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# S P E E C H

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*Mr. John Glas*

B E F O R E T H E

Commission of the General  
Assembly,

M A R C H 11. 1730.



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E D I N B U R H :

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The **S P E E C H** of Mr. *John Glas* before  
the Commission of the General As-  
sembly, *March 11th, 1730.*



Judge it my Duty to lay before this Commission such a State of my Difference from this National-church, as may serve to shew how far it may justify the Treatment I have met with upon it, and to manifest that I differ from this Church no farther than the Word of God, as I understand it, obliges me to differ. And I am hopeful that what I now offer may serve to bring this Process to a speedy Issue, which is the Thing I sincerely desire.

What lies now before the Commission to be considered as the Matter of my Condemnation, may be comprehended under the three following Heads.

I. My refusing to subscribe the *Formula*, because I cannot see the Government of this National-church by Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, provincial Synods, and General Assemblies, to be founded in the Word of God.

II. My refusing to subscribe some Passages in the *Confession of Faith*, touching the Magistrates Power *circa sacra*, and Liberty of Conscience, with some Propositions relative thereto, maintain'd by me.

III. My exercising the ministerial Office after I was forbidden upon these Grounds.

As to the *first* of these, I refuse to subscribe the *Formula*, because I cannot see *Precept* or *Example* in Scripture for the Government of this National-church by Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, provincial and national Synods; and I do not imagine that the Commission will affirm there is such a Foundation in the Word of God for the foresaid Government. And if it should be my Opinion, that it requires Precept or Example in God's Word for such a Government, to warrant me to declare, that it is founded in that Word, or if I should affirm that Church Courts, meeting in the Name of Christ, require as much Warrant in the Word of God, as Church-officers, acting in his Name; I see not any Proposition in the publick Standards of the Church that condemns this, nor can I conceive how it should be a Ground of Censure, since I have declar'd that I look upon this as the best national Establishment, and that I'm very far from desiring to see it chang'd for another national Church-government.

And tho' it be by me affirm'd, that a Congregation, or Church of Jesus Christ, with its Presbytery, is in its Discipline subject to no Jurisdiction under Heaven; yet I never intended by this to deny the Subjection of a Parish with its Kirk-session, unto Presbyteries, Synods and Assemblies. For when the Magistrate divides his Subjects into Parishes, to be taught by so many Teachers, upon the Encouragement by him afforded, the Nature of the Thing requires, that these Teachers should be subject to the Oversight of such as, by the Law that affords them Maintenance, are appointed to oversee them, and to whom that Law makes them accountable. But it will not be affirm'd by the Commission, that these Parishes and their Overseers are of the same Kind with the first Christian Churches or Congregations and their Presbyteries: For these Congregations were gather-  
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ed together only by the Gospel; and were Disciples of Christ, voluntarily associated for holding spiritual Communion together, and for the Observation of the Laws of Christ, and the Enjoyment of the spiritual Privileges of his Kingdom, which is not of this World, and they were governed by Presbyteries freely chosen and maintain'd by themselves. Now seeing 'tis evident these were quite different Things from Parishes and Kirk-sessions, as I cannot think but Parishes are design'd unto better Ends, than to make such Churches; as were from the Beginning, useless, and set them aside; so I cannot perswade my self that the Commission will judge it a censurable Fault in me to hold, that, notwithstanding of the Order of Parishes, it is still lawful for Ministers and Disciples of Christ to conform themselves to the first Christian Churches with their Presbyteries, 1 Thes. ii. 13, 14. So that, unless I be condemn'd for saying that Kirk-sessions and Parishes are not the same Thing with the first Christian Presbyteries and Congregations, the only Thing that remains to be consider'd, as a Ground for the Sentence against me upon this Head, is, That I affirm these first Churches were not subjected in their Discipline to any Jurisdiction under Heaven. But as the *Confession and Formula* (which respects Parishes) does not precisely decide this Question, nor contain any Proposition that expressly contradicts this; so there is no Evidence appearing to me from the Word of God, that these first Churches were subject to any Jurisdiction under Heaven in their Discipline, but much to the contrary. For,

1. Our Lord lodges the Power of binding and loosing under himself, in that Church with its Presbytery, unto which the offended Brother tells his Brother's Trespas, after he has neglected to hear him with the one or two more, and he promises his Presence with the smallest Presbytery of such a Church in the Exercise of that Discipline, and that what they do

do in his Name on the Earth shall be ratified in Heaven, *Matth.* xviii. 15,—20.

When the Lord warrands the smallest Presbytery of such a Church to exercise that Discipline in the Church, I cannot see that he hereby allows any Number of Bishops or Presbyters, gathered together in any other Manner, to bind or loose in his Name. Neither can I see, that his directing his Disciples in the Church to carry towards them that do not hear the Church, as the Jews did towards Heathen Men and Publicans, can give any Ground to think that he would by this have his Churches to be constituted after the Form of the *Jewish* National-church. But if there had been any Reference in this Place unto the Constitution of the *Jewish* Church, then I conceive that a congregational Church with its Presbytery, where the Worship and the Discipline hold Pace together, is far more agreeable to the Constitution of that Church, which was one worshipping Congregation with its Presbytery, the *Sanhedrim*, and where the Bounds for the Worship and Government were the same, and not as in National Churches now, where the Worship is comprehended in a Parish, and the Government and Discipline extends to the whole Nation. And as there were Synagogues in the *Jewish* Congregation, where the whole Worship of the Church could not be perform'd; so there may be Meetings belonging unto a Congregational Church, wherein some Parts of Worship, and some Things pertaining to the Discipline may be done. But as the Commission will not allow of a Conformity to the *Jewish* Church in the Subordination of Church Officers, so as little can I see any Reason for a Conformity to that Church in a Subordination of Church Courts; and it will not be easy to prove, That these two Subordinations should not go together.

2. As our Lord has thus committed the whole Power of Discipline under himself to a Congregational

onal Church with its Presbytery, and left it free from any other Jurisdiction, so when the Apostles had erected such Churches with their Presbyteries, and were leaving them, they did not recommend them to the Care of any Superior Court or Synod, but to the Lord on whom they believed, and to the Word of his Grace; and this even when they were forewarning them of the Case of false Teachers, gross Errors, and Sects, the very Case for which Synods have been, by the Wisdom of Man, judged absolutely necessary, *Acts* xiv. 23. *Acts* xx. 17, 28—32. The Apostle directs unto Means to be used in this Case, under the Lord, and calls the Presbytery to take heed to themselves and to all the Flock, but speaks of no such Mean as a Superior Court over such a Presbytery.

There were Divisions and many Evils prevailing, and gross Errors held in some of the first Churches, as in the Church at *Corinth*, and some of the Churches in *Asia*; and these Churches are condemn'd for suffering such Things, and commanded to reform themselves, which they could not well do, if it belong'd to their Superiors; but there is no Insinuation of their Subjection in this Matter unto any superior Court under Heaven, having Jurisdiction over them, nor any Reference unto such Jurisdiction.

3. The greatest *Acts* of Church Government and Discipline, and the most important Decisions in Doctrine, that the New Testament speaks of, were in Congregational Churches, and in no other Courts; as may appear from the following Instances.

1. Excommunication and Absolution was in the Power of the Church at *Corinth*, *1 Cor.* v. *2 Cor.* ii. And to any that will impartially consider, *1 Cor.* xi. 18, 20. and xiv. 23. it will evidently appear to have been a Congregational Church. The Apostle indeed speaks of his delivering some unto Satan, *1 Tim.* i. 20. but it is not thereby clear that he did

it by himself alone, and not after the Manner pointed at, 1 *Cor.* v. 4, 5. even as it does not appear from his Saying, The Gift was given unto *Timothy* by the putting on of his Hands, 2 *Tim.* i. 6. that this was not done in the Presbytery of a Church, as we see it was, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. The trying and judging of false Apostles was a great Business, and this was done by the Elders with the Flock at *Ephesus*, *Rev.* ii. 2. compare *Acts* xx. 28. and that whole Flock did in the Days of *Ignatius* all partake of the Lord's Supper, and pray together in one Place.

2. The first Instance of Ordination is in the Church at *Jerusalem*, when it was manifestly but one Congregation, *Acts* i. and that Congregation was very far from comprehending all the Disciples of Christ then on the Earth: For it is clear from 1 *Cor.* xv. 6. that the Lord after his Resurrection was seen of above 500 Brethren at once, of whom the greater Part remain'd, when *Paul* wrote that Epistle; but the Number of the Names together was only about 120, when *Peter* stood up among them, and call'd them to proceed to the Ordination of an Apostle, in the Room of *Judas*, who was also, together with the Eleven, to be chosen unto the Oversight of that Church, *Acts* i. 14, 15, 20, 26. For tho' the Apostles had an immediate Commission to be Witnesses of the Lord's Resurrection, as had also *Matthias* by *Lot*, yet they behoved to be the Overseers or Bishops of that Church by the Suffrages of the Church. And whatever Power they had to preach the Gospel through the World, yet in Order thereto they first assembled themselves with the Church, that the Gospel might proceed out of a Church: even as we see *Paul* the great Apostle of the Gentiles assembled himself with the Church in *Antioch*, and from thence went forth into the Gentile World to fulfil his Commission. The Separation of *Timotheus* and *Barnabas* unto that great Work, to which the

the Holy Ghost call'd them, and the sending of them to it, was by the Presbytery of the Church in *Antioch*, *Acts* xiii. 1, 2, 3. and it is manifest from *Acts* xi. 23, 26. and xiv. 25, 26. and xv. 30. that this Church was but one Congregation. The Ordination of *Timothy* was by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, (*1 Tim.* iv. 14.) of some one or other of these Churches of which we read, *Acts* xiv. 23. compare *Acts* xvi. 1, 2, 3. and these are acknowledged to be Congregational; yea the constant Signification of the Word *Presbytery* in the Writings of the Ancients is, for what I can learn, the Eldership of one worshipping Congregation. And if these great Ordinations were transacted in the Congregations of the Saints, we need not go else where to find the Power of ordaining Bishops or Elders, *Acts* xiv. 23. and Deacons, *Acts* vi.

3. That great Decision in Doctrine, even the *ῥογιατά*, the Decrees about the keeping of *Moses's* Law by the Gentiles, *Acts* xv. was ordained by the Apostles and Elders of the Church in *Jerusalem*, in the Presence and with the Consent of that whole Church, *Acts* xvi. 4. and xv. 26. and by none other. For,

1. These Decrees were ordained by the Apostles, and these Elders with the Brethren that were in *Jerusalem*, before the Question and Dispute was rais'd at *Antioch*; even that Company that says, *We have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with Words*, ver. 23, 24.

2. As there is no Evidence that there were Elders or Messengers there from any other Church but *Antioch*; so the Company that made the Decision is evidently distinguished from the Messengers of *Antioch*, *Paul* and *Barnabas*; so that 'tis manifest they were not Members of that Court that made the Decision, ver. 22. — 25. Then pleased it the Apostles and Elders with the whole Church, to send chosen Men



*Men of their own Company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, &c.* and it does not appear that *Paul* and *Barnabas* acted otherwise in that Meeting, but as Messengers asking a Question in the Name of the Church that sent them, and giving Information, ver. 2, 4, 12.

3. We are plainly told, the Decision was made by the Apostles and Elders of *Jerusalem*, and that they decided this Question in the Presence and with the Consent of the whole Church in *Jerusalem*, to which they were Elders, *Acts* xvi. 4. and xv. 22. for by the whole Church I can understand nothing else, but the Body of the People, the Flock over which these Elders were Overseers, not a Church representative, as 'tis called, for that is Elders; but this Church is distinguish'd from the Elders, and is no other but that Multitude, of which *James*, in the Presence of all the Elders, spake to *Paul* when he came upon another Errand afterwards to *Jerusalem*, *Acts* xxi. 18, 19, 22, 25. This is the same Thing that goes under the Designation of Brethren, *Ch.* xv. 23. where all the Members of the Churches of the Gentiles in *Antioch*, *Syria* and *Cilicia* are the same Way design'd and distinguish'd from the Brethren in *Jerusalem*, that consented to the Decision, by their being of the Gentiles. This Designation appears to have been from the Beginning common to all Church-members, *Acts* i. 14, 15, 16. *1 Thess.* v. 12. for the Churches consisted then of none other but such as were fit to be thus design'd, and the Apostles reckon'd all Church-members their Brethren in Christ.

There were very good Reasons for the making of this Decision in this Church, and for the sending of this Question by the Church in *Antioch* to be determined here. As,

1. The false Teachers used the Authority of the Apostles and Elders of this Church, from whence they came out against *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Acts* i. 2, 24,

25, 26. and it was the Use of such Teachers at-  
 this to call the Apostleship of *Paul* in question,  
 and represent him unto the Churches where they  
 came, as differing from the Apostles.

2. The Word of God came out (1 *Cor.* xiv. 36.)  
 from this Church to *Antioch* and to all the World,  
 and from hence they had their Church Order, and all  
 the Ordinances of Christ, *Acts* xi. for this was pecu-  
 liar to *Jerusalem*, that there the Gospel should have  
 its Beginning. And it could not but trouble and  
 burden the Church at *Antioch* and all the Gentiles  
 exceedingly to think that this Church should be so  
 far offended with them, as not to account them in a  
 state of Salvation, *ver.* 1, 24, 28.

3. The Apostles were in this Church, and with the  
 Elders of this Church, where they began their Mi-  
 nistry, and settled all Matters of Importance; and  
 this was an important Point to be fixed in this Church,  
 while they were in it; therefore we see the Church  
 at *Antioch* had a special Eye to the Apostles their  
 being in the Presbytery of *Jerusalem*, when they sent  
 up this Question to be determin'd there, *ver.* 2.

Thus there is nothing like a Pattern for a Synod  
 of any Kind in the xv. Chapter of the *Acts*, but a  
 plain Pattern in the Churches at *Jerusalem* and *Antioch*,  
 the first of the *Jews*, and the first of the *Gen-  
 tiles*, for Congregational Churches with their Pres-  
 byteries, and for the Sort of Persons of which those  
 Churches ought to be made up, and for a Presby-  
 tery's doing Things not by number'd Votes, but by  
 Agreement, and for the Consent of the whole Church  
 where they rule unto their Decisions, and for such  
 Churches their mutually helping one another, and  
 all the Disciples of Christ through the World, as they  
 have Occasion; all which is freely acknowledged  
 by me.

4. It is not agreeable to the Nature of such Chri-  
 stian Churches as were from the Beginning, that  
 they

they should be subject to any Jurisdiction, but that of the Lord Christ their Head, or that they should not depend immediately upon himself. For, 1<sup>st</sup> 'Tis necessary unto that pure Communion in Brotherly-love, specially in the Lord's Supper, which ought to be in them, that they have it wholly in their Power under Christ to bind and loose; and their Communion in this Love cannot stand with their being over-ruled in this Matter by a Superior Court, loosing whom they judge Christ commands them to bind, and binding such as they judge he commands them to loose and receive in his Name. 2<sup>dly</sup>, Neither is it consistent with their free Choice of their Overseers and Teachers, and their maintaining of them at their own Charges, as the Word of God directs, That the making up and dissolving of the Relation betwixt them and any of these Overseers, should not be in their Power under Christ. 3<sup>dly</sup>, Every one of these Churches is a complete Church, representing and shewing forth the Catholick invisible Body of Christ, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. And it is not agreeable unto this, that they should be subjected to one another, or to any Jurisdiction but that of Christ, who is the Head of the Catholick Body, whose Power is manifested in their Discipline, and who is the alone Head of every one of them, walking in the midst of the Golden Candlesticks, and holding the Stars in his Right-hand, and in whom every Church of the Saints is visibly builded together, as the Catholick Church is invisibly, for an Habitation of God thro' the Spirit, Eph. ii. 21, 22.

Lastly, Synods took their Rise from that first Step of Defection from the primitive Institution, viz. the setting of one Bishop in a Church above the rest of the Presbytery, and making them dependent on him; so that they were no more his Peers, and could not be his Judges. This Corruption was very early, and

and came to pass thro' Negligence of that Direction, which the Apostle gave against Antichrist, 2 *Thess.* 15. Therefore Brethren stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle. And this Direction he gave after he had said before that the Mystery of Iniquity was already working. Yet this Step of Defection was not taken when *Clemens Rom.* wrote his Epistle to the Church at *Corinth*, tho' indeed he insinuates something of a Contention about the Name of the Episcopal Office, in the Foreknowledge of which, he says, the Apostles of Christ constituted Bishops and Deacons, and he speaks of no more Distinction betwixt Bishops and Presbyters than the Scripture does, Page 54, 55, 57. However, by this setting up of a new Kind of Bishops, and, in Consequence of that, Synods, the Way was pav'd for that notable Change that happened, when he who at first letted was taken out of the Way, and when the Emperour became Christian, and for that Uniformity which was the Throne of the Beast, the Seat of Tyranny over the Consciences of Men, and the Fountain of Persecution, and of shedding the Blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus, that kept the Commandments of God, and the Testimony of Christ, under the Notion of Hereticks and Schismaticks.

## II.

As touching the Magistrate's Power in the Kingdom of Christ, I have declar'd in what Sense I refuse to subscribe the *Confession* on that Head; and I have not yet been told, if that Sense, wherein I understand it, and refused to subscribe it, be now the Sense of this National Church.

I have been very far from denying the Magistrate's Power in any civil Society, yea or in any National Church; nor do I in the least question his Right of Judging in all Matters of wrong and wicked Lewdness, and even in all Things pertaining to National Churches

Churches, as by Law established: For where-ever grants civil Rights, or inflicts Penalties, there must judge, and there is the Exercise of his Power

I have not denied the Defence of the natural and civil Rights of Men in the Kingdoms of this World, while I declare that Christ's Kingdom is not of this World; and therefore admits not of a worldly Defence. And when I affirm that the natural and civil Rights of Mankind are to be defended in the Kingdoms of this World, I reckon that the Liberty of Mens Consciences is one of these Rights, and can not see Ground for the Magistrate's punishing Hereticks and Schismaticks as such.

But because this Head is not so much insisted on, and the Commission does not seem to make so much of it as of the foregoing, I shall not now take much Time with it.

### III.

So I proceed to the third Head; the *Contumacy*. And here I have been surpris'd at some, signifying that the other Grounds are not of such Moment, as to bear the Weight of the Censure, but this is not so, and tho' they would not depose Men for Congregational Principles, yet they would, for the Contumacy. Yet,

1. There is nothing in that which is called *Contumacy*, but what is influenced by these Principles, and it must be owned that, if Congregational Principles do not deserve such a Censure, he that holds them, and walks up to them, is less censurable than he that believes them, and does not practise them.

2. If the Grounds of forbidding me to preach were not sufficient, how is it possible that a Sentence upon these Grounds could loose me from the Obligation laid upon me to preach by the Law of Christ? And can it be a Ground for my *Deposition*, that I shew a greater Regard to his Command, than to an ill-founded Sentence of Suspension?

3. If it be the Mind of the Commission, that the Sentence of a Synod, tho' ill-founded, looses the Obligation upon a Minister to exercise his Ministry, and that he is to give Obedience to it without asking Questions ; and if he do not, must lose his Ministry ; then this must be told me, and supported with some Reason from the Word of God, and the *Confession of Faith* ; but if not, then of Necessity the Grounds of the Suspension were good, else there is no Evil in the Contumacy : For it cannot be call'd Evil to disobey a Command obliging me to sin against the Laws of Christ.

Thus I have laid before my Judges a plain Account of my Principles, and of the State of my Case as it now stands ; and so I leave it with their Consciences, as I commit it unto him, who is Head over all Things to his Church, and knows well how to order it for his own Glory and the Salvation of his Church, and is able to keep all that is committed to him against that Day.

JOHN GLAS.