.<sup>5</sup>

Wilson was in Perth a quarter of a century. By his fellow-townsmen he was held in utmost respect as a man of integrity, of unswerving loyalty to truth, and unwearied in the efforts of the highest good in the community. With no intention of boasting, and with strict truthfulness, this Pastor could testify to the feelings with which he was regarded at the time of the proposed translation to Rhynd. The impressions of his preaching and pastoring in Perth were numerous. Many were edified by his labors. He, however, was much perplexed. It

---

4. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 164-167.

5. See Appendix.

was little wonder that when the call came, the people of Perth protested. "The whole people of the Town cleave to me with utmost affection. All of them did, in the strongest manner, express their unwillingness to part with me. The serious people through the country are very anxious for my continuance..."<sup>6</sup>

When Presbytery objected to his translation, he remarked, "None of the godly in the town or country had freedom about my going away; it would have been a hard matter to have put my thoughts against the general voice of serious people. I never in the least gave any encouragement to the people of Perth, to expect my stay amongst them; but rather, on the contrary, I expressed my inclination to go away. Yet all of this did not, for anything I know, lessen their esteem and affection for me. Though I devolved the matter wholly to the Presbytery, yet they had not freedom to lease me. I have found my mind more easy about staying since that time."<sup>7</sup>

Wilson could exercise firmness when it was required, and was not careful to free himself from the ill-will of those whom he withstood to the face. With his grasp on scriptural truths, he gained deep insights into the lives of those who approached him. On one instance, a woman - in apparent spiritual distress - came to him many times to discuss the state of her soul. The Pastor did all he could to comfort and encourage her in the way,

---

6. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 173. See Appendix.

7. Ibid.

but to no avail. Nothing he did brought any result. At length, when he had talked with her for some time, he turned to her suspiciously, and spoke firmly, "Woman, I am afraid you are in league with the enemy." The woman became confused and, with a diabolical leer and giggle, she left.<sup>8</sup>

Oftentimes Wilson was attacked through the press. He was looked upon as an "idol of the mob" and "prostituting sacred truths" and "a pious fraud." In a spurious missive, signed simply "Antizelotes", a series of questions were set before him which manifested the attitude of some among the inhabitants of Perth.<sup>9</sup>

The writer accused Wilson of being "a son of ingratitude and a servant of the works of darkness," because he did not cater more to the Town Clerk - George Miller - who had exercised much influence to obtain the charge in Perth for Wilson. The Pastor was accused of setting himself against Stewart - the second minister - and "persecuted him with an unrelenting spirit of revenge to his death." The mob violence inflicted upon the Reverend Mr. Fergusson, who had gone to Perth to serve the decree of the Assembly, was also laid at Wilson's door. "You approved of the zeal of these insults...and rioters." "Why adhere to a charge which by law, civil and ecclesiastical, you have no right? Was it the stipend? More money, more power, more blind respect, are the sins they say you aim at, and make

---

8. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., cf., p. 352.

9. Antizelotes, A Letter to the Reverend W\_\_\_\_\_m W\_\_\_\_\_n, Minister at P\_\_\_\_th, cf., p. 2.



religion subservient to these."<sup>10</sup>

One insult follows another in this brief pamphlet. In one place, Wilson has heaped upon him the uncomplimentary title of "director of the conscience" and "master of purses."<sup>11</sup> Wilson is denounced for regulating amusements in the province. Mr. Martin, Master of the Schools, supra, "having differed in some things relating to education, did so far incur your resentment ...to be anathematized by you in the pulpit, and brought before your Miniature Model of the Inquisition. He was brought before your Censorial Court (viz., the Session)...and you endeavored to have his appeal (to Presbytery) rejected."<sup>12</sup>

Reference is made to the appearance of a man named Wrightson, who, with his paintings on the life of Christ, was opposed by Wilson on the grounds of blasphemy. "You affirm that his design was to seduce the people to idolatry. Thus you proclaim to the world your ignorance of belles lettres. Are you afraid the devotion of the populace will be carried from you to the picture? I have done, and I expect an answer," concluded the author. "The facts are plain. You will not have the assurance to confess them publicly. If you are silent, I will presume it the strongest evidence to your guilt."<sup>13</sup>

---

10. Antizelotes, LWW, op. cit., p. 3.

11. See Appendix.

12. Antizelotes, LWW, op. cit., p. 5.

13. Antizelotes, LWW, op. cit., p. 7.

There is a parenthical portion at the end which runs after the following manner: The author of this missive desired a friend to send it to Wilson, and to write such an apology as would usher it into Wilson's good graces. The friend sent it to Wilson on August 5, 1735, and wrote, "A friend wanted me to send it at such a time as I judged acceptable. I thought this the most seasonable occasion - immediately before the approaching fast, in order that it will engage you to review your life. The style and manner are somewhat vehement, but not of personal disrespect. It serves as a self-examination for you; I hope you will honestly improve it. Though you despise it, the author will carry on inquiry through the press, and will take off your mask, unravel your design, expose your artifice, and leave you naked to the eyes of the world."<sup>14</sup> Wilson's answer, already referred to in his sermons, was most vigorous, emphatic, and vindictive. (q. v., Chapter Four).

In December, 1737, Wilson received another letter which illustrates the attitude of some against him. The inference is, that he had been proselyting among the women of the neighborhood while the men-folk were away. "You put on your big airs," raged the letter, "she desired you to come another time...she was not so silly...but answered, She was not subject to your ministry...You next endeavored to confuse her by subtile queries...You told her there was not a tongue in Perth

---

14. Antizelotes, LWW, op. cit., p. 8.

that did not speak evil of you and your people...Do not imagine you are suffering the same reproach with the apostles. They did not go about making themselves leaders of the blinded mob.<sup>15</sup>"

Wilson is scathed for considering himself as "overseer of all within the bounds of Perth...You would creep further into the world's bosom than they would let you. When you grew scarce of queries, you asked, 'Barby (Barbara, which you knew), what evidence have you that you are a gracious person'. We are sure you were hard put to puzzle the maid by asking that question. If you be out of humor with anything we have said, here is enclosed a song to divert you." There is appended eight stanzas of a poem which characterizes the feelings of the authors toward Wilson and his colleagues. One verse is given here to illustrate the whole.

"These spiritual merchants have proudly o'erthrown  
The honor of Jesus, to set up their own;  
Of the cup they have filled, let them doubly drink;  
In the pit they have digged, let them stumble and sink;  
Contempt and disgrace on their honor shall prey;  
Confusion and shame shall pursue them for aye.  
Ye subjects of Jesus, triumph in your turn;      16  
Ye great ones of Babel, 'tis yours now to mourn."

Shortly before the publication of The Defence, a letter appeared which came as a result of "no answer" of the many communiques sent to Wilson.<sup>17</sup> The author was evidently acquainted

---

15. Miller, George, and Sandeman, Robert, Copy of A Letter to Mr. W \_\_\_\_\_ W \_\_\_\_\_, p. 4.

16. Miller, CLWW, op. cit., p. 8.

17. Lawson, John, A Letter to the Rev. Mr. W. W., p. 12.



with Wilson, and expressed disappointment over the failure of a conference with him. "I value your sound principles and zeal in many things; though I differ in others, and cannot approve of your conduct of Secession. I know I am writing to one who is well acquainted with the Word of God, and it would not be proper to quote to prove any of my assertions."

After reviewing the history of the Church during the past century, the author turns to scorn Wilson's position for Secession and the "feeble" account of the movement contained in his writings. These are "sinful and dangerous", and he calls upon Wilson to renew his affiliation with the Established Church. "I own you are a noble man, but you have done much to hurt, when you might have done a great service. If my words prove wounds, they are the wounds of a sincere well-wisher."<sup>18</sup> Our review of Wilson's life has assured us that his whole purpose was that of doing good in the service of the ministry. One cannot read his sermons and writings without being impressed with his richness of mind and the power of grappling with the problems at hand. He wrote nothing he had not first thought through very carefully.

His constant introspection and soul searching is too much to make a popular appeal today. Yet, they serve to emphasize the depth and richness of his spiritual life. When re-

---

18. Lawson, LWW, op. cit., p. 19.

viled, he reviled not again. His faith was a thing of great heights and depths, and he was never happy unless he was in contact with the deep things of God. His work finds its value as the thinking of a man who lived through one of the most heated periods of Scottish history. He thrust himself into the life of eighteenth century thinking, and challenged the untruthful and unfruitful ways of Church and State, which not only fed his own life but countless others as well. There is something to be set down to the original character of Wilson which asserts itself throughout his Christian experience. He was strong, acute, passionate, and of an indomitable will. He made many mistakes, and severely reproached himself for them.

Wilson was deeply interested in the affairs of the poor, and more than once sought to apply relief. There was no poor rate for the help of unfortunates, so the relief of the indigent was left to the Church. The collections at the Church were used for this purpose. One would not expect the Seceders to encourage the poor to follow them because of the need of gifts to establish themselves. Yet, there was a regular provision for the poor. For years the recipients numbered about 125. The collections were, of necessity, frequent. There were also objects of charity which came to the treasurer with a "precept" written by Wilson. These "precepts" were the treasurer's warrant to pay. They contain the short and simple - but sad - annals of the poor.

In January, 1740, "the members of the Session, being not

as yet fully informed of the circumstances of the poor of this parish and several members of the Session being absent, the delay of the distribution of the extraordinary collection for the poor until their next meeting is hereby appointed." At that time "the Session proceeded to the distribution...to the poor, and a list being made up by the Session of thirty persons of good repute and in grait straits the sum of 32.10.0..." was set aside.<sup>19</sup> "Give to Janet Wittet, she is in a starving condition."<sup>20</sup> "Isobel Nimmo is exceedingly needy and a good woman...give her." One precept, which was given to this writer by the Session of the William Wilson Church, goes thus: "October 27, 1741. Rev. Sir. Will Bayne is in straits. Please allow him a precept for what you see meet, is from George Wilson, to the Rev. Mr. Wilson, Minister of the Gospel in Perth. Sir, please allow to the above 10. s., he is in great straits. This by - William Wilson."

Wilson was very interested in the youth. He called upon them to discover if the work of grace was in them, and to be established in the faith. Just shortly before his death, he spoke to the youth of his congregation in this manner: "You who are young communicants, and never were at a Communion Table before, - be concerned to cleave with and abide by Christ. It was with great fear that I gave some of you tokens, but I would desire to rejoice to see you coming to Christ. Have you given

---

19. MWC, op. cit., p. 46.

20. Hunt, OSP, op. cit., p. 42.



your heart's consent to the offer of Christ?...You have now given up your names unto Christ by profession. Say this day, and every day, Thou art mine. What is faith? It is a poor soul's saying, I am the Lord's."<sup>21</sup>

The well known anecdote which has been preserved of Wilson seems to establish the general accuracy of mental portraiture which we have of the Four Brethren. While conversing with his friends one day in the spirit of easy pleasantry, the question arose: To what might these Four be compared? When proposed to Wilson, he replied that he could not think of anything better than Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures. "Our brother, Mr. Erskine, has the face of a man. Our friend, Mr. Moncrieff, has the face of a lion. Our neighbor, Mr. Fisher, has the face of an eagle. And as for myself, I think that you will all own that I may claim to be the ox, for, as you know, the laborious part of the business falls to my share."<sup>22</sup> Courage, patience, and industry, are the qualities pointed at in this story.

Many of Wilson's sympathizers lost their zeal as time passed. Such a one was Mr. Palmer, of Forgandenny. When he was ill, Wilson went to him without prejudice. During one visit he said to his sick brother: "I think you should have stood forth with me, and some others, and borne an open testi-

---

21. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 353-354.

22. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 357.

mony against those indignities which you have often lamented, and which are so injurious to your Master's cause and interest in this day." To which his friend replied, "Yes, I have always been deficient in courage and zeal for my Lord and Master, but I hope by the riches of His mercy, that this sin and all my other sins shall be as the iniquities of Israel which shall be sought for and there shall be none."<sup>23</sup> This manifests the warmth and cordiality of Wilson's nature.

His last Communion reveals the gracious state of his mind, which he carried to the end. "The Physician is Christ Himself," he said, "and it is His work only to receive the languishing soul. Our Lord Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life; and by the breath of His mouth He can make the dead and dry bones come together...so they should live.

"To whom does the Lord Jesus bequeath all? It is to the poor and needy; the wretched and miserable. Christ is a Savior to poor sinners, and to none else. He is a Physician to the sick and diseased. Truly in the Lord our God is salvation. In vain is help looked for from the creature. In the Lord alone is rest...true and substantial rest. Come unto me all ye that labor...The rest of faith is a sure and infallible presage of the everlasting rest in glory hereafter."<sup>24</sup>

His unquestionable integrity was graced by the fortitude

---

23. Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 204.

24. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 367.

and dignity which he used to maintain his cause. His magnanimity was the result of humble confidence in the God Whom he served, and in the faithful promises of Scripture respecting the blessings of those who diligently sought Him. His morals as a Christian are above suspicion; his loyalty as a citizen is incontestible. His efforts toward the cause of truth exposed him to violent obloquy from those whose policies he condemned and resisted.

All the other qualities of Wilson were crowned by unfeigned humility. The doctrine of the Cross caused him to walk with a forbearing temper towards man. He made no ambitious claims. Whatever deference might have been due him from the other three as a man of gifts, he was much more inclined to recognize the claims of others than to magnify his own. "In any case, we must make allowance in estimating Wilson for his strength of attachment to covenanting tradition, and for the intense piety of emotion with which he remembered the broken life of his own father, who had endured most evils - short of martyrdom - which tyranny could bring."<sup>25</sup>

With whatever satisfaction we behold Wilson, in the pulpit, or vindicating the cause of truth through his writings, he is still more exemplary in his domestic life. His own record has not only enabled us to detail some vicissitudes which happened in his family, but to show authentic memorials

---

25. Leckie, J. H., Secession Memories, p. 14.



of their effects on his temper and conduct. Those experiences gave new impulse to his zeal in suggesting the promises of the Gospel to others.

Wilson's position has not been as conspicuous as that of his colleagues, nor has his fame been as far reaching as some, e. g., the Erskines. He was cut off at full strength, but from the beginning of the agitation he carried the banner for liberty and evangelical doctrine, and alligned himself with the protesting ministers. He combined zeal with discretion; firmness with forbearance, and fused them into effective counseling. His health soon broke under the accumulated labors, and he was the first of the four to leave the scene of toil. His entire ministry contained a clear, accurate exhibition of the Saviour. "He not only stood fast to the cause of truth, but ...went forward through all that course of difficulty and trial which (their) faithfulness subjected them."<sup>26</sup>

To separate from the Church was no trifling matter, but was a last resort. He could do nothing against the truth, but for truth. He believed the Church to be the Church of Christ only when it exhibited and defended Christ's truths. His character has nothing to fear from impartial scrutiny. He was led on by conviction; not pride or caprice. If we are ever tempted to speak disparagingly of his experience, we are to remember that he lived at a depth that many Christians

---

26. Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 191.

never reach. There beat in his veins a throb of the Christian life most men never approach. He is to be studied in wonder, sometimes in awe, and imitated in his noble ideals and convictions.

APPENDIX



## APPENDIX

### Chapter One

1. It is conjectured that he was the young man referred to in the following anecdote, related in connection with the martyrdom of that distinguished minister, which took place on June 1, 1661: - "In accordance with the sentence against Mr. Guthrie, his head was, after his execution, severed from his body, and fixed on the Nether-bow, Edinburgh. The body of the martyr was put into a coffin, and carried into the old Kirk aisle, where it was decently prepared for interment by a number of ladies of high respectability. While thus employed, a genteel young man approached and poured on the body a phial of rich perfume, the odor of which filled the whole Church. On observing this, one of the ladies exclaimed, 'God bless you, Sir, for this labor of love which you have shown to the slain body of a servant of Jesus Christ'. The young man, without speaking a word, made a low bow and retired." Ferrier, The Canadian Presbyterian Magazine, art., August, 1851.

6. Wilson had kept several records of religious experiences, previous to this, which are referred to but are not extant.

7. Within these writings are to be found many fine examples of the spirit and training of a young man striving to prepare himself for the ministry. His choice of vocation was made, we may be assured, out of a deep love for Him, and a zeal for His glory. We have no doubt he possessed the necessary requisites for his work. We shall have occasion to see how, as a humble minister of the Gospel, he brought the message of salvation home to the hearts of his congregation, and was able to touch the hearts of his hearers, all because he listened each day for the "still small voice" to resound within the recesses of his own.

18. "In view of observing the Communion of the Lord's Supper, I desire to have the following things before me: - 1. To seek brokenness of heart for sin and iniquity. 2. To get a solid pardon of sin. 3. To get clear evidence of an interest in Christ. 4. To receive grace to serve God and to delight in His way. 5. To get corruption mortified. 6. To

obtain qualification to serve God more and more, as long as I live. 7. To get pride, formality in prayer, self-conceit, hypocrisy, deadness, subdued and taken away; and, likewise, to get love, self-denial, hope, faith, humility, and all the graces of the Spirit strengthened and advanced. 8. To get communion with Jesus Christ, and all the benefits of the new covenant made over to me. 9. To pray for friends and relations. 10. To get a sight of the glory of Christ in his beauty and excellence, such as make me loath and abhor myself. 11. To get sanctification of heart, and a sweet sense of Christ's love. 12. To get bonds loosed, and especially the dead lump of corruption removed, and to obtain grace to serve God in spirit and in truth." Ferrier, Andrew, MWW, p. 46.

26. The "errands" spoken of are given to us in these words: "Errands to the Communion of Mearns, drawn up on the Fast-day. Mearns Communion is to be on the 26th of June, 1709. 1. To keep up the memory of Christ till He come. 2. To seek to have all the benefits of the covenant of grace made over to me. 3. To draw strength from a slain Christ; to crucify the flesh with all the affections and lusts thereof; to die to sin and live more to righteousness; for the mortification of heart-wickedness, lightness, self-conceit, vanity, and to draw virtue from a broken Christ; to bring my heart to live more and more to His promises; to live more with a stayed mind on Him; and to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments. 4. To get a close discovery of Christ, and more assurance of His love. 5. To surrender body, soul, and all to Him, and to choose Him for my all in all; to enlist myself under His banner, and to fight under Him as the great Captain of Salvation. And, 6. To offer up the sacrifices of praise for the new covenant of my redemption through Christ, and to praise Him for His love." The fact that he refers to this two years after he had entered into the covenant indicates that Wilson was in the habit of re-examining himself and his personal memoranda in order that these past experiences might be profitable to him. He who has accepted the invitation can repeat the welcome he has enjoyed: 'Restore unto us the joy of Thy salvation'. Ferrier, MWW, p. 57.

28. It should be added, however, that of the times in question, there were none of the abuses of this usage which afterwards crept in, and which Burns had branded in his description of Holy Fairs. When the faithful preachers of the day condemned those who "ran from Sacrament to Sacrament" their condemnation rested upon the strain which the practice laid upon religious emotion. The celebration of which we speak created a spiritual tie among the religiously disposed. It created a demand for those preachers who had an evangelical message, for their sermons were careful expositions of biblical doctrines,



with measured references to the outside questions which were before the minds of the church people of the age.

29. "In the days when Rev. John Jamieson was the youthful Secession minister of Forfar, Sheilhill belonged to Mr. Robert Watson, one of the founders of the denomination in Kerriemuir." Reid, Alan, The Regality of Kerrienuir, p. 331.

41. An oath required them to sanction a clause which provided that the person occupying the throne should be of the Episcopal faith. Another oath commanded their allegiance to recognize no form of Church government, either in kings or subjects, except that of Presbytery.

45. On January 11, 1717, Wilson received the following letter: "Reverend Dear Brother... Upon the whole, though I fancy this may not reach you till you be determined one way or other, it's my advice, that as you are not to suffer to be carried against your light by regard to any whomsoever; so, on the other hand, use your utmost endeavor to get light, if possible, to come up to the signing of it, since your colleagues (in Perth) have done it. By all means... be of a piece with them. They are worthy men, and of greater experience than you, and if there should fall in different practices, love may be in hazard to cool. But I hope the Lord shall prevent this. R. W." Wodrow, Robert, Correspondence, p. 112.

49. "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord."

51. Wilson relates it after this manner: While in Edinburgh, December, 1713, "I was occupied with a business that was very perplexing. I had no clearness to engage in a law process on the affair of my uncle's property, for the following reasons: - 1. I deemed it not right to sue for this property, as my uncle had the power of doing with his own what he pleased, and had thought proper to leave none to me. 2. Being a preacher of Christ's Gospel, I thought I should not so entangle myself with the affairs of this life. 3. After all, I was made to confess, before the Lord, my sin in meddling with a matter of this kind at all; and I sought that the Lord would bring me out of it with credit and honor, by a friendly arrangement, so that the Gospel of Christ might not be injured." Ferrier, MWW, pp. 113-114.

53. Ferrier stated that in April, Wilson was assigned this question: "What kind of a covenant did God make with Adam in a state of innocence?"

54. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold



the beginning of our condifence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." There is no mention of this in the records of Presbytery.

61. Ferrier has supplied us with "the original extract of his license" in these words: "At Dunfermline, the twenty-third day of September, one thousand, seven hundred, and thirteen years. The day which the Presbyterie of Dunfermline being met and considering, that Mr. William Wilson, student, hath now exped all the ordinary pieces of his trials, in order to be licensed, and is therein approven; and he being this day inquired anent his sentiments in Church government, if he was content to subscribe to the Confession of Faith, as the Confession of his faith; if he would give obedience to this and other Church Judicatories in the Lord, and shun all divisive courses; to all which he gave satisfying answers..." (MWW, p. 91).

## CHAPTER TWO

1. The document reads as follows: "These testifie that the bearer, Mr. William Wilson, preacher of the Gospel, has, since he was licensed, preached at the desire and in the hearing of several of the brethren thereof, to our great satisfaction, and edification of his hearers, and, so far as we know, has behaved himself gravely, religiously, and becoming his station. Wherefore, we hereby earnestly recommend to Presbyteries and other Church Judicatories, where Providence may order his lot, as a person whom we judge, through the Lord's blessing, may be very useful in His vineyard. In testimony whereof, these presents are given by appointment of the Presbyterie of Dunfermline, the ninth day of December, one thousand seven hundred and thirteen years, and signed in their name by George Mair, Moderator. Jo. Gib, Presbyterie Clerk." MPD, op. cit., IV, p. 322.

8. The civil commotions which were harrassing and agitating the country were grave issues to the mind of Wilson. He became deeply concerned for the welfare of the king's troops. During November, 1715, "the confusion seemed to be increased, and it was feared that the rebel army would gather strength. On the 10th of this month, the Earl of Mar, at the head of the rebels, made a march with his whole army, from Perth, where were his headquarters. On the 12th, the Duke of Argyle, having called together his forces, moved from Stirling to Dunblane. On Sabbath, being the 13th day, both armies engaged, within a mile of Dunblane. Mar had about ten thousand men. The King's army, under the Duke, was not above three thousand five hundred strong. Mar's right wing attacked the Duke's left, killed numbers of men, and took also many prisoners. In the meantime, however, the other divisions of the rebel army had got advantage over the royal troops. On the Duke's return the engagement was not renewed. Victory was claimed by both armies; but the losses were soon seen to be on the side of the rebels. The Lord was letting us see what He could do for us, and what He was willing to do for us, and that He was loath to lay on the stroke. Judgment is His strange act, and also, in His Providence, the hand of the Lord was seen. It was not our sword," declared Wilson, "or bow, but the Lord's right hand that gave the deliverance; and yet any deliverance that was given this day was given with a frown, - the greatest part of the army being put to flight. By this the Lord declared to us, that yet He had a controversy against us, and calls us loudly to repent and turn. But also! we regard not the doings of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands." Then as if to analyze, Wilson set forth what he considered to be the reasons for all this



folly: "This has been a time of wonderful appearance of God," he remarked, "for this Church and State. But the following things must be confessed: - 1. That we are not laying to mind the ground of the controversy, nor searching into the cause of this fire that is kindled in the midst of this poor land. 2. That the ministers of this neighborhood (Irvine) preach peace, peace. There is no searching nor upstirring preaching among them; and, hitherto, there had been no fasting, no mourning, and no humiliation days appointed. 3. That we are growing very secure. The gathering of the forces of the Duke of Argyle makes us think that there will be danger, and that all is well with us, and so we trust in the arm of flesh." Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 126-128.

Wilson later used this as a grievance against the Judicatories of the Church. "All the above sins are highly aggregate from the point that the Lord hath taken upon us both by mercy and judgment; particularly from the remarkable deliverance He has given us, out of the hands of our enemies and amongst others the merciful deliverance which was given us from the unnatural rebellion in the year 1715 which we in this place and congregation ought especially to remember." Minutes Wilson Church, 18th April, 1739, p. 41.

10. In July, Wilson had gone to Perth, "and stayed at Pitcaithly Wells. I came to the town on the 28th and preached there on the 29th, with very much enlargement, and also on the 31st I delivered a week-day sermon."

11. The records of Presbytery for the following day state: "The Moderator, Mr. Thomas Black, gave the reason for convening this meeting. The Magistrates and Town Council of the Burgh of Perth and members of Kirk-Session there, have their eye upon a person to be third minister...and are unanimous to give that person a call, and had desired him to acquaint all the members of the Presbytery that they should meet in order to consider that affair and appoint a call to be moderate for the said person, and that as soon as may be, in regard they were apprehensive of the inconveniences of delay." MPP, op. cit., VIII, p. 46.

13. John Wilson in his book, The Presbytery of Perth, gives the Leet as follows: "William Wilson, Probationer in the Presbytery of Dunblane; Francis Archibald, Probationer in the Presbytery of Aberbrethick; and John Hay, Probationer in the Presbytery of Perth." There is an error at this point which has undoubtedly come from following the Minutes of the Presbytery of Perth completely. In Volume VIII, p. 45, the same Leet is stated, but according to the records of the Presbytery of Stirling and Dunblane, no mention is made of Wilson between September, 1713, and November, 1716. It would appear



that the reference to "Dunblane" in the records of Perth Presbytery is a lapsus colarni of "Dunfermline". A further discrepancy is noted in the other names on the Leet. The records of Perth, which John Wilson has again followed, names "Francis Archibald...and Mr. John Hay." He lists these as "in the same Presbytery". According to the records, Archibald was not in Aberbrethisk, and this writer was unable to learn anything about John or James Hay.

16. The Record of Presbytery of that same day states: "Mr. Wilson being present, produced extract of his license (by the Presbytery of Dunfermline), also a testimonial from the same Presbytery stating that during his abode in their bounds he had behaved himself gravely, religiously, and becoming his station, and preached frequently by the appointment of the Presbytery in the hearing of several of the brethren to the great satisfaction and edification of his hearers." A similar testimony was read from the Presbytery of Glasgow. The Presbytery sustained the call, and "gave Mr. Wilson a 'common head' to be delivered against the next Presbytery day, viz., 'Quaenam est Ratio formalis Fidei Divinae?'" The call was "unanimously voted and syned by the Magistrates, Town Council, of the Burgh of Perth, and members of the Kirk Session there, and was delivered to Mr. Wilson by the Moderator and given back to the Clerk until Mr. Wilson should perfect his tryalls." MPP, op. cit., VIII, p. 50.

18. He "had the exercise and addition as appointed and approved. The Presbytery appointed him to have for lecture the twentieth Psalm, and for a popular sermon the seventh verse of the same Psalm, latter part of the verse, and deliver against the next Presbytery day. As also to defend his theses, and for the tryal of his skill in the Hebrew, Psalm twenth-fifth. And to expound a part of the Greek New Testament ad apertum libri. And for Chronologie, the first half of the fourth century. And to have all his other extemporary tryalls against the next Presbytery day." MPP, op. cit., VIII, p. 58.

23. The Reverend Thomas Black, Senior Minister at St. John's Kirk, had been settled there in 1698.

25. "Sermon being ended, Mr. William Wilson was solemnly ordained and admitted third minister...with solemn imposition of the hands of the Presbytery, and other solemnities usual in the like case, And the Presbyterie having given him the right hand of fellowship after public prayer and praises, the Congregation was dismissed with the Blessing. Mr. Wilson, being desired to syn the Confession of Faith and formula thereto subjoyned, he did it accordingly." MPP, op. cit., VIII, p. 69.

27. The first is dated August 10, 1717. "The Communion being at Kinnoul tomorrow, the following things are earnestly desired by me, in the view of sitting down at the Lord's Table: 1. I desire grace to improve myself by meditation and prayer, both that my own soul may be enlarged, and that I may be more and more useful in the service of Christ. 2. I desire to be kept from formality and indifference in the discharge of my work, and to be enabled to lean upon Christ for all necessary and promised aid. 3. I desire to have pardon for sin, and spiritual revivings and growth. 4. I desire to wait upon God, that He may come with power, life, light, and liberty. 5. I desire to take a greater hold upon Christ by faith, to get a greater concern for souls, and a greater weight of them upon my spirit." Another example recorded May, 1718, states: "Tomorrow is the Sacrament Sabbath in this place (i. e., Perth). This night I find myself: - 1. Under great concern about the growth in grace in my own soul. 2. Under many perplexing feelings about my ministerial work, having reason to be humble, for not preaching Christ so plainly and earnestly as I should do, for not singly aiming at the glory of God and not being sufficiently concerned for souls. 3. Desirous to mourn for sin, and to obtain pardon and sanctification. Oh for a believing look at a pierced Christ. 4. Anxious to receive Christ by faith. Oh that I may get a meeting with Him, and may be enabled to cast the stress of my soul for eternity upon Him. 5. Standing in need of more grace. Give me more faith in Christ, and more earnest desires after Him. Take away my vain thoughts, and fix my mind and heart wholly upon Thyself." Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 145.

32. "Immediately after his settlement here, he discovered that he was in no way fitted for a collegiate life. Such was his natural temper that he could not endure one to be equal in esteem with himself; neither could he be pleased with anything unless he was the chief manager and doer himself. I could scarcely preach," asserted Wilson, "but he was either contradicting me from the pulpit, by tearing and misrepresenting my expressions or some way or other discovering dissatisfaction with me. I cannot express how heavy a trial this was to me. Religion thereby suffered, and the cause of the Gospel was obstructed. I was, during his life, in continued uneasiness. Sometimes the trial was made more easy to me, but often I was as one in agony, and so burdened and pressed down as to be weary of my life. I could often have wished, with the Prophet, that I had, in the wilderness, a lodging-place of way-faring men." Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 211.

33. At the August meeting of the Presbytery of Perth, they "called Mr. Stewart and Mr. Wilson together and suggested that all matters that were the grounds of their differences



should be forgotten, and that they should be mutually engaged to live for the future, in love and accord, and if any differences did arise, to call...for aid in dissolving them." MPP, op. cit., XII, 1733.

38. It is worth noting that in this same year, 1730, there were twelve cases of protests upon the Clerk's table, of all length and sizes.

40. It is at this date that Drs. Adam Gib and John M'Kerrow mark the rise of the Secession.

41. "In the Settlement of 1690," says MacEwen, "and the Patronage Act of 1712, there was neither precedent nor parallel to such legislation. These had been Parliamentary Enactments; this was a voluntary surrender, by the Church, of rights which she had hitherto claimed. The Act came into force at once provisionally, and was transmitted to Presbyteries for their approval in terms of the Barrier Act, which provided that Constitutional changes could be made only with the consent of the plurality of Presbyteries." TE, op. cit., p. 65.

42. Prominent among the grievances were: "the growth and spreading of errors, intrusions into the ministry, and procedures of Commissions assuming the power of appointing committees for trying and ordaining ministers in vacant congregations, not only without the consent of the Presbyteries and Synods concerned, but also in direct opposition to their declared minds." Ninth in the order of signatures is that of "William Wilson" and, at irregular intervals, are the names of all those who Seceded with him.

45. Dr. Cunningham (II, p. 283) is in error at this point. He says 18 favored it as it was; 12 with alterations; 31 opposed; and 18 gave no returns. This would make a total of 79 Presbyteries. This historian's supposed discrepancy is the result of his mistake arising from not observing accurately what Struthers actually said. The letter does not say that 18 favored it as it stood but that "18 were for it, 12 OF THEM requiring material alterations." (Struthers, I, p. 612.) There were only 67 Presbyteries in the Church of Scotland at that time.

52. Dr. Cunningham remarks that Erskine "was behind his age rather than before it"; while the majority was the "party of progress", and knew better than he his words and their meaning.

53. Apparently Wilson won his place among the members of Presbytery quite quickly. He "soon obtained great influence," says Sidney Lee. Dictionary of National Biography, p. 616.



We note from the records of Presbytery that this must have been true. On November 19, 1718, "the Presbyterie proceeded to chuse a new Moderator, and a list being given out and the rolls called and the votes marked, by a plurality of votes Mr. William Wilson was chosen Moderator till the first Presbyterie after next Synod, and, when called in, he took the chair." MPP, op. cit., VIII, pp. 164-165. Although ordained just two years before, his call to occupy the Moderator's chair at the age of 28 indicates his remarkable sagacity and maturity. At this meeting, Alexander Moncrieff applied for Licensure. During this time, when Wilson - for the first time - was Moderator of the Presbytery, he presided at the Licensure of this Laird of Culfargie, who was later to be numbered among the Four Brethren.

A further note states that on the 19th it was reported that 795 Pounds, Scots, had been collected within the bounds for "the suffering Protestants of Lithuania."

60. "We, the underscribing ministers, dissenters from the sentence of Perth and Stirling, do hereby adhere to the above protestation and declaration containing a Testimony against the Act of Assembly, 1732, and asserting our privilege and duty to testify publicly against the same or like defections upon all proper occasions."

61. The city newspaper speaks of the Assembly having received the report of the Committee, which had dealt with Wilson and the others. Only after "much reasoning" was the Overture passed, which indicates that the Four had many sympathizers among the members of the Assembly. CM, op .cit., May 17, 1733.

63. "We understand one of our ministers...is cited by the General Assembly of this National Church, to compear before the meeting of this Commission on account of a protest taken by him, and some others, against a decision of the said venerable Assembly, in the case of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister of the Gospel at Stirling, -

"We, in all humility, beg leave to represent unto the very reverend Commission, the case and circumstances of this our town and parish; that we have two numerous assemblies every Lord's Day, - the one of them so large, that scarce the strongest voice of a man can reach them all; that we have two week-days for sermons, to which the inhabitants of the town, and the country-parts of the parish, give good attendance; and that the good town, of late years, have supplied us with a minister - a third - the charge being too great and weighty for two; that it has pleased the Lord to remove one of our ministers by death, in the month of January, last; that another one of our ministers is of an advanced age, so that we cannot reasonably expect

he shall be continued long with us, his health and strength daily decaying; that the said William Wilson, so far as we can understand, has not yet attained unto that light, as to come up to the obedience required of him by the Act of the late venerable Assembly; that if the reverend Commission should go to the rigor with him at this meeting, so that we be deprived of the exercise of his ministry, by suspension or otherwise, it is easy to see how dismal the consequences are like to be, and what deplorable circumstances we, in all human probability, shall be reduced unto. Upon the whole, then, let us earnestly beseech the reverend Commission, that, in their great goodness, they may be pleased to grant such delay in their procedure against our minister as they in their wisdom shall think fit."

65. "The Messrs. Wilson and Moncrieff were interrogated by the Moderator (after Erskine and Fisher) and they, offering in answer the paper they had formerly printed...the Commission appointed a Committee to meet with these brethren, to commune with them, and to report..." The item continues, "Principal Smith, of the Committee, reported, That they had not the desired success...Then Messrs. Wilson and Moncrieff were severally interrogated, but they argued, That the paper they presented might be read, as containing their sentiments at large, but this being over-ruled, they were heard viva voce. In the afternoon the Four were asked if they had anything further to say, They answered, No. The Four were removed, and the question carried, 'Suspend', 61 to 28. To this they objected..." GM, op. cit., August 9, 1733.

68. It is interesting to note, that within two months of the Commission's sentence, the Magistrates and Town Council of Perth, acting as if no sentence had been inflicted, raised Wilson from third minister to second, with the increased emoluments.

71. "The General Assembly to which John Gowdie was appointed Moderator was perhaps the most memorable since the Revolution. For there was taken at it the irrevocable step of remitting the case of the Seceding Brethren to the Commission with full powers to suspend them, and then to proceed to higher censure if they did not express regret for their procedure and withdraw their protest. One result could follow. Both parties were firm, and no concession was likely to come from either side. The sentence of suspension was pronounced and they were summoned to appear before the November Commission. The whole Church looked forward to this with throbbing interest. Many members shrank from taking the final step. The Moderate leaders were absolutely decided. The question was put: 'Higher censure, or, Delay?' The votes were equal.



Everything depended upon the Moderator. The orders of the Commission were specific. They were commanded to do the deed, and Gowdie ruled the Court. A death-like stillness prevailed. Short and sharp was the word that came from the Moderator's lips- 'Proceed', and the doom of the Seceders was fixed. His personal views were opposed to Erskine and his friends. General Assembly had given him instructions. He would not shrink from expressing his own views, or from carrying out the command of the Supreme Court." Warrick, John, The Moderators of the Church of Scotland, pp. 308-309.



## CHAPTER THREE

8. "And the Commission...appoint that letters from the Moderator, and extracts of this sentence be sent up to the several Presbyteries within whose bounds the said ministers have had their charges, appointing them, as they are hereby appointed, to cause intimation of this sentence in the aforesaid several churches, now declared vacant, anytime 'twixt first, January next; and also notice of this sentence be sent by letters from the Moderator of the Commission to the Moderator of Perth and Stirling; to the Sheriff-Principal of Perthshire;...in case (they) shall behave themselves dutifully and submissively to this sentence...the Commission will recommend them for favor...The Presbytery...taking the affair into their serious consideration, and after reasoning whether to appoint intimation of the said sentence loosing the relations of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Moncrieff to their respective charges and declaring them no longer ministers of this Church...and likewise declaring their churches vacant from and after the date of the Commission's sentence..., or delay intimation thereof until the next Presbytery..., in regard by the Commission's act the sentence to be intimate anytime betwixt and January next. The vote being stated, it carried 'Delay' by a great majority." MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 271.

9. James Mercer's protest is as follows: "This sentence is injurious and irregular in that he has done nothing to deserve censure in refusing to put the question inconsistent with 'the beautiful order of subordination of Judicatories of this Church', in which he thinks a good deal of the essence of the Presbyterian government; injurious also in that he declared himself in Presbytery willing to put the only proper question that could be put in consistency with the act of the Commission, namely, to make intimation of the Commission's sentence, this being the last day Presbytery can appoint such to make the said intimation. He also protested that anyone taking the office of Moderator shall be held accountable, and that Presbytery that presumes to recognize the sentence of the superiors, and acts inconsistent with it, is no Presbytery., and their sentence is null and void, and no member of the Church would be bound to them until he was returned as Moderator. This Presbytery was in rebellion against its superiors, and guilty of the most notorious defections from the principles of the Church." MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 275.

10. Errors crept into news items in that day as readily as in our own. One states: "We learn from Perth that last Wednesday the Presbytery there, after voting the Reverend Mr. Wilson out of the chair, put off declaring Mr. Wilson's Church

vacant, notwithstanding the sentence of the last Commission." Wilson, however, was not Moderator of the Presbytery at this time. CM, op. cit., January 1, 1734.

12. Dr. Eadie has fallen into error at this point. He fails to differ between this Fergusson of Killin and Adam Fergusson of Longerait, who moved in Synod against Erskine. (M'Crie, SSEB, op. cit., p. 34.) Professor Campbell, of St. Andrew's, was to intimate the same at Abernethy, and Presbytery desired of His Grace, the Duke of Athole, as Sheriff, to protect said Professor." CM, op. cit., March 18, 1734.

13. Mr. Fergusson later registered his complaint to the Commission "regarding the indignities he rec'd when he came in obedience to the Commission's sentence, to declare the Church of Perth vacant." CM, op. cit., May 13, 1734.

20. "I own, that after the meeting of Assembly, 1734, I was much in perplexity about our continuing in a state of Secession. It occasioned many thoughts of heart unto me, to understand what was duty in the present case. But as I had no hesitation about my duty when I did, together with my three brethren, declare a Secession from this Church in our protest before the Commission, November, 1733, so when I have observed the said Judicatories since the year, 1734, I have been gradually cleared and more and more confirmed that it is our duty to continue in a state of Secession...I desire," he could say five years later, "to bless the Lord who cleared my way, and led me by His good hand upon me to join my brethren, though the unworthiest among them, in the testimony that is now lifted up for the truth of our Lord Jesus, in opposition to the manifold inquiries that are done, both to His truths and members, by the present Judicatories of this Established Church." Wilson, William, A Letter From a Member of the Associate Presbytery to a Minister in the Presbytery of D...ne. pp. 1-2.

26. Black's answer to the final accusation runs something like this: He was going in company with two men who engaged in a match at the golph at North Inch. They were joined by a certain gentleman who was supposed to be in drink and under scandal. While the two men were playing their match, "I struck a ball for my own diversion", and the supposed drunk did the same.

28. St. John's Minutes records the Session as composed of 14 Elders and 18 Deacons (p. 62), 9 of whom adhered to Wilson's protest. They were: Provost Colin Brown, Baillies Robertson, Wilson, Davidson, Schioch, Meliss, Gardiner, Reed,



and Duncan. This number is further borne out by the statement that "it appears plainly that four Elders and five Deacons have joined..." On the other hand, the Minutes of the Wilson Church, which begin at July 14, states that 14 members of the St. John's Session protested and seceded. M'Crie and Hunt suppose that the Session had been composed of 26 members, and follow the records of the Wilson Church, namely, that there were 14 who protested and seceded.

29. The writer was unable to find any 'Declaration' either in the records of St. John's Parish or Wilson (Associate) Church.

34. The foregoing answers to Wilson's 'Protestation' of July 14 ends somewhat abruptly. The Minutes proceed to other matters of business.

35. A month later (November) the Associate Session reported "that their brethren from whom they have seceded have appointed some of their number to commune with members of this Session; the Session do appoint...to meet with any of the aforesaid brethren and to hear what is proposed, and report." MWC, op. cit., p. 20.

42. That these proceedings carried great weight upon Wilson's thoughts and actions is seen from the following note: "The Moderator informed the Session that the Associate Presbytery has appointed the Sessions and Societies that are under their inspection to observe the third Monday of January, next, for prayer that the Lord may over-rule in the present proceedings of the Judicatories anent the brethren of the said Presbytery." MWC, op. cit., p. 30.

48. Ralph Erskine and Thomas Mair had become members of the Associate Presbytery.

49. They also prepared a manifesto, evidently a composite production, in which they complained that "the heritage of God...are wounded, scattered, and broken...by the present Judicatories...And of late the most part of ministers...have practically given up with the sole Headship and Sovereignty of the Lord...And the present Judicatories have...no testimony against the same...They endeavor to bear down against the sins of the day, prosecuting and libelling such...who lift up...testimony...against a cause of defection." MWC, op. cit., p. 41.

56. When Bannatyne closed the Assembly, he said: "It could not but very sensibly effect us to behold so many who were once of us, standing at our bar...renouncing all communion with us and offering insults to us that we can hardly



find a parallel to, and yet borne with so much patience and forbearance. When we behold others insisting so much upon their 'Act and Testimony', let us insist upon the Testimony of Jesus Christ, the glorious Gospel of God our Saviour. Let us be zealous for the support of our happy Establishment; if we support it, it will support us; if we suffer it to fall, we will be buried in its ruins." Such words reveal the deep feeling with which this battle raged.

57. The Assembly dispatched this Act to the Presbyteries concerned "without giving...a large account of the...procedure and determination", but simply enclosing "a copy of their Act whereby you will see what is incumbent upon Presbyteries thereabout;" MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 337.

58. In view of the sharp points now drawn, the Associate Session of Wilson's Church "appoints the first Thursday of July to meet at three in the afternoon for prayer unto the Lord that He may follow with His blessing the Testimony given at the late General Assembly, and likewise for thanksgiving for the conduct given to the Presbytery in that affair. And for the Lord's remarkable Providence in preserving unto them the peaceable exercise of their ministry. And they recommend it to the several Societies in this place and the neighborhood to meet that day for the above ends." MWC, op. cit., p. 45.

60. "A letter signed by the Reverend Mr. Logan, Moderator of the last Assembly, being produced, was read. Also, the said Assembly's Act relating to the eight Seceding Brethren was produced and read. The Presbytery, in consequence of the said Assembly's Act, appoints one copy of the sentence to be sent to the Clerk of the Kirk-Session...of Perth." MPP, op. cit., XIII, p. 352.

61. Warrick states that the vote was 140-30, in the affirmative. MCS, op. cit., p. 565.

69. Wilson had made representation to the Session, and they in turn had conversed with "several of the well disposed persons of this town concerning the building of a Church... who all showed a cheerful readiness and willingness to contribute...and a considerable number had already subscribed... some in money, others in free service, and furnishing materials." MWC, op. cit., p. 64.

70. After Wilson was ejected from the Middle Church, the numerous congregation provided this Church - the South United Presbyterian Church. This was the first Secession Church to be erected. HP, op. cit., p. 392.

72. "We have thought of Thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple." Psalm 48:9.

73. Ferrier states, "Mr. Wilson died on the 8th of October, 1741", but all other resources - including the Minutes of the Associate Church - list the date as November 14. (See MWW, op. cit., p. 367.)

The newspaper carried a notice to the effect, that, "we learn from Perth on Saturday, last, died the Reverend Mr. William Wilson, one of the ministers of the Associate Presbytery, and Professor of Divinity. A pious, sincere, and also very learned gentleman." CM, op. cit., (reporting on) Tuesday, November 14, 1741.

74. At this same meeting, there was produced and read a petition from the congregation, asking that the Session apply to the Associate Presbytery for a supply for the vacancy created by Wilson's death, and the hearing of probationers in order to moderate a call.

75. Only three of his numerous family survived him. Isabella, who was 14 at his death, married the Rev. John Muchersie of Kinkell - the author of a worthwhile Catechism. She died in 1798. John Wilson, of Methven, was born in 1733; licensed in 1742, and ordained in 1743. He died in 1803. Mary, the youngest daughter, married the Rev. William Jameson of Kilwinning. Ralph Erskine composed Wilson's epitaph in two parts: Latin pentameter and English couplets. It reads:

"Monumentum Mri. Guilelmi Wilson,  
Pastoris Perthensis, Qui in Domino Suo  
Jesu Christo Oblit, Anno 1741  
Aetatis Suae 51."

"Nuper aras Pastor divus, Doctorque disertus,  
Nunc super astra volas, his licet ossa cubent;  
Magnum edunt nomen tua dicta, didactica majus,  
Caelica vita comes maximum et uberius."

"More brave than David's mighty men,  
This champion fought it fair,  
In truth's defence, both by the pen,  
The pulpit, and the chair.

"He stood with his associates, true  
To Scotland's solemn Oath,  
And taught to render homage due  
To God and Caesar both.

"Earth raging, from his sacred post  
D'barred the worthy sage;  
Heav'n frown'd, and sent a furious host,  
To 'venge the sacrilege."



## CHAPTER FOUR

9. The necessity of resorting to this mode of testifying arose from the Act of Assembly by which the marking of dissent and protestation was frowned upon. "This deed was highly unconstitutional, because it deprived members of a privilege...to which they were entitled by former Acts...it refused to those who might conscientiously disapprove...the most obvious and suitable means of expressing that disapprobation, of exonerating their own conscience. To those who venerated the Standards of the Church...who were deeply effected by the departure from them...who were anxious to express the tide of defection...no other method remained...except that of testifying against her apostacies in their public ministrations." Testimony of the United Secession Church, p. 35.

18. "And men shall be blessed in him." Psalm 122:17.

22. "A good convention was held yesterday of the adherents of the seceding ministers. At noon, Mr. Wilson preached, and afterward baptized ten children. The apparent tendency of the sermon was to excite fervor and devotion and a renewal of solemn engagements, and to deprecate sin in general. There were about five thousand persons at each session, besides the ungodly audience, consisting of many thousands." CM, op. cit., March 22, 1738.

31. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of espousals, and in the day of gladness of his heart." Song of Solomon 3:11. Colin Brown, former Provost of Perth, remained in the Church well after the service had ended. When asked to retire for refreshment, he said, "Here I have been getting much of that meat, which the world knoweth not of." Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., p. 360.

37. John Eadie prefixed this with the following: "Mr. Wilson was a man of good fervor, and frequent in wrestling with God; a man that, together with his learning, evidenced much prudence and moderation; and who, in preaching, evidenced the greatest concern, heavenliness, mildness and majesty, that I ever heard." This is not recorded in Brown's writing, although Eadie credits him with the words. UPF, op. cit., p. 117.

43. "And therefore, the Presbytery did, and hereby do, make choice of, nominate, and appoint, their reverend brother



Mr. William Wilson, minister of the Gospel at Perth, to take the inspection, and be teacher of the youth who should offer themselves to be instructed, in order to their being licensed to preach the Gospel, as they should be qualified, with full power to him to direct them in their studies, in such manner as shall be most conducive to their being acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and of the reformed principles of this Church founded thereon, contained in her Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter; and, considering his parochial and other ministerial work in the present circumstances, the Presbytery leave it wholly to him to judge what time he can most conveniently spare time for teaching and instructing those students; and the Presbytery recommend it to all the brethren to make inquiry after fit persons to be licensed to preach the Gospel or to be trained up for the ministry, and to report their diligence in the matter, from time to time, to this Presbytery, and, therefore, they recommend it to their committee named above to prepare proper overtures, to be laid before the Presbytery at their next ordinary meeting, anent the admission of students and the Presbyterie's procedure in licensing them to preach the Gospel." MAP, op. cit., pp. 103 - 104.

47. "The Presbytery...agreed that their reverend brother ...was to give attendance this season the three months above mentioned, and that he should admit students after his inspection from praying societies or other sufficient attestations." MAP, op. cit., p. 104.

## CHAPTER FIVE

14. "That, by the light of nature, the works of creation and providence, God has given an obscure objection revelation of the Gospel; and that it is probable that none are excluded from the benefit of the remedy for sin provided by God, and published twice to the whole world, except those who, by their actual sin, exclude themselves, and slight and reject the clearer light of the Gospel revealed to the Church, or that obscure discovery and offer of grace made to all without the Church; and that if the heathen would, in sincerity and truth, and in the diligent use of means that providence lays to their hand, seek from God the knowledge of the way of reconciliation, necessary for their acceptable serving of Him, and being saved by Him, He would discover it to them." "That there are means appointed of God for obtaining saving grace, which...when diligently used...God has promised to bless with success; and the going about these means in the foresaid manner, is not above the reach of our natural ability and power." "That it is inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God, to create a soul without any original righteousness, or any disposition to good; and that the souls of infants, since the fall, as they come from the hands of their Creator, are as pure and holy as the souls and infants would have been created, supposing man had not fallen; and that they are created as pure and holy as Adam's was..." M'Kerrow, HCS, op. cit., p. 11. Quote from Webster's libel.

17. "He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?" John 5:11-12.

19. A similar Committee had been set up by the Assembly of 1710. It said, "Purity of Doctrine is a signal blessing of the Church...therefore, the General Assembly doth discharge all persons to vent any opinions contrary to any head or article of the Confession or Catechisms, ...or use any expressions...not agreeable to that form of sound words, expressed in the Word." MGA, op. cit., XIX, 1718.

20. James Hog, Carnock; Alexander Hamilton, Airth; James Brisbane, Stirling; James Warden, Gargunock.

21. They were: the nature of faith; universal atonement and pardon; holiness not necessary to salvation; fear



of punishment and hope of reward not allowed to be motives of a believer's obedience; the believer not under law as a rule of life.

22. They were: All who hear the Gospel are warranted to believe it; faith in Christ encourages immediate access with confidence into the presence of God, and the immediate hope of salvation; that God, in the gift of His Son, has brought mercy near to everyone; that holiness, while absolutely necessary, is in no sense the price or condition of salvation; that believers are not under law as a covenant of works, in respect either of its promise, precept, or penalty, or that the law as a covenant of works, is wholly distinct from the law as a rule of life.

28. "Since Mr. Simson's process began, the Lord in His Providence has removed a great many who were firm in point of doctrine...and opposers of him and his innovations...these make a dreadful gap in the Church." Wodrow, A, op. cit., IV, p. 140.

29. Among the charges brought against Simson were: He denied the necessary existence of Christ; the phrase of 'Necessary Existence' was impertinent, and not to be used when speaking of the Trinity; The Three Persons of the Trinity are not said to be numerically one; the terms 'Necessary Existence' and 'Supreme Deity' are taken by some to be personal property of the Father and do not belong to the Son.

30. After giving this as the feeling of many in the Assembly, Wodrow himself said, (1728): "He (Hamilton) entered upon the subject everybody knows is before the Assembly, the matter of the Trinity, which more than once he asserted to be a fundamental of our faith, and ought to be looked after with the greatest zeal and earnestness." p. 386.

32. "In his discourses, Mr. Simson and his lovers were exceeding prolix. They were heard upon what was called alleviations, and under that head, as they had done upon exculpation and probation, they drew in the whole of the subject, and everything that might breed favorable impressions on the cause. They took up three or four days...Upon the whole... this process...is happily off the field...and I think its a token for good...that we have got through such a Quisquous (perplexing) and tender a process. Our enemies expected a breach...and an open breach...would have had ill consequences." Wodrow, A op. cit., I, pp. 53-54.



34. Others present were: Messrs. Gillespie of Strathmikle; Laing of Newburgh; Lachlan M'Intosh of Errol; Fisher of Kinclaven; Moncrieff of Abernethy. M'Intosh was Moderator of the Assembly in 1736, and "was decidedly Evangelical in his sympathies, and took a very friendly attitude with the Seceders after the General Assembly issued its decree against them." MCS, op. cit., p. 317.

38. In the April meeting of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, the following action was taken: "The Synod judges the Presbytery were so right in so doing; because, in the reasons of dissent, they made themselves parties...And further, the Synod agreed that it be recommended to the brethren of that Presbytery to study and harmonize among themselves." MSPS, op. cit., VI, p. 115.

40. The Elders and people at Kinross complained to the Assembly at this time, against the proceedings of the last Commission, in the settlement of Mr. S \_\_\_\_\_ (Stark) as their Minister. He was ordained by a Committee of the Commission, appointed for that purpose. All the Elders, except one or two, and the most part of the people of that parish, as also the Presbytery, reclaiming. But the Assembly dismissed their complaint, and appointed the Presbytery of Dunfermline to receive and enroll Mr. S \_\_\_\_\_ as one of their number. This was one of the violent intrusions too common at this time; but complaints to our Assemblies for redress, were all to no purpose." Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 181-182.

41. At the same meeting "it was moved that Mr. Moncrieff could not be allowed to hear the answers in regard he entered the dissent and is a party in the cause, and therefore ought to be removed. It carried: Remove. Mr. Moncrieff protested, and took instrument in the Clerk's hand, and removed." MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 197.

## CHAPTER SIX

2. "I argued that the propositions presented, bearing to be obnoxious clauses from Mr. Erskine's sermon, were not relevant, so as to infer censure, as they were readily not correct representations of the parts of the discourse to which they were alleged to refer. I likewise argued, that if Mr. Erskine were censured for preaching against the Act of the Assembly of 1732, regarding the settlement of ministers, the Synod thereby laid down a new term of ministerial communion, viz., that none of the Acts of our General Assemblies should be preached against, though ministers should be convinced of their iniquity and infidelity, and judged it their duty to give a doctrinal testimony against them. I alleged, further, that it was not competent to the Synod, to lay down terms of ministerial communion, as that belonged to the General Assembly, and no General Assembly of this Church had yet bound up ministers from preaching against their public Acts and Constitution." Ferrier, MWW, op. cit., pp. 198-199.

8. James Mercer, a minister in Perth, dissented from this, and promised to give in reasons for it. Six others adhered. Mr. Phut was one. MPP, op. cit., XII, pp. 221-222.

9. Mr. Mercer and the others again "protested against and dissented from this sentence and promised to give reasons." MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 226.

12. "The designation, which they themselves had chosen, had a recognized meaning. Turretin and other eminent theologians had contended that, at the Reformation, Protestants had not incurred the guilt of schism, but had 'seceded' from a Romanized majority. Secession was thus a vox signata, indicating the right and duty of a minority, when overborne, and censured, to maintain a separate Church life, in fidelity to Church principles, and without any severance from the life of the true Church. This was the position taken by the Four. The prevailing party refused to hold communion with them; therefore, they responded by refusing to hold communion with the prevailing party. They seceded from that party, as not representing the true Church of Scotland, with the belief that their Secession would be vindicated when Scotland again had a free, faithful, and reforming Assembly. While their Secession was not designed to be final, they, from the first, meant it to be definite, and recognized that the causes that led to it were deeply rooted. It had no incidental or personal basis.



The statements and documents which they issued were measured and explicit, without any trace of resentment or pique. They had resolved to continue their testimony for truth and freedom, and their resolution was of the steady and unanswering kind which Church authorities have always failed to baffle." M'Ewen, TE, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

18. "A complaint from the Presbytery of Dunfermline... for settling Mr. Robert Stark in...Kinross. After five hours pleading, the Assembly dismissed the complaint as to the reversing of the sentence; but reserved to the Assembly to judge the conduct of the Commission in this settlement. On Saturday the members who dissented craved the same to be recorded, but they were told, That though in supreme courts, civil or ecclesiastical, dissents are received, when these Judicatories are making acts,...yet no instance could be produced where dissent from a sentence or a judgment of a supreme judicatory was received." CM, op. cit., May 15, 1732.

30. A short time later these men gathered for the purpose of confessing their failures in the 1729 affair of Simson. Wilson desired to be included, though he was not a member of the Assembly at that time, nor was he present. Yet he wished to be included, for when the decision was reported to the Presbytery of Perth, he did not adopt any measure of protest until he joined the Representers in 1732. But the Associate Presbytery thought fit not to admonish him.

36. The more extended title is: "An Act, Declaration and Testimony, For the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government of the Church of Scotland."

39. "They were accused of tending towards the Constitution of a distinct Church. The Judicial Testimony of 1736 was an announcement to the world that they were prepared to exercise all the functions of a Presbytery. The Secession became the nucleus around which local discontents embodied themselves." Campbell, TCCS, op. cit., p. 62.

40. John Brown of Haddington claims that this was prepared chiefly by Wilson. History of the Secession, p. 13.

50. Not long after his deposition, he and Ralph Erskine were conducting a fast at Braidsraig, near Edinburgh. Many attempts were made by opponents to drive the large congregation into a panic and disperse them. Some residents shot at wild game nearby, and set fire to the shubbery on the meeting grounds. So high did tension run that guards were posted at various intervals until the service ended.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

1. He sets forth a very convincing treatise on the right of people to elect their own pastors. "Settlements have been made, not only without the call or consent of the people, but venitente and contradicento ecclesia; the body of people opposing, and sometimes giving their voice to others." Currie, JPD, op. cit., p. 5.

14. In 1643 the Church had asked the King to make it three, for they found it difficult to find six qualified men. This list came, for the most part, with the consent of the congregation, but it robbed the people of their right, for they might never get the person to whom they were inclined.

16. The dispatching of men to London to petition its repeal.

19. Clarkson accused the Commission of 1707 of "gross falsehood", in that it did not mention certain topics "whence the strongest arguments might have been drawn against it." PR, op. cit., p. 59.

41. These remarks are supported by such passages as I Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9; II Thessalonians 3:6,14; Acts 8:2; Jude 3; Philippians 1:27; Acts 15:24; Ephesians 4:31.

62. "A Defence of the Reformation Principles of the Church of Scotland. Wherein the Exceptions that are laid against the conduct of the Associate Presbytery, as also against their Judicial Act and Testimony, by the Rev. Mr. Currie in his Essay on Separation are examined; and the injurious reflections cast upon our reforming period from 1638-1650, in the foresaid Essay are discovered."

79. "...concerning separation, etc. In which the Essay on Separation is vindicated, and the arguments of the Rev. Mr. Wilson, for separation from this Established Church in his Defence, are considered, where sundry anti-Reformation principles, historical errors, etc., in that Defence are mentioned; and many things, neither truth nor matter of fact, in the Testimony of the Seceding Brethren, are discovered and collected. To which, in an appendix, a further argument against separation taken from the conduct of the famous martyr, Mr. James Guthrie, and other protestors in his day, is largely insisted upon. By the author of the Essay on Separation."

87. "...of the Reformation Principles of the Church of Scotland, wherein is shown that the Rev. Mr. Currie, in his late Vindication, has not entered into the argument for Secession, as is stated in the said Defence. Wherein also several questions relating to the present Secession are considered; particularly with respect to the management of the Judicatories in matters of doctrine, their tyranny in the administration, their like sentence against the Seceding ministers; Likewise, it is inquired, whether or not such as are imposed upon dissenting and reclaiming congregations ought to be received and acknowledged by the Church as lawful and sent Ministers of Christ."

90. "Let calls be given by whom they will, they are a robbing of the Lord's people, if ministers be placed over them against their will, through Magistrates, Heritors or Session." Currie, JPD, op. cit., p. 152.

94. The insinuations and calumnies of Currie were authorized by the Assembly, for, in the year 1740, he was given 60 Pounds to cover the cost of writing and publishing his works against the Seceders. Morren, AGA, p. 25, adds this: "for his writings published in vindication of this Church." The bitterness against Currie was rendered keener by this action.

## CHAPTER NINE

5. "Marjorie resembled an aged saint. Elizabeth, aged nine, asked her father to pray with her. 'Pray that I may be made sure of my interest in Christ; that I may have a safe passage to glory.'" Eadie, UPF, op. cit., p. 134.

6. When the Presbytery of Perth met, July 1, 1730, a certain Robert Gardiner produced a mandate and commission to cast a vote for Wilson as Minister of Rhynd. "Thereafter a list of heads of families in the Parish was given to the Committee and read, and all being satisfied with the same...then the roll of Heritors, Elders, Deacons, and Heads of families was called, and their votes marked. The said Mr. Wilson was elected and chosen (only one vote being cast for Mr. James Stewart). Then a call was produced, and blanks being filled up, it was read, and a Commission being drawn at the foot of the Call to persons to lay the Call before the Presbyterie, and to prosecute the same. Then the Call was attested in the presence of the meeting...

"They came to consider a paragraph in the Reasons of Transportation concerning Mr. Wilson's circumstances not being easy in some things...as also that another paragraph, that a town life is very prejudicial to his health...Presbyterie appointed the Clerk to transmit a copy of the Reasons to the town and parish of Perth, that they may prepare answers there-to...and another copy of the said Reasons of transportation to Mr. Wilson, and to issue forth a warrant likewise to the said Mr. Wilson to compear against our next Presbyterie that he may be heard as to what he has to say with respect to the said transportation...and further they agreed to call in Mr. Wilson and to put the call in his hand, and likewise to call in the parish of Rhynd, and all parties; which being accordingly done, the call was put into Mr. Wilson's hand by the Moderator, who having recorded it, gave it back to the Clerk to be kept..." MPP, op. cit., XII, p. 72.

On July 29, 1730, the Presbytery was informed by the Commission that copies of these Reasons were presented to the interested parties. "Then compeared Moncrieff of Rhynd, and those who were in Commission with him...and on the other hand compeared from the Town Council of Perth, Provost Brown and four Baillies, and from the Kirk Session of Perth, Mr. Thomas Black, as also a great many heads of families of the said Town and Parish against the transportation. And likewise compeared the Rev. Mr. William Wilson."

In the afternoon "compeared...many more heads of families from...Perth, to show their inclinations to have



Mr. Wilson continue their Pastor. All parties were heard declaring their minds on the matter, and were thereafter removed. The clause stating that Mr. Wilson's circumstances in Perth have not been made easie as to several things being considered, the Presbyterie appoint a Committee to confer with the three ministers of Perth and to report next Presbyterie Day in the presence of the three colleagues."

On the 6th of August, "compeared the Laird of Rhynd and his Commission," Mr. Black was absent because of the illness of his daughter, but Stewart and Wilson were present. "The representative of the Earl of Weymss (David Malcolm) read a letter from the Earl, stating that many of the parishoners of Rhynd had done contrary to his inclinations and the laws of the Established Church in presenting their call to Presbyterie...The Commissions of Rhynd and of Perth compeared, and having nothing to add, the vote was put and carried in the negative, - Not transport, but to continue Mr. Wilson in his pastoral charge at Perth." MPP, op. cit., XII, pp. 77-78.

11. Frances Collen, Dean of the Guild at Perth, left him many things, though it was a well accepted fact that her poor relatives could have used these articles.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ADDISON, WILLIAM, The Life and Writings of Thomas Boston of Ettrick. London: Oliver and Boyd, 1936.
- ANONYMOUS. A New and Full Vindication of the Seceding Brethren. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1740.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to the Rev. W m Wil n, Minister at P th. Edinburgh: James Jaffray, 1735.
- ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY. Act of the Associate Presbytery Concerning the Doctrine of Grace. Edinburgh: T. W. and T. Ruddimans, 1742.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The True State of the Process. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1733.
- ASSOCIATE SYNOD. The Re-exhibition of the Testimony. Glasgow: William Smith, 1779.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A Testimony of the Truths of Christ. Edinburgh: Balfour and Jack, 1839.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Testimony of the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church. Edinburgh: James Lothian, 1828.
- BAILLIE, ROBERT, Letters and Journals. Edited by Alexander Lowrie and Co., 2 Vols., Edinburgh: David Laing, 1841.
- BANNAYTNE, JAMES. A Full and True State of the Controversy Concerning the Marrow of Modern Divinity. Glasgow: John Bryce, 1773.
- \_\_\_\_\_. An Essay on Gospel and Legal Presching. Edinburgh: James Davidson, 1723.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Scope and Substance of the Marrow of Modern Divinity. Edinburgh: James McEwen, 1722.
- BARNETT, RADCLIFFE, Makers of the Kirk. Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1915.
- BEATON, D., Scottish Church History Society. London: Northern Counties Newspaper Printing and Publishing Co., 1929.



- BEATON, DONALD. "The Marrow of Modern Divinity and the Marrow Controversy". Records of the Scottish Church History Society. Vol. I, Part iii.
- BLAIR, WILLIAM. Religious Life in Scotland: From the Reformation to the Present Day. Edinburgh: T. Nelson and Sons, 1888.
- BLAIR, WILLIAM, Rev., D. D., The United Presbyterian Church: A Handbook of Its History and Principles. Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 17 Princes Street, 1888.
- BOSTON, THOMAS. The Marrow of Modern Divinity. Montrose: D. Buchanan, 1803.
- BRETHREN, THE FOUR. Review of the Narrative. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson. 1734.
- BROWN, JOHN. A General History of the Christian Church. Edinburgh: Gray and Alston, 1771.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Secession. Glasgow: Niven, Napier and Rhuss, 1802.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Gospel Truth. Glasgow: Niven, Napier and Rhuss, 1802.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Gospel Truth Stated and Illustrated. Glasgow: Blackie, Fullerton and Co., 1831.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Select Remains. London: J. Matthews, 1792.
- BROWN, P. HUME. Surveys of Scottish History. Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1919.
- BUCHAN, JOHN. The Kirk of Scotland. Edinburgh: W. F. Henderson, 1930.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Montrose. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1928.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Oliver Cromwell. London: Jonathan Cape and Co., 1934.
- BURGH MINUTES OF PERTH, 1742.
- BURNET, BISHOP. History of His Own Time. 6 Vols. Oxford: The University Press, 1833.

- BURNS, ROBERT. Lectures on the Headship of Christ. Glasgow: Walter Collins, 1841.
- CALEDONIAN MERCURY, THE. Edinburgh: Printed For and By Thomas and Walter Ruddimans.
- CALVIN, JOHN. Institutes of the Christian Religion. trans., Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936.
- CARRUTHERS, J. W. D., The Ter-Jubilee Book of the North Church of Perth. Perth: George Miller, 1898.
- CHAMBERS, ROBERT. Domestic Annals of Scotland. Edinburgh: W. and R. Chambers, 1861.
- CLARENDON, EDWARD, Earl of. History of the Rebellion. 6 Vols. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1807.
- CAMPBELL, ANDREW. Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland: 1707 - 1929. Paisley: Alexander Gardner, Ltd., 1930.
- CAMPBELL, WILLIAM. Seven Sermons. Glasgow: J. Bryce and D. Peterson, 1753.
- CLARKSON, ANDREW. Plain Reasons for Presbyterians' Dissenting. Edinburgh: James Jaffray, 1731.
- COWAN, SAMUEL. The Ancient Capital of Scotland. 3 Vols. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton Kent and Company, 1904.
- CRAIK, SIR HENRY. A Century of Scottish History. Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1901.
- CURRIE, JOHN. A Short Vindication of the Essay on Separation, Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1738.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. An Essay on Separation, Or, A Vindication of the Church of Scotland. Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1738.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. A Full Vindication of the People's Right to Elect Their Own Pastors. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1733.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. A Vindication of the Real Reformation Principles of the Church of Scotland. Edinburgh: H. Alison, 1740.

- CURRIE, JOHN. The Defection of the Church of Scotland From Her Reformation Principles: A Protest. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1733.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Jus Populi Divinium, Or, The People's Right To Elect Their Pastors. Edinburgh: William Brown, 1727.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Plain Perjury and Great Iniquity. Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1744.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Plain Reasons for a New Secession. Edinburgh: John Paton, 1747.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Queries Anent the Assembly's Overture, 1731. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1732.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Search. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1734.
- CUNNINGHAM, JOHN. The Church History of Scotland. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1930.
- DAVIDSON, Prof. FRANCIS. History and Doctrine of the Original Secession Church. Edinburgh: W. F. Henderson, 1930.
- DICKENS, CHARLES. Child's History of England. Collin's Classical Edition. London: Methuen and Co., 1901.
- DUNCAN, HENRY. Patronage and Calls. Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1834.
- EADIE, JOHN. United Presbyterian Fathers. Edinburgh: A. Fullerton and Co., 1849.
- FAIRBAIRN, ANDREW. Place of Christ in Modern Theology. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1893.
- FERRIER, ANDREW. "The Canadian Presbyterian Magazine". August, 1851.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Memoirs of the Reverend William Wilson. Glasgow: Robertson and Atkinson, 1830.
- FERGUSON, ALEXANDER. A Display of the Act and Testimony. Glasgow: James Know, 1761.
- FRASER, DONALD. The Life and Diary of Ebenezer Erskine. Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1831.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Life and Diary of Ralph Erskine. Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Son, 1834.



- FRASER, JAMES. Lawfulness and Duty of Separation From  
Corrupt Ministers and Churches. Edinburgh: W. Mackay,  
1905.
- GENERAL ASSOCIATE SYNOD. A Narrative of the State of Religion. Edinburgh: Adam Neill and Co., 1803.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Narrative and Testimony. Edinburgh:  
Neill and Co., 1817.
- GIB, ADAM. Declaration and Testimony. Edinburgh: A. Brown,  
1786.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Display of the Secession Testimony. 2 Vols.  
Edinburgh: R. Fleming and A. Neill, 1774.
- GRAHAM, HENRY. Social Life in Scotland in the Eighteenth  
Century. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1901.
- GRUB, GEORGE. Ecclesiastical History of Scotland. 4 Vols.  
Edinburgh: Edmanston and Douglas, 1861.
- HADOW, JAMES. The Record of God and the Duty of Faith.  
Edinburgh: James Mosman and Co., 1721.
- HASTIE, WILLIAM. Theology of the Reformation Church.  
Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1904.
- HENDERSON, G. D., Heritage: A Study of the Disruption.  
Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, Ltd., 1943.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Religious Life in Seventeenth Century  
Scotland. Cambridge: University Press, 1937.
- HETHERINGTON, W. M., History of the Church of Scotland.  
Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1842.
- HOG, JAMES. An Explication of Passages Excepted Against In  
The Marrow of Modern Divinity. Edinburgh: Thomas  
Lumisden and John Robertson, 1718.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Marrow of Modern Divinity. Edinburgh:  
Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1718.
- HORN, D. B., Scottish Diplomats: 1689-1789. London:  
P. S. King and Staples, Ltd., 1944.
- HUNT, COLIN. Origin of the Secession in Perth. Edinburgh:  
James Gemmell, 1733.

- HUNTER, MITCHELL. Teaching of Calvin. Glasgow: MacLehose, Jackson and Co., 1920.
- HUTCHINSON, MATTHEW. The Reformed Presbyterian Church. Paisley: J. and R. Parlane, 1890.
- HUNTER, THOMAS. St. John's Kirk, Perth. Perth: Thomas Hunter and Sons, 1932.
- JAFFRAY, ROBERT. An Essay on the Reasons of Secession From the National Church. Kilmarnock: H. and S. Crawford, 1803.
- KEITH, JOHN. The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1839.
- KIRKTON, JOHN. Secret and True History of the Church of Scotland. Edinburgh: C. K. Sharpe, 1817.
- LANDRETH, Rev. R. The United Presbyterian Divinity Hall. Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Co., 1876.
- LAWSON, JOHN. A Letter to the Reverend Mr. W. W. Glasgow: Andrew Stalker, 1741.
- LECKIE, J. H. Secession Memories. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1926.
- LEE, JOHN. History of the Church of Scotland. Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1860.
- LEE, SIDNEY. Dictionary of National Biography. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1909.
- LOFTHOUSE, W. F. Teaching of Calvin. London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1934.
- LOGAN, GEORGE. A Continuation of the Modest and Humble Inquiry. Edinburgh: Gavin Hamilton, 1733.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. A Modest and Humble Inquiry. Edinburgh: Gavin Hamilton, 1732.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. The Public Testimony Made More Public. Edinburgh: Gavin Hamilton, 1733.
- MACAULEY, LORD. History of England. London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1913.

- MAC EWEN, A.R. The Erskines. Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1900.
- MAC KELVIE, Rev. WILLIAM. Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church. Edinburgh: Oliphant and Co., 1873.
- MAC KENZIE, AGNES MURE. The Kingdom of Scotland. London: Alexander MacLehose and Co., 1936.
- MAC KINNON, JAMES. Calvin and the Reformation. London: Oliphants, Ltd., 1936.
- MAC LEAN, DONALD. The Counter-Reformation in Scotland. London: James Clarke and Co., Ltd., 1931.
- MAC LEOD, JOHN. Theology in the Early Days of the Secession. Records of the Scottish Church Historical Society. Vol. VIII, Part 1. 1942.
- MAC PHERSON, HECTOR. The Covenanters Under Persecution. Edinburgh: W. F. Henderson, 1923.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. The Political Ideals of the Covenanters: 1660-1688. Records of the Scottish Church History Society. Vol. I. Part 4. 1926.
- MAC PHERSON, JOHN. A History of the Church in Scotland. Paisley: Alexander, 1901.
- MARSHALL, THOMAS HAY. The History of Perth. Perth: John Fisher, 1849.
- MASSON, DAVID. The Life of Milton. London: MacMillan and Co., 1880.
- MATHIESON, WILLIAM LAW. Politics and Religion. Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1902.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Scotland and the Union. Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905.
- M'CRIE, THOMAS. Sketches of Scottish Church History. Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1846.
- M'CRIE, C. G., Church of Scotland: Divisions and Reunions. Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1901.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. The Marrow of Modern Divinity. Glasgow: David Bryce and Sons, 1902.



- M'CRIE, CHARLES G. Scotland's Part in the Revolution of 1688. Edinburgh: Andrew Elliott, 1888.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Studies in Scottish Ecclesiastical Biography. Edinburgh: Andrew Elliott, 1885.
- MILLER, GEORGE, AND, SANDEMAN, ROBERT. Copy of A Letter to Mr. W W. Edinburgh: James Davidson, 1738.
- MINUTES OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY, CHURCH OF SCOTLAND. Vols. XIX and XX.
- MINUTES OF SYNOD OF PERTH AND STIRLING. Vols. IV, V, and VI.
- MINUTES OF PRESBYTERY OF DUNFERMLINE. Vol. IV.
- MINUTES OF PRESBYTERY OF PERTH. Vols. VIII and IX.
- MINUTES OF SAINT JOHN'S CHURCH, PERTH.
- MINUTES OF WILSON CHURCH.
- M' KERROW, JOHN. History of the Secession Church. Glasgow: A. Fullerton and Co., 1841.
- MONCRIEFF, ALEXANDER. A Review and Examination of Some Principles Laid Down by the Reverend Mr. Campbell. Edinburgh: R. Fleming and Co., 1736.
- MONCRIEFF, HENRY WELLWOOD. A Vindication of the Free Church Claim of Right. Edinburgh: MacLaren and MacNiven, 1877.
- MONCRIEFF, LORD JAMES. "Church and State". art. Church and State From the Reformation. Edinburgh: MacNiven and Wallace, 1883.
- MORISON, JAMES. Present Duty: Treatises Relating to Covenant Renovation. Edinburgh: Neill and Co., 1789.
- MORREN, NATHANIEL. Annals of the General Assembly. Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1838.
- MORRISON, GEORGE H. Memoirs of the Life, Time and Writings of the Rev. Thomas Boston. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1899.
- MURRAY, GEORGE. Christ's Loveliness. Glasgow: John Bryce, 1759.
- NICOLL, JOHN. Scottish Diaries and Memoirs. Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1836.

- OGLE, J., and GUTHRIE, J. The Memoirs of Thomas Hog. Edinburgh: A. Bruce, 1798.
- POLLARD, ALBERT F., History of England. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910.
- RAINY, ROBERT. Three Lectures on the Church of Scotland. Edinburgh: John MacLaren, 1872.
- RAIT, ROBERT S. "The History of Scotland" Home University Library. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1914.
- RANDALL, THOMAS. Tracts Concerning Patronage. Edinburgh: W. Gray, 1770.
- RICCALTOUN, ROBERT. The Controversie Concerning the Marrow of Modern Divinity. Edinburgh: James Davidson, 1723.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. A Review of an Essay on Gospel and Legal Preaching. Edinburgh: John M'Ewen, 1723.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. A Sober Inquiry into the Grounds of the Present Differences in the Church of Scotland. Edinburgh: John M'Ewen, 1723.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Works. Edinburgh: A. Murray and J. Cochran, 1771.
- ROSE, JOHN D. Scotland's True Glory. Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, Ltd., 1940.
- SCOTT, HEW. Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1923.
- SCOTT, WALTER. Tales of A Grandfather. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1889.
- SHIELDS, MICHAEL. Collection of Letters From 1663-1689. Glasgow: Robert and Thomas Duncan, 1780.
- SMALL, Rev. ROBERT. History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church From 1733-1900. Edinburgh: David M. Small, 3 Howard Street, 1904.
- SMITH, GOLDWIN. The United Kingdom. London: David Nutt, 1900.
- SOCIETY FOR THE LIBERATION OF RELIGION FROM STATE PATRONAGE AND CONTROL. The Scottish Kirk: History, Past Position. London: Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street, 1870.

- STORY, ROBERT HERBERT. The Church of Scotland. London: William MacKenzie, 69 Ludgate Hill, 1889.
- STRATHESK, JOHN. Elder Logan's Story. Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1879.
- STRUTHERS, JOHN. The History of Scotland. Glasgow: Blackie, Fullerton and Co., 1828.
- SYNOD OF UNITED ORIGINAL SECEDERS. Testimony to the Truths of Christ. Edinburgh: Balfour and Jack, 1844.
- TAIT, JAMES. Two Centuries of Border Church Life. Kelso: J. and J. H. Rutherford, 1889.
- THOMSON, Rev. ANDREW. Historical Sketch of the Origin of the Secession Church. Edinburgh: Fullerton and Co., 1848.
- THOMSON, G. M. Short History of Scotland. London: Charles Sanford Terry, 1921.
- TINDAL, MATTHEW. Christianity As Old As Creation. London: 1732.
- WALKER, JAMES. The Lheology and Theologians of Scotland. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1872.
- WALKER, PATRICK. Six Saints of the Covenant. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1901.
- WALKER, WILLISTON. John Calvin. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906.
- WARDLAW, RALPH. A Lecture: The Headship of Christ. Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1847.
- WARR, CHARLES. The Presbyterian Tradition. London: Alexander Maclehorse and Co., 1933.
- WARRICK, JOHN. The Moderators of the Church of Scotland. Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1913.
- WATSON, JOHN. The Scot in the Eighteenth Century. London: Hodder and Stoughton, n. d.
- WEBSTER, JAMES. The Two Great Promises of the Covenant of Grace. Edinburgh: David Duncan, 1720.



WILSON, JOHN. The Presbytery of Perth. Perth: Mrs. C. Paton, 1860.

WILSON, WILLIAM. A Continuation of The Defence of the Reformation Principles of the Church of Scotland. Glasgow: Joseph Galbraith, 1769.

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. A Defence of the Reformation Principles of the Church of Scotland. Glasgow: Joseph Galbraith, 1769.

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. A Description of the True Nature of Schism. Edinburgh: James Jaffray, 1733.

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. A Letter From A Member of the Secession Presbytery to A Minister in the Presbytery of D \_\_\_\_\_ ne. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1738.

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. A Vindication and Defence of the Christian People's Divine Right to Choose Their Own Ministers. Edinburgh: James Jaffray, 1735.

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and MONCRIEFF, ALEXANDER. The Representations to the Commission of the Late General Assembly. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1733.

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Sermons.

The Blessedness Lost in the First Adam to be Found in Christ The Second Adam. Edinburgh: Adam Duncan, 1747.

The Watchman's Duty and Desire. Edinburgh: David Duncan, 1747.

The Church's Extremity: Christ's Opportunity. Edinburgh: David Duncan, 1747.

The Day of a Sinner's Believing in Christ A Most Remarkable Day. Edinburgh: David Duncan, 1742.

The Evening Time of the Church of Christ Issuing In Light. Edinburgh: W. Chyne, 1743.

The Father's Promise to the Son, A Clear Bow in the Church's Dark Cloud. Edinburgh: David Duncan, 1747.

The Lamb's Retinue Attending Him Whithersoever He Goeth. Edinburgh: David Duncan, 1747.

- Stedfastness in the Faith. Edinburgh:  
Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1738.
- WILLIAMSON, JOHN. A Seasonable Testimony. Edinburgh: James  
Davidson, 1738.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Reasons Against the Restoration of Pro-  
fessor Simson. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John  
Robertson, 1739.
- WILLISON, JOHN. The Church's Danger and the Minister's Duty.  
Glasgow: James Duncan, 1733.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Fair and Impartial Testimony. Glasgow: John  
Finley Wright, 1765.
- WISHART, WILLIAM. A Short and Impartial State of the Case  
of Mr. John Simson. Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and  
John Robertson, 1729.
- WODROW, ROBERT. Analecta. 4 Vols. Edinburgh: Edinburgh  
Printing Co., 1843.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. Correspondence. 3 Vols. Edinburgh:  
Edinburgh Printing Co., 1843.
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. History of the Sufferings of the Church of  
Scotland. 4 Vols. Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1828.
- WOODSIDE, DAVID. The Soul of the Scottish Church. Edin-  
burgh: United Free Church of Scotland, 1930.