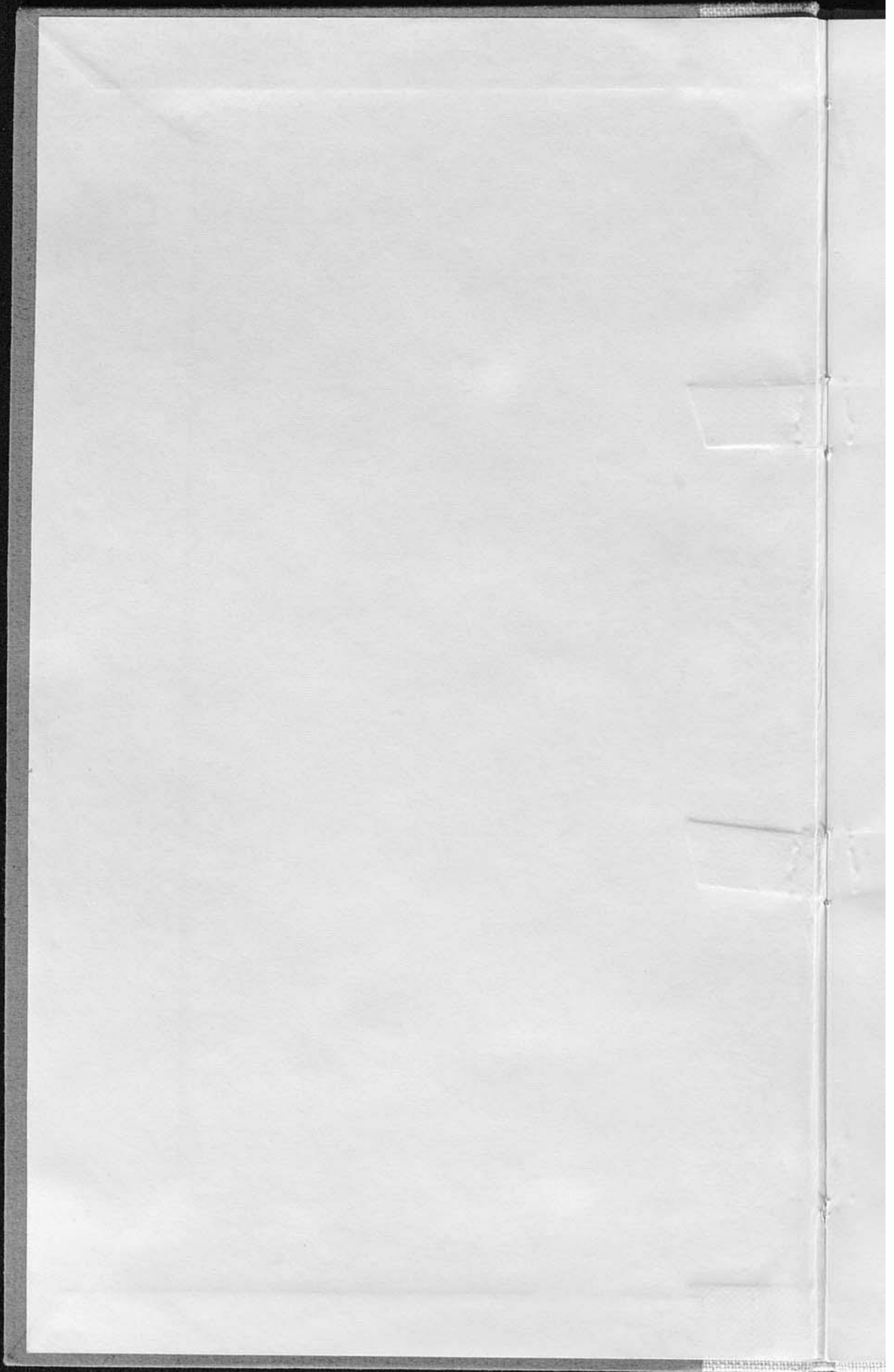
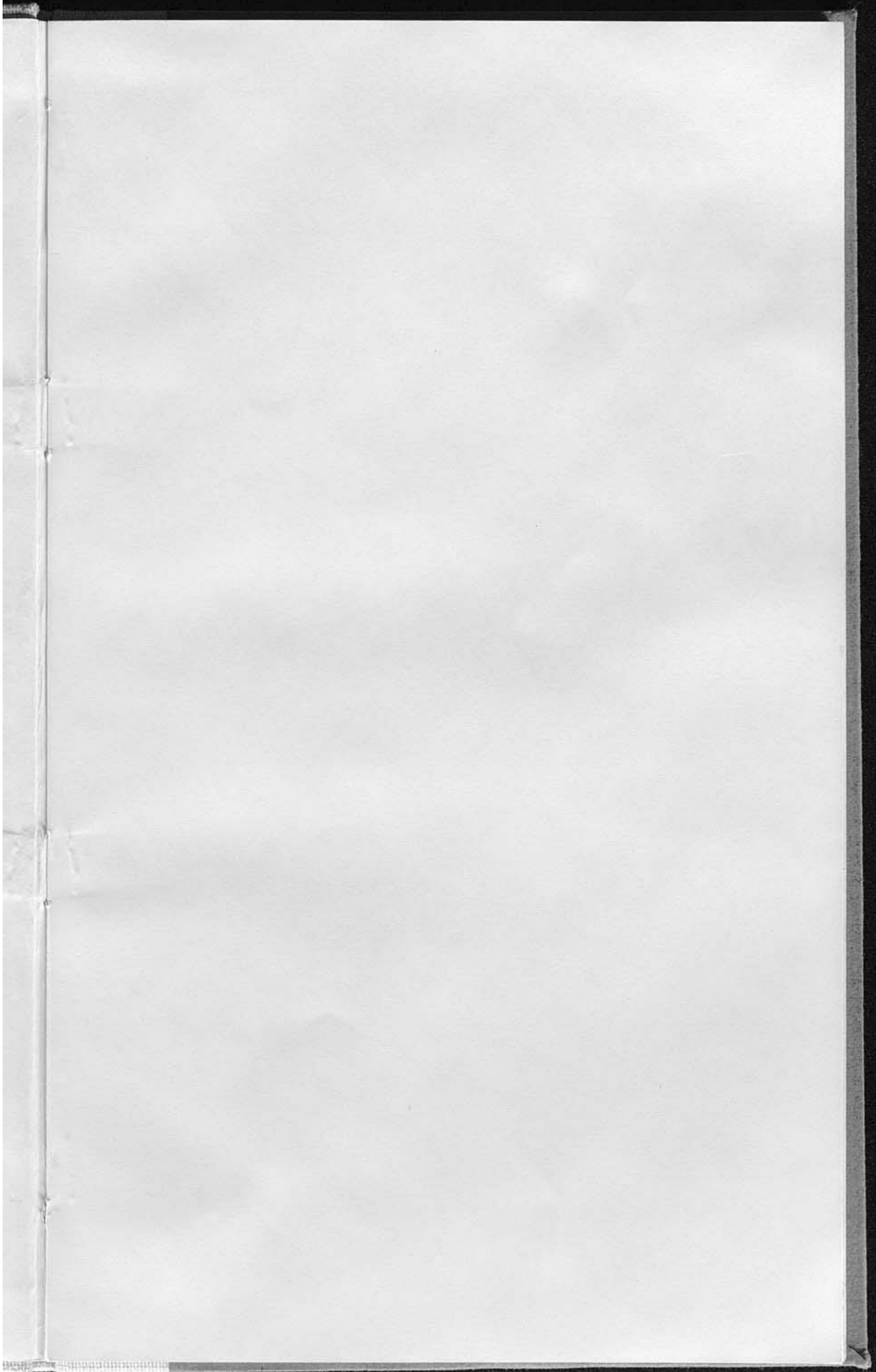
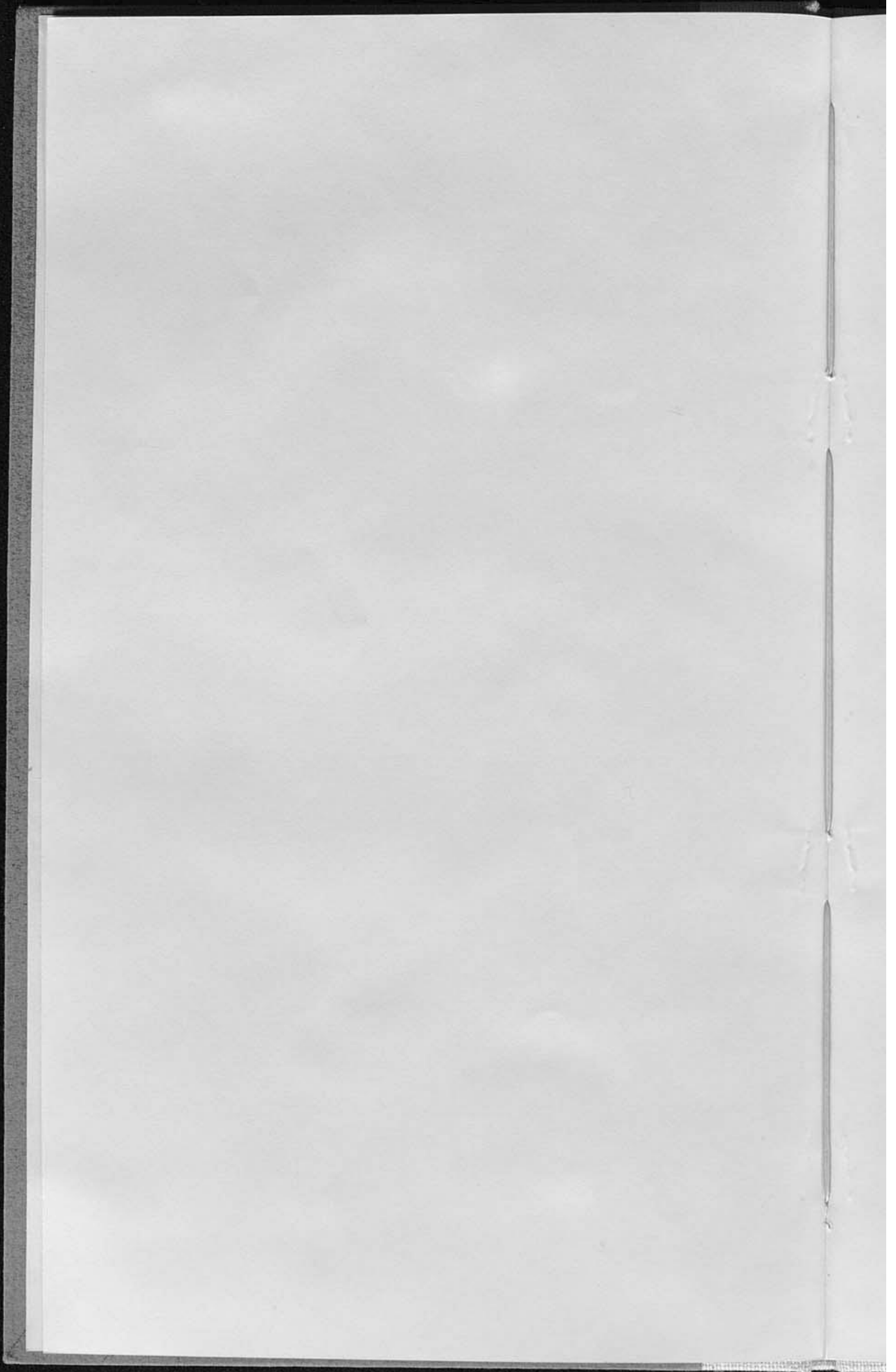
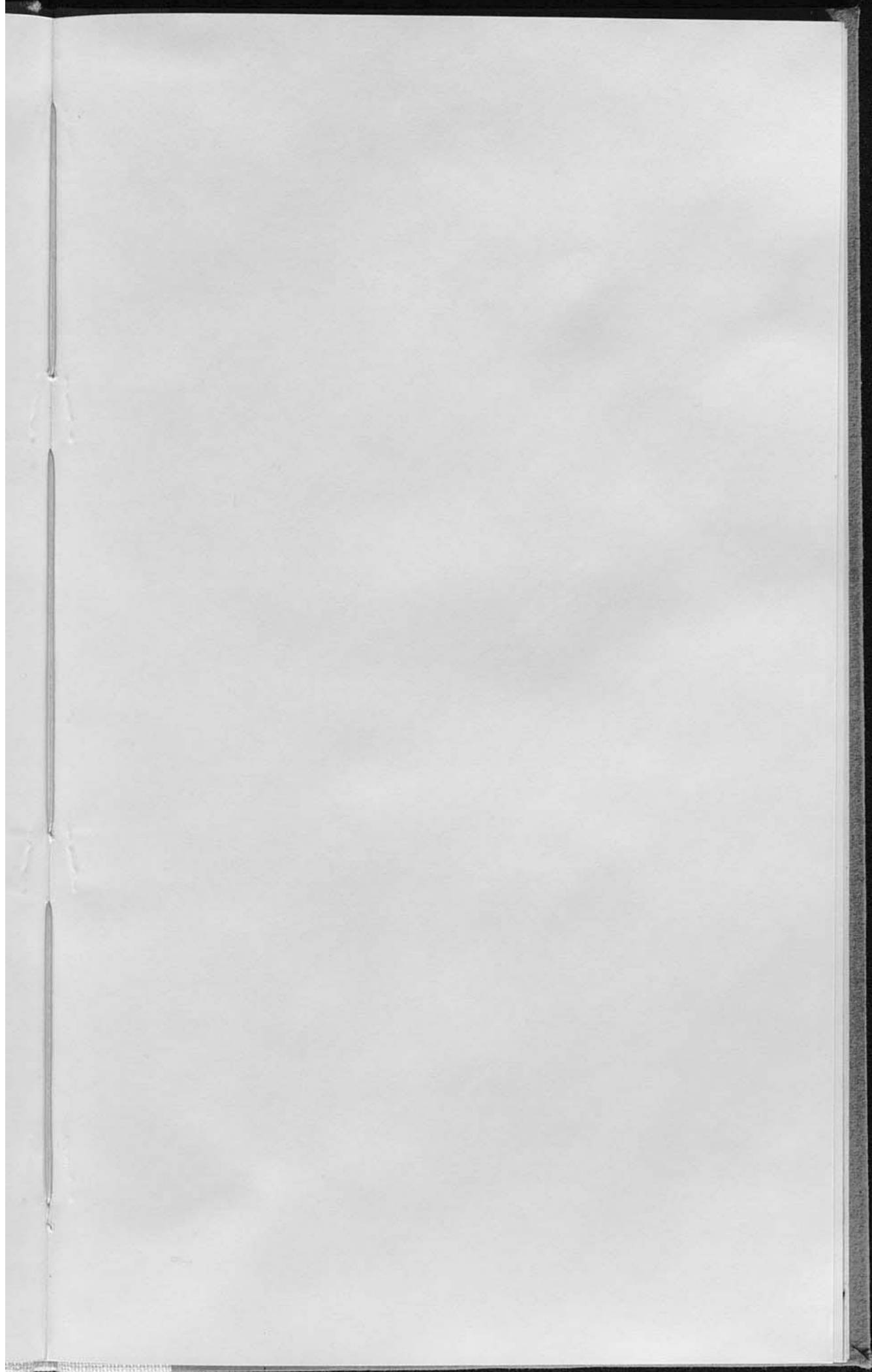


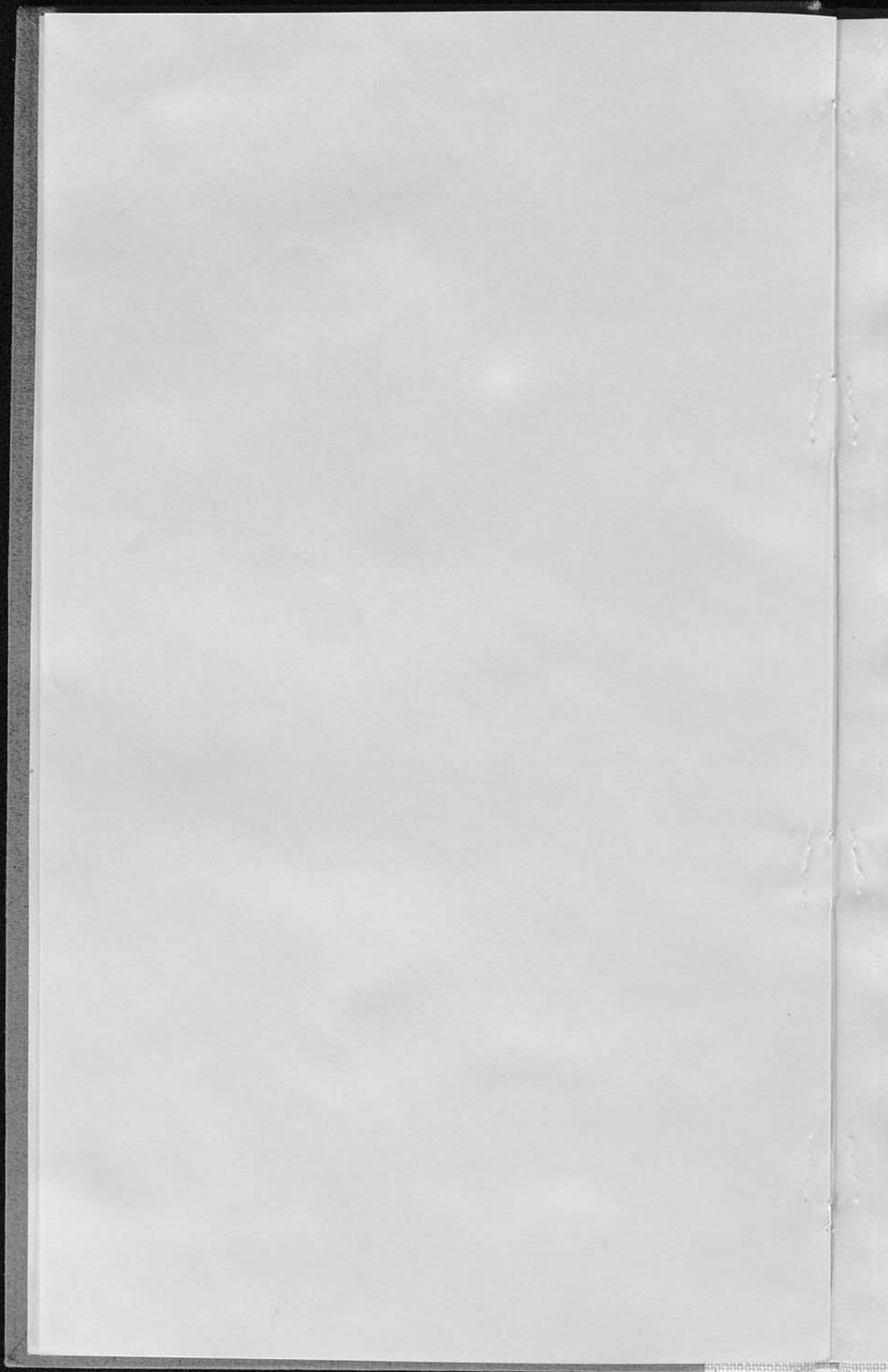
ADAM RANKIN'S REMARKS
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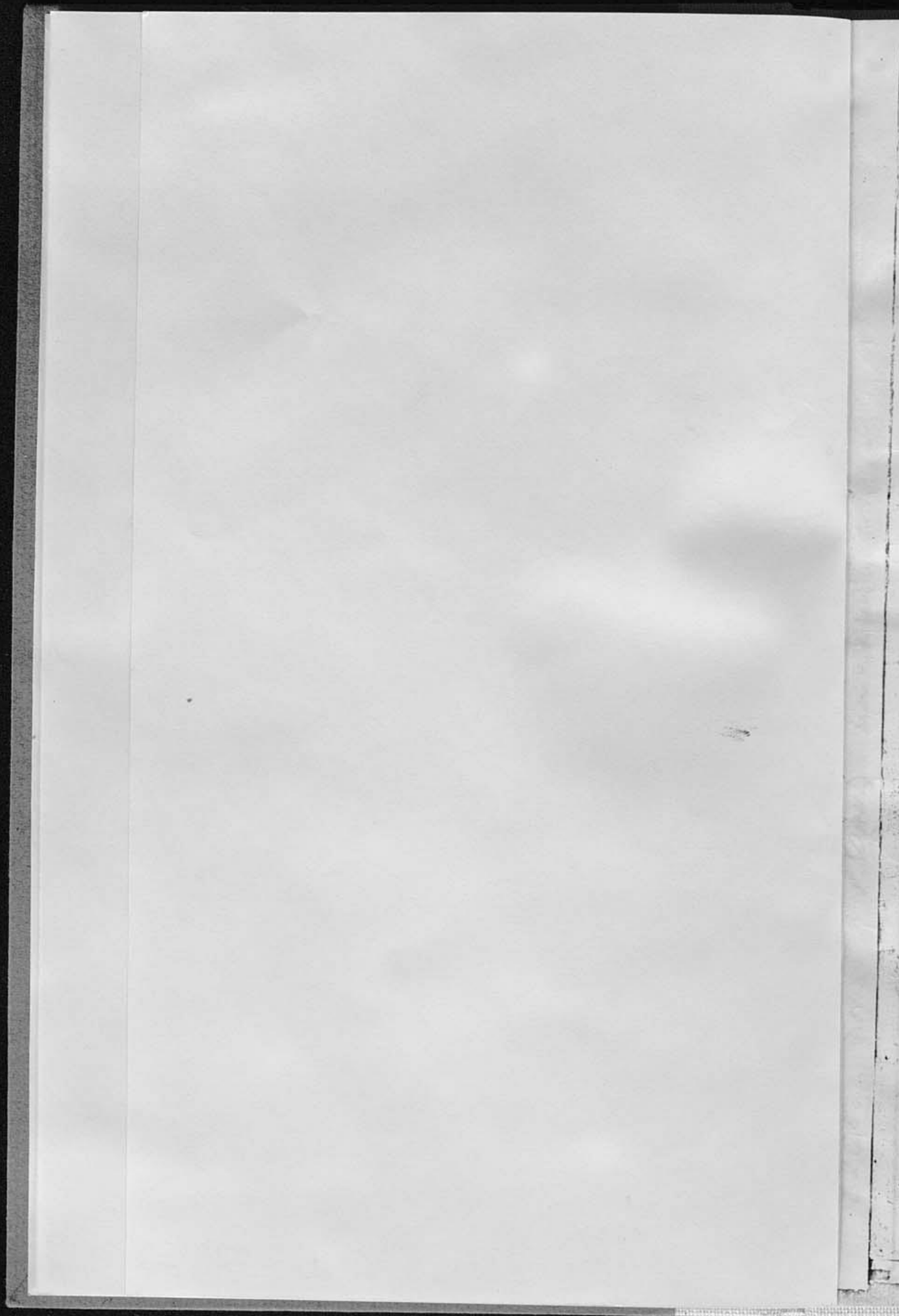












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NARRATIVE

Edward of Scotland
OF

MR. ADAM RANKIN'S

T. R I A L,

AND

REMARKS ON THE SAME,

WITH SOME

OBSERVATION ON HIS VINDICATION:

AND A

CONCLUDING

ADDRESS,

TO PROFESSORS OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN DENOMINATION.

Published by order of the *Transylvania Presbytery*.

EXINGTON:

Printed by W. MAXWELL & Co.

M, DCC, XCIII, 1793

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IN A R Y A T I

Mr ADAM RAIN

T R I A

AND

REMARKS ON THE

WITH SOME

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Published by order of the Synod

L I N G T O N

Printed by W. MAXWELL & CO

Edinburgh

\$2.25 9.19.60 * (Amer) Univ. Mic. 8-29-60

A N A R R A T I V E
Of Mr. ADAM RANKIN'S
T R I A L &c.

AT a meeting of the Transylvania Presbytery, at Mr. Haggin's, October 7, 1789. sundry papers were presented to the Presbytery, containing several charges against *Mr. Adam Rankin*; on which it was resolved, that a Committee of three members, meet at Sion church, on the third Monday in November, to prepare the way for trial.

The Committee met according to appointment, proceeded to do some of the business before them, and adjourned to meet the second Thursday in next December, and met according to adjournment. At these meetings they received the following charges, viz.

Whereas *Mr. Rankin*, debars from the table of the Lord, all who acquiesce in Dr. Watts' preface; it is given in as a farther part of the charge, by Samuel Blair, that *Mr. Rankin* said, the Doctor's preface and psalms were all one. Witnesses, Robert Patterson, James M'Dowell, James Trotter.

Mr. Rankin affirmed the day, certain questions were given him to answer, "That *Mr. Rice* is of the opinion that Dr. Watts denies the eternal existence of the Son of God." The witnesses are as above.

Mr. Rankin said, "That *Mr. Samuel Shannon*, is erroneous principles, a dangerous man, and he would not come within the bounds of his

Given in by Col. Patterson. Witness, well.

Mr. Blair declares in a letter, "That *Mr. Rankin*, charges the body of Presbyterian divines, with de and blasphemy," The said Blair undertakes to support said charge by the witnesses, James

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McDowell, Robert Steel, Joseph Walker, James Trotter, Robert Patterson, John Maxwell, Robert Wallace. The above charge of deism and blasphemy is brought against the body of Presbyterian divines, on account of their using Dr. Watts' psalmody, and was publicly said at Mount Sion, the first Sabbath he preached there, after his return from the general assembly.

I Samuel Blair, "Do charge *Mr. Rankin*, with pretending to an immediate revelation from Heaven, in a dream, which determined him not to use Dr. Watts' psalms and hymns." Witness, Alexander Maxwell.

And with saying, "That the divine being had raised him up as an instrument to overthrow the use of Dr. Watts' psalmody in the church, and that he would live to see the day, that he himself would do it." Witness, Robert Steel.

Also with saying, "That every thing of importance to him, was always beforehand revealed to him." Witness, John Maxwell.

"And when a day was appointed to choose elders, he refused to proceed to the choice, because it had not as yet been revealed to him, that it was necessary to do it." Witnesses, Robert Steel, James Trotter.

Mr. Rankin is charged by report, with calling Watts' psalms the rebels of the king of Heaven. Witnesses, James Trimble, William Walker, William Scott.

There were also certain questions written by *Rankin's own hand*, and given in as a charge him. The most material things contained are as follow.

When he was asked by what authority to the general assembly, and whom he answered, "Tell me was the institution of Heaven, or of men, and I will tell you by what authority I did these things."

In his answers to others, he says "I solemnly

debar from the table of the Lord, all who acquiesce in Dr. Watts' preface."

"I can make it appear that he (Dr. Watts) denies Christ was the eternal Son of God; that he holds the precepts of the Old and New Testament are contrary."

"I profess myself a member of the Transylvania Presbytery; I do not join with all the members in full communion so long as they continue to countenance Watts' errors.

By order of the committee, *Mr. Rankin* and all others concerned in the trial, were cited to attend the next stated session of the Presbytery: but instead of obeying this citation, *Mr. Rankin* left this country, and never returned until about the end of the year 1791.

At a presbytery, which met at Cane-run church, on February 28, 1792, in consequence of certain information that *Mr. Rankin* was returned to this country, and probable information that he continued to act on the same principles as before his departure; he and all concerned in his trial, were ordered to be cited, to attend the next presbytery.

The presbytery met at Stoner-mouth church, on the 24th of April, 1792, and was continued by adjournments until the 27th. *Mr. Rankin's* trial came on the 25th and continued the 26th. All persons who had been, or were concerned in the trial were present, except three witnesses, one of whom was dead. The witnesses were examined, their depositions recorded and subscribed by them, which are as follows:

John Patterson testified, "That at Mount Sion house, *Mr. Rankin*, being asked whether the preface and p. 10 and p. 11 were all of a piece, or words set to the text: *Mr. Rankin*, answered the preface was to come after."

James Trotter testified the above,

James Trotter

Robert Steel testifieth, "That *Mr. Rankin*, at Sion meeting-house, soon after his return from the Northward in 1789, charged Dr. Watts, with holding that there was a contrast* between the Old and New Testament; that he denied the eternal sonship of Jesus Christ, and that his favourites to the Northward were of the same opinion."

Joseph Walker testifieth, "That *Mr. Rankin*, at Sion meeting-house soon after his return from the Northward, in the year 1789 charged Dr. Watts with holding that there was a contrast between the Old and New Testament; that he denied the eternal sonship of Jesus Christ, which he, the said *Rankin*, looked upon blasphemy and deism, and that Dr. Watts' friends to the Northward were of the same opinion."

James Trotter and Robert Wallace testified the above, and the former that it was said publicly.

Robert Steel testifieth, "That *Mr. Rankin* said the divine being had raised him up as an instrument to overthrow the use of Dr. Watts' psalmody in the church, and that he would live to see the day that he himself would do it."

Robert Patterson testifieth, "That *Mr. Rankin* appointed a day for choosing elders, and when the day came, *Mr. Rankin* refused to proceed in the business of the day, because, he said, the expediency of it, had not as yet been revealed to him, or words to that amount.

John Maxwell testifieth, "That *Mr. Rankin* after his return from a presbytery in the old settlement, where he was called upon to answer to a charge exhibited against him; he asked *Mr. Rankin* how ters went, *Mr. Rankin* answered very well: but he knew before he went away, for every ^{eg of} importance to him, was always beforehand ^{eated} to him."

James Trotter testifieth, "That *Mr. Rankin* appointed a day for choosing elders, when the day,

* *Mr. Rankin* by contrast, professedly meant contradictions.

came, he declined proceeding in the business of the day, and among other reasons for so doing, gave one that it had not yet been revealed to him, that it was necessary; and one other reason, that where the session was large, it generally destroyed the influence of the head of the session, or words to that amount.

William Galloway, Richard Steel and David Logan, testify, "That they do not recollect that they knew of any person, being offended at any thing *Mr. Rankin* said on the day appointed for choosing elders, nor do they remember that *Mr. Rankin* said, any thing from which it could be infered that he was directed in any part of his conduct, by extraordinary revelation.

James Trimble testifieth, "That *Mr. Rankin* said, to the northward, at the Lord's table, he saw it spread from the one end to the other (he thinks the expression was, but not certain) with the rebels of the word of God."

William Scott deponent saith, he understood the expression to be "The rivals of the word of God.

David Logan and William Rankin deponents, say, that they understood the expression to be, "rivals of the word of God."

Mr. Rankin was allowed full liberty to introduce what witnesses he thought necessary, and to answer for, and defend himself.

He acknowledged at least, the greater part of the testimony of the witnesses, which respects and proves his reasons brown out against *Dr. Watts*' psalmody, and his use of it.

Instead of manifesting his sorrow, for his un-
 derstanding of his brethren, which censures
 all the ministers and christians on
 ear of every denomination, he endeavoured
 to entertain a debate about the propriety of singing
Watts psalms and hymns, which he knew were gene-
 rally approved and practised by the higher judicatures
 of our church, and of which, therefore, the presby-

tery of Transylvania, had no business to judge. The use of this psalmody, he might have protested against, and left the church which generally approved of and practised it: but while he continued a member of that church, he could not consistently expect, that the presbytery would condemn a practice, which had the public and avowed approbation of the main body to which they belonged. The presbytery could not have justified *Mr. Rankin*, without condemning the main body as guilty of making the scriptures contradict themselves, and of deism and blasphemy: which would have been as great an absurdity as for an inferior civil court to censure, and condemn the proceedings of the supreme court. This kind of defence, then, the prebytery could not admit. When *Mr. Rankin* was checked in this, or in things foreign to his proper defence, or in attempts to lead the presbytery wrong, he complained that he could not get a hearing in his own defence; to which it was answered, that if he would speak to the point in hand, he should have full privilege to defend himself; which accordingly he had, and spoke a considerable part of two days.

With respect to his pretensions to divine revelation, which was proved against him; he acknowledged he told a certain dream or dreams, but attempted to exexplain them away, as signifying no more than certain inward exercises of the children of God; and expressed his sorrow for doing so as a thing highly improper. But according to a part of *Mr. Rice's* testimony since taken, which says, that *Mr. Rankin* informed him, "That it was made known to him in a dream, that he must inform *Mr. Rice*, that he was directed by his dreams." There could be no great sincerity or consistency in this confession unless he meant to confess that his dream had deluded him. He frequently denied that he made any pretensions to divine revelation, and said, "Such freedom of expression I have not been acquainted with, that future things were revealed to me."

After his thus denying that he made any pretences to divine revelation, and denying the testimony of the witnesses proving such pretensions; he came to a pause: upon which Mr. Crawford rose and spoke to this effect; I find myself now in very peculiar circumstances, and am bound in duty and conscience, as a member of Presbytery, and minister of the gospel, to say, that *Mr. Rankin* is declaring a positive falsehood, which I know to be such, and of which he himself must be conscious: and if the Presbytery chuse it, I will explain myself. *Mr. Rankin* objected to Mr. Crawford's being admitted as a witness; perhaps because he had not been previously cited, or because a member of presbytery: to which it was replied that a witness had been admitted under the same circumstances, in favour of *Mr. Rankin*, and at his demand. The Presbytery then voted that Mr. Crawford should be sworn, which was done; and his deposition is as follows.

James Crawford deponent saith, That he invited *Mr. Rankin* to assist him in administering the sacrament of the Lord's supper; that on the Friday before the sacrament, *Mr. Rankin* gave him to know, that he could not come to the sacrament, if Dr. Watt's psalms and hymns were used, he could not join in communion. Said deponent saith; that he returned for answer, that it was the mind of the session: that the request could not be complied with; and accordingly *Mr. Rankin* did not attend the sacrament. In conversation some time after, in Lexington, said deponent saith, that *Mr. Rankin* told him that having prayed for direction, it was made known to him in a dream (the interpretation of which was made known to him with the fullest certainty when he awoke) that he should not attend the sacrament of the supper that he saw in his dream, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper administered by said deponent, and the great or whole dependence was laid on Watt's psalms; that Watt's hymns were included in the re-

presentation of the psalms; that in all matters of consequence, he was under an extraordinary divine direction; that in consequence of such direction he moved to and settled in this country. The deponent saith, he is not to be understood, as affirming the above is literally in the words of *Mr. Rankin*; but that his words fully communicated the same ideas with the above. Said deponent farther saith, that *Mr. Rankin* gave him to know that the use of Dr. Watts' psalms would be laid aside in the church; the knowledge of this, he obtained in the same extraordinary way as above: that being asked by the deponent, when this should come to pass, he would not fix the time.

Mr. Rankin, again denied that he had by any means told *Mr. Crawford*, that he had made such pretensions to divine revelation, as *Mr. Crawford's* oath declares he did. *Mr. Rankin* acknowledged his sorrow that he told his dreams, and his religious exercises; but not that he told them as divine revelation. Had there been no pretensions to divine revelation, there would have been no cause of sorrow; he that hath a dream, may tell a dream without sin (Jer. 23. 28.) but if he pretends to divine revelation, when it is only a dream, he is chargeable with causing the people of God to forget his name by his dreams. (v. 27.) He was charged with pretending to divine revelation in his dreams, and that by them he was directed in all matters of importance, in which he was at a loss to know his duty: this he did not confess; and for this he professed no sorrow.

[The Presbytery, at a session occasionally called, since *Mr. Rankin* published his defence, thought it expedient to request *Mr. Rice's* testimony upon the subject of *Mr. Rankin's* dreams; which he gave, and is as follows:

I David Rice do testify, That when at *Mr. Rankin's* on a certain occasion, he told me, that in all matters of importance in which he was at a loss to know his duty, he was directed in his dreams; that in such

cases he prayed to the Almighty for direction in this way; that after prayer he dreamed, and was directed in his dreams, as to the matter of his request; that as he was a weak man, God condescended to give him instruction in this way. He informed me of several instances of his being thus directed, viz. That a certain debate, which happened in Presbytery, had been made known to him beforhand; that one in the old settlement, finding himself at a loss to know whether he ought to sing Watts' psalms or hymns, he prayed for direction in that matter, and had his duty made known to him in a dream; that in the same way he was informed, that a certain candidate for the gospel ministry, ought not to proceed in his trials; of which candidate, he had the evening before his dream, expressed his very good opinion, and great desire that he should proceed: he told me also that he was directed in a dream to inform me, that he was thus directed in his dreams*. I was sensibly affected by this information, and warned *Mr Rankin* of the dangerous consequences; that I apprehended he was on dangerous ground, subject to be led into great errors and delusions. On which he said, he knew that those who had never experienced it, could form no judgement about it. I then desisted from warning him of the danger he was in; but expressed my great disapprobation of men's relying on their dreams for direction, in matters respecting sin and duty. Before we parted, he requested me, three or four times that I would not divulge what he had told me. As soon as he made this request, it struck my mind, that I might probably see the day, when it would be my duty to make it known; yet, as it was committed to me in the confidence of friendship, I resolved to keep the secret, until I should think myself called in duty to divulge it. To me it did not appear that we should long hold communion, and act harmoniously together, while we had such different rules of direction, as the sacred scriptures, and night visions.]

* Will the reader please to compare this with p. 38. l. 26, & downwards of *Dr. Rankin's* vindication?

Mr. Rankin in the charge of divine revelation, laid against him, argued that instead of one charge, it amounted to several (as may be likewise seen in his publication) that there was but one witness to support most of these charges.

The state of the case is this, which the Presbytery laid before *Mr. Rankin*, in the time of his trial viz. His claim, and the ground of claim to divine revelation, he told to different persons, at different times; sometimes it was a dream, again by saying it was revealed; or things were revealed to him. These things were told as a secret generally, in some cases secrecy requested by him. Therefore, one witness mostly might be expected; notwithstanding, it is but one charge, viz. of pretending to divine revelation, and several witnesses to support it, with these additional circumstances to gain credit to their testimony, that it was told them at different times, and different subjects of this revelation related by him.

That part of the charges in which *Mr. Rice's* name is mentioned, appeared not to be what should have been given in to the committee: *Mr. Rankin*, and the witnesses said, what was designed, and what the witnesses were to prove, was, "That *Mr. Rice* denied the eternal existence of the Son of God." This, which was a much heavier charge than the other, *Mr. Rankin* acknowledged.

The person who brought the charge of slandering *Mr. Shannon*, failed through neglect (as it appeared before Presbytery) to get more witnesses than one, and the testimony of that witness could not be heard.

The other charges were fully proved, though a great part was denied by *Mr. Rankin*; yet part was acknowledged, which respects his censures of those who use *Dr. Watts' psalmod*, and the Presbytery was obliged to judge, and determine the trial, according to the testimony of the witnesses, not only from reason and scripture, but by the form of process in the judicatures of our church, which as it applies in this instance is

as follows: "If the minister when he appears will not confess; but denies the facts alledged against him; if on hearing the witnesses the charges appear important and well supported, the Presbytery must nevertheless censure him; and suspend or depose him, according to the nature of the offence."

The Presbytery having heard the witnesses, and *Mr. Rankin's* defence, drew up a summary of what was proved against him, and judged him censurable; which is contained in the following extract of the minutes.

"Whereas it has been proved before this Presbytery that the *Rev. Adam Rankin* has declared and said that he is the subject of extraordinary divine revelation, that he has taken the same as a director in part, in the discharge of his ministerial function, and in all matters of importance, and has been the means of preventing him from joining in communion with those who were in the use of Dr. Watts' psalms, and that he calls Dr. Watts' psalms, the rivals of the word of God, and says himself he does not join with some of the members of this Presbytery in communion, so long as they countenance Dr. Watts' errors, with other declarations, and things proved, of the like nature, as appears from the deposition taken: therefore the Presbytery Judge said, *Mr. Rankin*, censurable." To which it may be added (which is also proved by the witnesses, and more than acknowledged in his vindication) that he charged the body of Presbyterian divines, with deism and blasphemy.

The Presbytery having judged as above, called in *Mr. Rankin*, to acknowledge the things proved against him; he refused and said, "I appeal to God, Angels and men, that I protest against the proceeding of Presbytery, and will be no longer a member of the Transylvania Presbytery; and immediately went out.

The Presbytery then wholly suspended *Mr. Rankin* from the exercise of the ministerial function, until the next stated session.

They suspended him until the next stated Presbytery, that he might have time coolly to consider matters, and recall the declaration he had made, if he should be so disposed.

At a Presbytery which met at Rode run church, October 2, 1792, and was continued by adjournments until the 6th. authentic information was received, that *Mr. Adam Rankin*, agreeable to the declaration he had made on the day of his suspension, had actually separated himself from the Transylvania Presbytery, and from the church, of which he was formerly a member, and was forming separate societies; they, therefore, not merely for the things proved against him, at his trial, but for these, his schismatical proceedings deposed him. The sentence is as follows:

“Whereas *Mr. Adam Rankin* was suspended the last stated session of Presbytery, and the present session unanimously approves of said judgment, and *Mr. Rankin*, since his suspension, has not been subject to his brethren in the Lord; but has preached as frequently since, as before his suspension; has been forming a number of congregations, and administered the sealing ordinances of the gospel repeatedly, and having sufficient reason to believe that he is determined to go on in the same course, this Presbytery, do unanimously declare that said *Adam Rankin* has no right to exercise any of the duties of the ministerial function, at any time, nor in any place; and that as he was set apart to the office of a gospel minister, and the discharge of the duties of the same, by the officers of the Presbyterian church; so by the same authority (being until now a minister and member of this Presbytery, under suspension) the said office is taken from him, and he forbid to discharge any of the duties of the same, and it is hereby done, and declared to be done, by that authority which Christ the head hath given his church and his congregations, or pastoral charge is declared vacant.”

An order was made that the above sentence be pub

ished in the congregations, under the care of this Presbytery.

Mr. Crawford, according to order, transmitted a copy of *Mr. Rankin's* suspension to him in due time, and Mr. Rice, sent him a copy of his being deposed.

Having given this compeñious narrative of *Mr. Rankin's* trial, we would proceed to make a few remarks on the same.

R E M A R K S.

THOUGH there was much said in the course of *Mr. Rankin's* trial about Dr. Watts, and his imitation of the psalms; it was not because he thought differently from his brethren on this subject, that he was tried and censured. It is hereby declared that his particular sentiments merely in the use of psalmody, were never considered as any ground of censure, or sufficient cause of alienation of affection: he was censured for unchristian and uncharitable reflections on his brethren, for their use of Dr. Watts' psalms and hymns, his charging them on this account, with deism, blasphemy, &c. and that after he had agreed with some of them to exercise mutual forbearance.

Those who spread contrary reports, cannot produce a single evidence for it, and those who believe it, do it on the most unwarrantable foundation.

Mr. Rankin by profession, and part of his practice, acknowledged himself to be a minister and member of the Presbyterian church, and of Transylvania Presbytery, until his trial. In this church he was licensed to preach the gospel, and ordained a minister; and professed himself a member of the Transylvania Presbytery, given under his own hand, as a minister of this church he acted in this country: on the morning before his trial he took his seat in Presbytery: his declaring, after he knew the opinion of Presbytery, that he would be *no longer* a member, evidently implied the same thing. But notwith-

stating this, he had for some time before been undet-
 mining the characters of his brethren, charging them
 with great errors in doctrine, and throwing heavy
 censures upon them, sometimes in private conversa-
 tion, at others, in the most insinuating manner in
 public; and thus under the mask of friendship, act-
 ing the part of an enemy. If he believed any of his bre-
 thren, to be fundamentally erroneous, and could not
 otherwise reclaim them, it was his duty to enter pro-
 cess against them, and to conduct it agreeable to the
 word of God, and the directory of our church. This,
 he was bound to do, both as christian and a minis-
 ter of the gospel; or if he apprehended the main body
 of the ecclesiastical judicature to be so corrupt, as to
 preclude all probability of a fair and impartial trial,
 he ought no longer to have professed himself a mem-
 ber, or minister of our church, but peaceably to have
 withdrawn. If after his suspension, he thought the
 Presbytery had proceeded irregularly, or judged
 wrong, he should have appealed to the Synod. This
 became necessary, in order to preserve consistency;
 since he was a professed member of Presbytery, un-
 til they judged him worthy of censure. If he knew
 the Synod of Virginia to be so partial, as to preclude
 all hope of justice, why profess any connexion with
 that body? If he, beforehand, saw the whole body
 to be so corrupt, he must beforehand, have been de-
 termined not to continue in communion: why then
 profess to be a member? Was it not that Presbytery
 might be obliged to do, what he was determined at
 any rate should be done; that he might have an op-
 portunity to complain of the hardship, in order to
 move compassion? This we think is implied in what
 he says page 53 of his defence. "All things were
 grown ripe for a separation, and Presbytery helped
 to such *desireable steps* as made all things evident to
 the sensible and conscientious." It may likewise,
 we apprehend, be infered from page 69. 15 first
 lines. According to many things in *Mr. Rankin's*

defence he could not, consistent with the character of an honest conscientious man, have continued a member of Presbytery, or Synod; but was in duty bound to separate: this he saw, and this he virtually acknowledges. For what purpose then, we say, did he declare himself a member? why blame Presbytery for putting him in a situation, which he was obliged to be in, by his own principles? why blame Presbytery for excluding him from communion, when he could not continue in communion with them without sin?

When *Mr. Rankin* first became a preacher, he knew very well, that his brethren, almost without exception, approved of the use of Watts' psalms and hymns in divine praise; which is the great and fundamental error, as it makes the scripture clash with itself. He informs us page 69 of his defence, "That since he entered on the ministry he had not, to his knowledge, made a single change in any point of principle." If *we* were the same, and *he* was the same, how strange that he should form any connexion with us! he must have believed *then* as he does *now*, that his brethren were guilty of gross and fundamental errors: was he not therefore extremely to blame to enter the gospel ministry in a church so very corrupt? would it not *then* if *known*; and does it not *now* carry the face of great deception? he certainly knew that they must renounce their principles, or he his; or else the connexion must break, and a separation inevitably take place. If he had changed his opinion (which he says he had not) and concluded that to be wrong, which he had before thought right, or that to be a fundamental error, which he had before esteemed less essential; so that he could not in conscience have continued in communion, he ought to have protested against their errors, and withdrawn from all connexion with them. Before his trial, he was fully acquainted with the sentiments of the Synod of New-York, and Philadelphia, and

of the General Assembly, as well as the rules of conduct to which they intended to adhere, it appears from many things in his publication, that his design was not to continue in connexion; yet for some end or other, he would acknowledge himself a member of Transylvania Presbytery, though he intended to go out, he would not go, until he was driven out.

Those who joined *Mr. Rankin* in his state of se-
 peration formed themselves into a judicature which they called *the House*. This house judged and acquitted *Mr. Rankin*, as not censurable in any part of his conduct; and therefore, at least implicitly, condemned the proceedings of Presbytery, without even hearing them in their own defence. Thus they assumed the prerogative of Synod, or rather acted as absolute independents. They stand detached, as *Mr. Rankin* expresses it page 69th, not only from all communion, but from all communication with any society. They placed a man at their head as their teacher who had no right to preach the gospel, nor administer its ordinances, because suspended, and afterwards deposed, by the disciplinary sentence of the same church which first licensed, and ordained him. He assumed the office of a gospel minister without the order, or appointment of any church on earth, except the house which rejudged and acquitted him. Those who encourage and join him, do virtually say, either that any man may assume the ministerial office when he pleases, or that the right of judging of their qualifications, and of licensing, and ordaining ministers, is in themselves, they must claim this right, or own they are a disorderly society and that the ordinances of the gospel are administered among them by one who has no right to dispense them.

Several expressions in the charges brought against *Mr. Rankin*, and in the depositions, by which these charges are proved, may appear something obscure, equivocal, or impertinent. Had he only published a narrative of his trial, it might have been suspected

that the Presbytery made more of these expressions than they would naturally bear, discovered a fondness to find him guilty, and treated him with unmerited severity. But in his publication he has abundantly justified the sense in which they understood him; and shewn that in his uncharitable censures, he took the same tract, and went all the length, they judged he had done. He has there let the world know that by his doubtful expressions he really did mean, what the Presbytery not merely suspected, but *knew* he meant. See Pages 15, 23, 25, 27, 34, 36, &c.

We would now make a few observations on *Mr. Rankin's* vindication.

We do not mean to answer this production, but only to point out a few things which may enable any sensible and impartial reader to answer and confute it. A full and formal refutation, would be an unjustifiable waste of time, both to the writer and reader.

O B S E R V A T I O N S.

1. WE observe, in this publication, many false representations, and false assertions, with regard to matters of fact. We shall only mention a few instances, as a specimen; and leave the reader to judge, whether they are wilful, or the effect of suspicion and jealousy.

In his dedication to the Associate Synod, he says, "I present you with the event of a sore and tedious trial, I have endured in defence of principles you have much recommended." Here he is mistaken, unless the Associate Synod, have principles leading them to reproach, in an unchristian manner, those who differ from them in religious opinions, and practice, not essential to christianity; or to believe that *Mr. Rankin* is the subject of divine revelation, and directed by it, in all matters of consequence, in which he was at a loss; because on these accounts he endured the trial,

In Page 5, and 6, He says, " They (meaning the Presbytery) finding a rumour among the people, appointed a committee to meet at Lexington, in Nov. 1789, to take in the complaints of the people, and form them into charges." This committee was not appointed in consequence of a rumour, but of sundry papers containing a charge, or charges against *Mr. Rankin*. They were not appointed to form the complaints into charges, neither did they do it; but to prepare the way for trial. It should be noted here, that *Mr. Rankin* fully concurred in the appointment of the committee.

In what he calls the 2d charge, page 7, he says, " here the accuser knowing it to be a lie, sagaciously concealed his name, and the witnesses summoned refused to prove the charge, and the slander fell on the committee." The narrative shews that the slander fell on *Mr. Rankin*, and that the accuser was under no temptation to tell a known lie, unless he designed to favour the accused.

In his defence against the charge of slandering *Mr. Shannon*, he says, " The committee is censurable for receiving an accusation at the mouth of one witness," referring to 1 Tim. 5; 19. Not to receive an accusation, in the sense of the apostle, must mean, not to believe it upon the testimony of a single witness, so as to judge and censure the Elder while he pleads innocent. This passage of scripture is therefore by no means applicable to the case of the committee, because they heard no testimonies, passed no judgment, or censure, on *Mr. Rankin*, on account of any accusation, and consequently no foundation to say they were censurable,

In page 40 he says, " They (meaning some of the members of the general assembly) published the plan while I was in Philadelphia, and sent it in a letter, by a gentleman in Lexington, to *Mr. Rice*." *Mr. Rice* denies that ever he received such letter from any person or persons, in Philadelphia, or any other part

of the world—Again, page 52, “letters came (meaning from the general assembly, or some of its members) to Transylvania Presbytery to bring about the process, which was executed.” This is absolutely false. We never received any such letters from the general assembly, nor heard of them by any other means, than *Mr. Rankin's* publication.

Mr. Rice received a letter from a member of the Synod of Virginia, blaming the Presbytery for neglect of discipline in suffering *Mr. Rankin* to go on as he did; but it was not an official letter, it was not communicated to Presbytery; and if it had, it was too late to have had any influence on his trial.

Page 40 he says, “Mr. Crawford spake with great venom, &c.” Mr. Crawford did not speak with the appearance of *anger* or *malice*; did not say he could prove *Mr. Rankin* guilty of falsehood, and that he would not enjoy communion with him till he would *acknowledge himself guilty of lying*. (See the narrative, page 8.) “Upon this I informed Presbytery Mr. Crawford should be sworn to tell all he knew of me.” This is so far from being a true representation, that *Mr. Rankin* utterly refused, and debated with Presbytery upon it for a considerable time. This evidently appears from his own words page 45th, where he says, “Mr. Crawford was received by Presbytery to be (and that by a vote of the majority) an accuser, and a witness to his own accusation. Had *Mr. Rankin* been agreed that Mr. Crawford should be admitted as a witness, there would have been no necessity of determining it by vote. There are two other false representations in this sentence, viz. that he is received as *an accuser*, and by *a vote* of the majority. He was not received as an accuser, there was no vote taken, nor a word to that purpose; but only that his testimony should be admitted; and surely Mr. Crawford's being a witness did not unqualify him for being a judge, unless a persons having personal knowledge of a fact unfits him to form a judgment

about it. Mr. Crawford affirms that he knew of no person present who could charge him with duplicity, or falsehood, was conscious of no such thing himself, nor ever was told of it by any person, except Mr. Rankin in his publication; and he, has produced no evidence

Page 50 it is said, "Mr. Crawford came unsent for, and joined me in communion:" which Mr. Crawford affirms is another false representation; that after finishing certain business for which he came to Lexington, he went to the meeting house, in the evening, on Saturday, but with no intention to preach, or join in communion, having to preach at Walnut-Hill the next day. Mr. Rankin, after sermon, asked him to preach that evening, appointed it without his consent; and the solicitations of Mr. Rankin, and some of his people to attend the communion the next day, were so very pressing, that Mr. Crawford broke his appointment at Walnut-Hill, and attended the communion upon Mr. Rankin's urgent invitation.

Page 41, the clerk is accused of *design* in setting down the word *revealed*; knowing, Mr. Rankin says, that unless he had the word, he would fail to prove the charge. This the clerk denies: nor was he under any temptation so to do, even according to Mr. Rankin's own representation of the matter; for he acknowledges, the witness testified that if that was not the word, it imported as much.

Page 43 Mr. Rankin says, "Mr. Blair informed me, he wished to throw up his office as a deacon; and gave me to understand by some plain hints, he would rather be elected as an elder. Mr. Blair denies that he ever gave any such hints on that, or any other occasion.

In page 11 it is affirmed, "But again one of themselves, in a publication known to the principle part of them, maintains that Christ is not the eternal Son of God." And to this the Transylvania Presbytery accorded, *nemine contradicente*." The most obvious

meaning of this last, and unequivocal sentence is, that the Transylvania Presbytery took the orthodoxy of the first sentence into consideration, put the question on it, and voted unanimously that Jesus Christ was not the eternal Son of God. The Transylvania Presbytery never took this point under consideration, never put it to a vote, never determined any thing about, nor even made it the subject of conversation previous to *Mr. Rankin's* publication.

Page 67, 68. *Mr. Rankin*, speaking of a certain candidate for the ministry, says, "I saw him licensed without examination on divinity, as a candidate." This, as the word *license* is commonly used is not true, and *Mr. Rankin* was informed it was not a license at the time; besides he was examined on divinity before this, and *Mr. Rankin*, himself was present at said examination. Presbytery only permitted him to preach occasionally, under the direction of the minister with whom he was studying, agreeable to these words in the scotch directory, "Howbeit, such as intend the ministry, may occasionally both read the word and exercise their gift in preaching in the congregation, if allowed by the Presbytery thereunto." It is true the Presbytery licensed the man alluded to without the usual education. They did it because they found he was as able to preach sound doctrine, in proper connexion, and in good language, as many who have education. But they did it not before they received a petition from a vacant congregation, praying that he might be licensed and sent to them; nor before he had stood a longer and better examination in divinity, than many learned candidates have undergone; and his performances since have not disgraced the Presbytery even in the judgment of learned men. *Mr. Rankin*, however, who has great sagacity in drawing inferences of that kind, has found out, that in licensing the man, we were guilty of perjury. A discovery made on a principle which would prove himself, and perhaps all the ministers he is acquainted with chargeable with the same crime.

We have only given the reader a few, out of many instances of *Mr. Rankin's* false representations, and false assertions, as a specimen. We have however produced more instances than we should otherwise have done, because many of them were facts of which none certainly knew the falshood, but ourselves.

2. We observe that much of *Mr. Rankin's* publication, and that too which has the greatest appearance of argument, proceeds from misunderstanding, or misrepresenting the sentiments, or expressions of others.

In Page 8, he quotes the following sentence from Dr. Watts, the gospel brings us nearer the heavenly state than all the former dispensations of God, among men; and then says, "This is implicitedly maintaining that the gospel was never preached in any dispensation of God, before the fulness of time." It must be evident to every unprejudiced mind, that by the gospel, the doctor means the new testament dispensation of grace, as distinguished from the old. Then his words imply, just contrary to *Mr. Rankin's* logick, that the former dispensations of God brought men *near* the heavenly state; but the gospel dispensation brings them *nearer* still; that the gospel was clearly preached under the old dispensation, but more clearly under the new. This is a truth generally allowed by christians, and seems to be acknowledged by *Mr. Rankin* himself. See page 17, line 15, 24 and elsewhere.

The doctor says, as quoted page 10, I have long been convinced the occasion of this evil, viz. a dull indifference &c. arises from the matter and words to which we confine all our songs. Here the doctor in consistence with what he had said before, must mean the matter and words peculiar to the forms, comparatively dark dispensation. He did not intend, as *Mr. Rankin* believes, and tries to make others believe, to set the scriptures at war with themselves.

but to represent them as a light shining more, and more to the perfect day. This perhaps carries the matter no farther than Col. 2, 14, where the apostle holds the same contrariety between the old and new testament, as is intended by the doctor. The most exceptionable part of the doctor's preface *Mr. Rankin* has expressed in capitals in his 19th page; and calls it a mysterious contradiction. Should we find the very same contradiction in *Mr. Rankin's* production, would it not increase the mystery? And this we apprehend is not a difficult task. A verse in 109 psalm, *Watts's* imitation, which is most evidently in the spirit of the new testament, *Mr. Rankin* says, page 57, "stands opposed to the doctrine contained in the whole psalm;" if so, then the new testament plainly stands opposed to the old. But *Mr. Rankin* did not mean to assert this; neither did doctor *Watts* mean to set the precepts of heaven, one against another; as appears by the close of the same sentence.

On these, and numerous other mistakes, and misrepresentations, much of *Mr. Rankin's* book is founded. Nothing obviates his impeachment of doctor *Watts*, and those who use his psalmody, as holding "a contrast" or contradiction between the old and new testament, more effectually, than that very imitation which is so much reprobated, and several of the doctor's hymns. Let any man read these impartially, and he needs no other argument, or proof to confute all that has been advanced, on this head. From *Mr. Rankin's* manner of writing, or speaking, one would imagine he takes it for granted, either that his reader, or hearer has never read *Watts's* writings, in question, or is entirely void of common sense, and observation. The doctor's business was to explain, and illustrate the psalms; in doing which he has set their consistency with the new testament, in a much clearer point of view, than perhaps any of his opposers can do; and thus effectually confuted all their cavils. At the same time, he omits certain

parts, not because, he thought them of no use; but because he could not so well accommodate them to the present dispensation of divine grace.

It is true *Mr. Bankin* has said, page 13, "David wrote a system of divinity, having all the articles contained, in the word of God from Genesis to the Revelations." And again he avers, "there is not one article of faith, and practice contained in the whole word of God, but is perspicuously in David's epitome of the bible." Strong and bold expressions! but what proof has he produced? the proof is, *I aver*: and this, we expect, is all he will ever produce. If the whole is *perspicuously* contained in the psalms, future generations would sustain, but little loss should all the rest of the bible, old and new testament, be totally destroyed. Here, an intemperate zeal for one part of sacred writ, seems to lead to affirmations not very honorable to the remainder,

The only way we have now to judge of the fulness and perspicuity of the sacred writings, is carefully to read them. In order then to know the different degrees of knowledge in divine things, which the people of God had under the old, and have now under the new dispensation, especially respecting the way of salvation thro' a redeemer, we must diligently examine, both the old, and new testament; and compare the degrees of light reflected upon that subject by each. If it appears on such comparison that the gospel plan of salvation was as fully revealed to the Jews, before Christ's time, as it is now to christians, we must admit the fact. But if we find this plan of salvation more clearly expressed in the new testament, than it was in the old, we must conclude that christians know more of it than the Jews did. We will then say, the impartial justice of God does not require that he equally distributes his favors among his children: if we take this method, we shall see that the assertions above are contrary to common sense, and common observation: absurdities into which rational

men, can only be driven by strong prepossession. This conclusion is inevitable, unless we indulge unwarrantable conjectures, and say, what was wanting in clearness of language was made up by greater illuminations of spirit; which is being wise above, if not contrary to what is written.

3. A principal part of *Mr. Rankin's* reasoning, and censures is founded upon this supposition, that the psalms of David &c. and *they only*, were designed by the sacred author to be used in the public praises of God in all generations. This, which is the main point in debate, he has all along taken for granted, and never, we think, pretended to prove. Unless this point can be well established, his sentiments can not be supported. We believe in the divine inspiration, and authority of the psalms: and have, we hope, as great a veneration for them as our antagonists: but we do not think they were designed for all the purposes, that some others imagine. We do not think they are so clear and compleat, as to render the rest of the bible superfluous. On this assumed principle, which we deem a mistake, which *Mr. Rankin* has not proved; and which we never saw proved; many of his arguments are founded. If this principle is unsound, his arguments vanish like smoke. All that is said about opposing human compositions to the divinely inspired psalms, and setting up *Watts* against *David*, is nothing better than begging the question. Should we use a form of prayer drawn up by a pious man, we do not oppose that form to the Lord's prayer, nor set up its author in opposition to Christ. We no more oppose *Watts* to *David*, when we sing his psalms, or hymns, than we oppose *Pool*, or *Henry*, to the holy spirit, or their writings to the word of God, when we read their expositions.

4. Some of *Mr. Rankin's* reasoning and censures are founded upon a false principle, viz. That if doctor *Watts* is wrong in some things, all who agree with him in other things, are guilty of his errors,

Should we grant that the doctor is wrong in some expressions and he, as well as other men, may be, does it follow that if we use such of his works, as are agreeable to the tenor of scripture, and the analogy of faith, we are wrong too? we think such an inference would not be fair. If it would, we may, by the same kind of logic, prove there is scarce a book upon earth fit to be read; that the confession of faith is a very dangerous book; that our translation of the bible deserves no credit; that every copy of the bible, now extant in the original languages is unsafe; and that *Mr. Rankin's* book ought to be burnt. We see no necessity in order to our reading an author, or using his writings with safety, that he should be infallible, and we have an implicit, faith in him, and adopt every article of his creed. We are to judge of every composition on divine subjects by the scriptures: what is agreeable to these we may use, whether the author was sound in every point, or not. Admit then that doctor Watts was really as erroneous as *Mr. Rankin* supposes him to be, to infer, that all who sing his psalms, or hymns, are chargeable with the same errors, is reasoning falsely, and censuring unjustly.

Violent opposition has been made to Watt's psalms, and hymns, and the wit of man put on the rack to find fault with, and condemn them; yet we do not find him charged, even by his greatest foes, with any fundamental error in either of these productions. Read them; and you find the way to heaven pointed out in clear, scriptural, and beautiful language: but sing them; and according to his opposers, you expose yourself to eternal damnation. If they contain no fundamental error, a persons using them is certainly no evidence of his being fundamentally erroneous. Why then condemn him with so much severity? why impeach him with Watts' (supposed) corrupt principles, without proof that ever he imbibed them? when the doctor's foes can find no error in his psalms, and

Hymns, they search his preface ; and finding there an exceptionable word, or two, (in their opinion) they censure and condemn the man, his other works, and all who esteem, and use them without inercy. or allowing that candid interpretation, of his words, to which every author of note is entitled.

Mr. Rankin has charged doctor *Watts*, and those who use his psalmody, with denying the eternal sonship of Jesus Christ. We believe the doctrine of the trinity, as it relates to the manner of the divine subsistence, to be a profound mystery, absolutely incomprehensible by any finite mind ; and therefore a subject of which common modesty would teach both *Mr. Rankin* and us never to attempt an explanation.

We cannot say what sentiments *Dr. Watts* may have expressed, on this head, in writings we never saw ; but in writing we have seen, he says,

While God's eternal Son proclaims,
His sov'reign honors and his names.

IT may not be amiss to observe, that *Mr. Rankin* frequently, so contrived it, as to express his unjust censures of his opponents, in the words of sacred scripture. With these he so mixes his own words, as to shew that it is *Rankin* speaks, though in the words of the Holy Ghost. In one place (page 36) he assumes and applies to himself the language of Deity and the bowels of God. These things perhaps, verge as near upon blasphemy as any thing he has charged upon his opponents.

We have, now, informed the reader, on what foundation *Mr. Rankin* stands, while both before, and since his trial, he accuses his brethren almost indiscriminately of making the scriptures clash, and of deism and blasphemy ; pronounces them unworthy of communion in the church,* and condemns them to the infernal regions. † We wish him no other harm than that he may see, and repent of his rashness. And our ardent desire with regard to you,

* Page 15, last line. † P. 16, l. 37.

is that you would mind the one thing needful; and avoid all unprofitable illnatured altercations, on this and every other point; such as would alienate your hearts from God, and your fellow men.

Tender hearted christian, when you peruse the 31st. and 32d. pages of *Mr. Rankin's* defence drop the book, and weep! weep that one who calls himself a minister of Christ, should be found capable of treating the spiritual and experimental conversation of (for what he knows) sincere christians with contempt, and joining a profane world in sneering at it as mere hypocrisy! weep, when you find him capable of treating with the same contempt, a society of (for what he knows) humble pious christians, met to join in social prayer for themselves, for perishing sinners, for the church of Christ, for him, and for his adherents! weep bitterly, when you see the sacred scriptures made the vehicle of this profane abuse! when you meet again, talk over the goodness of God to you, not with a pharisaical, but with a grateful heart, that you have been preserved from such profanity; and unite your humble fervent supplications to him, that he would preserve you, and all others from it in future.

Mr. Rankin's publication contains a fifth part; in which he intends, after his serious labour, to indulge himself in a little wit by way of relaxation.

Dulce est desipere in loco,

Had he not, for common, intirely mistaken the author he intends to ridicule, and patched up an article of faith for him, out of any words he could find in a page, though taken quite differently from the authors meaning, it might have passed for wit; but as it is the ridicule rebounds, and falls upon himself. Ministers of the gospel might certainly be better employed, than, in attempts to expose others, by putting absurdities, and faltshoods in their mouths, which were not included in, nor could be infered from their expressions.

A
CONCLUDING
ADDRESS,
TO PROFESSORS OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN DENOMINATION.

A PRINCIPAL object of *Mr. Rankin's* publication appears to be, to persuade the world, that the Presbyterian ministers, with whom he was formerly connected, have renounced the doctrines of the reformation, and even of the Bible; and have become deists and blasphemers: though like all fallible creatures, we are liable to mistakes, yet we can discover no foundation for such charges; and we acknowledge ourselves utterly unable to account for them, without attributing to *Mr. R.* such a liveliness of imagination as might change his suspicion into belief. If this is the case, it may likewise account for that conduct which subjected him to censure, and for many ungrounded insinuations in his vindication.

We find that there is a propensity in mankind to attend to, and believe what is said to the disadvantage of any individual, or body of men, rather than what is said to their advantage; and hence conclude, this production may make some unfavourable impressions on the minds of those who have no proper

means of information: we, therefore, think it our duty to make the following declaration of our belief on a few points.

We believe, that what are commonly called the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, were given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and that there is one great consistent, uniform scheme of religion carried on, by various modes of administration, through the whole.

We believe, that the psalms of David, Asaph, &c. were divinely inspired, and ought ever to be revered and regarded as a very important part of divine revelation; and therefore, highly censure and condemn the conduct of all who either wilfully or rashly despise, or speak irreverently of said psalms. But we do not believe, that the psalms of David, &c. contain *every thing* in the Bible, with all fulness and clearness of expression, or were ever intended as the sole matter of our praises to God, either in private or public worship. We, therefore do not believe it to be blasphemy to adopt into our system of psalmody, other parts of the holy scriptures; especially the more evangelical. We believe, we have the same liberty to enjoy the peculiar advantage of the more full and clear dispensation of the new testament, when celebrating the praises of redeeming love, as when we preach, pray, or dispense the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. When our songs of praise are agreeable to sacred writ, though not expressed in the exact words of scripture, we feel, we mean, we express, no more contempt of the psalms of David, than we do when we preach, pray, or dispense gospel ordinances not in the express words of scripture. The principal difference then, between us and others is, they think that the psalms of David, and they only, were designed by the spirit of God as the matter of christian praise, in all ages, and in every part of the world; but we think the peculiar at-

Advantages of the new testament dispensation, ought to be used in this part of worship, as well as in others.

Though we believe all Synods, general assemblies, or councils, are fallible, and therefore cannot implicitly receive their dictates, or adopt every particular phrase used by them, or any individual author; yet we believe the Westminster confession of faith and catechisms, as revised and adopted by the Presbyterian church of the United States of America, contain a true and excellent system of the doctrines and duties taught and enjoined in the word of God; and under this persuasion, cheerfully adopt them as the confession of our faith. We endeavour diligently and faithfully to teach them to the people of our respective charges. In which work, we make use of such expositors as Vincent, Thompson, Flavel, Fisher, &c. By our profession, by our preaching, by our catechising, we declare our agreement in sentiment with these venerable fathers. However by some means it seems the great secret is discovered, that we do not believe what we profess and teach; but are undermining the principles of the reformation; and even the christian religion, and running into deism. Notwithstanding this deep-sighted discovery, we are still of opinion, that the doctrines contained in the above mentioned confession and catechisms, are generally believed by the serious and intelligent members of our respective societies.

We acknowledge, and deeply lament, that there are great defections in our churches, and that we have greatly departed from the religion of our forefathers; but we believe these defections consist much more in the loss of a truly christian temper towards God, and our fellow men, and the practice of religion, than in a departure from the doctrines of the reformation. They consist in formality, hypocrisy, neglect of religious duties, worldliness, intemperance, pride, uncharitableness, and the like. We would

readily join with others in confessing and bewailing our degeneracy in these respects ; and endeavours to promote conviction, repentance, and conversion to God. We think the most dangerous errors which take place in our church, relate to the nature, necessity, and evidences of regeneration, and the temper and conduct of real christians. We do not pretend to absolute perfection in our system of doctrine ; but in the infinitely important things now mentioned, our need of reformation is evident.

With minds deeply impressed with a sense of the truth and importance of religion, the necessity of a revival of the life, power, and practice of godliness, and of our great degeneracy in these respects, we would with the most tender affection, address ourselves to the Presbyterian inhabitants of this state.

Dear brethren, we would not desire you to become latitudinarians, or indifferent whether you embrace truth or error ; but would urge you to search for truth as for hid treasure ; receive it in love, cleave to it, feel its powerful influence on your hearts, and in your lives carefully practise it. We would however earnestly intreat you to avoid all angry and party contentions about the doctrines of religion, modes of worship, and forms of government, and to realize the importance of that much neglected truth, *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Take heed that you do not bite and devour one another, lest you be consumed one of another.* Extend this rule not only to those of your own party, but to those also who differ from you in sentiment. Take care of censuring and condemning men because they do not follow you : for they may, notwithstanding, be humble and faithful followers of Christ, and the dear children of God. Cultivate a friendly regard to all who bear the image of Christ, of whatever denomination. Live in love to all mankind ; and in every proper act of beneficence. Never return railing for railing, but pity, pray for, and do good.

even to your worst enemies. If you are unjustly reproached, bear it with meekness, as part of the cross, and never indulge any unchristian resentments. If the ministers, on whose administrations you attend, are slandered and reproached, bear it with mildness and patience. We beg an interest in your fervent prayers, but charge you never to quarrel on our account.

We, who are ministers, are often under the very disagreeable necessity of being employed in the exercise of church discipline. This is on many accounts, the most mortifying and painful duty of our office. It is not an interesting object to us, we gain nothing by it; but bear all the anxiety and expence which attend it for your sakes, and the good of the churches. When we meet with ungrateful returns, and are censured for our feeble, though well meant endeavours to serve you, it greatly increases the difficulty, and adds to our burden. If you censure our conduct, we must endeavour patiently to bear it; but would rather beg your prayers to Almighty God, that his wisdom may direct, and his power support, us in this arduous work. We would remind you of your happiness in having comparatively little to do with this painful business. Let it be your daily endeavour to live the lives of christians in your private stations, and to promote it in your families, and amongst one another: but do not so far interfere in the government of the church, as to assume the place of the Synod, and judge the conduct of Presbyteries; unless you mean to lay aside the Presbyterian form of government, and set up absolute independency. Your exemption from this burden, you should esteem your felicity, and never take it upon your shoulders, without the call of divine providence. If we act wrong, we are liable to be corrected by the Synod. Every inferior judicature we decline; and if judged by them, it must be without a hearing; and therefore without a fair trial as in a late instance.

We desire to turn your attention to what is of much more importance to you, and in which you are more immediately concerned, i. e. the nature and necessity of experimental and practical religion. Diligently enquire into the nature, and duly consider the necessity, of effectual calling; the necessity of having your minds deeply impressed with a true and pungent sense of sin, in its evil nature and dreadful consequences, of being enlightened in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and enabled to discern the glory of God, in his face, so as to have your hearts transformed by its powerful influence, and your wills renewed: the necessity of having your minds turned from self to Christ, from sin to holiness, and disposed and enabled to embrace the redeemer in all his offices, making a solemn and sweet surrender of your whole selves to him. Labour to be well acquainted with the true temper and character of a real christian, and above all things, see that this temper and character be yours. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Fear the great and eternal God; adore his holy name; make him the object of your supreme love; admire his infinite condescension and goodness in the great work of redemption; bow your hearts before him, as dependent creatures, and as guilty sinners; love your fellow men; live in the daily practice of the various duties of justice and charity: in your proper places earnestly endeavour to promote vital religion, realize the worth of immortal souls, and exert yourselves to promote their salvation: bear with one another's infirmities; bear with the infirmities and mistakes of seeking souls; direct and encourage them all you can: daily admonish and pray for one another; lie near the throne of grace, wrestle with God night and day for yourselves, your families, the church of Christ, tempted distressed souls, and careless sinners. Let Sion's interest lie near your hearts; be importunate with God to redeem Israel out of all his troubles; fervently plead

For the ministers of Christ, that they may have much of the divine spirit, and be anointed to preach the gospel and dispense its ordinances aright; that he would, by the energy of his grace, make the word like a fire, and like a hammer to break the rock in pieces; that he would water with the showers of divine influences, the tender vine of the gospel, and make this wilderness like a fruitful field. Set the Lord always before you, consider him as the constant inspector of all your conduct, and ever act as under the view of his omniscient eye. Carefully study the temper, imbibe the spirit, and follow the example of your divine redeemer. A christian is a disciple of Christ, and like his blessed master, the great business of his life is to glorify God, and do good to men, even to his enemies.

Take care of entertaining prejudices against a work of God's grace, and reproaching it under the name of enthusiasm or hypocrisy. It may be carried on by means, or in a manner different from what you expect; if so, divest it of these circumstances, consider its nature and effects, and if these be agreeable, to the word, acknowledge it a divine work, give God the glory, and endeavour to encourage and promote it. Should you see an uncommon religious concern, and with it a mixture of hypocrisy or enthusiasm, do not condemn all in the lump, distinguish between the wheat and the chaff, and do not destroy the one to get clear of the other. Endeavour to make allowances for human weakness, and encourage every hopeful beginning. Avoid that capital blunder of condemning all intense concern about religion as enthusiasm and distraction; rather seriously examine whether it is not owing to a sinful stupidity and hardness of heart that many more, and yourselves in particular, are not deeply distressed, and crying out in an agony, *Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?*

We have long been of opinion, that unless it should

please sovereign and gracious God to revive religion, by beginning and carrying on a work of grace, a work of conviction and conversion, the Presbyterian church would soon cease to exist in this land; and we expect whenever such a revival shall take place, many smooth formal professors will list with its violent or artful opposers, will narrowly watch for the halting of others, lay hold of every instance of imprudence or excessive heat of imagination, and magnify it in order to discredit the whole work and sink it into contempt. Be not terrified or discouraged at this, should it take place; but earnestly plead with God to revive and carry on a work of grace in spite of all opposition; and diligently exert yourselves in your proper places, to encourage and promote the important design.

God has favoured his church with many, great, and precious promises concerning its future prosperity and increase, and thereby made it our duty and privilege to plead and hope for their accomplishment. Let us raise our hopes and expectations, and stir up our souls to take hold of God, resolving by faith, never to let him go until he bless us. We think it probable that the American revolution, the religious liberty which sprung out of it, and the spirit of liberty which seems to spread in various parts of the world are the dawning of more glorious times in the church than we or our fathers have seen. Though the first fruits of these revolutions should be confusion of opinions, enthusiasm, scepticism, foolish and hurtful errors, and much infidelity, yet do not despond; but entertain a cheerful expectation, that the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, will itself become a mountain, and fill the whole earth.

When depraved man first enters on the enjoyment of full religious liberty, it cannot be thought he will learn at once to make a proper use of it. We must not expect him instantly to renounce all the prejudices of ancient usages, and to embrace and be firmly

established in a complete system of truth. Shall we therefore despise the invaluable blessing? let us rather exert ourselves to make a diligent and thankful improvement. Let us consider with gratitude God's goodness to us in these United States. Here the christian religion perhaps for the first time since its introduction into the the world, is free, at once, from persecution, and the incumbrances and corruptions of civil establishments; truth has free course, and we are at entire liberty to worship God according to the dictates of conscience, without any to make us afraid or interrupt our devotions. We are peculiarly favoured in this infant state. The glad tidings of salvation, though attended with much imperfection in the administration, are published in every corner of the land. Other new countries have been long settled before the word and ordinances of the gospel were publicly dispensed; but the gospel, we may say, did not follow us into this wilderness, it came out with us; and now sounds in every part of the state, almost as soon as there are ears to hear it. Since we are thus distinguished by kind providence, let us distinguish ourselves by imbibing the spirit and walking in the footsteps of the divine Redeemer.

When Christ made his first appearance, in the time of his incarnation, he previously sent forth his harbinger to call his professing people to repentance and reformation. In hopes that Christ will appear amongst us in exerting the energy of his grace, and making his people willing in a day of his power, we would, as his unworthy servants, call you to repentance, and to an humble, but cheerful expectation and earnest seeking of Christ that he would come in mercy, visit these long desolations, and revive the things that remain.

Dear brethren, though we have already exhorted you to cultivate a spirit of love, meekness, and forbearance, and to avoid all angry debates on religious

subjects; we would nevertheless urge the same things upon you once more. It is a duty which can not be too often recommended, or too carefully attended to: as such disputes most effectually tend to destroy the vitals of religion; to sour the mind, corrupt religious zeal, quench the holy spirit, and harden the hearts of professors. In this respect Presbyterians have been greatly guilty; of which many sad and striking instances might be produced both in Britain and America. We ought to learn wisdom by the blunders of our forefathers; as well as emulate their virtues. We apprehend it is owing much to a spirit of pride and contention, that there is not more of the power and practice of religion among us. The spirit of God is a spirit of love and of peace; and dwells not in a breast disturbed with boisterous angry passions. By such criminal conduct the Presbyterian church has greatly suffered, the cause of Christ has been wounded, leanness has possessed the souls of God's people, convinced seeking souls have been offended, and turned back perhaps to their eternal ruin, and the careless have been more and more hardened in their sins. Conscientiously avoid these things, learn of Christ who is meek and lowly; walk in his steps; like him ever seek the glory of your heavenly father, and go about doing good.

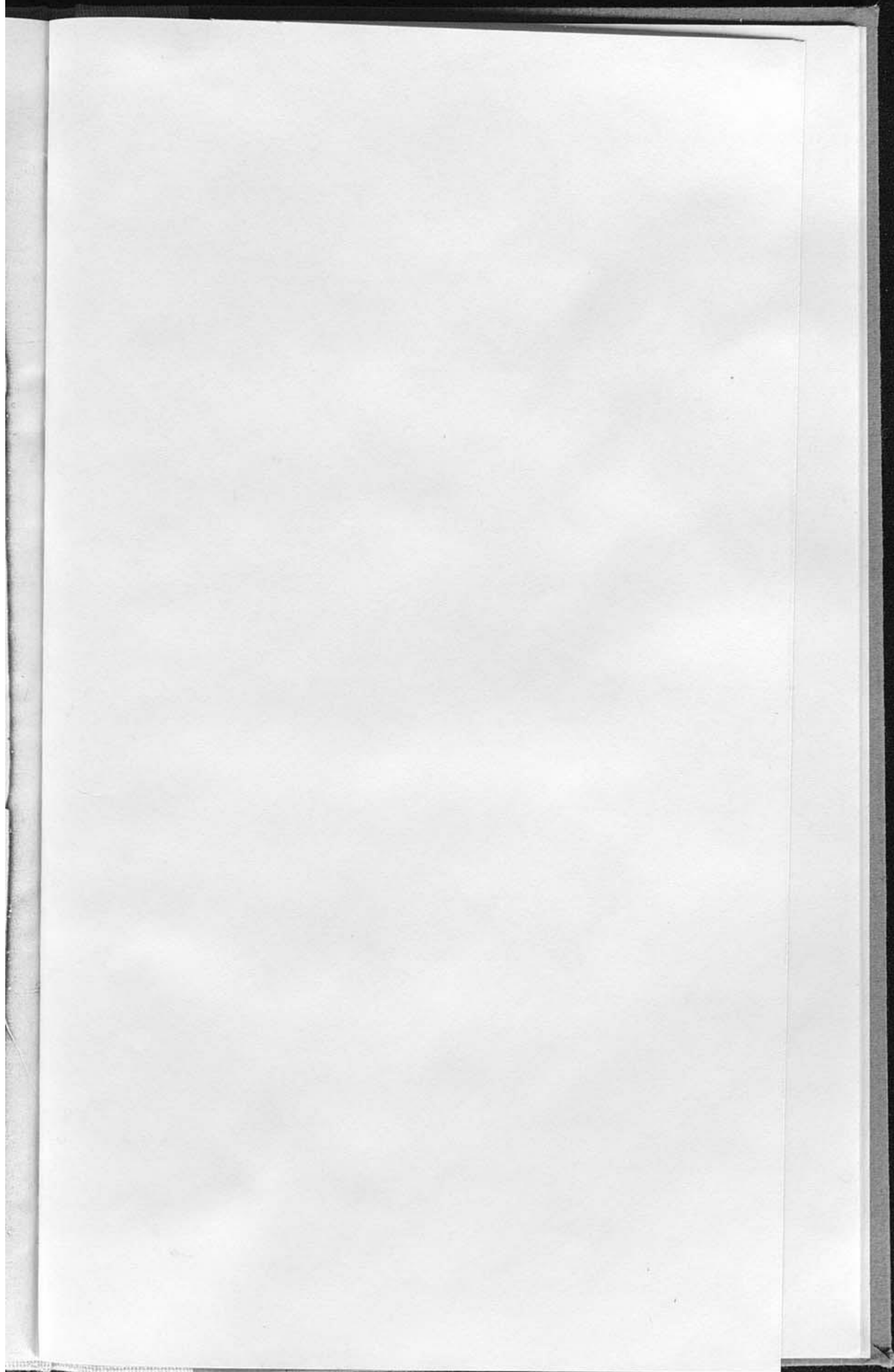
We would finally drop a word or two with regard to the delightful duty of praising God. In this heavenly exercise the melody of the voice is not only decent, but often has a great and good influence upon the heart. We therefore recommend it to all who have talents and opportunity, to make themselves well acquainted with the art of music. Endeavour to have your voices well tuned, but take care you do not substitute melody in the room of devotion, or the natural pleasures of music, for the spiritual and truly sublime pleasures of religion. To little purpose do you tune your voices, while your hearts are not rightly disposed to celebrate the wonders of redeeming

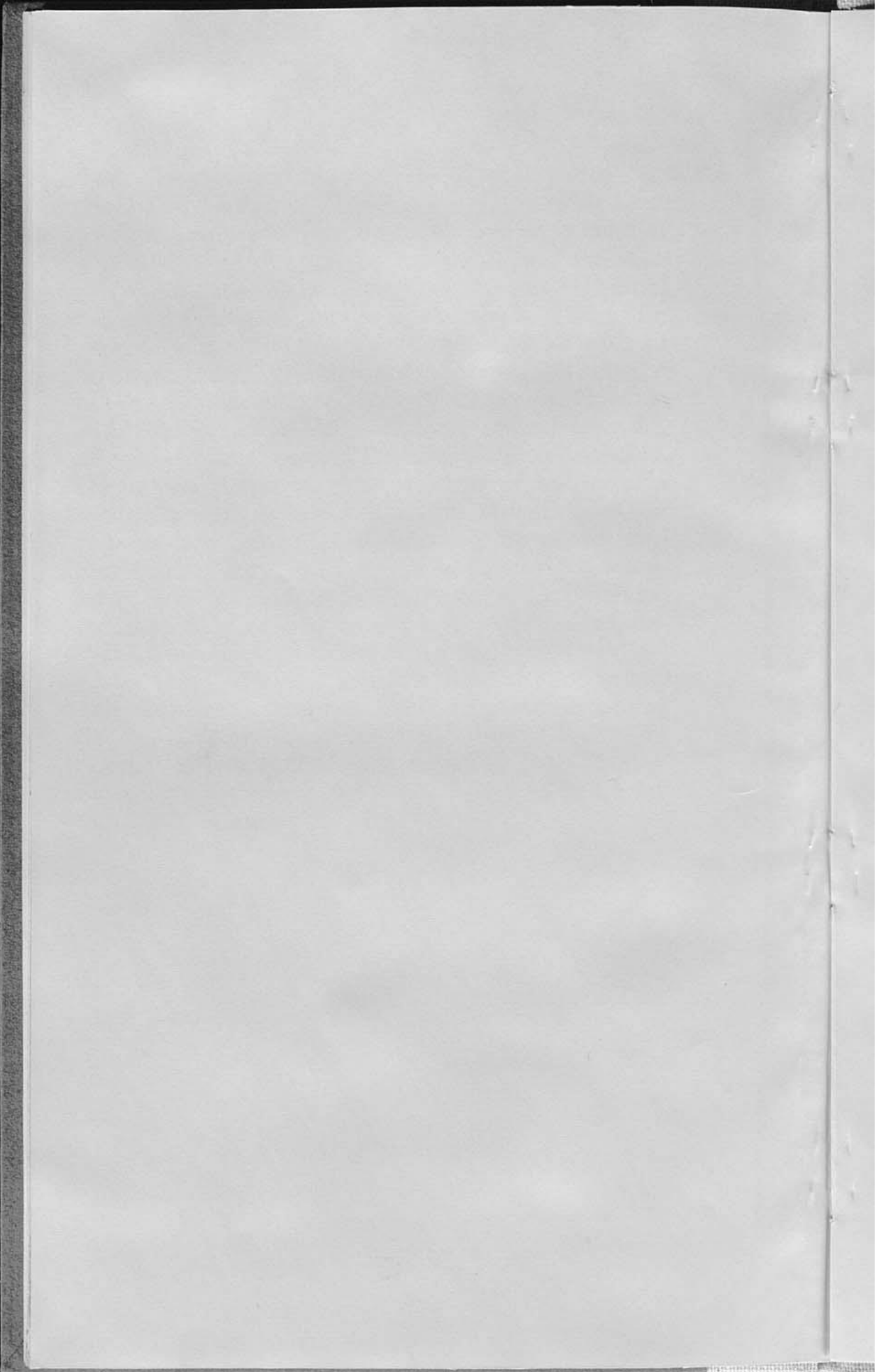
love: in vain you contend about what psalms you shall sing, while you are void of a true spirit of devotion, neglect the worship of God in your families, and live according to the course of this world.

Let the matter of your songs of praise be scriptural, whether expressed literally in the words of scripture, or not: and while you sing them, let it be with admiring and adoring thoughts of the perfections of Deity; of the wisdom and goodness of divine providence; and of the justice, mercy, wisdom, and holiness manifested in the astonishing work of redemption. Where the psalm or hymn consists of petitions for needed mercies, there offer up the fervent desires of our souls to God. Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you will find a gracious acceptance, whether your song be a psalm of David translated into English metre, or a hymn of human composition agreeable to the written word.

May that God, who inhabits the praises of Israel, tune your hearts by his grace to sing the immortal songs of the New Jerusalem; and inspire your souls with that universal benevolence, which may declare you to have the same mind which was also in Christ your Lord. Amen.

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