

REASONS

FOR

A GENERALL

ASSEMBLIE.

HEBR. X. 25.

*Forsake not the assembling of your selves together:
as the manner of some is. &c.*



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REASONS FOR A generall Assemblie.

GOD by the light of Nature informing all persons and societies to studie their owne preservation, teacheth also the particular kirkes of a Nation, as the members of one bodie, to draw together into a consociation, or representative meeting, for the preservation of the whole, which cannot bee sufficiently procured by the particular care of Sessions, Presbyteries and Synods; they being but parts thereof, and no more independent and absolute in themselves then particular corporations civile are in respect of the whole kingdome: So that by Natures light, the Parliament is not more necessarie for the estates of a kingdome, then is a nationall Assemblie for the particular kirks of a kingdome.

The Sonne of God, the King and Head of his Kirk, hath graciously promised, where two or three are gathered together in His Name, there Hee will bee amongst the mids of them; which doeth als well prove the Divine originall of nationall Assemblies to be kepted in the case of the urgent necessitie of the Kirk, as of other inferior meetings of the Kirk: And therefore the Councils of old used this for their warrand, and the Fathers being conveyed in Councils, used to pray for

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the presence and assistance of Christ upon this ground of his gracious promise.

The holy Ghost filling the hearts of the Apostles, moved them to convene in a councell at *Jerusalem Act: 15.* Whether also did resort the Apostle *Paul*, by revelation at the same time, *Gal: 2. 1.* For keeping that Assemblie, as both ancient and moderne Divines observe upon that place; for which cause, and for the assistance of the Spirit which brought them together, they were confident to give out their determination in this manner: It seemed good to the holy Ghost, & to us.

The Christian kirk directed by the light of nature, confident of the promise of Christ, and warranted by the divine practise of the Apostles, hath in all ages, even when shee was persecute by the powers of the world, used this as the ordinarie and necessary meane for uniforme establishing of Religion and Piety, for censuring of Heresie, and for removing of scandals, and such other evils as by Divine providence and prediction must be, and would certainly bring division, and desolation upon the kirk, if by this powerfull remeady they were not cured and prevented. Both Popish and reformed Divines agree in this truth: That although God by his omnipotencie, or by way of miracle may preserve his kirk on earth without Assemblies, yet in the ordinary providence of God, Assemblies are necessary for the right governing and well being of the kirk.

2. According to this Divine right the Kirk of *Scotland* kepted her generall assemblies with great evidence of the presence and blessing of God from heaven; For while they continued in their strength (far contrary to that which we have seene of late) the doctrine was
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by them preserved against error and heresie, the worship was kept pure against superstition and idolatrie; the Discipline was holden in integritie against confusion and tyrannie; unities & peace was entertained against schisme and division; pietie and learning were advanced against profanitie and idleness, every man had his gift stirred up and increased, every gift was made use of as it might serve for the good of the kirk, and all went from these assemblies with fresh resolutions, and fervent zeale for the worke of God in their particular places.

The libertie of this kirk for holding assemblies was also acknowledged, and ratified by acts of Parliament, as is manifest by the letter sent from the Assemblies to the Earle of *Morton* than Regent, in March 1573. And by the act of Parliament in the year 1592. For such necessary causes as are exprest in these acts, which being neglected, religion could not be preserved. King *James*, as at diverse other times, so by his Commissioners at *Lithgow*, in the year 1606. did acknowledge that the keeping of generall assemblies was the most necessary meane for preservation of pietie and union, and for extermination of heresie and schisme, and therefore willed that the act of Parliament for conveneing the generall Assemblie once in the year should stand in force. The prelates themselves in their assemblie at *Glasgow* 1610. expressly acknowledged, that the necessity of the Kirk did require yearly generally assemblies, and the act of that assemblie did suppose and import the same: for by the Act they were made lyable to the censure of the generall Assembly in their life, office, & benefice in generall, and in some particulars specified therein, as that of the processe of excommunication.

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The causes noted by Divines for the utilitie and necessitie of Councils are many, As 1. For suppressing heresie & controversies about points of doctrine: 2. For redressing abuses and enormities: 3. For appointing, restoring, or preserving the Discipline of the Kirk: 4. For the peace of the Kirk and for unitie: 5. For the mutuall comfort and benefite which the Godly may finde in their meetings, by stirring up, and acquainting one another with the state of their particular kirks: 6. For the confirmation of doubting mindes in the trueth: 7. For keeping faithfull Pastors in their places, thurst out by their adversaries, perturbers of the Kirk: 8. For punishing of hereticks, or such as introduce novations in the Kirk. Any one of those may bee a sufficient cause of conveening a generall assembly: But at this time not one or two, but all of them in a concurse may bee heard, crying for so necessarie a remeadie: For 1. The doctrine is corrupted by *Arminianisme* and Popish errors. 2. Abuses and enormities through the government of prelates are multiplied: 3. The Discipline of this Kirk established, by the acts of assemblies and by solemne oath, is not only perverted, but overturned: 4. Peace and unitie in the Kirk is turned into schisme and division, by the adversaries, who have minded nothing but their worldly peace, and increase of their dignities: 5. Bretheren of the Ministerie are become strangers one to another, their mindes filled with suspitions, and none of them bettered by another, more then if they were Ministers in fundrie kingdomes: 6. Many of the people have for a long time doubted of their religion, not knowing what hand to turne to, when they found
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such diversitie of opinions amongst Pastors. 7. Faithfull Pastors have beene thrust out of their Ministerie through usurpation of the prelates and their adherents, who take the greater libertie, and boldnesse to smite their Fellow-servants, that there bee no generall Assemblies to controule or censure them. 8. *Arminian* and popish teachers both in Kirks and schooles are rather rewarded and preferred, then censured and controlled: And therefore except Wee will suffer religion to expire, and the Kirk of Christ to perish by consumption or by combustion, Wee must resolve upon the necessitie of generall Assemblies.

Objections answered.

THE name of the Kirk belongs to the prelates, and the meeting of Our prelates for matters of religion is the representative Kirk of this kingdome. Object. 1.

The prelates cannot bee our representative Kirke: Ans. 1.

1. Because they are not office-bearers of this Kirke, which since the time that the office of bishops was abolished, hath never to this day acknowledged any such office, as is now exerced by them.
2. Although the office of our prelates had beene received by this Kirk, yet can they not bee esteemed the Kirk representative, since both in the Apostolick councill, *Acts* 15. and in many other counsels afterward, Presbyters had their voices, and the spirits of the Prophets must be subject to all such as by gifts and calling are prophes.
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3. Because they have no more warrand by the lawes of the countrey and Acts of the Kirk to represent the Kirk, then some few citizens, turning robbers, have to represent the corporation of the city, or some small faction ryding in a kingdome against the fundamentall lawes, to represent the whole kingdome, or an impostume growing on the bodie, and making it diseased and monstrous to represent the bodie: 4. It is manifest by the acts of Parliament and Assemblies, that this kirk and kingdome never acknowledged any other kirk representative since the reformation, but the generall Assemblie orderly constitute of Commissioners, chosen and delegate for that effect. 2. The Service book, and new Canons represent to all men, what conclusions wee may looke for from the prelates, if they were acknowledged to bee the kirk representative: And Wee may safely say of them, if they were the kirk representative, what is by all our Divines affirmed of the Romane representative kirk, made up of the members of the Romane hierarchie, that it cannot be the true kirk.

Obj^{ct}. Where the Christian kirk liveth under an unchristian Magistrate, Assemblies of the kirk must bee keeped, (according to the custome of the kirk for many yeares) without the consent of the Magistrate: But where the Kirke liveth under a Christian Magistrate, so that the kirke and Commonwealth make but one corporation; the Assemblies of the kirk must depend upon the indiction of the Prince or Magistrate, who is the head of the republick, and the principall member of the kirk.

Ans. I. Wee humbly acknowledge that the supreme Magistrate hath power to indict the Assemblies of the Kirk,

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kirk, and when in his wisdome he thinketh it convenient, he may by his authoritie conveene assemblies of all sorts, whether generall, provinciall, presbytries, or kirk Sessions: But the question is, whether he may prohibite or impede them, when the necessities of the Kirk evidently call for them. 2. No man will thinke that a republick, becoming a Christian Kirk, should losse any of her civile liberties, why then shall a kirk being in her selfe a perfect republicke, although of another kinde, because shee now lives under a Christian Magistrate, losse her priviledges, or suffer diminution in her Christian liberty, whereof the holding of assemblies is a necessary part: 3. When the Christian Magistrate either forbiddeth, or in the urgent necessity of the Kirk forbearth to conveene Assemblies, in this point the Kirk is left to her own libertie, and must provide for her own safetie. 4. The great wisdome of Iesus Christ, the King of the Kirk, hath provided sufficient supplies for all her necessities, and fitting remedies for all her evils, of which there be many that cannot be helped without generall Assemblies; and therefore, not only the Christian Prince, but the pastors of the Kirk, especially when the indiction cannot be obtained of the Prince, are bound as they will answer to Christ to provide that the Ecclesiasticke republick receive no detriment, and to esteeme the safetie of the Kirk to be the supreme law.

Although the libertie of the Kirk for holding assemblies once in the year at least, and oftener pro re nata, be ratified in the Parliament 1592. yet the act of Parliament 1612. acknowledgeth the indiction of the generall assemblies to

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pertaine to his Majesty by the prerogative of his royall crowne, and therefore abrogates the former act.

God forbid that any man should be so impious, as to thinke that his Majesties royall prerogative doth containe or import any thing contrarie to the royall prerogative of Christ, by whom Kings reigne, or to the liberties granted to the Christian Kirk, whose nurse fathers Kings on earth must be; the matter therefore may be easily salved without wrong to the Kings Majesty, or to Iesus Christ the King of Kings, and to his Kirk by this threefold distinction. The first which is used in the point of calling Assemblies both by Popish and reformed Divines, putteth a difference betweene a solemne and publicke indiction, *Via citationis ac publica authorizationis*, by way of citation or compulsion by authoritie; and betweene a voluntarie meeting, *Per viam admonitionis ac requisitionis*, by way of Christian admoniton or advertiement; the former is so proper to the King by his prerogative, that it can neither be given to the Pope, nor to any forraine power, nor without usurpation can be claimed by any of his Majesties Subjects. *Moses* only may blow the trumpet; The other is proper to the Kirk and her office-bearers, which neither is, nor can be taken from her by any Act of Parliament. Secondly we are to distinguish betweene a cumulative or rather a positive power of calling Assemblies, and betweene a privative or destructive power; The former is acknowledged by the Act of Parliament to belong to the King, who being *Custos utriusque tabule*, may, and ought, *pro re nata*, call the assemblies of the Kirk, but the other cannot be meant in the act of Parliament 1612. 1. Because it doeth
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not confer any new power, but only declareth *quo jure* his former power of indicting (which is only set down in the act 1592.) doth appertaine to him: 2. Because in the act 1592. it was found that the Kings power of indicting generall assemblies, and that by vertue of his prerogative royall, might consist with this native libertie of the Church, to appoint the time and place of her necessare assemblies, in case of the Kings not using his prerogative by appointing them: And the act of the Kings prerogative was declared to containe no derogation to the liberties and priviledges granted by God to his Church, whereof the libertie of generall assemblies is there acknowledged to be one. 3. Because although *Cujus est nolle, ejus est & velle*, it is not alwayes reciprocal, *Cujus est velle, ejus est & nolle*, and 4. because the act of *Glasgow* assemblée, whereof the act of Parliament is ratificatorie, acknowledgeth the necessitie of yearlie generall assemblies.

Thirdlie, We must observe the difference betwixt the indiction, or calling of assemblies considered absolutelie, and in respect of the circumstances of time and place, *Indictio simpliciter*, and *secundum quid*, the act of Parliament intendeth no further but touching the circumstance of the place, as in what town the assemblée shall convene, and of the time in what Moneth of the year, and what day of the moneth, as is evident by the act of 1592. which giveth this libertie of time and place to the assemblée, when the Kings Majestie or his Commissioner doth not appoint them.

F I N I S.