

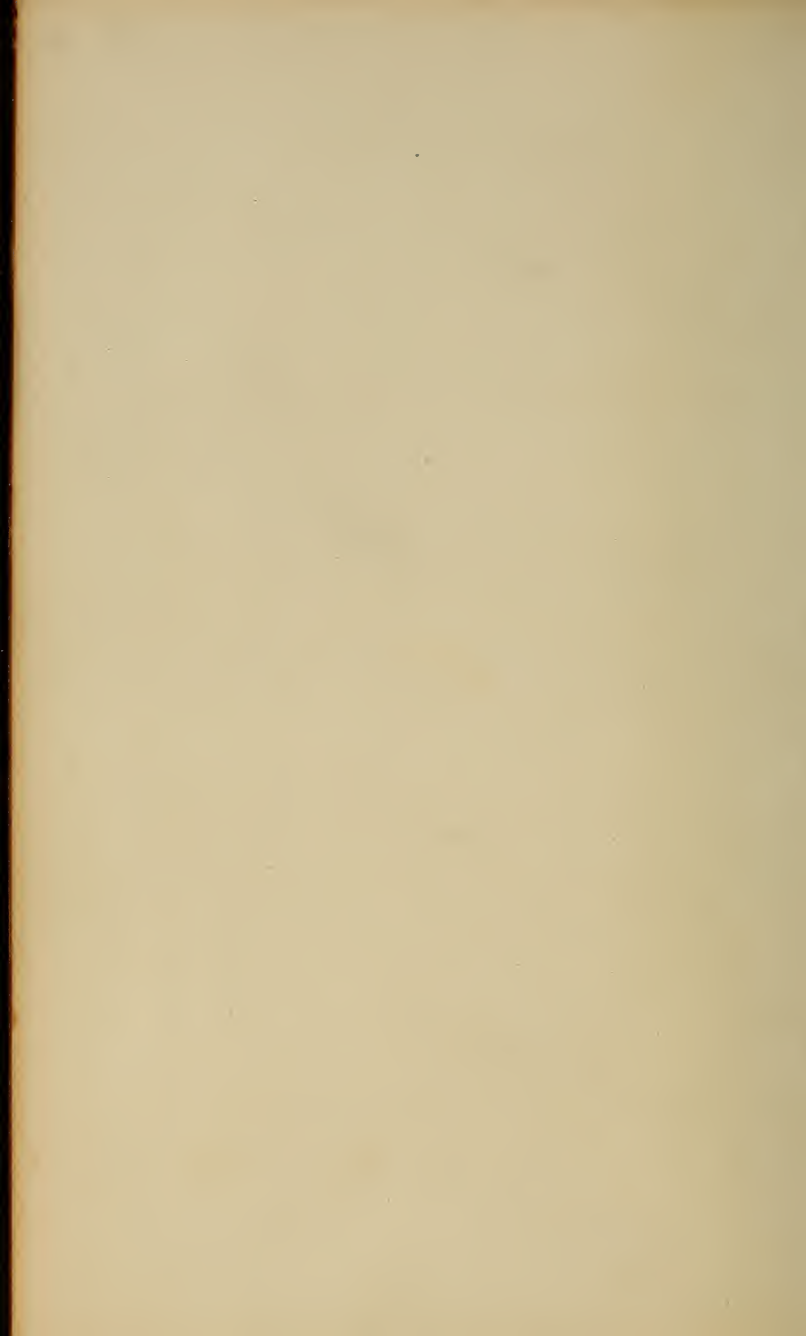
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church

EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE

OF THE

WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY'S

CONFESSION OF FAITH:

BEING THE

DRAUGHT OF AN "OVERTURE" PREPARED BY A COMMITTEE
OF THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED SYNOD, IN 1783.



A NEW EDITION:

With an Introduction and Notes,

BY

REV. DAVID M^cDILL, D.D.

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T .

THE following paper was prepared and published A. D., 1787, by a COMMITTEE OF THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED SYNOD, as an "Overture" for illustrating and defending the doctrines of the Confession of Faith. Having been laid before the Synod, it was substantially approved, and recommended to the Churches as useful for the purposes intended. It has been long and familiarly known by the name of "The Overture." It is understood that Rev. ROBERT ANNAN was its sole Author.

EDITOR.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION.

THE following draught of an Overture for illustrating and defending the Doctrines of the Confession of Faith, prepared by a Committee of the Associate Reformed Synod in the year 1783, is now republished, in the hope that it may promote the cause of truth, and subserve the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. Having been solicited to furnish some historical and explanatory notes, the writer has thought it expedient to prepare an introduction, of considerable, perhaps of disproportionate length. It will consist, in part, of extracts from an appendix to a discourse on religious fasting, by the late Rev. John Hemphill, D. D.

Having adverted to the union in which the Associate Reformed Church had her origin, Mr. H. proceeds:

“It is well known, that the Associate and Reformed Presbyteries who entered into this union, were churches nearly related in their views of the doctrine, government, discipline, and worship of the Church of Christ.

“Both parties had forsaken the communion of the established Church of Scotland, [counting all the honors and emoluments of the establishment but loss for Christ,] because of errors and backslidings into which she had fallen. The principal difference between themselves, was

respecting the civil powers in Great Britain. One maintained that, considering the Lord's goodness in bringing their nation into such a high state of reformation, and the solemn engagements under which they and the nation had come, they could not acknowledge these powers as lawful, which were set up according to the plan adopted at the revolution, anno 1688, or yield obedience to them, for conscience' sake; that, to do so, would be to violate their covenant engagements, to encourage and strengthen the hands of the enemies of the reformation, and partake in the general apostasy of the nation.

“On the contrary, the others maintained, that, while they bore testimony against every step of the national apostasy, everything in the revolution settlement that was wrong, and every degree of power given to the civil rulers which did not belong to them, yet, in other respects, their power being that which belonged to civil rulers, and they being clothed with it by the consent of the people; in these respects, they considered the powers in Britain, even after the revolution, lawful powers, and to their lawful commands obedience was due, not only for fear of wrath, but for conscience' sake; that, in conducting in this manner, they did all that was right for them to do in opposing the enemies of the reformation, and in condemning the general apostasy of the nation, and that, therefore, they acted consistently with their solemn national engagements.

“These are the outlines of that dispute which prevailed between Seceders and Covenanters. [We do not regard it as having been, in its day, altogether an idle dispute, though good men might take opposite sides.] This was

the principal thing that kept them separate communions. The disputes ran high, [as disputes are apt to do between those 'near of kin']. The opposition was carried a great length on both sides, and, as is too common in such cases, there was a degree of bitterness and want of candor in many of their writings and speeches, which was far from justifiable. This was the opinion of many of the judicious, serious, and sensible, in both these communions, and of many others who did not belong to one or the other. [There were some in the establishment who sympathized with them; more would have done so, and probably have joined them, but for this 'unseemly strife.']

“That it was the ardent wish of many such characters to see these two sister churches united into one body, will not be denied.

“That the Lord would remove the cause, and heal the breaches, was the professed desire of all, and the earnest prayer of many on both sides. Has, then, the Lord done nothing for us in this respect? Certainly he has. Although in Britain the same difficulty remains, this is not the case in America. We are now planted in a land, which, as such, has never been reformed in the manner in which Britain was—a land which, as a nation, was never under such solemn covenant engagements—a land freed from that government which gives to the chief magistrate supreme power in all causes, both spiritual and temporal. Those very circumstances, then, from which the dispute sprang; those very circumstances on which it depends; those very circumstances on which the propriety of introducing and maintaining that dispute, as far as peculiar to them, rests;

those circumstances being removed in America, was there not a door opened for these two churches to unite? I suppose it will be granted, if the Lord would, in the same manner, change the circumstances of the contending parties everywhere, that it would be their duty to embrace that as a favorable opportunity of obtaining that union for which they had been praying and waiting."

"If to desire a union between these churches was lawful, to attempt to bring it about was also lawful. Accordingly, this attempt was made when the favorable opportunity offered, after the American revolution. Nor was this union entered into in a rash, inconsiderate manner. It appears, from the best accounts we have of it, to have been the fruit of much serious deliberation. During several years, different meetings and conferences were held on the subject; at last, in the year 1782, the union was finally closed.

"The principles on which the union was founded are these:

1. That Jesus Christ died for the elect only.
2. That there is an appropriation in the nature of faith.
3. That the Gospel is indiscriminately addressed to sinners of mankind.
4. That the righteousness of Christ is the alone proper condition of the covenant of grace.
5. That civil power originates from God, the Creator, and not from Christ, the Mediator.
6. That the administration of the kingdom of Providence is committed to Jesus Christ, the Mediator; and magistracy, the ordinance appointed by the moral governor of the world, to be the pillar or prop of civil order among

men, as well as other things, is rendered subservient by the Mediator to the welfare of his spiritual kingdom, the Church; and beside, the Church has the sanctified use of that, and every common benefit, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7. That the law of nature and the moral law revealed in Scripture are substantially the same, although the latter expresses the will of God more evidently and clearly than the former; and, therefore, magistrates among Christians ought to be regulated by the general directions of the Word, as to the execution of their offices, in faithfulness and righteousness.

8. That the qualifications of justice, veracity, etc., required in the law of nature for the being of a magistrate, are also more explicitly and clearly revealed, as necessary in Scripture. But a religious test, any farther than an oath of fidelity, can never be essentially necessary to the being of a magistrate, except where the people make it a condition of government; then it may be among that people necessary, by their own voluntary deed.

9. That both parties, when united, shall adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, Directory for Worship, and propositions concerning Church government.

10. That they shall claim the full exercise of Church government and discipline, without dependence on foreign judicatories."

Here several thoughts occur to the mind:

1. When the parties came to *understand* one another, real differences were seen not to be so great as they had

been supposed to be, or as they had been made to appear by the alchemy of ultra theorists and ardent controversialists; and "supposed" differences, (always the most numerous in such cases,) became "like the chaff of the summer thrashing-floors." All that was really necessary to consummate the union, was, that the parties should try to understand each other, and *try* not to keep believing that there were great and important differences between them.

2. The above basis on which the parties united, was never made a term of communion in the united Church, or proposed as a test to those who applied for Christian privileges. It was wisely taken for granted, that all those of either of the parties who acquiesced in the union at the time, or came into it afterward, were so far satisfied with the principles on which it was founded, that they could have comfortable communion with their brethren, and be edified. This is as far as it can ever be necessary that Christians should be of "the same mind," in order that they may have fellowship one with another, and also with "the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." To insist on an unnecessary and impracticable agreement in sentiment and opinion, in order to union and communion among Christians, is only an indirect and disingenuous method of opposing union. While all were of one mind as to the duty of "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace," what harm could possibly follow, though some should continue to believe, that, in the "Old Country," the Seceders were in the right, and others, that the Covenanters were in the right?

3. The Associate Reformed Church has not, and never

had, any terms of communion which would exclude either Seceders or Covenanters from participating with her in all the ordinances of the Lord Jesus. With respect to all such differences, her uniform language is, and has been—"Forbear one another in love"—"Brethren, forbear."

4. The union was consummated without any attempt being made by either of the parties to bind the other up by oaths, covenants, and testimonies. No such jealous disposition was cherished. They had confidence in one another, as only honest men can have confidence, either in themselves or in other people.

5. The only pledge which the parties made to each other is contained in the ninth article, and has for its object, the future maintenance of "sound doctrine." Over these symbols of faith, exclusive of anything else, the members of the Associate Reformed Church have hitherto pledged themselves to each other—to God and his Church. Whatever resolutions or rules she may have adopted, to regulate or direct her administrations, never has she required of persons applying for her privileges, or her members when offering their children for baptism, or of ministers and elders at their ordination, more or less than an assent to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and an approbation of her form of government and directories for worship, as founded on, or *agreeable* to, the word of God. Occasions may arise, when it is necessary for a church, in her administrations, to insist on some things which are not explicitly set forth in her standards; but an occasion may change its character in the course of a few months, or it may entirely pass away, and with it, this necessity. Such things will then cease to

be regarded as important. Hence, they should never have a place among the stated terms of communion in the Church. And indeed, in such cases, individuals must often, to some extent, be left to exercise their own judgment. People may be heartily agreed with respect to their duty, as *prescribed* in the word of God; but, with respect to their duty, as it is to be *deduced* from a comparison of the teachings of the Bible with the character of existing facts, they may differ; that is, they may differ with respect to what is *present duty* and the best manner of performing it, while yet they are all equally studious to walk blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.

The want of some definite ideas here has been the cause of much confusion and division in the Church. *Perhaps* it was the cause of the wrangle between the old Seceders and Covenanters; *certainly*, it was the cause of the painful rupture between the Burghers and Antiburghers. The matter in controversy should have been left to Sessional jurisdiction, with, perhaps, some prudent advice, if advice were asked, and if it could be given with tolerable unanimity. But what if the Sessions concerned in the case had decided wrong? Well, what if they had? Did the Synod decide right? Take which side of the question we may, we must admit that one division of the Synod were sadly wrong. And the scandal, the reproach brought on religion, and on the cause of the Secession, were incomparably greater than could have resulted from the error of a few Sessions. Suppose two or three score of good Christian people had, in their simplicity, or in their ignorance of the laws of the realm, taken an oath of allegiance, which a casuist could

show contained a clause of doubtful propriety, what would this have been in comparison of the awful sentence of excommunication, which, in the heat of controversy, the one party pronounced on the other?

6. The principles on which the union was formed, were all of an important and weighty character. It would be impossible to point to anything in the basis which is of a frivolous nature, or which evinces a disputatious temper, or which shows that one of the parties wished to have something put on record which would bear witness that concessions had been made to them, or which indicates that the parties were not yet tired of wrangling.

“Upon these principles, all of the ministers of the Reformed Presbytery, and all the ministers of both the Associate Presbyteries, united together, except Mr. Marshall and Mr. Clarkson, two members of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania. They refused to unite on these principles, and so formed themselves into a distinct Presbytery, which is styled the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania. Those who entered into the union, are styled the Associate Reformed Synod. A few of the people belonging to the Reformed Presbytery, refused to unite on the above principles. They have been joined by emigrants from Britain and Ireland, and have received ministers from those countries, who are formed into a Presbytery, called the Reformed Presbytery of North America.”

Both these dissenting Presbyteries have since grown into Synods. They have always contained many good, pious people, and many excellent ministers. It is proper that we should pay this tribute to the grace of God, “that wrought

effectually in them," though we can not approve all their measures.

All parties received accessions to their ministry from abroad; but, for some years, it is believed that few "emigrants from Britain and Ireland" joined the Associate Reformed Church. Emigrants, immediately on their landing in America, were poorly qualified to form a correct judgment as to the merits of the union. The controversy, as well as its causes, still continued to exist between the parties, (the "Mother Churches," as they were called,) in the "Old Country;" and each party was as unwilling to lose what strength it had in America, as Great Britain was to lose what interest she had in the colonies. Both the mother churches supposing, what they had no right to suppose, that they were capable of judging as to the duty of their brethren in the altered state of things in this country, condemned the union; and those "who went out from them," would, of course, bring to America the prejudices in which they had been nurtured on the other side of the Atlantic. It was a great deal easier, even for a talented young minister, to declaim against the union, on his first setting foot in America, than to appreciate the reasons which rendered it a wise, necessary, and Christian measure. Had the same view been taken of the civil institutions of the United States, by the body of the Reformed Presbyterian ministers and people at first, which, at present, prevails in one of the parties into which they have since divided, it is difficult to believe that the Reformed Presbyterian Church would ever have existed in this country as a distinct body.

Each party in Scotland had its Testimony. A testimony was deemed necessary to supply some defects in the Confession of Faith. Or, if this be thought an incorrect representation, though we do not see that it is, a testimony was deemed necessary to unfold, more fully and particularly, the doctrines of the Confession of Faith, and to direct its principles against many errors and corruptions which the Confession does not explicitly condemn. It was charged on the Associate Reformed Church, as a great fault, that she had no book or paper called a Testimony. It did not satisfy to reply, that she had the best testimony in the world—the Bible—the great leading truths of which were exhibited in her Confession of Faith. Many of her own people thought that something was still wanting, while she had no Testimony. Such a paper, they did not doubt, had always had a place in the Church. At least, it was a great departure from a usage which had existed from time (to them) out of mind, to have none. The Synod were convinced that it was improper to have such a paper in addition to the Confession of Faith, which should make a part of her standards, and be regarded as a term of communion, so that an approbation of it—logic, metaphysics, loose reasonings, inapt quotations of Scripture, and all—every person, whether young or old, must be required to express, on his joining the Church, and when he offers his children for baptism.

As a general fact, it may be remarked, in reference to these papers called Testimonies, that they are apt to be most zealous and earnest when opposing such things as separate churches which are nearly related, or such shades

of error as will frequently appear in evangelical churches, through the influence of men who are of a speculative turn of mind, but which are destined only to a temporary existence, because they are soon opposed by the friends of Gospel truth in the body where they make their appearance. But an inconsiderable portion of them is devoted to the elucidation and defense of the great saving truths of Christianity. Often do Deistical, Socinian, and other soul-destroying errors, receive but a perfunctory notice. It is not, as a general fact, on such subjects that the authors of testimonies write with spirit, faith, and point. In an age when the tendency of the public mind is toward skepticism, this is an unhappy feature. A diseased mind, which is indisposed to believe *enough*, will not be cured by offering it *too much* to be believed, but by placing GREAT TRUTHS before it in a convincing light.

The Synod refused to offer a Testimony to the churches under her care. But a work illustrating and defending the doctrines of the Confession, which should receive the judicial approbation of the Synod—to this, provided it were what it should be—there could be no objections; and it might be useful. It could not be less useful, as a means of instruction, on account of its not being adopted as a part of the fixed testimony of the Church. A committee was appointed to prepare such a paper. Hence, the “Overture.” It was from the pen of Rev. Robert Annan. It is the product of a great mind. About the year 1813, after hearing him preach at a very advanced age, a minister of the Reformed Dutch Church remarked, that his discourse brought vividly before his mind the idea of “a great light just going out.”

The Synod recommended the Overture to their people, as, in substance, a useful book. Probably, there are a few passages in it, in which the Synod could not have unanimously concurred; but they were not thought of such importance as to require particular animadversion. It contains a few ideas which we cannot entirely approve. What human work is perfect? Who can write a book which shall contain nothing to which another, of very inferior mind, may not be able to take just exceptions? We do not regard the Associate Reformed Church as "held and firmly bound" to receive and defend every one of its positions. None will contend that the Church must, in all future time, acknowledge, as an article of faith, everything that may have received the sanction of a Synod or Council, unless, by some means, the opinion has obtained a secret lodgment in his mind, that there is some sort of infallibility in such decisions.

The reader will find a few foot-notes appended to passages which, in earlier or later times, were subjects of doubt, cavil, or misrepresentation.

Our earnest prayer is, that God would bless the following pages to the establishment of Christians in the truth; and also, that he would render them useful to the friends of Christian union, by leading them to see that the only true basis of union, because the only basis on which the whole Church of God can ever become one organic body, is the DIVINE TESTIMONY exhibited, or its meaning ascertained, in plain, simple, doctrinal statements. D.

INTRODUCTION.

MAN is endowed by his great Creator with noble powers and faculties. God made him but a little lower than the angels. He is exalted in the scale of being far above the irrational and inanimate parts of the creation; and is laid under peculiar and very strong obligations to glorify and serve his Creator and Almighty Preserver. But obligations to gratitude and praise are infinitely accumulated by our redemption through the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. Redemption from sin and misery seems to be God's peculiar gift to men. Rebel angels do not participate in it. And it appears to be the greatest of the works of God. In it he has made the fullest display of his glorious nature and perfections. Here we see the Father giving his Son: The Son yielding to his Father's appointment and giving himself for us: and the Holy Spirit applying the gift. Jesus Christ is the brightness of the divine glory, he is the image of the invisible God. The fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in him bodily. The human nature of Christ is the true temple of the Deity, where he dwells and manifests all his glory. In him mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace embrace each other. Here we see justice flaming; holiness

shining; mercy beaming with the most mild and amiable radiance; righteousness and peace enthroned and speaking in the sweetest accents from the throne. And not only the moral character of the Deity is here emblazoned; but his natural attributes also shine with infinite splendor. In Christ we behold all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and the power of God is transcendently glorified in him.

With unfeigned thankfulness and the highest joy, we desire to commemorate the redeeming love of Christ. This dear Redeemer we desire to honor; to his glory to dedicate our time, our strength, and all our talents. We would not betray nor desert his cause for a thousand worlds; and we trust our witness is on high, that there is nothing we so ardently desire as through grace to be found faithful to our divine Master. We rejoice in the promise, that race unto race shall praise him, and show forth his mighty deeds. And we will not cease to contribute our mite to spread abroad, and transmit down to posterity, the sweet savor of his most precious name. It is the character of true church members, that they appear with the Lamb on the mount Zion, having his Father's name written on their foreheads: by which phrase must be understood an open and bold confession of God and Christ before the world. Without such an open confession of his name, we can not give public glory to him, nor promote his religion among men. And Christ declares, that whosoever is ashamed to confess him before men; of that man he will be ashamed before his Father and his holy angels.

The testimony of the Church is, therefore, no visionary thing; it ought not to be treated with ridicule; for it is

one grand design of her erection, that she may bear a public testimony for God. But what is the testimony of the Church? The Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is the matter of her testimony, whatever different forms it may assume. For in the Bible the Lord testifies of himself. He is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness. We are not allowed to witness anything of him, but what he has witnessed of himself. All that the Church can say is, "Truth, Lord." It is evidently the design of the whole book of God to call our attention to Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of lost sinners. God the Father says, "Hear ye him." Christ says, "Look to me and be saved; hear, and your souls shall live." The doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ, flows like a great river of life through divine revelation, making glad the city of God. This river was opened soon after Adam's lapse, in the first gospel promise, "that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Small, indeed, in its beginning; but gradually enlarging, widening, and deepening. Doubtless, Adam endeavored to enlighten his children with the knowledge of this salvation. They, indeed, gradually fell off from the true religion, and plunged into such atrocious wickedness, that God, in righteous indignation, sent a flood of waters on the earth, and swept away the world of the ungodly: but saved Noah, a preacher of righteousness and an upright man in that wicked generation. He, doubtless, also endeavored to diffuse among his posterity the sweet savor of the knowledge of Christ, and salvation through his name. But his posterity also gradually fell away, and must inevitably have been all swallowed up in the bottomless

abyss of heathenism—and the true religion entirely lost—had not God graciously called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees; manifested himself to him in a singular manner; entered into covenant with him and his seed, and made known the Saviour to him with peculiar evidence. Thus, to Abraham and his seed, were the promises made. And the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to him, nor his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. All this while the testimony of Jesus was not committed to writing. But the longevity of the patriarchs greatly compensated for that want; and the revelation of saving truth was very simple and concise. Methuselah was cotemporary with Adam two hundred and forty-five years; Noah cotemporary with Methuselah near six hundred years, and only about ninety years from Adam. And, at the time of Noah's death, Abraham was fifty-eight years of age. Thus the saving truth descended, by easy transitions, from Adam to Methuselah; from him to Noah; and from Noah to Abraham.

After this period, the Church was inclosed, and prevented from mingling with the heathen, by the ordinance of circumcision; and animated to faith and patience by the all-cheering promise of the Saviour, delivered in a more full and explicit manner; and also by the promise of the land of Canaan as her earthly rest. Abraham committed the precious treasure to his son Isaac; and Isaac to Jacob; who were all eminent prophets, inspired by the spirit of saving truth. Jacob committed it to his sons, and they to their children; and, in the firm faith of it, Joseph gave a charge to his brethren concerning his bones, that they

should carry them up to the promised land. Four hundred and thirty years after the covenant of circumcision was given to Abraham, the law was delivered to Moses at Mount Sinai. And he, guided by the spirit of inspiration, committed to writing the whole testimony of Jesus, so far as God saw meet to amplify it at that time. Abraham's posterity being brought out of Egypt, and established in the land of promise, became, through the divine blessing, a great nation, and for many ages were the only Church of Christ, the only people on earth in covenant with God. The rest of Noah's posterity had cast themselves out of covenant by their own perfidiousness and baseness, and were, for many ages, sad monuments of the degeneracy of fallen man; of the enmity of the human heart against God; and of the feebleness and insufficiency of human reason, not only to acquire, by its own exertions, the true and saving knowledge of God, and of that worship which is acceptable to him, and the practice of that genuine virtue, which is the native fruit of true religion; but even to retain these after they had been revealed to men. But during this period, God frequently published, by the prophets of his Church, his gracious purposes respecting the heathen. In the second Psalm he says to his Son, "Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thy heritage, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;" and remarkable is the conclusion of that Psalm for its New Testament style: "Now, therefore, ye kings of the earth be wise and kiss the Son." The prophecy of Isaiah abounds with predictions of the conversion of the Gentiles, and some of the other prophets plainly

mention it, to which we refer. But the great event was reserved to be the glory and triumph of the incarnate Redeemer himself, after having finished the work given him to do.

We desire to commemorate, with the highest joy and gratitude, the infinite love of God to a perishing world, in giving his only begotten Son. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who thus visited and redeemed his people, and raised up for us a Horn of salvation in the house of his servant David: to perform the mercy promised to the fathers, and to remember his holy covenant. Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and good-will toward men. How pertinent the triumph of Simeon! And he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." What a wonderful era this, in the history of mankind! Christ made all things new in the Church and in the world. A new heaven and a new earth. When the Prince of Peace set his foot on this globe, the nations were silent before him! they dropped from their hands their murderous weapons, and were hushed into peace!

The Son of God, by patient suffering and dying, finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; confirmed the covenant, and caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease; spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them on his cross; took the prey from the mighty, and set the lawful captive at liberty; foiled Satan,

abolished sin, hell, and death, filled up and completed the testimony given to the Church, sealed it with his blood, and shut it up with an awful curse on all that should add to it or diminish it. And having, after his ascension to heaven, according to his promise, poured out his spirit on those whom he appointed the ministers of his religion, his word had free course and was glorified. He gave testimony to the word of his grace in such sort, that, by the plain preaching of the doctrine of his cross, by a few despised men, the kingdom of Satan trembled and fell. The thick darkness which covered the nations was dispelled; and Satan, who had long reigned in that thick darkness, was cast down from his throne; and it was not long until our ancestors in Britain and Ireland were cheered with the orient beams of the Sun of righteousness, rising on them with healing in his wings.

We give praise and glory to God for the spirit, resolution, and faithfulness, wherewith he inspired his witnesses and martyrs, to hold fast the truth of the Gospel, during the violent persecutions under pagan Rome. And that even at the time, when the man of sin, foretold by the apostle Paul, and minutely described by the apostle John in the Apocalypse, was far advanced to maturity; yea, at the very time of the plenitude of his power and fullness of his iniquity, God did not want witnesses to testify against the abominations which then polluted the Church, among which witnesses, we may enumerate the followers of Wickliffe in the island of Britain, and the Waldenses on the continent.

We commemorate, with all thankfulness, the bright displays of the grace, mercy and power of God our Saviour at

the reformation from popery. What a blessing to the world that Jesus Christ gave such a blow to the man of sin ! The reformation has been of great service to the Church of Rome itself, and we hope will finally subdue a great part of its members to the obedience of faith.

We praise God for the noble zeal, firmness and patience, with which he qualified his witnesses, during their struggles against popery. These men were the heroes of our religion. The substance of their testimony we adopt and espouse with all our hearts, under full conviction that it is the testimony of Jesus ; and we wish to transmit, in purity, to our posterity, the good cause which has been sealed with the blood of the Saviour and the blood of his holy martyrs.

But though we wish to extend our grateful remembrance, to what the Lord did, in and by his faithful witnesses, in all the Protestant churches : yet, we commemorate, in a special manner, his goodness to Britain and Ireland, in collecting such a bright cloud of witnesses for his name there, among whom we have the honor to rank our ancestors. We heartily espouse their testimony, both against popery and prelacy, and abhor the horrid cruelty with which their adversaries made war with these illustrious sufferers. We thank God for the deliverance accomplished for his Church in Britain and Ireland, at the glorious revolution, and lament that our fathers did not improve, to better purpose, the prize then put in their hands.

In like manner, we commemorate, with unfeigned gratitude and joy, whatever has been done by our fathers and brethren in Scotland, in agreeableness to the Lord's will, for obstructing the progress of error. clearing up and establish-

ing the truths of the Gospel, and asserting the rights and liberties of Christ's Church. We heartily espouse their testimony as to the spirit and substance of it. But we lament the mismanagement of the good cause, especially by schism and division among themselves, than which nothing contributed more, to harden the leaders of the defection in their tyrannical courses. At the same time, we do not wish to perplex the Church here with merely local controversies, such as that about the lawfulness of swearing, a religious clause in a certain burgess oath, which has no place anywhere on earth but in a few cities in Scotland, and we are certain can affect no person's conscience here: or that about the lawfulness of submission to the civil powers in Britain, while we all readily acknowledge and submit to the civil authority in the United States. But while we set aside these local controversies, we can boldly declare, there is not a single point of divine truth, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government appertaining to the Reformed Church of Scotland, for which we do not contend.

The Christian profession in itself, when stripped of local peculiarities with which some have invested it and with which, while they meant to adorn it, they have really marred its beauty, is equally suited or adapted to all nations and places of the world.

Finally, we give praise and glory to God for his unutterable goodness in providing a retreat for his Church and people in America, from the iron rod of oppression and persecution; for planting the vine of the Gospel in this land, and watering it from time to time, with the influences of his spirit—for preserving and wonderfully supporting us through the horrors

of the late bloody war, and conducting it to a happy issue ; for commanding peace in all our borders and establishing our liberties, sacred and civil ; so that none can hurt us ; if we do not, by a spirit of irreligion, division, luxury and ingratitude, bring swift destruction on ourselves. These are the Lord's doings and wonderful in our eyes ! A blessed opportunity is put into the hands of his ministers and people, to build the house of the God of heaven, in the nearest conformity to the pattern showed in his holy word. May he, who hath given us the opportunity, also give grace to us all, to improve it to his glory, and the happiness of the present and future generations. Amen.

DRAUGHT OF AN OVERTURE

FOR

ILLUSTRATING AND DEFENDING THE DOCTRINES

OF THE

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH.

ON CONFESSIONS OF FAITH AND THEIR USE.

WE have said that the Bible is the only testimony of the Church, and most certainly it is so. *To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.* Yet this does not render Confessions of Faith vain. For as there never was, perhaps, any book, on parts of which different senses have not been imposed, so the Bible has been made subject to this vanity. The most dangerous adversaries to the truth of the Gospel, pretend to establish their opinions on the holy Scriptures. This rendered it necessary that the Church should, in her Confession of Faith, ascertain the true sense of the Scriptures, or explicitly declare in what sense she understood them; and though it will be readily granted that she is not infallible, yet this doctrine of her fallibility may be, and is, carried to a dangerous extreme; amounting to this, that she should put

no sense on them at all; or leave their meaning quite vague and undetermined; that is, place them down as having any meaning or none. But we cannot think God's Word is involved in so much obscurity. Light is not darkness, nor darkness light. And where there is an honest heart, willing to receive the truth, with a humble dependence on the spirit of truth to guide into all truth, which spirit is promised to the Church and remains with her, the Bible is not so uncertain in its meaning as to leave room for skepticism. And it is altogether clear, that the difficulty is not nearly so great, for fallible men to decide on a system of truths and duty already given, as it would for these same fallible men to form such a system. This, however, furnishes an argument for candor, but not for skepticism. And it is undeniable, that it is the duty of the Church to search out and ascertain the true sense of the Scriptures. Thus a Confession of Faith in a Church does not make any new rule of faith and manners; but only fixes, as far as she is able, the true sense of God's Word, the only rule. And making an adherence to the Confession of Faith in a Church a term of communion, is not appointing any new term of communion distinct from the Bible: it is only making an adherence to the Bible, in its true sense, the term or condition: than which nothing can be more proper. What do the adversaries to Confessions mean? Do they mean that the Bible should have no sense or meaning put on it? Or that the sense of it should be concealed from the unlearned? Or that an adherence to it, in general, should be the only term of communion, while the adherents think, speak and preach as differently from each other, as if one preached the Alcoran and the other the

Bible? What communion would be in such a Church? What harmony between her and the Church in heaven? The adversaries to Confessions of Faith then, were they to act a rational and consistent part, instead of railing at Confessions in general, would produce a confession of their own faith, whatever it be: thus they would, though opposed to the truth, act the part of fair assailants. How absurd to involve all in darkness, as if the Bible had no sense or meaning at all!

When the Protestant Churches came out of mystical Babylon, they came forth with a public confession of the truth in their hands. The following things are noticeable with respect to the Confessions of the Protestant Churches. There is at least a great apparent similarity between the doctrines taught in them, and those taught in the holy Scriptures. This must be granted by any impartial observer who will read and compare both. There is not a doctrine taught in these Confessions, but some analogous text of Scripture is produced to support it. And as in the Scriptures, so in them, there is a beautiful consistency between all the parts throughout the whole. There is a surprising harmony between the Confessions of all the Protestant Churches: they all speak the same things. Men, living in distant regions of the earth, speaking different languages, and strangers to each other's habits and customs, animated with holy zeal, bore testimony for God and his Christ with one heart and one soul. To what shall we ascribe this? Surely their fathers had not taught them so. It was not the prejudice of education that influenced them. The true reason is, they had read the holy Bible impartially, as men that were

willing humbly to receive the truths of the living God ; and were taught by the same spirit of God which indited the Scriptures. The effect was wonderful. By the plain, pungent preaching of the Gospel, antichristian Jericho trembled, and her walls fell flat to the ground. The nations were awakened from the slumbers of many hundred years, and began to assert both their religious and civil liberties. Those who had long been seeking rest and peace to their consciences, in popish pardons, penances, and pilgrimages, but all in vain, found a solid rest and certain peace, in the doctrines of Christ. Sweeter than honey were these doctrines to them ! welcome as the new fallen manna to the Israelites ! and we may, without exaggeration, assert, that this was the beginning of all these blessings which we now enjoy. The foundation-stones of the fair temple of religion and freedom, which is now erected in Europe and America, were laid in the publication of these precious truths of the Gospel. The enslaved consciences of men, being once set free, and obtaining a sweet peace in the doctrines of Christ ; this gave a spring to the human mind, which hell and Rome could not resist : vigor and strength to it, to do anything, and bear anything, for the glory of God and good of men.

Furthermore, these precious truths have been sealed with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. In all the Protestant Churches many thousands have suffered unto death, and that for holding fast the same truths. Idolatry, both pagan and popish, hath ever been drunk with the blood of the saints. The faith of the Protestant Churches stood the fiery trial. In this it showed itself to be like, or rather the same with, the faith of the apostolic Churches. They

overcame at both periods by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. It is a good maxim in states, "Often revert to first principles." It is equally good and proper in religion. Let us often revert to the principles of the reformation. Our present boasted freedom of inquiry, amounts to a kind of libertinism and licentiousness in thinking. We pretend to be an enlightened age, and to enjoy many superior advantages to our ancestors. It is doubtless so in some respects. In mathematics, natural philosophy, and just views of the rights of mankind, we have made progress. But it is well known, that a spirit of skepticism hath long poisoned our moral systems. And the same spirit hath invaded and in part laid waste divinity. The Israelites, after long enjoying the manna, said, "Our souls loathe this light bread." The pure and plain food of gospel doctrine, is now loathed by formal and lifeless professors.

Christians have no reason to be shaken in mind by the new-fangled doctrines of the present age. Without entering into a direct argument about them, only ask, Are they more like the Bible doctrines, than the doctrines of the reformation? Is there a harmony among the visionary authors and projectors? Are they not rather like the builders of Babel, each differing from another, and all from the truth? Whereas our reformers were like the builders of Solomon's temple; not the sound of a jarring ax or hammer to be heard. Are our innovators more pious and strictly virtuous than our reformers? "By their fruits," says Christ, "ye shall know them." Have they stood the same trial? Has their faith carried them honorably through a scene of suffering shocking to humanity? Has it enabled them to take

joyfully the spoiling of their goods—cheerfully to embrace the ignominious gibbet and burning stake?

Satan long endeavored to ruin the Church by persecution, but was frustrated in his attempt; for the blood of the saints was the seed of the Church. We may be certain, he never will be at rest for the good Word's sake, as Luther speaks. But since by the increasing knowledge of the rights of human nature, he has been so far chained, as to be restrained from persecuting; he attempts to ruin the Church by odious and monstrous errors. We might have argued before it happened, that this would be the case. Facts confirm it. He is a master in the arts of deception. He has the wisdom of an angel, the policy of a devil, and the skill of a practitioner. What a pity that professors of Christianity should be ignorant of his devices and allow themselves to be deceived by seducing spirits! When we see professors eagerly running after every new projector in religion—we think we see them greedily sipping the poison of asps, and the venom of dragons. We do not intend, by this, to preclude free inquiry; but to prevent skepticism and rashness in adopting new opinions. We ought not to be like children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine: ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. Whoever will compare the Westminster Confession of Faith with the Confessions of the other Protestant Churches, will see a striking uniformity of sentiment between them. The Westminster Confession and Catechisms are the public standards of orthodoxy in the Reformed Church of Scotland. The Associate Reformed Synod have declared, and now do declare, that said Confession

and Catechisms are their public standards. That is, they adhere to the sacred Scriptures as their sense is given and explained in said Confession and Catechisms. The Bible is their testimony. The Confession of Faith ascertains the true light in which they view that testimony. They are afraid of publishing too many papers called Testimonies. Because these may tend to turn away our attention from the holy Scriptures, and fix it on human compositions. And they are convinced that in this manner all the trumpery of the Church of Rome was gradually introduced. We may stand safely on a branch, close by the trunk of the tree; but by going out too far, the branch will bend under us, and we must fall. They, therefore, offer no other testimony to their Churches than the Bible, as explained in the Confession of Faith. The application of this testimony to the purpose of refuting schemes of error, they will attend to from time to time. It would be superfluous labor to give you a duplicate of the Confession in another paper called "A Testimony." But to assist you in understanding said Confession, the Committee of Synod submit to consideration the following illustrations of the doctrines and duties therein contained.

CHAPTER I.

THE first chapter of our Confession treats of the holy Scriptures, which are a revelation from heaven, and the foundation of all true religion. We heartily approve of every remark made in this chapter on the holy Scriptures. There appears to be a great analogy between the works of God and the Word of God. As none can work like God, so none can speak like him. As the heavens declare his glory and the firmament showeth forth his handy work: as day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth forth knowledge: so the Word of God, in a still more clear manner, manifests his glorious nature and perfection. When one takes a contemplative walk in the field of nature, and beholds huge mountains, horrid precipices and flowing rivers; the earth diversified with hills and valleys, the year varied with summer and winter, and the revolution of day and night; the vast collection of waters in the sea, the wide expanse of heaven, the sun pouring a flood of glory on the earth, or the moon and stars bespangling the heavens; who can forbear exclaiming, These are thy works, O thou Eternal and Omnipotent! No mind but an infinite one could conceive the idea of them; no hand but an infinite one could fashion

them. Let an honest and contemplative mind take a walk through the wide field of divine revelation ; and he will perceive something very similar, but superior to all this majestic scenery. It is certain, there is a sublimity, a majesty and grandeur in the Word of God, which proclaims it to be his and only his. As the works of God infinitely transcend the works of human art ; so the Word of God infinitely excels all human writings. The more we search into the works of men, the less wonderful they appear ; but the more we search into the works of God, the more grand and wonderful they show themselves. The first is the case with the writings of man ; the last with the Word of God. The analogy holds in another instance. There are many parts of creation and providence, the design and use of which we are not able so readily to comprehend ; and so it is in the Word of God. But as in God's works, the most necessary and useful parts are most open to view ; so in the Word, the most necessary and useful truths are most easily discerned. The objection against the historical parts of Scripture, viz : that they are no regular history, is of no weight ; because they were never intended to be a history of any man or men : but are truly a history of God, of his providential and gracious care about his Church and people ; or a history of the work of redemption.

This age is distinguished by an alarming diffusion and prevalence of deistical principles. Our thoughtless youth are carried away with the torrent. Too many, it is to be feared, take these principles for granted, without any examination. They are flattering to man's pride of reason and superior understanding ; but the Gospel is a humble and

humbling scheme. They are pleasing to man's natural lusts and corruptions; whereas the Gospel is pure and holy. But if the Scriptures be a forgery, who could forge them? Neither good angels nor bad; neither good men nor bad. Not good, for they could not be guilty of such an audacious crime and offense against both God and man, as to impose on mankind in such a manner. Not bad, for it is impossible such a pure, unblemished and perfect system of religion and morals could come from them.

In the Scriptures, the justest views are given of God and of man. Of man's sinful and miserable state, and of the way of his recovery from sin and misery to virtue and felicity. The inspired writers fail not to declare salutary but unpalatable truths; they freely expose their own sins, blemishes, and imperfections; and those of the people most nearly connected with them. The glory of God and the reformation of man are the grand scope of the inspired writings; and it is evident they are adapted, by infinite wisdom, to creatures in a sinful and miserable condition. And are not all sensible, more or less, that in fact they are in such a condition? It behooves us on this subject to look well to facts. Are the scorers of the Word of God, the infidels of this age, the most sober, religious, and virtuous part of the community? Are they not generally the frothy, the proud, the irreligious, and voluptuous? Who ever heard of a worshiping society of deists? of a Church of religious, virtuous infidels? In this respect we have more reason to fear they are generally atheists. And, in fact, deism is nearly allied to atheism. A very thin partition, if any, divides them. The transition from denying revela-

tion to practical atheism, is very short and easy. There is no history so fully attested as the Scripture history; no facts better established than the facts recorded in the Old and New Testaments. And if once men seriously give way to skepticism on these, the principles of faith and credibility are altogether thrown loose and set afloat; and there can be no consistent belief of anything. Hence, our thinking deists have not merely called in question the divine authority of the Scriptures—there they could not stop—but, on the same principles of doubt and uncertainty, have generally run into universal skepticism and atheism; yea, even to the nonsense of discrediting the testimony of their senses, and becoming absolute apostates from common sense, have made matter nothing, spirit nothing, religion nothing, virtue nothing, vice nothing.

In a word, are Christians—the men who read, study, understand, and believe the Scriptures, and with invincible faith and patience profess an adherence to them—are they the people who blaspheme God, who pollute the air with oaths and curses, live in whoredom, adultery, and all the lusts of the flesh, crowd our jails, and load our gibbets? Infidels ought to weigh this matter well. The tree is known by its fruits. Goodness is the native fruit of truth, because truth purifies the heart. And we fear not to affirm, that, in a general view, religion and virtue are entirely on the side of revelation. On the other hand, infidelity corrupts the heart—it poisons all the springs of action; and of the most of infidels it may be justly said, that it is an honor to revelation that they are enemies to it, and no weak evidence that it is of God.

There are only four questions respecting revelation, on which skepticism itself can have any place for exercise. First: Whether there ever were in the world such persons as Moses, the Hebrew Lawgiver; and Jesus Christ, the divine Author of Christianity? Secondly: Whether they taught the doctrines, enacted the laws, and performed the miracles, which in the sacred writings are ascribed to them? Thirdly: On supposition they really did so, whether the sacred writings be a divine revelation? Fourthly: Whether these writings have been handed down to us in a pure and uncorrupted state?

On all these questions, let us only admit the common principles of faith and credibility, and we will be perfectly satisfied. The subject being moral, it can admit of none but moral evidence. Deceitful as our fallen nature is, men will never make falsehood their refuge, when truth will gain the end proposed. And it must be an end unworthy of truth, which truth will not accomplish. The gentlemen with whom we contend, on some occasions talk highly of the dignity and purity of human nature; but in this case, in order to discredit revelation, they degrade it below its real dignity.

Let us, for a moment, attend to these questions in order. On the first and second, we remark: That it can not be denied there is such a people on earth as the Jews. That they are scattered abroad among all nations, and, by a singular providence, kept distinct from them. Our infidels can not deny this to be a standing miracle. There is nothing equal to it under the sun. And, if they look into the Holy Scriptures, they will see that this singular event

was expressly foretold by the inspired writers: Deut. iv, 17; Ezek. v, 14, 15, and vi, 8, and xii, 14, 15. Jesus Christ expressly foretells it: Luke xxi, 14—"And they shall fall by the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

It is probable, that one great design of Providence, in preserving the Jews a distinct people from all other nations, and dispersing them among them, is, that they may be living witnesses of the truth both of the Jewish and Christian religion. If they had been either wholly mixed with other nations, or wholly converted to Christianity, it might have been said, either, that there never were such a people, or that they never had practiced the religion delineated in the books of Moses; and never had crucified Jesus Christ. But now that there were such a people is evident, for they still exist. That they practiced the religion delineated by Moses is evident, for they still do so, as far as possible. And that their fathers crucified Jesus Christ, is what the present Jews will freely confess. Ask the Jews whether they be not the descendants of Abraham, as recorded in the Bible? Whether they be not, to this day, circumcised as he was? Whether they do not observe the seventh day of the week as a sacred rest? Whether they do not acknowledge the writings of Moses and the prophets to be a divine revelation? Whether they do not firmly believe their fathers went down into Egypt to sojourn there, and were much oppressed with hard bondage? Whether Moses did not say he was sent of God to deliver them, and, in proof of this, performed many signs in Egypt, and miracles in the

field of Zoan? Whether they do not, to this day, observe something like the passover, in commemoration of the destroying angel passing by their houses, while he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians? Ask whether they do not firmly believe, that Moses conducted their fathers through the Red Sea, fed them with manna in the wilderness, and gave them water from the flinty rock? And whether, finally, they were not settled in the land of Canaan? Ask them, whether they have not still among them an order of priests, and those, as they suppose, of the tribe of Levi—as far, at least, as they are able, in their dispersions, to keep up a distinction of tribes? Whether Moses and the prophets be not read still in their Synagogues every Sabbath day? Whether they do not still commemorate with thankfulness, their deliverance from Haman's conspiracy, and from Babylon by Cyrus the illustrious prince of Persia? To all these interrogations they will readily answer in the affirmative. Ask them, if they have any suspicion that their ancestors deceived them, in handing down these informations, writings, observances, customs and rites to their posterity? They will answer, none. And that they could propose no end to be gained by such a deception; yea, that such a deception was impossible, for they would justly remark, that a whole generation of men does not go off the stage at once, and another as abruptly come on. That God has, for wise purposes, ordered it otherwise. That there are three or four, and in some instances more generations on the stage at once. That this is true, not only in particular family-lines, but a great number of these families being associated together in a nation or church, the intermixture is still nearer and greater:

so that old men, middle aged, young men, and children, with all the different gradations between them, or various degrees of approximation to each other, meet, talk, and freely converse together at one time. Mankind thus become like a marvelously interwoven chain, the links of which blend and intermix, some stretching a longer, some a shorter length on the chain. And hence the light or knowledge of one generation safely and easily descends by short transitions, unto the succeeding. And it cannot be an easy matter to impose a forgery on a whole nation, especially in its national concerns, such as its laws, its worship, its religious rites and customs.

It must indeed be impossible to persuade a whole nation, that a book of laws published yesterday by an impostor, importing that said book contains the statutes and laws of the nation, enacted and observed from the time of its first formation, was really the system of the national statutes, while no one living had ever heard of such a book, or of such laws and statutes before. But if the book should also contain a great number of rites and ordinances of worship, which it affirmed, were the national modes of worship, from the beginning of the nation, while no person living had ever heard of or seen such rites and ordinances, it would be still more impossible to impose it. But the argument rises superior to all possibility of doubt, if the same book mentioned a number of miraculous and wonderful facts, as having been certainly done in the nation by its Lawgiver, in order to induce it to accept said system of statutes and religious institutions; and also many monuments of these facts, said to have been retained and practiced in the nation, from its first formation

down to the very day in which the impostor published his book; while nobody living had ever heard of these facts before, and none had ever practiced the memorials, nor heard of the monuments of them until then; surely it would be impossible to impose such a forgery on a nation. All the above suppositions are realities in the books of Moses; as will be readily seen by any who read them. The books of Moses contain the laws of the Jewish nation, the rites and institutions of their national worship, and an account of the stupendous miracles performed by Moses in the sight of all men, to prove his divine commission. And said books institute and ordain a number of observances, as monuments of the principal facts; which monuments were to be kept up in the nation in remembrance of the facts, and were immediately reduced to practice, and continue to this day; such as circumcision, the passover, and the Sabbath; and the books mention them as all along so used and practiced. How then could the Jews have received the book of an impostor as true, which said these things were so, if they were not so? All which may lead up the mind to an absolute certainty, on the first and second questions respecting Moses, and show clearly that there really was such a lawgiver as Moses, and that he taught the doctrines, enacted the laws, and performed the miracles ascribed to him in his books, and therefore that these books are genuine.

The miracles wrought by Moses, were performed openly before the Hebrews and the Egyptians. They were such as the senses of men were proper to decide about. And it was purely by the undeniable evidence of these that he established his character as one sent from God to deliver his

brethren. By the evidence of the same alone, he introduced the severe laws and laborious worship instituted in his books; which the Jews observe as far as possible to this day. They were so well satisfied as to the certainty of these facts, that they never scrupled to admit national monuments of them. All of which they observed down to the time of Christ, and some of which remain among them to this day, and their faith in the whole is unalterably firm and unshaken.

The same observations, as above, may be made concerning Christ, as well as Moses. It will not be denied, that there are in the world at present such a people as these called Christians, after Christ. And it is equally certain there have been such above seventeen hundred years. Josephus, a Jewish historian, Suetonius, Tacitus, Celsus, Pliny, heathen writers, mention them; and an innumerable company of Christian writers. They may ask the Jews and Mahometans, they are not unbelievers on this head. They will tell them that beyond all doubt, there was such a person as Jesus Christ, from whom Christians receive their denomination, who taught religion and virtue, and worked wonderful signs in Judea, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. The principal facts recorded in the New Testament, have been allowed to be true, by Julian, by the Jews, and all others, the greatest enemies of Christianity; and indeed they cannot be denied, without rejecting all faith human and divine. It must also be allowed that baptism and the Lord's supper have been dispensed; the first day of the week observed as a Sabbath; and a succession of Christian ministers kept up, ever since Christ's death and resurrection, because the authentic writings of

both friends and foes to Christianity, in every age since that time to this present, testify it. Nor can it be denied, that these are monuments of the principal facts recorded in the New Testament. Baptism and the Lord's supper, are monuments of the Redeemer's death, and point out the blessed fruits of it. The sacred rest on the first day of the week is a monument of his resurrection. The Gospel ministry a continued fulfillment of Christ's word, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; Lo! I am with you always even unto the end of the world." The facts of which these are monuments, and many other facts recorded in Scripture were done openly before the world; and were of such a nature, that of their certainty the eyes and ears of men were witnesses and proper judges. The history of the Gospel could never have been received if it had not been true; because baptism, the holy supper, and the first day, Sabbath, are therein mentioned, as being not only instituted by Christ, but also practiced and observed all along from his time; and it is fully as impossible to persuade men that they had been baptized, had celebrated the holy supper in remembrance of Christ's death, and observed the first day of the week as a memorial of his resurrection; had baptized their children and taught them to show forth the Redeemer's death and sanctify the Sabbath, if they had not seen and done any of these things, as it would be to persuade them that they lodged every night in the center of the earth, or were eye-witnesses of the stars all falling from heaven; or indeed of anything the most false and absurd. But without being conscious of the truth of these things, it was impossible that the Gospel could be believed or received.

Were it necessary it might be added here, that the numeration of time from the birth of Christ, in use with many nations, is an undeniable fact which contributes its evidence to the same important truths.

The first and second questions being thus put beyond a possibility of doubt; the third is whether, on supposition that there were really such men as Moses and Jesus Christ, and that they published the doctrines, enacted the laws, and performed the miracles ascribed to them in their books; these books be a divine revelation? and this question is readily answered. Admitting the truth of the miracles performed by Moses and Christ, which are the matters of fact, of which men were eye and ear-witnesses: this necessarily follows. It is certain Moses and Christ, both declared they came from God; and that the doctrines they taught, the precepts they enjoined were a discovery of the mind and will of God. Omnipotence ratified their testimony by the miracles which they had power and authority from God to work. But God would never manifest his infinite power to attest and propagate what was false. It is also corroborating on this head to observe, that all their doctrines and precepts are such as are truly worthy of God, and indeed, many of them, so sublime, heavenly, benevolent and grand, as could never have entered the mind of man without inspiration from God; and the whole so contrary to man's corrupt nature, that the world persists in opposing, contradicting and blaspheming them to this day.

The authenticity of the books of Moses and the Gospels being established, the writings of the prophets and apostles are established of course. The writings of the prophets

were intended to keep Israel closely to the law of Moses. They predict the terrible judgments that should come on the nation for their disobedience; and the prosperity they should enjoy if obedient: the fulfillment of which predictions, in their minutest circumstances, clearly proves their writings to be divinely inspired. The writings of the apostles are intended to keep Christians closely to the law of Christ; and that law is substantially the same with the law of Moses, for Christ declares he came not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them. Also the great object of revelation, the almighty Saviour and salvation through him to perishing sinners, is constantly kept in view through both. The very law given by Moses was subservient to this. It was a schoolmaster to conduct to Christ. All the sacrifices pointed to his sacrifice. The brazen serpent, the manna, the smitten rock which supplied the people with water, prefigured him. Our fathers, says Paul, all passed through the sea, etc., and did all eat the same spiritual meat and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ. The prophets speak of the dignity of his person, of the manner, time and place of his appearance in the world, of the blessed fruits of it, particularly the conversion of the Gentile nations, of his sufferings and ignominious death, and the happy issue of all, in the language of ecstasy! Whoever will read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, on the sufferings of Christ, and many other chapters of that book, respecting the conversion of the Gentiles, and consequential blessings; and compare them with the events recorded in the New Testament; will perceive the Old Testament and New mutually confirming and confirmed by each other. The Old fore-

tells the facts recorded in the New: and the New is a history of the fulfillment of these facts which were predicted in the Old. This is indeed the more sure word of prophecy mentioned by the apostle Peter; more sure than the singular manifestation of the glory of Christ, with which he and others were favored on the holy mount of transfiguration.

It is more than astonishing that any man should imagine the Bible to be an imposture. One design is evidently prosecuted throughout the whole, viz: the glory of God and the salvation of men to virtue and felicity. The plan therein laid down and prosecuted, is like one stupendous arch, consisting of many parts, but all these constituting one great whole and each part depending on another. An arch, one pillar of which stands on eternity past, if we may use the expression, the other on eternity to come, and comprehending within its sweep all time and all eternity! Who built this arch, what mind could form the plan of it, what hands execute the work? None but his who built the arch of heaven. Men who could conceive such a plan and unanimously prosecute such a design, must have been inspired by the Spirit of God. And how is it possible that deceivers, living in such distant ages, could unite their counsels so harmoniously to delude the world? Could Moses and Paul lay their heads together for this purpose? If impostors, each of them must have had a separate scheme of deception. We see this is verily the case with all impostors in the Christian Church, and others out of it in our day.

In thinking on this subject we should add to all the above the accomplishment of Christ's numberless predictions, such as Peter's denying him, Judas' betraying him, his own

death, which was evidently all along a part of his own plan, his resurrection, the destruction of Jerusalem; the accomplishment of the predictions of his apostles, in the appearance and downfall of antichrist; the amazing success of the Gospel, though preached by a few plain men, who instead of having the civil powers on their side, had the whole weight of their authority against them; the universal change in the face of affairs introduced by Jesus Christ, who, according to ancient prophecy, made all things new; a new heaven and a new earth, that is, a new Church and a new state of things throughout the heathen world; the conversion of the Gentiles and rejection of the Jews, which is an amazing revolution in human affairs, and was expressly foretold long before it happened; the total ceasing of sanguinary sacrifices in the Church, since Christ offered himself a sacrifice; which is perfectly agreeable to ancient prophecy, Dan. ix, "He shall confirm the covenant with many, and cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease;" and what is more wonderful, that since the sufferings of Christ in the flesh, sanguinary sacrifices have comparatively ceased throughout the world, the heathen temples have been thrown down, their altars demolished, their sacrifices no longer smoke, and Polytheism, or the adoration of numberless deities, is greatly abolished. If we duly consider these incontrovertible truths and facts, we can scarcely fail to see the perverse rashness of infidelity, in rejecting as fictitious, what is so well attested and confirmed; and as uninteresting, what is so important; and for the sake of gratifying pride and other lusts, running headlong to damnation.

On the last question, whether the sacred writings have

been handed down to us in a pure and uncorrupted state, little need be said. Can their adversaries prove that they have been corrupted? They can not. If the writings of the Old Testament were so, we should naturally expect to find them exceedingly flattering to the Jewish nation, and favoring their prejudices respecting the Messiah, for whom they looked, and still look. But do they so? Quite the reverse. The unbelieving Jews are easily confuted from their own writings. It is easy to show from thence, that Jesus of Nazareth, in every particular, answers to the character of the Messiah described in the Old Testament writings. The Jews have always watched, with the utmost jealousy, over their sacred writings. When a Romish printer, about two centuries ago, altered but a single letter into one almost similar, they raised an amazing cry against it through all the world. The New Testament also bears on the face of it genuine characters of authenticity. Is it not like a counterpart to the Old? The one a prediction, and the other the history of its accomplishment? Do the evangelists flatter themselves or others? Do they even enter passionately on the account of the Redeemer's sufferings? No subject afforded greater scope for pathos and warm declamation. But God seems to have restrained their spirits from the smallest degree of warmth. They coolly and simply narrate facts, and tell their own mistakes and blunders, and leave the reader to judge. Do their doctrines and precepts flatter the pride of men, or indulge their lusts? The corruption of the originals, of either Old or New Testaments, by Christians, was totally impossible. So many copies were soon spread abroad, says one; such multitudes of men, learned and

unlearned, read and heard them, that no impostor could have succeeded in corrupting them; unless he could have made his alterations start into many thousand copies at once, and erased remembrance from the minds of men. And all along, from the time the Christian Church was formed into any degree of order and consistence, the New Testament writings are mentioned and quoted by other writers. But what temptation could there be to corrupt them? The learned enemies of Christianity would not think it worth their while, for they despised the whole. If professed Christians should have attempted it, this would have stamped their character with infamy. And we may judge of times past from the present. Though professed Christians differ widely as to their sense of some passages in the Scriptures; yet none pretend or dare presume to make an alteration of moment in the originals. Providence seems to watch over this invaluable treasure with peculiar care.

The attributes of the Deity are gloriously manifested in ruling the stormy tempest and setting boundaries to the raging ocean: but more so in governing the turbulent and outrageous passions of men, to answer the most valuable purposes. The differences and contentions in the Church appear to be an ill thing; and yet they answer, under the Divine government, a valuable purpose. Hereby a spirit of jealousy is kept awake among the contending parties, and as all appeal to the Scriptures for the truth of their opinions, if any should attempt an alteration of them, the other parties would soon expose them to shame and ignominy. And perhaps this is one reason in the unsearchable counsels of God, why the Jews have been continued so long in enmity and

unbelief. They are like watchmen guarding the Old Testament writings with the keenest edge of jealousy. No alteration can be made in them without being detected and stigmatized. And if the Old Testament be true, it is impossible the New can be false; for it is a counterpart to it, and written by men who were educated in and firmly believed the Old. If the New be true, the Old cannot be false, for the writers of the Old point to the truths and facts recorded in the New. That they are both true, most certainly true, is a conclusion as well supported as any the human mind can form.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER second treats of God and the Trinity; of every article of which we heartily approve. That there is a God, all nature proclaims aloud through all her works. We may be as certain of his existence as of our own. We are infallibly certain we did not and could not create ourselves, and that we did not always exist. The reasoning is as short and conclusive with respect to every creature. No created thing could possibly create itself. Therefore there must exist an eternal, uncreated, necessarily existent, self-sufficient, infinite, and independent Being, who created all things out of nothing, by his almighty power.

It is a great ground of thankfulness, and conduces much to the preservation of the world, that the knowledge of this great foundation truth, is so easily attainable, that all nations, even the most barbarous, all men, even the most wicked, must acknowledge it. It is true, God is not the object of sensation. We cannot see nor touch Him. Our senses are too gross for anything but matter. God is a most pure spirit. When we converse with our fellow men, it is not with their bodies or the mere pieces of matter that we converse. No, but our spirits converse with their spirits,

though invisible to each other. In social and friendly converse there is a communion of spirits, an interchange of hearts. And this intercourse may be, and in many cases is, as intelligible and effectual without words as with them. Why may not our spirits then discern God and converse with him in his works and in his word, though we do not see Him with our bodily eyes?

Reason pronounces that God is one. The holy Scriptures also testify the same in the fullest manner. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Jehovah." But revelation unfolds an incomprehensible mystery in the Godhead, viz: that God is *Triune*. This, mere unassisted reason could never have ascertained: but though it transcend reason, it is by no means contrary to it. It is perfectly consistent with reason, that an infinite substance, whose fullness is truly and properly infinite, should subsist in a plurality of persons. This is no more incomprehensible than his eternity, necessary existence and self-sufficiency. Reason suggests, that there may be in the Divine nature many excellencies of which we could have no notion, if not revealed, and which when revealed far transcend our comprehension. As God's works are so wonderful, reason says, that he must infinitely surpass all in wonder. And it would be a strong presumption against an account of God, pretending to be a revelation from Him, if it gave no information of Him but what was easily comprehensible by our feeble powers. Do we find it impossible to comprehend the nature of a clod; or a spire of grass; or the union between our souls and bodies: and shall it be possible, by searching to find out the Almighty? When men ask, how can it be? the same question may, with equal

propriety, be put about every thing. How can matter be? How can spirit be? How can matter and spirit be so united as to make but one person? How can spirit move matter? How can the volitions of the mind move the penman's fingers in writing? The Scriptures have every character of a revelation from God. God knows himself infinitely well. None can deny that the Trinity is revealed in Scripture. And it is a truth fundamental to our redemption. We are well pleased with the account of this mystery given in our Confession of Faith, given in a few words, indeed, but these agreeable to Scripture. The language of God himself is safest here. The words used by the Holy Ghost are the most proper for declaring the doctrine of the Trinity. It is impossible for men, by strength of genius, or superior capacity and learning, to know any more about this grand mystery, than the weakest Christians may know, by a diligent searching of the Scriptures. It must be received with the humility of faith. And as it was death to taste the forbidden tree, so it is death to deny this doctrine. The Socinian, Arian, and Sabellian heresies, evidently spring from diabolical pride, which will bring God himself down to the standard of our feeble reason. Some will ask with a sneer, of what use was it to men, to reveal this truth, if we cannot comprehend it? Yea, they will say, on this supposition, it is no revelation at all. We answer, it is a truth, that the divine Nature subsists in three distinct persons; and this truth is essentially the foundation of redemption; and therefore it is of infinite importance to know this truth; though like ten thousand other truths and facts, it be not comprehensible. The divinity of Christ is the very corner-

stone in the foundation of the Church. Take that away and all is gone. Christianity is nothing: our hope perisheth. The glory of the Christian religion is gone forever. We cannot believe that the Christian Church is built on a mere creature; that it is our duty to glory in the cross of a mere creature; that a mere creature is able to save to the uttermost; that we were baptized in the name of God and one or two mere creatures. These horrible absurdities may suit the pride and enmity of men, who never felt their extreme need of a divine Saviour: but they are as opposite to the truth of the Gospel, as darkness is to light.

It cannot be denied, that in Scripture, the same names, titles, attributes, works and worship, are ascribed to the Son and Holy Spirit, as to the Father. This is incontrovertible. The Bible begins with this doctrine. The divine Elohim created the heavens and the earth. Jehovah Elohim said, the man is become as one of us. The apostle testifies that God created the worlds by his Son, and it is said the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters. And at the creation of man, the phraseology is remarkable: "Come let us make man." At the destruction of Sodom, it is said, "The Lord rained fire on it from the Lord out of heaven." The form of benediction used by Moses is to the same purpose. "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord lift up his countenance on thee and be gracious to thee; the Lord cause his face to shine upon thee and give thee peace;" exactly corresponding with the Evangelical benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; the love of God; and communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." It appears, by comparing Numbers xxi with 1 Corinth. x, that it was Christ

whom the people tempted, on account of which fiery serpents were sent among them. And by comparing Isaiah vi chap., with John xii, 41, it will appear, that it was the glory of Christ, which the prophet saw. In the ex Psalm, the language is to the same purpose, "The Lord said to my Lord." "Go, says Christ, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." God the Father says of the Son, "I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall show forth judgment to the Gentiles." Christ says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek," etc. At the Redeemer's incarnation, the Father sent forth his Son, and the Holy Ghost formed his human nature; "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," etc. said the angel to Mary. At his baptism, the Holy Ghost descended and rested on him, and the Father proclaimed with an audible voice: "This is my beloved Son," etc. And in 1 John v, 7, this great truth is testified in the fullest manner: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." It is true, we are told this text is not in some ancient manuscripts, and thence it is inferred, that it must be spurious. But this is running too fast, the same truth is taught in many other texts. It is most probable that these ancient manuscripts, in which this glorious text is omitted, have been manufactured by some daring Arian or Socinian; for it is well known, that men of these principles use uncommon liberties with the Word of God to this day, and are not afraid to tell us, that though it could be proved, the doctrine of the Trinity is revealed in Scripture, they would not believe it. Have ever

the humble disciples of Jesus spoken so? It is, therefore, easy to judge which of the two characters was most likely to falsify God's Word, the believer, by interpolation, or the blaspheming Arian, by omission; and we doubt not to affirm, that Arians, Socinians, and Deists, are brethren in iniquity, and engaged in the same cause.

Some modern divines have alledged, that Jesus Christ is denominated the Son of God, only from his mediatorial office; others have supposed the title to arise from his incarnation and resurrection. Of such a grave subject it becomes us not to give way to vain philosophy or curious speculations, but with all humility to investigate the mind of God in his Word, and with that to rest perfectly satisfied. These explanations are only an attempt to accommodate the doctrine of the Trinity to our feeble reason and comprehension, which is utterly vain; it will eternally transcend created comprehension: Who can by searching find out God? Christ's Sonship originates not in office, or anything appertaining to office, but in nature. He ever was, and is the Son of God by an eternal, natural and necessary generation. "Who shall declare his generation," says Isaiah, chap. liii. "I will declare the decree," says the Son of God, "The Lord hath said to me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." The eternity of God hath neither past nor future, it is one continued day. And it follows in the same second Psalm, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry." Compare this with Proverbs viii, 22-30, and with John i, 1-5. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way," etc., "when there were no depths, I was brought forth." And this eternal Son says, Proverbs, chap. i, 23, "Turn ye at my reproof,

behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you;" corresponding with his promise often repeated with his own lips, while on earth, that he would send the Comforter. The Hebrew words translated "*possessed and brought forth,*" point out generation, as might be shown at large, were it proper here. And Proverbs xxx, 4, it is said, "What is his name, or his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" And in the third chapter of Daniel, it is said, "I see four men walking in the fire, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Micah says, "Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, etc., out of thee shall come he, etc., whose goings forth, or generation, have been of old, from everlasting." With what noble propriety does this idea of the subject, introduce the doctrine of the New Testament, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son;" Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The Jews sought to kill him, because he said God was his Father, making himself equal with God. In the fullness of time God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, etc.; and Coloss. i, 15-17, he is called the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature, for by him were all things created, etc. The phrase, "*Prototokos pases ktisioos,*" may be translated with propriety, begotten before all creation. And Heb. i, 2-8, it is said, "He hath spoken to us by his Son, by whom he made the worlds, who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person." These expressions, "He spared not his own Son;" "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, nor any the Father, save the Son;" "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father;" "God will have all men to honor the Son, even as they honor the Father;" "Moses was faithful as a servant,

but Christ as a Son, over his own house ;” “ This is my beloved Son ;” “ Last of all, he sent unto them his Son, saying, they will reverence my Son ;” certainly point out an eternal and incomprehensible generation, infinitely transcending a relation depending on office, which is applicable to creatures, angels and men ; or on his incarnation and resurrection ; though in these he was undoubtedly declared, fully and expressly declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness. The last text we shall mention is 1 John v, 7: “ There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.” The paternal character necessarily indicates the filial ; there cannot be a father without a son.

CHAPTER III.

THE third chapter treats of the divine decrees, on which there has been much disputation. Rigid Arminians cannot endure the doctrine of predestination; and in their zeal against it, carry on a scheme of argument; which, could the thing be done by argument, would reason God out of his own world; or entirely exclude him from the government of it, leaving the whole to man's free will, or to chance. The divine prescience cannot well be denied; if this be granted, it involves all that any reasonable man can require on this subject. To deny the divine prescience is to be an Atheist. On the other hand, we own that some rigid predestinarians have argued in such a manner as would lead us to think, that they excluded all free agency from the rational creation, and maintained that man was a mere machine, and necessarily impelled by the first cause; and of consequence that God is the author of moral evil, and all its fruits—than which nothing can be more shocking. That God does govern the world cannot be denied. That he governs it according to a plan laid in his infinite mind, cannot be doubted. Which plan no unforeseen accident can disconcert, because his infinite foreknowledge extends to all things knowable;

whether possible or future. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning. And without this there could be no such thing as foretelling any future event. Prophecy could have no place. He who certainly foretells future events at a great distance, or inspires men to tell them, must have fixed, and must see the whole chain of subordinate causes necessary to the production of the event. This plan is only another name for the divine decrees. But there is another point equally clear and certain; that man is an intelligent, free, and moral agent. Every man feels himself free and voluntary in his volitions and actions. Many men know nothing at all about the divine decrees, perhaps never heard the term. No man can say that the decree compels him to anything. He acts as freely as if there were no decree; and yet as certainly according to the divine plan, as if he had no freedom. Men's lusts and passions are contrary to the spirit and law of God, but cannot frustrate his purpose. "My counsel shall stand, says he, and I will do all my pleasure." "The wrath of man shall praise the Lord, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain." This is indeed one of the deep things of God. But though our feeble reason be not able to comprehend the consistency between the divine purpose and the freedom of will in men and angels: who can doubt but God comprehends it well? That these things are really so, we are as certain as we are of our own existence. We are certain that we are free agents, and therefore accountable and punishable for sin. But that God governs the world according to a plan laid in his infinite mind, is an intuitive perception as clear and obvious as that God exists.

But cannot infinite knowledge see farther than we can? Strange! because it appears to be absurd to us; that we should think it impossible with God. May there not be excellencies in the divine government, as well as in the divine nature, which we cannot comprehend? The decrees of God respecting the eternal state of angels and men, form what is called Predestination. It is here that Arminians muster all their zeal. Awful and horrible things are said against the doctrine of predestination. But surely its opposers must grant, that except all men and devils be saved, some must perish, and they must allow God knows who they are. The Lord knoweth them that are his and therefore them that are not his. If this foreknowledge be certain, which it undoubtedly is, and if we argue the subject out fairly, it will bring us exactly to the very conclusion advanced by the apostle Paul upon the subject, in several epistles. To deny the sovereignty of God is to deny his being. Sin is infinitely sinful in always attempting to overthrow this. Satan said to Eve, Hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the Garden? or what right hath he to say so? And again, God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods. But God has displayed and continues to display this attribute in all his works. Every acorn that drops in the forest, might produce a tree; but how few do so? Might there not have been millions of other men and women formed, which are not? Might not the savage nations on this continent, and the negroes of Africa have been favored with the light of the Gospel and the knowledge of the arts and sciences, and we in their state of barbarism? It is very offensive to tender Christians to hear

any exclaiming against the divine sovereignty, which has distinguished them so much by conferring superior privileges. It would not be so surprising, were the heathen to rise and assault the divine sovereignty, which has bestowed its gifts more sparingly on them ; which yet they do not. It is certain, all denominations of Christians have been chosen to hear the Gospel of Christ ; which is an unspeakable privilege ; and without spending time in arraiguing the sovereignty of God, we ought to fall down and humbly adore it—that has done so much for us above many others—and give all diligence to make our calling and election sure ; first our calling and then our election. In the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the apostle exhibits the golden chain of the believer's privileges. Whom he did foreknow, them did he also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son ; that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Here is a chain of blessings reaching from all eternity to all eternity ; the links of which were made by God himself, and are inseparably connected in one another. Foreknowledge and predestination are from all eternity ; glorification reaches to all eternity. It is impossible for us at first or immediately, to lay hold on the extreme parts ; but the middle link is within our reach ; to wit, our effectual calling. Let us lay hold on that. Let us obey the call of God's grace in the Gospel, let us accept of Christ as offered to us in the word of truth, and thus secure our calling ; and then we may draw the whole chain to us ;

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by this we shall ascertain our predestination to life, and also our eternal glorification.

The doctrine of the decrees does not exclude the use of means. It is an appointment of heaven, to accomplish all the works of creation, providence and redemption, by a subordinate chain of secondary causes. God, the first cause of all things, has appointed the whole subordinate series of causes, and gives energy and efficacy to them. The appointment of the end includes the appointment of the means. Paul's crew were to be saved; but the means must be used; the mariners must stay in the ship. Nineveh is to be saved; but Jonah must pronounce the destruction which they merited—must call them to repentance and amendment, to which call they must yield.

The mariner never argues in this form: if it be ordained that I arrive at my intended port, I need not go on shipboard—for the decree will certainly bring me there. If it be decreed, I shall not arrive at my port, I need not go on shipboard; for it is impossible I can arrive there. No. He knows it would be absurd to expect to arrive at his port, if he did not go aboard, hoist his sails, and give his vessel to the wind. The farmer never argues thus: if it be decreed I shall not have a crop, it is needless for me to plow or sow; for I cannot have it. If it be decreed I shall have it, (and by-the-by decrees of God extend as much to these things as any other) I need not plow nor sow, for I shall have it; the decree will produce it. No. He knows, if it be decreed, that he shall have a crop, this decree must be accomplished in the use of means; and the appointment of the end in-

cludes the appointment of the means, and therefore, in the appointed season he plows and sows his fields, and waits for the divine blessing to produce the end. Let us only apply this to the doctrine of eternal life and all is easy. Believers are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father: but it is through sanctification of the Spirit, belief of the truth and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. Gospel hearers must know, that if they be ordained to eternal life, this infers the necessity of believing in Christ, repenting of sin, and practicing universal holiness.

Predestination is a very high and awful doctrine, and ought to be studied with deep humility and reverence. But it is, when well understood, and taken in connection with the other blessings of the covenant, a great source of consolation to believers. Finally, God's decrees are not and cannot be the rule of our duty; because secret and never to be known but by their accomplishment, except in the case of immediate revelation, which has no place here. Men may form designs quite opposite to them, and be applauded; as in the case of David resolving to build the temple, which yet was not appointed for him, but for his son. Men may act agreeably to them, and yet be most justly condemned, as in the case of the Jews crucifying the Lord of glory. He was delivered into their hands by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and yet with most wicked hands they crucified and slew him. The revealed will of God, then, is the only standard of right and wrong—the only rule by which sin and duty must be determined.

CHAPTER IV.

ON CREATION.

WHEN any person of the least turn for contemplation, beholds the starry heavens, and the various revolutions, seasons and productions of this terraqueous globe, he cannot forbear inquiring, How came they into existence? And he will naturally ask, How came I myself into being? I did not always exist. I did not, could not create myself. Who then formed this body, consisting of so many members, and all so finely proportioned and adapted to various purposes? Who formed the spirit within me, and gave me this power of perception and volition? It should enhance our esteem of the Bible, that it is the only book in the world which gives a satisfactory answer to these queries. It opens with a majestic account of the work of creation. By Jehovah's omnipotent word all things sprang into existence, order and harmony. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host thereof by the breath of his mouth." "For he spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast." He said, "Let there be light and there was light."^o This

^o The Hebrew word *rakiahgh* is derived from the verb *rakahgh*, which signifies to spread out, expand, or extend; the noun is trans-

gives us an idea of power truly divine. Some fanciful writers have endeavored to accommodate the work of creation to the slow, the reptile operations of their reason, and exhibited theories dishonorable to the Word of God. This is more preposterous and absurd than if an ant should attempt to correct the Newtonian system. An act of Jehovah's will accomplished the whole; and this act was as sufficient to have produced all in a moment as in many days or years. There are two decisive ways of reasoning; the one from first principles, which cannot be controverted—the other from facts. Now there is nothing in the account which Moses gives of the generation of the heavens and the earth, but what is perfectly consistent with every just and rational idea of the divine attributes. Infinite wisdom, infinite power, and immense goodness, were certainly sufficient to perform the whole, and in the time mentioned, too; there can be no rational doubt of this. And let any impartial and candid reasoner peruse the account, and compare it with facts, with what he sees and feels, and he cannot entertain a doubt of its truth. Do not the heavens and the earth continue as Moses represents the divine fiat establishing them? If he had spoken at random or without the direction of the spirit of God, would he not have blundered in some parts of his narrative, so that the lapse of four or five thousand years would have detected his fallacy? Or would not God, to detect an impostor, have

lated firmament, which firmament, it is said, divided the waters from the waters. By this is probably meant the atmosphere, which is of infinite use both to refract and reflect the light, and also to bear up the dew, the clouds and waters necessary to refresh and fructify the earth.

taken some method to confute his doctrine? Is not the continuance of different sexes among the various kinds of animals, and the equality of the number of each sex, a continued effect of the appointment of heaven? And is not the continual propagation of each species, the constant effect and operation of that command and blessing, "Be ye fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth?" etc. And man's dominion over the earth and seas and the inhabitants thereof, is a continued fulfillment of the divine decree or omnipotent fiat, "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every living thing that moveth on the earth." The division of time into weeks, and the sanctification of the seventh part of time, is a fact that has never failed since the creation, and will not cease until the heavens and the earth be no more. To what shall we ascribe this in such a shifting, changing world as ours? to what, but to the omnipotent word of God. This is a fact immediately connected with creation, and leads us up to it in a moment; and one would think is altogether decisive on this subject to justify Moses' account of it. There is another fact which, though it do not so naturally fall in here, yet we shall mention in this place; man, according to the account of Moses, was deceived by Satan in the form of a serpent, and enmity was put between the seed of the woman and seed of the serpent. Is not the general horror which men feel at the sight of serpents a continued fulfillment of this Word? We may add, is not the general perception of the propriety and decency of the marriage-covenant existing between one man and one woman only, with the blessing attending it; and the direful effects following on the contrary practice, a fact

correspondent to the first institution of marriage as narrated by Moses? “He made them male and female; and therefore shall a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife.” And does not the course of nature, in producing nearly an equal number of each sex, show, that the same God who created the world, governs it, as narrated by Moses?

Though it do not so immediately refer to this subject, yet as it tends to corroborate the evidence of the truth of the Mosaic history from facts, we shall mention another thing. It is undeniable, that in all countries there are monuments of the flood recorded by Moses; or appearances which can not be accounted for, on any other hypothesis. And the truth of this fact seems to have been almost universally acknowledged by the heathen nations. Ovid, a heathen poet, has written a poem on it. And what uninspired man, or what man that was not certain he had the mind of God on the subject, would have ventured his character, as Moses has done in these words—Gen. viii, 21, 22: “And the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake, neither will I smite any more every living thing as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.” And the prophet Isaiah must have had a full conviction of the truth of this; for he represents Jehovah as saying, “This is as the covenant of Noah unto me, for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee.” Now we see both prophets venturing their characters on it. But since a flood

of waters had once overwhelmed the earth, how were they certain it would not do so again? how, but by the inspiration of God's Spirit. But Noah's covenant intimates, at least implicitly, the destruction of the earth at last. It runs thus: "While the earth remaineth." And the New Testament prophets assure us this destruction will be accomplished by fire. And who can doubt the truth of these declarations of Moses?—"In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And to the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee." And to Adam he said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And the Hebrew law-giver records, that Abel offered the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof, or sanguinary sacrifices; and it is an incontestable fact that all nations, even the most barbarous, before the incarnation of Christ, were employed in offering such sacrifices, which practice no doubt was deduced from Adam and Abel.

Reason teaches, that a being infinitely good, as God must necessarily be, would create all things very good. Revelation fully ascertains and confirms this fact. But perhaps it is refining too much on this subject to say, "that of all possible systems, God behooved to create the best. It looks too much like the doctrine of the ancient stoics concerning fate, by which fate, they said, God himself was bound; and

we fear it has led some into the dangerous opinions, or at least is nearly connected with them, "That God is the author of sin, that sin has been of great service to the world, and that we should be thankful for sin, etc."

God is the fountain of reason and volition, therefore he must be an intelligent and voluntary agent, and in all his works free and sovereign. And though it was impossible that he could create any being in a state of moral depravity, or with any sinful defect, yet he bestowed such a degree of perfections and powers on his creatures as seemed good and proper in his sight. There is a striking gradation in the scale of existence, so far as we are able to observe it, from nothing up to man; and from analogy it is natural to suppose, that the gradation ascends from man up through the spiritual and invisible world. But supposing it infinitely extended, it is impossible it can ever come near to infinite perfection; for there must be an infinite distance between the most glorious and exalted creature, and the Creator himself. He charges his angels with folly. Man was created holy and upright, but free. God, as was most meet, would be served by him not of necessity but choice; and so he must be served by all rational and intelligent creatures. And beside the moral image of God impressed on his rational soul, man was appointed lord and governor of this earth, and the other creatures were subject to his dominion. In fine, he was ordained the priest of nature, to offer unto God continually, the sacrifices of praise due from himself and the subordinate creation; and by the divine faculty of reason, he was enabled to employ all the elements, and many of the other creatures in his service.

CHAPTER V.

OF PROVIDENCE.

God, who made all things by the word of his power, also sustains, rules and governs them by his providence. Having laid his plan for the government of the world in his own infinite mind, He invariably adheres to that plan, and by his providence fully executes it. The doctrine of divine Providence is very full in the holy Scriptures; and is perfectly harmonious with sound reason. It extends to our minutest concerns; to the minutest creatures; the very hairs of our head are numbered; a sparrow can not fall to the ground without our heavenly Father. He feedeth the ravens, and gives the young lions their prey. With infinite ease he plants and plucks up; builds and pulls down kingdoms and empires. His providence extends even to these events, which we call fortuitous or accidental, as is manifest from the little and apparently fortuitous incidents in the history of Joseph, on which the grand conclusion depended, and also from many other passages of Scripture. There is this excellency visible in the lives of the Old Testament saints, that they appear to have walked with God, in a firm

persuasion of his universal presence and universal providence. Not a blessing conferred, but they acknowledge to be of God. Not a trial sent in their way, but is owned to be of Him. At the same time they were not strangers to the subordinate chain of secondary causes. This is clearly taught in the Old Testament writings; particularly in that beautiful passage of the prophet, where the supreme Governor is represented as saying, "I will hear the heavens; and the heavens shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."

Divine Providence reaches even to the sinful actions of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission; but such a permission as includes a powerful bounding and otherwise ordering and governing them, in a manifold dispensation, to answer his own holy ends; yet so that God is infinitely pure and free from the blame of man's sin; which sin is entirely and only of the creature. How clearly is this truth taught in that marvelous text: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, have ye taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." It is the glory of divine providence, that the dispensations thereof are always adapted to the moral state and character of nations, either in the way of mercy or judgment. That it produces good out of evil; as in the case of the sufferings and death of Christ, and also the temptations, falls, and sufferings of his own children, and makes all things in the kingdom of nature and grace subservient to the good of the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE FALL OF MAN.

THAT man is a sinful and miserable creature, can not be denied by the greatest infidel. Though a most wise, holy, and good God governs the world, yet the cup of misery which all men must drink, is large, wide, and deep. Man is evidently under the curse. It affects his health, life, property, and liberty. And the various relations in which we stand to each other, which were instituted originally to be springs of felicity, are really, in many instances, sources of misery. The earth and elements are cursed for man's sake, and the whole creation groans under this curse. But wherever natural or penal evil is, certainly moral evil must be the cause of it; and all men are conscious, more or less, of guilt. But it is clear God could not create men in a sinful and miserable state; nothing evil could proceed from the infinite fountain of all goodness; man, therefore, must have fallen. He has revolted from his Creator; has rebelled against his almighty Lord and Sovereign. "Be astonished, O heavens," says God, "be ye horribly afraid, be ye very desolate; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have

rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, the ass his master's crib, but my people do not know; Israel doth not consider. The whole head is sick," etc. It is the Bible alone which gives us a satisfactory account of the fall of man. Unassisted reason assents to the fact that he is fallen, but could never have investigated the manner how. According to the scriptural account, Adam and Eve were seduced by the temptation of Satan; and doubting God's title to sovereign dominion over them, and questioning the veracity of the threatening, they did eat the forbidden fruit; which act, circumstanced as it was, included the nature of all sin in it. By this they lost their original rectitude, and became obnoxious to the penalty, which is death. There is a threefold connection between sin and misery. First, natural: for as the earth in its diurnal course, by turning its face from the sun, is necessarily involved in darkness; so a rational creature, turning from God, is as necessarily involved in spiritual darkness and death. Secondly, in respect of demerit: "The wages of sin is death." Thirdly, by a divine appointment: for God hath said, "The soul that sinneth shall die." It is an established law of nature that all creatures propagate others like themselves. In agreeableness to this law, it is said of Adam, after his lapse, that "he begat a son in his own likeness." Here is a manifest distinction—Adam himself was created after the likeness or image of God; but in his fallen state begets a son after his own likeness. All men were originally and radically in the first Adam; as the root, the trunk, the branches, and the fruit of the oak are contained in the acorn. And what is all the posterity of the first man, but this tree fully grown and its branches

fully spread? Beside, it is clear from God's Word, that the first pair represented all their posterity in the federal transaction between God and them. This is the reason why the Apostle runs a parallel between Adam and Christ. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive. The first Adam is of the earth, earthly; the second, the Lord from heaven. The first Adam was made a living soul," and appointed to transmit that life to his posterity by obedience; in which he failed, and so lost his life and theirs: "But the second is made a quickening spirit," to quicken the dead, or give life to them that believe in him. See this truth more fully displayed, Rom. chap. v. We think this doctrine is well expressed in our Catechism: "The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression." Original sin is no fiction, but a sad reality. We may see it everywhere, and feel it every day. Even the saints of the Most High complain justly of sin dwelling in them. Men before conversion are dead in trespasses and sins. Their hearts are desperately wicked and deceitful above all things. And from this depraved, wicked nature in them proceed all actual transgressions. "Out of the heart do proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, etc." It would be well if the advocates for the dignity and perfection of human nature would deeply consider this point—whether the state of facts throughout the world do not fully agree with the scriptural account of the depravity of human

nature. And this is the more requisite, that on this principle alone it is that we shall see the propriety of the doctrine of regeneration, and of justification through the righteousness of Christ. No wonder that such deluded men reject the last, when they have no perception of the first. Alas! what a pity that souls should perish by the pride of their hearts, which will not permit them to believe that they are in danger. The strength of sin lies in its power to deceive; and it is worthy of notice, that while these men deny the depravity of human nature, they themselves are the strongest instances and proofs of it: not to mention that such proud men are never more remarkable for strict virtue than those of the opposite opinion. What can be more wicked than to call God a liar? What more so, than to spurn redeeming love, trample under foot redeeming blood, and do despite to the Spirit of grace? Surely such a carnal mind must be enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. The sinfulness and misery of man's natural state are well represented in our Catechisms, to which we refer, and earnestly obtest all deeply to ponder.

CHAPTER VII.

OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH MAN.

SOME have questioned whether God entered into a proper covenant with the first Adam. But what has been alleged against this, in our opinion, amounts to mere caviling. It is expressly taught, Hosea vi, 7, "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." It is manifestly taught in the parallel run between Adam and Christ. It cannot be denied that God the Father made a covenant with his Son Christ, for it is expressed in innumerable passages; and wherein can the parallel hold between Adam and Christ, but in a covenant transaction or federal representation? There was evidently in the first covenant a condition of life stated—a threatening of death in case of disobedience, and a promise of life in case of obedience, annexed. And it was impossible that Adam could withhold his consent from such a righteous, yea gracious proposal.

We will readily grant there was not every requisite here that must take place in a covenant between equals. God's title to man's obedience is not founded on contract only, but

on nature. Previously to all contract man owed obedience ; but there was just such a covenant as could take place between parties so distant from each other as the infinite Creator and the creature. And we heartily agree with our Confession, which says, the distance between God and the creature is so great, that though reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their happiness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on his part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. We testify that man by the breach of this covenant forfeited a title to every benefit, temporal and spiritual ; is a child of wrath and exposed to misery. And though the covenant seems to have secured his existence and that of his posterity, even if the Mediator had not interposed, yet it must have been an existence loaded with Jehovah's curse ; such an existence as the damned in hell have—an existence without God and without hope. It would have been better for them, in that case, if they never had been born ; and it would not alter the case much, whether men were supported in existence under the curse of God by the immediate exertions of divine power, or by the exertions of the same power in a mediate way, by giving them rain and fruitful seasons, with all the productions of the folds and fields, if equally destitute of the divine favor and without hope.

OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

MAN, by his fall, has thus destroyed himself, and can do nothing for his own recovery : he is dead in trespasses and

sins. But O! what ground of praise and eternal gratitude, that God has devised a way for our recovery! a marvelous way! a way worthy of God, honorable to him, and safe for us! He entered into a covenant with his own Son Jesus Christ, for this purpose; appointed him the surety and Mediator of this better covenant; which office the Son of God freely undertook. The condition of the covenant he, in due time, fulfilled, in his active and passive obedience. The price of our redemption he paid; and to him were the promises made; even these precious promises, respecting the salvation of sinners: Isaiah liii, "If thou wilt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed. Psalm lxxxix, I have made a covenant with my chosen, etc. Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations." As in the unction of Aaron, the oil poured on his head, descended to the skirts of his garments; so the promises, like a sacred oil, were poured on the head of Jesus Christ in this covenant, and descend from him to the lowest members of his mystical body. There is no salvation to men but in this covenant. It was, therefore, soon revealed to Adam after his fall, and was renewed again and again with the patriarchs, under various emblems. The covenant with Noah, securing the world from a second deluge; of circumcision with Abraham, promising the land of Canaan to his posterity; of an everlasting priesthood with Phineas; of royalty with David, were all types of it. This covenant was administered to the Jewish Church, in promises and predictions of the coming of Christ, and in a great variety of sacrifices, all pointing to the great atoning sacrifice which the Son of God was about to offer. But, since the coming

of Christ, it is administered in a more simple way: in the preaching of the Gospel, and dispensation of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. Without doubt, therefore, the Jewish Church was under the same covenant; enjoyed the same Gospel in substance, which we are under and enjoy; and was saved by faith in the same name. There are two different dispensations, but one and the same covenant. And if any were saved at all under the law, as doubtless there were many, it was, of necessity, by the covenant of grace; for there is no salvation by any other. "There is no name given under heaven, or among men, but the name of Jesus, by which men could or can be saved." And we cannot approve the distinction between the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace. It does not seem to have any warrant from the Word of God. The apostle knew only two covenants—that of works and that of grace.—Gal. iv. The distinction above mentioned might pass unnoticed, were it not for the bad improvement thereof. In every proper covenant we must find a condition and a promise. According to this distinction, the righteousness of Christ will be the condition of the covenant of redemption. What, then, must be the condition of the covenant of grace? No doubt, faith; and some add repentance. But, it is clear, these are promised blessings of that covenant by which men are saved, and so can not be the proper condition. "By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins. To make faith alone, or faith and repentance conjoined, the proper condition of the

covenant of grace, leads us away from free grace unto another Gospel. The same covenant considered as subsisting between God and the Mediator, is justly called the covenant of redemption; as subsisting between God and the Church, the covenant of grace; and faith may be called a condition of order and connection. It is, also, in our opinion, a very erroneous tenet, that the saints of the Jewish Church were total strangers to spiritual promises and blessings; knew nothing of the immortality of the soul, and a future happiness in heaven; for the apostle affirms, that unto them was the Gospel preached, as well as unto us. And they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink; they drank of that Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF CHRIST THE MEDIATOR — HIS SURETYSHIP AND
SACRIFICE.

It is the glory of the Christian religion, that our Saviour is Jehovah, the true and eternal God. The divinity of Christ is the rock on which the Church is built. If this foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do? Take this away, and all is gone. Our hope is perished. This is the only foundation of present grace and future glory. It is incontrovertible, that in Scripture, the same perfections, the same names, the same works, and the same worship are ascribed to the Son as to the Father, as has been already noticed. But he is truly man as well as God; of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead. His name is Immanuel, God with us. He is David's Son, and David's Lord, Psalm cx. The Root and the Offspring of David; the Bright and Morning Star. The Child born, is the mighty God; the Son given, the everlasting Father. O! precious and adorable truth! without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness, God was made manifest in the flesh! Though he was in the form of

God, yet he took upon him the form of a servant; and, though he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he was found in fashion as a man. And, by this mysterious constitution of our divine Redeemer's person, and by it alone, he was qualified to execute his mediatorial offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. True believers see an infinite glory and beauty in this great truth of the Gospel. They behold him at once, as God's Son, and their Brother. They see infinite majesty and humility united in him. This darts a beam of light through the whole book of God, and explains every part of the history of his life, death, resurrection, etc.

We heartily detest all Socinian and Arian opinions about the person of Christ, and we firmly believe in his mediatorial righteousness consisting of his obedience to the law of God, and an atonement or infinite satisfaction for sin in the room of his people. His obedience to the precept was vicarious. It has, indeed, been alleged, that Christ did not perform obedience to the precept of the law in place of his people; but that his obedience was due for himself; for, say the authors, it is as impossible for the human nature to be from under the law, as for the divine nature to be under it. This dangerous position is nearly connected with another error, and, indeed, rises out of it, namely: that Adam's posterity, since the fall, are not under the preceptive part of the covenant of works; but only under the penalty. The consideration of this last point will fall in naturally, when we come to the nineteenth chapter, which treats of the law of God. Meantime, let us attend to this other doctrine. And, can it possibly be so, that Christ did not perform

obedience for his people; but that his obedience was due on his own account? Surely, God's Word does not teach so. The Scripture tells us, "That as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous;" it was predicted of him, "That he should finish the transgression, make an end of sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness; this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness; and surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; your righteousness is of me, saith the Lord; thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness, says he; as sin hath reigned unto death, so grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life." These texts point out the active obedience of Christ as an essential part of his mediatorial righteousness, which he accomplished in the room of his people. It has been said, that there was an active obedience even in Christ's death and sufferings. That Christ voluntarily yielded to death, is certain; that he bore his sufferings patiently, is certain. But when we distinguish between action and passion, let us do it fully. These two words convey very different ideas. When a person undergoes sufferings and death entirely by the activity of others, he is utterly passive in it. That Christ was not the efficient cause of his own death and sufferings must be allowed; and, therefore, in his sufferings and death, viewed abstractly as a passion, he was entirely passive. So that to ascribe an active obedience to his passion and death, is to confound ideas in themselves distinct, and render words indeterminate in their signification. The meekness, patience, and voluntariness wherewith Christ submitted

to his death, are quite distinct from his passion. They point out the manner of his bearing his passion, and were a part of his active obedience, or conformity to the precept ; and thus every believer is required by the law, to bear injuries, and sometimes death itself, with similar patience and meekness, for Christ's sake.

It is said, it is impossible for the human nature to be from under the law, as it is for the divine nature to be under it. But this method of arguing is absurd. It is absurd to speak of a nature abstractly being under a law ; it is not a nature but a person that is under a law ; the word nature conveys an abstract, universal idea ; so the angelic nature comprehends all angels ; the human nature all men. The angelic nature has no existence, but in the person of an angel. The human nature none, but in the person of a man ; except in the extraordinary case of the Son of God. A nature, as such, can violate or fulfill no law ; but only as in a person. If Christ then owed obedience, was under the law and fulfilled it for himself, he, doubtless, was no more than a human person. This doctrine denies his divinity and lands us in Socinianism. Or if the doctrine of his divinity be admitted, the unity of his person must be denied. According to this scheme he must be both a divine person and a human. In respect of his divine person he was not under the law, but in respect of his human, he was under it, owed obedience for himself and fulfilled it. It is said, it is impossible for the divine nature to be under the law. We allow it. But it was not impossible for the divine person of the Son of God, the person of Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, to be under it. Far ! very far from it ! " God sent forth

his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." It was the Son of God that obeyed and died ; and it was this that made his righteousness truly divine, and of infinite value ; hence it is the righteousness of God, and his blood is also called the blood of God. If only a human person obeyed, it was but a human righteousness. To talk of a human nature obeying, exclusively of a human person, we already showed to be absurd.

But it will be said, are the acts of the divine nature imputed to believers ? We might likewise ask, are the acts of the human nature imputed ? The truth is, the righteousness or obedience of the complete divine person, God in our nature, is imputed. Every being subject to the divine law, is bound to glorify God by obedience, according to the extent of its powers. The divine person Jesus Christ, God in our nature, subjected himself voluntarily to the law, in the room of his people ; and so was bound to glorify God in proportion to his powers ; but his powers were infinite, and so his righteousness was an infinite righteousness. The value, merit, or worth of which, is sustained in law as the ground or reason of the believer's salvation. It is very true, that Christ had in his human nature, the two essential, constituent parts of a human person, to wit, a rational soul and human body. But his human nature never had a distinct, personal subsistence of its own. It never existed, but in a state of union to the divine person of the Son of God, and obedience to the divine law, does not appear to have been due from this divine person, on his own account.

The death and sufferings of Christ were also certainly vicarious, for he demerited no such thing himself. He was

holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The Scriptures declare, "That he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. That God the Father laid on him the iniquity of us all. That though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. That he was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. That he suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. That he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us;" and hence it is promised: "That men shall be blessed in him." These texts declare as plainly as language will allow, that the death of Christ was accomplished in our stead. The death of Christ is often represented as a sacrifice; and a true sacrifice it was. But it is essential to a sacrifice that it be vicarious. When a person offered a sacrifice, he thereby confessed himself guilty before God; but at the same time, his doing so intimated a hope, that the punishment would be transferred from the head of the criminal, to the head of the sacrifice. It is also remarkable, that all nations have had an idea of the necessity and propriety of sacrifices; and have accordingly offered them. In this instance we see all the world confessing themselves guilty before God, and yet expecting mercy through a propitiation. The apostle indeed remarks, that what the Gentiles offered in sacrifices, they offered unto devils. But though the object of their worship was wrong, the principle on which they proceeded, was right; that is, a conviction of sin and guilt, and that mercy might be obtained only through a propitiation; and perhaps this was one of these

scattered rays of revelation, which penetrated the thick darkness that covered the nations: and in this respect, Christ, the true sacrifice, was the desire of all nations.

The doctrine of sacrifices is in substance the same with that of imputed righteousness; and however much this precious doctrine be now despised, we see from the preceding remark, that it really has been the system universally embraced by the common sense of mankind. It is a sentiment natural and congenial to the human mind, that sin demerits punishment, and that prayer and penitence alone (supposing the sinner could bring his hard heart to prayer and penitence, which is impossible), cannot atone for sin and guilt; for on this supposition the law would have no other penalty, which would make the penalty a blessing; and encourage to sin, instead of deterring from it. And we are persuaded, were God to let fall a few drops of his flaming wrath, on the conscience of the most daring infidel or audacious profligate, he would instantly call out for an atonement, and see the absolute need of such a satisfaction as the Gospel reveals.

In consequence of the incarnation of Christ, and his offering himself a sacrifice for our sins, we see sacrificing laid aside in the Church of God. Jehovah said of his blood, "*It is enough.*" Christ cried, "*It is finished.*" The cry went up to heaven and made God and angels glad. It reverberated from heaven all around this globe, and made the nations sing for joy. For what is the preaching of the Gospel, but to tell the world "*It is finished.*" There is not one bloody ordinance belonging to the New Testament Church. Circumcision and the passover were sanguinary institutions, and

pointed to the blood of Christ as about to be shed: but Christ set them aside when about to offer his own blood, and instituted in their place, baptism and the holy supper, which indeed point at blood, the blood of Christ, and that as actually shed, but are not attended with the shedding of blood. And beside, after the offering of this sacrifice, what a change takes place in the Gentile world? Soon after this, the heathen temples were thrown down, their altars demolished, their oracles ceased to give responses, and their sacrifices to smoke. To what shall we ascribe this? To what, but to the providence of him who rules over all, and governs the nations to answer the purposes of his own glory? God did, in all this, give testimony to the great sacrifice of his Son. He proclaimed to all the world, that with it he was infinitely well pleased.

It has been objected to this doctrine of the vicarious nature of the righteousness and death of Christ, that it is inconsistent with the justice of God, to punish an innocent and righteous person, in place of the guilty: but the objectors know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. They cannot deny that the Son of God did suffer, and that his sufferings were of the deepest kind too. They must allow, he was holy, perfectly holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. How then, on their principles, will they acquit the justice of God in punishing such a holy person, who was in no sense responsible to the law and justice of God? Here the difficulty is much greater than if we allow with the prophet, "That God laid on him the iniquity of us all," and with the apostle, "That he was made sin for us." And, on their hypothesis, what sense, what meaning in all the sacrifices under

the law, and in the whole doctrine of Christ and his apostles on this subject? "I lay down my life for the sheep," says Christ: and again, "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many." Such objectors should consider, that Jesus Christ is a divine person. He has the absolute power of life and death. He says, "I have power to lay down my life, and power to take it up again." And who doubts the justice of King Zaleucus, who, when his son was taken in adultery, against which the king had made a law that the adulterer should have his eyes put out, consented that one of his own eyes, in place of one of his son's, should be extinguished? Did not this both fulfill and honor the law? A father may hate a son, but no man ever hated his own flesh. Who complains of injustice when the surety is obliged to pay the insolvent's debt? But these are only faint similitudes of the sovereignty of him who is absolute Lord of all; and had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again.

The mediatorial righteousness of Christ is represented in Scripture as a satisfactory price paid for our redemption. And whereas doubts have arisen in the Church, concerning the extent of redemption, it may be proper in this place to state our views of that subject. We are of opinion that the Mediator's righteousness was finished in the room and for the sake of the elect. Election, redemption, and application appear to us to be of equal extent. This scheme is consistent, and every other inconsistent. This scheme maintains a harmony among the persons of the adorable Trinity. The electing love of the Father, the redeeming blood of the Son, and the renewing grace of the Spirit, meet on the same

objects. But the scheme of universal redemption destroys this harmony. According to it, Christ died for men, whom the Father never elected to eternal life, and whom the Holy Spirit will never sanctify. And further, on this last scheme, the apostle's question implies no impossibility. "Is Christ divided?" For according to it, he must, as a Priest, have died for men whom he will never teach as a Prophet, nor sanctify and rule as a King. Yea his priestly office is rent asunder. For, on this plan, he died for men, for whom he declares he does not make intercession. Says he, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world." And again, "I pray not for these only, but for those also who shall believe in me through their Word." In a word, the doctrine of universal redemption, so far as we are able to judge, dishonors all the divine perfections. God is no longer a rock, nor his work perfect; according to it, the divine foreknowledge is nothing; God must be totally uncertain who shall be saved, and indeed whether any shall be saved, until he see the event: which event must depend wholly on the creature's own exertions. The infinite wisdom of God is tarnished by a plan, according to which, the gracious designs of the death of Christ may, either in whole or in part, be frustrated. The faithfulness of God is overthrown, inasmuch as Christ shall not see the travail of his soul, at least in part. The conditional scheme of salvation to which it leads us, is absurd. According to it, the electing love of the Father, the redeeming grace of the Son, and the regenerating power of the Spirit must be all conditional. And the condition of all these must rest wholly with the creature, either to perform or not perform it. And thus in

fact, were the scheme true, and any saved by it, they must be indebted to their own exertions for salvation. And so the doctrine of the grace of God is wholly subverted, and salvation by works restored.

The universal phrases used in Scripture, respecting the death of Christ, sometimes mean, men of all nations; men of all characters, stations, and in all generations; a very great number. There was a particular reason for using these universal phrases, at the introduction of the Gospel. The Jewish dispensation confined the Church to that nation. It was difficult to bring the Jewish Christians into a belief that the grace of God, under the New Testament, was to extend to the Gentiles. Peter, himself, does not appear to have been fully satisfied on this head, until he had a vision from heaven, of a great sheet containing all manner of beasts and creeping things; and heard a voice saying, "Rise, Peter, slay and eat." And at the same time, to explain this to him, the messenger from Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, had arrived, informing him that their master had also seen an angel of the Lord, who desired him to send for Peter. In a word, the abettors of universal redemption, or of the doctrine that Christ died for all men, to be consistent, must either renounce this opinion, or go a little farther; and that is, not only to maintain the universal purchase, but also the universal application. The modern doctrine of universal salvation is really more consistent. The chain of blessings mentioned Romans viii, cannot be broken. Foreknowledge, predestination, effectual calling, justification, and glorification, center on the same objects. And when the apostle throws out his defiance, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's

elect?" we should consider, it is the elect only of whom he speaks. And what is the ground of his defiance? It is, that God justifieth them. On what foundation? Christ died for them; yea, is risen again, and maketh intercession.

That there is a sufficiency in the atonement of Jesus Christ for all men, is undoubtedly a great and glorious truth. But the sufficiency of his death, and extent of it, must be considered in a twofold light: first, either with relation to the nature of sin, or, secondly, the number of sinners pardoned and saved. That the necessity of Christ's infinite atonement does not arise from the number, but nature of sin; or that the very nature of sin itself requires an infinite atonement, in order to its honorable remission, cannot be denied by men of sound understandings. Such an atonement is indispensably necessary to the pardon of one act of sin, and the salvation of one sinner, consistently with the glory of the supreme Lawgiver, the obligation of his law, and sustentation of his government; and the end thereof may be completely gained in the salvation of one. Sin, though distinguished into various acts, is, in itself, one thing, one corrupt principle, one vicious habit. It is enmity against God, it is spiritual darkness, spiritual death, spiritual bondage. Contraries illustrate each other; and saving grace is the contrary to sin; now saving grace is doubtless one gracious principle, one divine habit; it is light, love, life, liberty. The reason why we distinguish the one vital principle of saving grace into various acts, is, our distinguishing between the faculties and powers of the soul, and our viewing these powers as acting on one and the same object, in a manner suitable to their nature, by contemplating, believing, choosing

and supremely loving God. The same divine principle, viewed as discerning and believing the divine testimony, is called faith; as choosing and approving it, love; as hating sin and esteeming holiness, repentance. By the rule of contraries, sin is one corrupt principle; it is the vitiosity or corruption of our nature; and so every act of sin includes the nature of all sin in it: with regard to the divine testimony, it is called unbelief; with respect to the divine goodness it is enmity; and to the authority of the Lawgiver, it is contempt and disobedience. With infinite propriety, therefore, the apostle James says, "He that offends in one point is guilty of all;" and as every act of sin includes the nature of all sin in it, so the penalty of the law in its full extent, is due to it. The wages of sin, not of ten or ten millions of its acts only, but of sin itself, even in one act, is death. And therefore the infinite sufficiency of Christ's death is necessary to the pardon of one sin, and the salvation of one sinner; and indeed if this were not the case, it would not be necessary to the pardon of any supposed number, because numbers do not vary nature, nor degrees alter species or kind.

The dispute about the extent of the death of Christ, therefore, can take place only on the second question, to wit, the number of sinners to be saved by it. That it is sufficient for the salvation of all men, is not denied by any; and, doubtless, all men would be saved by it, if it were accepted by them. The sacred writings clearly teach this; and on this ground the revelation and offer of it to all men must rest.

When we speak of the sufficiency of the death and satis-

faction of Christ, in this last sense, perhaps we err in regulating our ideas on this great subject, by the idea of commutation or commercial justice among men. As a thousand pounds, in specie, by whomsoever paid, whether by the surety or debtor, is sufficient to cancel a bond, or discharge a debt of that amount. But, it is manifest, no such ideas, strictly taken, ought to be admitted here. Let us say it with reverence, God is not a merchant. Transferable property is out of the question. The rectoral justice of the supreme Governor of the universe, is the subject to which we must fix our attention. And the only proper idea which we can form of the sufficiency of the atonement of Christ is this: Is it a sufficient display of the glory of the divine character; of his holiness, justice, hatred of sin, and goodness, as a moral governor? Is it sufficient to maintain the authority and obligation of his law, sustain the moral system, and give energy to his government over rational and free agents, while he pardons sin, and receives the rebel into favor? After forming this idea of it, which is certainly the true and just one, there arises another question. In the room of what creatures is it morally fit and proper to admit this atonement? It must be still remembered, that, by Christ's atonement, we mean his enduring the penalty of the law due to sin, the execution of which became necessary after man's transgression, that the divine law might not be totally vacated, and God's moral government unhinged; the precept being violated by the creature, and the penalty set aside by the Creator. This penalty, in its fullest extent, being due to every sinner, he must either endure it himself, or fly under the covert of the Mediator's atonement: to

proceed otherwise, would totally repeal the divine law, and unhinge the divine government.

Therefore, in answer to the question, let it be observed, that as all men were comprehended in Adam, in a double sense, both as the natural root from which they all proceed, and as their representative in the first covenant; as they are all originally under one law or covenant; as sin is one and the same thing in them all; and as one and the same penalty is due to all of them; and, furthermore, as the Son of God assumed the common nature of them all, was made under the very same law and covenant which they had all broken; and not only fulfilled the obedience required by the precept, but also endured the penalty of that very law which they had violated, and to which penalty they had, by transgression, exposed themselves. There is, doubtless, a sufficiency* in his death for them all, that is, it would comport

* Some have gone farther and said, that, considering the infinite dignity of the person suffering and dying; who is no less a personage than the Son of God, the mighty God, one who counts it no robbery to be equal with God; his atonement has an intrinsic sufficiency in it for the redemption of fallen angels. The writer of these illustrations, etc., acknowledges he has used this mode of speaking in a note affixed to the piece on Universal Salvation. But, on deeper reflection, he is disposed to think, the mode of speaking is not safe; it is not scriptural; it is too much like being wise above what is written; and he would not knowingly, for any consideration, advance anything on divine subjects, but what is warranted by the Word of God. Whether the Son of God suffering and dying, not in the angelical, but human nature; his bearing the curse, and enduring the penalty threatened in the law given to Adam and his posterity, would be a sufficient display of the glory of the divine

with the glory of the divine character, the sustentation of his government, the obligation and honor of his law, and the

character, of his rectoral justice, and holiness ; and be adequate to give energy to his law, and sustain his moral government over angels, while he admitted the rebels to favor and mercy, is a question that is not so easily determined. It is dangerous, on so great and grave a subject, to give way to conjecture. We know little about the nature of angels ; we know not under what law they are ; we are ignorant of the divine constitution respecting them ; we know not what penalty was annexed in that constitution to their disobedience. We are sure they do not propagate a posterity as man does ; they were not all comprehended in one federal head, as men were in the first Adam. They may be under constitutions, and exposed to penalties, as various as their numbers. We are certain the Son of God took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. God did not appoint the death of his Son for them. He spared not the angels that sinned, says Peter, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved to judgment. And, says the Apostle Jude, the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. They expect nothing but destruction from Christ. Art thou come to torment us before the time ? said they. We are, therefore, certain as to the second question on this subject, that there is not a moral fitness or propriety to admit the atonement of Christ in the room of the fallen angels, or offer it to them ; or certainly it would be done ; for it is as impossible that God should depart from what is morally fit and proper to be done, as it is impossible for him to lie or deny himself. And it is remarkable that our Lord declares, he will consign unbelieving and wicked men, at the last day, to the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And whoever will read the second chapter of the second Epistle of Peter, and the Epistle of Jude, will find, that this fire

good of the rational and moral system, to save them all ; provided they all accepted of Christ's atonement, yielded submission to him, and returned to God by him. In this sense it may be said " Christ tasted death for every man ; is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. And God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son ; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." And this lays a sufficient foundation for that injunction, " Go preach the Gospel to every creature, he that believeth shall be saved : he that believeth not shall be damned. Go speak to the people all the words of this life." Every legal bar and obstruction in the way of the salvation of all men is removed ; let them only accept and submit to Jesus Christ, as their Prophet, Priest and King. All things are ready, and all are made welcome to the marriage and the marriage supper.

But, can it hence be inferred, that it will comport with the glory of the divine character, the sustentation of his government, the honor and obligation of his law, and the good of the rational and moral system, to save such as utterly and finally reject the Lord Jesus, his atonement and infinite righteousness? Surely not. Such an assertion is a contradiction in terms, for salvation by Christ is just a reducing the rebel back to a subordination or submission to Christ : but to suppose the sinner to be saved by Christ, while he

is prepared for false teachers, who bring in damnable heresies, and who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, by telling men they shall be saved, though they oppose the constitution both of law and Gospel. These two apostles show that the damnation of such is as certain and as terrible as the damnation of devils!

utterly rejects Christ, is the same thing as supposing him to be saved and damned at the same time.

God is not like man. He changes not. All his purposes and constitutions are immutable. With him there is no variation nor shadow of turning. The first covenant with man or divine constitution respecting him, is immutable. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" and men cannot, by their sophistry, set aside that constitution; they feel the effects of it; man died in a spiritual and moral sense as soon as he transgressed; his body instantly became mortal and must die; the penalty, in its fullest extent, was endured by the Saviour, in the room of all that shall be finally saved; and those who reject him must endure it, in their own persons, to eternity. For the second covenant or divine constitution respecting man, is as immutable as the first. "He that believeth shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned. He that believeth on the Son hath life: he that believeth not on the Son, hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Both parts of this constitution are equally immutable. "He that believeth shall be saved. Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." And the apostle, Heb. vi, 12-18, encourages believers to imitate Abraham in his faith and patience, on the same immutable foundations of faith and hope. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by none greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely in blessing, I will bless thee," etc., for men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation puts an end to all strife; wherein God willing, more abundantly, to show unto the heirs of salvation the immutability of his counsel, con-

firmed it by an oath : that by two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge, "to lay hold on the hope set before us." The two immutable things of which the apostle speaks, are God's word, and God's oath ; on which immutable foundations the promise is built. Can any be disappointed in trusting to this ? But the other part of the divine constitution, to wit, "He that believeth not shall be damned," or, "He that believeth not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," stands on the same immutable basis. God's word is passed for it, and the word of the Lord endureth forever. His oath is passed for its truth likewise — Heb. iv, 3 — "As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest." The sentence is awfully abrupt ! It is the oath of God ! None speaks like him, and none swears like him.

It is as if he had said, If they shall enter into my rest — then let me cease to exist ; for he swears by himself — that is, by his own being and perfections. Now against whom is this tremendous oath passed ? the apostle answers the question, chap. iii, ver. 18 : "And to whom sware he, that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not ? So we see they could not enter in, because of unbelief," He adds, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." This, one would think, is decisive, and might end the controversy about universal salvation. But as the serpent beguiled Eve, when he told her, "Ye shall not surely die," so the same old serpent, speaking in the authors and abettors of the universal doctrine, beguiles unstable souls.

Satan told our first parents, God's covenant is not immutable, the divine constitution respecting you is only a bugbear to frighten and hold you back from glory, and honor, and immortality; for if you eat ye shall be as gods. In like manner these preachers and their abettors say, that divine constitution — "He that believeth not shall be damned," — is but a mere scarecrow. Though it stand upon God's immutable word and oath, there is no truth, no solidity in it; ye shall not perish, but after some years, or ages at most, shall have eternal life. Who can forbear exclaiming, if an angel from heaven preach such Gospel, let him be accursed! Let God be true, and every man who contradicts him a liar!

As for the doctrine of a dispensation of the Gospel in hell, that there Christ now has, and for numberless ages will have, a glorious Church; that there the river of life will flow, and the tree of life grow and scatter around its fruits among the despairing inhabitants; that there the work of conversion will prosper, and much more successfully too than ever it did in this world; that there is now, and ever will be, communion between heaven and hell, between Christ and Belial; that all men, in heaven, in hell, and in this world, form but one Church, one body, of which Christ is the sanctifying and saving head; that saints and devils drink the same cup of salvation, the cup of the Lord. It is too gross, absurd, and blasphemous for any person to believe, who is not given up in the righteous judgment of God to strong delusions, to believe a lie, that he may be damned.

But while we allow the sufficiency of the atonement of Christ for the salvation of all men; at the same time it is absolutely certain, both from the testimony of God's Word,

and from fact and experience, that many men reject it, and die rejecting it. Now did God design to save, by the death of his Son, those who finally reject it? Is there a sufficiency in the death of Christ to save men whether they receive or reject the benefit of it? Most certainly not. The gospel-constitution assures us, that such, instead of being saved by it, will find this rejection infinitely to aggravate their guilt and condemnation. Christ will profit them nothing. He that believeth not shall be damned. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "If I had not come and spoken unto you," says Christ, "you had not had sin; but now you have no cloak for your sin. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

It is moreover certain, that it is the natural disposition equally of all men, to reject the counsels of God against their own souls; for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they appear to be foolishness to him; and the carnal mind is enmity against God; therefore all men without exception, if left to themselves, as God might justly leave them, would most certainly reject it. Did Christ then die at an absolute uncertainty, whether any should be saved by his death or not? Surely not. A number have been saved by it, and many more shall be so. But known unto God are all his works from the beginning. Is the salvation of any owing to their own exertions? Were that the case, they would be saved not by grace but by works, and boasting would not be excluded. Was it owing to Saul's pious exertions that he was stopped in his mad career? No, he

was a chosen vessel. The Scriptures most fully declare that a number were predestinated to life by Jesus Christ.—Rom. viii. “They were elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit and sprinkling of the blood of Christ.”—1 Peter i, 2. A number were given to Christ, “And all that the Father hath given to him shall come to him.”—John vi, 37. “A willing people shall come to thee,” says the Father, “in the day of thy power.” God determined to give such, not only the offer of Christ and salvation, but also grace to believe and accept; and says Christ, “No man cometh to me, except the Father which sent me, draw him.” This doctrine we are not afraid to avouch and maintain, because it runs through the whole Bible; and to deny God’s sovereignty, is to deny his being. He is under no obligation to bestow his grace on any; he therefore injures none while he gives it to whom he pleases.

In respect of its sufficiency then, the death of Christ bears a relation to all men. The door of hope has been opened to all, to enter, or to believe and accept. And he that believeth shall be saved. But in respect of the intention of real and actual salvation, he died only for the chosen, or those who were given to him, and whom the Father will draw by rich, free, and unmerited grace. In virtue of the atonement of Christ, it is consistent with the honor of God, yea redounds much to his glory, to save all who believe and obey the Gospel and none else. But shall we suppose he did not know who should finally do so? How can that be possible, since it is certain, whenever any do so, it is owing to the interposition of sovereign grace? “By grace ye are saved,

through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." As for others, he determined to leave them finally to their own free choice; except that he strives with them, in the dispensation of his word and ordinances, and by the more ordinary operations of his Spirit; still declaring that whosoever believeth on Christ shall not perish; they are thus inexcusable; for the Gospel is as rational an address to the rational powers of men, as ever was made to rational creatures. And the only reason why they are not saved is because they will not. "Ye will not come to me," says Christ, "that ye might have life." That some have been thus left in holy sovereignty, to their own free will, is a fact that can not be denied; because in some places and nations of the earth, where the Gospel once was, it is now no more; they have totally rejected and put it away. And in places where it is, some corrupt it, some mock it, and multitudes do not firmly and practically believe it; and thus a remnant only shall be saved, and they according to the election of grace. The connection between the decree of election and effectual calling, is very fully and clearly stated in the Word of God. "All things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose; whom he did predestinate them he called; who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began: give all diligence to make your calling and election sure; as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

All this may be illustrated by an example. Christ, addressing himself to the young ruler, who appears to have been

what we generally call a lovely and virtuous youth, commands him to go and sell all that he had, give it to the poor, take up the cross, and follow him ; and he should have treasure in heaven. Here he presents him a free choice, but leaves him entirely to the freedom of his own will. That Christ had a right to bid him give up his earthly possessions is unquestionable, because he, as the supreme Lord of the universe, had given them to him ; and he might, by an adverse stroke of providence, have justly taken them all from him, as he did in the case of Job. Beside, it was necessary in that suffering period of the Church ; and it may be asked, of what avail were this ruler's possessions to him, a few years after this, when Jerusalem was trodden down of the Gentiles, and Judea laid waste by the Roman armies ? Yet for the sake of them this young man refused treasure in heaven, and probably lost his soul. We see God, in his holy sovereignty, putting others to the same trial, and carrying them triumphantly through it ; he called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and commanded him to forsake his father's house and paternal inheritance. Abraham obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he went. He became a sojourner in a strange land. God gave him none inheritance in it ; no, not so much as to set his foot on. In like manner, he commanded Moses to abandon, at once, all his prospects in the land of Egypt ; Moses obeyed, not fearing the wrath of the King, and preferred the reproach of God's people before all the treasures of Egypt. Job, in like manner, said, " The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Now it is certain, that in the case of Abraham and Moses a choice was presented to them, much the same as to

the young ruler. But behold the difference ! They obeyed ; he did not. Why so ? The Lord left him entirely to the freedom of his own will, and that ruined him ; but to them he gave supernatural grace to obey, faith to believe God's Word, and supreme love to himself as their God and portion. It appears that the young ruler was ignorant that Jesus was the true God and eternal life ; he trusted to self-righteousness, or his external conformity to some precepts of the law, while it is manifest supreme love to God did not possess his heart, nor indeed due benevolence to men. The world was manifestly his idol ; that he supremely loved, and in that he trusted. The examples above mentioned may illustrate the manner of God's proceeding with men in the gospel-offer ; the offer is made to all, a free choice is presented to them ; to the elect he gives grace to accept and obey, as he did to Abraham and Moses ; they sell all and buy the pearl of great price, renounce all self-righteousness, and even all earthly comforts, if they should come in competition with Christ they deny themselves, take up the cross and follow Jesus. As for the others, he leaves them, as he did the young ruler, to the freedom of their own will, and so they do as he did, for the sake of the world, and self-righteousness, and gratifying their lusts, they reject Christ and treasure in heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ninth chapter treats of man's free will. It is evident that though the judicious compilers of the Confession were decided in their opinion respecting the decrees of God, yet they by no means favored the modern doctrine of necessity, which represents man as a mere machine, and governed as necessarily by motives, as the wheel is turned round by the weight of water. They are equally clear on the doctrine of free will, as on that of the decrees. They do not pretend to explain how they can be consistent: it is perhaps a subject too profound for the highest angels. But they knew that it is an undoubted fact that man is a free agent. And all men are as certain of God having laid his plan for the government of the world, and that his foreknowledge is absolutely perfect, as they are that God exists. Free will consists not in indifference, but in a rational and free choice. That man in his fallen state has a power of willing or choosing, and so of doing, what is truly and spiritually good, previously to regeneration, is an opinion contrary to Scripture, which testifies, "that the human heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things, and who can know it? That the

imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart are evil, only evil, and evil continually; and that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." It is also contrary to fact and experience. Ask the children of God, who have really chosen the better part, truth and holiness—Was it by exerting their own latent strength that they made the choice? Did they make this choice previously to any work of the Spirit of God on them? Did they make themselves to differ from others? When they paid some external respect to virtue and religion, did they not depend on this as their justifying righteousness, to the rejection of Christ and the whole Gospel plan? Whence came they to embrace the Lord Jesus as offered in the Gospel, to trust in him alone for salvation, and also to love and practice religion and virtue without trusting to it? Will they not all say that this change was accomplished by the spirit of grace renewing and changing their whole heart and soul? This view of the subject perfectly accords with the scriptural doctrine of regeneration and justification by the righteousness of Christ, the irresistible nature of divine grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

CHAPTER X.

REGENERATION, which is materially the same thing with effectual calling or conversion, is wholly the work of the Spirit of God on the soul of man, and is represented in Scripture as a beam of divine light entering the mind—the image of God portrayed on the soul—the love of God shed abroad in the heart—the Holy Spirit taking possession of the soul, and remaining therein as a fountain of living water springing up to everlasting life, on which the reader may enlarge in his own mind.

But we are not to imagine that the soul of man is wholly passive in regeneration; such an opinion leads into many errors.* The soul is the subject of the Spirit's work. But

*“But we are not to imagine that the soul of man is wholly passive in regeneration.” Many of the writer's brethren thought this language rather too unguarded. It was natural, as they had heard little of the “scheme of doctrine” which he was controverting. Candid men, however, admitted that while it was calculated to startle the orthodox reader, no intelligent man, on seeing what follows, could doubt that the idea which the writer intended to convey is sound and scriptural.

When guarding against one extreme, it is difficult to avoid the

the human soul is an active spirit. It can not, therefore, be such a subject of operation as a piece of wood or stone, or any inanimate matter under the artificer's hands. Man, in a natural state, is indeed said to be dead in trespasses and sins, but this does not mean that men, in that state, cease from action. It only means that they are under the power of a moral incapacity for things spiritually good, and that incapacity fixed and immovable as death; so that as no-

use of language which may seem to favor the opposite extreme. The writer had in view a philosophical (so called) "scheme" of theology which was then rife in the vicinity of Boston, and which afterward, under the name of Hopkinsianism, produced many evils and distractions in the Churches. A brief view of it is given in the Appendix. According to it, regeneration does not consist in a moral change wrought on the dispositions, affections, inclinations, or "mindings" of the soul; but in "creating holy exercises and volitions." Indeed, no such thing as a holy or unholy nature can be predicated of man; for all sin and holiness consists in "acts," "exercises," "volitions," which God "creates." Hence it was sometimes called "the exercise scheme." Its language often sounds like blasphemy; and nothing but their metaphysics could have saved those who were initiated into its mysteries from *intentional* blasphemy.

It is a fact, which a thoughtful mind may contemplate with some profit, that while Mr. Annan, in the Overture, was endeavoring to put Christians on their guard against the ingenious subtleties of a system which was laying waste the heritage of God in the land of the Puritans, good men in other places, ignorant of danger and not knowing what they were doing, were "testifying" against him as a "corrupter," because he did not walk according to the traditions and customs, and use the very phrases and modes of speech, which to their narrow minds seemed to contain the essence of all truth.

thing but infinite power can quicken the dead, so nothing but the same power can remove that moral incapacity. This moral incapacity does not consist in a privation or want of rational powers, for fallen man has all the same physical powers which Adam in a state of purity had; but it consists chiefly in a total aversion of the will from spiritual objects and enmity of the heart against God, including also blindness of mind or darkness of understanding. So that carnal men are not spiritually good because they will not, and because they see no beauty or excellency in these things; yet still it must be affirmed that the enmity of the will excludes the light, as well as rebels against it. Unregenerate men are therefore active in this kind of death; they are active against God, or exert their power in rebellion against him.

Conversion is, therefore, a moral change upon these active powers; and the Spirit of God never operates on the human soul, but in the way of rousing the powers of the mind to action. For instance, when he convinces of sin, what is it, but the man's own conscience arraigning and condemning him at the bar of the law? When he illuminates the understanding in the knowledge of Christ, what is it, but the person's own mind thinking, and thinking aright, about Christ? When he renews the will, what is it, but the person's heart making a free and cordial choice of Christ as his Saviour? When he purifies the affections, what is it, but the person making Christ the object of his hope, fear, love, desire, and joy? Here, then, is a twofold agency noticeable—the agency of the Spirit of God, and of the man's own spirit. The agency of the Spirit of God is concealed in the agency of the creature. The man is conscious of nothing

but of his own perceptions and volitions; yet he could as easily pluck the sun out of the firmament, as command these perceptions and volitions without the Spirit of God. We are not sufficient of ourselves, says Paul, to think anything as of ourselves. And Christians feel this from experience. At times they can neither think, nor will, nor desire, nor pray, nor perform any duty, with heart and spirit. And thus this agency is as much of the Spirit of God, as if the creature were entirely passive; and yet as much includes the activity of men's own minds, as if the Spirit of God had no concern with the matter. This truth is concisely pointed forth by the apostle when he says, "Work out therefore the work of your own salvation; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And corresponding to this, we see that whatever duty is required in his law, in the Gospel he promises grace for the performance of it, as will be shown more fully in another place.

Faith in Christ, or a union to him by faith, is the ultimate point in which all the steps of the Spirit's work in regeneration do terminate. Why does he alarm and convince the conscience? It is to show the necessity of a Saviour, and shut the sinner up unto the faith. Why does he enlighten the mind and renew the will? To bring the sinner to a cordial acceptance of Jesus as offered in the Gospel. All true believers in Christ are converted, and all converts are true believers.

Finally, this view of the soul of man, and of the change made upon it by conversion, shows clearly the fitness of the means appointed by God for the conversion of sinners, and the propriety of the unconverted using them. These means

of grace and salvation are an address to the rational powers of the mind, and are well calculated to rouse them to action. And whenever the power of the Spirit attends, this effect will follow. And also it shows the absurdity of the doctrine, "That we ought not to use these means, neither read nor hear the word, nor pray, until we be converted or believe in Christ." On this head we are told that to do so is only to add sin to sin, and a great deal of such stuff. But the Lord warrants sinners, who have not the Spirit, to pray for him. "If ye, being evil," says he, "know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" And the Scriptures testify that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Consequently, it is the duty of unbelievers to hear and read the Gospel. And it is an incontestable truth, that the ordinances of the Gospel are adapted, in infinite wisdom, both to convert sinners and promote the divine life in believers; for they are all a most proper address to the rational powers of the soul, and tend to awaken them to action. It is by effectual calling, or true faith in Christ, that we obtain a personal interest in the redemption purchased by Christ.

CHAPTER XI.

THE eleventh chapter treats of justification. We believe that sinners are justified in the sight of God only in consequence of their spiritual union to Christ, and solely on account of his infinitely perfect righteousness imputed to them, and received by faith. This great truth, this grand foundation of our hope, is justly styled by some of our reformers, "Articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ."^o Our ancestors in the Church of Rome had long been seeking rest to their souls in popish pilgrimages, penances, and indulgences, but found none. At the Reformation, when this precious doctrine was set before them in all its scriptural evidence and glory, they embraced it with the most ardent affection. It was welcome to them as the new fallen manna to the famished Israelites. One of them says that when he first got a view of this door of hope and life, the gates of heaven seemed to fly open before him. And it was the plain preaching of this doctrine that shook the deepest foundations of mystical Babylon, and threw down her strongest walls.

The doctrine of imputation, is fully taught in Scripture ;

^o "The article by which the Church stands or falls."

there is the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity to their condemnation, which is the native consequence of his federal representation of them, and his being their primogenitor, to which we see something similar among men, when the traitor forfeits not only for himself but for his children. There is the imputation of our sins to Jesus Christ. It is said, "He was made sin for us, though he knew no sin. God laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was wounded for our transgressions." And the scapegoat, on which the sins of Israel were laid, was a figure of him. There is something similar to this also, among men, when the debt is assumed by the surety and demanded of him—the debtor being found unable to pay. There is the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer for his justification—this follows of course on the former. Christ was made sin, that the sinner might be made the righteousness of God in him : "He is made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness," etc. And then follows the non-imputation of sin to the believer : "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." There is also something similar to this among men, when the debtor is liberated or restored to all the privileges of a citizen, on account of the surety paying his debt. It is very common for those who deny one of these, to deny all. And indeed, in this they are at least consistent, though very erroneous. If men would divest their minds of prejudices, and come to the book of God, with a good and honest heart, not to give it such a gloss as will accord with their preconceived opinions, but cordially to receive the truth from these Divine oracles, whatever it may be, we are persuaded there would be none to oppose the doctrine of

justification, through the imputed righteousness of Christ. This doctrine is as ancient as the doctrine of salvation—indeed it is the same with it. It was intimated in the first Gospel promise “that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” And in Abel’s sacrifice, of whom it is witnessed “that by faith he offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain.” It is testified of Abraham “that his faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness.”—Rom. iii. Here faith is put for its object, as elsewhere the apostle says:—“After faith is come, that is Christ, the object of faith, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. Thus then it is clear, that the object of Abraham’s faith, Jesus Christ, or the righteousness of Christ, was reckoned or imputed unto him for righteousness. All the sacrifices under the the law, all the types of Christ, such as the brazen serpent, the manna, the smitten rock, had it some way couched under them. The prophets speak it out plainly: “Surely shall one say, ‘In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. This is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness.’” It was foretold of him “that he should finish the transgression and bring in an everlasting righteousness.” “Your righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. In him shall all the house of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” Which Paul explains, when he says, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ.”—Christ himself clearly teaches it: “I am come,” says he, “that ye might have life. I lay down my life for the sheep. He that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live. He that believeth not is condemned already. He that believeth shall not come into condemnation.” The Apostle

Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, enters deeply into the argument. He brings the whole world of mankind under review, and first gives the character of the Gentiles, and then of the Jews, concludes them all under sin, and shows the whole world to be guilty before God. From whence he draws this conclusion, that by the works of the law, no flesh can be justified in the sight of God, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. His reasoning here amounts to this plain, simple, cogent argument—men can never be justified by the law which condemns them. But all men are condemned by the Divine law, as transgressors thereof, therefore can never be justified by it. The first proposition is self-evident. It is a contradiction in terms to assert that men can be justified by the self-same law which condemns them. The second proposition is clear, from fact and experience—all men have violated the Divine law: “There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not. If we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us.” Therefore the conclusion is unavoidable, that by the works of the law, shall no flesh be justified in God’s sight. We must then either be justified by the righteousness of another, or be eternally condemned—there is no other alternative. This will further appear, if we consider that man’s nature is corrupt through deceitful lusts. His heart is desperately wicked, and deceitful above all things. And who can change his own nature? Who can renew his own heart? If we can not make one hair white or black, much less can we change our spiritual or moral nature: “Can the Ethiopian change his color, or the leopard his spots?” But if the heart be not renewed, the life can not be holy. If the tree be not good, it can not bear good

fruit. If the fountain be poisonous, the streams will be so. Out of the corrupt heart will proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, etc. Though unregenerate men may not appear outwardly vile, yet God judgeth the heart. Though they may possess many amiable virtues, which render them useful to society, yet the heart not being renewed, in the sight of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, their virtues must appear essentially defective, as to principle, motive, and end. But, supposing men could change their own nature, and yield perfect obedience to the Divine law; this is not all. We have already sinned, and an atonement must be made, a full satisfaction must be given—and a satisfaction too, suitable to the majesty, dignity, justice, and purity of Him whose honor has been stained, law transgressed, and government disordered. What mere creature could give that, in any supposed space of time? But eternal punishment absolutely excludes the idea of salvation. With respect to true Christians, it may be remarked, that whatever acceptable obedience they offer to God, they are entirely indebted to the grace of God for it. The more holy they are, they are so much the deeper in debt to sovereign, rich grace; this alone has made them to differ, and consequently they can have no pretense to justification by their own works, and they are completely justified previously to all this new obedience. All mankind are thus concluded under guilt, and shut up under the curse of the law; but how precious! how cheering the truth: “We are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission

of sins, etc., that God might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Christ.”—Rom. iii. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” On this plan, and no other, there is glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will toward men. This is the sure foundation laid in Zion, on which mercy is built up forever. It is the scope of the whole Bible to set forth the glory of this plan. The apostle Paul counted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of it. Here mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. This displays the glory of the divine character, sustains the honor of the divine law, the majesty and perfection of the divine government. Mercy is glorified; the promise is sure to all the seed; the interests of virtue and true holiness are secured; the Holy Spirit is given; the sinner’s enmity is slain; and his soul transformed into love, supreme love to God and benevolence to men, on which hang all the law and the prophets.

There is one objection, which, as it may stagger some honest minds, we shall here briefly notice. It has been said that the law, stated in the apostle’s argument, by which a sinner can not be justified, is the Levitical or ceremonial, not the moral law. That the apostle includes the Levitical law in his argument, can not be denied; because the corrupters of the Gospel in his day taught, that except the disciples were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved—against which the apostle argues in the strongest manner. But it is clear that, in his argument, no person can be justified by the works of the law; he intends the whole law of Moses given at Mount Sinai—both moral

and ceremonial. This is evident beyond a possibility of doubt, for in his epistle to the Romans, where he treats designedly on the subject of justification, he begins with the Gentiles, gives their character, shows how odious and vile they were, chapter i, and consequently that it was impossible they could be justified by the law. Now it is manifest, the Gentiles were never under the Levitical or ceremonial law, and so could not transgress it; for where there is no law, there is no transgression, and every transgression which he imputes to them is a breach of the moral, not of the ceremonial law, as will readily appear to any who will peruse the last part of the first chapter. He then proceeds to give the character of the Jews, chapters ii and iii. And he here quotes a number of passages from the Old Testament, in which they are described. "As it is written," says he, "there is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one; their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips," etc. Now it is clear, all these evils are transgressions of the moral, not of the ceremonial law. And that he understands these things as spoken of the Jews, is evident, for he immediately adds, "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." And from the whole draws this conclusion, "Wherefore by the works of the law, shall no flesh be justified in his sight."

Furthermore it is manifest, that the law of which the

apostle speaks, is not the ceremonial law only, but the moral also; from the example which he produces of Abraham's justification. He shows that Abraham was justified not by the works of the law, but by faith, chap. 4. Now, it is evident, that Abraham was never under the Levitical or ceremonial law; for it was not given until the days of Moses. But Abraham was under the obligation of precepts strictly moral, and indeed all men are so, even the heathen, who have a copy of that law written on their hearts. It is true the moral law was not given to Abraham in form, as afterward to his posterity at mount Sinai: but it is evident, its precepts are founded in nature, and are partly manifest from the light of nature. Beside, Abraham had all the assistance of traditionary revelation from the patriarchs who went before him; and immediate revelation from God himself. And the apostle supposes him to have performed the works of the law. He walked before God in a perfect way, and yet was not justified by his own obedience, but by faith. Abraham had no cause for glorying before God; he believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. "Now," says the apostle, "to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness;" and this was the case with Abraham. This will appear further from what the apostle says, chap. vii, 4, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ; and verse 6, Now we are delivered from the law." That is, as we have no hopes of justification and life, so neither have we any dread of death by it; but it is clear, from verse 7, that it is the

moral law chiefly of which he speaks, for he subjoins, "Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said thou shalt not covet." And in verse 22, he says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man;" certainly this was the moral law in which Paul delighted; for the ceremonial was abolished to true Christians, and they could have no delight in it. This leads us to observe, that while the apostle, and all other true Christians had no hopes of life, nor fears of death by the law; being dead to the one, by the law itself, to the other by the body of Christ who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; at the same time being renewed in the spirit of their minds, the new nature in them delighted in the divine law as the essential rule of righteousness. Further, he says, Galatians iii, 21, That if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. The moral law was certainly a law given, but he affirms no given law could give life, or justify the sinner. And in chapter iv, it is said, Christ was made under the law to redeem them that were under it; but the Gentiles were never under the ceremonial law, and so could not be redeemed from it; and yet redemption from the law, by the blood of Christ, was as needful for them, and extended as really to believers among them, as to the Jews.

CHAPTER XII.

OF ADOPTION.

THE apostle John exclaims, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God!" And in his Gospel he shows how we become his sons. "To as many as received him, (viz: Christ) to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." Being united to Christ, we obtain a joint sonship and a joint heirship with him. Christ says, "I ascend to my God and your God; to my Father and your Father:" yours because mine. And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

Adoption is an act of God's sovereign grace, whereby he translates a child of Satan, an heir of hell, from that disgraceful and miserable state; into the kingdom of his dear Son, and constitutes him, through Christ, his own son and an heir of eternal life. Adoption was the privilege of all the Saints of God, under the Old Testament, but it is the privilege of Christians in a higher sense under the New. The Jewish Church was under tutors and governors; weak and

beggarly elements, suited to her juvenile state. Her condition was comparatively servile. God's people, then, were like Abraham's seed by Hagar the bondwoman. They were kept under bondage and fear. God hid himself comparatively from them. They were not admitted to much familiarity with their father. The way into the holiest was not made manifest; while the first tabernacle was standing. The vail of the temple was not rent. They had not the fullness of the Spirit, which was reserved for better times. The inheritance in the land of Canaan was an earthly one; where they often met with many troubles, and from it were sometimes driven by the nations around. It was not an easy matter to look to the end of these things, until they were abolished; and the better things reserved for the Church actually introduced. But under the New Testament, the Church is emerged from a state of infancy and childhood; and has attained to a state of maturity and liberty. She is no longer under tutors and governors; which kept her at a distance from her father: but is admitted to intimate communion with him. God's people now are like Abraham's seed by the free-woman: and as Isaac, are children of the promise. They have received the spirit of adoption, and cry Abba, Father. They are admitted to clear and distinct views of heavenly things; to much familiarity with God; and the lively hopes of a blessed immortality. On account of these superior privileges, believers under the New Testament are, in an emphatical sense, called the sons of God. And to illustrate this, is the scope of the apostle's reasoning in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians. From which it is evident, that New Testament saints are not only blessed with adoption in Christ;

but enjoy the privilege in its highest and most excellent form, in which it can be enjoyed ; until they arrive to the possession of it in heaven.

The inheritance of the saints is truly great ; God is their God and portion ; Jesus Christ is their brother ; the spirit of adoption dwells in them, leads, comforts, sanctifies and fits them for glorifying God ; all things are theirs ; all things work for their good ; God is for them and none can be against them ; none can lay anything to their charge, for God justifies them ; nothing can separate them from the love of God ; Satan is foiled, sin subdued, the world overcome, death abolished, the grave vanquished, hell shut up, and heaven opened to them.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF SANCTIFICATION.

SANCTIFICATION and regeneration differ from each other not in kind ; but only in degree. In regeneration, the principle of grace and life is implanted ; in sanctification the same gracious principle is reared up toward a state of perfection. They both differ from justification and adoption in this, that they change the sinner's nature, temper, and disposition ; but justification and adoption only change his relative state and character. The word sanctification signifies, making holy. And we find it variously applied in Scripture. Sometimes it signifies to set apart anything from a common and profane use, to a religious purpose ; thus the Jewish temple and altar ; Aaron and his sons, are called holy ; because dedicated to the service of God. The Jews were called a holy nation ; because they were a people appropriated to the service of God. They dwelt alone and were not numbered among the nations. By ceremonial institutions, they were distinguished from all nations, and the observation of these institutions constituted a ceremonial holiness ;

but the sense in which we understand the Word is much superior. It signifies that moral purity of nature and life, which amounts to an imitation or resemblance of the divine purity.

Sanctification is therefore the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the regenerate, whereby they are more and more enlightened, quickened, and conformed to the holy image of God; until they come to be fully ripe for glory. To this purpose speaks the apostle, Though our outward man decay, yet our inward is renewed day by day, and again, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The path of the just is compared to the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Our sanctification springs from a living and efficacious faith in Christ's death and resurrection. It is a purchased blessing of the new covenant, and is accomplished by the Word and Spirit of Christ dwelling in us. True and acceptable obedience in the heart and life; obedience proceeding from faith in God and supreme love to him; obedience which sincerely regards the divine law in the hand of a mediator, and the pattern which Christ hath set us, as its rule; obedience, which is ultimately directed to the glory of God as its chief end, is a plant that grows only in the rich soil of Gospel doctrine, and must be daily watered and refreshed by the blood of Christ. Virtue of this sort is the very image of God. Wherever we see such a person, we see the liveliest image of God, that can be seen in this world. We see God himself dwelling in him and walking in him.

We are far from thinking that any of the saints attain perfection in holiness in this life. It is at the moment of

death they attain it. The leprous house under the law, in order to its being perfectly cleansed, behooved to be pulled down. Those who talk of their attaining perfection, give sufficient evidence that they are lost in the deepest ignorance of God, of themselves, of his holy law, and the vileness of their own hearts. They know not the exceeding sinfulness of sin, which thus lifts them up with pride; nor the deceitfulness of it, in which its power to destroy doth chiefly consist. Believers are indeed renewed in the whole man. They are sanctified in every part; but not perfectly in any part. They sincerely aim at perfection in every grace and in every duty. It is their glory also, that they are all complete in Christ. His righteousness covers all defects, and there is grace in him insured to them, for perfecting them in holiness. There is also a comparative perfection among them, in respect of which some attain far higher degrees of grace and holiness than others. And it is certain, though sin may rage and create great disorder and distress within them, yet it shall never obtain the dominion; but will be gradually more and more mortified. In them all there is a severe conflict; a spiritual warfare; and in this warfare they may receive many wounds; but their life is safe. Their life is hid with Christ in God. The event of the battle may often appear dubious to themselves, and at intervals the enemy may seem to gain ground; but the Lord will see their ways and heal them. He will return again and have mercy on them, and cast all their sins into the deeps of the sea; because he delighteth in mercy. He will again and again renew the work of grace in them. And it is worthy of observation, that he renews it in much the

same manner as he began it at first. He revives convictions; gives a fresh alarm to the conscience; brings them under a deep sense of sin and misery; and then proceeds to give a renewed manifestation of Christ the Saviour; raises the soul to the renewed exercise of faith in him, and deep repentance toward God.

We have said already, that the Spirit of God, even in regeneration, never operates on the soul of man, but in the way of awakening the powers of the mind to action. This is true especially in the work of sanctification. When he begins his operations, which are necessary to regeneration; he finds the soul in that state which is emphatically called spiritual and moral death. The understanding clouded with ignorance; the will in a state of enmity against God; the conscience slumbering; and the affections, earthly, sensual and devilish. But in regeneration the soul is delivered from the dominion of this death. The understanding is in part enlightened; the will renewed; the conscience awakened and purged; and the affections in some measure purified. This divine life is never totally lost: but by the renewed operations of the Spirit is fanned, and increased, and called forth to action. The spirit of grace is in them as a well of living water; springing up to everlasting life. It springs up in renewed convictions, acts of faith, repentance, love, holy affections and good works; sometimes more copiously, sometimes more sparingly: but never entirely ceases.

This view of the subject serves to show, the infinite wisdom of God in his various modes of address to his people; all which are calculated to stimulate them to action; to renew their hopes and fears. "Let us run with patience

the race set before us. Let us so run that we may obtain. Let us take heed lest a promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of us should come short of it. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation. I press toward the mark, that I may obtain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest while I preach Christ to others, I myself should be a cast-away. If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." To the same purpose are all the precepts, promises, warnings and threatenings contained in the Word of God. And on the same plan we see the infinite wisdom of God, in appointing all the institutions of the Gospel, such as the reading of the Scriptures, hearing the Word preached, the holy Sabbath, the holy sacraments, prayer, brotherly admonition, reproof, meditation, self examination, and renewing our covenant with God. To sum up the whole, the grand mean of our sanctification, is frequently to behold the Lamb of God. In him, in his sufferings and death, we obtain the clearest views of the vileness of sin; around his cross the terrors of God's justice stand in terrible array, while mercy shines on us from thence with the most amiable luster. Here the love of God is manifested in all its glory, and holiness puts on the most winning and charming aspect. In the face of Jesus we see the glory of God, and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE fourteenth chapter treats of saving faith. Faith in general is the belief of a testimony. Divine faith is the belief of the divine testimony. The whole Word of God is the object of this divine faith. It extends to precepts, threatenings, histories, doctrines and promises. But more particularly, saving faith is that grace wrought in the heart of a sinner, by the Spirit of God; whereby he believes the record of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ. He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record, that God gave of his Son; and this is the record that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, 1 John v, 10, 11. It is essential to saving faith, not only that we believe the history of facts recorded in the Gospel concerning Christ: but also that we believe in the declared end and design of these facts. It is recorded not only that the Son of God became man; was made under the law: obeyed and died: but that he did so for the salvation of sinners. And it is manifest, that wherever we have the history of Christ's obedience and death, there is another idea that accompanies these; they are always pointed out as the foundation on which we may expect eternal

life. And a belief of the facts, without looking for the end of them, would amount to a belief, that Christ obeyed and died in vain. And were all men to believe the first, without the last; we should have all men believing that Christ obeyed and died to no purpose.

Faith in Christ is frequently represented as a receiving him. He is the gift of God to a lost world, and he is a gift revealed, offered, and conveyed in a testimony. The gift is therefore received by believing or receiving the testimony which conveys it. We are said to receive a testimony or report, when we believe the truth of it. When we do not believe the report to be true, we are said to reject it. To receive the report of the Gospel is therefore to believe it to be true. But this belief must extend to the whole report, as has been said, not only to the record of facts; but also to the gracious end and design of them; that is, we must believe it to be true, not only that Jesus obeyed and died: but also that he did so, in order that we might obtain eternal life through him.

The history of the Gospel is not the only object of faith; but the promise also of eternal life in Christ is so; and to believe the truth of the promise, is no more than to believe the declared end and design of Christ's obedience and death; which necessarily implies a trusting in Christ for eternal life. And this act of trusting is so essential to faith, that without it, faith can never correspond fully with its object. But it is not for the salvation of others that we trust in Christ. No, it is for our own salvation. A general belief that there is salvation in Christ for men, will not calm the alarmed conscience of an awakened sinner. He feels him-

self condemned and miserable, and he must have a ground to hope for salvation to himself, before he can find rest to his soul. He can not be nourished by the bread of life, unless he eat it; nor refreshed by the water of life, unless he drink it; he can not be healed by the leaves of the tree of life, unless he apply them; he can not be sheltered from the storm, unless he retreat under Christ's shadow by an act of trust and reliance on him for his own salvation. This particular application in faith, is pointed out in these words: "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. One shall say I am the Lord's." If this doctrine of appropriation in faith be set aside, it will exclude faith from the world altogether. For if one man have no ground or warrant to believe in Christ for his own salvation; it is clear another has as little; and all men are in the same predicament. The consequence is plain, there is not a person on the face of the earth, that does believe, or has any ground to believe in Christ for his own salvation. The only evasion here, must be, that one man believes in Christ for the salvation of some other person, and that other person believes in him for the salvation of the former; and thus we should have all men believing for others, and none for themselves: such a faith is chimerical and absurd; without foundation in Scripture or reason. And therefore without appropriation there could be no faith at all in the world; and yet without it, there would be no unbelief in the Church. For all church members will allow the Gospel in general to be true. Unbelievers in the Church are chargeable with that sin, only in not believing the truth of God's Word with application to themselves. They do not

believe the law in this manner, and so are not alarmed ; consequently see no necessity for applying the comforts of the Gospel. They rest in a general opinion that the Gospel is true ; which falls far short of the lively faith, by which a man trusts in Christ for his own salvation. Application is therefore the main point in faith. It is that alone which designates a person a believer, and the want of it an unbeliever. It is the hinge on which the decision of our character as believers does turn.

This application in faith of its glorious object, does not proceed upon any previous knowledge, that the person has of his election ; nor that Christ died intentionally for him more than for others ; for it is impossible to come to the knowledge of these things, but in consequence of, or posterior to believing. Nor does it go upon the perception of any good qualities in the sinner, to distinguish him from others. Every good quality in the soul is the fruit of faith, and therefore cannot be the cause. But it proceeds solely on the free, unlimited and gracious call, offer and promise of the Gospel to the chief of sinners ; the sinner perceives, that the call, offer, or promise is addressed to him as well as others. Though his name be not mentioned ; he sees his character described. Bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. And so he ventures on the grace of God ; and throws himself over on divine mercy and faithfulness. He did not find his name mentioned in the accusations of the law, and yet justly applied them ; with equal justice he applies the free and general offer of the Gospel, though his name be not specified. He reasons much in the same manner as the lepers did ; if we stay here, said they,

we must unavoidably perish; if we go out to the camp of the Syrians, we can only perish. They went out with a peradventure, but their peradventures were soon turned into a glorious certainty; and so it is often with distressed souls.

This leads us to remark, that saving faith admits of various degrees. It may be weak or strong, little or great; just as the truth of the testimony believed is more or less evident to the mind; and as the character of God, the speaker, appears more obscurely or clearly. If these appear, clearly and fully, then we will believe with a full assurance. It is not without reason, that our Protestant divines plead for a fiducia, a confidence, or assurance in the very nature of faith, in a greater or less degree; for in the nature of things, it is just according to the assurance we have of the truth of a testimony, that we may be said to give credit to it, or believe it. If our assurance of the truth of it be strong, our faith will be strong; if our assurance of the truth of it be weak, our faith will be weak; and if we have no assurance of the truth of it at all, we will have no faith or belief of it at all. And though the truth of the divine testimony be invariably the same, yet it does not always appear so to the believer. It is only in proportion as the Spirit of God elucidates the truth of it, and impresses it on the mind, that he can discern it. It is his office to take of the things that are Christ's, and show them unto us. This assurance in the nature of faith, must be carefully distinguished from the assurance of sense. The assurance of sense, is a firm persuasion that we are already in a state of grace, and is grounded upon our Christian experience, or a perception of the distinguishing

marks of saving grace in us. But the assurance of faith has its dependence upon the evidence of the truth believed; which, in saving faith, is the authority of God, who cannot lie, speaking in his Word; and this made evident to the mind by the Holy Spirit.

Great things are ascribed to faith in Scripture. We are justified by faith; sanctified by it; and this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith. Faith is the shield by which we quench the fiery darts of the wicked one. And in the eleventh of the Hebrews, the greatest achievements that were ever done in this world, are ascribed to faith; and yet faith itself, as an act of the mind, is represented as the most simple, easy thing in nature. It is a hearing Christ's voice. Isaiah lv, "Hear and your souls shall live." It is a coming to him. "Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." It is to receive Christ as a gift. "To as many as received him," etc. To look to him. "Look to me, all ye ends of the earth," etc. It is to sit down when we are neither able to walk nor stand any longer, "I sat down under his shadow," etc. Hence it is manifest, that the whole efficacy of faith, is derived from its object. By faith we are united to Jesus Christ, and it invests the soul with a kind of omnipotence; for its object is the omnipotent Saviour, and thus the believer can look back on all that is past, and forward to all that is to come without fear. He can do all things through Christ strengthening him, and endure all afflictions, as seeing him who is invisible.

We have said, that the immediate ground and warrant of saving faith is, the free, the generous, and unlimited offer of

salvation in Christ, to all that hear the Gospel. "Go, says Christ, and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Some have, indeed, alleged, that it is improper, in preaching the Gospel, to make any offers of salvation to men; that all we can do with propriety, is only to testify the bare truths and facts of the Gospel, and set before men the evidence of these truths and facts; which they will believe, or not believe, as the evidence appears or does not appear to their minds. This is plausible enough, and would be just too, were the Gospel no more than a collection of speculative truths and facts. But it is false and dangerous, and will appear so to be, when we consider that in the ministry of the Gospel, a gift is presented to us to be received by us. This gift is eternal life. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. He that believeth not the record of God hath made him a liar; and this is the record, that he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." The salvation of sinners is ever represented, as the end proposed by Christ, in his obedience and death; and it is absurd to preach these truths and facts, without pointing to their blessed end and design; or in other words, without offering salvation or eternal life, as the free gift of God to sinners through Jesus Christ. And truly, men can not, in the scriptural sense of the words, believe that Jesus is the Christ, that he obeyed and died, as recorded in the Gospel, unless they believe in him for eternal life, or receive the gift of salvation presented to them in him. True Christians not only believe something concerning Christ, but also believe in him

for something. They not only believe that he obeyed and died, but also trust in him for their own salvation, as the declared end and design of his obedience and death. For saith the apostle Peter, "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus we shall be saved even as they." When Christ commanded his disciples to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, he surely did not mean only, go and tell them that the Son of God obeyed and died and rose again, while they concealed the grand end and glorious purpose for which he did so; no, but go and proclaim liberty to the captives, salvation to the lost, life to the dead, pardon and peace to the guilty, and eternal felicity to the heirs of hell, through his obedience and death; hence the whole Gospel is often comprised in its blessed end and design, "Unto you is the Word of this salvation sent. God hath sent him to bless you, etc. Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. Go speak to the people all the words of this life."

This life must be preached to every creature, "Freely ye have received, says Christ, freely give." The offer must be made to all without exception. The promises must be presented to sinners, in connection with the history of truths and facts, to be embraced by them as an object of faith.

It is absurd to suspend the offer of the Gospel on any good quality, whatsoever, to be previously produced in the creature; call it contrition, humiliation, repentance, or by any other name. It is true, none will ever fly to Christ until they be sensible of their danger. But to suspend the offer of salvation on this or anything else, would be going blindly to work; for how shall Gospel ministers know, who are truly

sensible of their sin and misery, and who not? Who have attained the necessary degree of sensibility, and who not? And it is clear, from experience, that those who are most awakened, are most ready to complain of the hardness of their hearts; their want of true repentance, contrition, etc. It is, therefore, safest to proceed in the way which the Lord himself hath marked out; to throw the Gospel net among all; to invite all to come and take the water of life freely; to take it without money and without price. We know of no qualifications necessary to entitle a person to the offer of grace and salvation through Christ; but that he be a sinner of the human kind, who needs a Saviour. We must come to Jesus as sinners, the chief of sinners. We must come as we really are, and can never prepare ourselves by unbelief, or keeping at a distance. It is therefore dangerous to teach, that we may not come to Christ, nor trust in him for salvation, unless we have previously repented of our sins, and practiced new obedience.

CHAPTER XV.

THE fifteenth chapter treats of repentance unto life. Repentance is, in a figurative sense, ascribed to God himself. It is said, the Lord repented that he had made man, and he repented concerning Nineveh. In this case it points out, not a change of mind, but of conduct. The Divine mind cannot change. God is of one mind, and who can turn him. Known unto him are all his works from the beginning. And it is worthy of our attention, that the supreme Ruler always adapts his dispensations to the moral state and character of a nation or people. When Nineveh was impenitent like the old world, it was on the brink of destruction. But when Nineveh repented it was the object of mercy. Accordingly, Jehovah says, at what time I shall speak concerning a nation; to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that nation turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. Jeremiah i, 6, 7.

But repentance, in its proper sense, is ascribed to men; and in this sense it signifies a change of mind as well as conduct. This is commonly distinguished into legal and evangelical. Legal repentance is the fruit of the spirit of

bondage; and produces fear and sorrow. It may be accompanied with an external and temporary reformation; as in the case of Ahab, and perhaps of Nineveh. But the spirit of Christ, acting as the spirit of the new covenant, is very different. And in this last character, he is the author of evangelical repentance. This repentance includes a deep sense of sin; not only of its evil consequences, but of the vileness and odiousness of sin itself. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Therefore, there is in evangelical repentance, the very same thing which there is in the other; a perception of the obligation of the law; a conviction that we have broken it, and on account of this deserve the wages of sin, viz: death in its utmost extent. But evangelical repentance includes much more; it implies saving faith, or an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. True repentance is not the effect of a bare manifestation of the power, justice, and wrath of God in the law, for then the damned in hell would be the greatest penitents; such a manifestation does not soften the heart, nor dissolve it into godly sorrow; such penitents harden in the fire of God's wrath: but a discovery of redeeming love, of infinite mercy, as it reigns through the blood of Christ, effectually melts the sinner into grief for sin, hatred of it, and love to that good God, who graciously pardons it through the infinite atonement of his dear Son. And this divine temper necessarily implies the strongest resolutions against sin, and endeavors after true holiness.

We find repentance thus stated in the divine oracles, Zechariah xii, 10: "They shall look on him whom they have pierced and shall mourn." It is impossible to behold Jesus bleeding on the cross as a victim to justice for our

sins, and immediately turn from that sight to the commission of sin. The prophet says, After I was turned, I repented. Turned, how? Surely by faith. We cannot turn to Christ but by faith. Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance. But how do we receive any blessing from Christ? Surely by faith.

Indeed, the divine life is one gracious principle in the soul; but receives different designations, from the different lights in which it views its object. As believing the testimony of the Gospel, it is called faith; as exercised about sin, it is called repentance, etc.; thus in the order of time there is no priority or posteriority of one grace to another. But in the order of nature, repentance is posterior to faith. We insist the more on this, because teaching that true repentance is prior to faith, necessarily involves the soul in much perplexity. It is to point out something as a preliminary to our acceptance of the Saviour; it is insisting on our bringing a price for the water of life. It is like teaching a person first to heal himself, at least in part, and then come to the physician; whereas the Gospel teaches uniformly that we must come to Christ as we are—poor and maimed, halt and blind. We must not delay one moment, thinking first to become true penitents. Were this notion embraced, great doubts would arise as to what degree of repentance is previously necessary, and whether the person possess that degree. The Gospel plan is: be of good cheer, rise immediately, behold he calleth thee. Many times God's own children cannot draw near to him in the character of penitents. But there is another character in which they may always come; as poor miserable sinners that need a Saviour.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE sixteenth chapter treats of good works. Good works are the native fruits of saving faith and sincere repentance. Religion is justly distinguished into two branches—doctrinal and practical. It is difficult to say which of them is most important. They give a distorted view of religion, who say that it avails little what a man's principles be, if his practice be good. Not to insist that this way of speaking proceeds on a false hypothesis; that our practice may be good while our principles are bad, whereas it is certain that loose principles will produce loose practices; it may be remarked that it cannot be of small importance, whether the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus. Whether we think as God thinks, or think in direct opposition to him; or in other words, whether we be taught by the Spirit of God or not, and have communion with God, angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, or not. The Word of God testifies that Jehovah searches the heart and trieth the reins; and as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he, in his estimation. And a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil

treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things ; for out of the unsanctified heart do proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies. This shows the necessity of our being renewed in the spirit of our minds, in order to a holy life. Make the tree good and its fruit shall be good, says Christ. In the foregoing chapters our Confession treats of the great and fundamental doctrines of religion. This is the foundation. In this it treats of good works, which are like the superstructure. And this is correspondent to the form of the apostolical epistles, which begin with the doctrines and conclude with the duties of religion. Yea, this scheme answers exactly to the tenor of the new covenant, in which grace is promised to enable to the performance of duty. And Christ shows, John xv, that we must be united to him before we can bring forth fruit.

It is essentially necessary to good works, that they be required by the law of God. Human inventions can meet with no acceptance before God. In vain do they worship me, says he, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. By good works we understand, obedience to the whole moral law, comprehending our duty to God and man ; or what are commonly called the duties of religion and moral virtue. A pretended zeal for religious duties, without a regard to virtue, is gross hypocrisy. Moral virtue, without an attention to the duties we owe to God, must stand on a very insecure foundation, and argues gross stupidity and hardness of heart. The two conjoined, and proceeding from true faith in Jesus Christ, supreme love to God, and ultimately pointed to his glory, form the truly great and noble character.

The great importance of good works, in this view, will appear from the following considerations: First, it is the great end of all evangelical and practical principles, that we reduce them to practice. Indeed, practical principles are of no use at all, unless we reduce them to practice. They are but vain speculations, and their nature and design is contradicted and defeated. It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment. If I had not come and spoken unto you, says Christ, you would have had no sin, that is, comparatively; but now ye have no cloak for your sin. To sin against light, is to sin with a high hand. To sin against the light of the Gospel, is to despise the riches of redeeming love, and do despite to the Spirit of grace. Secondly, By good works, as above described, we become like God. He is good, and ever doing good. His goodness extends to all, and his tender mercies are over all his other works. His goodness is manifested in two ways; in giving and forgiving. In like manner true Christians must conduct themselves; and thus they become living images of God; God is visible in them, and glorified by them. Thirdly, It was one grand end of the whole of Christ's undertaking, of his incarnation, obedience, and sufferings, to destroy the works of the devil, and consequently to promote good works. Beside, while his obedience satisfied the law for us in its covenant form, therein he set us an example that we should follow his steps. Fourthly, Good works are the fruits and evidence of our union to Christ. "Abide in me, and I in you, so shall ye bring forth much fruit." And he declares that every tree which beareth not fruit shall be hewn down and cast

into the fire. Fifthly, They are the fruits of his Spirit in believers. His Spirit is in them a well of life springing up to everlasting life; they through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body. He worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Sixthly, The rewards of heaven are promised to good works: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom," etc. "I was hungry and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink," etc. All who have their fruit unto holiness, shall in the end obtain everlasting life. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, they rest from their labors and their works do follow them. Seventhly, It may be said, this is heaven come down into the soul of man, and a high anticipation of the glory to be revealed. Eighthly, This is the end of our election. "I have chosen you," says Christ, "and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." Ninthly, The end of our regeneration. We are his workmanship created again in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them. The whole doctrine of the grace of God, in justification, adoption, and sanctification, teacheth us, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." And a life spent in the service of God will afford pleasant reflections on a death-bed. "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." "I am now ready to be offered," says Paul, "and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Hence-

forth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearance. God will render to every man according to his works; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life." Romans ii, 7.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE seventeenth chapter treats of the perseverance of the saints. On this subject it may be of great service to state the question with precision. The question, then, is not, whether some, who have made a shining profession of religion, may not totally and finally fall away. Doubtless there have been not a few of such; as Christ teaches in the parable of the sower who went to sow his seed. Secondly, The question is not, whether true believers may not, through the power and prevalence of indwelling sin, the strength of temptation, and the allurements of the world, fall far back from former attainments in grace and holiness. This can not be denied. It is manifest from several instances in God's Word: but it is clear that grace again revived in them. They were restored to repentance. And it is a great proof of the wisdom and mercy of God, that such instances are recorded; that when God's children are cast down, they may not utterly despair; as one, not without a good meaning, said, Two things give me great consolation—the perfection of Christ's righteousness, and the imperfections of the saints. Thirdly, The question is not, whether Christ-

ians shall persevere to eternal life by a kind of necessity, which excludes spontaneity or free agency. There is no such thing in human nature. The will is free and can not be forced. It is inclined and determined by the grace of God. Though God's decree and purpose of salvation be immutable, yet, like all his other purposes respecting men, it does not exclude the rational choice and free agency of the creature. Fourthly, Nor is the question, whether they persevere in a way, that renders their own exertions unnecessary? By no means. Man is not a piece of wood or stone. And, as has been formerly remarked, the Spirit of God never moves the soul, but in the way of awakening its powers to action. In short, they are kept from falling, partly through a fear of falling, and the hopes of eternal life to them that endure to the end.

But the question is, whether any person, savingly united to Jesus Christ, shall be so far forsaken of God, as utterly to cast off fear and restrain prayer before him, and so perish eternally with the damned? We think not, because the purpose of God, according to election, shall stand. The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. Believers are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Their life is hid with Christ in God; and therefore when he who is their life shall appear, they shall appear also with him in glory. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. The chain of blessings, Rom. viii, cannot be broken. God made every link of it, and inseparably connected them. The

covenant is well ordered in all things and sure : it contains the sure mercies of David ; if one may be utterly lost for whom Christ died, and whom he hath called and sanctified ; so may ten, yea, ten thousand, and by the same reason all that were given to him. Thus God our Saviour must have been uncertain, when he died, whether his blood might not be shed in vain. There was no certainty in these promises made to him, "He shall see his seed, etc. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied," Isai. liii. And if any do persevere on this scheme, it must be owing, not to the grace of the new covenant, but to their own endeavors ; which leads us to the popish doctrine of salvation by works, in the fullest sense of the words. Christ's intercession is an eternal rock on which the Church is built. "I have prayed for thee, says he, that thy faith fail not. My Father, says he, is stronger than all, and none shall pluck them out of his hands. And he adds, none shall be able to pluck them out of my hands." He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. If God be for us who can be against us ? Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, etc. ? All this is perfectly consistent with free agency in them, and does by no means supersede, but rather infer the necessity of their exertions. When Cyrus was told by Daniel, that he was the person appointed by Jehovah to emancipate the captives at Babylon, this animated the prince to give orders accordingly. The means and the end are alike in God's purpose ; and stand in an inseparable connection. Believers are chosen

to salvation, but it is through sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and belief of the truth. It seems to be the will of God, that all his purposes respecting the government, and redemption of the world, should take effect by the operation of a series of secondary causes; at the head of which subordinate series, he himself stands as the great and first Cause, which gives energy and efficacy to the whole: in a manner indeed quite incomprehensible to us, but always adapted to the nature of these secondary causes; whether they be necessary, contingent, or rational and voluntary. Finally, we cannot believe that a man may be a child of God, to-day, and a child of the devil to-morrow; an heir of heaven to-day, and an heir of hell to-morrow; and on the same scheme next day, or next hour, shifting sides again; and so every day and hour of life. The administration of the kingdom of nature is not so fluctuating: much less the administration of the kingdom of grace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE eighteenth chapter treats of the assurance of grace and salvation. We have already spoken of the persuasion, assurance, or certainty which is essential to the nature of saving faith; founded upon the truth of the divine testimony in the Word; and that made evident to the soul by the Spirit of God. But the assurance treated of in this chapter is of a different kind. It is an assurance that we are already in a state of grace. The question on the first point is this. Is the Scriptural testimony true or not? But on this second point, the question is. Am I possessed of saving faith in the divine testimony? Am I already in a state of union to Christ? And it is evident, that the more lively and strong the direct act of faith in the divine testimony be; the more readily shall we attain a certainty that we are possessed of it. Faith, in this respect, may be compared to the sun, which not only discovers other objects; but also itself. By the direct act of faith in the divine testimony, the believer says, I am the Lord's; I accept of him as given to me in the record of God, and according to his commandment, I give or surrender myself to him. We

all know that when a person enlists himself a soldier in the service of the state; by the very act of enlistment, he says, I am the servant of the state; so likewise by the first act of saving faith, the believer says, I am the Lord's servant. This sentence becomes true as uttered by faith. It was not true before; that is, it was not true that the person was enlisted in Christ's service, or had accepted him; before he really was, and did so: but it becomes a truth by the very act of believing or acceptance. This plain truth is the very thing, against which such a mighty uproar has been raised, as being one of the grossest absurdities, and what some call a manufacturing truth without evidence. Now it is manifest, when this acceptance and surrender is clear, distinct and explicit: it must go far to free the person's mind of doubts and ascertain the truth of his gracious state.

But there is another way of ascertaining this truth, and that is by self-examination. The believer, studying the distinguishing marks and characters of true Christians, laid down in the Word of God, comparing these with what he finds in himself, and perceiving that he is possessed of them; cannot help drawing the conclusion, that he is in a gracious state. There seems to be another way of attaining this assurance, when by the candle of the Lord shining clearly on the soul, by a plerophory or full manifestation of the love of God, and the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God; the believer is overwhelmed with the glory of divine things, and is placed beyond a possibility of doubting his interest in Christ. This last is a prelibation of heaven, a foretaste of glory, and a rare attainment. The sensible assurance, of which we speak, is what believers may

be long without, and may, after obtaining it, have it much weakened, through the power of sin and temptation, but even in this dark, perplexed state, they may have some degree of faith in the divine Word, and somewhat of a lively hope in the promise. The question which distresses them in this case, is not so much, whether they believe God's Word, and hope in it, at least in an inferior degree; as whether their faith and hope be of the true, genuine kind.

This sensible assurance cannot be preferred without close walking with God in all his ordinances and commandments blameless. It requires constant watchfulness, and much diligence in the paths of religion and godliness. We should earnestly study to say in the whole train of our conversation; that we are the Lord's. We should determinately appear on the Lamb's side, in the grand conflict between him and the world.

CHAPTER XIX.

THIS chapter treats of the law of God, and states a distinction between the law as vested with the form of a covenant, and the same law as stripped of that form; and doubtless this distinction is well founded. It was given to Adam as a covenant of works, or as it stated a connection between his obedience, and his life, and between his disobedience and his death. And all his posterity in their fallen state are so far under it in that form, that they cannot enter into life without fulfilling its precepts and enduring its penalty, either in their own persons, or by an acceptance of the surety. In their own persons it is altogether impossible to fulfill its demands, and be saved. So that none are saved but through faith in the righteousness of Christ; and all who fly to him are saved, in agreeableness to the terms or demands of the covenant of works. It has been alleged, that Adam's posterity are not under the perceptive part of the covenant of works, but only under its penalty. Surely it cannot be said, that the moral law is not obligatory on Adam's posterity since the fall, for this would at once wipe the world clean of sin; because where there is no law there

is no transgression. The obligation of the precept is indispensable in every state in which men can possibly be in this world. And it is the peculiar privilege of true believers to be under it, only as a rule of life. Therefore if it be obligatory at all on unbelievers it must be in the form of a covenant; but a covenant already violated by them, and consequently a covenant by which they can have no rational expectation of life; but on the contrary inevitable death, or the fullest execution of the threatening, if they do not embrace the Saviour, and the covenant of mercy revealed in him. This is manifestly the doctrine of the Scriptures; the apostle affirms, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" in which sentence he distinguishes between the precept and penalty, and supposes unbelievers to be under both. And according to him, the reason of their being under the curse or penalty, is their being under the precept, and indeed it is evident no law can have a condemning power over men, unless it had and have a commanding power over them. But this truth is further evident from the following words of the apostle: "I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died;" that is, he imagined that while a Pharisee, he was a lively saint: but the commandment came, or was powerfully applied to his conscience; he felt its authority demanding perfect obedience; sin then revived, for by the law is the knowledge of sin; "I had not known sin, says he, but by the law I had not known lust, except the law had said thou shalt not covet;" when the law thus came and sin revived, he died; the law slew him, or destroyed his false peace and groundless hopes.

But it will be said, does God require any man to seek life by the covenant of works? God requires all men to seek life in such a manner as will fulfill its demands, and declares none shall enter into life without a complete fulfillment both of precept and penalty; thus the obligation of that covenant on the sinner, both in precept and penalty, is the groundwork of Christ's obedience and death. When Christ told the young ruler, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," no doubt he graciously meant to convince him of sin, and show him the necessity of coming as a poor sinner to the Saviour: but he also intended to establish the obligation of the law both in precept and penalty. This obligation is, therefore, not inconsistent with the obligation under which gospel-hearers are to believe in Christ for eternal life; so far from it, that the last presupposes the first, or our obligation by the Gospel to seek righteousness and salvation in Christ, proceeds on the hypothesis of the law's just demands upon us, both for a perfect obedience, and complete atonement.

It is the privilege of true believers in Christ, to be delivered from the covenant of works or the law in that form. They are not under the law, but under grace. Christ was made of a woman, and made under the law; to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. The apostle says, "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God;" and in several places of Scripture, they are said to be dead to the law; surely not as a rule of duty, but only in the form of a covenant. And they are so in a twofold sense. They have no hopes of life by any conformity to its precepts, of which they are capable: says Paul, "I through the law am dead to the law. By the

powerful application of the law to my conscience, says he, by its high demands on me a poor impotent sinner; I am convinced I can expect nothing from it but death. I renounce all hopes of life by it." But has he not reason then to be afraid of its curse? No, he is dead to all fears of that too; and how so? He replies, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye are become dead to the law through the body of Christ." By the body of Christ he means his crucified body; or indeed the whole of his mediatorial righteousness. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; and thus the sinner, united to Christ, is freed from the covenant of works. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in all true Christians. Their faith is counted unto them for righteousness. Not the act, but the object of faith, to wit, Christ.

But while we zealously contend, that believers in Christ are delivered from the law in its covenant form, with equal zeal we maintain, the obligation of the whole moral law on them, as a rule of life. They are not without the law to God, but under the law to Christ; the Spirit of God writes his law upon their hearts, and puts it into their minds; Christ is made of God unto them, sanctification; he saves from sin, not in it; he destroys the works of the devil, which may be all summed up in sin; they that abide in Christ, bring forth fruit; they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life; true faith worketh by love to God and man, which love is the fulfilling of the law; evangelical hope purifieth the heart even as God is pure. Believers are God's workmanship, created again in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should

walk in them. The moral law is a transcript of the image of God. He spared not his own Son, but would not give up with one jot or tittle of his law. Holiness is the beauty, the perfection, and happiness of the rational and intelligent creature; the possession of it makes one spirit a glorious angel; the want of it makes a spirit of the same powers, capacity, and rank, a devil. All the previous steps in the work of redemption terminate, ultimately, in perfect holiness; and this is the glory and felicity of the heavenly inhabitants; they are spirits of just men made perfect. Faith in Christ does not make void the law, but establishes, magnifies, and honors it. Shall we sin, says Paul, because grace does abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein? And on this head we are not afraid to appeal to fact and experience: let us only look round and ask, whether religion, virtue, and true holiness, flourish most in those Churches, which have turned aside from free grace unto another Gospel; or in those where the pure doctrines of Christ have free course and are glorified. To shun preaching the cross of Christ, and declaim on merely moral subjects, is like plucking up a few weeds in a garden, while the whole garden is burnt up with drought; but to preach Christ crucified, is to introduce a stream of living water among the beds. The first is lopping off a few wild and more luxuriant branches from the tree of sin; but the last lays the ax to the root. True virtue is a precious fruit which flourishes only on the cross of Christ. It is a plant that must be daily watered with the blood of Christ.

The whole book of divine revelation, taken in a large sense, may be and is called the law of God; and may also

not improperly be called the Gospel, because one thing is the scope and design of all its parts; namely, to guide men back to God; to conduct them to holiness, glory and immortality. But taken in a strict sense, the law and the Gospel are very different; and it is of great use and importance to understand this distinction well, especially to Gospel ministers. The Gospel, in a strict sense, includes no commands, nor threatenings; it is a message of infinite love and grace to perishing sinners; it is glad tidings of great joy; the promise; "The promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off," and this promise is that of eternal life, "This is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life;" it is the word of life, "Go speak unto the people all the words of this life;" the record of God, in which he hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; the covenant of promise, "And this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people," etc., Hebrews viii, 10, 11, 12; in which it is noticeable, there is neither precept, nor threatening, but all promise; no condition is stated on the sinner's part, but God takes the whole work of grace, both of pardon and sanctification, into his own hand.

All precepts and threatenings belong to the law, either in its covenant form, or as a rule of life. The command to believe, and threatening against unbelief; the command to repent, and denunciation against impenitence; the command to pray, to watch, to obey the Gospel, and submit to all its institutions; and the sentence of wrath against the neglect

of these duties; belong to the law, strictly taken. The neglect of these is sin. But sin is a transgression of the law. And these do not constitute a new law of grace, offering life to men on easier terms than the first covenant, into which law, some have absurdly attempted to transform the Gospel; and so to lead sinners to seek eternal life by the covenant of works a little softened: but in these, we see the law accommodated by infinite wisdom, to the sinful and ruined state of men, under a dispensation of grace and mercy introduced by the Gospel of Christ. It must be granted, that the authority of God, in the law of the ten commandments, does oblige the creature to every duty God can require of him, and that in all circumstances in which he can possibly be placed; and therefore, when sinful and fallen, and under a revelation of mercy and dispensation of grace, he must be bound by the law to embrace the one, and submit to the other.

There is therefore no contradiction between the law and the Gospel, but a blessed harmony between them; and subserviency of the one to the other. The law, as a covenant of works, demands of the sinner a holy nature, a perfect obedience, and condemns him to suffer the punishment due to sin; or demands a full satisfaction to incensed justice. These demands are subservient to the success of the Gospel, they shut the sinner up to the faith of Christ. The sinner perceives he cannot change his own nature; cannot create a new heart in himself; that it would be as practicable for him to create another world, another sun and system of planets; and as the heart is the spring of action, he perceives that unless the fountain be pure the streams cannot be so; unless the tree be made good, its fruit cannot be so; and that therefore

without the renovating grace of Jesus Christ, he cannot perform one acceptable act of obedience to the law. But further, he is conscious, that he has already sinned in innumerable instances; and that were it even possible for him to change his own corrupt nature, and yield perfect obedience, still another demand remains, that is, full satisfaction to divine justice for his sins already committed, by suffering the punishment due; and thus he discerns the absolute necessity of flying to Christ. There are here, only two things which constitute an alternative: either to fly to Christ, the end of the law for righteousness, or to sink in absolute despair. In this extremity, the Gospel reveals Christ, and invites the sinner to sit down under the covert of his blood and righteousness, which he does with great delight, and finds his fruits sweet to his taste. And thus the Gospel fulfills the covenant of works in all its demands; it does not make void that covenant, but establishes it. Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. And it is of great use, to preach the law, in all its demands and terrors, that it may be as a rigorous schoolmaster, to scourge the sinner to Christ.

The law, viewed also as a rule of righteousness in the hand of the Mediator, is perfectly harmonious with the Gospel. They go hand in hand; the one in pointing out our duty; the other furnishing grace and strength for the performance of it. Does the law command us to believe? The Gospel says, it is given you on the behalf of Christ to believe; and he is the author and finisher of our faith. Does the law command us to repent? The Gospel reveals Christ, exalted as a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel.

Does the law require us to love God? The Gospel promises that the love of God shall be shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit, and says the Lord, "I will circumcise your hearts to love the Lord thy God." Does the law command us to hear that we may live? The Gospel promises that the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; and the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God. Does the law require us to pray? God promises in the Gospel, to pour upon us the Spirit of grace and supplication. Does the law require us to wash and make us clean? The Gospel promises, that God will sprinkle clean water upon us, and we shall be clean. Does the law command us to make to ourselves a new heart? God in the Gospel says, a new heart also will I give to you. The Gospel is altogether adapted to the sinful and lost state of men. Christ finds men dead in trespasses and sins; but he, the second Adam, was made a quickening spirit to give them life. The Gospel, instead of overthrowing the law in any sense, establishes and fulfills it in all, and its ultimate end is to transform sinful creatures into the image of God, perfect them in holiness, or bring them to that perfection which the law requires; and so advance the glory of God in their salvation. We therefore testify against the following errors. That believers are still under the law as a covenant of works; bound to obey that they may live. The apostle affirms, "That they are not under the law but under grace; that the law of the spirit of life hath made them free from the law of sin and death; and there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Also, the error that believers are not under the law in any sense, that they may live as they please. and can not

commit any sin. The Word testifies that they are not without law to God but under law to Christ. We likewise testify against the error, that the Gospel is a new law of grace, proposing life on easier terms than the covenant of works ; and that if our obedience, though imperfect, be sincere, it will be accepted as sufficient for the pardon of our sins, and give us a title to eternal life.

CHAPTER X X .

OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

THE divine Redeemer came to save his people from sin. Sin is represented, as darkness ; as death ; as bondage. Salvation from it, is light, life, and liberty. Christ does not only save from the guilt of sin and the wrath of God, but also from its power and dominion. It is the deceitfulness and power of sin, which form the instrument of Satan's dominion over the soul of man. And there is no deliverance from his tyranny, but by redemption from the deceitfulness and power of sin itself. We must therefore affirm, that liberty of conscience is not a liberty to commit sin. It is not a liberty, to destroy and cast off all conscience. This would be to make liberty the same thing with slavery ; light, darkness ; and death, life. Christian liberty is not, to do as we please, without regarding our duty to God and to man. But while we maintain, that God hath left our consciences free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith and worship ; we also contend, that Jehovah is the Lord and

only Lord of conscience. That his Word is the rule of conscience. And his service the most perfect liberty. God himself enjoys infinite liberty; but he is essentially holy. Angels and glorified saints are free and enjoy perfect liberty: but it consists in perfect holiness, or complete freedom from sin.

The power of the Church is only ministerial and declarative. She can do nothing more, than declare and administer the doctrines, laws, and ordinances of Christ. A Church of Christ is formed by a covenant or contract to walk in these, and when any of her members depart from these, and so violate that covenant, they cast themselves out of communion; and the Church only declares that they have done so. It would be absurd to plead liberty of conscience in this case, and insist for communion too: for such a pretended liberty would be licentiousness, or liberty to transgress the laws of Christ; therefore from the communion of the Church such a person must be expelled; the Church does not claim an infallible power of interpretation, but she must judge for herself; and the doctrines, worship, and laws of Christ, are not so obscure, but where there is an honest mind, and sincere heart to receive the truth, it may be easily discovered.

The civil authority of any Christian country, can not lawfully intermeddle with the internal government of the Church of Christ. The keys of doctrine and discipline are not committed to civil rulers; but to Church officers. Nevertheless, civil rulers ought carefully to distinguish between liberty of conscience, and downright licentiousness, or a rejection of all conscience; and while they allow full liberty as to modes and forms of worship, they ought not to permit the citizens,

totally to neglect the worship, fear, and service of God in every mode and form ; for this would subvert the principles of all order, justice, and good government ; a person who does not acknowledge, and worship God, who blasphemes and profanes his sacred name ; who allows of no stated times for his service, can not with any propriety be admitted as a witness on oath in any court ; and much less can he fill any place of power and trust ; yea, he can not be viewed as a subject of moral government.

CHAPTER XXI.

OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

THAT God, who is infinitely glorious and supremely good, and whose goodness extends to all, ought to be worshiped and adored by all intelligent creatures, is a ray of truth as transparent, as that he exists. There is no sentiment more natural to the human mind, than religion in some form or other. Hence all nations in all ages of the world have practiced some rites or modes of worship; and reason readily gives its assent, that sincerity and purity of heart constitute the essence of this worship. But in our fallen state, the understanding being clouded, and the heart depraved, there is nothing more unnatural than true religion and pure spiritual worship. There was, therefore, great necessity, for God to reveal and prescribe what worship would be acceptable to him. This he has done in his Word, to which we should be carefully obedient; and observe all his institutions in their purity. All images of God and of Christ, either as objects of adoration, or as a medium through which our adoration is directed to the Supreme Being, are repugnant to reason as well as Scripture.

The undivided trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the object of our worship. To this one God, subsisting in three distinct persons, we must address prayer, confession, and thanksgiving; in secret, private, and public. And it is only in the mediation of Jesus Christ, that we can be accepted. No man cometh to the Father but by him; and whatsoever we shall ask of the Father in his name, he will do it; and for our encouragement farther, Christ is our advocate within the veil; and the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of supplication, is promised to help our infirmities. All these great and mighty privileges are expressed in a most concise manner by the apostle in these words: "Through him we have an access, by one spirit, unto the Father." What a source of comfort! We have the almighty, all-wise, and all-merciful God to go to as our Father and Friend. The Son of God as our Mediator and Advocate. The Holy Spirit to assist us in our approaches. God deigns to take particular notice of prayer, and put peculiar honor on it. He says of Saul, "Behold he prayeth! Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify my name. Seek and ye shall find, ask and ye shall receive," etc. And he never bid any of the seed of Jacob seek his face in vain. And it is impossible to tell, how much comfort is contained in that divine direction: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving make your requests known to God." Our worship under the Gospel, is not confined to any place, or sanctified by it. But God requires us to worship Him in all places, in spirit and in truth.

Social or public worship is clearly founded on the law of nature, and expressly enjoined by revelation; and it is one

of the principal ways in which Christians express their communion with each other. If God ought to be worshiped, some time must be allotted for that worship. If worshiped by society in a social capacity, a suitable portion of time, must be consecrated to that purpose. Thus a day of sacred rest, or what is called in Scripture a Sabbath, is a most rational institution. The civilized heathens all observed something like it; and indeed devoted much more of their time to religious worship, such as it was, than God requires in his Word. The seventh part is appropriated by God to this purpose, and is a most rational and easy precept. The institution of the Sabbath is no ceremonial rite; for it was appointed long before the giving of the ceremonial law; it was ordained from the creation of the world. Six days God labored, and rested on the seventh; and therefore, says he, six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh is a holy Sabbath unto the Lord. This is the first number in divine numeration, and hence we see this number very often singled out with honor in the New Testament. There were seven churches; seven angels of the churches; seven trumpets; seven vials, etc. And as God's division of time by this number, is recorded in the first book of Scripture, so this division is stamped with divine authority and honor, in the last; which is no obscure hint, that the institution of the Sabbath is perpetuated under the New Testament.

Christians indeed believe, that at the resurrection of Christ, the day was changed from the last to the first day of the week. This was probably one of the directions given by Christ to his disciples, during his continuance with them

forty days after his resurrection ; for it is said, that he was employed then in speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. It was foretold in prophecy, that this change should take place.—Ezek, xliii, 27. Christ claims lordship or dominion over the Sabbath — “ The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath day.” Surely not to annul or repeal it (he came not to destroy the law and the prophets) but to change it. “ Behold,” says he, “ I make all things new.” He set aside the Levitical worship, to which the seventh-day Sabbath was annexed, and introduced a new system of worship and ordinances ; a new priesthood, a new temple, a new altar, a new commandment ; to wit, love, a new ministry, new sacraments, and therefore very properly a new Sabbath. It is certain that the apostles, after Christ’s resurrection, sanctified, or kept holy, the first day of the week, and called it emphatically the Lord’s day ; because on that day he arose from the dead, and by this, gave the fullest demonstration, that the work of redemption was finished in respect of impetration ; which event was like the creation of a new world, or a new state of things in the world ; and accordingly the New Testament Church is called the world to come ; “ For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak ? ” says the apostle.—Heb. ii, 5. As the seventh day was instituted to be a memorial of God’s creating the first world, so the first day is justly said, by our divines, to have been instituted as a memorial of Christ’s laying the foundation of this new world. Jesus, on the day of his resurrection, entered into his eternal rest, never to suffer any more for the redemption of his people, and instituted the first-day, Sab-

bath, to be a sign or token of his ceasing from his works, as God did from his—Heb. iv, 10; and also as a sweet rest to his Church in conjunction with him. And were there not a change of the day, we should want one of the principal monuments of the truth of the New Testament writings; because the seventh-day Sabbath applies only to the Old Testament, and the Church would have no memorial of the Redeemer's resurrection at all.

But it is necessary to remark, that the change of the day makes no alteration or change in the moral part of the fourth commandment. It is still a seventh part of time, that is set apart to the service of God. And it is worthy of observation, that the fourth commandment is couched in such terms as seem to have left it open to a change in this circumstance; it is not said, "Remember the seventh day to keep it holy, but remember the Sabbath day." And whereas it follows, "six days shalt thou labor," etc., "but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God;" this still holds true under the Christian dispensation; for, six days Christians labor, and rest the seventh part of time. The sanctification of the Sabbath is of essential service to the Church; and indeed of great use to civil society. It stands in or near the center of the law, and sheds back the most benign influence on all our duty to God, while it is the best preparative for faithfully discharging all the duties which we owe to men. Wise rulers, therefore, who wish rather to prevent crimes, than to punish them, will take great care both by precept and example, to promote the sanctification of the Sabbath. Men must be ignorant and stupid indeed, who will plead, that conscience obliges them to profane the Lord's

day. With equal reason they might plead conscience for theft, murder, etc., which would be to plead conscience for throwing aside all conscience. The knowledge and fear of God will be the most powerful restraint from crimes of every sort.

We therefore solemnly bear witness against such, as do not worship God at all; we can not help viewing them as practical Atheists, and extremely dangerous to civil society. And against all profaners and blasphemers of the name of God, whether by direct perjury, or in common conversation; against all who worship any other beside God; whether angels or saints, directly or indirectly. Against all who worship God by the mediation of any other but Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and men. Against all who corrupt the ordinances of Christ, by adding to them, or diminishing them; and all who neglect to worship God in secret, in a family capacity, or in his public ordinances. And against all who profane the holy Sabbath, whether by idleness, visiting, frolicking, journeying, remaining at home, when they should publicly honor God in his institutions, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about their worldly employments and recreations. And as the observation of holidays, as they are called, has done, and continues to do hurt in the Church of God, we bear witness against it. They are generally days of dissipation—the blessing of God is not on the observation of them. And it is remarkable, that in those churches where they are observed, much inattention to the Lord's day, or rather profanation of it prevails. Whenever we introduce human inventions into divine service, we are apt to lose a zeal for divine institutions, and become enamored with our own vanities. God must be worshiped in a diligent attendance on

all his ordinances, and a sincere observance of them. The ordinary acts of the worship of God are, prayer, confession, and praise. "Praise waits for thee, O God, in Zion," says the Psalmist, "unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that art the hearer of prayer, all flesh shall come to thee. Iniquities, I must confess, do prevail against me; but as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away."—Psalm lxxv. And we are not afraid to assert, and vindicate the propriety of using the psalms and songs of the Old Testament in the praises of God. In these days of prevailing infidelity and atheism, while many with ignorant boldness and absurd effrontery deny the inspiration of the Scriptures altogether, and earnestly attempt to carry us back into their beloved regions of heathen darkness; others, who have only a form of godliness without the power, have become very cool and indifferent about the Word of God, either in whole or in part. And hence arises a great temptation to true Christians, which, if not resisted, may diminish their zeal, love, and esteem for the Word of God. The churches of Christ in different ages and places, had, and still have peculiar temptations, from which great, and often unseen dangers threaten them. The present prevalence of deistical opinions, of Socinian, Arian, and Arminian errors, is a severe trial of the faith and patience of the saints. But blessed is he that keepeth his garments clean.

We are extremely sorry to have observed a growing disrelish in some Churches, for the psalms of David and other songs of Scripture. We could wish for a more finished poetical version of these, than any yet given to the Churches. And we do not mean to say, that hymns of human com-

position may not be lawfully used in any case whatsoever.*

But we think it is safest, generally to adhere to the Scriptural psalmody; and it is remarkable, that the most erroneous and deluded sectaries are fondest of uninspired hymns, which, doubtless they will take care to have composed, each party on its own peculiar scheme of principles. It is dangerous for the Church, in any important parts of her worship, to drop rule and order; and leave her members to follow each his own inclination. It has much grieved the hearts of tender Christians, to hear the psalms of David represented as in some instances, inconsistent with a Gospel spirit, and

* "And we do not mean to say, that hymns of human composition, may not be lawfully used in any case whatsoever."

Candor forbids that any construction should be put on this sentence, which would place it in conflict with the earnest protest which the writer enters against the use of "uninspired hymns," in the room of, or in preference to, the "inspired songs." The well-known views of Mr. Annan, as expressed in a letter to Rev. A. Rankin, of Lexington, Kentucky, and on other occasions, also forbid. We can state from memory how the language was understood and explained by some who had the best opportunity of knowing how the writer explained it, and wished it to be understood. You may read a pious poem in a devotional manner to edification, without treating the Word of God with neglect, provided you do not substitute it for the reading of the Scriptures, in the services of the sanctuary or in the ordinary stated worship of God in the family. Under the same restrictions, you may add the charms of music, and sing it, without displacing the inspired psalmody. But while the writer would forbear to say, that this may never be "lawfully" done, he still thinks it good to administer a caution against it, as not entirely safe.

D.

unfit for the New Testament dispensation; and such language, we fear, has greatly aided the cause of infidelity. It was wrong-headed wisdom to push forward the foaming torrent.

Christ came not to destroy the books of the prophets; among which prophets, David, Asaph and Ethan were eminent. If he had seen the psalmody of the Jewish Church unfit for the Gospel dispensation, it would have been easy with him, to have given his Church a new system: but we have no hint of this; nay, it is evident, that he and his apostles used the scriptural Psalms in the praises of God; and every one must allow, that the book of Psalms is remarkable for its New Testament style. It comes nearer to the simple evangelical spirit, and style of the New Testament, than most of the Old Testament books. The graces and experiences of God's children in all ages, are there most beautifully delineated; sometimes indeed typical language is introduced, as when it is said, "I will go to God's altar. He smote the rock and the waters gushed out. He rained down manna on them and gave them corn of heaven to eat." But the Redeemer never appears to us more in his glory, than when shadowed forth by these types, with the light of the New Testament shining on them. In this case, we have both the type and the antitype placed in our view, reflecting and augmenting the light of each other. This is a double light; and in this instance that word is fulfilled, "The light of the moon, or of the type, is like the light of the sun: and the light of the sun, that is, of the antitype, is like the light of seven days."

If it be objected, that there are, in the Psalms, terrible pre-

dictions of God's judgments, on the enemies of his kingdom ; it may be answered, so there are through all the New Testament. How often does Christ, the meek Lamb of God, pronounce terrible woes against his opposers? Paul says, "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any other Gospel, than that which we have preached, let him be accursed ! If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be an Anathema maranatha." In fine, as in the providence of God, mercy and judgment are blended ; so in his Word, mercy and justice, terror and consolation, majesty and meekness combine everywhere their rays. And is not this infinitely suitable to the constitution of human nature? There are two powerful springs of action in the human mind, hope and fear ; Noah, being moved with fear and hope too, prepared an ark to the saving of his house. Moses, moved by fear and faith, kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them. God, therefore, adapts his Word to our rational nature. He addresses our hopes and fears ; and they must be very ignorant of human nature, who suppose it can be moved or actuated in any other way. It is absurd to suppose, that anything of the Psalmist's personal resentment breathes in these predictions and threatenings. The very threatenings of God's Word, viewed in their connection with the Gospel, are evidences of his love. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, says Christ ; be therefore zealous and repent." They are intended for our warning, and are subservient to the success of the Gospel.

One evil seldom comes alone ; it is commonly followed by a gloomy train ; as we fear, many have injured the matter of the Church's praise, by forsaking the fountain of living

waters, and hewing out broken cisterns ; so we are well convinced, that the manner of performing this solemn act of religious worship, is in some Churches greatly corrupted. What unprejudiced mind is not grieved, to see the solemn work of praising God, committed to a few light-headed boys and girls, about whose carriage, there is often little or no semblance of piety or seriousness, while the whole congregation, or nearly the whole, sit dumb? Who is not offended to see the worship of God turned into a mere piece of human art and carnal amusement, the singing of his praise performed with idle theatrical parade? It is certain, that this new mode has as effectually, perhaps more effectually, expelled the praises of God from the lips of far the greatest number in some Churches, than an act of Parliament for the purpose could have done. And it has produced the same effect in many families. It has expelled his praise from the dwellings even of the righteous. They say, they can not sing ; that is, they can not sing in the fashionable mode, and therefore do not attempt it at all. And along with this the reading of the Scriptures, in family worship, is, in many families laid aside. We wish not to be rigorous or uncandid ; but when we see Christians deceived through the subtleties and devices of Satan, turned aside from their duty, and cheated out of their privileges, why should we be silent? The use of the organ, and other instruments of music in the Jewish Church, was agreeable enough to a worldly sanctuary, and the pomp of ceremonial worship ; but does not accord so well with the spiritual nature of the New Testament : yet we must grant, that in those Churches where it is retained, it does not work more, if as much, mischief, as the mode of which

we speak: the organ leads the music, the people follow: but in a general way, where the new mode is practiced, the people are silent, and commit the whole service to a few delegates. Is not this to serve the Lord by proxy? And if men could be judged too, at the bar of God, by proxy, something might be said. Our sinful nature is very dexterous in inventing apologies for what is wrong. Many justify this evil by saying, in time the whole congregation will acquire the new mode, and consequently all join in the worship. Under this pretext, it has been introduced into several Churches in New England. But experience contradicts this; for in those Churches where it has been longest practiced, the evil seems rather to increase than decrease; the habit becomes more confirmed, and it is generally taken for granted, that the people have no business with the duty, that it belongs entirely and only to the chorister and his train.

CHAPTER XXII.

THIS chapter treats of lawful oaths and vows. On the subject of oaths, we deem it unnecessary to add any remarks on what is advanced in the Confession, only that the approved Scriptural mode of swearing, is by the name of God, with the sign of the uplifted hand. The doctrine of vows, leads us to define our views of public and explicit covenanting with God. Jehovah, in his infinite condescension and grace, has all along humbled himself to transact with his creature man, by entering into covenant with him. Thus with innocent man he made the covenant of works; and after the apostasy, he revealed to sinful and rebellious men the covenant of grace, or that gracious contract with his own Son, whom he had appointed the second Adam, for the purpose of redeeming lost men. "I have given him," says he, "for a covenant to the people." This is the covenant on which the salvation of the Church is built. The design of this covenant is not the preservation of the loyalty or allegiance of innocent man; but the recovery of guilty, ruined and lost men; hence it is called the sure mercies of David. Therefore some of its institutions, are intended for the conversion of sinners; others

for the confirmation and increase of grace in true believers. But it is clear, there is not one Gospel institution, not one ordinance of the New Testament, not one promise, precept nor duty, but is an appendage of this covenant. The design of all is either to instate us in it, or perpetuate our interest. God in this covenant reveals and offers himself to the sinner, as his reconciled God in Christ. God the Father engages to be to him a Father; God the Son, to be his Redeemer; and God the Holy Ghost, his Sanctifier. The sinful creature perceiving the boundless grace and love of God in this offer, by the influence of the Spirit, accepts the gracious tender; and in the strength of grace promised on God's part, he surrenders himself to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Avouches the Lord to be his God, and engages, not in his own strength (for without me, says Christ, ye can do nothing), but in the strength of promised grace, that he will walk in his ways and keep his commandments. This is the evangelical idea of covenanting with God. It is just an acceptance by faith of the covenant of grace in all its parts, promises, precepts, and ordinances; and a voluntary surrender of ourselves to him. And even this acceptance and surrender is of grace. "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Thus the duty of covenanting with God, is performed in every act of faith and repentance, in meditation, prayer, and reception of the sacraments; and indeed it is the life of every duty.

But it has, through common use, been appropriated to the act of vowing unto the Lord of Hosts. However, this differs from the former only in being more external, explicit and formal; for in every act of faith there is a solemn and hearty

acceptance of God to be our God, and surrender of ourselves to be his, on the scheme of the Gospel. And in the participation of the sacraments of baptism and the holy Supper, this act is very explicit, public, and formal. In these institutions, Christians express their union to Christ, and to each other in him. Nevertheless, on some particular occasions, they may also practice this, by solemn conjunct vowing to the Lord. It is clear from reason, scripture-precepts, promises and prophecies, that this is sometimes the duty of the Church in New Testament times.

The peculiar seasons, when God calls for the performance of this duty, seem to be; when the Church is in imminent danger from a general apostasy or persecution; when under some heavy judgment; when about to implore some great deliverance; or when the deliverance hath been granted, and his divine Spirit poured out. And there is in fact no more in it, than what the Church had formerly transacted, or than what every believer must in every act of faith transact, only that it is done in the form of a public, social and explicit vow.

It is further necessary to observe, that even this solemn transaction does not preclude freedom of inquiry. Nor should it prevent progress in reformation; so far from that, it is intended to excite us to go forward in the good way of the Lord; and wherein we see, we have formerly erred, by no means to hold fast the error: but to drop it, and proceed in reformation. And it is supposed, that the Church in general, and every believer in particular, proceed in this duty, not as if they were infallible, but according to the measure of light and knowledge which God hath given them. How-

ever, from this it follows, that the matter of our vows should be simple, plain, and scriptural. Great would be the danger, were we in such a solemn transaction, to entangle the conscience among doubtful and obscure points.

It is clear that covenanting with God and each other in the manner above defined, being an ordinance of the covenant of grace; it must belong only to the Church. It is an ecclesiastical, not a civil ordinance; and must be practiced by men, not in their civil, but ecclesiastical capacity. Yet as the Christian religion recognizes every lawful relation among men, whether natural or civil, a Church consisting of fathers and children, magistrates and subjects, rulers and common citizens, and thus covenanting with God and each other; ought to view their covenant as solemnly binding them to the faithful performance of the duties which they owe to each other in these relations. And thus the grace of the Gospel opened in the Church, should flow like a river of life in ten thousand channels through civil society. It should circulate through all the relations of it, like the blood in the arteries and veins of the human body. A believing husband is bound by the law of Christ, to act as a Christian toward his wife, even if she were a heathen; a Christian parent is obliged, by the same authority, to perform the duties of a Christian toward his children, and all the members of his family; and by a parity of reason, magistrates are obliged by the laws of Christianity, to conduct as Christians, in the execution of their office, toward the subjects or citizens. And were it so in fact, most certainly the most blessed consequences would follow.

Christians in this transaction, not only give themselves to

the Lord: but, as in baptism and the Lord's supper, so in this, they give themselves and their children to him. We then, as the children of covenanting ancestors, do acknowledge ourselves as dedicated to the Lord by their act, and engaged by them, to obey and serve him in every religious and moral duty; in which, as they acted agreeably to the will of God, and by his authority, the obligation to duty rests ultimately on the divine authority; while their vow may be considered as a stimulus or motive exciting to it. Furthermore, we choose to disengage this solemn duty from all local connections, and questions; and take it up on its first principles, its original and true ground, the authority of God in his Word warranting and enjoining it. For as our ancestors had the authority of God warranting them to set about it; we have the very same authority for our warrant. This, we apprehend, will be infinitely better, than to entangle the consciences of God's people with a multitude of questions about former covenants in another Church or nation. And accordingly we have drawn up, and present to the solemn consideration of the Lord's people connected with us, the following plain, scriptural form of a covenant.

We all and every one of us, convinced in some measure, we hope, by the Word and Spirit of God; that we are by nature children of disobedience and of wrath even as others; that we inherit from the transgression of our first parents a depraved, sinful and corrupt nature; that our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; that there is no soundness in any part, but from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot we are full of wounds, bruises and

putrefying sores. Convinced, that by reason of this sinfulness of our nature, from which have proceeded innumerable actual transgressions of the law of God, both in the way of omission and commission in thought, word and deed; we have lost his image, his favor, and communion with him; are most justly under his wrath and curse, and liable to all the miseries of this life and that which is to come. Conscious that this is our sinful and miserable state by nature: but hearing from the Word of God, "That God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish; but have everlasting life. That in the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. That the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin; and that he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Though sensible of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and however frequently perplexed with doubts about our actual believing; yet desiring to essay in the strength of promised grace, and in obedience to the Lord's commandment, to glorify God by believing his Word of grace contained in his covenant of promise, and in the faith of his promise to devote ourselves unto the Lord in a covenant of duty. We do with our hands lifted up to the most high God, hereby profess, and before God, angels and men, solemnly declare, that through the grace of God, we desire with our whole hearts to take hold of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Saviour, as our prophet, priest and king; as the only propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood; his

righteousness as the only foundation of our access to, and acceptance with God; his covenant of free and rich promises as our only title to the heavenly inheritance; his Word for our perfect and only rule of faith and practice; his Spirit for our guide to lead us into all truth revealed in his holy Word; and his God and Father to be our God and Father, reconciled to us and well pleased with us in him.

We avouch the Lord to be our God, and in the strength of the grace laid up for us in Christ, we solemnly promise and vow, by the great name of the Lord our God, that we will endeavor to walk in his ways and keep his commandments and hearken to his voice: and particularly that we will by the Lord's grace, continue and abide in the profession of the faith, and obedience of the Gospel of Christ, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government. And that we will according to our stations, places and callings, and the measure of knowledge given unto us, contend and testify against all contrary evils, errors and corruptions. That we will study to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; do good to all men, but especially to the household of faith; follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus; freely forgive our enemies, and pray for them; walk in the truth, and in love to one another for the truth's sake, maintaining that fervent charity among ourselves which will cover a multitude of sins, and thus encourage and strengthen each other's hands in the good way and work of the Lord: that we will endeavor a life and conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ, studying to be good examples to one another, especially in our

families, of godliness and righteousness, or of every duty which we owe to God or man. That we will not give up ourselves to a detestable neutrality or indifferency in the cause of God: but will, above all things, through divine grace, seek the glory of God, the prosperity of his Church, and good of mankind. And forsaking the counsels of flesh and blood, and not leaning to our own understandings, nor any carnal confidence, but trusting only in the Lord, will thus study to promote true reformation in ourselves and others, according to the Word of God.

In all which, with the deepest sincerity, professing and acknowledging our own utter insufficiency and weakness; we earnestly implore the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, through his Son Jesus Christ, our dear Redeemer, to be merciful to us, and enable us, by his Spirit, that we may faithfully and sincerely, though imperfectly, do our duty, unto the praise of his rich, free grace in all the Churches. Amen.*

* This chapter, which closes with the form of a Covenant, offered for the consideration of God's people, affords proof that what some call "the duty of covenanting," was well considered by the founders of the Associate Reformed Church; and that they neither rashly nor inconsiderately came to the final conclusion, to insert nothing on the subject, in the standards of the Church, beyond what is contained in the Confession of Faith. There are some things in the chapter to which we cannot give an unqualified assent; but they are not of such a nature as to require specification. What we would particularly remark is, that the writer, where he has our hearty concurrence, affirms, "There is in fact no more in it," (that is, in "vowing to the Lord," to which, "through common use, the name (of covenanting) has been appropriated") "than what the Church has

formerly transacted, or that what every believer must in every act of faith transact, only that it is done in the form of a public, social, explicit vow." We may, therefore, object to the "form" as not expedient or not required—we may refuse to bind on the shoulders of Christians a "form," to which the name of Covenanting has been appropriated in the language of some, and yet perform, as all Christians do perform, the duty of covenanting with God, in all those ordinances, which are of positive divine appointment.

The covenants of our ancestors in the British isles, from the first compact entered into by "the Lords of the Congregation" in Scotland, to stand by one another in defense of the Reformation, down to the Solemn League and Covenant, were measures of safety adopted on great emergencies, when, from the state of parties, or other causes, the necessary and desired reformation, or, we may say, revolution, both in Church and state, could not be effected by ordinary means; that is, by the regular and healthful operation of the civil and ecclesiastical constitution. To say that, if really necessary and expedient, those covenants were lawful, and that our ancestors were warranted to enter into them, may be true enough; but it simply asserts what no man of sane mind in a free country will now deny, that a people are warranted to *fall back on the right of revolution*, when it becomes really necessary. To say the least, it would be a work of supererogation to insure a clause in vindication of this right, in the constitution of a Church or nation.

The question about covenanting has outlived its day. Perhaps no other question has made so much noise, and meant so little. There may, however, yet come "perilous times" which will revive it in some "form." But the form which it may take from circumstances may be so different from the pattern which was shown, in what men call the "purest times of the Reformation," that testimonies and traditions, may serve only to put their adherents in the wrong.

In reference to the clamor which was kept up about the British covenants, and the "binding obligation of the covenants," Mr. Annan, in the Ruling Elder, thus expresses himself: "In thinking on this

subject, I have frequently called to mind the story of the brazen serpent, in the days of Hezekiah; it seems then the children of Israel offered incense to it. It had been a type of Christ, and exceedingly useful in its time. But the good king saw it necessary to break it in pieces. Why? because it was become an object of superstitious veneration; the children of Israel offered incense to it. It is likely that their fathers did not esteem it so much, when it was really of great use and service."

Yet, Mr. Annan would have been far from wishing to destroy the solemn league and covenant, as he afterward says. Nor would we. Nor does the same reason for it now exist. Little of this "superstitious veneration" for it, is now *felt*. For the most part, it exists only in words, the meaning of which few inquire. Of a true and enlightened veneration for it, there is *necessarily* but little; for in order to form an enlightened opinion of the men who framed the covenant, of their object, and of the wisdom and propriety of the means by which they sought to accomplish their object; a man's means of information must extend *far beyond* the testimonies of the Church, and a few one-sided histories.

D.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THIS chapter treats of the civil magistrate. With regard to the authority granted him in civil matters, there is no debate in the Churches: but the power allowed to him, in the Confession, about the Church, has been, and is a fertile source of disputation. On that subject the following principles are exhibited. First, Though civil government derives its form from human policy, and on that account may be called an ordinance of man, it is a divine institution, in respect of its general principles. It is the will of God, that men live in society, and be subject in all lawful things to the authority of the society of which they are members. Secondly, All Christians, therefore, are under social obligations, as well as other people, and should be exemplary in their obedience to civil superiors, Rom. xiii, 1, 8; Tit. iii, 1; 1 Pet. ii, 13, 15. Thirdly, The authority of magistrates in matters of religion, under the Gospel dispensation, cannot be particularly ascertained by the examples of the interference of Jewish magistrates in such matters; because the system of policy which God gave to the Jews, in a complex view, was peculiar to them. Fourthly, These examples, however,

deserve the serious attention of Christians, because they imply this general principle. That as Jewish rulers exercised their authority about religion in a manner that was adapted to the dispensation under which they were placed, so Christian rulers should exercise their authority in a manner that is adapted to the Gospel dispensation. Fifthly, As the Gospel revelation lays indispensable obligations upon all classes of people who are favored with it, magistrates, as such, are bound to execute their respective offices in a subserviency thereto, administering government on Christian principles, and ruling in the fear of God, according to the directions of his Word; as those who shall give an account to the Lord Jesus, whom God hath appointed to be the Judge of the world, Isa. xlix, 7, 23; Rev. xxi, 24. Sixthly, Hence magistrates, as such, in a Christian country, are bound to promote the Christian religion, as the most valuable interest of their subjects, by all such means as are not inconsistent with civil rights; and do not imply an interference with the policy of the Church, which is the free and independent kingdom of the Redeemer; nor an assumption of dominion over conscience. Seventhly, In Protestant countries the government should be vested in Protestants. And in those countries where the Protestant religion is generally professed in its purest form; the government should be vested in those who profess it in that form. This would be a strong political security of the confidence that should exist between rulers and their subjects. When the most orthodox Protestants are in the minority in a nation, they should meekly submit to the government established by the majority; praying and patiently waiting for a more reformed state of policy. Eighthly, No errors

or heresies are punishable by magistrates; but such as tend to subvert the peace of civil society, and do not suffer good people to live a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. Others must be left to the censures of the Church, and the judgment of God. Ninthly, It is the will of God that magistrates punish vices which have a visible tendency to efface impressions of piety, to injure civil rights, or to destroy the property and health of their subjects, such as profane cursing and swearing, adultery, drunkenness, gaming, etc.; such vices cannot be supported by conscientious pretenses. They weaken the bonds of society, and injure the feelings of virtuous subjects who have the highest title to the protection of government. Rom. xiii, 3, 4. Tenthly, When a government, as in America, is established by a combination of different denominations of Christians, who are so intermixed, as that separate governments would be impracticable, and were they practicable, would be opposed to each other and destructive to the interests of society; the civil authorities can not interfere in the peculiarities of any of these denominations, because the combination implies a compact, which secures to them their respective peculiarities. In this case the power of civil government, with respect to matters of religion, is necessarily confined to the promotion of such matters as are objects of general agreement, and to the suppression of vices, which in their obvious tendency, are political injuries to all these denominations. Eleventhly, As the welfare of civil society has a necessary dependence upon religious sentiments, some portion of time should be uniformly observed in every country for devotional purposes, that a sense of the existence and perfections of the Supreme

Being, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, may be more effectually preserved among the people; and as the Word of God, the great law of Christians, with consummate wisdom, has appropriated for these purposes the seventh part of our time, called the Lord's day; those who administer government should enforce the observation of that day. This enforcement may be considered as a hardship by some individuals, who have a peculiar opinion with respect to the day that should be called the Lord's day; but when the general sentiment of the subjects is in favor of the day that is commonly observed by Christians, the interests of society require the observation of that day, and that those who are of another opinion, be compelled so to behave as to give no disturbance to the great majority who profess to believe it should be religiously observed. Twelfthly, In conformity to these principles, the substance of the doctrine of the Confession of Faith may be expressed in the following terms.

Chap. xx, sec. 4. "And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold one another, they who upon pretense of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God; and for their publishing such opinions or maintaining such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, conversation, or the order which Christ hath established in his Church, they may be lawfully called to an account, and proceeded against not only by the censures of the Church, but, in proportion as their erroneous opinions or

practices, either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace of the Church, and of civil society, they may be also proceeded against by the power of the civil magistrate."

Chap. xxiii, 3. "The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; yet it is his duty, by all gentle methods, to use the influence of his exalted station, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline be prevented or reformed, and that all the ordinances of God be duly settled, administered, and observed; and he hath authority to suppress all blasphemies, and such heresies as are destructive to the external peace of society; for the better effecting whereof, it may be prudent for him, as the nursing father of the Church, to desire the calling of synods, on critical occasions, to be present at them, and to provide, as far as the nature of his office, and the distinction between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world permit, that whatsoever is transacted in them, be according to the mind of God."

Chap. xxxi. "For the better government, and farther edification of the Church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called Synods or Councils. The ministers of Christ, of themselves, and by virtue of their office, or they with other fit persons, upon delegation from their Churches, have the exclusive right to appoint, adjourn, or dissolve such synods, or councils; though in extraordinary cases, it may

be proper for magistrates to desire the calling of a synod of ministers and other fit persons, to consult and advise with about matters of religion ; and in such cases it is the duty of Churches to comply with their desire." *

* When this Overture was in the press, and pretty well advanced, a reverend brother, a member of the committee, sent up his views of the civil magistrate's power, circa Sacra, which are given above. The paragraphs in the Confession, which treat of that subject, are transcribed with little variation (a few words being transposed). And if his first principles be just, as they certainly appear to be, the doctrine established on them can not be controverted. It may be added, that perhaps it is safest for civil communities and their rulers, to discourage irreligion, etc., more by negative than positive penalties ; that is, by withholding offices, refusing testimony on oath, etc.

R. A.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE twenty-fourth chapter treats of Marriage and Divorce. Marriage is a holy institution, appointed by God while man was in a state of innocence. Its design is the comfort and mutual help of mankind, their increase with a legitimate issue, and the supply of the Church with a succession of a holy seed. It is honorable in all, and they who despise the divine ordinance, and live in the lusts of the flesh, must feel God's displeasure, and endure his terrible judgments. "For whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Marriage has been, and is much corrupted in the nations of the world. It was so, even among the Jews, God's ancient people. But Christ reduced it in his Church, to its first institution, and primitive simplicity, allowing it to subsist only between one man and one woman. He also regulated Divorce, by the rule of right reason; and the law of his kingdom forbids believers being unequally yoked with unbelievers. We have nothing of importance to add to the doctrine of the Confession on this subject, only to warn all against marrying within the degrees of affinity or consanguinity, forbidden by the law of nature and God's Word. We mention this the rather, because an

evil is gaining ground in the Churches in this country, viz: a man marrying the sister of his deceased wife. To our certain knowledge, this corruption of manners has taken place in the communion of several Churches, and there has been one instance of it in our own. The evil is likely to increase with the decay of real practical religion. But the practice is contrary to the law of nature, the law of nations, and has no countenance from the Word of God; for the particular case under Levitical law is by no means applicable to our circumstances. It tends to confound relations and the duties resulting from them; but God is the God of order and not of confusion. It breaks down one of the barriers erected against promiscuous and adulterous copulations in families; and were it, and other practices like it, to prevail, mankind, instead of forming one united, compact body, would soon be singled out into little tribes and factions, which would destroy the peace of society. And God very often puts a mark of his displeasure on such marriages. We thought proper just to mention these things, to warn our people and other Christians against the unhallowed practice.

CHAPTER XXV.

THIS chapter treats of the Church of Christ. There are in general, but two kingdoms in this world. The kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of Christ. All mankind, by their apostasy from God, have subjected themselves to the dominion of Satan. "The whole world lieth in wickedness." 1 John v, 19. From this wreck, not only of nations, but of human nature, Christ collects his Church; from these rude materials, he gathers those, whom as lively stones he builds up into a spiritual house, constitutes a royal priesthood, and makes a holy nation. The Church of Christ is therefore separated and distinguished from the world, by her faith, her spirit, her worship, and holy conversation. This society is altogether voluntary; a willing people come to him in the day of his power. It is spiritual, as enjoying spiritual privileges, performing spiritual worship, maintaining a spiritual communion with God, with Christ, and with each other, and as formed to the practice of spiritual duties. This society acknowledges no head but Christ. He is given to be head over all things unto his body the Church. He is her Prophet, Priest and King. Her faith, her hope, her worship, and all

her laws are from and only from him. She is called his kingdom, his temple, his house, his body, etc.

The distinction between the visible and invisible Church, is discerned by God alone. It is not perceptible by us. We can easily see, there is ground for such a distinction; but cannot distinguish certainly, who are the elect and who not. And it is clear that the visible Church is a society of visible saints, both in profession and practice. A Church of Christ made up of infidels and immoral persons, is a contradiction in terms. There are, no doubt, hypocrites in the visible Church; but a hypocrite, as such, is no member of the Church, and has no place in it; for while he acts the hypocrite, he has the semblance of religion, and appears as a visible saint. When his former hypocrisy is discovered and ascertained, he is no longer a hypocrite; but appears as an infidel or profligate, and must be cast out of the Church, or declared to belong to the world. Thus a hypocrite, as such, though clearly distinguished by Him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire; yet is a nonentity to us. And the visible Church, to distinguish her from the world, must be a holy, spiritual, and pure society. This is the temple where God dwells; as he hath said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." Here it is that Jesus Christ executes all his offices, of Prophet, Priest, and King; and carries on the scheme of redemption as to the application of it. He executed these offices, by his own personal ministry, while he sojourned in this world. Before his incarnation, he executed them, by the ministry of his prophets, by the Aaronical priesthood, the theocracy for a considerable time, and afterward by the royal authority of David, Solomon, and other pious kings.

Since his ascension, he continues to execute these offices, and carry on the plan of redemption chiefly by the ministry of reconciliation. Indeed all the saints under the new Testament are called prophets, priests, and kings. In the prophesy of Joel, which evidently refers to Gospel times, it is said, "Thy sons and thy daughters shall prophesy." And the whole redeemed company are represented in the first of the Apocalypse as saying, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." This shows that Christians in general, are not only the subjects of redemption, but are agents under Christ, and instruments in his hand, for the purpose of applying redemption to others. This is true, more especially in the case of heads of families. The civil law says, that every man is king in his own house. The Gospel says the same, and much more, that every Christian who is a head of a family, is prophet, priest, and king in his house.

There are four things, which Christian parents can and will, through grace, do for Christ in their families. First: Administer instruction to their children and servants, or teach them to know the God of their fathers. Secondly: Set a holy and religious example before them. Thirdly: Exercise a proper authority, and command them to serve the Lord. I know, says the Lord, "That my servant Abraham will command his house to serve the Lord." Fourthly: Pray for them, and for God's blessing on their instructions, example, and authority. But the great Redeemer executes his offices in the Church, especially by the ministry of reconciliation. This is the grand engine of heaven, for carrying on the scheme of redemption. "It pleases God by the

foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. The Gospel-treasure is put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of men. The Gospel is the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." It is the office of Gospel ministers to teach others, and it is required as an essential qualification in them, that they be apt to teach. "Go disciple all nations, teaching them, says Christ, to observe all things," etc. It is true, the propitiatory part of the priestly office, can never be repeated. Christ offered himself once for sins, and a repetition of that sacrifice is both unnecessary and impossible: but ministers must ever point out that sacrifice or atonement to their hearers, as the foundation of their faith and hope, and indeed in the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, they are officially led to do so. "I determined," says Paul, "to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." By their office they are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech sinners by them, to be reconciled unto him; and thus the apostle, in the name of all Christ's ministers, says, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." It is their duty to pray for the Church; and thus Christians may consider Christ their advocate, as not only praying for them in heaven, but as praying with them and for them on earth; for when his ministers pray under the influences of his Spirit for the Church, it is really a part of Christ's own intercession, in a subordinate line; and thus they bless their people in the name of the Lord. When it is said of Jacob, that he blessed the sons of Joseph; and of other prophets, that they blessed the people; it may no doubt mean, their

predicting the future blessings of Providence, that were to fall on them: but it chiefly means, their praying for the divine blessing upon them. And thus there appears to be a great propriety in the apostolical benediction, as still used in the Church, "The grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God, and communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." It is also the office of Christ's ministers under him, to rule the Church. They must declare his laws, not only doctrinally, but judicially and authoritatively. They must bind and loose, by the exercise of discipline as well as of doctrine. And he declares, that whatsoever they shall bind on earth, according to his will, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever they shall loose on earth, in the same manner, shall be loosed in heaven; that is, he will ratify and confirm the sentence. We have said, that a Gospel ministry is the great mean of Christ's appointment, for carrying on the scheme of redemption. By this, sinners are converted, and saints nourished and advanced in the divine life. By this, sinners are converted. They are begotten by the word of truth. Begotten to faith and a lively hope by the doctrines of the Gospel. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But, says the apostle, "How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard; how can they hear without a preacher; how can they preach except they be sent?" They are begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection, or the doctrine of Christ's resurrection from the dead. By the plain preaching of the law, or broken covenant, conscience is awakened; by this is the knowledge of sin; and this is the ministry of condemnation and death: but it is of great service, for we must become dead to the law before we can live

to God. The sinner being alarmed with a sense of his sin and danger, is stimulated to fly to Jesus for salvation; and the first act of saving faith in Christ, completes conversion. By this ministry, also, true believers are kept in life; as new-born babes, they desire and receive the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby. Christ says to Peter, "Feed my sheep." And again, "Feed my lambs." And the Apostle Paul, to the elders of Ephesus, says, "Feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." In fine, the Word of God is profitable, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. This view of the subject may strengthen the faith of Christians, that as the application of redemption in the hands of the Mediator will never cease; so he will never want a true and faithful ministry in his Church. "Because I live, ye shall live also," says he. And this gives us an exalted view of the office of the Gospel ministry. It is most honorable and glorious: but its glory is all spiritual and divine. "I will magnify mine office," says Paul. And it teaches, that a submission to a true and faithful Gospel ministry, is a submission to Christ: a rejection of it, is a rejection of him. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." It serves also to show, how much ministers of the Gospel should strive to be like Christ in all things. And it may encourage their hearts in their arduous work: they are workers together with God; they are prosecuting a design, and promoting a cause, which the glorious Trinity has much at heart, and which, God has promised, shall finally succeed, in spite of all opposition from hell and earth. No wonder

then, that Satan points his arrows chiefly at a Gospel ministry. In times of persecution, the weight of his fury fell commonly on them. In our day, the office is denied by some, despised by others, assumed irregularly by many, and too much neglected by all. Men who do not love Christ, can not love his faithful ministers. It is true, the whole efficacy and success of the ministry of reconciliation depends on the influences of the Spirit of grace. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth. The excellency of the power is of God, and not of man. The weapons of our warfare are mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds. Paul may plant, and Apollos water: but it is God that giveth the increase." But Christ says to his ministers, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world." And again, "I will send you another comforter, who shall abide with you. He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance. And he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." So that wherever the doctrines of the Gospel are faithfully taught, the worship of God performed in purity, and a happy medium maintained in discipline, between ruling the flock with rigor, and a lax inattention to good order and government; wherever Christians dwell together in unity, love, and peace, with purity of morals; there is no doubt, but in such a Church, the Spirit of God will co-operate with the means of grace, to render them effectual, more or less, to the conversion of sinners, and upbuilding of saints. The beauty of the Lord will be on such a Church. The glory of the Lord will shine on it. Such a Church is like a planet moving regularly in its orbit, which will continually be beautified with the beams of the sun.

God's nature or essence is invisible. He can be seen only in his works and Word. His glorious perfections are discernible in the starry heavens, and the various revolutions and productions of the earth. And with propriety we may say, by a Church constituted as above, the light of the glory of God is reflected. The glory of the Lord shines upon her. The Lord God and the Lamb is the light thereof. And God himself is visible in her.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE twenty-sixth chapter treats of the Communion of Saints. And the view given us, in the preceding chapter, of the nature of Christ's Church, will instruct us in another question: What ought to be the terms of communion in his Church? The word Communion properly signifies something that is common to a number of persons; and thus it was said of the primitive Christians, who were so moved with the love of Christ, and of each other, that the love of the world had no place in their hearts, "That they had all things common." The rich freely distributed to the poor, and no man called anything his own, exclusively of others. All true Christians have communion in Christ their head. They have all one God and Father with him. "I ascend," says he, "to my God and your God, to my Father and your Father." One common inheritance. They are all heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. They have all communion with God the Father, with Christ, and with each other in the truth. They all think as Christ thinks, on the great foundation truths of the Gospel. They are all taught by the Spirit of God, who leads them into all truth; and this communion reaches to

the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven.

The Church militant and triumphant are one in this: there is a blessed harmony between them in the truth; and the strongest bonds of union in a Christian Church, are the knowledge of the truth, a firm faith in it, love to it, and to each other for the truth's sake. True Christians have all communion in the justifying righteousness and sanctifying spirit of Christ. They are adorned with the same robe of righteousness, and drink into one spirit. They are heirs of the same promises, and partakers of the same blessings. They eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink; for they all drink of that spiritual rock which follows them; and that rock is Christ. They have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, and are called in one hope of their calling. And it is the duty of Christians to express this communion externally, by observing all Christ's institutions in a social manner. These truths can not be denied; and were it possible to get all true Christians throughout the whole world assembled into one Church while none others were admitted, there would be very little jarring between them, probably none in the great truths and duties of the Gospel. But this is impossible. God hath wisely ordered it otherwise. The tares and the wheat must grow together until the harvest. Christians are the salt of the earth. God hath sprinkled this salt over a great part of the world, in order to season and preserve from total putrefaction, the mass of mankind. Differences in the Church of Christ, errors and corruptions spring chiefly from false brethren; formal professors, who have a name to live and yet are dead,

the form without the power of godliness; the sons of Diotrophes, who love to have the pre-eminence; such ever will connect the Church with the world, and conform her to it as far as they can. And we must here also allow something to the different capacities of true Christians, their very various advances in knowledge, grace and holiness; and the power of temptation under which they sometimes fall. All these things being considered, we may safely say, there is not a perfectly pure Church on the face of the earth. The purest is the best, which we ought carefully to seek and embrace, as God gives opportunity. But in nowise must we withdraw from her communion altogether. As is common in other cases so it is here, we are quick-sighted in discovering the spots and blemishes of other Churches; and they are no doubt, equally so, in discerning ours. We cast guilt and blame on others, but no man saith what have I done? There is an extreme danger of falling under the power of pharisaical ostentation, and religious pride in our profession. This was the great sin of the Jewish Church in Christ's day, and this sin crucified the Lord of glory. It is natural for us to say, we are the people, and wisdom shall die with us; stand aside, we are holier than you. And there can be no greater evidence of gross hypocrisy, in a religious profession, than when a fondness for pompous and showy titles and pretensions overthrows candor, meekness, charity, patience, forbearance and peace.

Taking it for granted therefore, that it is the duty of Christians to maintain a visible communion with the Church of Christ, wherever providence shall order their lot; that no Church is perfectly pure; that it is their duty to seek

the purest communion to which they can have access ; we shall proceed to point out the terms of communion, which in our opinion come nearest to the Word of God ; on which terms any Christian may safely join in stated fellowship with any branch of the Christian Church, where Providence may order his lot. They are briefly these: First, that the profession of faith of Christ in said Church be full and pure. Secondly, That her worship be Scriptural, all Christ's ordinances being purely administered. Thirdly, That her discipline and government be according to the Word of God, temperate, pure, impartial, peaceful and gentle. Fourthly, That her morals be strictly conformed to the divine rule. Fifthly, That the unity of the Spirit be maintained in the bond of peace. All this we maintain with an allowance for the unavoidable weaknesses and infirmities, incident to human nature in its present imperfect state. On the same conditions, or materially the same ; may any Church admit a new member to her communion in a stated way. It is requisite, that he have a proper degree of knowledge, be found in the faith, holy in life, and profess a willing subjection to all the ordinances of Christ, particularly to the discipline and government of his house. His continuance in fellowship, must depend upon his pure and peaceable deportment. The rulers of the Church will find much scope for the exercise of wisdom, prudence, meekness, condescension, charity, and patience in this case. They will see the necessity of attending to the various capacities, opportunities, means of improvement, docility of disposition, the different tempers, and temptations of Christians ; and govern themselves by that wisdom which is profitable to direct. When a person removes from

one Church to another, it is extremely proper, for the sake of good order, that he produce a testimonial of his soundness in the faith, and holy life.

That a temporary or what is called occasional communion with sister Churches may lawfully in some instances take place, is what no man of understanding, who is not much pinched to support some favorite and false hypothesis, will deny. The terms of it are not materially different from the terms of stated communion, only making an allowance for a variety in innocent customs and forms. There are doubtless points of external order in Churches, which may be called indifferent, such as, whether we begin public worship with prayer or praise; whether in baptism we sprinkle once or thrice; whether in consecrating the bread and wine in the Lord's supper we pray once or twice; whether we give tokens of admission to the Lord's table or not, if otherwise proper care be taken to guard against an unhallowed communion; and some things may be lawful and expedient in one Church, which though lawful, would not be expedient in another; there is also a difference between a Church formed and the one only forming; and between a Church advancing in reformation and one falling back from former attainments.

By occasional communion we do not mean, the admitting to our communion a person whom it would be sinful to continue in it; but a person who on account of his local circumstances can not continue in it. Christians may for months and years be removed from the place of their stated communion. What shall they do in such circumstances? shall they forsake the assemblies of the saints? shall they

cease to express publicly their love to Christ and his people? shall they have no visible communion with that branch of the Church of Christ, because it happens to be in another part of the world? shall they cease to give public glory to their Redeemer, and to confess him before men, because they are not at home? Is their God a local Deity, confined to a particular place, or is his acceptable worship so limited? No, Christians may worship God everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting; and our Confession saith the same thing. Article 3. It is certainly circumscribing the doctrine of the Confession too much, to say, that the communion here meant, is no more than communion in the common benefits of life; because communion in these may be lawfully extended to Jews, Turks and heathens. "Do good to all men, especially to the household of faith," is a divine precept. And if it be so, as some affirm, that common benefits are not the fruits of Christ's death even to believers, are not benefits of the covenant of grace, are neither applied by the Spirit, nor received by faith; it is not easy to see how communion in these alone can be Christian communion, which believers have with each other in Christ. It would also be an unreasonable extension of the phrase, "With all, who in every place, call on the name of the Lord Jesus," to make it include all pretenders to Christianity. The phrase is purely Scriptural; and doubtless the apostolic sense, if we could ascertain it, is the true sense. It is quoted from 1 Corinthians, i, 2. It cannot be denied then, that the apostle intended such Churches, as that at Corinth, though several things were imperfect and wrong in it, as will readily appear to any, who will read the epistles to that

Church. The happy medium on this subject, which would neither extend communion too widely, nor circumscribe it too much, the true scriptural model, is that at which we would aim. The mind of Christ we wish to discern and follow. We are far from claiming the prerogatives of the whole catholic body of Christ, to our society, in an exclusive sense. We will not pretend to unchurch all the Protestant Churches; or say, that their communion is so impure that it would contaminate us, to touch, taste, or handle it, in any case. But while we say so; to guard against the mistake as if we were pleading for a promiscuous or unhallowed communion; let it be observed, that this question is not at all, concerning the Church of Rome. God has described her as anti-christian, as totally gone off the foundation, impure in doctrine, idolatrous in worship, tyrannical on one hand, and totally loose on the other, in discipline, her government an image of the lordly pride of this world; her morals very impure; she is described as Sodom for filthiness; Babylon for pride and cruelty; Egypt for darkness, idolatry, and tyranny: his people are commanded to come out of her, that they partake not of her plagues. Nor is the question concerning raving sectarians, who have corrupted some, or perhaps many of the doctrines of the Gospel, who have set aside or maimed, added to or diminished the ordinances of Christ. What Christian can favor such opinions as these? The light within, not the Word of God, is the rule of faith and life, that is, men may believe and act just as every man's own mind directs him, without having a regard to any rule or fixed standard.—That we must attempt no duty, until the Spirit of God moves us thereto, whereas

Christ commands us to pray for his Spirit, and the consequence of that opinion is commonly, that it leads to a general neglect of many, if not all religious duties.—That every one that pleases may commence a teacher in the Church of God, or as the Spirit moves him thereto.—That there is no Sabbath, no sacraments under the Gospel. Nor is the question concerning any Church or religious society whatsoever, that would impose any sinful term or terms of communion; or with whom even a temporary communion would involve us in a direct or implied apostasy from the testimony of Jesus, and that holy profession of his name to which we have attained. Whenever even a temporary communion would do this, it ought to be avoided.

But the question is, concerning the regular, orderly, Protestant Churches, who have clearly expressed their orthodoxy in their Confessions of Faith, adhered thereto, and walk in the order of the Gospel, although differing from us in some external modes and forms. We cannot pretend to unchurch these sister Churches; or pronounce their communion unclean, and in all cases improper to be touched. We could not defend such a principle from reason or Scripture, and so will not advance it. We might have said nothing on this offensive subject, as it is to some. We might have concealed our sentiments; but in a public declaration of our principles, we think this would have been uncandid; and we hope, tender and humble Christians will not wish, that we should advance principles which are not supported by reason, good sense, nor by the Word of God. From these Churches we never separated. Our fathers never thought of pronouncing their communion unclean; far less did they ever think of

totally rejecting it. Knox held communion with the foreign Churches. Welsh, with the Protestant Church of France. Moncrieff, with the Church of Holland, when he studied at Leyden, Renwick received ordination in the Church of Holland. And it is a fact, that Rutherford, Henderson, Bailey, etc., held communion with their brethren in England, while they attended the Westminster Assembly. It was with the greatest reluctance, that the ministers of the association, first withdrew from the established Church of Scotland. They did it with holy fear and humility; considered it as an awful and important step; still declared they meant no separation from the Church of Scotland, but from a corrupt party in that Church; and they held communion with several ministers of that Church for some years after their separation. But now schisms and separations are with many a light matter; they tear, and divide in a wanton manner, only to gratify pride, passion and ungodly zeal. May the Lord have mercy on us, and give his healing Spirit. We shall only add, that submission to the discipline of a Church, while we are in her communion, is indispensably necessary. On the whole, we never can, and never will embrace the principle, that all the Protestant Churches, except our own party, are unfit for Christian or holy communion.

CHAPTERS XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX.

THESE three chapters treat on the same subject, viz: the Seals of the Covenant of Grace, and therefore our remarks shall be thrown together under one head. The Lord and Saviour of the Church did not see it proper, that his Church should be one moment without visible seals and tokens of his gracious covenant with her. Immediately after he had celebrated the last Passover with his disciples, on the very night in which he was betrayed, he set that aside, as unfit for the new dispensation he was about to introduce, in which there is no more any offering of sanguinary sacrifices: and in place thereof, he took the bread and the cup, blessed them and gave them to his disciples; and appointed this to be a standing ordinance in his Church, until his coming to judgment, to perpetuate the remembrance of his death, and keep it constantly in our view, as the meritorious cause of all blessings. Baptism with water, was administered by John, commonly called the Baptist. But his baptism was only temporary; it was preparatory to the coming of Christ, and was an early intimation of the glorious change which the Messiah was about to introduce: it intimated that

circumcision would give way to it. Christ, himself, when a child, was circumcised, and so acknowledged a member of the Jewish Church, and as one of Abraham's seed, and in Abraham's covenant. But behold, when he begins his public ministry, which was to make all things new, he was baptized by John in Jordan! John's baptism was, as Paul says, the baptism of repentance, in which he said to the people, that they should believe on Him that should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. The disciples of Christ also baptized, and very probably it was in much the same manner as John's baptism. But we have the institution of that baptism which is to continue in the Church to the end of time, in the 28th of Matthew. Jesus, after his resurrection, said to his apostles, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Go not only to the Jewish nation, but to all nations. Do not circumcise, but baptize them. Do not, like John, baptize them in the name of God, as about to send his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. to set up his kingdom therein: but baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Exhibit to them a redemption contrived by the Father, purchased by the Son, and applied by the Holy Ghost. From this moment, circumcision became unnecessary. It began to die apace: and after a little, became totally obsolete and unlawful. Circumcision was the badge of distinction between Abraham's seed, and other nations. But now, when the Church is thrown open to all nations, that badge of distinction is justly laid aside. These

sacraments, of Baptism and the Supper, are emblematical representations of the great fact on which our salvation depends, to wit: the death of Christ, and the benefits resulting from it, namely: the remission of sins, and all other promised blessings; and are also undeniable evidences of the truth and authenticity of the New Testament writings. For it is recorded in these writings, that such rites were instituted by Christ, and practiced by his apostles from the beginning. And, as has been formerly remarked, it would have been totally impossible, to persuade men, that they had been baptized, and had baptized their children; had celebrated the Lord's supper, and enjoined their children to do so: if they had not truly been and done so. And thus it would have been impossible that they could have received as true, books which said they had done so, if they had not been conscious that it was so; and therefore that these books were true and genuine. Thus the Word bears testimony to the sacraments, and the sacraments bear witness to the truth of the Word. They mutually support each other.

It is vain to say that the spiritual baptism renders baptism with water unnecessary, for it is easy to prove that the apostles administered baptism with water to such as had obtained baptism with the Spirit; and for that very reason, too, because they had received the Holy Ghost. Acts x, 47. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we. How offensive, then, to God and good men, to lay aside these monuments; it is an attempt to overthrow two of the principal evidences of the truth of the Christian religion, and tends ultimately to aid and abet the cause of infidelity!

But those who allow the necessity of these monuments are divided about them. On the sacrament of the supper, there is not so much disputation among Protestants. But we can not here help noticing, that there is a manifest congruity between the Lord's supper, and the doctrines of Christ's divinity, imputed righteousness, and infinite atonement for sin. But we think it is utterly inconsistent with Socinian, Arian, and Arminian doctrines; and much wonder, that men of these principles can observe it. Surely it must appear a senseless thing to them. Baptism has been, and is a fertile source of disputation and division. Some insist that it must of necessity be administered by plunging, or immersion; and that it is altogether wrong to administer it to infants. The first part of the dispute is not so important as the last. Yet surely our brethren carry their argument quite too far, when they insist on immersion as essential to the right administration of the ordinance. For there is no unquestionable proof from the Scriptures that ever immersion was practiced in baptism. No, we repeat it, not any. But supposing, not granting, that John had baptized by immersion; yea, supposing the disciples of Christ had done so before Christ instituted the permanent baptism of the New Testament; this would not satisfy. John came neither eating nor drinking; he wore a garment of camel's hair; was girt about with a leathern girdle. He appeared in all the stern dignity, and rough austerity of the ancient prophets. Christ did not appear so; and he himself marks the difference. John was concluding a severe ritual and ceremonial dispensation, and calling on men to prepare for a very different one. John baptized unto repentance: saying, "Believe on him that is to come after

me." But the permanent baptism of the New Testament was instituted after Christ's resurrection; and points him out as come; as having finished redemption, and set aside the ritual and ceremonial system; with all severities adapted to it. The question is, did Christ institute immersion? Did his apostles, after his resurrection, always or ever baptize in that manner? We are not afraid to say, it cannot be proved; and it is certain, Christ speaks of two baptisms, which could not be performed by immersion. His own baptism with his own blood; he doubtless was sprinkled with it: but not plunged in it. And baptism with the Holy Ghost; and this is invariably represented by sprinkling, never by dipping. "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, a right spirit will I put within you; I will pour on the house of David, etc. the spirit of grace;" alluding to the clouds pouring out, or sprinkling down rain on the earth. It is said the children of Israel were baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea. Surely they were not dipped in the cloud, and in the sea. But it is said, they were buried in the sea; there was a representation of a burial; and believers are expressly said to be buried with Christ in baptism. But we answer, the same thing, the same spiritual blessing is meant, when believers are said to be crucified with Christ; and this method of arguing would infer the necessity of the sign of the cross in baptism, as well as that of a burial. Our salvation by baptism is represented by the salvation of Noah in the ark. The wicked that perished, were indeed buried in the waters; but Noah and his family rose above the flood; while water was sprinkled from the clouds on them. But enough of this. If it could be made appear that this was the mode certainly

instituted by Christ, we should cheerfully observe it; but it does not appear to be so.

The next point is of more importance; whether the infants of believers have a right to baptism or not? And here we must candidly own, that on this head, too much cause has been, and still is given to our Baptist brethren, to separate from the Church. For Baptism, as it is presently administered in many Churches, is truly a bond of union between Christ's kingdom and the world. Worldly and wicked men, yea, even deists and profane mockers of God and religion; men who are manifestly dead to God and godliness, are admitted to receive baptism to their children. This is a fearful prostitution of the ordinance, and must grieve the hearts of God's people, while it dishonors Him. But this is, perhaps, only an abuse of a good and lawful thing. Our brethren should reflect on a very natural propensity in human nature, that to avoid one extreme, we are apt to rush to the opposite. The question is not at all concerning such an abuse of the ordinance; but, it is whether the infants of visible believers have a right to it? We verily think they have; and, without pretending to infallibility, will give our reasons for this opinion. The following facts satisfy us.

First. There is not an instance in all the book of God, of a covenant made with parents, which did not include their children. And, indeed, this is true of all covenants made between men, which can extend, in their nature, to their children. The covenant made with Noah, was also made with his children. The covenant made with Abraham included his posterity. The covenant of an everlasting priesthood with Aaron and Phineas, included their posterity.

The covenant of royalty made with David, included his posterity. And all these were types of the covenant of grace given to the Church, both then and now. And, doubtless, the penetrating faith of these holy men, saw the covenant of grace and life under these emblems; it is certain Abraham did, for the apostle affirms that he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, which he had, being yet uncircumcised. And in all these covenants, which had any visible signs or seals annexed to them, the seal was given to the children as well as to the parents. Thus the rainbow, the token of Noah's covenant, was visible to his young children as well as to himself. Circumcision was given to Abraham's children at the age of eight days.

Secondly. The Lord having thus made a grant of the covenant to his people and their seed, and a seal of it likewise to both, under the Old Testament; we would wish to see any proof that the Lord Jesus hath recalled that grant under the New Testament. If this could be shown, it would end the controversy. But we are bold to say, it never can. God still says to his people, "I will be your God and the God of your seed." "The promise is to you," says Peter, "and to your children." Christ did not come to destroy the law and the prophets. This gracious doctrine of God's ancient prophets is not annulled nor repealed by Christ. He came not to diminish the privileges of his people, but to enlarge them. But how grievously diminished must they be, if our infant-
seed be, under the Gospel, cast out of God's covenant; and in the same relative state every way, as the children of the heathen. We say the same relative state, for the question is not concerning their spiritual and moral nature; we

will allow they are shapen in sin and conceived in iniquity. But do they stand in the same relation altogether to God and his Church, as the children of the heathen? Christ acknowledges little children to be the members of his kingdom; "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." On what is a kingdom formed? It is on a compact or covenant between the king and people. The kingdom of God is formed on the covenant of grace, that gracious contract between him and his Church. It is clear, a king's son is born as weak and helpless a creature as the son of any of his subjects. What then makes the difference? It is the covenant-relation between the king and the nation; by virtue of that relation, the king's son is born a prince. We mean by this to show, what mere covenant relations will do, where there is no specific difference. And to the same purpose, a child born of lawful wedlock, inherits the father's titles and estate; but a child born of fornication is entitled to neither. Every child born under the covenant or compact, which forms any kingdom, is entitled to all the rights and liberties of a citizen. "But I was free born," says Paul. Can not we conceive, then, that a covenant subsisting between Christ and his people, may make some relative difference between their seed and the children of heathens? The apostle surely affirms so, when he says, "The unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband, etc., else were your children unclean: but now are they holy." Christ laid his hands on the little children brought to him; the imposition of his hands was a token of his confirming them in all the privileges of his kingdom, as they became capable of enjoying them. "Go,"

says he, "make all nations my disciples, initiate them by baptism, and teach them to observe all things," etc. Children are a very considerable part of every nation; and a person becomes a disciple, the moment that he enters the school, before he has learned a word. This is sufficiently applicable to the case of children. By baptism they are acknowledged disciples, and by it a religious education is secured to them, if things went right; for, supposing the parents should neglect it, or die, the Church, in which they were baptized, is bound in the sight of God, to see that they get it; and beside, they are the proper objects of Church discipline, from the time they are capable of it; and have not the good fruits of this been manifested all along? and do not they still appear? Pray, who are the real living members of Christ's Church at this day? Who, but the posterity of those who were the members thereof a century or two centuries ago? No doubt there are exceptions of individuals; but in general it is true. Many individuals of Abraham's posterity who left Egypt, never entered the promised land. But it is certain, the people who possessed the land, were Abraham's posterity, according to the covenant; and none, who came out of Egypt were excluded, but those who cast themselves out of the protection of the promise, by rebellion and unbelief; and we may say the same thing of the posterity of believers, under the New Testament.

Moreover, it is a fact, that no father of a family can, in God's estimation, make an adequate profession of his subjection to the Lord; unless he subject all under his power to him. But by the appointment of heaven children are put under the power and authority of their parents. God there-

fore expects, that they will give them up to him in all his ordinances, as they become gradually capable of receiving them. Now it is clear, young children are as capable of baptism, as Abraham's seed, on the eighth day, were of circumcision. And as they advance to maturity of judgment, parents must teach them, and bring them to the house of God to hear his Word, and see baptism and the Lord's supper administered; put them often in mind of their baptism; and enjoin it on them, when they become capable of self-examination, to give themselves to the Lord at his table. This is evidently the Divine scheme. I know my servant Abraham, that he will command his house to serve the Lord. Joshua said, whatever others do, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Eli is blamed and punished for the neglect of his children; by which he was accessory to their guilt. David says, "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers. I will walk, says he, with a perfect heart, within my house at home. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me. He that walketh in a perfect way, shall serve me. He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house," etc., Psalms, ci. And under the New Testament, we read, that whenever the father or head of a family, made a profession of faith in Christ, he and his whole house were baptized. Thus says Paul, I baptized also the household of Stephanas. 1 Cor. i, 16. Lydia and her household were baptized. Acts xvi, 15. The jailer was baptized, he and all his, straightway. Acts xvi, 33. The authority given by God to a parent or head of a family is very great; and none in that station can serve the Lord

to the utmost extent of their ability and authority, unless they command their children to do so too. It therefore follows, that parents can not make an adequate profession of their subjection to the Lord, unless they give their children up to him in baptism. And we fear not to affirm, that there is not an instance in the New Testament of the young children of baptized parents, being baptized a long time after their parents, or when grown up to maturity.

CHAPTERS XXX, XXXI.

IN these two chapters, the subject treated is Church Government and Discipline. The Church of Christ is a body of visible saints professing their firm faith in God's Word; and engaged by covenant to worship him through the mediation of Jesus Christ; and walk in all his ordinances and commandments, whether pointing forth their duty to God, to one another, or to mankind at large. It is clear, that as no society can subsist without order and government, so neither can this. Christ must therefore have appointed a form of government in his Church. He alone is her king and law-giver; none has a legislative power in his kingdom but himself. And we cannot suppose that Christ has been so deficient in his care about his kingdom, as to institute no mode of government in it, or leave it to the discretion of men. A Church without government and discipline, is like a besieged city without walls; or a field without a fence. And in such a Church (could it exist), the kingly office of Christ would be totally rejected. And to assume any form of government of human contrivance, or not authorized by Christ; would also in effect renounce that office, and acknow-

ledge another lawgiver beside Christ. The Word of God is the Church's rule in all things ; and therefore in it we must search for that mode of government which the Redeemer has instituted.

There are two plain principles on this head, clearly taught in the Scriptures. First, That there is a distinction between rulers and ruled : or between church officers and other members. Secondly, That the kingdom of Christ is one. His Church is one body, one house, one building, one vineyard, one flock, one family, one husbandry, one kingdom. These two Scriptural, and indeed rational principles, which can not be controverted, may greatly assist our inquiries on this subject. There is a distinction stated between rulers and ruled, church officers and other members. "Obey them that have the rule over you, for they watch for your souls as they that must give an account. The elders that rule well, count worthy of double honor, especially them that labor in the Word and doctrine." And the apostle Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xii, establishes both these principles incontrovertibly ; where he compares the Church to the natural body. "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body ; so also is Christ. If the whole body were an eye," says he, "where were the hearing ? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling ?" He then applies the similitude. "Now are ye the body of Christ and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church ; first, apostles ; secondarily, prophets, etc., helps, governments." Then he puts the question ; "Are all apostles ? Are all prophets ?" And with equal propri-

ety it may be added, nay, indeed it is implied, are all helps? Are all governments? which interrogative is the strongest negative. It is therefore manifest, that the independent plan which commits the government of the Church into the hands of the whole body of the faithful, has not the appearance of conformity unto the scriptural model. It destroys the scriptural distinction between church rulers and other members; and also overthrows the unity of the body of Christ. It makes as many independent Churches as there are particular congregations.

Another mode of ecclesiastical government for which many have contended, is the hierarchy introduced into the Church at the time when antichrist was advancing to the fullness of his power; and retained in England by king Henry VIII, when he cast off the Pope's authority and assumed the headship over the Church to himself and his successors. We have little to say about this. It is a pity that ever any attempted to vindicate it by the Word of God. It is contrary to the Spirit of the Christian religion, which is not lordly, but meek and lowly—to the doctrine of Christ, "My kingdom is not of this world"—to the peremptory laws of his kingdom. "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but it shall not be so among you." Diotrephes, who aspired after the pre-eminence, is stigmatized with infamy. And there is no pattern of any such lordly dominion or prelatical power in all the New Testament. It is true the apostles were superior in office to the ordinary pastors, rulers, and elders of the Church. But it is a wild and extravagant fancy, that the apostolical office continues in the Church. The pretense confutes itself. Let those who

pretend to the apostolical office, make it manifest that they have apostolical powers. Every office and its powers must stand and fall together. John says, that the city of the new Jerusalem hath twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. But if the Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops be apostles too: this city must have innumerable foundations, and innumerable names in them. The apostles often acted in the character of ordinary pastors and elders to the Church. Peter says, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ." And there is nothing more certain, than that the standing ministers of the Church are in the Scriptures designated indifferently, elders, pastors, watchmen, rulers, bishops. It may throw some light on this subject, to attend to the time and occasion of the introduction of prelacy and independency. It is certain, that prelacy never made its appearance in the Church, until she began to decline far from the purity and humility of the primitive Church, and never attained its height, until the man of sin sat down on Christ's throne in the temple of God, and exalted himself above all that is called God; and the Popedom is only a higher degree on the same scale. It is further certain, that when our ancestors departed from the prelatical Church, they were struck with such horror at the tyranny and unscriptural authority of the bishops, that, to shun that extreme, some of them ran to the opposite, namely, to divest church officers of all ruling power, and surrender it into the hands of the people. We can much more easily account for both these, from the passions and weaknesses of human nature, than from the Word

of God. But there must be a medium between these two extremes; and the Presbyterian plan of government, properly adjusted, seems to be that medium. It is a collateral argument in its favor, that it requires a truly humble Christian spirit, to constitute a true Presbyterian; while it allows official power enough to church officers, for the right management of the kingdom of Christ. It is further remarkable, that what is truly good in the prelatial and congregational modes of government, is really a part of Presbytery. We do not mean to enter on any labored argument on this subject. We are all well pleased with the propositions concerning Church government laid down in our standards; to which we refer. But it must still be remembered, that all the power delegated by Christ to his officers, is only declarative and ministerial. They can only declare and administer in his name, the laws which he has enacted. And when in attempting to do this, they act according to his will, "Then whatsoever they bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever they loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." And thus, in the case of obstinate transgressors who remain finally impenitent, that word is verified; their sin shall not be forgiven in this world nor in the world to come. The Church cannot loose their sentence in this life, nor will Christ in the life to come.

The unity of the Church of Christ pleads highly for a subordination of Church judicatories. For as two or three sessions or consistories may unite their powers in a Presbytery: so two or three Presbyteries may in a Synod; and two or more synods may in a General Assembly: and a number of these again may concenter their powers in a more gene-

ral Council. And indeed the true spirit and form of Presbyterianism, are calculated to unite the Church throughout the whole world in one body.* This says not a little for it;

* An objection will instantly occur to an injudicious critical mind; that we plead for the unity of the Church on the Presbyterian plan: but have overthrown it, by renouncing subordination to all foreign jurisdiction. The answer to this objection is easy. Our local distance from Britain is such, as renders subordination in the inferior degrees of the scale, altogether impracticable. There is a manifest difference between the lower and higher degrees of the immediately connecting or uniting parts in the Presbyterian body. It is clear that the constituent families of a congregation may be easily united, by delegation, in a Session; while it would be impracticable and unprofitable to unite them all personally in one judicature. A number of contiguous Sessions may, by delegation, concenter their powers in a Presbytery; while it would be inconvenient and impracticable to unite all the members in one Session. And a number of Presbyteries adjacent to each other, may, by their delegates, unite their councils in a Synod; while it would be impossible to collect them all into one Presbytery. In like manner, all the Synods in the United States might combine their councils and powers, for the purpose of rule and government, in a General Assembly; but could not all conveniently meet in one Synod. And all the General Assemblies in Europe and America, might combine in one General Council, in like manner, but could not all in a General Assembly. Finally, we may add, that all the Churches in the world might do the same by delegation in a Council still more general; but could not all come into immediate contact or union in any other way; nor in the grade immediately below. We are therefore too low in the scale, considering our local distance, for any practicable or profitable union with the Churches in Britain. We cannot send members to represent us there; and subordination without representation, is not Presbytery, but Popery; not liberty, but slavery. The points of union, or im-

and this idea of the unity of the Church, is held up in many places of the New Testament. It is certain, that the ministers and officers of the primitive Church, viewed them-

mediate contact, in Churches at such a distance, are near the top of the scale: but we are near the foot of it. This scheme is not fanciful: it is truly Presbyterian. And were Christians what they ought to be, or perhaps might be, it is not impracticable. But indeed, considering the imperfections of human nature, we have little prospect of such a unition and comprehension of Churches; however, there is one ground of consolation, that we can look up, and behold all true Churches united and connected in Christ the head of the whole body. We have said that we are too low in the scale, considering our local situation, to be properly united to the Churches in Britain; and indeed it is so. But were all the Presbyterian Churches in America to purify themselves, remove causes of jealousy, and come into a scriptural harmony; and were the Churches in Britain and Ireland to do the same; we see no reason why they might not concenter their powers in a general Council when necessary: nor on this supposition do we see any cause to prevent all the Churches in America and Europe, or indeed in the whole world, doing the same in a still more general council. And something like this, as appears from history, took place in the early days of Christianity. It is clear, it could be accomplished only by delegation, and the unavoidable expenses behooved to be a common burden.

But who can help remarking the inconsistency and depravity of human nature, when we see men by a wild, ungoverned zeal for Presbytery, as they pretend, running headlong, and dragging the Churches into independency; destroying the harmony of the Church, where it is sufficiently practicable to support Presbyterian union, for the sake of a connection impracticable and unprofitable in our circumstances. This is to make Presbytery destroy Presbytery; that is, impracticable or unprofitable and popish Presbytery, to destroy practicable, profitable, and Scriptural Presbytery. Such

selves as standing in a general relation to the whole body of Christ, in whatever place it was, and as interested deeply in the prosperity of the whole. The apostle Paul says to the elders of the Church of Ephesus. "Take heed to yourselves, and the whole flock (not flocks) over which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops." And there was evidently a Presbytery in the Church at Antioch; for we have an account of their performing a judicial act, to wit, the ordination of Saul and Barnabas. In this Church a dissension took place among the officers thereof, about circumcision: and after much disputation, that Presbytery referred the whole

men are zealous Presbyterians in principle, and violent independents in practice. Their zeal defeats its own intention. They grasp the shadow and reject the substance. They renounce Presbytery at their hand, to catch it at a distance, where they can not in present circumstances reach it. We have always testified a cheerful readiness to correspond with our brethren abroad, for mutual advice and help; and were the judicatories of the Churches here, to rise higher in the scale, they might easily, in a future day, come into contact with those in Europe, in a Presbyterial and Scriptural manner. It would almost tempt even a firm Presbyterian, were he to allow himself to think but superficially on the subject, to question whether that plan of government have the divine approbation, that the providence of God, in ruling this world, seems to fix men down to independency against their principles. At least it is certain, that even zealous Presbyterians, through want of candor, humility, forbearance and patience, run wildly into the grossest independency: but it must be ascribed to the powerful corruptions of the human heart, pride, want of charity and a fondness for peculiar, and sometimes whimsical sentiments. And when thus viewed, it turns out to be no indirect or weak evidence, that Presbyterian government is truly of God.

affair unto the synod at Jerusalem, and sent Paul and Barnabas, and certain others as members to that synod. And accordingly the apostles and elders came together to consider of this matter referred to them, and after much disputing and reasoning (from which it is rational to infer, that the apostles acted not in their extraordinary character, or by the spirit of apostolical inspiration; but as ordinary officers in the Church of Christ, who have the promise of his preference and direction of his Spirit, when met in his name), they came to a final decision on the point: and their decisions on that, and other points not mentioned, are called the decrees ordained of the apostles and elders; which were given unto the Churches for to keep. We will only just add here, that as the true spirit and form of Presbyterian government are adapted to unite the Church of Christ throughout the world into one body; so the true principles, spirit and form of the Christian religion are calculated, to unite the whole world of mankind into one great empire or peaceable confederacy, so as to exclude wars and all their concomitant plagues forever from the earth; while each state might enjoy all its rights and liberties. And perhaps this may yet be the case; doubtless it will be so, if ever the Church of Christ fill the world, and the Spirit of Christ fill the Church.

Unto church officers Christ has committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven; to wit: the key of doctrine and the key of discipline. In the exercise of this great and mighty trust, they must study to be faithful, as bearing only the character of servants in the house. They may compliment men with their own things: but it is infinitely dangerous

to compliment them with the things of Jesus Christ. If they please men in these matters, they can not be the servants of Christ. In the exercise of both, they deal with the consciences of men; for they act in the name and stead of the Lord of conscience, and handle his law the rule of conscience. It is evident they may touch many cases of sin and duty, by the key of doctrine, which they can not by the key of discipline. The faithful exercise of both will produce noble fruits.

There is nothing punitive, nothing vindictive in the censures of the Church. The Church knows nothing of civil pains and penalties in her censures. No, ecclesiastical power is of Christ, and is spiritual only. It is called in Scripture, a bewailing or lamenting over the offender. And it is certain, that Church officers never pass censure, in the spirit of their office, without much grief of heart. They may proceed by suspension and deposition from office, and by excommunication. What is called the inferior degree of the last, seems to be a suspension from the seals of the covenant; the higher sentence is a pronouncing an obstinate irreclaimable transgressor, to be totally unfit for communion in any branch of the catholic Church, and that he properly belongs to Satan's kingdom, the world. "Let him be to thee as a heathen-man or a publican," says Christ. It is clear, that Church officers ought to be extremely cautious in passing this last censure. There is not an instance of it in the whole book of God mentioned with approbation, except in the case of propagating some very noxious error, or committing some flagrant breach of the moral law in practice. There are two ends to be aimed at in Church censure. The

first is, asserting the glory of God, vindicating the honor and purity of true religion, and keeping up the distinction between Christ's undefiled kingdom, and the world which lieth in wickedness. The second is, gaining the offender or recovering him from the snare of the devil. These two ends are perfectly harmonious and consistent; both ought to be kept in view; and it will require much spiritual prudence—"Much of that wisdom which is from above, and is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, full of mercy and good fruits," to gain both. If, under the pretense of saving an offender in the communion of the Church, we should dishonor God, grieve the Spirit, and wound religion, the case is dreadful. And if, under the pretext of zeal for God's glory, we should rule the flock with rigor, and discourage, or too much cast down in despair the offender, the effect is also dreadful.

It has been alleged, that, in Church censure, yea, even in the highest sentence, Church rulers have nothing to do, no concern with, no question about the spiritual state of the offender, or his state before God. This seems to be a strange assertion. Is it possible that a spiritual ordinance affecting the conscience, passed in the name and stead of the Lord of conscience, and, according to his law, the rule of conscience, and for a scandal which must be a breach of his spiritual law, and to gain a spiritual end—the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord—can have no concern about the spiritual state of the offender? But the assertion appears to be ambiguous; if the meaning be, that we can not see him as God sees him.

that we can not judge him as God judges him, in every respect; it is true, but without sense; for God sees the heart, which we can not see, and to which no man will pretend. Men judge by the outward appearance. "By their fruits," says Christ, "ye shall know them." But if it be, that we can not see nor judge of his state before the Lord, as the Lord has directed us to see it, and judge of it; then it is false. It is said, that it is only the person's practice of which we are to judge. But Christ says, by their fruits ye shall know them. What is the meaning of this? Is it, by their fruits ye shall know their fruits? No; but by their fruits ye shall know them; for the tree is known by its fruits. What about them? Surely their spiritual state. We are commanded to try the spirits whether they be of God. Paul says, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." He compares spiritual things with spiritual. The Church wrestles against spiritual wickedness in high places. "There is a sin unto death; I say not that ye shall pray for it," says John. This direction implies that the sin unto death was, and is, something visible to men. And what if the scandal, for which a person is cast out of the Church, should be something that does not pertain immediately to practice; some damnable error or heresy, which the Church can not help viewing in any other light, than as inconsistent with salvation? It can not be denied, that some Socinians have a good moral deportment, and yet deny the Trinity, and aver that Jesus Christ is a mere man. The Apostle John adds, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that

confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. Ye are of God, little children. They are of the world. We are of God. He that knoweth God heareth us. He that knoweth not God, heareth not us; hereby know we the Spirit of God, and the spirit of error. Every one that loveth, is born of God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love; therefore, let us love one another. Hereby do we know that we dwell in him, and he in us; because he hath given us of his Spirit."

There are three propositions on this head which are incontrovertible. First, The Church of Christ is a body of visible saints. Secondly, That true Christians may fall into sin. Thirdly, That they cannot persist or continue in it. First, The Church of Christ is a body of visible saints. Paul's address to the Church of Corinth is altogether to this purpose. "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints; with all that in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus." And that to Ephesus is similar. "To the saints which are at Ephesus." And so on through the epistles. And the Lord himself conveys this idea of his Church, when he says to Paul, "I have made thee a minister and a witness," etc. For what purpose? "To open men's eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me." Christ declares, "That except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." He cannot be a true and proper member of God's kingdom on earth, "For if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature." And the

apostle John remarks, "He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him neither known him. Whosoever is born of God sinneth not, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." Which expressions must be explained by others in connection with them. It is manifest the apostle means that the children of God cannot follow a tract of sin; they cannot allow it in themselves, for this is contrary to their new nature, and that seed of grace which remaineth in them. This is clear from two other sentences uttered by him in connection with these, "He that doeth not righteousness is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother." And again, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." And, without supposing these truths, there would be no difference between the pure, spiritual kingdom of Christ, and the world which lieth in wickedness. Let us remark the phrase, "the whole world lieth in wickedness." Christians can not do so. Secondly; it is an undeniable principle in our religion, that even true saints may fall into acts of sin, and these very grievous too. The same apostle asserts this: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." And, again, "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And, if any man sin, (let him not sink into despair,) we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins." This is also clear from fact and experience. It is manifest, from the history of the saints recorded in Scripture, that they were encom-

passed with infirmities, and fell into acts of sin. Peter denied his Lord. Peter and Barnabas dissembled. Paul and John Mark had sharp contention. Paul complained of a law in his members, which warred against the law of his mind, and led him into captivity to the law of sin and death; which made him call out, "O wretched man that I am!" But, thirdly, God's people can not continue in sin; can not lie still in it; can not live in it. God will, by his spirit of grace, recover them. He will raise them up again. "I, like a lost sheep, went astray," says the Psalmist; "seek thy servant." And, in the twenty-third Psalm, he acknowledges the good shepherd had done this: "He restoreth my soul." But how doth he restore them? By granting them renewed repentance. When a professor of the religion of Jesus, then, falls into sin in the sight of a brother; a question arises in the mind of the beholder, whether the transgressor allow himself in it or not? The offender must be spoken to, and rebuked; if he give sufficient evidence of repentance, he must be forgiven; because this is an evidence that the Lord hath pardoned him, and the offender is gained. "If thy brother trespass against thee," says Christ, "seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." And when Peter put the question: "If my brother trespass against me, how often shall I forgive him? till seven times?" Christ replies, "I say not unto thee till seven times; but till seventy times seven." This is that charity that covers a multitude of sins. It is to no purpose here to say, that our Lord speaks of personal offenses; for this rather augments the force of the argument. Every

personal offense taken on just grounds, is in the offender a breach of the divine law, and, therefore, a sin against God. The law of God commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves; and the law of Christ is, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye the same to them. Personal offenses are, therefore, sins against God, and our brother too. But if the brother be impenitent; a doubt about the sincerity of his profession and reality of his religion rises still higher; and, therefore, the offended brother must take two or three witnesses; and, if he then repents, he is gained, and the offended party ought to be satisfied. But if, after all this, he remain hardened and impenitent in his sin, the scandal must be brought before the Church. If he will not hear the Church, but still justify himself in his sin, this is inconsistent with visible saintship, or any appearance of real grace, as far as the Church can judge by the rule of Christ given in such cases. He can not be born of God; for he that thus sinneth is of the devil; and, therefore, must be cast out, or declared to belong to the world which lieth in wickedness. But if he do repent, this is an evidence, that, though fallen, the Lord hath raised him up, restored him to repentance, and forgiven his sin. And it will be impossible for true Christians, after they have sufficient evidence that God hath pardoned him, to hesitate a moment about forgiving him too; or, in other words, acknowledging, loving, and treating him as a brother in Christ. Public confessions, then, before the Church, are not confessions to the Church; but to God before the Church. It is not the law of the Church which the offender hath violated; but the law of Christ,

the Head and King of the Church. It is not the Church that can pardon sin, but the Lord himself. The confession is, therefore, not to men, but to God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," says the Psalmist; that is, it is thy law which I have broken; at the same time, he makes this confession before the Church; and his penitential tears mingle with the Church's praise to this day. The design of such public confessions, is not to make any atonement or satisfaction, in a strict sense, to the Church; but only to satisfy the minds of God's people, about the person's gracious standing with God, or reconciliation to him. The controversy is not properly between the Church and the offending brother, but between God and him; it is not her own honor, but God's, that the Church attempts to vindicate: she pleads the cause of her King, and contends for him. This serves to show the great need for caution in passing censures; especially the highest sentence. Great heed should be taken, that the matter of the offense be truly sinful: for sometimes Christians are scandalized and grievously offended with that which is no offense against God; but a great duty. This was evidently the case with those who contended with, and blamed the Apostle Peter, because he went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them; but this was his duty. And when he had explained the vision which he had, and the angel's message to the Centurion, ordering him to send for Peter, the offense was removed. It was, no doubt, the case with some of God's people, at the time Luther and others began the Reformation. It would be too harsh to say, there were no true Christians in the Church of Rome at that time; and some

of them, judging without knowledge, might imagine that Luther was going quite wrong, and so take offense at his conduct. But the offense would immediately cease on their being properly enlightened. Indeed, in things indifferent, which may be either done or let alone without sin, but at which weak Christians would take offense, it is the indispensable duty of the stronger to bear the burdens of the weaker; this was the noble resolution of the Apostle Paul: "If eating flesh will offend my brother," says he, "I will not eat flesh till I die." On the whole, it appears, that it is no light matter to give scandal or offense to a Christian brother or the Church of God, "Offenses must needs come," says Christ, "but woe to the man by whom the offense cometh; it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." And Christians should be extremely cautious in taking offense, and be sure never to do so without cause. Many times ecclesiastical judicatories, in attempting to purge scandals, have, by uncharitable, passionate, and unscriptural procedure, given greater scandal and offense, than the one which they meant to remove. And we fear the doctrine above animadverted on, that ecclesiastical judicatories have no concern with the person's state before God, is only a fig-leaf covering to some fearful abuses of that kind.

On the Thirty-second and Thirty-third Chapters, which treat of a Future State, we deem it unnecessary to add any remarks, beside what have been advanced against the doctrine of universal salvation.

THOUGHTS ON THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

DOCTOR DODDRIDGE, in a small treatise printed along with his Exposition of the New Testament, has distinguished Inspiration into three kinds, viz: that of Superintendency, Elevation, and Suggestion. We shall say nothing about this distinction, but allow every reader to judge for himself. The best idea of the subject may, doubtless, be obtained from the Scriptures. We may acquire it from the following texts: John xiv, 26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost," says Christ to his disciples, "whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John xvi, 13: "Howbeit, when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, shall he speak, and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." In these texts we may notice, First, the designation given to the Holy Ghost: he is called the Spirit of Truth; intimating that nothing but God's truth

could or would be communicated by him. Secondly, his office. First, he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you; that is, as if Christ had said, you may rest assured, that whatsoever he shall tell you, is divine truth; it is my mind, and you may publish it as such. Secondly; he shall guide you into all divine truth, necessary to be known; he shall teach you all things. Thirdly; this shall extend to things past, and to things to come; for he shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have spoken unto you, and he shall show you things to come. Thus the Spirit would qualify them to write the history of Christ's life, of what he had said, and done, and suffered, and the manner in which he conducted himself; and, also, he would be in them as the spirit of prophecy, enabling them to foretell future events. Christ himself was filled with a superabundant measure of the Holy Spirit. The Father gave not the Spirit unto him by measure; it pleased the Father that in him all fullness should dwell; the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily. The eternal Father says, Isaiah xlii, 1: "I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." And Isaiah lxi, 1, Christ is represented as saying: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor," etc.; which prophecy Christ expressly applies unto himself, Luke iv, 16-21, "At Nazareth, he entered into the Synagogue, and there was delivered to him the book of Isaias; and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," etc.; and he said, "this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears," etc. The texts are almost innumerable, which testify, that the apostles, and other holy men, were filled with the same spirit which was given to Christ, and which he promised to them. Mark xiii, 11, "It is not ye that speak," says Christ, "but the Holy Ghost." John xx, 22, "He breathed on them, and said, receive ye the Holy Ghost." Acts i, 8, he said, "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Acts ii, 4, "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." But the passages to this purpose are too many to be transcribed.

Again, it is certain, that the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles affirm, in the fullest manner, that holy men under the old Testament spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Christ attests this — Mark xii, 36 — "For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, the Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand," etc., which is quoted from the 110th Psalm. Peter attests it — 2 Peter i, 19, 21 — "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, etc., knowing this, first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And the apostle Paul says to the same purpose — 2 Tim. iii, 15, 16 — "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are sufficient to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and in-

struction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The same thing is attested in many other passages. Acts xxviii, 25, "Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Isaias the prophet, unto our Fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand." Hebrews iii, 7, "As the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice," which is quoted from the 95th Psalm. Hebrews ix, 7, 8, "But into the second went the high priest alone, once a year, etc., the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet manifest," etc. Acts i, 16, "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake concerning Judas, etc., let his habitation be desolate, his bishopric let another take," which is quoted from the 109th Psalm. It is affirmed, that John the Baptist, Zacharias his father, Elizabeth, Mary, and Simeon, were filled with the Holy Ghost. Yea, of Simeon it is said, "That it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not taste of death, until he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the spirit into the temple, and he took the child Jesus up in his arms, and blessed God and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," etc. It is declared, that God spake with Moses face to face; God says to him, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest;" and again, Numbers xi, 17, "I will come down, and talk with thee, and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it on them, viz: the seventy elders." Philip says to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the

prophets did write," doubtless by the inspiration of God's Spirit; and remarkable are the words spoken concerning Christ, when he discoursed with the two disciples going to Emmaus, "Beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded to them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself."

Now the only question that remains, is, do the predictions uttered by Christ and his apostles, the miracles which they performed, the doctrines which they taught, the laws and ordinances which they instituted and published, their holy and spotless lives, justify this representation of the matter? Are these truly worthy of God, and such as could proceed from none but God? Most certainly they are so; and therefore the conclusion is unavoidable, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. We say nothing, at present, of the doctrines, miracles, laws, the holy, humble, and spotless lives of Moses and the prophets, which, when thrown into the scale, add weight to the argument likewise.

Indeed, the truths revealed in the Scriptures are such, as could never have entered the mind of man if they had not been conveyed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God; such as, the account of creation and part of that of the flood; the mystery of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; the manner of man's fall; his redemption; the covenant of grace; the incarnation; the suretyship; the obedience and atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, the only Mediator between God and men; the doctrine of regeneration; of justification by faith in Christ, so as that God may be just and merciful in one and the same act; life and immortality after death, and

the resurrection. All these pour in their evidence to this truth, that God hath spoken to us in his Word. Every perfection ascribed to God in the Scriptures, is most worthy of Him. The scheme of religion there delineated, is so benevolent, pure, spiritual, and heavenly, both as to principles of faith, and practice, as could proceed from none but the Spirit of holiness. The tendency of the whole to subdue our lusts and passions, to debase the proud, and exalt and comfort the humble and penitent, and, in a word, to raise our corrupt, depraved natures, to grace, holiness, virtue and felicity, manifestly discover its divine original. The majesty of the Word of God, its power over the conscience, its efficacy to transform the most wicked men, into the most amiable and useful of the human race, which it has done, in innumerable instances, and that even in our own time, declare, that never man spake as God's word speaks. But why enlarge on this subject? The very sentences of Scripture quoted above prove it. Did ever any heathen writers, the greatest of their philosophers, utter such words, or communicate such ideas? They are such as could never have entered into any mind uninspired. Who ever read in any the most sublime and polished heathen authors, such words as these: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, etc. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel; through the tender mercies of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us. We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace,

whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, etc., that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Who of God, is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see, to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality; and when this shall be so, then shall be brought to pass that saying, Death is swallowed up in victory! O Death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, working in you, that which is well pleasing in his sight;” and such like, with which the sacred writings abound. These are surprising words! They are the words of the Holy Ghost! They proclaim their divine original! Let any one read the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and indeed we may say every chapter almost of the Bible, with the comparison above mentioned in his eye, and he will be convinced, that never man spoke like God, or that no uninspired person could have conceived such ideas, or uttered such words.

But, to remove every doubt on this subject, we may observe further, that none can deny, that it was, and is possible for

God, to reveal his mind and will unto men. He formed the spirit within us, and must surely know and understand his own work, and have an easy access to it. In him we live, and move, and have our being. We exist in the immensity of his presence. He is within us, without us, and all around us; compasseth our path, knows our lying down, and rising up. Every secret thought is open to his view. He searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men. There is one consideration of great weight in this argument; but because it is common, it is little admired, though when deeply studied is most astonishing, viz: that one created spirit can reveal its thoughts unto another. Men are but very imperfect creatures, and yet can, with the greatest facility, communicate their mind and will to each other. But it is not their bodies or mere pieces of matter, that hold converse and communication together, but really their spirits or intelligent powers, through the organs of the body. Yea, man can make his will known to the inferior animals; and it is certain, these animals can to one another. Has the great Spirit, the infinite Creator, thus, in a most marvelous manner opened a channel, and established a way of intelligence through the whole creation, and shall any deem it impossible for him to reveal his mind to rational creatures? most certainly this can not transcend his infinite wisdom, goodness, power and condescension. And it must be granted, that on supposition of his graciously intending to save men from the ruins of their apostasy, such a revelation was indispensably necessary; and that therefore he would most certainly give it. Now the above supposition is that, which the Gospel proclaims to be a glorious reality; and if so, a revelation of

the plan was absolutely necessary. There appears to have been a strong sense of this necessity, and a vehement desire of obtaining the blessing, prevalent with some of the wisest of the ancient heathen philosophers, who were conscious of their groping in the dark. They were extremely anxious, that such a revelation might be given to the world; and as an evidence of such a prevailing sense of its necessity, and ardent breathing after it, pretended revelations were substituted in place of the true; but the counterfeit supposes the genuine coin. And the universal practice of the heathen in consulting their oracles, was nature pointing to this great object.

That God has actually given such a revelation of his mind and will to men, is an unquestionable fact—because the Scriptures contain many predictions of future events, foretold many hundred years before their accomplishment, and which have been literally fulfilled, and are still fulfilling; such as the rise and downfall of the four great monarchies in the East; the appearance, miracles, and sufferings of the Messiah; the destruction of Jerusalem; the dispersion and misery of the Jews, and conversion of the Gentiles; the success and spreading of the Gospel; the rise, and downfall of antichrist, etc. We are the witnesses of the accomplishment of these prophecies; and it is incontestable, that they could never have been foretold, but by supernatural revelation. God has revealed his mind to men in various ways—he seems to have conversed visibly and audibly with the patriarchs. He spoke to men by the ministry of angels. He discovered his purposes to Joseph and others by dreams; by visions to Ezekiel, and to Peter, when he saw the great sheet descend-

ing from heaven, containing all manner of beasts and creeping things, and heard a voice, saying, "Rise, Peter, slay and eat." He spake by Urim and Thummim. But chiefly and most commonly, by inspiring holy men with his own Spirit, which might be easily shown to be, on many accounts, the fittest and best adapted, to gain the ends proposed by infinite wisdom. At last the eternal Logos was made flesh, and dwelt among men. The Son of God assumed the nature, and performed the service of a man. And when he ascended from this world to take possession of his glory, he renewed the gift of inspiration by his Spirit to the Church, by granting it to his apostles, as has been made appear in the fore-cited texts. The Divine Spirit was given to them, to teach them all things, to guide them into all truth, and also to assist their memories in relating what was past, or to bring all things to their remembrance, as well as to show them things to come. Thus they were fortified against error on every hand, both in the historical, doctrinal, prophetic and mandatory parts of their office.

The following truths may tend further to illustrate the credibility of the doctrine of inspiration: First, as it was by the Spirit of God moving on the face of the deep, that this world was formed into order and consistence; so the same Spirit seems to be the natural and moral agent in the preservation and government of the world. Elihu says, "There is a Spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding."—Job xxxii, 8. "This Spirit teacheth man more than the beasts of the field, and maketh him wiser than the fowls of heaven."—xxxv. And Isaias saith of the husbandman, "His God doth instruct him

to discretion, and doth teach him ; bread corn is bruised, etc. This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.”—Isaiah xxviii. Bezaleel and Aholiab were inspired with wisdom in the arts of their profession. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Sampson, as the spirit of heroism and bravery. David says, “ He teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight.” Solomon had the Spirit of God as the author of political wisdom. And indeed, whatever of true wisdom or good order, remains among men in this world, doubtless the Spirit of God is the author of it ; and this is no more than to maintain, that He who created the world, also sustains and governs it. And there is no question, but the great discoveries made to men in the science of government, natural philosophy, and the useful arts, proceed from the same source. But it is only carrying the idea a little higher, to suppose, that God has, by the inspiration of his Spirit, made a supernatural revelation of heavenly things to man.

Secondly. That other spiritual beings have access to the minds of men, and may communicate hints of things, of which men would otherwise have no knowledge, seems evident from fact and experience. That the most of men have had premonitions and warnings, in dreams, of future events, of which otherwise they could have had no knowledge, is undeniable. Now supposing this to proceed from angels, good or bad, the argument is, a fortiori, or more strong, when applied to the Spirit of God. If created spirits, whether good or bad, may convey intelligence to men, much more may the infinite, eternal, and uncreated Spirit of God. And that a superior being, even in the rank of creatures,

may do so, can not well be doubted, when we see that the inferior creatures can convey intelligence to us of their wants, and of other things.

Thirdly. It is a fact incontrovertible, that even a created spirit may so unite himself with the spirit of a man, as to obtain the absolute command of his mind, and government of his bodily members; so that the man shall think, speak, and act under the influence of such a spirit. This was evidently the case of the possessed in the time of Christ. When Legion called out, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God, Most High?" it was the man's mouth and tongue that uttered these words, and his mind no doubt conceived the ideas; and perhaps the most of us have seen such instances, wherein it was clear, that some preternatural power had the command of the person. And Christians will, no doubt on this occasion, recollect their being at times perplexed, utterly against their wills, with blasphemous thoughts, and horrible apprehensions of God, which have been tossed like fiery darts into their minds; which must be ascribed to Satan, and are doubtless the very things which the Apostle calls the fiery darts of the wicked one. Now, if a created spirit, whether good or bad, may have such access to our minds, is it not easy to conceive, that the infinitely holy, and good Spirit of God, may have it, and so unite himself with the spirit of a man, that the man shall think, speak, and act under his influence?

Fourthly. This union of the Spirit of God with the souls of Christians, is a doctrine clearly taught in the Scriptures, and confirmed from fact and experience. But on this subject we have spoken already, when treating of regeneration.

In the work of conviction on the sinner's mind, it is the Spirit who is at work. He convinces of sin. When the man is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and his heart captivated by his glory and grace, this Divine light and love proceeds from the operations of the Spirit of God on the mind. The agency of the Spirit of God is concealed in the agency of the man's own mind; the believer is sensible of nothing but of his own perceptions and volitions—and yet he might as easily create a new world, as command these perceptions and volitions, without the power and influence of the Spirit of God. "We are not sufficient of ourselves," says Paul, "to think anything as of ourselves." "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." And are not all true Christians more or less sensible, of their being sometimes overwhelmed with darkness, the power of spiritual deadness and weakness? Christ on this subject, speaking to the woman of Samaria, says: "If thou knewest the gift of God," etc., "thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water," etc., "and the water that I shall give, shall be in you as a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life."—John iv. And again, to explain his meaning, he says, John vii, 38, 39; "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water, this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him, should receive." And according to this doctrine, the apostle prays: "Now may the God of peace," etc., "make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight." And again, "Work out the work of your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his

good pleasure." This is the experience of all his saints. But it is only raising the idea somewhat higher, to suppose holy men inspired by the same Spirit, to give to the world a supernatural revelation of the mind and will of God.

Fifthly. It is a fact sufficiently attested and incontrovertibly established, if we should regard only human testimony in the case, that the apostle spoke various languages, wrought miracles, endured sufferings, and accomplished astonishing labors, by the aiding, supporting, and comforting power of God's Spirit. And let any one read the achievements of faith, recorded in the eleventh to the Hebrews, pause a moment and ask, what spirit could enable men to do and suffer things, so far above the power of the human mind? and he will be convinced, that such men were under a Divine influence, and supported by a power more than human. But let us not suppose that this was peculiar to ancient times. The Popish persecutions in Britain and elsewhere more early, and the late persecutions in North Britain, during the reigns of the last branches of the Stuart family, furnish many glorious instances of the same heroism and fortitude of faith. But, if the Spirit of God could thus inspire men with resolution to suffer, and even to rejoice in their sufferings, there can be no doubt, that he might also inspire them to reveal Divine truth; and some of these holy sufferers, in the last century, were undeniably inspired, to predict some future events; some of them expressly announced the rejection of the then reigning family from the throne of Britain, long before it happened, and several other things, which have come to pass.

Finally, it is manifest, that the apostles must have been

absolutely certain of the truths and facts which they announced to the world. Of the facts they were eye-witnesses ; and they must have been as certain of the sublime truths and predictions which they uttered ; for so many men would never have conspired to bring temporal ruin and destruction on themselves, merely to propagate that, of which they were not certain, and of the success of which, they had so very small a prospect. But it is evident, that they could never have even thought of such truths, as they published and boldly preached ; much less have been absolutely certain of them, if they had not been divinely inspired. But certain they were : yea, absolutely certain. “ We have seen and do testify,” said they, “ that God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world ; every spirit that confesseth not, that Jesus is come in the flesh, is not of God ; he that knoweth God heareth us ; he that knoweth not God, heareth not us ; hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” They freely and cheerfully risked their lives, and lost them in the defense of the truth ; and the prospect of this was continually before them, for they were sure, from the testimony of their divine Master, that this was a part of the plan of Providence respecting them ; yet they were not in the least intimidated. And the event proves, that they were not mistaken ; for the truths which they taught, have changed the face of affairs over the whole world ; and the doctrines of these plain, undesigning men, govern the world to this day ; not only the Christian world, but really their influence extends, in no small degree, to the regions of the earth yet under Mahometan and heathen superstition, and will do so, more and more, unto the end of time.

On the whole, how awfully important must the doctrines and duties of divine revelation be! Our souls justly tremble on the review. The infinite and omnipotent God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of time and eternity, the God who will dispose of all his creatures in a most righteous and just manner at last, speaks to us in his Word. He sent his holy prophets to reveal his mind; sent his only begotten Son, hath sent his Holy Spirit to manifest his will to men. He has confirmed this revelation by miracles, by prophecies, by turning this world upside down, by planting and plucking up kingdoms and empires to fulfill these prophecies. By the ministry of angels, and expulsion of devils, by signs or miracles in the sun, the seas, the rocks, on all creatures and in all elements, by raising the dead to life, by the blood of his Son, his resurrection from the dead, by the blood of thousands and ten thousands of his holy martyrs who have endured sufferings and deaths the most shocking to humanity, he has confirmed the doctrines of the Bible. And the last grand assize, the final judgment, is reserved to be the concluding proof of its truth. And all these great events are accomplished in a godlike manner, with infinite ease and certainty, and without being much noticed by carnal men, though these men are used often as subordinate agents in his hand; he says of Cyrus, "He shall fulfill all my will, and I have girded him, though he hath not known me."

And when we see such great and marvelous things crowded in upon the narrow stage of this present life, who can help concluding, that the present life of man is infinitely important, and must be eternally decisive of his character and

future state? And who can help weeping over the folly, impiety, and horrible wickedness of such men, as despise, and mock, and pervert or wrest the Scriptures, neglect so great a salvation, and reject the things which belong to their peace, until they be eternally hid from their eyes!!! How happy are those, who have been subdued to the obedience of faith, who firmly believe, supremely love, and walk in God's Word! It sanctifies them in life, and will support them in death, and glorify them to all eternity. And how careful should we all be, to know the joyful sound of the Gospel, and the great things of the divine law, and improve them by faith and holiness to our everlasting salvation!*

* Since the brief sketch of the argument for the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, contained in the first chapter of this treatise, was written, the writer has seen and partly perused Dr. Kennicott's new edition of the Hebrew Bible. The Doctor, to his immortal honor, and what is infinitely better, to the glory of God, has taken much pains. After sending a learned gentleman over Europe, to search for and compare ancient manuscripts of the Old Testament, he obtained six hundred and ninety-four manuscripts and printed copies; all of which, he, assisted by some other learned gentlemen, perused and compared with the utmost attention and diligence; and was employed in this work more than twenty years: the Jews in London wrote a recommendatory letter to their brethren abroad to assist him in the work. The king of Great Britain, of Denmark, and other princes and learned men of various nations aided the grand design. The result of this astonishing scrutiny, confirms our argument laid before the public. Many small variations in the reading he has indeed discovered, all of which he has with incredible labor noted, even to such minutiae, as a word or letter being written in a large capital form, or otherwise; a word adorned, or not adorned. Very many of the variations take place in the four quiescent letters of the Hebrew

language being omitted, or transcribed, which letters, though written, yet with the use of the vowel points, in some positions are not pronounced. He has also given us the readings of the Samaritan Pentateuch differing from the Hebrew books; which are many, and some of them consequential. There are indeed various readings in the Hebrew text, of greater importance than those which have been hinted above, and this is no more than what might have been expected, and was in a manner unavoidable through the imperfection inseparable from human nature, especially before the invention of printing; unless we could suppose every person, who undertook to transcribe the Bible, to have been infallibly inspired, and guided; to suppose which, would be superstitious and absurd, a miracle greater than any recorded in the Bible, and a miracle too without a sufficient reason. Non dignus vindice nodus. And such a supposition destroys the necessity of transcribing, as such inspired men would have been qualified to write new canonical books. But, as the Doctor remarks, these variations do not affect the general strain of doctrine taught in the Scriptures, because the great essential doctrines and duties thereof, are not taught systematically, one chapter containing one head, another a second, and another a third, and so on: but are really interspersed through the whole, either more expressly or implicitly. And supposing the sense to be somewhat dark and maimed in one place, the same truth or duty may be clearly collected from another. Variations, lapsu calami, may generally be distinguished from such as would be made with design, for if any person were to form a design of altering the great doctrines and precepts of Revelation, he behooved to go through every book, yea almost every chapter of most of the books. The Doctor indeed remarks, there is some reason to believe, that the Jews, through their enmity against Christ, have ventured to transpose some words, in such prophecies as tormented them most, in their arguments with the Christians; as in Isaiah liii, "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death:" he thinks it was originally written, "He made his grave with the rich, and with the wicked in his death."

Several other things of equal importance, the Doctor has noticed, particularly some chronological and historical variations; and expresses a high regard for the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the ancient Greek version, as being more accurate in several such instances, than our Hebrew books. We may adopt the adage, on this occasion, *magna est veritas et prevalebit*. The great doctrines of Christianity stand the scrutiny, such as, the doctrine of the Trinity, of the Redeemer's atonement, justification by faith in his blood, etc. And it must afford joy to every true Christian, to find, that the deistical tribe of Socinians have received a check, from the Doctor's scrutiny, which, we think, might teach them to lower their pride and presumption. On the doctrine of the Trinity, he remarks, that when the plural noun *Elohim*, is applied to the false gods of the Heathen, it is joined with a plural verb. But when the same plural nominative is applied to *Jehovah*, the true God, it is joined with a singular verb, to point out a plurality in unity: and that this is universally the case, through the whole Bible, except in three places; and he makes it appear, that in these three places the text is mis-transcribed, because two of them stand in the usual form, in the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the other is corrected in another text in our own Hebrew Bible, where the same words are recited, only the verb is in the singular number, as it ought to be, and originally was in the other place. In a dissertation on the reason of Abel's sacrifice being accepted, and Cain's rejected, he shows, that Cain offered only the fruits of the ground: but Abel offered the fruits of the ground, and the firstlings of his flock, and the fat, or a sanguinary sacrifice; in this manner confessing himself guilty before God, and expressing his reliance on the great atoning sacrifice of Christ, prefigured in the one which he offered. Thus, by faith, Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain.* To peruse this great work, is a most pleasing and edifying study: and we hope great good will redound to the Church of God from the Doctor's labors. It is clear, that his discoveries are much in favor of truth. And the more ancient his

* This dissertation is not printed with the Bible.

manuscripts were, still were the quotations of the Evangelists, and the apostles, from the Old Testament, the more fully justified. It is an evidence of God's providential care of the holy Scriptures, that a man of his ability and learning, was excited to take such pains, and endure such labor, to ascertain their true reading. And finally, here we may affirm, that if any person were to collect and compare, as many different copies of any ancient book, suppose of Cicero or Homer, he would find probably more, and greater variations, and yet nobody doubts, but we have the true genuine books of these authors.

It may not be improper to subjoin one remark here, that the evidence of the truth and authenticity of the holy Scriptures is infinitely superior to the evidence of any human history. Not to mention the number and characters of the witnesses, the intrinsic excellence of the doctrines and morals, their confirmation by miracles and prophecy, the unity of design throughout the whole; let us only attend to one thing. The religious rites and observances therein instituted and recorded, are those which the church must daily practice; every baptized person, and every father of a family who obtains baptism to his children, every communicant at the Lord's table, sees with his eyes and handles with his hands, the proofs and documents of its truth. The Bible tells us that these sacraments were instituted by Christ, our immediate parents practiced them, their immediate parents did the same, and theirs again the same, and so on up to the time of Christ, when they were first instituted; and none can point out any period when they were introduced, or when it was possible to introduce them, until we go up to the time of Christ, their instituter; and the same remark may be made concerning the sanctification of the first-day Sabbath. And thus, by a marvelous contrivance of infinite wisdom, it is so fixed, that the quotidian transactions of church-members are practical proofs of the truth of the Gospel, our bodily senses are daily witnesses of it, and continued facts prove it. The Jews, as hath been formerly remarked, are living witnesses of the truth both of the Old and New Testament; of the Old, as they firmly believe the doctrines,

and practice the rights thereof; of the New, not only as their dispersion and misery is a fulfillment of its prophecies, but also as they do not pretend to deny the principal facts therein recorded, but only disguise and misrepresent them. And the Jews are witnesses of the truth of Christianity, not from love to it, and therefore not from collusion, or with a design to deceive. Their testimony is evidence from an enemy. Strange! that the truth should be doubted, when thus attested by friends and foes.

Kennicott's Hebrew Bible is deposited in the Library of the City of Philadelphia, an honor to the present age, that will survive the pride of princes, and fame of wars and victories.

CONCLUSION.

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Now, dearly beloved brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ, having exhibited to your view, the great and important doctrines of the Gospel of Christ, how can we conclude more properly than by addressing to you the following exhortations? We beseech and exhort our brethren in the ministry, to take heed to themselves, to their doctrine, their spirit, their life, and conversation. Preach Christ crucified; point him out as the substance of divine revelation, the center in which all its lines meet; set forth the glory of the divine character as revealed in him; show the relation in which the prophecies, the histories, the types, the miracles, the promises, the ordinances of worship, the precepts of moral duty, and the providences of God, stand to him. We may be sure it is our glory and felicity to know, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. The doctrine, of Christ's mediatorial person, his mediatorial state, and mediatorial offices, characters, and relations, justification by faith in his blood, regeneration by his Spirit, and submission to all his laws and institutions is the very life of the Church. God's Spirit will never accom

pany, nor will he bless any other doctrine, to the conversion of sinners, or nourishing the divine life in true believers. Beware of a carnal, worldly, proud spirit. Such a spirit will consume and lay waste true religion; and under the power of such a spirit, even good men are at times too apt to fall, through their unavoidable connection with this world. Beware of indolence and slothfulness, in the work of God. Christ says, "Occupy until I come." Did the Redeemer give his blood for the salvation of men, and shall we account it much, to expend a little sweat and labor for that grand purpose? Give not way to discouragements; live a life of faith and prayer; cleave to your divine Master, and he will support you. "Christ taught a divine parable, that men should always pray and not faint." The cause in which you are engaged, is the greatest and best of causes, and will be finally successful. "Ye are workers together with God, and God will work, and none shall let it. Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed, and rule the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Avoid equally, the extreme of laxness, and rigor, in discipline; take every opportunity of saying, and doing something for Christ. "Gird up the loins of your mind; watch, and be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Be clothed with humility; put on meekness, humbleness of mind, patience, long-suffering; be good examples to the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." To sum up the whole, search the Scriptures daily; give God's

Word the chief place in your studies, always a dwelling in your hearts, and let it drop from your lips like the honeycomb. Ministers should frequently read, and deeply study, Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus. "Lay not a disproportionate stress on sound doctrine, to the neglect of a holy life; nor on a holy practice, to the neglect of sound doctrine; they are both pillars of the same arch, and the one cannot stand without bearing on the other. An unsound, unholy ministry, is like salt that has lost its savor; and, as Christ says, "Is fit for nothing, neither for the land, nor even for the dunghill."

To the Churches immediately connected with us, and to all the Churches of Christ, we say: Dear brethren, esteem and love the Lord Jesus Christ. Set a high value on his precious Word and Gospel. Be supremely grateful to God, for his mercy, in calling you to the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ. What a blessing to the world is the Gospel of Christ! What a privilege to enjoy a complete system of Gospel institutions! It is a mercy which can never be highly enough prized. The despised Gospel has been of infinitely greater service to the world, than all the philosophy of the nations. Wherever it is cordially embraced, it brings all good things in its train! Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. The New Testament Church enjoys the Gospel dispensation in its most perfect form. Under the Mosaic Economy the revelation of grace, through Jesus Christ, was more obscure. That dispensation is emphatically called the law; "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Much terror, and much of the spirit of bondage and fear,



attended that dispensation. The law was given at Mount Sinai, with terrible majesty. God descended on the top of the mount; the mount was covered with a dark cloud, which threw out all around bickering flames! God dwelt in, and uttered his voice from, the thick darkness! Lightnings flashed! Thunders roared! The trumpet sounded louder and louder! The mountain shook! The people trembled! And so great was the terror, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake! There was evidently here an amazing exhibition of the broken covenant, the covenant of works, in its terrors and threatenings; which might also be providentially pointed forth, by Moses, in haste, breaking the stony tables of the law. The design of all which was, to show the necessity of a Mediator between an offended God and offending creatures. And we see this design was answered, for the people entreated that the Word should not be spoken to them any more; for they could not endure that which was commanded; they begged that Jehovah would speak to Moses, and Moses to them; and accordingly Moses was appointed the typical Mediator. The apostle (Heb. 12), remarks the difference of the New Testament dispensation, "Ye are not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, etc., but ye are come to Mount Zion, etc., to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling," etc. And God, under this dispensation, instead of writing the law on tables of stone, promises to write it on fleshly tables of the heart. See Heb. viii.

We beseech our dear brethren, who are immediately connected with us, to suffer the word of exhortation! We have, in the foregoing pages, as God enabled, illustrated and

vindicated the doctrines and duties of the Holy Bible, and our Confession of Faith. Are you still disposed to suspect our adherence to these? You have been tempted and urged to do so with much earnestness. But do not yield to Satan's temptations. The means that have been used, and the pains taken to decoy you, bear every mark of their proceeding from a bad source, though not perceived by the immediate agents, nor perhaps by you. But good men have often fallen into Satan's snare, and been unnaturally employed in his service to injure the cause of God. A gentleman, an utter stranger to the state of our Churches here, the moment that he landed on the American shore, was stimulated to raise the outcry against us, and blow the coal of strife and contention between brethren; the indirect, evasive and double dealings that were first practiced to prevent our progress in the good work of healing the breaches of Zion, and the violent measures pursued afterward — criticisms without candor, accusations without truth, the abuse of friendship, of gentleness, lenity, and forbearance, and perversion of words, all indicate a spirit in this business, that is not of God; and this we have borne with a degree of patience, which some have been tempted to construe into pusillanimity, or an inability to defend ourselves. But we feared God. It is better to bear Shimei's cursing, than to retort it. We are all in this land comparatively strangers, and it appeared to us, to be an odious work in the sight of God and man, to commence a war against each other, that would only make those rejoice, who wish the destruction of both.

But all this dishonor to God, and injury to the cause of religion, has been done under the pretext of contending for the

truth. Examine well what truth we have dropped or denied. But it is said, we have relinquished the Secession-testimony. This assertion is not judicious. If by the Secession-testimony be meant, the whole doctrine of the Bible, as explained in the Confession of Faith, we firmly adhere to it. If by that testimony be meant, the application of the doctrines of the Bible and Confession, to the circumstances of the Church in Scotland, you will easily see that it is our duty to apply them properly here, or to the circumstances of the Church in America. This is what we have sincerely, though imperfectly, studied to do.

If you please to call the foregoing sheets, a testimony, we have no objection, and will not dispute about words; but it would be more proper to consider them, as an application of the testimony of Jesus, unto the circumstances in which Providence has placed us. We beseech you, to shun, on the one hand, lukewarmness in the cause of God, and to avoid, on the other, pharisaical pride and ostentation in your religious profession. Remember, a sound about a testimony will not save your souls.

You may talk loudly about that all your days, and under that pretext Satan may persuade you, and your deceitful hearts deceive you so far as to think, that you are very eminent Christians; the only people of God on earth; and so you may perish eternally. But examine well, what are you in heart more than others? are you more holy, more humble, more mortified to sin and the world, more spiritual, heavenly, zealous for God, gentle, patient, affectionate and forbearing, than others? Are you severe on yourselves, but candid toward others? Have you that charity which will

not indulge one sin in yourselves, but will cover a multitude in others? What do ye do for God, or for the promotion of the kingdom of Christ in the world, more than others? Is the Gospel esteemed much by you? Do you teach it daily to your children? Is family religion much cultivated? Are the Lord's public ordinances regularly attended, his ministers decently supported, esteemed, and loved for their works' sake? Do you maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, or are you contentious, hateful, and hating one another? It is not saying, but doing; it is not hearing the law and the testimony, but practicing it, that God regards. Dear brethren, we are afraid of you, lest, as Satan beguiled Eve, so you may be deceived through his subtleties and devices. It is an easy matter to adopt a system of principles (and where a religious education has been previously enjoyed, they may be found principles too) publish them to the world, and plume ourselves, as if on this account we were the most eminent Christians and faithful witnesses for God in the world. This is not one of the most difficult duties of the Christian religion. We mean not by this remark, to diminish the value and importance of being valiant for the truth upon the earth, but to prevent your placing an undue confidence, and laying a disproportionate stress on it. Adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour with every Christian grace and virtue; among which, charity, brotherly-love, peace, humility, and candor, possess a high rank. You can not but be sensible, that a dependence on a foreign judicature for a supply of ministers must be very precarious, unproductive, and attended with much expense, and other disagreeable consequences. We hoped, by the late coalition of parties, between whom every

real cause of contention was, by God's providence, removed, to have had it more in our power to raise and educate candidates for the ministry among ourselves; but our dissenting brethren have greatly baffled this good design. However, we must look higher for the source of the evil. God has a holy hand in it. The schism is an awful judgment on both parties. God is angry with us. Our sins have procured his righteous displeasure. O God, thou has cast us off; thou hast scattered us; thou hast been displeased; O! turn thyself to us again. Our dissenting brethren endeavor to persuade you, that we are apostates from the cause of God, with a view to draw you over to them. Now, brethren, judge, whether there be really any just cause for this high accusation? We hope a gracious God will forgive our accusers. For your sakes and at your call, we forsook our native country, our nearest relations, and dearest friends. To serve you in the gospel of Christ, we voluntarily renounced the honors and profits of this world, which we might have acquired in other stations, and which, the expensive education bestowed on us by our parents, might have entitled us to expect. We cast ourselves on your mercy, have endured much fatigue and loss of health, with other hardships, and spent the prime of life, and flower of our days to serve you. To repay this will you treat us with neglect, contention, strife, and reproach! We only entreat, that you will be candid, and honest, and judge for yourselves.

But you will also consider, that if you listen to evil surmises, and desert us, you thereby, at the same time, set us free from the obligations of these relative duties which we promised to perform to you. We wish earnestly for truth

and peace. But if any be determined, not to be satisfied, to the judgment of God we must leave them. We have been doing our best to promote the kingdom of Christ ; but, hitherto Satan hath much hindered us.

Hoping that you will resist the spirit of contention and division, we exhort and beseech you to attend to the one thing needful ; for the Lord is at hand. See that you win Christ and be found in him, etc., that you be born again, and have become new creatures in Christ Jesus ; that ye walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit ; for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, etc., hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.

Receive the truths of the Gospel in the love of them, and consider well, we beseech you, that the firmest bonds of union in the Church of Christ, are a knowledge of the truth, a firm faith in it, love to it, and to one another, for the truth's sake. Study to promote real religion in your families ; religious families are like nurseries for planting the garden of God. Worship God daily in Spirit and in Truth ; teach your children the fear of the Lord ; command them to serve him ; set a holy example before them ; and pray much for them, and with them. Attend on God's public ordinances, and command your families to do so. Never live contentedly, without the public ordinances of Christ ; honor the Lord with your substance, and with the first fruits of your increase, so shall your barns be filled with plenty, etc., support your ministers honorably, and never think to increase your wealth by robbing Christ and his Gospel. See Malachi

iii, 8-12. The Jewish religion was labor; but Christ's is rest. Theirs was expensive; but ours is comparatively without money and price. Yet the Jewish Church never gained anything, but lost much by withholding from the Lord's service, what was due to him; and so it will be with us. We earnestly beseech you, to search the Scriptures daily, to read God's Word in your families; study the Confession of Faith, and your Catechisms much. And as a most excellent summary of evangelical and practical religion, in connection with the doctrines of grace, ponder well the ten commandments, the sins forbidden, the duties required, and rules for a right understanding of them, as explained in the Larger Catechism.

By a truly religious profession and holy life, it will appear, that God is in you of a truth. If the light of truth and holiness thus shine on you before men, others, seeing your good works, will glorify your Father who is in heaven. God is not the object of our senses. His essence is invisible. He can be discerned only by our understandings. It is an intellectual view of his glory only that men can obtain; and this may be obtained from the works of Creation and Providence, but especially from his Word, and his Church. A pure and holy Church reflects his glory in an eminent degree. God says, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." Christ walked in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Such a Church is an image of Heaven. God is visible in her. Divine truth, divine love, divine purity, peace, harmony, and good order, shed a luster on her. The glory of God beams around her. But a society, where the contrary evils prevail, is a synagogue of Satan.

And wherever heresy, error, pride, strife, contention, uproar, and impurity reign, there we see the kingdom of darkness and the Devil ; and by such things, men prepare themselves to dwell with devils forever.

Now, Brethren, may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight.



## APPENDIX.

A NEW scheme of doctrine has been propagated in New England; much learned dust kicked up, and metaphysical nonsense preached and printed to support it; on which we shall say very little. To give its outlines, seems to be a sufficient confutation of it. It originates in false views of the divine volitions and agency; wrong notions of the divine decrees; and from it the modern doctrine of universal salvation natively springs. The scheme is to the following purpose: "That of all possible systems, God behooved necessarily to create the best." On which we may remark, (*en passant*), that it seems by this, God is not a voluntary, but a necessary agent; and infinite wisdom, power, and goodness have already done their utmost—have arrived at their *ne plus ultra*. "That sin, or moral evil, is a part of this best system; and, therefore, God is the author of sin; yea, say some, the creator of it;" giving to sin a positive being or existence, or making it a creature; and so, one would think, a very good thing; and, consequently,

that there is no evil at all in the creation, neither moral nor penal. "That we should bless God for the creation of sin, because it has done a great deal of good in the general system! That men must love God so disinterestedly, as to be willing to be damned, to advance his glory, if he see it necessary." The plain purport of which is, either, that God may see it necessary, for the purposes of his glory, to damn a person, whom he has sanctified and saved, united to Christ, and enabled to love him supremely: that is, God may both save and damn him at the same time: or, that we must love God so much, as to pursue that great end, his glory, in the way of spurning redeeming love, trampling on the blood of the covenant, and doing despite to the spirit of grace; for all men know, this is the way, and the only way to damnation, under a Gospel dispensation; and then it turns out to be this, that we must love God so much as to hate him with a perfect hatred; and be so completely in a state of salvation, as to be in a state of damnation at the same time. "That to maintain, with the apostle, that we love Christ, because he first loved us, is selfish, and a sure sign of a graceless state; that true Christian love is so elevated and sublime, as to soar above all such mean, low, and selfish considerations, as God's love to us in Christ. We must love God merely for what he is in himself, without any regard to what he is, and has done for us in Christ." The purport of which is, that we may be perfectly holy and completely saved, without a Saviour, (for supreme love to God is the essence of holiness, and summit of salvation,) or we may savingly know God, and be conformed to him, without any regard to the Mediator Jesus

Christ, his redeeming love, and what he has done and suffered for us; and, consequently, that men might have been saved, though Christ had never done nor suffered anything for them. Query: In what other medium but the Mediator can we see the glory of the divine character, so as to be sanctified and saved by the view?

And yet in another whirlpool of the same doctrine, the current is quite contradictory to this, for it is asserted by the same authors, "That the unconverted need not attempt any duty, until they believe in Christ, or be converted, because the Scriptures testify, that without faith it is impossible to please God; and therefore, if such do pray or practice family worship, etc., this is only to add sin to sin." The obvious meaning of which is, that the soul of man is a block of wood or stone, and the means of grace, such as reading and hearing the Word, prayer, etc., are in no respect calculated to make any impression on, or change that block of wood or stone. It would be more proper to take the mason's chisel or the carpenter's ax to it, than to exhort it to read, hear, or pray; or at least, that, as the artificer can easily hew and fashion to his purpose, a piece of wood or stone, without ax or chisel, or any other instrument, so sinners may believe in Christ without reading or hearing anything about him; may be taught without teaching; obtain without asking or desiring; yea, get grace at the very moment their heart is shut against receiving it. And so may, yea, must lie by in a state of inactivity, and at perfect ease, too, (for why should they be concerned, they can no more do anything for their recovery than a piece of wood or marble can hew itself into the image of a man,) until supernatural power begin to

operate on them, which it must and will do without their using the means of grace, to use which, in a graceless state, would only aggravate their guilt. We are certain such reasoning is not sound; but it is not easy to detect the fallacy of it. Such teachers do not consider that it is a part of the scheme of grace, to give to men and excite them to use the means of grace, and that this is a great step toward their salvation—that the Spirit of God never operates on the soul of man but in the way of rousing its powers to action—that the Gospel in all its institutions, is a most proper and rational address to the rational powers of the soul, and adapted to awaken them to action—that God converts men in a rational way, by informing the judgment and inclining the will, and beside the means of grace nothing more is necessary to this than the power of the Spirit to accompany them—that it is impossible in the nature of things, to receive a blessing without being made willing to receive it, or without desiring it, which is the same thing with praying for it. But we forbear. These are some of the gross features of the scheme—a scheme propagated not by wild, ranting enthusiasts and sectarians, but by those who call themselves the regular ministers of regular Churches; and, we hope, some of them learned, sensible, and pious men, too. But vain man would be wise! A fondness for singularity, a thirst after fame; and pride of understanding, hurry men along in a strain of augmentation, until they reason themselves out of all reason and common sense. Much learning makes them mad!

F I N I S .

May 17, 1855.















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