

**LIBER REDIVIVUS: OR, THE
BOOKE
OF THE UNIVERSALL
KIRKE RE-OPENED**

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Liber Redivivus: Or, the Booke of the Universall Kirke Re-Opened by D. Aitchison

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D. AITCHISON

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LIBER REDIVIVUS:

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OF

THE UNIVERSALL KIRKE

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RE-OPENED.

BY A PRESBYTER.

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TO THE READER.

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD, Professor of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews, wrote a book in 1649, "Against pretended Liberty of Conscience," containing many pertinent remarks touching unity; in page 392 of which, the learned Professor thus discourseth,—“And what is the quarrell, but divers religions and waies of worship about Christ? St. Paul exhorteth to christian peace, indeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, not because of contrary religions and many sectaries, called the holy partie, that are to bee tolerated in meeknesse and mutuall forbearance: but because there is but one Lord, one faith, one baptisme, and but one religion, whether Presbyteriall or Independent, and since the apostles and Christ in the New Testament so often recommend peace, and never once insinnate forbearance in diversitie of religion, and all the apostles and apostolike church had but one religion; toleration of many religions not being

a part of the New Testament liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, as is the libertie from ceremonies and righteousnesse by the law, that the foolish Galatians affected, Gal. v. 1, 2; we conclude there is a law against Toleration of many religions, not any repeating of that law in the New Testament, but divers religions expressly forbidden as contrary to peace, and foretold to fall out as sad judgments." Doubtless our Professor was a wise man in his generation, and a learned, but his censure anent Toleration is rather strong meat for weak stomachs, and difficult of digestion in these days of civil and religious liberty; it savours, too, somewhat of the Vatican. But his commendations of unity are right wholesome and highly to be praised. Wherefore, reader, if you be an admirer of that luminary of the Universall Kirke, you will not fall out with the exhortations to unity contained in this little book. That all may be persuaded to peace and unity, not by the sword of intolerance but by the sword of the Spirit, is the earnest prayer of the author.

W^HEN a christian traveller journeying in the east, where once flourished the churches founded by St. Paul, to discover in some depopulated regions the ruins of a noble temple of the Lord of Hosts, melancholy musings would fill his mind as he surveyed the wreck of the sacred edifice, where the faithful in the olden time had worshipped the Triune God; and in the mouldering fragments which lay upon the ground, he would see the accomplishment of the threat denounced by the Spirit to the angel of the church of Ephesus,—“ Repent and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” And can the christian pilgrim, in this his native land, witness without heartfelt emotions the decay of pure religion, the wreck and ruin of the holy and united household of faith, so beautifully described by St. Paul to the Ephesians. “ Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and

are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly joined together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit."

With this description of the household of God, on the one hand, and on the other, the scattered and dismantled fabric which we see before our eyes in this country, there is a mighty difference.

We see various structures raised for religious purposes. In some the doctrine of universal redemption is taught; in others particular redemption, election, and reprobation. In some the divinity of Christ is maintained, in others it is denied. In some an apostolic priesthood is deemed essential, in others it is thought that any man may take this honour unto himself. These facts are as notorious as that the sun shineth in the firmament of heaven, yet, notorious though they be, they are viewed with indifference, and people hardly think it worth their while to inquire which is the church which the Lord hath founded. Is it not of serious importance to know whether we be in the faith, and whether we continue in the apostles' fellowship, as well as doctrine? All cannot be right, because all are at variance. To me, I must confess, it is a subject of grave and

anxious consideration; and feeling how weighty a matter it is to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, I am desirous of drawing your attention to it, that you, through the blessing of Almighty God, may discover the true church here on earth.

The first commission given by their divine master to the holy apostles ran thus :—" Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The blessed gospel of eternal life, was, according to the wisdom and goodness of God, to be proclaimed first to the children of the promise, the stock of Abraham; but they to whom it was offered having rejected the glad tidings, the apostles were then commanded to turn to the Gentiles. They were commanded to preach the gospel to every creature. The Lord Jesus, very God of very God, having accomplished the object of his earthly mission, and having made a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, by the sacrifice of himself upon the altar of the cross, and being about to return to his throne on high, to resume the glory he had with the Father before the world was made, gave to the apostles whom he had chosen, authority and power to raise up into a goodly and firmly compacted structure the

church which he had planted. This second commission was of the most ample kind—"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you, and when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said, whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." This gift of the Spirit was essential for the work of the ministry. For at the baptism of Jesus the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in bodily shape like a dove; now, as in Christ Jesus dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, this visible descent could not have been caused by any imperfection of His nature, but as a sign or seal to the world of his ministry, and in testimony that God was with Him. So, likewise the same Spirit fell upon the apostles in bodily shape, that the world might believe that God had sent them, even so, and in like manner, as he had sent His beloved Son. And as the chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls was sent to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel, so the holy apostles were commissioned for the same purpose, and also to the whole world: "and God," saith St. Paul to the Ephesians, "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the