

ACT

OF THE

ASSOCIATE SYNOD OF NORTH AMERICA,

FOR A

PUBLIC FAST.

Philadelphia, May 23d, 1808.

THE ASSOCIATE SYNOD, taking into their serious consideration the manifold evidences of God's controversy with the inhabitants of the land, with his professing people, and more especially with the Secession-body, agreed to call upon all under their inspection to essay the exercise of **HUMILIATION, FASTING** and **PRAYER**, for such reasons as the following :

The great prevalence of PRACTICAL ATHEISM. Many declare that they have no suitable sense or impression of the being of God, by their speaking of his perfections, works or worship, in a profane, careless, or contemptuous manner, and by living securely in open breaches of his law.

Many openly reject the word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and others who profess to receive it, neither consult it in secret nor read it in their families. Persons attending on public Ordinances too commonly neglect to carry their Bibles along with them ; which gives too much reason to fear that they have little concern to receive the word which they hear, not as the word of men, but as the word of God. The Lord hath written to us the great things of his law, but they are strange things to multitudes in this land. The Lord has in a great measure the same grounds of controversy with these United States, that he had with Israel of old, there being a great deficiency of truth, mercy and knowledge of God in the land.

GROSS IMMORALITIES abound, such as swearing in common conversation, Sabbath breaking, sinful diversions, lying, fraud in civil dealings, oppression, particularly in the perpetual slavery of the negroes.

LAWs, in some instances, are made by our civil rulers without a due regard to the word of God; and laws in force against vice and immorality are not faithfully executed.

The greatest absurdities, contradictions, and falsehoods are propagated as the doctrines of the Scriptures, through the ignorance or base designs of persons pretending to be teachers sent from God: and even among those that profess adherence to the confession of the churches of the Reformation, many deny that the offer of Christ in the gospel to sinners is free and unconditional, or that they have an immediate warrant to trust in him for all their salvation; while others deny man's natural inability to believe in Christ to the saving of the soul.

Some deny the Divine right of Presbyterial church government, and others who professedly own its Divine right, trample upon it in their practice.

THE LUKEWARMNESS of many professing to be witnesses against the corruptions of the church of God is lamentable. Many of them shew, that they are not duly established in the present truth, by the entertainment they give to the opposite errors when presented to them under some plausible appearance. Some will not be convinced of the inconsistency, however glaring, between their declared adherence to a testimony for truth, and their attending on the public administrations of such as are in a stated opposition to that testimony. There appears also to be a prevailing backwardness to the duty of Covenanting. While on the one hand there is too little concern among church members to attain a competent knowledge of the several articles of their profession; yet, on the other hand, many discover much spiritual pride on account of that profession, and value themselves upon their external church privileges.

Many in the communion of the Secession church are chargeable with a criminal neglect of the duties of religion, or with great formality and indifference in the performance of them. Family worship is often neglected, particularly in the morning,

or hurried over in a careless unprofitable manner. Family instruction is also greatly neglected: hence ignorance of our holy religion prevails among young people: hence their little acquaintance with the Bible, and our subordinate standards. The restraining of prayer to God in secret is chargeable in a great degree on many professors. Fasting is not duly observed: it is indeed little more than a name.

The commendable practice of attending on Sacramental occasions in neighbouring congregations is much on the decline, and there appears to be a prevailing neglect of the means of preparing for the near approach which we make to God on these occasions; a great neglect of solemn prayer, meditation, and self-examination. The practice of church members meeting privately for prayer and conference about the things of God, is become rare.

There is a great decline of mutual love among professors: they are often engaged in quarrels and vexatious law-suits, untender of the good name of others, whisperers, tale-bearers, &c.

For these and many other reasons, particularly those specified in the Acknowledgment of Sins, prefixed to the Bond for renewing our solemn covenant-engagements, the Synod call upon all under their inspection, to engage in the exercise of **HUMILIATION, FASTING, and PRAYER**, with the eye of faith fixed on Jesus the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, earnestly beseeching the Lord, that for his sake he would blot out as a thick cloud our transgressions, and as a cloud our sins:

That he would heal our backslidings, and stir us up to be watchful, and to strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die:

That he would support a testimony for the truth, and defeat all the opposition that is made to it, whether by avowed enemies or professed friends.

That he would graciously bless his own Ordinances, both teaching and sealing, and make them effectual for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and for the edification and comfort of believers.

That he would bless this Synod and subordinate judicatures, and all the congregations under their inspection; and also provide pastors according to his heart for the vacancies, seeking the dispensation of Ordinances :

That he would bless those that are prosecuting their studies with a view to the office of the ministry; and his servant employed in directing their studies :

That he would bless the General Associate Synod, enabling them to faithfulness in holding the testimony of Jesus Christ :

That he would bless the President of the United States, and all in lawful authority over us; grant our civil Rulers the spirit of wisdom, guiding them to such measures as may be for the public interest, especially in the present critical and alarming state of the nation; avert the calamities of war from this country, and put an end to such calamities in foreign nations.

That he would pour out his Spirit abundantly, as a Spirit of faith, repentance and reformation, upon all the reformed churches; restoring their first love, and purging them from the remainders of antichristian superstition :

That he would hasten the total overthrow of the Antichristian and Mahometan kingdoms, the restoration of the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles, and the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for the complete and everlasting salvation of his people.

The Synod appoint the 2d Thursday of November next to be observed in all the Congregations and Vacancies under their inspection, accordingly.

Extracted by

FRANCIS PRINGLE, Syn. Ck.

☞ Next meeting of Synod to be held at Philadelphia, the third Wednesday of May, 1809,—6 o'clock, P. M.