

The Biography of James Renwick

An Excerpt from *Biographia Scoticana* by John Howie

MR. JAMES RENWICK was born in the parish of Glencairn in Nithsdale, Feb. 15, 1662. His parents though not rich, yet were exemplary for piety. His father Andrew Renwick (a weaver to trade) and his mother Elizabeth Corsan, had several children before Mr. James, who died young; for which when his mother was pouring forth her motherly grief, her husband used to comfort her with declaring, that he was well satisfied to have children, whether they lived or died, young or old, providing they might be heirs of glory. But with this she could not attain to be satisfied, but had it for her exercise to seek a child from the Lord, that might not only be an heir of glory, but might live to serve him in his generation: whereupon when Mr. James was born, she took it as an answer of prayer, and reputed herself under manifold engagements to dedicate him to the Lord, who satisfied her with very early evidences of his accepting that return of his own gift, and confirmed the same with very remarkable appearances of his gracious dealings with the child. For, by the time he was two years of age, he was observed to be aiming at prayer even in the cradle and about it, wherewith his mother conceived such expectations and hopes, that the Lord would be with him, and do good by him, &c. so that all the reproaches he sustained, difficulties and dangers that afterwards he underwent, to his dying day, never moved her in the least, from the confidence that the Lord would carry him through, and off the stage in some honourable way for his own glory. His father also, before his death, (which was Feb. 1, 1679.) obtained the same persuasion, that his time in the world would be but short, but that the Lord would make some eminent use of him.

After he had learned to read the Bible, about 6 years old, the Lord gave him some sproutings of gracious preparations, training him in his way, exercising him with doubts and debates above childish apprehension, about the Maker of all things, how all things were made, and for what end; and with strange suppositions of so many invisible worlds above and beneath, with which he was transported into a train of musing, and continued in this exercise for about the space of two years, until he, by prayer and meditation {504} on the history of creation, came to a thorough belief that God made all things, and that all which he made was very good. And yet after he came to more maturity, he relapsed to a deeper labyrinth of darkness about these foundation truths, and was so assaulted with temptations of atheism, that being in the fields and looking to the mountains, he said, "If these were all devouring furnaces of burning brimstone, he would be content to go through them all, if so be he could be assured there was a God." Out of which he emerged through grace into the sweet serenity of a settled persuasion of the being of a God, and of his interest in him.

From his younger years he made much conscience of obeying his parents, whose order (if they had spoken of putting him to any trade) he would no way decline, yet his inclination was

constant for his book, until providence propitiously furnished him with means of greater proficiency at Edinburgh, by many, who were so enamoured of his hopeful disposition, that they earnestly promoted his education; and when he was ready for the university, they encouraged him in attending gentlemen's sons for the improvement of their studies and his own both; which consorting of youths, as it is usually accompanied with various temptations to youthful vanity, so it enticed him, with others, to spend too much of his time in gaming and recreations. Then it was, for no other part of his time can be instanced, when some, who knew him not (for these were only his traducers), took occasion from this extravagance, to reproach him with profanity and flagitiousness, which his nature ever abhorred, and disdained the very suspicion thereof. When his time at the college drew near an end, he demonstrated such a tenderness of offending God, &c. that, upon his refusal of the oath of allegiance then tendered, he was denied his share of the public solemnity of laureation with the rest of the candidates; but received it privately at Edinburgh. After which he continued his studies, attending on the then private and persecuted meetings for gospel-ordinances for a time.

But upon a deplorable discovery of the unfaithfulness of the generality, even of non-conformist ministers, he was again for some time plunged in the deeps of darkness; doubting what should be the end of such backsliding courses, until, upon a more inquisitive search after such ministers as were freest from these defections, he found more light, and his knowledge of the iniquity of these courses was augmented and his zeal increased. And being more {505} confirmed, when he beheld how signally the faithful ministers were owned of the Lord, and carried off the stage with great steadfastness, faith, and patience, especially after the death of that faithful minister and martyr, Mr. Donald Cargil (at whose execution he was present July 27, 1681.), he was so commoved, that he determined to embark with these witnesses in that cause for which they suffered: and he was afterward so strengthened and established in that resolution, getting instruction about these things in and from the word, so sealed with a strong hand upon his soul, that all the temptations, tribulations, oppositions, and contradictions he met with from all hands to the day of his death, could never shake his mind to the least doubt concerning them.

Accordingly in this persuasion, upon ground of scripture and reason, &c. in Oct. 1681, he came to a meeting with some of these faithful witnesses of Christ, and conferring about the testimonies of some other martyrs lately executed (which he was very earnest always to gather and keep on record), he refreshed them greatly by a discourse shewing how much he was grieved and offended with those who heard the curates, pleaded for cess-paying, and defended the owning of the tyrant's authority, &c. and how sad it was to him that none were giving a formal testimony against these things; and in the end, added, "That he would think it a great ease to his mind, to know and be engaged with a remnant that would singly prosecute and propagate the testimony against the corruptions of the times to the succeeding generations, and would desire nothing more than to be helped to be serviceable to them."

At his very first coming amongst them, he could not but be taken notice of; for, while some were speaking of removing of the bodies of the martyrs lately executed at the Gallowlee, Mr. Renwick was very forward to promote it, and active to assist therein, and when the serious

and sincere seekers of God who were interspersed up and down the land, and adhered to the testimony, as Messrs. Cameron and Cargil left it, towards the end of that year 1681, began to settle a correspondence in general, for preserving union, understanding one another's minds, and preventing declensions to right or left hand extremes. In the first of which (the duke of York holding a parliament at Edinburgh), they agreed upon emitting that declaration published at Lanerke Jan. 12, 1682, wherein Mr. Renwick was employed proclaiming it, but had no hand in the penning {506} thereof, otherwise it might have been more considerably worded than what it was; for, though he approved of the matter of it, yet he always acknowledged there were some expressions therein somewhat unadvised.

After publishing this declaration, the next general meeting, finding themselves reproached and informed against both at home and abroad, in foreign churches (as if they had fallen from the principles of the church of Scotland), thought it expedient to send the laird of Earlston to the United Provinces to vindicate themselves from these reproaches, and to crave that sympathy which they could not obtain from their own countrymen. Which at length, thro' mercy, proved so encouraging to them, that a door was opened to provide for a succession of faithful ministers, by sending some to be fitted for the work of the ministry there. Accordingly Mr. Renwick, with some others, went thither. His comrades were ready and sailed before, which made him impatiently haste to follow. Yet, at his departure, to a comrade, he affirmed, "Though they were gone before him, as they did not depart together, so he saw something should fall out, which should obstruct their coming home together also." Which was verified by the falling off of Mr. Flint (however forward at that time) unto a contrary course of defection.

When he went over, he was settled at the university of Groningen, where he plied his studies so hard, and with such proficiency, that (upon the necessities of his friends in Scotland longing for his labours, and his own ardent desire to be at the work) in a short time he was ready for ordination.—To precipitate which, his dear friend Mr. Robert Hamilton, (who merited so much of those who reaped the benefit of Mr. Renwick's labours afterward) applied to one Mr. Brakel, a godly Dutch minister, who was much delighted at first with the motion, and advised it should be done at Embden; but this could not be obtained, because the principal man there who was to have the management of the affair was in his judgment Cocceian, &c. Whereupon Mr. Hamilton solicited the classis of Groningen to undertake it; which they willingly promised to do; and calling for the testimonial of Mr. Renwick and the rest who went over at that time, Mr. Renwick's was produced (being providentially in readiness when the others were a-wanting) and though in a rude dress, was sustained. The classis being convened, they were called in and had an open harangue, wherein open testimony was given against all the forms and corruptions of their church: whereat they {507} were so far from being offended, that after a solemn and serious consideration of their cause, they declared it was the Lord's cause, and cost what it would, though all the kings of the earth were against it, they would go through with it. They all three should have passed together, but upon some discontents arising, the other two were retarded. It was the custom of the place, that every one that passes, must pay twenty guilders for the use of the church, but they jointly declared that they would be at all the charges themselves.

But the next difficulty was, that being told it was impossible for any to pass without subscribing their catechism, &c. and observing that their forms and corruptions are therein justified, Mr. Renwick resolutely answered, He would do no such thing, being engaged by solemn covenant to the contrary. This was like to spoil all, but at length they condescended that he subscribe the confession and catechism of the church of Scotland, a practice never before heard of in that land; which was accepted. The day of ordination being come, Mr. Renwick was called in a very respectful way. After spending some time in prayer, the examination began, which lasted from ten in the morning, to two o'clock in the afternoon. Then His friends, who were attending in the church, were called in (amongst whom was his honoured friend Mr. Hamilton, and another elder of the church of Scotland¹), to be witness to the laying on of the hands; which, after the exhortation, they performed with prayer, the whole meeting melting in tears; and thereafter he had a discourse to the classis. With this solemnity the classis were so much affected, that at dinner (to which he and his friends were invited) the preses declared the great satisfaction all the brethren had in Mr. Renwick, that they thought the whole time he was before them, he was so filled with the Spirit of God, that his face seemed to shine, and that they had never seen nor found so much of the Lord's Spirit accompanying any work as that, &c. But no sooner were these difficulties over, than others of a more disagreeable aspect began to arise, which if they had appeared but one day sooner might have stopped the ordination, at least for a time. But the very next day, Mr. Brakel told them, That a formed libel was coming from the Scottish ministers at Rotterdam, containing heavy accusations against the poor society people in Scotland, &c. which they behoved either {508} to vindicate, or else the ordination must be stopped, but this being too late as to Mr. Renwick, it came to nothing at last.

After his ordination, he had a most longing desire to improve his talent for the poor persecuted people in Scotland, who were his brethren; and having received large testimonials of his ordination and learning (particularly in the Hebrew and Greek tongue) from the classis, and finding a ship ready to sail, he embarked at the Brill; but waiting some days upon a wind, he was so discouraged by some profane passengers pressing the king's health, &c. that he was forced to leave that vessel, and take another bound for Ireland. A sea storm compelled them to put in to Rye harbour in England, about the time when there was so much noise of the Rye-house plot, which created him no small danger; but, after many perils at sea, he arrived safe at Dublin, where he had many conflicts with the ministers there, anent their defections and indifference; and yet in such a gaining and gospel-way, that he left convictions on their spirits of his being a pious and zealous-youth, which procured him a speedy passage to Scotland. In which passage he had considerable dangers and a prospect of more, as not knowing how or where he should come to land, all ports being then so strictly observed, and the skipper refusing to let him go till his name be given up. But yet at last he was prevailed on to give him a cast to the shore, where he began his weary and uncertain wanderings (which continued with him till he was apprehended) thro' an unknown wilderness, amongst unknown people, it being some time before he could meet with any of the societies.

¹ See this in his testimonials from the classis, which are inserted in his life at large, pag. 25, &c.

In Sept. 1683. he commenced his ministerial work in Scotland, taking up the testimony of the standard of Christ, where it was fixed, and had fallen at the removal of the former witnesses Messrs. Cameron and Cargil, which in the strength of his Master he undertook to prosecute and maintain against opposition from all hands, which seemed insupportable to sense and reason.

In the midst of which difficulties, he was received by a poor persecuted people, who had lost all that worldly enjoyment they had, for the sake of the gospel. His first public meeting was in a moss at Darmead, where for their information and his own vindication, he thought it expedient not only to let them know how he was called to the ministry, and what he adhered to, but besides to unbosom himself about the then puzzling questions of the time, particularly {509} concerning ministers, defections, &c.—shewing, whom he could not join with, and his reasons for so doing; and in the end told them, on what grounds he stood, and resolved to stand upon; which he resolved (the Lord assisting him) to seal with his blood.

After this the father of lies began to spew out a flood of reproaches to swallow up and bury his name and work in contempt, which was very credulously entertained and industriously spread, not only by profane, but even by many professors, &c. Some saying, he had excommunicated all the ministers in Scotland, and some after they were dead; whereas he only gave reasons why he could not keep communion with some in the present circumstances. Others said, That he was no presbyterian, and that his design was only to propagate schism. But the truth was, he was a professed witness against all the defections of presbyterians from any part of their covenanted work of reformation, &c. Again, other ministers alleged he was sectarian, independent, or anabaptist, or they knew not what. But when he had sometimes occasion to be among them, in and about Newcastle and Northumberland,² they were as much offended as any, at his faithful freedom in discovering the evils of their way, and declared that they never met with such severe dealing from any presbyterian before him.

But the general out-cry was, that he had no mission at all. Others slandering him, that he came only by chance, at a throw of the dice; with many other calumnies, refuted by the foregoing relation.

On the other hand, some gave out that he and his followers maintained the murdering principles of the delirious and detestable blasphemies of Gib; all which shameless and senseless fictions he ever opposed and abhorred. Yea some ministers, more seemingly serious in their essays to prepossess the people against him, said, "That they had sought and got the mind of the Lord in it, that his labours should never profit the church of Scotland, nor any soul in it, &c." assuring themselves he would break, and bring to nothing, him and them that followed him ere it were long; comparing them to Jannes and Jambres, who withstood Moses. All which reproaches he was remarkably supported under, and went on in his Master's business, while he had any work for him to do.

² This seems to have been when he made a hasty journey thither in the year 1684 and 1686. See his letters, pag. 9[8?], and 136.

In the mean while, by the noise that went through the country concerning him, the council got notice; and thereupon, {510} being enraged at the report of his preaching in the fields, they raised a hotter and more cruel persecution against him than can be instanced ever to be against any one man in the nation; nay, than ever the most notorious murderer was pursued with. For, having publicly proclaimed him a traitor, rebel, &c. they proceeded to pursue his followers with all the rigour that hellish fury and malice could suggest or invent; and yet the more they opposed, the more they grew and increased.

In 1684, his difficulties from enemies, and discouragements from friends opposite to him, and manifold vexations from all hands, began to increase more and more; and yet all the while he would not intermit one day's preaching, but was still incessant and undaunted in his work; which made the ministers inform against him, as if he had intruded upon other men's labours; alleging, that when another minister had appointed to preach in a place, he unexpectedly came and preached in the same parish, and for that purpose instanced one time near Paisley; whereas he went upon a call from severals in that bounds, without knowing then whether there was such a minister in that country. It is confessed, that he hath sometimes taken the churches to preach in, when either the weather, instant hazard at the time, or respect to secrecy or safety did exclude from every other place. But, could this be called intrusion, to creep into the church for one night, when they could not stand, nor durst they be seen without?

This year, in prosecution of a cruel information, the soldiers became more vigilant in their indefatigable diligence to seek and hunt after him; and from whom he had many remarkable deliverances: particularly in the month of July, as he was going to a meeting, a country man, seeing him wearied, gave him a horse for some miles to ride on, they were surprised with lieutenant Dundass and a party of dragoons. The two men with him were taken and pitifully wounded. He escaped their hands, and went up Dungavel hill, but was so closely followed (they being so near that they fired at him all the time), that he was forced to leave the horse (losing thereby his cloak-bag with many papers) and seeing no other refuge, he was fain to run, in their sight, towards a heap of stones, where, for a little moment getting out of their sight, he found a hollow place into which he crept; and committing himself by earnest ejaculation to God, in submission to live or die; and also believing, that he should yet be reserved for greater work, that part of scripture often coming into his mind, {511} Psalm 6.8, Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity, together with these words, Psalm 91.11, For he shall give his angels charge, &c. In the mean time, the enemy searched up and down the hill, yet were restrained from looking into that place where he was. Many such sore and desperate chases he and those with him met; some continuing whole nights and days, without intermission, in the wildest places of the country, for many miles together, without so much as a possibility of escaping the sight of those who pursued them.

This year, Sept. 24, letters of intercommuning were issued out against him, commanding all to give him no reset or supply, nor furnish him with meat, drink, house, harbour or any thing useful to him; requiring all sheriffs, &c. to apprehend and commit to prison his person, wherever

they could find him; by virtue of which the sufferers were reduced unto incredible straits, not only in being murdered, but by hunger, cold, harassings, &c. in which perplexity, having neither a possibility to flee nor ability to fight, they were forced to publish an apologetical representation of their sentiments, shewing how far they might, according to the approven principles and practice, and covenant engagements of our reformers, &c. restrict and reduce into practice that privilege of extraordinary executing of judgment, on murdering beasts of prey, professing and prosecuting a daily trade of destroying innocents, &c.—When this declaration was first proposed, Mr. Renwick was somewhat averse to it, fearing the sad effects it might produce; but, considering the necessity of the case would admit of no delay, he consented and concurred in the publication thereof. Accordingly, it was fixed upon several market-crosses and parish church-doors Nov. 8. 1684.

After the publication of this declaration, rage and reproach seemed to strive which should shew the greatest violence against the publishers and owners of it. The council published a proclamation for discovering such as own, or will not disown it; requiring that none above the age of sixteen travel without a pass, and that any who could apprehend any of them should have 500 merks for each person, and that every one should take the oath of abjuration; whereby the temptation and hazard became so dreadful, that many were shot instantly in the fields, others, refusing the oath were brought in, sentenced and executed in one day, yea spectators at executions were required to say, whether these men suffered justly or not. All which dolorous effects and more, when Mr. Renwick with a sad and troubled {512} heart observed, he was often heard to say, though he had peace in his end and aim by it, yet he wished from his heart that declaration had never been published.

Neither was the year 1685, any thing better. For it became now the enemy's greatest ambition and emulation, who could destroy most of these poor wandering mountain men (as they were called); and when they had spent all their balls, they were nothing nearer their purpose than when they began; for the more they were afflicted, the more they grew. The bush did burn but was not consumed, because the Lord was in the bush.

Charles II. being dead, and the duke of York, a professed papist proclaimed in Feb. 1685. Mr. Renwick could not let go this opportunity of witnessing against that usurpation of a papist upon the government of the nation, and his design of overturning the covenanted work of reformation, and introducing popery. Accordingly he and about 200 men went to Sanquhar May 28, 1685, and published that declaration, afterward called the Sanquhar declaration.

In the mean time the earl of Argyle's expedition taking place, Mr. Renwick was much solicited to join with them. He expressed the esteem he had of his honest and laudable intention, and spoke very favourably of him, declaring his willingness to concur if the quarrel and declaration were rightly stated, but because it was not concerted according to the ancient plea of our Scottish covenants, &c. he could not agree with them; which created unto him a new series of trouble and reproach, and that from all hands, and from none more than the indulged.

In the year 1686, Mr. Renwick was constrained to be more public and explicit in his testimony against the designs and defections of the time; wherein he met with more contradictions and opposition from all hands and more discouraging and distracting treatment, even from some who once followed him; and was much troubled with letters of accusation against him from many hands. One of the ministers that came over with Argyle, wrote a very vindictive letter³ against him, which letter he answered at large. He also was traduced both at home and abroad by one Alexander Gordon, who sometimes joined with that suffering party. But by none more than one Robert Cathcart in Carrick, who wrote a most scurrilous libel against him; from {513} which Mr. Renwick vindicated himself in the plainest terms. But this not satisfying the said Robert Cathcart, he did, in the name of his friends in Carrick and the shire of Wigton (though without the knowledge of the half of them), take a protest against Mr. Renwick's preaching or conversing within their jurisdiction; giving him occasion with David to complain, They speak vanity, their heart gathereth iniquity, &c; yea mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, hath lift up his heel against me.

Notwithstanding of all former obloquies he sustained from all sorts of opposers, he had one faithful and fervent wrestler on his side, Mr. Alexander Peden; and yet a little before his death, these reproachers so far prevailed with him to instigate him to a declared opposition against Mr. Renwick, which not only contributed to grieve him much, but was also an occasion of stumbling to many others⁴ of the well affected, and to the confirmation of his opposers. Yet nevertheless he proceeded in his progress through the country, preaching, catechizing, and baptizing; traveling through Galloway, where he was rencountered with a most insolent protestation given in against him by the professors between Dee and Cree, subscribed by one Hutchinson, which paper he read over at a public meeting in that bounds (after a lecture upon Psalm 15, and a sermon from Song 2.2.), giving the people to know what was done in their name, with several animadversions thereon, as that which overturned several pieces of our valuable reformation; exhorting them, if there were any there who concurred therein, that they would speedily retract their hand from such an iniquity, &c.⁵

Shortly after this, while his work was increasing daily on his hand, and his difficulties multiplying, the Lord made his burthen lighter by the help of Mr. David Houston from Ireland, and Mr. Alexander Shields, who joined with him, all in one accord, witnessing against the sins of the time; which as it was very refreshing to him, and satisfied his longing desires and endeavours, so it furnished him withal to answer those who said, That he neither desired to join with another minister, nor so much as to meet {514} with any other for joining. The first being already confuted, and as for the other, it is well known how far he traveled both in Scotland and

³ See his letters and the answers, with the reasoning on Cathcart's affair at large from page 84 to 97.

⁴ Mr. Peden on his death bed sent for him, and after some conference owned he had been misinformed anent him; exhorted him to go forward, and he would be carried honestly through; asked his forgiveness, and desired him to pray with him before he departed: all which Mr. Renwick did with great cheerfulness. See Walker's remarks of the life of Mr. Peden.

⁵ See his letter to Earlston, page 163.

England to meet with ministers for a coalescence, who superciliously refused. He once sent a friend on that purpose to a minister of great note in Glendale in Northumberland, but he peremptorily refused. At another time, in the same country, before that he happened to be in a much respected gentlewoman's house, where providentially Dr. Rule came to visit, whom Mr. James, in another room, overheard discharging her by many arguments to entertain or countenance Mr. Renwick, if he should come that way; whereupon he sent for the doctor, letting him know that the same person was in the house, and that he desired to discourse with him on that head, but this he refused.

After this one informed against him to the Holland ministers, who returned back with Mr. Brackel's advise to Mr. Renwick and others; but as it relished of a gospel fruit, not like that of his informers, it was no way offensive to him. Mr. Roelman, another famous Dutch divine, and a great sympathizer once with Renwick and that afflicted party, by their informations, turned also his enemy, which was more weighty to him, that such a great man should be so credulous; but all these things never moved him, being fully resolved to suffer this and more for the cause of Christ.

In 1687, a proclamation was issued out, Feb. 12, tolerating the moderate presbyterians to meet in their private houses to hear the indulged ministers, while the field meetings should be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of law, &c. A second proclamation was given, June 28, allowing all to serve God in their own way, in any house, &c. A third was emitted Oct. 5, declaring that all preachers and hearers at any meeting in the open fields should be prosecuted with the utmost severity that law will allow, &c. and that all dissenting ministers who preach in houses should teach nothing that should alienate the heart of the people from the government; and that the privy counsellors, sheriffs, &c. should be acquainted with the places set apart for their preaching, etc. This proclamation it seems was granted as an answer to an address for the toleration given in, in name of all the presbyterian ministers, July 21, 1687.

Whereupon Mr. Renwick found it his duty not only to declare against the granters, but also against the accepters of this toleration; warning also the people of the hazard of their succession to it, etc. At which the indulged were {515} so incensed, that no sooner was their meeting well settled, than they began to shew their teeth at him, calling him an intruder, a jesuit, a white devil, going through the land carrying the devil's white flag; that he had done more hurt to the church of Scotland, than its enemies had done these twenty years, etc.: As also spreading papers through the country, as given under his hand, to render him odious; which in truth were nothing else than forgeries, wherein they only discovered their own treachery.

Yet all this could not move him, even when his enemies were shooting their arrows at him; being not only the butt of the wicked, but the scorn of professors also, who were at their ease; and a man much wondered at every way; yet still he continued at his work, his inward man increasing more and more, when his outward man was much decaying; and his zeal for fulfilling his ministry, and finishing his testimony still increasing the more, the less peace and accommodation he could find in the world; at the same time becoming so weak, that he could not

mount or sit on horseback; so that he behoved to be carried to the place of preaching, and never in the least complained of any distemper in the time thereof.

In the mean while, the persecution against him being so furious, that in less than five months after the toleration, fifteen most desperate searches were made for him: To encourage which a proclamation was made, Oct. 18, wherein a reward of 100 pounds sterling was offered to any who could bring in the persons of him, and some others, either dead or alive.

In the beginning of the year 1688, being now drawing near the period of his course, he ran very fast, and wrought very hard both as a christian and as a minister: And having for some time had a design to emit something in way of testimony against both the granters and accepters of the toleration, that might afterward stand on record. He went toward Edinburgh, and on his way at Peebles he escaped very narrowly being apprehended. When at Edinburgh he longed and could have no rest till he got that which he, with the concurrence of some others, had drawn up in form delivered; and upon inquiry, hearing that there was to be no presbytery or synod of tolerated ministers for some time, he went to a minister of great note amongst them,⁶ whom he heard was moderator, and delivered a protestation into his hands; and then, upon some {516} reasons, emitted it in public as his testimony against the toleration.⁷

From thence he went to Fife, and preached some sabbaths: and, upon the 29th of January, preached his last sermon at Borrowstonness. Then returned to Edinburgh, and lodged in a friend's house in the Castle hill, who dealt in uncustomed goods; and wanting his wonted circumspection (his time being come), one John Justice, a waiter, discovered the house that very night; and hearing him praying in the family, suspected who it was, attacked the house next morning, Feb. 1, and pretending to search for uncustomed goods, they got entrance; and, when Mr. Renwick came to the door, Mr. Justice challenged him in these words, My life for it this is Mr. Renwick.— After which he went to the street crying for assistance to carry the dog Renwick to the guard.

In the mean time, Mr. James and other two friends essayed to make their escape at another door, but were repelled by the waiters. Whereupon he discharged a pistol which made the assailants give way; but as he passed thro' them, one with a long staff hit him on the breast, which doubtless disabled him from running. Running down the Castle-wynd toward the head of the Cowgate, having lost his hat, he was taken notice of, and seized by a fellow on the street, while the other two escaped.

He was taken to the guard, and there kept some time. One Graham, captain of the guard, seeing him of a little stature and comely youthful countenance, cried, What! is this the boy Renwick that the nation hath been so much troubled with. At the same time one bailie Charters, coming in, with great insolency accused him with bawdy houses, which he replied to with

⁶ Mr. Hugh Kennedy then moderator.

⁷ This testimony was again of late republished by some friends to the same cause.

deserved disdain. Then he was carried before a quorum of the council; and when Graham delivered him off his hand, he was heard say, Now I have given Renwick up to the presbyterians, let them do with him what they please. What passed here could not be learned.

He was committed close prisoner and laid in irons, where as soon as he was left alone he betook himself to prayer to his God, making a free offer of his life to him, requesting for through-bearing grace, and that his enemies might be restrained from torturing his body; all which requests {517} were signally granted, and by him thankfully acknowledged before his execution.

Before he received his indictment, he was taken before the chancellor, into the viscount of Tarbet's lodging, and there examined concerning his owning the authority of James VII, the cess, and carrying of arms at field-meetings; and delivered himself with such freedom and boldness as astonished all present. The reason why he was interrogate anent the cess was, a pocket-book found about him, in which were the notes of two sermons he had preached on these points which he owned. There were also some capitals in the same book, and because the committee was urgent to know these names, partly to avoid torture, and knowing they could render the persons no more obnoxious, he ingenuously declared the truth of the matter.—Which ingenuity did much allay their rage against him; and being asked by the chancellor, What persuasion he was of? He answered, Of the protestant presbyterian persuasion. Again, How it came to pass he differed then so much from other presbyterians, who had accepted of the toleration, and owned the king's authority; and what he thought of them? He answered, He was a presbyterian, and adhered to the old presbyterian principles (which all were obliged by the covenant to maintain), and were once generally professed and maintained by the nation from 1640, to 1660, from which they had apostatized for a little liberty (they knew not how long), as you yourselves (said he) have done for a little honour. The chancellor replied, and the rest applauded, That they believed, that these were the presbyterian principles, and that all presbyterians would own them as well as he, if they had but the courage, etc. However, on Feb. 3, he received his indictment upon the three foresaid heads, viz. disowning the king's authority, the unlawfulness of paying the cess, and the lawfulness of defensive arms. All which he was to answer on the 8th of February. To the indictment was added a list of forty-five, out of which the jury was to be chosen, and a list of the witnesses to be brought against him; which are too tedious here to insert.

After receiving his indictment, his mother got access to see him, to whom he spoke many savoury words. And on Sabbath, Feb. 5, he regretted that now he must leave his poor flock; and declared, "That if it were his choice, he could not think on it without terror, to enter again into and venture upon that conflict with a body of sin and death; yet if he were again to go and preach in the field, {518} he durst not vary in the least nor flinch one hair-breadth from the testimony, but would look on himself as obliged to use the same freedom and faithfulness as he had done before." And in a letter on Feb. 6, he desired that the persons, whose names were deciphered, might be acquainted with it, and concludes, "I desire none may be troubled on my behalf, but rather rejoice with him, who, with hope and joy, is waiting for his coronation-hour." Another

time his mother asked him, How he was? He answered, He was well, but that since his last examination he could scarcely pray. At which she looked on him with an affrighted countenance, and he told her, He could hardly pray, being so taken up with praising, and ravished with the joy of the Lord. When his mother was expressing her fear of fainting, saying, How shall I look upon that head and those hands set up among the rest on the port of the city, etc! He smiled, telling her, She should not see that, "for (said he) I have offered my life unto the Lord, and have sought that he may bind them up, and I am persuaded that they shall not be permitted to torture my body, nor touch one hair of my head farther." He was at first much afraid of the tortures, but now, having obtained a persuasion that these should not be his trials, thro' grace he was helped to say, "That the terror of them was so removed, that he would rather choose to be cast into a caldron of burning oil, than do any thing that might wrong truth." When some other friends were permitted to see him, he exhorted them to make sure their peace with God, and to study stedfastness in his ways; and when they regretted their loss of him, he said, "They had more need to thank the Lord, that he should now be taken away from these reproaches⁸ which had broken his heart, and which could not be otherwise wiped off, even though he should get his life, without yielding in the least."

Monday, Feb. 8, he appeared before the justiciary, and when his indictment was read, the justice-clerk asked him, If he adhered to his former confession, and acknowledged all that was in the libel? He answered, "All except where it is said I have cast off all fear of God; that I deny; for it is because I fear to offend God, and violate his law, that I am here standing ready to be condemned." Then he was interrogate, If he owned authority, and James VII. {519} to be his lawful sovereign? He answered, "I own all authority that hath its prescriptions and limitations from the word of God, but cannot own this usurper as lawful king, seeing both by the word of God, such an one is incapable to bear rule, and likewise by the ancient laws of the kingdom, which admit none to the crown of Scotland, until he swear to defend the Protestant religion; which a man of his profession could not do."—They urged, Could he deny him to be king? Was he not the late king's brother? Had the late king any children lawfully begotten? Was he not declared to be his successor by an act of parliament! He answered, "He was no question king de facto, but not de jure; that he was brother to the other king, he knew nothing to the contrary; what children the other had he knew not; but from the word of God, that ought to be the rule of all laws, or from the ancient laws of the kingdom, it could not be shewn that he had or ever could have any right." The next question was, If he owned and had taught it to be unlawful to pay cesses and taxations to his majesty? He answered, "For the present cess enacted for the present usurper, I hold it unlawful to pay it, both in regard it is oppressive to the subject, for the maintenance of tyranny, and because it is imposed for suppressing the gospel. Would it have been thought lawful for the Jews in the days of Nebuchadnezzar to have brought every one a coal to augment the flame of the furnace to devour the three children, if so they had been required by that tyrant, &c.?"

⁸ For besides these reproaches already noticed, with many others, he and his followers were charged as man of anarchical, murdering, and bloody principles, which makes it the less wonder that their successors should be still charged with the same.

Next they moved the question, If he owned he had taught his hearers to come armed to their meetings, and in case of opposition to resist? He answered, "It were inconsistent with reason and religion both to do otherwise; you yourselves would do it in the like circumstances. I own that I taught them to carry arms to defend themselves, and resist your unjust violence." Further they asked if he owned the note-book and the two sermons written therein, and that he had preached them? He said, "If ye have added nothing I will own it, and am ready to seal all the truths contained therein with my blood."— All his confession being read over, he was required to subscribe it. He said, "He would not do it, since he looked on it as a partial owning of their authority." After refusing several times, he said, "With protestation I will subscribe the paper as it is my testimony, but not in obedience to you." {520}

Then the assizers were called in by five and sworn, against whom he objected nothing; but protested, "That none might sit on his assize, that professed Protestant or Presbyterian principles, or an adherence to the covenanted work of reformation."⁹ He was brought in guilty, and sentence passed, That he should be executed in the grass-market on the Friday following. Lord Linlithgow justice-general asked, If he desired longer time? He answered, "It was all one to him, if it was protracted, it was welcome; if it was shortened, it was welcome; his Master's time was the best."—Then he was returned to prison. Without his knowledge, and against his will, yea, after open refusing to the advocate to desire it, he was reprieved to the 17th day; which gave occasion to severals to renew their reproaches.

Though none who suffered in the former part of this dismal period, spoke with more fortitude, freedom, and boldness than Mr. Renwick, yet none were treated with so much

⁹ And it is to be remarked, that many of the Jury were professors, and eminent in the tolerated meetings; while others, even of the malignants, chose rather to run the hazard of the penalty, as the laird of Torrence, who compeared not, and Somerville chamberlain of Douglas, who, though when he appeared, yet when he saw Mr. Renwick turn about, and direct his speech to them, he ran away, saying, He trembled to think to take away the life o' such a pious-like man, though they should take his whole estate. The list of the Assizers is as follows:

James Hume of Kimmergen.
John Hume of Nine wells.
John Martin clerk to the manufactory.
Alexander Martin sometimes clerk of ——
Robert Halyburton merchant.
Thomas Laurie merchant.
Archibald Johnston merchant.
Thomas Wylie merchant.
James Hamilton vinter.
William Cockburn merchant.
James Hamilton jun. stationer.
Robert Currie stationer.
Joseph Young merchant.
John Cuningham merchant in Glasgow.
Ninian Banantine of Kaims, chancellor.

moderation. The lenity of the judiciary was much admired beyond their ordinary; for they admitted him to say what he pleased without threatening and interruption, even though he gave none of them the title of lord, but Linlithgow, who was a nobleman by birth. And though his friends (which was not usual after sentence) were denied access, yet both papists and Episcopalists were permitted to {521} see him. Bishop Paterson often visited him, nay he sought another reprieve for him; which would easily have been granted, had he only petitioned for it. The bishop asked him, Think you none can be saved but those of your principles? He answered, "I never said nor thought that none could be saved, except they were of these principles; but these are truths which I suffer for, and which I have not rashly concluded on, but deliberately and of a long time have been confirmed that they are sufficient points to suffer for." The bishop took his leave, declaring his sorrow for his being so tenacious, and said, "It had been a great loss he had been of such principles, for he was a pretty lad." Again, the night before he suffered, he sent to him, to signify his readiness to serve him to the utmost of his power. Mr. Renwick thanked him for his courtesy, but knew nothing he could do, or that he could desire.

Mr. M'Naught, one of the curates, made him a visit in his canonical habit, which Mr. Renwick did not like. The curate among other things asked his opinion concerning the toleration, and those that accepted it. Mr. Renwick declared that he was against the toleration, but as for them that embraced it, he judged them to be godly men. The curate leaving him, commended him for one of great gravity and ingenuity, &c. Dalrymple the king's advocate came also to visit him, and declared that he was sorry for his death, and that it should fall out in his short time. Several popish priests and gentlemen of the guard, with some of the tolerated ministers, were permitted to converse with him. The priest at leaving him was overheard saying, He was a most obstinate heretic, for he had used such freedom with them as it became a proverb in the tollbooth at the time; Begone (said they), as Mr. Renwick said to the priests.

Several petitions were wrote from several hands, of the most favourable strain that could be invented, and sent him to subscribe, but all in vain; yea, it was offered to him, if he would but let a drop of ink fall on a bit of paper, it would satisfy; but he would not. In the mean time, he was kept so close that he could get nothing wrote. His begun testimony which he was writing was taken from him, and pen and ink removed. However he got a short paper wrote the night before, which is to be found in the cloud of witnesses, as his last speech and testimony.

On Tuesday the 14th, he was brought before the council on account of the informatory vindication, but what passed there cannot be learned, farther than their signifying {522} how much kindness they had shewn him, in that they had reprieved him without his supplication; a thing never done before. He answered with extraordinary cheerfulness, rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of his Master. A friend, asking him, how he was?— He said, Very well, and he would be better within three days. He told his mother, That the last execution he was witness to was Robert Gray's, and that he had a strong impression in his mind that he should be the next; and often said, He saw need for his suffering at this time; and that he was persuaded his death would do more good than his life for many years could have done.

Being asked, what he thought God would do with the remnant behind him? He answered, It would be well with them, for God would not forsake nor cast off his inheritance.

On the day of his execution, the chief jailor begged that at the place of execution, he would not mention the causes of his death, and would forbear all reflections. Mr. Renwick told him, That what God would give him to speak, that he would speak, and nothing less. The jailor told him, that he might still have his life, if he would but sign that petition which he offered him. He answered, That he never read in scripture or history, where martyrs petitioned for their lives, when called to suffer for truth, though they might require them not to take their life, and remonstrate the wickedness of murdering them; but in the present circumstance he judged it would be found a receding from truth, and a declining from a testimony for Christ.

His mother and sisters, having obtained leave to see him, after some refreshment, in returning thanks, he said, "O Lord, thou hast brought me within two hours of eternity, and this is no matter of terror to me, more than if I were to lie down in a bed of roses; nay, thro' grace, to thy praise, I may say, I never had the fear of death since I came to this prison; but from the place where I was taken, I could have gone very composedly to the scaffold. O! how can I contain this, to be within two hours of the crown of glory." He exhorted them much "to prepare for death, for it is (said he) the king of terrors, though not to me now, as it was sometimes in my hidings; but now let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. Would ever I have thought that the fear of suffering and of death could be so taken from me? {523} But what shall I say to it? It is the doing of the Lord, and marvelous in our eyes. —I have many times counted the cost of following Christ, but never thought it would be so easy; and now who knows the honour and happiness of that? He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before the Father." He said many times, "Now I am near the end of time, I desire to bless the Lord, it is an expressly sweet and satisfying peace to me, that he hath kept me from complying with enemies in the least." Perceiving his mother weep, he exhorted her "to remember that they who loved any thing better than Christ were not worthy of him. If ye love me, rejoice that I am going to my Father, to obtain the enjoyment of what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, &c." Then he went to prayer, wherein he run out much in praise, and pleaded much in behalf of the suffering remnant, that the Lord would raise up witnesses that might transmit the testimony to succeeding generations, and that the Lord would not leave Scotland, asserting with great confidence of hope, that he was strengthened in the hope of it, that the Lord would be gracious to Scotland.

At length, hearing the drums beat for the guard he fell into a transport, saying, Yonder the welcome warning to my marriage; the bridegroom is coming; I am ready, I am ready. Then taking his leave of his mother and sisters, he entreated them not to be discouraged, for ere all were done, they should see matter of praise in that day's work. He was taken to the low council-house (as was usual) where after his sentence was read, they desired him to speak what he had to say there. He said, "I have nothing to say to you, but that which is written in Jer. 24.14,15, As for me, behold I am in your hand, &c." He was told that the drums would beat at the scaffold all the time, and therefore they desired him to pray there; but he refused, and declared he would not be

limited in what he would say, and that he had premeditated nothing, but would speak what was given him. They offered him any minister to be with him; but he answered, "If I would have had any of them for my counsellors or comforters, I should not have been here this day. I require none with me but this one man;" meaning the friend that was waiting upon him.

He went from thence to the scaffold with great cheerfulness, as one in a transport of triumphant joy, and had the greatest crowd of spectators that has perhaps been seen at any execution; but little was heard on account of the {524} beating of the drums all the time without intermission, from his first ascending the scaffold until he was cast over. Yet from the friends and others, permitted to attend him, there were some of his last words collected, which were as follows.

When he went first unto the scaffold, some forbade him to speak anything, because the people could not hear; which he took no notice of. There was a curate standing at the side of the scaffold, who tempting him, said, Own our king and we shall pray for you. He answered, I will have none of your prayers; I am come here to bear my testimony against you and such as you are. The curate said, Own our king and pray for him, whatever you say against us—He replied, "I will discourse no more with you. I am within a little to appear before him, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, who shall pour shame, contempt, and confusion upon all the kings of the earth, who have not ruled for him."

Then he sang Psalm 103, read Rev. 19: then prayed, commending his soul to God through the Redeemer, and his cause to be vindicated in his own time, and appealed to the Lord if this was not the most joyful day he ever saw in the world; a day that he had much longed for. He insisted much in blessing the Lord in honouring him with the crown of martyrdom, an honour which the angels were not privileged with, being incapable of laying down their lives for their princely Master. He complained of being disturbed in worshipping God; but, said he, I shall be above these clouds; then shall I enjoy thee, and glorify thee, without interruption or intermission for ever. Prayer being ended, he spoke to the people much to the purpose of his written testimony, whereof somewhat was remembered to this effect:

"SPECTATORS, I am come here this day to lay down my life for adhering to the truths of Christ, for which I am neither afraid nor ashamed to suffer. Nay, I bless the Lord that ever he counted me worthy, or enabled me to suffer anything for him; and I desire to praise his grace that he hath not only kept me from the gross pollutions of the time, but also from the many ordinary pollutions of children; and for such as I have been stained with, he hath washed and cleansed me from them in his own blood. I am this day to lay down my life for these three things: (1.) For disowning the usurpation and tyranny of James duke of York. (2.) For preaching {525} that it was unlawful to pay the cess expressly exacted for bearing down the gospel. (3.) For teaching, that it was lawful for people to carry arms for defending themselves in their meeting for the persecuted gospel-ordinances. I think a testimony for these is worthy many lives, and if I had ten thousand I would think it little enough to lay them all down for the same.

"Dear friends, I die a Presbyterian Protestant; I own the word of God as the rule of faith and manners; I own the Confession of Faith, larger and shorter Catechisms, Sum of saving knowledge, Directory for public and family Worship, Covenants national and solemn League, Acts of general assemblies, and all the faithful contendings that have been for the covenanted reformation. I leave my testimony approving the preaching in the fields, and the defending the same by arms. I adjoin my testimony to all these truths that have been sealed by bloodshed, either on scaffold, field, or seas, for the cause of Christ. I leave my testimony against popery, prelacy, Erastianism, &c. against all profanity, and every thing contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness, particularly against all usurpations and encroachments made upon Christ's right, the Prince of the kings of the earth, who alone must bear the glory of ruling in his own kingdom the church, and in particular against this absolute power, usurped by this usurper, that belongs to no mortal, but is the incommunicable prerogative of Jehovah; and against his toleration, flowing from this absolute power."

Here he was ordered to have done.—He answered, I have near done; and then said, "Ye that are the people of God, do not weary to maintain the testimony of the day in your stations and places; and, whatever ye do, make sure an interest in Christ, for there is a storm coming, that shall try your foundation. Scotland must be rid of Scotland before the delivery come; and you that are strangers to God, break off your sins by repentance, else I will be a sad witness against you in the day of the Lord."

Here they made him desist, and go up the ladder, where he prayed and said, "Lord, I die in the faith that thou wilt not leave Scotland, but that thou wilt make the blood of thy witnesses the seed of thy church, and return again and be glorious in our land.—And now, Lord, I am ready; the bride, the Lamb's wife, hath made herself ready." The napkin being tied about his {526} face, he said to his friend attending, "Farewell; be diligent in duty, make your peace with God through Christ. There is a great trial coming. As to the remnant I leave I have committed them to God. Tell them from me, not to weary nor be discouraged in maintaining the testimony, and the Lord will provide you teachers and ministers, and when he comes, he will make these despised truths glorious in the earth." He was turned over with these words in his mouth, Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

Thus died the faithful, pious, and zealous Mr. James Renwick on the third day over the 26th year of his age, a young man and a young minister, but a ripe Christian and renowned martyr of Christ, for whose sake he loved not his life dear unto the death, by whose blood and the word of his testimony he overcame, and thus got above all snares and sorrows, and to the conviction of many that formerly reproached him was as signally vindicated of, as he was in his life shamefully reproached with all the aspersions, obloquies, and calumnies, that were cast upon him for prosecuting that testimony for truth, which now he sealed with his blood, in such a treasure of patience, meekness, humility, constancy, courage, burning love and blazing zeal, as did very much confound enemies, convince neutrals, confirm halters, comfort friends, and astonish all.

He was of stature somewhat low, of a fair complexion, and, like another young David, of a ruddy and beautiful countenance. Most men spoke well of him after he was dead; even his murderers, as well as others, said, They thought he went to heaven. Malignants generally said, He died a Presbyterian. The viscount of Tarbet (one of the counsellors), one day in company, when speaking of him, said, "That he was one of the stiffest maintainers of his principles that ever came before them. Others we used always to cause one time or other to waver, but him we could never move.—Where we left him, there we found him. We could never make him yield or vary in the least. He was the man we have seen most plainly and pertinaciously adhering to the old way of Presbyterian government, who, if he had lived in Knox's days, would not have died by any laws then in being." He was the last that on a scaffold sealed his testimony for religion, liberty, and the covenanted work of reformation in Scotland.

Besides what hand Mr. Renwick had in the informatory vindication, and the forementioned testimony against the {527} toleration (both of which have long ago been published), there was also of late, by some well wishers to the same cause and testimony, published a collection of very valuable prefaces, lectures, and sermons of his, in two volumes; as also another collection of very choice letters, wrote by him from July 8. 1682, to the day of his death, Feb. 17. 1688. There is also a treatise of his upon the admission of ruling elders, which the reader will find affixed to his life and vindication of his testimony wrote by Mr. Shields.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, &c.—These are they which came out of great tribulations, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.—I saw, under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth—Here is the patience of the saints, here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.—Heb. 12.1; Rev. 7.14; 6.9; &c. 14.2.

N.B. In Scotland during these twenty-eight years persecution, according to calculation, above 18000 people suffered death, or the outmost hardships and extremities; whereof 1700 were banished to the plantations, besides 750 banished to the northern islands, of these 200 were executed. Those who suffered by imprisonments, confinement, and other cruelties of this nature, were computed at or above 3600, including the 800 last mentioned, and 55 who were paneled to be executed when apprehended. Those killed in several skirmishes or on surprise, and those who died of their wounds on such occasions were reckoned to be 680. Those who went to voluntary banishment to other countries, &c. were calculated at 7000. About 498 were murdered in cold blood without process of law, beside 262 who were by form of law executed. But the number of those who perished through cold, hunger, and other distresses, contracted in their flight to the mountains, and sometimes even in the article of death murdered by the bloody soldiers, cannot be well calculated, but will certainly make up the number above specified. And yet like the Lord's church and people of old, while in Egypt, the more they were oppressed the more they grew, the blood of the martyrs being always the seed of the church. Yea to the honour of truth, and the praise of that God whom they served, they were so far from being spent, wasted, or

eradicated, that at the revolution they could raise a regiment in one day without beat of drum, the ancient motto of the church of Scotland being verified now as evidently as ever, Behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

See a more full account of these sufferings in the memoirs of the church of Scotland, from page 290 to 295.