

THE
GREAT DUTY

OF

Confessing Christ before Men, stated
and recommended.

A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT STIRLING,

Monday, 29th July, 1805.

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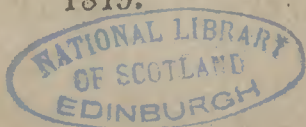
I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

PAUL.

KILMARNOCK :

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1815.



MATTH. X. 33.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven.

THESE words are part of that moving address which Jesus delivered to the twelve apostles, when they were about to enter on their work. As he knew the end from the beginning, he foresaw all the opposition they would meet with in the faithful discharge of their office, and encourages them to boldness, faithfulness, and perseverance in their duty by arguments and motives which are very forcible and appropriate. In this verse he recommends them, and, after them, to all his servants and followers in every age, a public and consistent profession of his name and religion before men, in all places, and in all the variety of their circumstances and urges their duty by a promise infinitely affecting, *Him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven.* To make a profession of Christ, and confess him before men, are phrases, we apprehend nearly of the same meaning; the words are the same in the original, and if there is any difference, it is probably this, Confession refers to the union of many persons in the duty, and Profession to the public nature of it: Christ witnessed a good profession before Pontius Pilate,—*With the mouth confession made unto salvation*;—in both these sentences, the sense is almost the same, and justifies our use of both words indifferently in the following discourse. We shall therefore proceed in the subsequent place

I. *Make some Observations about the Duty recommended in these words, of Confessing Christ before men.*

II. *Consider the force of the motive, Him will I confess before my Father in heaven.*

III. *Make a few Inferences.*

HEAD I.

1. We observe, that it is the bounden duty of Christians to confess Christ before men, or the world. The words of our text refer to a period, when a confession of Christ exposed his followers to reproach, to persecution, and to death; but even then this was a necessary duty: Though Christ's name was not then generally known, though his religion was in opposition to all other religions, and though the powers of the world were leagued against the Church, yet it was still a duty to hold fast his name, (Rev. ii. 13.) and not to deny his faith. But the text refers also to a time when under the name of Christ men have forsaken him; when his truths are denied, his cause neglected, his laws broken, and when the true spirit of Christianity has evaporated: Then it is our duty to confess him before men, to appear on his side, to range under his banner, and, at all hazards, to stand with him upon the mount Zion, having his Father's name written on our foreheads, Rev. xiv. 1. If we are subjects of the moral government of God, we are bound by his law, "to know and acknowledge him to be the only true God, and our God, and to worship and glorify him accordingly." The very constitution of the Church, and the enjoyment of her ordinances, lays every Christian under an obligation to confess Christ before men, and not to be ashamed of him, or of any of his words, before an evil and adulterous generation. The names given to Christians in Scripture, imply an obligation to make a public profession of his name: They are his friends, chil-

dren, servants, followers, bride or spouse; and surely all these names indicate that none should be ashamed of that glorious person to whom they are related, and from whom their eternal happiness proceeds. Moreover, they are the light of the world, they are cities set on an hill that cannot be hid, and should shine, of consequence, in the midst of the world, holding forth the word of life, by the beauties of a scriptural profession and a holy conversation. He that hath a friend must shew himself friendly; and Christ's name must perish from the world, which is impossible, if there is not a succession of witnesses in the church, to appear on his side: *His name shall endure for ever, and be continued as long as the sun. Men shall be blest in him; and all nations shall call him blessed.* Happy are we, if we are honoured to confess that divine person before men, and, in any degree, to contribute our endeavour to make his name to endure for ever! This will be the greatest public honour God can bestow on us in this world, and no mean evidence that we are to enjoy the glories of the next! No person ever regretted in his dying moments, or at the supreme tribunal, that he had made a public profession of Christ before men.

2. Our confession of Christ is not to originate in false or improper motives: *As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.* If our eye is not single; our whole bodies cannot be full of light. A profession, however splendid, if it be hypocritical, is an abomination in the sight of God. We are not to confess Christ before men from a spirit of contradiction to others: We are bound to oppose all who oppose the truth as it is in Christ; but our contendings are not to flow from resentment at men's persons, nor a delight in their errors and failings: Nor are we to oppose any system because professed by men whom we have been accustomed to despise, or be-

cause patronised by names whose reputation we envy. We should rejoice at all that is good in every denomination of Christians, and bewail what is bad, and testify against them with moderation and candour. They who separate themselves from any society, (Jude 19.) for the sake of separation, *are sensual, not having the Spirit: They went out from us, (says John, 1st Epist. ii. 19.) because they were not of us*; and, no doubt, were determined to form a party: *for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us.* Neither are we to confess Christ from ostentation, or love of applause. To borrow Christ's name, to aggrandize or set off our own, is a forgery of the worst kind, and infinitely dishonouring to Christ and his religion. We are to profess him when it exposes us to the loss of every thing, and even of our good name, and consequently cannot, without the greatest iniquity, wear his name merely to take away our reproach. We are to be willing, like John Baptist, to decrease, or grow little, if Christ increase in the world, and rejoice the work is done, though we had no hand in it. To follow Christ for loaves and fishes, or for temporal rewards, in religion, is a prostitution of the best of things to the worst of purposes; this is loving him for his clothes, and not for his divine beauty. This is a meritorious regard, or the love of an harlot, but not of a chaste and loving spouse. When worldly emoluments are attached to a profession of Christ before men, multitudes appear on his side, and seem zealously affected to himself and his truths; but when persecution arises because of the word, when the tide turns in opposition to genuine christianity, many are offended, go back, and walk no more with Jesus, John vi. There are still many in the church, whose *god is their belly, whose glory is their shame, and who mind earthly things*; who measure their diligence by their emoluments, or by

the applause of men, and are not actuated by the spirit of religion.

3. That we are to confess Christ before men, because we believe in his person, and love his truth, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*, Rom. x. 9. 11. Confessing Christ with the mouth, while we do not believe in him for salvation, is but mocking him. Peter made a glorious profession of Christ, (Matth. xvi. 16. 18) but it sprung from faith in his person, and a revelation of his glory made to his mind, which flesh and blood could not effect. In like manner the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts viii. 37.) made a confession of his faith in the Son of God, as soon as he believed in him, and had a spiritual perception of his divinity and excellence. Persons cannot confess Christ till they know and love him: *Without faith it is impossible to please God* in any thing; and, *What is not of faith, is sin*. When there is no faith in the heart, a confession of Christ will be but a painted gewgaw or vanity, which will perish at the very presence of temptation and affliction for the sake of the gospel. Without faith, we cannot have a single aim at the glory of God in our religious confession, and wanting this, every thing is hypocritical and insincere; having no faith in Christ, we cannot be stedfast, uniform, nor consistent in a profession of his name and truth: Faith is the principle of all stability in religion, *By faith we stand*. If we do not believe the truths we contend for, we shall soon be terrified, or decoyed out of our principles: We cannot continue in the Father and the Son, (1 John ii. 24.) except that which we have heard from the beginning remain in us, as to its practical and sanctifying influence: It is easy to seduce us, if we have not an unction from the holy One. If our own salvation for eternity be not embarked on the truth of the gospel, it will be no dis-

ficult matter to carry us about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Our strife, in this view of the case, will be that of slaves or mercenaries, who have nothing to lose or gain, but fight as they are hired, and not the manly struggles of patriots and free men for their hearths and altars, for their civil and religious liberties. When we believe in Christ, every truth of his word will be precious to us, from its connection with his person, and from its connection with the other branches of the system; this will induce us to contend, as in an agony for the faith, the whole faith, once, and but once, delivered to the saints. Love to the truth also, is a strong reason for a full and consistent confession of Christ before men. Love is a most powerful principle of action, and especially when it operates about the great things of God. He, who, from love of the truth, buys it, shall not exchange it for all the gold of Peru, and all the diamonds of Indostan. Love to the truth animated the martyrs and confessors of Christ, in all ages, and in all their sufferings: *They loved not their lives unto the death, because they loved the truth.* Let us go and do likewise, at least in affection and resolution. Truth is as precious as ever, and the duty of contending for it will never grow out of date while the world stands.

4. It is our duty to confess, before men, the whole truth of the gospel, or the whole of Christ's name, as revealed in the scripture. All the doctrines exhibited in the word, are to be the matter of our confession; and surely we ought not to be ashamed of what infinite wisdom hath revealed. No part of the scripture is made known in vain, but deserves to be believed with our hearts, and defended with our blood, and must not be lost by ignorance or error. The church is the pillar and

ground of truth? not as supporting it, but, as the ancient pillars in the earlier periods of the Grecian history, preserved the laws and edicts from corruption and oblivion, and exposed to public view; so the church of Christ reflects his glory and exhibits his truth to the world, in her worship, her testimony, and her life. The enemies of truth may assert, that some truths are trivial and circumstantial, and may not enter into the testimony of the church; but such an assertion is made with an ill grace by the friends of God and truth. Who gave us licence to make distinction, and how far it may be carried? Christ came into the world to bear witness (John xviii. 37.) to the truth, to all the truth; and herein he was an example to us, that we should follow his steps. The church herself, and in her representatives, are to observe, and cause to be observed and kept, all the laws of Christ's kingdom, a perfect system, containing all that Christ enjoins, for faith and obedience: these are to be enforced, not with fines or civil pains, but with the salutary discipline of his house, for the destruction of the flesh, that is, the corruptions of the individual, or of the society. If any of these laws fall into disuse, or are neglected, it is the duty of the church to revive and observe them. We are bound to "receive and observe, and keep pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word." We are not left at liberty to neglect, nor invent any thing in the worship of God; either way he is dishonoured, and the means of our fellowship with him are destroyed. Superstition and will-worship must be resisted as evils that will sooner or later waste the church and banish his gracious presence from her: *God will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images.* Christ, as King in Zion, hath left a form of government in his church, and this form we are to preserve as much as any other

part of divine truth- It is in no small degree unworthy of the wisdom and care of the Head of the church, to assert, That he hath left no form by which she is to be governed, or that that form is to be modelled according to civil policy, or to be ambulatory and framed by the relative situation of the times: This form of government, we believe, is Presbyterian, and consists chiefly in the parity of her ministers, and subordination of her courts: The sacred rights of this society we are to hold fast—such as, her right to elect her own officers, to call her own meetings, appoint her own fasts, and exercise her own discipline, independently of the state. My brethren, let none of these things appear indifferent to us, as they do to this frivolous and temporizing generation. They are not indifferent to Christ, and he commands us to confess them before men for his glory. The slothful, the worldly-minded, and the cowardly may overlook, and like Gallio, care for none of these things, but they are of great importance to the friends of Jesus. It is not a matter of indifference to them, whether Christ's name live or die in the world, whether truth sink or swim. God has a cause on earth, in which his declarative glory is deeply concerned, and the maintenance of that cause is the peculiar charge of his providence, and ought not to be of small value in our eyes. As our public profession involves in it a great part of our duty to God and the church in our generation, we should be careful to join that society which in its constitution and administration approaches nearest the rule of the word. We should not be ashamed to resist that torrent of error and profaneness that deluges our country, and which may soon accelerate our ruin. When truth falls in our streets, when covenant engagements are sported with, it is a dreadful symptom that the Lord cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the world for

their iniquity. When the Romans ceased to preserve public faith pledged in their treaties, their decline and fall hastened apace; and surely these nations that break God's covenant, and think to be delivered, are not on the road to long and sanctified prosperity.

5. We are to confess Christ before men in all the variety of our circumstances. In all companies, and in our whole intercourse with the world, we are to confess Christ. It is very unbecoming the prudence of Christ's friends to cast pearls before swine, or to make their good to be evil spoken of, by detailing their experience, or introducing religious subjects in mixed companies, when there is no occasion for it: This conduct is unworthy of serious minds, and greatly exposes religion to contempt and ridicule: But we are never to deny Christ in any company. Perhaps Peter, in the high priest's hall, might have remained silent without sin, but when interrogated, whether he knew Christ, to deny him with cursing and swearing, was a sin of singular enormity: *We can do nothing against the truth, says Paul, but for the truth.* We are, or ought to be, the salt of the earth, and the light of the world; and should never give occasion to any of the enemies of God to blaspheme that worthy name by which we are called. Daniel was vulnerable in no side, as his accusers imagined, but concerning the law of his God, (Dan vi. 5.) and it were good for many of us, if the world could find no other fault in us. If we stood foremost in every thing lovely and of good report, and had our conversation as it becometh the gospel of Christ, we should exceedingly recommend religion. Did the influence of religion descend with us into all our intercourse with the world and into all the walks of life, the world would believe that we served a holy master, and shewed our faith by our works. When men

destroy with their lives what they attempt to build with their testimony, or profession, or with their lips. they act a most inconsistent part: He is a good man, heathens wont to say, but he is a christian: a noble testimony to christianity!

We should confess Christ in our families: God gave us families, and we ought to walk with a perfect heart in our houses at home. It is a shameful denial of the Son of God, when we do not shew forth in our families his loving kindness every morning, and his faithfulness every night. When we do not, by family-worship, instruction and government, consecrate our houses to God, as Bethels, to his service. If God be the founder of the family, if domestic deliverances, mercies, and trials, come from God? where is his honour and fear? How ungrateful to forget, or conceal, the goodness of such a gracious Father! If children and servants, and visiters in a family, never hear the worship of God, how is Christ confessed under that roof? The worst of the heathen shall be witnesses against these families, falsely called Christians, in the day of the Lord.

We ought especially to confess Christ before men after solemn occasions. When we have been near Christ in privileges and enjoyment, it is natural to suppose that we have imbibed a portion of his Spirit, and are resolved to glorify him in the world by obedience to his laws. We are especially to remember the day we stood before the Lord in Horeb, when we avouched him as our God, and promised to be his people. We are to hear what God saith to his people, and that he spoke peace, and we should not turn again to folly. The eyes of the world are fastened upon us after these occasions, and we should *walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; knowledge should be taken of us, that we have been with Jesus.* We should carry about with us daily

the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies. We are to confess him before men in all places of the world: not only in the presence of ministers and friends, with whom we are acquainted, but in every place where Providence fixes our habitation, among strangers and enemies; when no friend is present to applaud us, and no worldly interest is to be promoted. No change of place can alter the vows of God.—When David was in the land of the Philistines, he feared the God of Israel; he did not abandon himself to impiety, though he was unknown. *Thy vows are upon me,* (Psalm lvi.) says he, in the true spirit of religion, *I will render praises to thee!* How many men once bore Christ's name, but on changing their abode, became bold in committing sin, and threw themselves into the thickest of the throng of the workers of iniquity! Christ should be confessed by us in an hour of trial: There is somewhat very affecting in what the high priest said to Jesus, (John xviii. 19) *He asked him of his disciples;* as if he had said, Where are all thy professed friends now in the time of thy afflictions! We are to follow Christ through good and bad report, and should be prepared to resist unto blood striving against sin. We are to take up his cross daily, and follow him whatever it cost us. When others deny him, or are ashamed of him and of his words, we should confess him before men. In the face of all dangers and death, in its most hideous forms, we should stand unintimidated, and say as the martyr of old, who being threatened and flattered to abandon Christ, replied to the confusion of his persecutors, **I DID NOT COME HITHER TO DENY CHRIST!** If we suffer with Christ, we will reign with him; if we deny him he will deny us; *He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.* In such a glorious cause it is honourable

to be single, as Athanasius in former times, and Abdiel in Milton, faithful among the faithless, unmoved, unshaken, unseduced, not influenced by number nor example to swerve from truth, nor change his constant mind; and in this cause nothing is too good, or too great to be lost. In short, We are to confess Christ before men in our death. The death of a saint is a most instructive event, and it is chiefly instructive as it is the close of a holy life, and a recommendation of religion to survivors. Then men generally speak the words of truth and soberness; and it is a happy circumstance in our death, when we can confess that Christ is a good master, that his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. Paul, in view of eternity, felt the force of true religion on his mind: He knew in whom he had believed; was certain that there was a crown of righteousness laid up for him. In like manner Stephen died confessing his faith in Christ, and committing his soul into his hand as the God of truth who had redeemed him: Amidst the tumult of his murderers, and the pangs of such a death, he exhibited a serenity not to be disturbed, and a testimony to the truth of Christianity.

6. We are bound to confess Christ before men constantly, and never to draw back on any account whatever. Not only are we to confess Christ when it is the fashion of the times, or when it suits our inclinations and interests, but constantly and thro' our whole lives. We are not to be allured with promises, nor terrified with threatenings, to apostatize from our blessed Master. Against all force and fraud we are to harden our hearts, and to forego every thing rather than betray Christ, or deliver up our sacred trust into the hands of his enemies; the backslider in heart, and the apostate in principle, are fearful characters. Having opened our mouths to the Lord, and lifted our hands to the most

high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, we cannot go back without the most dreadful impiety. All that belongs to Christ we have among our hands, and should contend earnestly for it, and be *stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.* The end of a thing is better, saith Solomon, than the beginning of a thing, (Eccl. vii. 8.) and beyond controversy, the end of our religious profession must be better than the beginning of it. The scriptures commonly commend the issues and not the beginnings of things: "*Finis sed non initia Laudantur* jerome." *He that endureth to the end shall be saved.—Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations.—If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.—So run that ye may obtain. Some begin in the Spirit, but end in the flesh.* The same reasons that induced us to begin a religious profession still remain: Christ still deserves to be confessed before men: *He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; without variableness and shadow of turning.* The truth of the gospel suffers nothing by the lapse of time, or the changes of men: The gospel is an everlasting gospel, and is always worthy of being contended for. It is still a high honour to be instrumental in the hands of Providence in the protection and diffusion of divine truth in the world. The obligations of the moral law are perpetual, and we are bound by these, to do all the good we can, in our stations, and in our day, for the honour of God, and the salvation of men. Souls are still precious things, and how can these be saved, if they remain ignorant of Christ and of the gospel? The encouragements of the word to perseverance, and the rewards of eternity to all that overcome, are still the same; and why should we cease to confess such a gracious master? The persons who have deserted Jesus, from mercenary motives, have, in all ages, been held infamous and contemptible; and, instead

of enjoying, undisturbed, the blessings of time in a greater degree, as perhaps they expected, they have been ultimately the peculiar objects of the frowns of Providence. A Sharp in the church, and a Lauderdale in the state, are fearful instances of the truth of this assertion.—On the contrary, those who have left all, and followed Jesus, have quitted with every thing, but truth and a good conscience, have received a hundred fold, even in this life; themselves and families have been the peculiar charge of God, and they never wanted. The non conformists in England, and the Presbyterians in Scotland, in the seventeenth century, are proofs, how proper it is to obey God rather than man; and that, ‘If a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.’ Many of these excellent men, ejected by the act of uniformity, have confessed on their death-beds, that they would not have acted otherwise than they did, for ten thousand worlds. Let us also hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for faithful is he who hath promised.

7. The manner of our confession greatly recommends it. As it must originate, as already hinted, in faith in Christ, and flow from inward experience (for the saints cannot but speak what they have seen, and heard, and felt) so it must be free and unrestrained. It must be our own voluntary act, and not the effect of compulsion, or a fear of offending others, or a desire to please men. This confession must also be full, and adapted to the circumstances of the times: full, without obscurity; and full, without concealment of any of the doctrines of the word. In exhibiting this confession, as in all religious duties, we should be truly sincere; our love to Christ, the animating principle of this confession, must be sincere: Our zeal for the glory of God, the credit of his cause, the honour of his truth, the propagation of his gospel, the encouragement and

comfort of his friends, and the conviction of his enemies, must be pure and unfeigned. Such a cause demands integrity and resolution of mind to carry it into effect: We should confess Christ boldly and without fear or shame. This courage in confessing Christ, is not animal hardiness, or fortitude taught in the schools, but it flows from faith in God, as our shield and buckler: It is being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Conscious of a good cause, and of the approbation of God, we may look the wrath of men and terrors of devils out of countenance. *None of these things move me, saith Paul, neither count I my life dear to myself, (though dear to the church,) so that I might finish my course with joy, &c. I am ready,* says he in another place, *not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus,* Acts xx. 21. and xxi 13. We are in nothing to be terrified by our adversaries. At the same time we are to confess Christ patiently, with a disposition and resolution to suffer for our testimony, if God call us to it in his providence. John was in the isle called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ: if he had denied Christ, and worshipped idols, he had not been there. We should always prefer suffering to sin: When we are called to suffer for Christ, the suffering virtues or graces should conspicuously appear in meekness, mildness, and forgiveness of enemies. Resignation to the will of God, and silence as to men, will have their perfect work, and these may recommend religion more than graces of a more active nature: The sufferings and blood of the martyrs have extended the church. Above all, we should always render the reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear. Our conduct in confessing Christ, should discover humility of spirit, a fear of God, and reverence of men, before whom we confess his name; that we contend for truth

and not for words, and names, and victory; and, in one word, never to give over till we have finished our testimony, as the two witnesses mentioned, Rev. xi. 7. did; their lives and their confession ended together. We should occupy and hold fast till Christ come; and though we may have but little strength, we should keep his word, and never deny his name. If we keep the word of his patience, he will also keep us from the hour of temptation which shall come on all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth, Rev. iii. 8. 10.

HEAD II.

The import of the promise, Him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven.

These words refer to a period in which all worlds are interested, the great day of judgment, when all rational beings that have ever existed, shall meet in one vast assembly before the judgment seat of Christ. In that solemn day Christ will be Judge, and preside in settling the destinies of these beings for eternity: and it must be unspeakably exhilarating to be confessed by such an illustrious personage, and before such an illustrious congregation, and before the Father and his angels. To be confessed by Christ at the time referred to, may imply;

1. That Christ, whom they confessed before men, hath a high value for his faithful witnesses. All his saints are precious in his sight; and he keeps them as the apple of his eye, and sets them as a seal on his heart and on his arm; but those who are jealous for him, when his covenant is forsaken, his altars thrown down, and his prophets killed, are held in peculiar estimation by him who is the faithful and true witness: Their prayers, their tears, their efforts, their contendings for his cause, are embalm-

ed in his presence. His eye and heart are upon them, from the one end of the year till the other end of the year. It imports also, that his gracious presence was with them in their work and warfare. Without him they could do nothing; but he made their shoes iron and brass, and as their day was, so is their strength: His Spirit excited and directed their zeal against the sins and errors of the times. His promise supported their hearts in the difficulties of their profession. His providence opened a door for action to them in their several stations and places: Without him, they would have *fallen before the prisoners, and bowed down under the slain*, (Isa. x. 4.) but by his assistance they *ran through a troop, and by their God they leaped over a wall:—out of weakness were made strong; waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens*. It may also imply, that he gave testimonies to their sincerity in his service: Besides a consciousness of his approbation, or the testimony of their consciences, they enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing the work prospering in their hands. Whatever Hezekiah undertook in the work of God, he did it with all his heart and prospered, (2 Chron. xxx. 21.) Hypocrites may, in the mysterious providence of God, be useful in the church; but God carries on his work generally by right hearted men, men who really rejoice in the prosperity of religion, and who are deeply afflicted when it is interrupted, men whose hearts are in alliance with heaven, and have common friends, and common enemies with God. The Holy Ghost is sent to carry on the work of Christ in the church, and not to exalt worms into importance, by enabling them to claim a share of the honours which belong to him.

2. These words may imply, that Christ will publicly acknowledge them in the day of judgment, as his disciples, his friends, and faithful witnesses.

Them that honour him, he will honour. Honour and praise bestowed by real judges of excellence, are worth having. The honour which is to all the saints, is awarded by God, the judge of all, and must be great beyond thought or expression! Men are commonly fond of applause before a multitude, as in the Olympic games, when the prizes were distributed before assembled Greece, and loud shouts accompanied the distribution. Here is honour conferred in the presence of a world! How many eyes shall see, and ears hear, the plaudit of Christ to all his saints! Christ will not then be ashamed of any of his people in that day, but will acknowledge them as belonging to him, how despicable soever, and poor and afflicted, and unknown they were in the world. Then *they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever, Dan. xii. 3.* Christ will then stablish their characters for eternity, as his real friends, who followed him on earth thro' good and bad report, who bore his cross, and endured hardness, as his good soldiers, who walked by faith, and preferred Jerusalem to their chief joy; who grieved when he was dishonoured, and rejoiced when his kingdom came, and his will was done on earth. He will then vindicate their characters from the foul aspersions cast upon them by their enemies, as troublers of Israel, turners of the world upside down, pestilent fellows, movers of sedition, enemies to Cæsar, formers of a party, ambitious demagogues, separatists, factious persons, &c. All these calumnies will be wiped away in the presence of those who invented and propagated them in the world: and surely this will fill the calumniators with unutterable confusion? Jesus will confer on his confessors a gracious reward, a crown of glory, righteousness and life, that fadeth not away; he will give them the morning star, they shall put on their robes of victory,

the palm shall be put into their hands, the new song in their mouth, mortality shall be swallowed up of life, death of victory, their bodies shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, and they shall be for ever with the Lord! Who would not wish, in the prospect of that eternal weight of glory, to have confessed Christ before men?

3. That he will vindicate the cause itself for which they contended on earth. Christianity has been the subject of much debate, animosity and ridicule, since its first introduction into the world. It has been execrated by Jews, reviled by Mahometans; and the heathens, when it appeared, deemed it a cursed superstition! But its deepest wounds have been received in the house of its friends. Many who bear Christ's name, deny the peculiar doctrines of the cross, and sap the foundations of a sinner's hope for eternity. Others, in a Christian country, affirm, that the Bible is not from God, but a fiction of men! Another class of Christians, perhaps falsely so called, are fierce for moderation, and assert, that contending for a pure profession of religion, is but another name for a party spirit, and is, as matters now stand, altogether impertinent: But, when Christ cometh the second time, things shall be seen in a different light, the controversy between him and all his rivals shall be ended. Great is the truth, and it shall then have prevailed! The authority and excellence, and triumphs of Christianity shall then appear, in their utmost evidence, in opposition to deism in all its shapes. The necessity of a public and spirited stand for the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, in opposition to slothful, covetous, and cowardly temporizers, shall, doubtless meet with the divine approbation. The stedfastness of the church in her principles, in opposition to the wavering and unstable in religion, will be fully vindicated. Let us act now as we would wish to have

done at the day of judgment, and choose that religion which will support us through life, with all its changes, at death, with all its terrors, and in the day of the Lord, with all its solemnities!

III.—INFERENCES.

1. That the work of Christ is honourable and glorious. Christ is a glorious person, and his work must be very honourable. The highest orders of creatures adore him without end, in heaven; cover their faces in his presence, and reckon it their supreme felicity to be employed in his service. In some cases the worker honours the work, but in religion the worker is ennobled by the work. How glorious is our Master, how pleasant his service, and how great the reward! Who would not say, *Thine are we, O David! and on thy side thou son of Jesse: Peace be to thee, and to thine helpers, for thy God helpeth thee.* Compared to this, every other employment is despicable and paltry; every other honour is disgrace; and all other pleasures are stale and insipid. O taste and see that our God is good!

2. That Christ hath every reason to be ashamed of us, but we none to be ashamed of him. God is not ashamed to be called our God, and shall we be ashamed to be his people, or to avow ourselves such! It is an eternal wonder that Christ ever appeared on our side, and did and suffered, what we should have done and suffered, and yet could not; and it is almost an equal wonder, to hear of sinners that are ashamed of this glorious person!

3. That the spirit of a church is known from her testimony and confession. If these are tests of her orthodoxy, then, having orthodox standards, her administrations should be scriptural and pure. The spirit of a society is not known to the world, or to sister churches, if it has no creeds and confessions, or testimonies. The Bible is not the testimony of the church, it is the testimony of God to men. The

gospel is the record of heaven concerning Christ, and it is not the creed of any society of Christians.

4. It is the indispensable duty of all Christians, to confess Christ, by a bold and faithful testimony for truth. The greater part of men, alas! are at ease in Zion, with regard to the concerns of their souls, and of the honour of the Redeemer. The things of the world engross their attention and time, and they are like the deaf adder to the voice of religion. The church may rise or fall for them, may increase or decrease, the godly may be few or many, oppressed or in prosperity, it is all indifferent to them; but this lukewarmness is very hateful to Christ, and he will spue those under its influence out of his mouth. We should rouse ourselves and others to our duty about the public interests of Christ's kingdom, and love that Zion whom no man seeketh after. The zeal of others in spreading the gospel through the world, should animate us to hold fast what we have, and to pray earnestly, and to prayer add active exertions, that the whole earth may be filled with the glory of Christ. Those who love Christ, and prize his gospel, have the most tender sympathy with the people sitting in darkness, having no light.

5. That Christ is a good master, and will not allow any thing we do for him, in the spirit of the gospel, to lose its reward. In keeping his commandments there is a great reward; they have great peace who love his law. True religion is indeed its own recompence; godliness hath the promise of this life, and of the life to come. If we confess him before men, he will confess us before his Father; if we confess him in this world, he will not deny us in the next; if we serve him, and follow him; where he is, there will we be also; and his Father will honour us: if we continue with him in his temptations, he will give us a kingdom, that we may eat and drink at his table, in his kingdom,

and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke xxii. 28. 30.) 6. The duty of all professors of religion, to hold fast their profession, without wavering; to transmit it down to posterity; and, in the mean time, to honour it by a holy life.

Men, brethren, and fathers, let us be valiant for the truth on the earth. We serve a Master that will never leave nor forsake us, and we plead a cause that shall ultimately prevail; our infirmities and our inconsistencies are many, but the cause is good, even the cause of God and truth. A long list of witnesses, confessors and martyrs have preceded us in this course, and fought the battles of the Lord; but they are now more than conquerors through him that loved them, and know, in all their hearts and souls, that the cause of Christ is worth contending for, and must be victorious. Let us follow them as they followed Christ. The precious principles espoused by our ancestors, should not be deserted by us their sons. We are under the most solemn obligations to be faithful to God and his church and truth in our day. The summaries of divine truth in the *Confession of Faith*, in the *Catechisms*, Larger and Shorter, and in our own *Testimony*, should be frequently read by all, and inculcated by parents on their children, in connection with a frequent perusal of the word of God. These summaries, however despised by a fastidious and self-conceited generation, are of excellent use in the church; they tend to discover and condemn error, and to exhibit to the world what is called present truth: they not only discover and refute error, but they are a strong preservative against it; when persons are acquainted with truth in its connections, or in a system, they are not easily led away from the truth as it is in Jesus; but ignorant and unstable souls, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, who have loose and dis-

jointed views of divine things, these are the prey of every innovator.—These summaries are also an excellent help to the memory. Order and method in all sciences, conduce to the acquisition of knowledge. The reason why so many people forget sermons, is, because they forget their catechisms; and it is not the multitude of things in the memory that embarrass the mind, but the disorder in which they lie. Our most judicious hearers are those who are best acquainted with the first principles of the oracles of God. They follow us from Head to Head, and from Text to Text. Loose hearing may please for a while, but fixed hearing is ultimately profitable. Those hearers also who know the doctrine of God and Christ, are best able to resist the influence of error delivered from the pulpit. How unhappy are they who hear those preachers whose discourses are partly true and partly false; who have here a truth, and there an error; here a doctrine, and there an innovation; who seem eager only to startle their hearers with quirks, conceits and novelties; but judicious hearers detect the fallacy; and discover the cheat, and having tasted of the old wine, they say it is better than the new. These summaries serve also as a bond of union among ministers and people, that they may all stand fast in one spirit, and speak the same things. Let us therefore hold fast the form of sound words, in truth and love, and by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. Let the savour of Christ's knowledge be manifested by us in every place, and be a means of drawing others to the love and knowledge of religion, and at length may we be perfect and entire, lacking nothing; and give in our account with joy, and not with grief; believing that if we confess him before men, he will confess us before his Father which is in heaven. Amen.

FINIS.