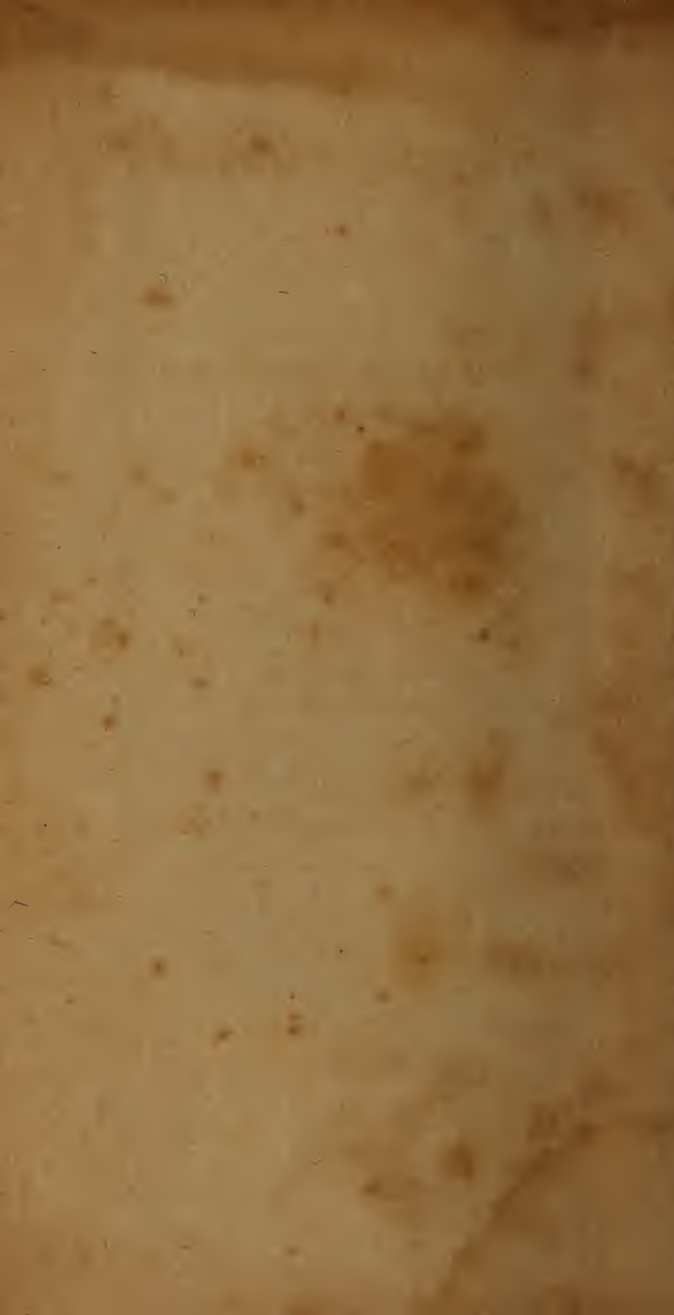


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THE
BODY OF CHRIST:

A

SERIES OF ESSAYS

ON THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF

FEDERAL REPRESENTATION.

CORRECTED, ENLARGED AND CONCLUDED, FROM THE EVANGELICAL RECORD AND WESTERN REVIEW.

“For the edifying of the Body of Christ.” Eph. iv. 12.

EDITED BY JAMES M'CHORD.

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PREFACE.

THE person who adventures to issue a performance of his own into the world, prefaced with a multitude of reasons why he did not produce a better, is doubtless compelled to appear before the public in very awkward guise. Yet to the rueful necessity of making some such apology for the more obvious defects to be found in the following pages, the author, and editor, finds himself reduced. Nearly the one half of the present work appeared during the course of the last year in "the EVANGELICAL RECORD AND WESTERN REVIEW." At the commencement of its republication in the present form, the publisher contemplated nothing more than merely to reprint the part which had then appeared; as the agitations of the West on the question of communion had given to those numbers a momentary importance, and promised to promote a pretty extensive circulation of them. In this transaction the Editor did not intend to concern himself, further than in the correction of several egregious errors of the press,

which had happened in the first impression, for want of an attendance which he found it impossible to give. Hence he refused to take upon himself the labour of altering several sentences and allusions which were suitable enough to the form in which the work at first appeared, and not at all objectionable in a new edition, when issued merely under the character of an excerpt; but which make a very awkward figure in a volume of the description now issued to the world. It was the intention of the editor to have continued these essays under a different form and title, in another work about which he is concerned. But as the practicability of this plan soon became questionable, it was no hard task for him to submit to the solicitations of his publisher, for furnishing the residue of "the body of Christ," under the shape and circumstances in which it now appears.

This has been done at very irregular and sometimes very long intervals. The reader of taste may therefore be sometimes shocked, but cannot be very much surprised, to find that in whole numbers, generally written upon the spur of the moment, and just when it suited the compositor to call for more,—written too, amidst a variety of avocations and distractions, which per-

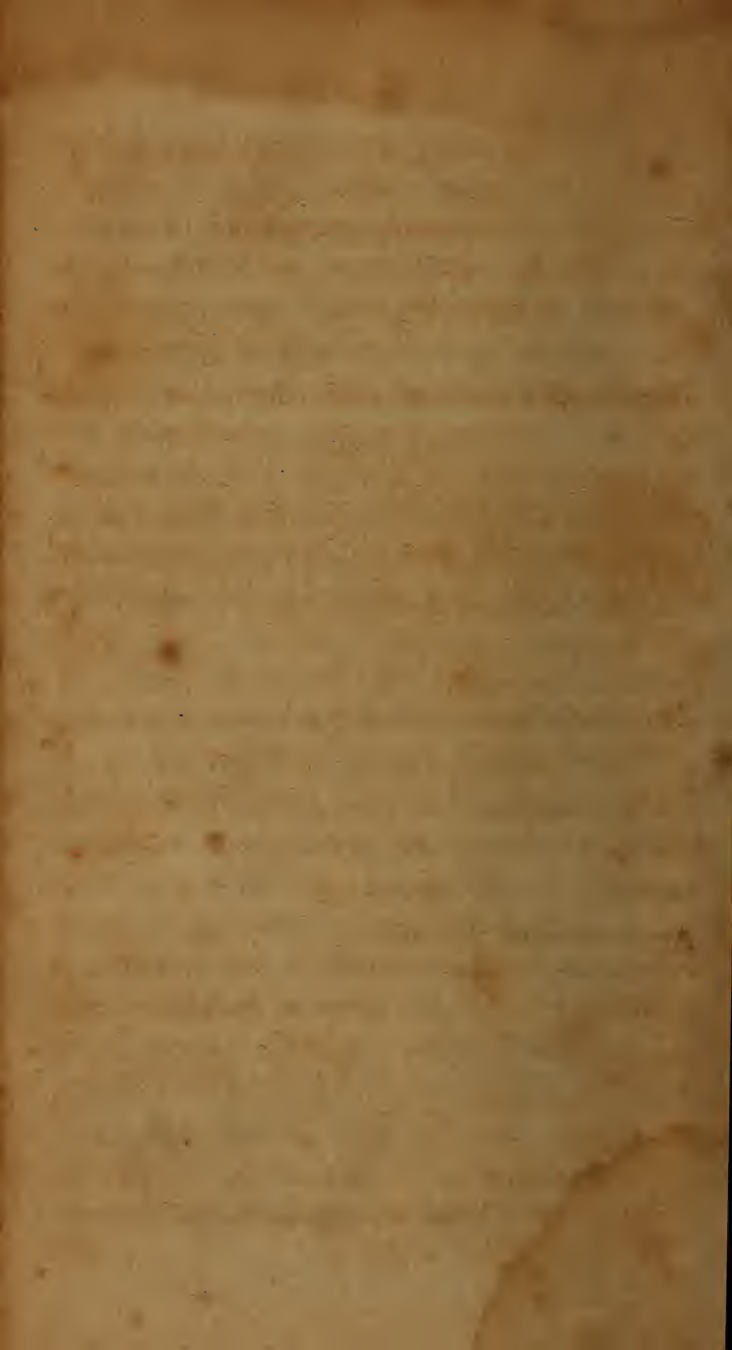
mitted no more leisurely and careful composure,—written also, for the most part, at a single sitting, and hurried to the press without so much as a single reperusal:—the reader will hardly be surprised to find that such a work is not characterized by that perspicuity of thought, or conducted with that regard to unity of plan, which he feels entitled to demand, in an age of fine writing and of vigorous thought.

We are perfectly sensible that unless the simple detail already given can be admitted, under the circumstances of the case, as a sufficient apology for this hazardous attempt, the attempt itself may be justly regarded as without a plea for mercy, whatever might be the style of execution as respects the work. But if the circumstances by which he was pushed into the undertaking, required that it should be completed at any hazard; then the editor feels that he has a claim to all the indulgence to which his very unfavourable and uncontrollable circumstances would give any one a right; and he is persuaded that it will be deemed neither an improper nor an unnecessary step thus explicitly to state that claim.

With respect to the views and principles advocated in the following pages, he has nothing

of the same kind to offer. Leisure might have enabled him to state them much better; it would not have contributed to his stating of them differently. Some of them will be new to very many of his readers, others of them, for ought that he has seen or heard to the contrary, may appear quite new in themselves. It is hoped, however, and expected, that none of them will be found novel, when brought to the "touchstone" of all christian doctrine, and none of them uninteresting to the lover of the Saviour's cause. Upon the subjects comprehended in the first two deductions, the times certainly demand that something should be said. How far this little effort may go to supply that need, it is not for us to take upon ourselves to guess. But if it shall tend in any measure to establish the wavering and determine the irresolute; if it should even be a means of exciting others to a more luminous and laboured and successful exposition of these great christian truths; certainly the editor will have no solid cause to regret that he inadvertently exposed a youthful name to be nipped by frigid criticism, while it is his blessedness to be favoured with the more valuable acquisition of an assurance that he has not "ran in vain, neither laboured in vain."

It would be improper to commit this little effusion to the press, without a distinct acknowledgment of the editor's obligations to a valuable coadjutor, by whom he has been furnished with the well written essay which constitutes the sixth number of the present volume; as also to the intelligence and industry of a correspondent in a neighbouring state, by whom he has been favoured with some of the most valuable authorities contained in the appendix; and indeed, with some hints of very considerable importance which are engrossed in the body of the work.



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In turning over the pages of this work in a very hasty manner, for the purpose of making out the foregoing table, the Editor regrets to say that he has perceived a considerable number of typographical errors,—a much greater number indeed than he could by any means have anticipated. It is expected, however, that there is nothing of the kind of which the correction may not be sufficiently obvious to relieve every reader from the smallest measure of embarrassment. The residence of the Editor at some distance out of town, and his consequent inability to spare more time than could be devoted to a *single*, and that often a *hasty*, though careful perusal of every sheet, is the only apology that can be offered to his readers.

THE BODY OF CHRIST.

NO. I.

“Ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular.”
1 Cor. 12. 27.

It is a remarkable fact that the plan of redemption, so august in all its parts, and perfectly without parallel in its design, introduces no new principles into God's government of this world; but is bottomed, and fairly carried through, upon such as have their foundation laid deep and large in the original constitution of things, and most of which mankind, in all other matters, admit without scruple; while upon all of them, whether they do or do not perceive it, they are practising every day.

We are aware that the world, and even a great proportion of the christian church, do not think so. On the contrary, men speak and feel as if they had got into quite another region. when their attention is drawn to “the things of the Spirit;” and they set out with the expectation of new principles, new plans, new modes of doing things, to all which, in all other matters, the universe is perfectly a stranger. Just as if the God of Grace were not the God of Nature too!

And yet it seems almost surprising how such a notion could obtain for an hour in the mind of a man but very little acquainted with his Bible.

For that book perpetually appeals to things around us for the illustration of its most abstruse principles; and hardly a page of it is any where to be met with, in which analogies are not brought into view, that might serve to silence the most captious objector. The truth is, there is an amazing simplicity in the constitutions of the Divinity. The general principles of his government are few, but of most extensive application. And it is this fact, the application of the same general principle to a great variety of objects differing in essence, in constitution, in circumstance, in degree, that lays the foundation for every thing we call analogy among the works of God. Whence it comes to pass that no man, whether infidel or errorist, may captiously object to the most rigid application of any scriptural principle, without, at the same time, setting himself in array against many practical maxims and plain matters of fact, to be found among men and things around him, by which the most obnoxious tenets of the faithful are paralleled, illustrated, established.

This fact, important at all times for the defence and illustration of evangelical truth, is doubly valuable in its application to those principles which lie at the bottom of the christian scheme, and form at once the greatest mysteries, and the most important springs of practical religion.

These remarks will be seen to apply in their full force to the invaluable truth suggested by the Apostle in that context of which our motto forms so small, but so significant a part. The doctrine of the "mystical union" has been, in all

ages, precious to those who knew the truth as it is in Jesus. It has been retained and prized in places and in periods in which most of its kindred and consequential truths have been impaired and lost. Nor is it the smallest proof of its important bearings on the general scheme of things, that the man of reason and the man of works have uniformly set themselves against it. In fact, there is no one christian principle that occupies a more distinguished station in the scale of christian truth; none bears so extensively, none more fully on the relations and feelings of a christian man.

In calling the attention of our readers to a subject in which every one of them has such interests embarked, we wish it, however, to be distinctly understood that the attempt is hazarded for the sake of introducing several obvious and important practical results, which (such, alas, are the times!) men who allow and value the doctrine, are too much disposed to overlook; rather than from a confidence of rescuing a most ponderous and precious truth from the captious objections of *rational theologians*, and the "*oppositions of science, FALSELY so called:*" or yet from a hope of setting in a clearer light than has been done an hundred times by others, a subject of acknowledged difficulty, because of magnitude too vast for human intellect to wield.

The idea of the whole church of Christ being considered, not merely *in law*, but really in point of fact, one great moral, or, if you will, spiritual individual, must be perfectly familiar to the read-

er of the scriptures. For while they unceasingly present it as a motive to the active discharge of duty, and a ground of comfort amidst difficulties and discouragements, they illustrate the connexion by a great variety of objects familiar to mankind. Jesus Christ is represented as the bridegroom, and the church catholic as the bride, the lamb's wife; and this too as grounded upon that original constitution, that a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and the twain shall become one flesh. A constitution the full force of which was felt by our first father, when, on seeing Eve, he exclaimed, "this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." Again: the connection is pointed out by our Lord, under the similitude of a vine and its branches;* and by the Apostle Paul under that of the trunk of an olive tree and branches engrafted on it.† In one instance it is compared by our Lord to the union which subsists among the persons of the blessed Godhead.‡ Not only for his disciples, but for every one else who should believe upon him through their word, he prays "that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." And surely, when it is recollected that this was not an illustration given to his disciples, but an act of supplication to his God and Father, who stood in no need of any elucidation on the subject, no professed believer in the scriptures who admits that there is a real and necessary union

* John xv.

† Rom. xi. 15—25,

‡ John xvii. 20, 21.

between the Father and the Son—who is not in fact an Arian or Socinian—none such, we say, can avoid concluding that the relation subsisting between the head of the church and all the individual members, is something much more real and intimate than a simple relationship created by law. If Jesus Christ be in reality Divine, if “the Lord our God is one Lord,”* not in figure, but in fact, so too are the members of the blessed head “members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones,”† *really, immutably, eternally.*

But this constitution of the church of God is much the most frequently, and perhaps the most clearly, pointed out under the emblem of a human body. A striking example of this kind is afforded us in 1 Cor. vi. 15—17. where the Apostle dissuades christians from the sin of uncleanness, by adverting to this great principle of the “mystical union,” in connexion with that other constitution just mentioned, viz. that “the twain shall become one flesh.” This, argues our Apostle, being the declared constitution of God, what do you, a christian man, by debasing yourself by a connexion of this kind, but likewise debase Christ Jesus? You are a member of Christ Jesus, for “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit:” and by this transaction you likewise make your members the members of an harlot, thus bringing, in some sort, the Lord himself into connexion with the infamously lewd.

Another, and if possible still more striking example, we have in the passage to which our read-

* Deut. vi. 4.

† Ephes. v. 30.

ers are directed at the head of our essay. He had been speaking of the vast variety of gifts imparted by the Holy Ghost to different members of the church of Corinth; and tells them that the Holy Ghost in "dividing to every man severally as he will," did not intend merely to put distinguished honor upon the selected individual, but through his means to benefit the whole. And in order to suppress that spirit of envy and discontent at the superior endowments of others, to which they who are only perfected in part are liable as well as other men, he points out the folly and unreasonableness of such a disposition, by comparing their relative situation with that species of connexion and dependency which subsists among the members of the human frame. "The body," he insists, "is not one member *but many.*" And yet those many members, so variously gifted, are not designed to act, neither in fact *can possibly act*, for their own advantage exclusively, but for the benefit of that whole body of which they severally form so inconsiderable a part. If the hands, or feet, or eye, or ear, execute their appropriate functions, they do so for the service of the whole; and if any one of them is subjected to any inconvenience, that inconvenience equally affects the whole. Now, says the Apostle, let us suppose any one of these members discontented with this arrangement, and that it is possible it should be gratified with getting into the station and office of a more distinguished member: what would be the consequence? Why the whole body must suffer by the change,

and that very member with the rest. "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? and if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?"—"If they were all one member, where were the body."

We beg our readers to advert again to the *drift* of the Apostle. It is to shew that no man should be dissatisfied with his particular allotment in the church of God. And having illustrated his position at large by this diversity of disposition and endowments in the members of the human frame, and by the harm that all the parts must sustain by altering the condition of any one, he fastens down his conclusions by this sweeping principle, that *as are the several members of the human frame, to the whole of that frame, considered as ONE BODY*, so are all the individual members of the church of Christ, to the whole of that church of which he is to be considered as the Head. Thus, he had said, *is it, thus must it be*, with the body and its members: "*now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*"

If it be not then plainly an assumption of our Apostle, that all the individual believers in the world are but parts or members of one great spiritual system, and if this be not the very basis of his reasoning, we defy the whole world to point out any light contained in his illustration, or any conclusion to which his argument leads. Nay, it is not a bare assumption, it is a fact positively asserted at the commencement of his reasonings on this subject; "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. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." (verses 12, 13.)

But it were useless to multiply instances upon this subject. Any person desirous of pursuing them further, may consult with advantage chapt. x. 27. of this epistle. Ephes. i. 22, 23. ii. 16. iv. 1—16. And Romans vi. vii. viii. through-out.

Upon the whole, then, it clearly appears, that while every believer retains his individual standing, and his separate powers, and personal distinctions, even as do, according to their nature, the several members of the human body, and the trunk, the branches, twigs, and foliage of a tree; yet, as these various objects in nature are nevertheless combined into their appropriate systems, and have being, feeling, and importance, only as parts of a still greater whole;—nay, as the Father is distinct from the Son, and the Son from the Holy Spirit, and yet Father, Son and Spirit, but the one Jehovah: so, also, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, "grow up into him in all things which is the head;" form really and truly but one great body vivified and actuated by the Holy Spirit, even as the human soul pervades and actuates the members of the body; and derive from this source all their importance, all their feeling, all their interest, nay, their very being, considered as *living* members of the living head. Hence, likewise, it will necessarily follow that it is to no

man, considered in his individual capacity, but solely as a part of "the body of Christ," that any of the dispensations of God are measured not. And, also, that upon this connexion, as founded *in fact*, all those relations are predicated which are said to exist *in law*, between the Redeemer and his people.

NO. II.

It has been singularly the lot of scriptural principles to meet with opposition from mankind, upon the alleged ground of their injustice, impracticability, absurdity; while at the very same moment the maxims and positions thus roughly handled when brought in aid of a purpose to save sinners, are acknowledged, are practised upon by men, are day by day verified in the providence of God; and only differ from the other hated and calumniated application of them in those mere circumstances of measure and form, which their adaptation to a variety of objects must necessarily impose. The fact is, that men who "have not *submitted* themselves to the righteousness of God" fear the consequence of such concessions. They feel that they war against their security—against their peace; and therefore against *them* they wage determined warfare. Hence it becomes necessary not only to illustrate, but also to *defend* the truths of God.

The fact, that in Christ Jesus all true believers “form really and truly but one great *body, vivified and actuated by the Holy Spirit*, even as the human soul pervades and actuates the members of the body,” has, we think, been shewn with sufficient clearness from the scriptures. And if we are to maintain a conflict on this subject, the weapons of the adversary must be drawn from an armory very different from the word of God. We must expect to hear that the thing is impracticable, is absurd: and therefore, on this great question which enters into the vitals of christian hope, our appeal shall not be confined “to the law and to the testimony.” Men, we have hinted, are daily acting upon the principle of great moral associations; and God also, in a variety of cases, undeniably proceeds with men upon this footing.

Let it, however, be recollected that when we speak of the church of Christ as forming but *one body*, of which individual believers are “members in particular,” it by no means follows that any individual is so merged in the general system as to lose his personal distinctions, powers, or feelings. This, it has already been remarked, is not in any shape or in any case the consequence of moral associations. In fact it is not the case in those natural objects to which the scriptures refer for illustration. An arm or an eye is not deprived of the appropriate powers, feelings, distinctions, belonging to it as a member, because constituting only a small part of the system: though it is at the same time obvious that separated from that system, its distinctions, functions,

and very being must cease. Just such is the predicament of all the associations of which we speak. A man loses his individuality only in the sense and to the extent in which his interests become merged in a more extensive system. Or rather, he exchanges personal standing, influence, interests, &c. for an adequate concern in the fortunes of the whole. According to the nature and extent of the objects had in view by the association then, and in proportion to the degree and kind of his connexion with the same, not a jot further, does a man cease to be regarded and affected in his individual capacity.

Thus much being premised, we say that the world is full of these large bodies, each of which embraces a variety of men. What are all your corporate bodies—your cities, banks, public seminaries, privileged societies, nay, even nations, but moral individuals on a smaller scale? smaller, we mean, than “the body of Christ.” No man, by his connexion with any of these, loses his personality. But in proportion to the kind and degree of that connexion, he ceases to be regarded or affected as an individual, and must submit to the regulations and destinies imposed upon the mass. You vest, for instance, a portion of your property in bank stock. Then it is no longer yours. The whole association have an interest in it, and you in the whole of theirs. Your voice, as an individual, is not heard with regard to the management or disposal of it. The resolve of the directors determines every thing: and not only of directors chosen in part by yourself, or your own

resolve as one of them; but you must abide by the arrangements made, and contracts entered into, an hundred years before you were born. You profit by the good conduct of every officer belonging to the institution, and the misconduct of any one of them is your loss. Here, however, only a part, perhaps a very small part, of your property is put from under your personal control; and what is thus circumstanced may not have been in consequence of your ancestors' procedure, but of your individual act. Your entire profits by no means result from the good management of this; nor are you reduced to poverty should the institution fail.

Take then another instance. It is not by your own consent that you become a member of a nation. You are born in that capacity. It was the deed of your fathers. And in the transactions of your government with the other nations of the earth, not only your property but your person is deeply interested. By that government your lot and standing are determined without your being consulted, or in despite of your dissent. You may indeed expatriate yourself by emigration; but this will not mend the matter; for of whatever nation you become a member, and whatever be its form of government, that government will act for you. How then are you regarded by the other nations of the world? Doubtless as a component part of a mighty whole. In respecting the flag of your private vessel they respect your nation's flag; or in making prize of your merchandize they wound the nation's interests.

In a state of warfare the nation pleads the public act in reference to every individual numbered among her enemies; and in seizing your property, laying waste your patrimony, or immuring your person, she only treats you as part of a more extended whole. She would deride your plea of being only an individual that had no kind of agency in bringing on a state of warfare, and felt no kind of enmity against herself.

The reader may diversify and carry much further these illustrations at pleasure. He cannot but see that almost all the transactions of men proceed upon the principle; and that without the introduction of it as a *practical* maxim, neither families nor corporate bodies nor nations could possibly get along. Thus then do men think, thus do they speak, in relation to their transactions with one another. And that this is no mere arbitrary principle, but one founded upon the very nature of man, and resulting necessarily from the general state of things, is evident from this strong fact, that the ruler of the universe adopts it as a maxim of his government and actually deals with men upon this very footing. Few men are such enemies to the doctrine of God's providence, as to deny that national calamities are inflicted by him, and that too under the character of national judgments. Here then, of course, the evil is a common one. They who had no hand in the provocatives that call down vengeance, partake equally with the most guilty—the helpless female with the man of blood—the little prattler with its hapless parent.—All

—all are buried together, amid the ruins of the earthquake, or fall before the exterminating sword, or pine beneath the grasp of

“The meagre fiend, that from his shrivelled lips
“Blows pestilence.”

This, then, is the punishment of *a nation's* sin. It is the expiation of *a nation's* guilt; and they who are made to suffer, suffer but as parts of an offending whole. For their personal atrocities, men will be called to a separate and personal account.

It will require a very limited acquaintance with the Scriptures, to enable any of our readers to turn up to multitudes of passages which sanction, and even avow, the principle before us. The deluge is a prominent example. All flesh had corrupted their way; the earth was filled with violence: And when the desolations came, they swept away the infant and the suckling. These could in no degree be guilty of the atrocities which laid the foundation for that dire calamity. They formed, however, a part of the world, and upon *a world* of wickedness the judgment was executed. It is likewise worthy of remark that of the eight persons who escaped the calamity, we have no evidence that the greater part were pious. But the application of the principle which desolated the world brought safety to them. They were but one family; a moral individual therefore on a smaller scale: and the head of the family being righteous, some of the members probably also righteous, this was a sufficient pro-

tection from a family judgment, and a sufficient ground for the extension of deliverance to every member of the same.

Let us hear, however, God's positive declarations on this subject. Upon what principle, think you, does he visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him?* Doubtless it must be that the domestic circle constitutes really but one moral whole.

Upon what principle but this was the possession of Canaan withholden from Abraham and his posterity for above four hundred and fifty years, until *the iniquity of the Amorites should be full*?† Doubtless the succession of individuals did not destroy the identity of the nation; and when that nation should have grown old in wickedness, when they who were afterwards to live in the days of Joshua should have *filled up the measure of their fathers*,‡ and the *national* guilt had reached its utmost limit; then, upon that last generation, should fall the *nation's* punishment. *They* must be accounted with for all. And thus it actually did fall out. We are aware that persons who do not deny the application of the principle in these instances, may tell us that the constitution under which they occurred is now abrogated; and in proof of their assertion, allege that declaration of God himself: "Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel;" viz. "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the

* Exod. xx. 5. † Gen. xv. 16. ‡ Matth. xxiii. 32.

childrens teeth are set on edge.”* Without attempting to determine what was the precise object of this declaration, it is sufficient that we prove that no such dereliction of the principle in question can possibly be involved in it. If *that* were the meaning of the passage, then how could our Lord be so inconsistent as to tell the Jews that of the generation which he addressed should be required “the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zecharias, who perished between the temple and the altar?” “Verily,” he adds, “verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.”† How fearfully this denunciation was accomplished, the whole world knows. And Jesus Christ being judge—the author of the dispensation being admitted to interpret it, no man may deny that this was the punishment of a hardened and corrupted church’s defections, in which the account was brought up from the very date of her existence. It took its sweep from the commencement to the consummation of the old œconomy.

The father’s eating sour grapes no more to set the childrens teeth on edge, a proof that God has done away the great principle of moral associations! How then cried the souls which John saw under the altar, of them who had been “slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held”—“how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood upon

* Ezek. xviii.

† Luke xi. 49—51.

them that dwell on the earth?" And wherefore was it told them "that they should rest yet for a little season, until their brethren that should be killed as they were should be fulfilled?"* Let any one examine the history of these transactions, as gradually unfolded, and still unfolding, in the providence of God, and he will see a vengeance merited by Pagan persecutors poured forth, after a lapse of many centuries, upon their professedly christian offspring. Let him look at this moment on the plains of Europe, and he will see that "the harvest of the earth is ripe;" that upon those kingdoms which conspired together to give their power to the beast, and to shed the blood of the saints, some five hundred, and some a thousand years ago, God is now causing the scourge to descend, and "giving them blood to drink."

This principle, which deals out what men will no doubt call *hard measure* to the inhabitants of the earth, in their *national* capacity, affects them no less in their religious. For what was the judgment of blindness of mind denounced against the Jewish nation, and bound down upon them for centuries to come, an arrow the poison of which at this day drinks up their spirits, if it were an unrighteous thing with God thus to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the heads of the children—in other words, to make no account of the succession of individuals in punishing a people's sins? Wherefore did Judah lie desolate, and her temple in ruins for the space of seventy years, to

* Rev. vi. 9—11.

balance the years of rest and of release, which had been neglected of the Jews for seven times the length of that period—wherefore did the generation that toiled in Babylon make restitution for the whole, if the succession of individuals destroyed the national accountability? if Israel, in fact, throughout all her generations, were not still the same? Wherefore has the Gospel been continued with Philadelphia for the space of seventeen hundred years, in fulfilment of a promise made to her fidelity in the days of the Apostle John? And why from Ephesus, from Laodicea, and from others, was the candlestick removed several hundred years after the sentence was denounced, on account of the lukewarmness and infidelity of those churches, severally, in the Apostolic age? Let it not be alleged, as a satisfactory account of these inflicted judgments, that the children walking in the footsteps of the parents merited them on their own account: or that the defection of parents naturally makes way for the greater defection of children, and thus will in time infallibly secure the result. All this is distinctly understood; but will it invalidate the proof? That protracted and increased defection is itself a very important part of the punishment in question. It is indeed a very natural mean of producing such a result; but is it not, therefore, according to its measure, the very result threatened? Strange indeed, if God's taking the *natural* and *necessary* course to punish the defections of a church, can be wrought into a proof, or even presumption, that the thing does not take place

as a punishment at all! We admit that the removal of the gospel from an after age, produces no inconvenience to the one in which, and on account of whose sin, the purpose may have been denounced—no inconvenience, we mean, of the kind which is said to constitute the punishment. But, then, just so much the stronger is the proof of our position; for if God denounce against a church the removal of his gospel, as a punishment for her neglect or abuse of it, and yet does not fulfil his denunciation till long after the persons bringing down the judgment have gone the way of all the earth; then most clearly he considers the successors obligated to the punishment: or, in other words, regards that church as ONE throughout her generations.

Men may cavil and discriminate and explain away as they please; but, if they will do so, they do it at their peril. The decision of God upon the point is full and clear throughout the volume of the Scriptures; and all attempts to soften or explain away, will be found a most hazardous "kicking against the pricks." All that objecting the impenitence of churches, the guilt of nations, and the demerit of every age, amounts to nothing. Every generation *is not so visited*. God bears long, warns long, threatens long, actually makes the very impenitence a part of the nation's punishment; and then, as he tells us, visits upon one race of men the national transgressions of the whole. Often, in fact, lets the judgment fall most heavily upon the less guilty generation, and among them on the most blameless individuals;

thereby evincing, when he lops off the soundest and healthiest parts of a great system, that his indignation must be highly wrought against the general mass.

We hope that the length of the preceding discussion will not lead our readers to forget the point on which it is intended to bear. They cannot but see that both God and man recognise and act upon the principle of moral associations, i. e. of a great number of individuals, bound up together in one great system, and (if the term be admissible) identified with one another. We say, then, that the doctrine we have advanced, relative to "the body of Christ," is by no means novel; the principle upon which it is predicated is by no means peculiar to the christian system. It is, in fact, the common principle of all extensive operations among men—the sole principle upon which nations act in their intercourse with one another, and upon which the governor of the nations *can act*, in the greater proportion of his dispensations towards men. If so, men talk without book when they heap contempt upon this mystery of our holy religion, and hoot at the philosophical absurdities of those "who turn the world upside down." There are, we admit, features in the church catholic peculiar to itself, and to which no kind of resemblance can be traced, in any other combination known among men. But so has every such association its own peculiarities, all of which arise out of its adaptation to the particular object had in view. There are doubtless many things common to boroughs and

cities which have no resemblance in a bank; and yet both are corporate bodies. And if the church of Christ be found to embosom more or stronger peculiarities than any other large system, it is a satisfactory account of this difference to remark that its object is greater, the extent of its bearings greater, and especially that the fact of its embracing the Son of God himself as a part of the system, gives a susceptibility of features which must necessarily be unknown to every combination of which the soul is not the all-important part, and Jehovah himself avowedly and formally the head. In this case all the resources of the Son of God are brought to bear upon the object, and give a character to the plan; in every other case the features of the plan will be found to be only such as the resources of men can admit.

Our business, however, is not to note the distinctive marks of various moral systems. It is all that we desire, if our readers are aware of the fallacy of objecting these differences and peculiarities with a view to confound the whole scheme. But as these analogies may be found very helpful to illustrate as well as defend "the body of Christ," we cannot avoid pointing them to some of those principles which are common to the whole class of moral associations. It is worthy of remembrance that in every such combination of men the great mass is subject to the control of a head, which itself occupies not an individual but an official standing, and has its individual concerns just as completely merged as any private member. Thus the government is a nation's head:

the corporation appears for the city: the board of directors for a bank: of trustees for a public seminary: the husband for a family: and the Lord Jesus Christ for "the Church which he purchased with his own blood." Whatever is by any of these officially transacted, is considered as having been done by the whole body; upon that body the procedure takes effect; and to it the consequences are imputed.

Again. It is proper to remark that the constant flux of individuals never affects the standing of the *body*, nor in any wise makes void the procedure of its head. Let whosoever will buy or sell bank stock, the measures of the directors make a steady progress, and the man who possesses a share for the moment is the one who is affected. Let the individuals in a nation be shifting every moment, let births and deaths take place by thousands in a day, the operations of *the body* are not thereby hindered, the national accountability is not in the least impaired, for *the nation never changes*. That is to say, under every possible change of circumstance the imputative principle applies. Add to this another important view: that whatever be the actual limitation as to the number of individuals comprised in any association, or whatever be the intention of the head of the association relative to such limitation, the system itself is capable of embracing individuals without number. The civil compact never sets limits to the numbers of a nation, nor the city charter to the number of the citizens. And in the first covenant made with man, which

gave birth to the most extensive moral constitution with which we are acquainted, it is obvious that Adam was the representative of *human nature*; and whether that nature was to be developed in ten generations or in ten thousand, was a matter of no consequence at all in the application of the principle. Upon no man could it have its influence of whom he was not the federal representative; upon every man to whom he might afterwards stand in that relation its influence was to be direct. That is to say, human nature, as descending from him by ordinary generation, was the object specified; and the application of the covenant terminates upon A. B. and C. not in consequence of any individual specification in the compact, but because they are of that *body* which the compact specified. No doubt God, who knows the end from the beginning, and appoints the bounds of every man's habitation, had every individual in his view, and the production of such individual is the development of his plan. But we must carefully distinguish between that limitation within which God actually confines the operation of a covenant, and which is with him a matter of choice, and that limitation which the covenant itself is understood necessarily to impose. The latter is the measure of the capacities of a system, the former of its practical effects.

Again. Let it be remembered that not only the whole body is identified with the head of a system, such as we have had in our view, but every individual member, every constituent por-

tion of that body is thus identified. If a treaty of commerce be settled between two nations, which leaves the way open to unshackled exertion, then every member of either nation has a perfect right to exert himself to the uttermost. If he and his family be but a millionth part of the nation, it does not therefore follow that he is limited to one part in a million of the benefits thus laid open to his people; he has access to the *whole*. On the other hand, if reprisals be made upon an offending nation, and violence committed, it is a matter of perfect indifference how many or how few are the individuals upon whom the evil falls. They have no right to object that they are but a thousandth or a still smaller part of the nation which provoked the severe return, and that therefore their property should be held bound for only that proportion of the remuneration sought. All men regard them as identified with the nation, and the whole of their possessions as justly liable for the nation's fault. So too in the first covenant, the guilt of Adam's sin is not partitioned out among his descendants, but the whole of that guilt, and the whole burden of the curse entailed with it, descends undivided to every soul of man.

Finally; from the view that has been given it will be seen that our personal consent, or even our existence at the time such body was constituted, or for ages after, is by no means necessary to our being treated as a part of a great political or moral whole, and being justly entitled to all the benefits resulting from good management,

or exposed to all the evils naturally flowing from a contrary event. In one word, of whatever system any man forms a part, he is to all intents and purposes identified with that system; his fate is bound up in its fate, to the full extent of his connexion with it; nor is there any possible way of separating himself from these results, but by severing the ties that bind him to the body.

NO. III.

If it be a fact consonant to reason and certified by Scripture, that all the redeemed of God are "members in particular" of one body, it may appear natural, and certainly is not unimportant, to inquire, what is the tie by which men are bound together in a federal relation, so intimate and extensive? and what are the ends intended to be answered by this constitution? They are certainly objects of legitimate inquiry; and as the press of other matters deemed of more immediate importance to the mass of our readers, has for some time past excluded "the body of Christ" from our pages, we shall compress into the present number all that appears necessary to be said on those points, lest we should never arrive at the developement of those "results," which, as our readers know, furnished the sole motive for the present undertaking.

Federal unity, or as we have generally called it in the course of this discussion, *moral association*, necessarily supposes, in every instance, some one or more bonds of union by which individuals become compacted together, and consolidated, as it were, into one common mass. Every monied man is not a member of a banking company: nor does every inhabitant of a country form a constituent portion of the nation among whom he resides. There is always some one principle which forms the basis of every association of men, and is esteemed an indispensable condition of their connexion with the mass; or rather, is in fact the very bond by which they are thus connected. This connective principle will of course vary in its kind, according to the nature of the association of which it forms the bond. Election and subscription to certain articles of compact will be that bond, in some cases. Birth, or adoption, constitute it in others. But it is perfectly clear from the nature of such associations, that there always must be some uniting principle. Hence we said, that if the church of the living God really form but one great body, of which Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Head, and every other individual a component part, it is a subject of inquiry, natural, important, and legitimate, what is the connective principle, what is the bond of union in this extensive and sublime association? Be it remembered that the question is not merely what unites the Christian man to Christ; but what unites all Christian men to one another as well as to their Head? For we are repeatedly

told in so many words, that they who are designated members of Christ, are likewise "*every one members of one another.*"* And hence results the principle, that in promoting the real good of any Christian man, or of any Christian church, you promote the good of the whole church of Christ; you do service to the Lord himself, and shall accordingly be considered and rewarded: † And in refusing to do service to any individual, or to any church that calls upon the name of Jesus Christ, you refuse to do service to himself. ‡ Verily it was not without good reason that the great, the good, the justly venerated Thomas Boston was accustomed to declare, that such as love none but Christians of their own denomination (and of course, restrict their services to their *own church*), are souls too narrow for the kingdom of heaven. But we should perhaps solicit pardon for this digression, so contrary to all rule.

The question is, what so completely consolidates and individualizes the Christian church, that it is one with Christ, even as he is one with the Father; and all its members are members of Christ and of one another? It is common to say, that there is in this case a two fold bond of union, faith on man's side, and the Holy Spirit on God's side. With this representation we perfectly accord, provided it be allowable to explain the sense in which, as we would venture humbly to suggest, it is alone admissible. It is certainly as

* Rom. xii. 5.; and Ephes. iv. 25.

† Matth. xxy. 40.

‡ Id. 45.

impossible as it would be unscriptural, to conceive of living Christianity existing in a subject capable of faith, but who was nevertheless living in the most unqualified unbelief. The direct and necessary tendency of unbelief, is departure from the living God; and the equally necessary tendency of faith is approximation to him. While therefore, the just are said in scripture to walk by faith, to receive Christ by faith, even to be justified by faith, it will remain forever an unquestionable truth, that faith is inseparable from regeneration, or if you will, from a state of union with the Lord Jesus Christ; in so far as the declaration has respect to subjects capable of such an exercise of their faculties. We admit, likewise, that in every other case, faith in the habit as it is called, is an indispensable accompaniment of union with the Redeemer. But indeed, to that very phrase, "faith in the habit," or more generally "grace in the habit," we have insuperable objections, if it be interpreted to mean any thing but the native tendencies and necessary dispositions of the new nature—that "law in the mind," against which the law in the members wars. Nor even in that sense is the phrase defensible, though the sentiment it is intended to convey is unquestionably sound. *Habit* is a disposition to act in a certain way, and to attach ourselves to certain objects, formed or at least mightily strengthened by repeated acts. But, doubtless, that which we call the habit of faith, and of the various other graces, exists as really in the regenerated idiot, and in the favoured being

“sanctified from the womb,” as in the most accomplished Christian; and yet certainly, in neither of these cases can it be said with truth, that repeated acts, or even a single act has taken place. By consequence, habits properly so called, cannot possibly exist. We do not wish, however, to render ourselves singular about a mere strife of words. It is sufficient for our purpose, if our readers can see with us, that union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently with his people, is perfectly separable from the actual exercise of faith; in as much as there may be, and no doubt always have been many living members of the living Head, incapacitated by their circumstances for receiving that record of God’s Son, which is the alone foundation of the Christian faith. Here then, clearly, we have sufficient ground to assert, that if faith be not a uniform nor an indispensable accompaniment of the mystical union, it cannot be called in *any* case the *bond* of that union, except in a kind of secondary and very imperfect sense. For surely we ought not to expect that any one will be found so disingenuous and unreasonable, as to foist in a supposition, that the mode of instating men in the covenant of grace is not necessarily uniform. If such persons should be found, it will doubtless be an easy matter to dislodge them; but until there appears a necessity for proving a self-evident proposition, it would be unwise to enter upon any such question, lest we be only fighting as those who beat the air. Let not the pious spirit startle at the suggestions that have been dropped upon this subject. We cer-

tainly do not mean either to oppose or explain away the faith of the churches on this very important article. All that we object to, is the putting a rigid interpretation upon a lax mode of expression, and thereby exalting into the character of a bond of union in this most important of all associations, the exercise of a grace which is at best but occasional in its operations, while at the same time, it must be conceded that the union may subsist, and often has subsisted, where no faith *could* be exercised; and that between the Redeemer and all the hosts of his redeemed, it unquestionably shall subsist when faith and hope will have forever ceased.

We seek then, for some other, some unchanging, some permanent, universal bond of union that serves in *fact*, as well as in form of law, to unite the people of God to their exalted Head, and at the same time renders them members one of another. This indispensable, universal, *everlasting* bond the Scriptures every where point out. Without controversy it may be asserted of every infant, and of every idiot, as well as of all others, "*if any man have not the SPIRIT OF CHRIST, he is none of his.*" In every case, without so much as one exception, it may be safely said, "if Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." And yet more clearly to our purpose, "*if the SPIRIT of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your*

mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. * And hence the Apostle, in the first of the verses just quoted makes the question of regeneration, and by consequence of justification too, depend entirely upon the fact of the Holy Spirit having taken possession of the man: "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, IF SO BE THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELL IN YOU." We read that "it is by *one Spirit*;" † that both Jew and Gentile have access through Christ unto the Father. And when believers, under the emblem of "living stones," are spoken of as parts of "the building fitly framed together, and growing unto an holy temple in the Lord," we read that they "*are builded together for an habitation of God thro' THE SHIRIT.*" ‡ In fact, that very faith which is said to justify the sinner, is called in so many words, a "fruit of the SPIRIT," § and springs up only as one among the multitude of graces that are born together in the regenerated creature. The Scriptural reader will readily turn up scores of passages, in which the immediate, the uniform, the indispensable agency of the Holy Spirit is asserted, not only in the commencement, but throughout the whole progress of spiritual life. || And by availing himself of the full blaze of scriptural light upon this subject, he will further discover, that to the saints in heaven as well as saints on earth; to the angels who kept their first estate as well as to regenerated

* Rom. viii. 9, 10, 11. † Eph. ii. 3. ‡ Id. 22

§ Gal. v. 22. || See especially 1 Cor. xii. 13.

man, the Spirit of Jehovah is the immediate dispenser of all their measures of grace and happiness. Nay, further, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, in whom is said to dwell "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," was quickened, was gifted for the exercise of his ministry, was raised from the dead, and even after his ascension, when speaking in vision to the prophet John, dictated his epistles to the seven churches, through the supply that was given him of the Holy Spirit, with whom he was anointed without measure, and who is, in fact, the communicator of every thing we call life to every creature in the universe of God.

We do not, however, intend a descant on the doctrine of the Spirit's agency. The few remarks offered, and scriptural passages adduced, are designed merely to bear upon the point in hand, by shewing upon what grounds we now explicitly assert, that the Holy Ghost is the actual bond of union, and in the strict sense of the words, *exclusively* the bond of union by which the members become identified with the Head, and united to one another. Not that federal union necessarily follows from the fact, that all creatures partake of spiritual life, through a participation of the same Spirit. Thus angels do, and yet they stand in no such federal relation to man, or to one another, as is asserted of the church of the Firstborn. Had they been thus compacted in one federal body, they must have had a common Head, they must have inherited a common lot: it never could have been as it actually has

fallen out, that some should fall into perdition, while others kept their first estate. But when we see the Lord Jesus constituted the Head of a great system, we see a foundation laid for the development of such a system in the gradual production and increase of its parts. He takes upon him a nature common to a multitude of men. That assumption of their nature does not unite them to him, but it lays a basis upon which such union may take place. As the wearer of human nature, he is baptized with an immeasurable effusion of the Holy Spirit upon himself: The *fulness* of the Spirit dwells in the God-man. Communications of that Spirit are therefore emphatically communications of "*the Spirit of Christ;*" and doubtless it is under this very view that the Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of Christ. Hence it follows, that if out of that fulness by which he himself is endowed with grace and qualified with gifts, he communicates a measure to any other being wearing the same nature, he becomes the Head of influences, the principle of life, the *heart* as it were to that being; and thus not merely in law, but in fact, unites him to himself; and the reason of recognizing the union in law, is because it exists in very fact. And it is by thus baptizing an innumerable multitude with that baptism wherewith he was himself baptized, that he becomes to them a federal Head, and they become the members of his body and of one another. As the heart of this system, he propels the life's blood through every limb; and just in proportion to the measure of his communications,

makes them partakers of all that is in himself. In proportion as they are thus made "partakers of the divine nature,"* the propensities and qualities of that nature manifest themselves directly—naturally—necessarily, in heart and life. And as they are sinful corrupted creatures, that are thus identified with the Saviour, and made partakers of his nature, such participation infers a change in their nature, and that change we call *regeneration*. All that cluster of graces then, faith not excepted, which the scriptures call "fruits of the Spirit," are the product of regeneration; and regeneration itself is the product of union with the Son of God. So that in the order of nature, union with Christ stands first; next to this regeneration, as a native and immediate consequence; and all graces follow regeneration, as the acts of a renewed creature. The enmity is destroyed, the eyes are opened, the affections are regulated—and *then*, when truth is presented they discern it, they love it, they obey it.

Thus then, stands the church of the living God. The Lord Jesus Christ is constituted the fountain of influences; he puts forth that Spirit by which he himself (as the wearer of our nature) lives, into the bosoms of multitudes of slain. All, therefore, stand united by a common principle of life, and are obviously connected with one another, by the very same principle that serves to connect them with the Head, "from which all the body, by joints and bands, having

* 2 Pet. i. 4.

nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God ”*

Having thus ascertained what it is that constitutes the bond of union in “the body of Christ,” and shewn with as much clearness, and in as few words as we knew how, that “THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT,” which is to be kept “*in the bond of peace,*”† is not a mere fictitious relationship, known only in law, but an actual union of which the Holy Spirit is the real bond; it only remains to inquire, what are the ends intended by this constitution? This inquiry may be satisfied in very few words. The Redeemer thereby secures the justification of his people. The very fact of his taking them into union with himself, not only renders him capable of accounting, but *actually accountable*, for the whole body of which he thus became the Head. They are no longer known as individuals; they are “in Christ.” He then, is called to answer for his members; and they stand or fall with him. Hence the propitiation made by him for us, takes away all guilt. He bore the sins of the body “in his own body on the tree;” and the curse exhausted, there can be no more condemnation. He also “fulfilled all righteousness,” and consequently heads a righteous system, rendering it “complete in him.” All those “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people,” flow directly from the facility with which this arrangement “finishes transgression, and makes an end of sin.” And

* Col. ii. 19.; and Eph. iv. 16.

† Id. 3.

so long as God's Holy Spirit is graciously vouchsafed to "convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," union with the Saviour will be sought and appreciated as the sinner's only refuge.

The *sanctification* of the body is another of the consequences flowing from the mystical union, and undoubtedly occupies a principal place among the reasons of the constitution. We have already anticipated almost unavoidably, the few remarks intended upon this subject, while attending to the question of union. Without repeating the statements there made, let it be sufficient to remark that the Holy Scriptures not only ascribe *uniformly* the sanctification of a sinner to the Spirit's agency, but do so under the connexion which we have been attempting to develope. The sixth and eighth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, seem to be entirely modeled upon this view of the subject. Christian men cannot continue in sin, it is declared. Wherefore? Because, argues the Apostle, the very fact of their being Christians presupposes their having been placed in such a connexion, as renders their continuance in sin impossible. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death." If baptized into him at all, if made one with the Head of the great system, we of course, cannot pursue a different interest and direction from that Head; we cannot promote those works of the devil which he died to destroy: but rather, as being one with him in that

great constitution, we must drink of the cup whereof he also drank. And if thus "planted together with him in the likeness of his death," it will follow, by the same law, that "we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:" that is, as the Apostle just before states, we shall "walk in newness of life, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." Our readers, if they please, may look over the whole passage, and we shall certainly agree that they are very cunning men, if they can shew any consistency of reason, or coherency of thought, in the Apostle's argument, upon any other supposition than his assumption of the mystical union as the basis of sanctification. So also, when in the seventh chapter we read of his being "dead to the law by the body of Christ," and hear him state that "bringing forth fruit to God" is the aim, as well as issue of that arrangement, we certainly cannot understand him in any sense at all, unless the one we are attempting to establish be the correct one.

Finally: the resurrection of the just is likewise spoken of as resulting directly from the same union. This point the sacred writers, in so far as we recollect, never attempt to *prove*. They always speak of it as if it were a self-evident proposition, and without scruple or ceremony recur to the principle in proof of the resurrection. Thus, in that well known passage in the xv. of 1 Cor. the Apostle, stating the matter in perhaps every imaginable shape, and reiterating his argument several times, always *assumes* for the basis

of his reasoning, that the Redeemer and his people necessarily stand or fall together, as parts of the same system—"if the dead rise not, then is not Christ risen:" "Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

From the commencement, therefore, to the consummation of the church of God, Christ is all in all. "He is the Head of his body the Church;" in him she lives, by him she stands, with him she inherits, and to him it is required that she be devoted in all her members. Such is her constitution; and from this constitution flows not only a multitude of doctrines of extensive sweep, but also a multitude of duties of "high and noble bearing." It is to these, especially to the latter, that we have been all along desirous to call the attention of our readers. Some time, however, must elapse before this desire can be accomplished. The same causes which for some time past suspended the course of these essays, will again arrest it. Other subjects demand an *immediate* hearing; and the pages of "the Record" are not sufficiently ample for the reception of every thing by which we would willingly "stir up the pure minds" of the brethren, "by way of remembrance." Perceiving, however, that the vocation of a Christian is so high and holy, let our readers be entreated, distinctly to reflect on the vast difference between union with the Son of God, and a mere "name to live." And let such of them as are Christians indeed, be solicitous to comply with the obligations evidently laid upon them, to promote at all times, and by all

means, the welfare and increase of that body, in connexion with which lie their safety and their glory. Especially let all men lay to heart, that the doctrine we have been considering furnishes one of the best and most facile means of ascertaining "what manner of spirit we are of:" for it is both a scriptural and a self-evident conclusion, from the view that has been given of "the body of Christ," that "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

NO. IV.

RESULTS.

From the proofs and illustrations already submitted relative to the doctrine of the mystical union, it will at once appear, that a correct answer to the inquiry, Are you or are you not a member of "the body of Christ?" decides at once what is a man's present standing in the sight of God. Christ's church is his body;* there can be no such thing as living christianity but in connexion with his body; for it has been abundantly shewn that *that* connexion is the alpha and omega of every thing belonging to christian light and life: consequently, every member of the

* Ephes. i. 23. Collos. i. 18 and 24.

Church visible of Christ, every person who professes himself a christian, is professedly a member of the body of Christ. He may not be so in fact; you may not be bound to recognize his claim; but still that is the amount of such profession. The whole church visible on earth is professedly (in connexion with departed saints) “the body of Christ;” and therefore every one who occupies the station of a member of the church, avows his relation as a member of Christ.

Upon this ground, then, we adopt, as our first result, the words of a well known and justly admired composition, commonly received among the churches:

“*Saints by profession, ARE BOUND to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.*”*

This result, we say, is founded upon the assumption, that the body or church of Christ is *one*; so that all who are “saints by profession” are of course professedly members of one body — “members one of another;” and it is as members of the body of Christ, that the communion

* Westminster Conf. Chap. xxvi. sec. 2.

of saints is extended to any of them. Nor is it a matter merely optional whether one saint by profession shall hold communion with another saint by profession: he is *bound*, says our proposition, he is "*bound*" so to do; under pain of being proceeded against as a despiser of the ordinances of Christ tendered to himself, or as a rejecter of them whom God hath received into the fellowship of his body.

It is not unknown that multitudes are unwilling to admit this result; and therefore bend their whole force to give another interpretation to the passage quoted. But why? Wherefore reject the proposition that all who are members of the body of Christ, should hold fellowship together as members of one another? The terms, we have seen, are convertible: all who are members of the living head, are also of one another: and if all God's ordinances of grace were given, as is declared, "for the edifying of the body of Christ"* why not bound to seek for ourselves, why not obliged to extend to all others, professedly members of the same body, the means of edification: declaredly ordained for the comfort and growth of the whole? But without spending time in attempting to decide the precise meaning which the language in question would naturally convey, let the appeal be to the scriptures: let us see whether any other meaning than the one which has been suggested, does not contradict the analogy of faith, and in a great degree hinder the

* Ephes. iv. 12—16.

plain intention of God's ordinances. And as the difference of view principally relates to what is called organical communion, let it be especially inquired, whether the fellowship of Christians in sealing ordinances, in the ordinance of the supper, ought not of right to be extended to all "saints by profession;" to "all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." Our readers surely need not be told that, it is on every hand conceded that the exercise of wholesome discipline and the question of edification, will of course interpose their exceptions to this conclusion in all cases, however wide be its range in every other respect. Nor is it more than barely worth while to remark, that the expression "saints by profession," is not designed to include all persons or sectaries who choose to assume the name of Christians; but only those who make a *credible profession*; that is to say, those whose views of fundamental truth are clearly consistent with a sound profession, and whose conduct does not contradict the profession made by them. It is not the bare assumption of *the name*, it is the exhibition of *the spirit*, that constitutes a credible profession. And, therefore, any thing either in the faith or practice of a man, that is plainly incompatible with the character of a christian, nullifies his claim to the fellowship of the saints.

Keeping in view these exceptions, the reader will put the proper construction on the proposition above quoted, when he understands it as declaring that all persons who are believers by profession, and consequently professed members of

the Lord Jesus Christ, are mutually bound to recognize their relationship to him and one another, by holding fellowship together in the worship of God; and especially in that ordinance which is said to be “a bond and pledge of their communion with him and with each other, as members of his mystical body.”* This obligation, it has been repeatedly remarked, springs out of the very constitution of the church of God. The whole of the regulations and ordinances found in this church were given to it as *one*. The right, therefore, to partake, arises out of the fact, that the party enjoying or applying for it is a member of that body, “for the edifying of”† which they are declaredly provided. And there remains no way of lawfully refusing this claim (the exceptions above noted kept in mind) but by making it out that the claim itself is void, i. e. that the party applying is without credible pretensions to the character of a true christian. To this it will no doubt be objected, that we make the terms of communion in the visible church, one and the same with those that all admit to be indispensable to the communion of the church invisible. The allegation is admitted. We *do* say, that the terms upon which external christian fellowship avowedly proceeds, are the very ones which go to constitute the real christian character. The scriptures, also, say the same thing: and it is really wonderful, that any one should

* Conf Faith, chap. xxix. sect. 1.

† Ephes. iv. 12.

call the principle in question. Is it not a fact, that every one who is not a member of Christ is without a just claim to the name of christian? and if he have no right to the name, upon what conceivable plan should he have a right to the privileges? Nay, is it not a common, a universal thing, in debaring from the supper of the Lord, to state that they who are not of the body of Christ, who are not believers in the strict and only proper sense of the word, have no right to partake of that holy table of the Lord, and in adventuring so to do, eat and drink judgment to themselves? Will any one say, that all the treasures of knowledge and fire of zeal can qualify in any respect, where they are not found in a living member of the great community? or, is there on earth a christian church that dare admit such characters on the ground of their orthodoxy, when at the same time they did not even profess to be christians indeed? Whatever else may be superadded as additional terms of communion, then, every church agrees that union with the Lord Jesus is a term not to be dispensed with: and, therefore, a profession of this union is always looked upon as implied if not expressed. True, indeed, men cannot search the heart—they are not, therefore, able infallibly to determine the soundness of the claim: but still, it is upon the advancement of this claim that they are admitted; and the circumstances of credibility under which it is preferred furnish the rule of judgment laid down for them in the scripture. In the application of this rule they may be mis-

taken: but in assuming the principle, that all christians have a right to christian ordinances, (with the exception above named), and that *none but a christian* can have any right, there is obviously no mistake. If then such as really have no right impose upon the churches, they must be borne with until such time as their conduct reveals their true character; or till the Lord himself shall separate the tares from the wheat. If this, then, be to make the terms of communion in the church visible and invisible the same, who so mad as to insist that they are different? What is the church invisible but Christ's body? What is the church visible but professedly Christ's body? Is it strange, then, if the one be *professedly* what the other is *really*, that the terms of communion in them should be *professedly* the same? or rather, would it not be a marvellous result, if a distinction created on account of false professors, who have no right to be numbered with the church in any sense, should give rise to different sorts of terms of communion, merely for the purpose of covering the admission of those whose very entrance is predicated upon the supposition of their being true men!! But it is really trifling with our readers patience, and ruffling our own, to attempt reasoning on this subject. It is a very clear thing, that unless membership in Christ be an indispensable term of lawful communion with his church, the sacraments are not rightly called "seals of the covenant of grace," or "pledges" of the saints "communion as members of Christ's mystical body." And on the

other hand, if they are really such, the church is bound to consider living christianity an indispensable term, and to admit none except as they sustain a credible claim to the character of living christians. So far then at least, the terms of communion in the church visible and invisible are the same. For communion in the church *invisible* no other term is requisite. The question, therefore, is, what right has the church visible to superadd other terms? or can such right be plead to exist at all? Churches we know have of late been in the habit of creating multitudes of indispensables: or, in other words, of narrowing the way of admittance into their communion to such a degree, that multitudes whom they believe and admit to be christians are necessarily excluded. That is to say, they not only insist that men should afford evidence that they are christians indeed, but they impose the obligation of receiving and defending *their* views of scriptural doctrine and order, in every point concerning which they have seen proper to declare an opinion. All, therefore, who cannot in all these things conscientiously profess a coincidence of view, are necessarily cut off. Is this right? or rather, are not these "saints by profession, BOUND to maintain an holy fellowship and communion" in those great ordinances about which there is no difference of view, notwithstanding a diversity of sentiments in other matters? So says our proposition: so also says the scripture. For here, likewise, the constitutions of the churches visible and invisible agree. It would be strange indeed

if they did not. It would be "passing strange" if the terms were more lax in the confessedly pure church, than in that the supposed impurity of which affords the only ground for creating this distinction. But "to the law and to the testimony." The word of God itself recognizes living christianity as the all important term, and in the church visible as well as invisible it recognizes no other.

"The cup of blessing, which we bless," what is it? The badge of a party? The attestation of our agreement in some contested point about which we differ with others, called christian? The pledge of our adherence to a certain "form of sound words?" No such thing. "Is it not," say the scriptures, "*the communion of the blood of Christ?*" The bread which we break, is it not *the communion of the body of Christ?*"* This is precisely the nature of that communion about which the greatest particularity is observed. It is the sign and pledge of those who partake of it being one in Christ: it is a fellowship which they hold under the specific idea of being members of his body. So at least says our apostle. For in the next verse he adds, as the ground of this communion, and therefore as the thing attested by it, that "we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." Clearly then, in our Apostle's view, the church's being *one bread and one body*, is the ground of the communion maintained by her members in

* 1 Cor. viii. 16.

the supper of the Lord. And the whole of this ordinance is confessedly designed to shadow forth their severally uniting with Christ himself, whence they become united one with another. This view of the subject, be it remembered, is introduced by our Apostle, to shew the inconsistency of admitting professed idolaters to the holy communion. No idolater can be at the same time a member of Christ. This is repeatedly taught in scripture, and directly insinuated in the passage in question: “ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of Devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of Devils.” And just before, it had been said, that “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils.” It is then to combat this view, that the Apostle insists upon the term of communion already adverted to. Communion in the sacrament of the Supper, he says, is the communion of the body and blood of Christ. For, says he, it proceeds upon the ground of our being one bread and one body; inasmuch as we are all partakers of that one bread, i. e. of Jesus Christ, the bread of life. And from this assumption, that participation in the ordinance supposes and signifies participation of Christ the one bread, by which they themselves become one bread and one body, he argues the incongruity of admitting idolaters to fellowship in the ordinance; whereas they are manifestly not partakers of Christ, and so *not* one bread and body with his people. The amount of the reasoning is, that men have no right to the symbol, while they have manifestly no interest in

in the Saviour, and consequently nothing in common with his body or church.—The reader will do well to mark carefully the progress of this argument. 1. The Supper is the symbol of the pardon and life, together with all other saving benefits that are in Christ. This is the Apostle's first proposition: it is the "communion of the blood and body of Christ." 2. The ground of men's holding fellowship in this ordinance is their being parts of the one great system that is saved: "for we being many, are one bread and one body." 3. The principle by which they are thus united into one system; and so called to act as members the one of another; "for we are all partakers of that one bread." Here then is a passage in which the terms of Christian communion are professedly treated of, treated of, too, with a special reference to the doctrine of exclusion from Christian fellowship: yet not a whisper, not the slightest suggestion of any other ground of admission, but living union with the living head; and not the remotest hint of any impediment but the want of such connexion.

But further: that we have not built too broad an inference on the Apostle's premises, plainly appears from this fact, that a profession of such union with the Lord Jesus Christ was always required, and *nothing else* than such profession was required during Apostolic times. "Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"—"If thou believest thou mayest," was always the question, was always the condition propounded to those who sought the privileges of the Christian church.

And a correspondent reply always secured the privilege. Now, no well informed Christian will pretend to say, that a profession of faith in Jesus Christ was ever understood to mean any thing differerent from a reliance on him for the great salvation offered in his gospel. It was always (whether truly or falsely made) the avowal of living faith, the profession of laying hold upon him for the hope of eternal life. This a profession of believing always meant: this it still means. But he who truly believes in Christ really lays hold on Christ—is one with him. Admission, therefore, upon an avowal of faith in the Redeemer, was simply the recognition of the applicant as a member of Christ; it was a recognition of his claim to all those privileges which the living head has provided for the body, and for every member of it. That it could imply no such approbation of the whole circle of Christian truth as is now frequently attributed to it, or that it could not be understood as a declaration of an intention to support every thing contained in this circle, is a plain case. For the profession was exacted from all men, Gentile as well as Jew: from the convert of an hour, who had enjoyed no previous acquaintãnce with the truth of God, as well as from those to whom it had been familiar from infancy. Now, that such men as the jailor of Philippi, or eunuch of Ethiopa, or the thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, had made acquisitions in knowledge that would admit of such profession, declared or implied, is plainly impossible. They believed the truth at

the time declared by the Apostles and Evangelist, severally: it was that portion of truth which was calculated to lead them directly to Christ as the giver of repentance and eternal life: they professed to adhere to the offer as made to them: and then, as believers in Christ, as members of his body, they were baptized. Whatever, then, was necessary to a credible profession of faith in the Redeemer, was always exacted; but nothing more was exacted. They were immediately admitted to the benefit of those ordinances which his goodness had provided, that in the participation of these they might "grow up into him in all things, which is the head."

It will no doubt, be very easy to point out a multitude of circumstances in which modern churches differ from those of Apostolic days; and to devise multitudes of reasons why the Gentiles might be admitted upon a more general profession than is now thought sufficient. And of this species of objection it may be proper hereafter to take notice. But the present inquiry is directed solely to the question whether the Apostles did not consider living faith, or rather that union with Christ of which living faith is the appropriate fruit, as the proper, and *only proper* basis of church communion. The inquiries made by them, we see were directed to that point, and to that point alone. The instructions upon which the profession was in most cases founded, were precisely of the kind that are needed for the production of such faith. And if these appeared to produce their appropriate effect; if they convin-

ced the party addressed that they were sinners and Jesus Christ the Saviour; and if in consequence of this conviction they professed to flee to him, it was all that was thought needful. They were immediately received into the fellowship of the saints: and in the enjoyment of this fellowship they were expected to “grow in grace, and *in the knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” No instance is on record of a refusal of any person who appeared to possess this single qualification.

Let us, however, to bring this point to a close, examine particularly one single instance out of the many. When the Apostle Peter went to Cesarea in obedience to a heavenly vision, upon entering into the house of Cornelius, and expounding to the circle there assembled, the great doctrine of redemption by Christ, “the Holy Ghost,” it is said, “fell upon all them which heard the word,” “while Peter yet spake.” The inference immediately drawn by the Apostle from this unexpected gracious communication, was, that those Gentiles were chosen vessels, as well as himself or any of the Jewish brethren who had accompanied him.—Immediately therefore, he puts the question, “can any man forbid water, that those should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” and accordingly forthwith he caused baptism to be administered. Upon his return to Jerusalem we find that the church there was very much dissatisfied with the course that had been pursued. “They contended with him, saying, thou wentest in to men uncircum-

cised, and didst eat with them.” It is to be remembered, that not only “brethren,” but “Apostles” themselves were of the discontented party. Peter however “rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and concluded his defence by supporting what he had done in relation to the baptism, from a well known declaration of our Lord himself, which he quoted in so many words. His remarks upon the subject were closed in these words: “forasmuch then as God gave unto them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God.” This exposition of the matter was decisive: “when they heard these things they held their peace and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

Let the reader recollect, that the controversy concerning Jewish rites was not at this time decided. Peter had viewed them as obligatory; and was prepared to act in opposition to this view, only through the influence of a vision, accompanied by an explicit commandment to go with the men. The Apostles of Jerusalem contended with him about his procedure; and that the contention reached the matter of baptism, as well as the going in to uncircumcised men and eating with them, is evident from the fact that Peter’s answer mainly defends the baptism. In fact, this point was not settled till ten years afterward in the synod of Jerusalem: and even then, there was “much disputing” about it, as we are informed by the writer of the Acts. In the face, then, of all these

prejudices Peter decided; and the Apostles and brethren at Jerusalem, when they understood the matter, decided that it was right to admit uncircumcised Gentiles to the communion of the church of God. Upon what ground did this decision rest? God had given them the same spirit that had been imparted to the Jews: he hath “also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,” said this rejoicing and admiring multitude. To refuse the communion of men to whom God had “*granted repentance unto life,*” was accounted by Peter a withstanding God. And so also, it would appear, judged all the brethren when the thing was rightly understood. Here then is proof not to be controverted, that the bare fact of a man’s being in possession of God’s spirit as the spirit of grace—of “repentance unto life” (so they construed it) was, in the judgment of “Apostles and brethren,” reason enough for admitting him into the communion of that body of which God had made him a member. It may be said, indeed, that if men in our day could make out their claims in the same manner, their admission would follow as a thing of course; but that we are not bound to take their own profession in proof of their christianity.

And what kind of evidence then would you wish to have? You do not require miraculous effusions of God’s spirit, in support of the pretensions of those with whom you ordinarily *do* commune. What then is your authority for requiring it of others? That kind of proof which you deem sufficient in one case, is equally so in

all. If therefore, the miraculous effusion is not to be expected, the ordinary evidence of repentance unto life is the utmost you may ask for. And if among brethren of your own denomination this be deemed sufficient, and you at the same time refuse to decide according to it in case of other applications, is not this to “withstand God?” But we must not trifle with the patience of the reader, by spending time in refuting such a wretched cavil. The sum of the matter is, that the Apostles evidently considered the Holy Spirit’s work as the only essential requisite to the communion of the saints. This, and this only, made them members of the body, and to the members of the body, they were perfectly clear communion should be extended. The proof of this point is all we want. For if it be a maxim every where assumed in scripture, and always acted upon by the Apostles, that the members of Christ are, in virtue of their standing, entitled to his fellowship, and to that of all their fellow members; then, “as saints by profession,” are by profession members of the body of Christ, they are consequently “bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification.” And this “communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.” Such is the conclusion to which we are necessarily led by following out the all important doctrine of the Bible, that the whole church of Christ

and all true christians “MEMBERS IN PARTICULAR.”

We may arrive at the same conclusion in a variety of other ways. But as the consideration of them does not fall properly within the plan of this essay, to pursue the subject through all its ramifications might subject the writer to the charge of “travelling out of the record.” There is, however, one other point of view in which the subject may be presented, at once so important and decisive that we cannot forbear “travelling” a little out of our way to notice it. It is this:—one of the great ends for which the sacraments were instituted, unavoidably demand that fellowship in them should be maintained, to the extent already mentioned. The sacraments it is said by an authority which few of our readers will be disposed to call in question, are designed among other things, “to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world;”* as well as “to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body;”† which is the point we have been considering.

Now, if the assumption be correct, that the putting “a visible difference between those that belong to the church and the rest of the world” is an end of these institutions not to be lost sight of; what shall be said of the principle so much in vogue, that a participation in either of them,

*Westminster Conf. chap. xxvii. sect. 1.

†Ibid. chap. xxix. sect. 1.

especially in the supper, amounts to a declaration, nay, is *predicated* upon a declaration, that the party thus admitted ranks with the denomination under whose banners he receives the ordinance, and promises to hold fellowship nowhere else? If the assumption be correct, what shall be said in justification of the practice of excluding all who do not adopt the peculiar tenets of the church in question? Obviously that they have diverted the sacraments from their proper use, and rendered them badges by which each denomination is *visibly* distinguished from all other portions of the church, as well as from the world. There is no getting rid of this consequence. In fact it is one which most people are ready to avow. They *do* consider a participation in the supper, as an evidence that the party so communicating belongs to *that denomination* in which he holds fellowship: and they *do* contend that to extend christian fellowship beyond the peculiar circle, is to trample upon the very distinction which the sacrament of the supper holds forth. That is to say, in direct contradiction to the authority above quoted, they do not admit the sacraments to be intended to put a visible difference between the church and the world merely; but also contend that they put a visible difference between the members of the different churches. Hence it follows, that the refusal to participate, does not amount to an evidence that the party refusing is of the world, not of the church; it is only understood to declare that he is not of that denomination with the members of which he re-

fuses to hold fellowship. And on the other hand, the refusal to admit a person to the communion of the saints, is not understood as a denying his connexion with the church of Christ, but only his connexion with the section of it that refuses him.

The man must be wilfully blind who does not see that this mode of construction destroys entirely the great intention of the sacraments as stated above. For under this arrangement a person's own refusal to commune, or the refusal of the church to admit of his communing, creates no such visible distinction between those who belong to the church and the rest of the world. And when we see the sacraments administered in a very large assembly, only a few of which join in the fellowship of the saints, so far from concluding that the residue are *of the world not of the church*, we cannot tell but that the majority of them, and perhaps *the whole of them*, are of the church of Christ, as well as those who did partake. This were a marvellous device for "putting a *visible* difference" indeed!—But admit the principle that the sacraments *do* "put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church and the rest of the world;" carry this principle out; and then where does modern practice land you? Certainly, when you refuse to extend fellowship to any persons, to the members of any other denomination, you say by that very deed that they do not belong to the church of Christ, but to the world. You *do this*, for you arrogate to yourself, and you deny to them, that very symbol which you say

serves to put a visible difference between the two. You receive it; from them you withhold it; and if receiving or not receiving constitutes the “visible difference,” you certainly make it out to be your “*visible*” opinion that the party in question are no members of Christ, but are “of the world.” We know that this is a consequence at which the really pious mind will startle—will shudder. But is it not a *legitimate* consequence? Must you not admit it, or deny the premises? that is, deny that the sacraments put a visible difference between church members and the world. You may indeed plead that you do not undertake to judge a brother: that as there is a difference in sentiment, you only mean to let that difference be marked: and meanwhile you leave it to God’s judgment entirely, to decide the soundness or unsoundness of those persons and churches from which you stand separate. But will that mend the matter? Does not the very fact of your refusing to countenance a fellow professor by joining him or permitting him to join you in an ordinance, one great end of which is putting “a visible difference” between the members of Christ and the people of the world—does not this very fact declare that there is a difference? Does it not declare that there is that very difference which the sacraments are said to mark? If it does not, then you deny that the sacraments constitute such visible mark, and so contradict your first principle: if it does, then you have already judged your brother; you have said he is of the world.

From this view of matters it will appear that to restrict the communion of the saints in the participation of the sacraments to peculiar sections of the church; and to erect such participation into an evidence of our agreement in certain opinions peculiar to such sections, amounts to a direct prostitution of God's great ordinances.— They are not only diverted from the declared object, the putting a visible difference between his own people and the world; but they are prostituted by being made the "visible" tokens of men's agreement in sentiment about some point of doctrine or of order, in disputing about which the churches have been shattered. Thus, for instance, in the memorable case which gave rise to the sapient distinction between church communion and the communion of saints; the Secession churches having divided about the question of the Burgess' oath, respectively made an agreement among their members on this not vastly important question a term of communion. They could not be content that "every man should be firmly persuaded in his own mind;" but such as communed together must be of one mind. The consequence then was, that their separate communion no longer distinguished them exclusively from the world; it was made a mean of distinguishing them from one another. Their participation in the sacraments, on the other hand, was no longer a "bond and pledge of their communion with Christ and with one another, as members of his mystical body;" for they admitted that those from whom they separated, and

whose fellowship they refused, occupied precisely the same standing, were also members of his mystical body. But as acquiescence or non-acquiescence in the Burgess' oath was made by them respectively the term of communion, it followed that between these churches at least, the participation of the sacraments, put the "visible difference" in that particular respect. That alone was judged sufficient to authorize the "visible difference," though in every thing else they should be perfectly agreed: and by consequence, the supper of our Lord was by them administered as a "visible" testimony of their agreement in this point. *That* and *that only* was the purpose answered by the sacraments in these instances, as a mark of "difference:" but that our Lord ever instituted a sacrament to be the mark of difference on any such subject, we have never yet heard.

Upon the whole, the inference drawn from a statement of the scriptural doctrine of the mystical union, in the first number of this essay, applies in its full force to the subject of communion. It is there infered "that it is to no man, considered in his individual capacity, but solely as a part of the body of Christ, that any of the dispensations of God are measured out."* This, we have clearly seen, the Apostle Paul makes to be the ground of sacramental communion, the point most contested; and all the Apostles, it has been demonstrated, coincided with him in judg-

*No. 1. page 21.

ment, and practised accordingly. By narrowing this foundation then, by superadding other conditions neither named nor acknowledged by the Apostles of the Lord, we not only destroy the intention of the sacraments, as visible signs of difference between the church and the world: but, exactly in the spirit of Pharisaic teachers, by our traditions we make void the law of God. We impose conditions which God never imposed: we cut off those whom the Lord hath received: and by screwing up the standard of attainments to very high degrees of knowledge in the mysteries of the faith, we avowedly cut out the weaklings of the flock, and consent that babes in knowledge shall perish with the world. It is in vain to object to this representation of the matter, that other churches have their separate communions too; and that these severally distinguish them from the world, as ours do us; and that they receive moreover in the character of "strong men" the very persons whom we judge to be weak, if we admit their christian character at all. But does this alter the thing! Does it release *you* from the charge, of refusing to receive "them that are weak in the faith," as the Lord hath given commandment? Does it free *either* of you from the charge of destroying the visible distinction which the sacraments were designed to keep up, when you *do* refuse to admit another to communion, and so, visibly, *do* confound one another with the world? Each of you indeed may thus distinguish your own members from the world; but do you not both refuse

to distinguish other members from the same world? and is it not such refusal, according to the declared intention of the sacraments, a confounding one another with the world?

The only question of any kind of importance is, whether we are bound to believe that other denominations are parts of the christian church; and their members, members of Christ's body. It is certainly little to the credit of the Western world, that there are in it numbers who really need the proof of this point. But as we are persuaded of the fact, a neglect to discuss this very wonderful controversy would be to brave unnecessarily the danger of losing all our previous labour. Here, however, we shall not, as formerly, appeal "to the law and to the testimony." For certainly it is only a disregard of that "sure word of prophecy," and an amazing propensity to build every thing upon "the traditions of the fathers," that could incline any man to doubt whether his own church be not the only true church, and christians of his own denomination the only true christians. Any man who directs his judgment by the word of God, who reflects upon what little and what various degrees of light, men formed their profession (incontrovertibly a sound profession) in apostolic times; any man who lays to heart what it really is that constitutes a christian in scriptural judgment; any such man will at once perceive, that there is light enough in very many denominations to lead men to the Saviour; and if he is disposed to judge them according to their fruits,

he will, in innumerable instances, be compelled to acknowledge that they really have been there. It is that leaven of Phariseeism, that disposition to put the doctrine and ordinances of the New Testament church upon the very same footing on which the Jewish doctors placed the law of Moses, that creates the whole difficulty upon this subject. And there are men among us sufficiently ignorant and impudent to avow their belief, that all who do not walk according to the traditions received by them and their church, that is, according to Dr. Such-an-one's exposition of matters, are ipso facto convicted of a false profession; of being no better than Pharisees.—*To the traditions of the fathers*, then, let the appeal be made. These very fathers whom you profess to follow, and in whom you glory, differ as much from your views in this point, as they will be found, upon examination, to do in almost every other. Hear the fathers! Hear Thomas Boston! "Those who confine their love to a party, to whom God has not confined his grace, are souls too narrow to be put among the children. In what points soever men differ from us, in their judgment or way; yet if they appear to agree with us in love to God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and in bearing his image, we will love them as brethren, if we ourselves be of the heavenly family." *Boston's Four-fold State. State iii. Head i. Use i.* Hear the fathers! Hear Dr. Owen! His single name is a host. In his sermon before the Parliament, relative to their duty in building up Zion, he notices and thus

answers the following objection: "But it will be said, we are still at a loss; for what woful divisions are there among the generation of professors? Some are for one way, and some for another; some say the Prelatists are so, some the Presbyterians, some the Independant, some the Anabaptists, some the Fifth Monarchy-men, some others: and on whom should the valuation pleaded for be cast?" The Dr's answer is as follows: "Some do say so, and plead thus, it cannot be denied; but the truth is, the greater is their weakness and folly. It is impossible men acquainted with the spirit of God and with the gospel should *say so*, unless they were under the power of one temptation or another. But it is no *party*, but the *party of Christ*, in the world and against the world, the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent, that I am pleading for; that men as to their interest in Christ should be judged from such denominations, as though they make a great noise in the world, signify very little things in themselves, is most unrighteous and unequal; nor will men find peace in such rash and precipitate judgments. There may be many divisions among the people of God, and yet none of them be divided from Christ the head. The branches of a tree may be entangled by strong winds, and stricken against one another, and yet none of them be broken off from the tree itself; and when the storm is over, every one possesses its own place in quietness, beauty, and fruitfulness. Whilst the strong winds of temptation are upon the fol-

lowers of Christ, they may be tossed and entangled; but not being broken off from the root, when he shall say to the winds, *be still*, they will flourish again in peace and beauty. Let not Satan cheat you of your duty by this trivial objection. If he can keep you from duty whilst he can make divisions, he hath you sure enough. They of whom I speak, be they under what reproach or obloquies soever, they are all true men, all the children of one father, though they are unhappily fallen out by the way." *The glory and interest of nations: a sermon on Isa. iv. 5.* Hear him again. "Some men think that none are *righteous* that are not of their principles; than which principle there is nothing more unrighteous. Let them that differ from them walk never so *holily*, profess never so *strictly*; yet if they are not of their *mind*, they are not righteous. If men are offended on such accounts, it is because they will be so." *Same sermon.*

Once more hear Dr. Owen: he is speaking of the injury which the church of God at large endured, through the selfish zeal of every one of the sectaries above-mentioned to exalt themselves above the other denominations. "Every one, if not *personally* yet in association with them of some *peculiar persuasion* with himself, would be the head; and because they are not, they conclude they are not of the *body*, nor will care for the *body*, but rather endeavour its ruin. Because their *peculiar* interest doth not reign, the *common interest* shall be despised; and this hath been the temper or rather *distemper*, of the

people of God in this nation now for sundry years.—Unless God end this frame, my expectations I confess of a happy issue of the great work of God, will wither day by day.” *God’s work in founding Zion: a sermon on Isa. xiv. 32.*

Were it not a waste of pages that may be better occupied, and an abuse of the more intelligent reader’s patience, we might add scores and hundreds of passages to the same amount. But really the man who is so full of his own tenets, and so eager against those of his neighbour, as to require proof that the church of God is composed of a great many denominations besides his own, does not deserve this attention: he carries about him very strong symptoms of being a Pharisee; and the really intelligent christian will be apt to suspect the soundness of his faith, a great deal sooner than that of his more humble adversaries, who may make a much less sound profession. Father Boston has said, that such men have souls too narrow to be put among the children. Dr. Owen thought it impossible that such characters could be acquainted with the spirit of God, and with the gospel; unless, indeed, their perverse opinion might be accounted for from the influence of strong temptation. The apostle Paul would have said, that such a man “is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,” &c. To these great authorities we most cordially bow; and therefore add nothing further, in proof of the position, but the declared judgment

of the Westminster Assembly, who say in their Confession (chap. xxv. sec. 2 and 4) that “the visible church, which is also Catholic——consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion.” And that “particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.” Such then was the view of Owen; such the view of the reverend assembly which sat in the age of Dr. Owen.—A list of the most important sects into which the English churches were at that time divided, is given in the first quotation. And if it shall be said, that the sectaries then were far less corrupt than those among us, and their subjects of contention far more frivolous; if this shall be said in order to justify a refusal to recognize the modern sections of the church as christian—we have only to deny the fact, and to say with Dr. Owen, from a sermon already quoted, “you seldom see a man take up a bye-opinion, but he instantly lays more *weight* upon it than upon all religion besides. If that be not *enthroned*, be it a matter of never so *small* importance, he scarce cares what becomes of all other truths which he doth embrace.” And in this way we may fairly account for the superlative importance that each man, and each sect, is in the habit of attaching to the error, real or supposed, which *they* are in the habit of confronting. But away with this shameful controversy. “That which *holds the head,*”

says Dr. Owen, “*that* is the church; that which doth not so, is no church at all.” And if in the application of this plain rule, a man cannot find out to what denomination he may extend his fellowship, they will certainly lose little by his missing the discovery.

Two points then have been sufficiently ascertained: 1st. That all the communion of the members of Christ is founded upon the fact of their constituting one body; and, therefore, that this communion should of right be extended, “as God offereth opportunity,” to all who afford evidence—*the ordinary evidence* of their being *of* the body: And 2dly. That the members of Christ are to be found in various denominations, and are not confined to OUR OWN, whatever that be. It follows, as a consequence, that the communion of saints is not to be restricted to a single denomination, but to be extended to “all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus,” to whatever party they may be more immediately attached; provided only, that it be done to edification. This conclusion, however consonant to scripture and the standards of almost all the Presbyterian churches (and, for ought we know, of *all* of them), is nevertheless known to be at war with modern practice. It cannot therefore be wondered at, that it should be at war with the peoples’ prejudices; and that multitudes of objections should be urged against it. To the most imposing of those objections it will be doubtless proper to attend. Not, however, at present. They must

be reserved for discussion in a future number.—Probably the most formidable and general opposition that has been raised to the principles above defended, is to be ascribed to the very common apprehension of their novelty. It looks like a leaving the “good old way,” and treading unexplored paths; or at least paths that have not been explored until lately, and that by a people who it is generally known flung open their gates to every kind of error and abomination, at the very same time that they left them open to a promiscuous communion. That such *has* been the fact in our quarter of the world, is beyond a doubt. But it is a mistake to imagine that false doctrine will *necessarily* attend the practice of a mixed communion: and it is yet a *more* palpable mistake to suppose that the party alluded to were the *first*, who practised it. We plead for no extention of it to the members of churches that do not “hold the head;” unless their individual title be individually made out: we plead for it, not as a novel practice, but as alike the doctrine and the practice of the church during all her best and purest ages; as the doctrine and practice of the Westminster fathers, and Westminster age; as a doctrine and practice that have only been lost during the squabbles and darkness of far later times. And with the proof of this point we shall close our present number.

That such was really the doctrine of Westminster divines, must, we think, appear to every person who does not suffer his judgement to be warped in construing the language of their con-

session. They tell us that the visible church Catholic consists of particular churches, some more and some less pure in doctrine, ordinances and worship, (chap. xxv.) Now, undoubtedly these "particular churches," more or less pure, consisted of "saints by profession." And they tell us, in their chapter on the communion of saints, that "*saints by profession* are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God," &c. They also tell us, that this communion "is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." And the ground of such communion with *all saints*, is stated in the first section of that chapter. They are the same that were shewn in the beginning of this number to be the *scriptural* grounds: i. e. that all saints are united to Jesus Christ the head; have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, &c. "and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others gifts and graces, and are *obliged* to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man." It will doubtless require great expertness to work this into a consistency with the doctrine, that communion of saints (*or christian communion!*) is to be restricted to what Dr. Owen calls a particular persuasion.

But let us hear the Savoy divines, let us hear Dr. Owen express his opinion of the sentiment intended to be conveyed by the Westminster Assembly. The Independents having obtained

liberty of Oliver Cromwell to publish an uniform confession of their faith, met for this purpose at the Savoy, on the 12th of October, 1658; which was only ten years and eight months after the Westminster Assembly had concluded their labours. At the head of this meeting were Drs. John Owen and Thomas Goodwin. These were the most celebrated divines of the Independent persuasion; and the Presbyterians of the day said that they managed every thing. These two, together with Philip Nye, Joseph Caryl, William Bridges, and William Greenhill, formed the committee by which the articles of their confession were drafted. No man in his senses will doubt their competency to ascertain the meaning of the Westminster Assembly's article on communion, when it is recollected that they lived at the very time of its being drafted, and maintained habitual intercourse with the members of that Assembly. In fact, two of this very committee had been members of the Westminster Assembly, viz. Dr. Goodwin and Philip Nye. So also had been several others of the Independent divines. They had, therefore, every opportunity of understanding what was meant by the Assembly's article on the point before us. Now hear Mr. Neale, their historian, and himself a divine of the Independent church.—“The Savoy confession proceeds upon the plan of the Westminster Assembly, which made the work very easy; and in most places retains their words. They tell the world in their preface, that they fully consent to the Westminster confession,

for the substance of it, but have taken liberty to add a few things, in order to obviate some erroneous opinions that have been more boldly maintained of late than in former times. They have likewise varied the method in some places, and have here and there expressed themselves more clearly, as they found occasion." Mr. Neale goes on to tell us that they rejected, as might be expected, the Assembly's articles relative to church government: but that "upon the whole, the difference between these two confessions in point of doctrine is so very small, that the modern Independents have in a manner laid aside the use of it in their families." Here then we have the Savoy Assembly's own declaration of their agreement with the *substance* of the Westminster confession, except in point of government and matters connected with it. This they stated in their preface. They, however, took the liberty of expressing these sentiments in their own words, whensoever they thought it might be done more clearly. And, as has been said, Dr. Owen was one of the six who drafted the articles; and together with Dr. Goodwin, was said to have managed the Assembly as he pleased. So says my author, though he treats it as an aspersion of the other venerable men who sat with them. Now hear what they had to say on the doctrine of communion. "Churches consisting of persons sound in the faith, and of good conversation, ought not to refuse communion with each other, though they walk not in all things according to the same rule of church order; and if

they judge other churches to be true churches though less pure, they may receive to occasional communion such members of those churches as are credibly testified to be godly, and to live without offence."

The *being godly, the living without offence*, then, was in the judgment of the Savoy divines the proper term of communion, and whoever bore this character ought to be admitted, though they were members of churches "less pure."—What sort of churches they were, that Dr. Owen allowed to be "true churches," and the members of these "children of the same father," has been already shewn. The foregoing statement needs no remarks. It sufficiently establishes the points that the Independents, at the head of whom were such men as Owen, Goodwin, Nye, Caryl, Burroughs, &c. &c. held the doctrine under consideration; and also that in their judgment the Westminster Assembly held and had declared the very same. The reader, if he pleases, may examine this document at large, in *Neale's history of the Puritans, Protectorate of Cromwell, Anno 1658.*

But as the great difficulty seems to be the decision of the question what are fundamentals in the christian religion; and as every sectary is inclined to make the particular point by which his church is distinguished a fundamental; it may not be amiss to put the reader in possession of another document, which will serve to shew what was the opinion of the Westminster age upon that subject, and may therefore help to

supply an answer to the inquiry, what churches are sufficiently pure to be recognized as parts of the church of Christ?—In the year 1658, the English parliament appointed a committee to “nominate certain divines to draw up a catalogue of fundamentals, to be presented to the house.” Fourteen divines were nominated, only eleven of whom, however, acted. They were, “Dr. Owen, Dr. Goodwin, Dr. Cheynel, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Reyner, Mr. Nye, Mr. Sydrach Simpson, Mr. Vines, Mr. Manton, Mr. Jacomb.” The articles presented by them, and fortified by a multitude of scripture proofs, were as follow:

“1. That the holy scripture is that rule of knowing God and of living unto him, which whoso does not believe cannot be saved.

2. That there is a God, who is the creator, governor and judge of the world, which is to be received by faith, and every other way of the knowledge of him is insufficient.

3. That this God, who is the creator, is eternally distinct from all creatures, in being and blessedness.

4. That this God is one, in three persons or subsistences.

5. That Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man, without the knowledge of whom there is no salvation.

6. That this Jesus Christ is the true God.

7. That this Jesus Christ is also true man.

8. That this Jesus Christ is God and man in one person.

9. That this Jesus Christ is our redeemer, who by paying a ransom, and bearing our sins, has made satisfaction for them.

10. That this same Lord Jesus Christ is he that was crucified at Jerusalem, and rose again and ascended into heaven.

11. That this same Jesus Christ, being the only God and man in one person, remains forever a distinct person from all saints and angels, notwithstanding their union and communion with him.

12. That all men by nature are dead in sins and trespasses; and no man can be saved unless he be born again, repent and believe.

13. That we are justified and saved by grace and faith in Jesus Christ, and not by works.

14. That to continue in any known sin, upon what pretence or principle soever, is damnable.

15. That God is to be worshipped according to his own will; and whosoever shall despise and forsake all the duties of his worship cannot be saved.

16. That the dead shall rise; and that there is a day of judgment, wherein all shall appear, some to go into everlasting life, and some into everlasting condemnation."

Mr. Baxter who was one of the committee, says that Dr. Owen worded these articles; and that Dr. Goodwin and Messrs. Nye and Simpson were his assistants. My author remarks that there were some other articles in addition to the above, or at least that it was so said; but that these were all which were to be found in the

printed account possessed by him, which account, he remarks, was licensed by authority.— On this view of christian fundamentals, we need make no remarks. Every christian reader will perceive that they are really such; and will perhaps be surprised to learn that some of the committee thought them too specific and numerous to be imposed as a list of christian fundamentals. Let the reader now recollect that these were drawn up several years after the Westminster Assembly had finished its work, and by men too, several of whom had been members of that Assembly, and all of whom admitted the soundness of its doctrines, except in point of government. For though this exhibition was not properly a *judicial* declaration of what is to be considered as fundamental in christian doctrine, though it was drawn up at the command of parliament to answer their special purpose, yet it is no less serviceable in proving what really was the judgment of the Westminster age upon that point.

As a further proof that the doctrine of intercommunion was admitted in those days, it may be observed that the Westminster Assembly sat, not as a church court, but as a council to aid the parliament in the establishment of a national religion. For in those days the churches had not got clear of the ruinous opinion that every nation should have a particular form established by law, to the exclusion of all others.

The Assembly of course moved for the establishment of the Presbyterian scheme; and this

step was likely to involve Independents, Prelatists, and all others in the pains and penalties of the civil law. The Independents remonstrated against so harsh a measure, and plead at least for a toleration. Among other things they agreed that "they would hold occasional communion with the Presbyterian churches, in baptism and the Lord's supper, communicating occasionally with them, and receiving their members to communion as occasion required. Their ministers should preach for each other, and in cases of difficulty they would call in their assistance and advice." Only they besought that Presbyterianism might not be established in such a manner as to expose them and other denominations to the same process of fine, imprisonment, banishment, &c. &c. that had formerly been carried on by the bishops. *Neal's Hist. Purit. Charles I. Anno 1645.*

In conformity with these declared principles, the churches, whether Presbyterian, Independent or Prelatical, acted. This it would be easy to shew by an induction of particulars. But as this article has been already extended to an unreasonable length, and as we profess only to be writing an essay, not a book, this part of our undertaking must be waved. Let it therefore suffice to mention in general, that while no instance can be found of a Presbyterian, or Independent congregation refusing to admit a pious Episcopalian, even at the time when the Episcopal church was persecuting them; so on the other hand there are instances innumerable of

pious Presbyterians and Independents joining occasionally in the communion of the Episcopal churches, when it might be done under circumstances that did not compel them to practice any of those rites against which they objected as unlawful.* In fact this was a thing so usual, that in the year 1689, when the high church had regained all her power, she obtained an act of parliament prohibiting the practice: not because it was deemed a breach of christian order; but because such act would enable them more certainly to discriminate who were non-conformists, in order that they might gratify their hate by proceeding against them according to law. *Neal's Hist. Pur. William and Mary. Anno 1689.†*

To the practice of holding communion with the church of England in those days, it must, however, be acknowledged that a great portion of the Puritans objected. Among them was Dr. Owen, who wrote expressly against it. But the reasons of dissent were not grounded on the unlawfulness of the *principle*, for *that*, we have shewn, was on all hands admitted. The objections were solely directed against *the church of England*, as then established by law; and were grounded partly upon the immeasurable evils she was then inflicting upon dissenters of every name, excepting Catholics; and partly upon her mixing a multitude of Popish rites with all her public services: in fact, she appeared to be fast hastening back to Popery, and was marking her

*See note A at the end of this number.

† See note B at the end of this number.

course with idolatry and blood. This was reason enough, one would think, for abstaining from *her* communion.

We have been thus particular relative to the Westminster age, because it is generally, and indeed not very improperly, looked upon as the touch-stone of orthodoxy. During the ages which preceded it, the practice was common: the *principle*, so far as we have learned, was never called in question. Though indeed, it is only of latter ages that the churches have been accustomed to split themselves up into fragments and sections, on account of differences of opinion: Formerly, they could differ about matters of minor consequence, and even maintain long and arduous controversies, without thinking it needful to testify their zeal by quitting their church connexions. This is an improvement almost peculiar to these ages of the church, the character of which is distinguished in the Revelation of John by the face of a man: and undoubtedly there is too much of *the man* about it. But of this more hereafter.

That such has been the practice, and such the principles of the church of Scotland, subsequent to the Westminster age, is very susceptible of proof. Were it not so, they must have deserted the principles of their fathers, to which they still profess adherence. We will however, tax the patience of the reader with but one proof upon this point. In Mr. Boston's valuable sermon upon the sin of schism, which was levelled against the originators of that denomination known among us as Covenanters, he notices it as

an evidence of their schismatical spirit, that they “refuse communion with us (i. e. the established church of Scotland,) in ordinances, unless it be at some times to serve a turn.” Now, it is plain, that had not the doctrine of communion, as here defended and as held by the fathers, been maintained both by these Covenanters, and by the church of Scotland, at that time, Mr. Boston could have had no room for speaking as he did. For neither would these Covenanters have dared to violate their church order, at a moment when they were just taking a start and professing great purity; nor could the church of Scotland have winked at their occasional communion, designed, as is said above, merely to serve a turn. But the fact is, that the principle was always recognized, was always practised upon, even by the Scottish churches; and though objections were often made to it by some, yet the opposition never was systematized till after the Secession churches divided among themselves. Before this period they were in the habit of communing, when occasion served, with the ministers and people of the established church from which they had seceded; and of admitting the members of the latter to their communion. But when they armed themselves for combat as Burgers and Anti-Burgers, and in the plenitude of their zeal refused to commune with one another, they found themselves obliged to extend the principle for consistency’s sake, and so refused communion with all denominations. But even at this day all their churches do not carry out the

principle, but many of them, both ministers and people, do practice occasional communion.

But enough has been said upon this point.—Enough to satisfy any unbiassed mind that it was the doctrine of the fathers as well as of the Apostles, that in consequence of a common relation to God the Saviour, christians are bound to maintain the communion proper to his members: and that they are called upon to do so, *as a bond and pledge of their mystical communion*; not in testimony of their agreement in a scheme of doctrines. It is, we repeat it, the communion of the Redeemer's members with himself and among themselves; and no man may refuse it to another christian man, no man may impose such terms of communion as are calculated to shut out the most weak and ignorant of his master's flock, without the hazard of being judged for that offence, the imputation of which Peter was so anxious to avoid.



NOTES ON No. IV.

Note A. Page 91.

We will here give instances of occasional communion as practised by the churches severally. Nothing but the want of room prevented our doing this in the first impression of this essay.

1. *A Presbyterian.*—In Neale's notices of the death of eminent non-conformist ministers under the year 1692, we find among others the following. "Mr. Sa-

muel Clark, the ejected minister of St. Bennet Fink, was an indefatigable student, &c.—; he was one of the commissioners of the Savoy, and presented the Presbyterian ministers address of thanks to the king for his declaration concerning ecclesiastical affairs; and though he could not conform as a preacher, he frequently attended the service of the church as a hearer and communicant. He died Dec. 25, 1682, in the 80th year of his age.”

2. *Independents.*—In addition to the evidence already furnished with respect to this sect, we subjoin an extract from an apologetical narration presented to the English parliament by five of them who were members of the Westminster Assembly. The extract indeed specifies no individual instance of the practice in question; but it states that even during their previous banishment in Holland, when they could of course entertain no motive either of fear or hope, their principles led them to extend communion to members of the English hierarchy through whose influence they had been banished, as well as to the Hollanders among whom they were, and who certainly stood remote from the doctrine of independency. The passage is as follows: “As to the church of England, we profess before God and the world, that we do apprehend a great deal of defilement in their way of worship, and a great deal of unwarranted power exercised by their church governors; yet we allow multitudes of their parochial churches to be true churches, and their ministers true ministers. In the late times, *when we had no hopes of returning to our own country*, we held communion with them and offered to receive to the Lord’s supper some that came to visit us in our exile, whom we knew to be godly, upon that relation and membership they held in their parish churches in England, they professing themselves to be members thereof, and belonging thereto. The same charitable disposition we maintained towards the Dutch churches among whom we lived. We mutually gave and received the right hand of fellowship;” (the Dutch churches, be it remembered, were Presbyterian), “holding a brotherly cor-

respondence with the divines, and admitting some of the members of their churches to communion in the sacrament, and other ordinances, by virtue of their relation to these churches." *Neale's Hist. Pur. Charles 1.* 1643.

The paper of which the above is an extract was signed by Dr. Thomas Goodwin and Messrs. Simpson, Nye, Burroughs and Bridges, all members of the Westminster Assembly. Strange indeed if they should have at that time made such an avowal to conciliate their opponents, if the Assembly and parliament had held a different sentiment with respect to the communion of saints!

3. *Episcopalians.*—Of Dr. Thomas Wilson, bishop of Soder and Man, a contemporary of the long-lived heroes of the Westminster school, it is said that "with regard to the rights of conscience in others he exercised the most candid and benevolent moderation. He admitted dissenters to the holy communion, and administered it to them, either sitting or standing, as they themselves approved. *Buck's Miscellaneous works, vol. 1. page 330.*

Should the reader think it surprising that we read or hear so little of this occasional communion in former ages, if it were admitted and practised as here contended for; he has but to recollect that a principle to which all subscribed, and upon which all occasionally acted, never could assume such importance as to be often mentioned in ages when points of difference, not those of agreement, occupied almost all the thoughts and industry of writers of all parties. This was looked upon as a small thing, as a thing of course; and even in those cases in which it does happen to be noticed, it is for the most part incidentally, as might be expected of a matter about which there was no dispute, nor any factitious interest excited in the churches.

The universality of this view however, must be stated with some little exception. For not only Roman Catholics, to whom, as a body, few Protestants feel disposed to allow the title of christian, but the Anabaptists also rejected the diffusive communion here

maintained; and were for restricting christian fellowship to their own denomination. This was the case not only with those wild and turbulent fanatics who sprung up in Germany about the time of the reformation, but likewise with the English Anabaptists of the Westminster age; a people precisely the same in principle with the Baptists of our own day. Mr. Neale mentions the refusal of this sect to hold communion with the other orderly ones then existing in England, (viz: Episcopalians, Independents and Presbyterians), and states that this unseemly carriage towards their brethren of other denominations was one great reason of their being treated with peculiar severity. These are his words: "The people of this persuasion were more exposed to the public resentment, because they would hold communion with none but such as had been dipped." *Hist. Pur. Anno 1646.*

Upon these specimens the reader must be left to make his own reflections.

Note B. page 91.

The statement contained in this sentence is inaccurate both in point of date and matter of fact. The reference was made six or eight months after the passage had been read, and without any recurrence to it at the time of writing, except merely for the purpose of ascertaining the date as indicated at the head of the page. The shame of this carelessness the writer must therefore take upon himself. But though the statement be inaccurate in both of the respects mentioned, the proof of the position contended for will lose nothing of its force by a correction of the errors; as must appear from the following corrected account of the passage referred to in Neale.

1. With respect to the date. The act in question is spoken of by Neale under the year referred to; and it was this that led to the incorrectness of the statement as it respects the date. But Neale's history ends with that year; and he merely glances at the subsequent act of parliament as a thing by which dissenters were *after-*

wards uncharitably and unjustly distressed, in defiance of the act of toleration of 1689 by which their religious liberties had been confirmed to them. It was under the succeeding reign of queen Anne that the bill against occasional conformity was passed; and it was not till the latter end of 1711, twenty-two years after the period at which Neale concludes his history that it passed into a law, having stuck by the way session after session for a considerable number of years, i. e. from the accession of Anne in 1702.

2. This act, Neale says, was ushered into the world “under the specious title of *an act to preserve the protestant religion, and to CONFIRM THE TOLERATION, and further to secure the protestant religion.*” But its intention and tendency was to cut off all dissenters from the established church of England from holding any office of honor or emolument under the government. The dissenters, it should be known, were among the best friends of the revolution by which the succession of Papists to the throne of England had been prevented, and the protestant religion secured. Accordingly they stood high, perhaps *highest*, in the esteem of William and Mary, and enjoyed without difficulty a vast number of places under the government. It was however provided by a statute of 25th Car. II. “that all persons bearing any office of trust or profit, shall take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance in open court, and shall also receive the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, according to the usage of the church of England, in some parish church, on some Lord’s day immediately after divine service,” &c. *Hist. Pur. Charles II.* 1673.

This act remains in force to this day, and fortified as it was with numerous and severe penalties, no dissenter from the established worship could venture upon the most inconsiderable office without first holding occasional communion with the episcopal church. This however created no difficulty. They often did so without any such motive—did so from principle; and the requisition of this service could be no burden to a nonconformist who sought an office under government,—

BUT—the act against occasional conformity ordained that “if any persons in office, who by the laws are obliged to qualify themselves by receiving the sacrament or test, *shall ever resort to a conventicle or meeting of dissenters for religious worship*, during the time of their continuance in such office, they shall forfeit twenty pounds for every such offence, and be disqualified for any office for the future, till they have made oath that they have entirely conformed to the church, and not been at any conventicle for the space of a whole year.” “So that no person” says Neale, “in the least office in the *custom, excise, or common-council, &c.* could ever enter the doors of a meeting house.”

However specious the title then, Neale tells us that the act in question was made for the purpose of excluding from all offices all dissenters from the church of England. And all persons at that time in office were either compelled to resign their posts or to quit all connexion with dissenting churches. As communion with the church of England was indispensable to the possession of the smallest office, and had been so from the days of Charles II., the reader will at once perceive that the number whose principles did not lead them to refuse occasional communion with that church, must have been immense indeed, otherwise it never could have been an object worth a nine years labour to get them thus removed.

But further: The fact that the act in question is called an act against occasional conformity (i. e. occasional communion) while at the same time occasional conformity is no where so much as mentioned in it, decides as much as volumes of instances could do. By occasional communion (i. e. conformity) dissenters qualified themselves for holding offices. This act is designed to force them fully into the church or to cut them off from all offices from the highest to the lowest, whether civil or military; and is stiled “an act against occasional conformity.” Then the principles of dissenters must have admitted such conformity, or it would have been an unmeaning title: then too they must have been in the habit of practising this occasi-

onal conformity, or it would have been an act without an object. But let the labours of a nine years effort to get it through the parliament and under the royal seal, attest how vast the object it was intended by churchmen to accomplish. And let the complaints of the puritanical historian instruct us how wide must have been its devastation. And let the reasoning reader thence conclude how extensive must have been the principles and practice of occasional communion. And all this while yet many of the Westminster fathers had hardly laid their heads beneath the sod, and some of the worthies of that period were unquestionably yet alive!

Though therefore the precise object of the act in question was indistinctly remembered, and incorrectly stated in the foregoing essay, yet the reader will at once perceive that the sentiment in question loses nothing of its proof by a particular and correct recital of the circumstances of the case. The church and parliament intended it to operate against occasional communion; they have even called it an act against it; the dissenters understood and felt the force of it as such. And though it could not extend to the prosecution of private persons, it cast out at once every dissenter who held a post of any description under government, and must have reduced many thousands to the greatest straits.

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It is novel, it is a departure from "the footsteps of the flock"—He must be a stranger to himself, he must be a stranger to the human heart, as it unfolds its character in the world at large, who does not at once see, that the objec-

tion we have named may be opposed with more effect to the promulgation of truth, than a score of others the most formidable that can be imagined. This Hercules, it has been attempted to strangle in the cradle—with what success, the reader will probably determine, in a great measure, according to his present dispositions. It is not, however, harsh judgment, to decide that the person who still regards the intercommunion of Christian denominations as a *novel* and exclusively a *new-light* practice, is obstinately and wilfully blind. Whether the principle be correct or otherwise, whether the practice be defensible or not, one thing is certain—neither of them are NEW. It was at least the faith, it was at least the practice, of the divines composing the Savoy assembly; and if, considering their circumstances, the judgment of such men as Owen, Burroughs, and Caryl may be relied on, it was the faith and practice of the Westminster fathers too. In so far as a disposition to “call any man master” may influence the fate of this controversy, the conflict, therefore, may be looked upon as already at an end. The practice of the fathers, in what we call the purest ages of the Protestant religion, and the principles of those standards universally adopted by Presbyterians of the West, *and not any new and hitherto unheard-of scheme*, is advocated in these pages.

But novelty, though the most operative, is by no means the only objection; nor, if stripped of its imposing appearance, will it seem most worthy the notice of a conscientious inquirer after

truth and duty. Against the position that “saints by profession are *bound* to maintain an holy fellowship and communion, and to extend it, as God offereth *opportunity*, unto *all those*, who in *every place* call upon the name of the Lord Jesus,” innumerable objections are brought. To some of the most formidable of these, the present number is devoted: to set ourselves in array against every thing that ingenuity might devise, and pertinacity bring forward, would require a field capacious as a folio.

It is common, and no doubt it is very easy, to say that the principles of Christian communion, as stated and defended in a preceding number, if carried out, must at once merge all the distinctions between truth and error, which separations from erroneous profeseors have hitherto so successfully preserved: that they stand in diametrical opposition to those salutary admonitions given in the scriptures,—“Cease, my son, from the instruction that causeth to err”—“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins”—“Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly,” &c. &c.: that they lead men to sanction, not only by their presence, but by actual participation, all the errors, and all the sins, countenanced by any church or individual, in whom it may be hoped that there is still some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel: that they render nugatory every thing like standards of Christian doctrine and testimonies for truth: that they, in a word, do a thousand things of which our readers will have little inclination to

hear, and the writer still less leisure to take notice. But nothing is more common than to jump at conclusions before the premises have been sufficiently attended to; and one wrong assumption, in point of matter of fact, will conveniently make way for as many wrong conclusions, in point of Christian doctrine, as there are objections in the case before us. The reader has already been sufficiently apprised that *a credible* profession is indispensable to the legitimate acknowledgment of any man as a saint of God; and that the same common sense and scriptural rules by which you fix the standing of an applicant for membership in your own denomination, are for the same reasons applicable, and ought to be applied to the members of any other. You do not, however, insist on re-examining the pretensions of persons admitted into any society in connexion with the denomination with which you likewise stand connected; but, as knowing the principles of that society to be evangelical, you proceed upon the ground, that the officers there presiding have been faithful to their trust. For the very same reasons you are bound thus to judge concerning other denominations professedly evangelical; and, in virtue of the same supposition, to admit in the same way. On the contrary, though you have no control over the members of a neighbouring congregation of the same denomination; though you cannot proceed to try and suspend them; yet, upon the knowledge of their irregularity, or upon full conviction of unfaithfulness in the officers who admitted them, with-

out, and even contrary to, all evidence of a credible profession; you have doubtless a natural right to supply their defect in discipline, as far as it may affect your own society: you have a perfect right to say, that such offending members shall stand debarred from *your* table, till their rightful governors take cognizance of their case; or, if that cannot be done, till you are satisfied for yourself of their repentance, or rightful claims, as the case may be. The very same mode of reasoning will apply to the members of all other denominations. For as their regular standing in an evangelical church is the evidence to you of their right to Christian ordinances; so, when you know of facts destructive of that right, you are not only bound to make them known to the authorities which alone have immediate cognizance of the case; but upon their refusal, you have a perfect right, as the governor of your own house, to say that the offender shall not enter there. We are aware that this principle may appear new to many. It is unhappily, too seldom acted on. But that it flows directly and legitimately from the very nature and end of Christian discipline, no thinking mind will be at a loss to see. It is, nevertheless, a power that ought to be exercised with a great deal of prudence and caution: but once admit that it may be exercised, and you cut up by the roots one principal assumption upon which the main opposition to the doctrines here contended for rests. From the danger of pollution from members in societies of other denominations, and of other socie-

ties in your own, you free yourselves in the same way, and upon precisely the same grounds. In one word, whatever be the rules lawfully adopted in holding fellowship with Christians of another congregation, may, for the same reasons, and with the same facility, regulate the intercourse of various denominations. And, by consequence, every argument drawn from defective discipline, from erroneous doctrine, or from ignorance of individual character, that may be brought to bear against our doctrine of intercommunion, will conclude with equal effect, and to an equal extent, against the admission of members belonging to the same denomination, but of a different society:—would, in fact, go to shew, that no christian can regularly or safely enjoy the fellowship of saints, without the compass of his customary place of worship, and of the single congregation with which he is regularly numbered. The reader, by carrying these remarks along with him, will find it no hard matter to unhinge a great proportion of the thousand objections every where resounded against a diffusive communion with the saints.

But it will be said that, independently of the difficulty of discriminating between the good and bad, the sound and the erroneous, in evangelical churches over which we have no control, the very fact of their existing as distinct churches creates an insuperable difficulty. Wherefore remain distinct bodies at all, if it is eligible, and even necessary, to commune together? And if corruptions or differences be so great as to make

it necessary to keep up distinct organization, do we not virtually merge those differences—do we not sanction those corruptions, by uniting together in the most sacred expressions of fellowship, and solemn acts of duty, of which in this life we are capable? What mean we by our Confessions of Faith, if persons who do not subscribe to them may be admitted to our fellowship, as well as they who do? What mean we by our testimonies against prevailing error, if the world may see us walking with men who hold those errors, as openly and lovingly as if no such things existed?—This, it is believed, is a fair and full statement of that class of objections most commonly and imposingly urged. They are certainly very far from being of a despicable character; and all the churches bear witness that they may be wielded with tremendous effect.—To that first, and certainly most respectable objection, “wherefore remain distinct bodies at all, if there exist no differences that can justify a suspension from christian communion?” it may be of importance to remark, that most of the distinctions among evangelical churches are certainly without sufficient grounds to justify them, and are oftener to be attributed to the selfish spirit, or unhallowed frenzy, of those who were instrumental in creating them, than to any just regard for christian truth, or legitimate efforts to preserve it. In many cases, however, divisions that originated on grounds perfectly justifiable, are still maintained, while the reasons that once justified them have long since ceased to operate;

and in order to justify the continuance of the schism, other reasons are perpetually bringing forward, which neither do nor ever could justify such separation. But in addition to this, it should never be forgotten, that all the evangelical churches, so far as we know any thing of them, are enormously guilty in extending and multiplying their terms of admission. The result is, that however nearly christian men may be allied in their views, their feelings, and their wishes; though they agree in every important article, and in ten thousand points of minor consequence; yet, if there be an iota of difference in their views about one single point, concerning which it is judged proper to express an opinion, that single point of difference separates them. Neither party can, with a good conscience, subscribe to that which the other views to be correct; and both parties unwisely and unscripturally assuming that, small as it is, it should be inserted in their standards, which standards are to be approved as a condition of church-membership, if they be honest men they are necessarily divided. Finally, it should be remembered that edification being one great object of all christian fellowship, and of the organization of the church of Christ, it would be far from practicable, far from profitable, at once to break down all the distinctions which time has rendered venerable, and to infringe upon all the habits that the lapse of generations may have rendered incorrigible. Admitting that there be no doctrinal diversities which require the preservation of existing separations, yet it

would be plainly impossible to throw together a variety of men, from a variety of churches, all whose habits of acting and of thinking, in the management of church affairs, are so notoriously diverse, without producing more halting, vexation, heart burning, discrepancy of every kind, than the consideration of visible unity, were it a thousand times more strong, could possibly counterbalance. We must therefore take the churches as they are, with all their different degrees of light, and all their diversity of habits; and instead of hastily attempting to consolidate this disjointed and disordered mass, we must study the best means of pursuing, for the present, the promotion of the common cause, and the edification of every part concerned; and regard their assimilation in views and habits as a thing of gradual attainment, but of indispensable necessity to a perfect consolidation. Assimilation, we mean, in views and habits, so far as is necessary to prevent that discrepancy which must be the inevitable concomitant of a union among materials so discordant as the churches now are, especially in their modes of transacting business; and so perfectly untutored in the great duty of bearing one another's burdens. But, after all, the existence of distinct denominations, of which the members are severally subjected to their own church courts, and independent of all others, is not in itself a matter by half so serious as we might, at first thought, apprehend. It is an accommodation not unlike that which universally, and very properly, subsists among churches of the

same denomination. Every session, every presbytery, every synod, every national assembly, acts independently of every other, and possesses, within appropriate bounds, an exclusive jurisdiction. The reason is plain: it is not practicable, much less would it be for edification, that all christian men should be subject to one and the same set of rulers. Their dispersion over a great extent of country imposes the necessity of their being amenable to different ecclesiastical courts, both of an inferior and superior grade. The member of one congregation is not subject to the session of another: the member of one presbytery can claim no jurisdiction over the concerns of another: the superior judicature, in one nation or district, possesses no authority over the people of another, though they correspond as sister churches. And yet the fact of your participation in the common privileges of christian men, in and under any one of these little divisions of the church, unquestionably secures to you the same privileges in every other. Now whence arises this discrimination? Obviously from this single consideration, that good government requires the existence of courts exercising distinct and independent authority (independent, we mean, upon others of the same grade); because there is a natural and an obvious necessity for our being dispersed far and wide, and the mode of exercising ecclesiastical authority must be *accommodated* to the nature of the case: the reason of the arrangement is, in other words, merely geographical. But geographical con-

siderations can have no kind of influence in settling our participation in those common privileges, that are no way connected with them, nor influenced by them. The very same thing holds good in relation to those differences among evangelical professors, which may be admitted as just grounds for constituting different denominations. A difference of view, for instance, in relation to the form of church government, or the scriptural mode of managing some things essential to good order, will create a barrier against subjection to the same church court, as real and as formidable as the intervention of the Atlantic Ocean can possibly be esteemed to be: the only difference is, that the inability arises in the one case from geographical considerations, and in the other from considerations of a moral nature. But as neither of these considerations render it difficult for men to enjoy in common the privileges belonging to christians merely as such, it is easy to conceive that as he who is entitled to them, because a member of Christ, on one side of the water, is equally entitled to them on the other, and among churches to which he is not subject; so he who is entitled to them upon scriptural grounds in an independent congregation, may on the same grounds be entitled to them within the precincts of any other. Unless indeed you mean to contravene all scriptural precept and example by saying that the error or misconception, on whichever side it be, is of itself sufficient to annul a christian's claim to the privileges of the church: and against this assump-

tion we shall just now beg leave to issue our “quo warranto.”——If so little can be gained by merging at once all distinction of denomination, inasmuch as “holy communion and fellowship” in all those ordinances about which we are agreed may be safely maintained without it, there is obviously nothing to require——nothing to justify a premature amalgamation of the churches. Edification is one main point to be studied; and however much we may find occasion to regret the mischiefs of the schism that formerly separated them, yet this separation having been once made, edification will be most consulted by prolonging the separate state so long as there is a prospect of their doing more for the common cause by walking together in the things about which they do not differ, and yet maintaining independent jurisdiction, than by attempting a union that must expose them to all that jarring and counteraction which conflicting habits will infallibly produce. When brotherly intercourse has sufficiently assimilated their modes of thinking and acting, there will be every reason for a perfect union. Till that take place, it by no means follows that they should stand in every respect united, because they may freely join in commemorating the dying love of God their Saviour—a transaction about which few real christians will be found to differ, however various their views in other things.

Still, however, it is urged that setting aside all questions of practicability and expediency, we have no way left us to testify against the errors

of individuals and churches, but by separating from their communion: and therefore to act upon the principle here contended for, while we at the same time remain distinct bodies, is to destroy the very thing which we profess to build. What becomes of the testimony for truth which our separation is understood to constitute? What becomes of the offences that induced that separation? What becomes of those standards of doctrine, of discipline and of worship, to which the separatists refuse to bow, and are nevertheless admitted?

These are no doubt very imposing objections; and were they only predicated upon one correct assumption, they might fairly defy the logic of a million of assailants. But then where did you learn that separation from the communion of a church of Christ is a proper way of testifying against her errors? Where did you make the discovery that the refusal to admit of the fellowship of a christian brother in ordinances about which you are perfectly agreed, is the scriptural mode of chastising his misapprehensions about some other matters in which of course you pursue a separate track? Where is it written “him that is weak in the faith” *receive ye not at all*, lest it should unhappily give occasion for “doubtful disputations?” Or how has it been discovered that in holding fellowship with a man who cannot see in all things with the standards of your church, you thereby in all those respects nullify your standards, and just so far take down your testimony against abounding error? May it

not be looked upon as “passing strange” that the fact of your giving the right hand of fellowship to a christian brother, and walking with him in every thing which you yourself call “the right ways of the Lord,” destroys by implication your testimony against his irregularity in those very things in which you refuse all countenance and connexion with him, on the ground of their being unwarranted by the word of God, or perhaps in direct opposition to it? Or would it not rather appear that by joining yourself to every christian man in so far as he is disposed to walk with you in the right way, you have it in your power to give a much more direct, a much more commanding, and a much plainer testimony against his errors or misdeeds, when you separate from him *only* in those things and to that extent in which *he* separates from the law of your Lord? Is not this a better way of discriminating his errors? Does not this more decidedly attest your love of scriptural truth and christian ordinances? Is it not thus you act in all the common intercourse of life, and with respect to the ebullitions of corruption in your brethren?—By what strange process then do you arrive at conclusions in this instance, directly the reverse of all those which you deem just and salutary in every other? It is very easy, to be sure, to descant with much spirit, and propriety too, upon the sin and danger of countenancing erroneous doctrines and unwarrantable practices in the church of God: but then that is not the point in dispute. The question is simply wheth-

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er the giving countenance to individuals and churches which we not only acknowledge to be christian, but to be correct and enlightened in the main, amounts to any thing like a sanctioning their irregularities, while at the same time we refuse to join them in any thing but that which we both consider as agreeable to the commandment of the Lord. It is by no means contended that we are to go with any, further than they follow Christ: nay it is predicated that we are as individuals and as churches to testify against every species and instance of disregard to the holy commandment. But because you testify against whatever you deem wrong, it by no means follows that you should refuse your sanction to any thing that is right: it by no means follows that errors in other evangelical churches should estrange you entirely from their fellowship, any more than the things which you cannot approve in the churches of your own denomination imposes on you a necessity of estranging yourselves from them.—*Evangelical* churches be it remembered we have said. For though there may be in others, persons whom upon sufficient acquaintance you feel constrained to acknowledge as fellow members of the Lord, yet with these individuals you must proceed on different principles; for while a church is *ostensibly* built upon “the sand,” you are not to proceed with her as if founded on the “rock.” You are certainly as a christian to maintain no intercourse with them who are *ostensibly* unconnected with the body of Jesus Christ. Whether it be indi-

viduals, or whether it be churches, the fellowship we contend for is “the fellowship of *saints*,” and it is upon the scriptural evidence that they are really such, you are warranted, nay commanded to embrace them. But surely this imposes no necessity upon you of following them in their departures from the right way, or of mingling the self-willed devices of corruption with the incense you offer to the common Lord. If they in particular instances will do so, unhappily mistaking sin for duty, you are by no means constrained to imitate them; but rather your refusal so to do, your admonitions and protestations prudently administered, will probably be a much more effectual testimony, and will certainly be a much more striking one, than if you separated yourself entirely from the good as well as evil.

Which of these modes of procedure is most agreeable to the example set us by our blessed Lord and his holy Apostles, it is by no means difficult to pronounce. We rest not the controversy on the point before us on our own frail and fallible reasonings, satisfactory as, in this instance, they really do appear. Let the persons who received the Apostleship “not of men, neither by man,” let “the true and the faithful witness,” instruct us by their own example how far we are to consider ourselves as countenancing the frailties or mistakes of men by extending to them our fellowship in things allowable. Let us see whether those deductions which lash so unmercifully the supporters of the principles here contended for, do not reach likewise the backs-

of the Apostles,—do not fall heavily on our Lord Jesus Christ himself. It is a remarkable fact that except in one or two instances, in which their own obtrusiveness brought it upon themselves, he never distinguished by his notice the demerits of the Sadducees. They were the philosophical gentlemen, the free-thinkers of the day. He throws none of his pearls before swine; he honours them neither with controversy nor reproof. But of his warnings directed to the Scribes and Pharisees; of their hypocrisy, of their self-righteousness, of their abominations both in doctrine and practice, every child has heard. With the utmost freedom, and often with the utmost severity, the Redeemer spoke of them, both present and absent. These were the men who sat in Moses' seat; they with their adherents formed by far the most numerous, and certainly the most hopeful portion of the Jewish people. Yet, generally at least, "being ignorant of the righteousness of God," they went about "to establish their own righteousness:" they made void the law of God by their traditions: they heaped up to them selves the greater damnation by their mutilated services. What was the consequence? Did our Lord Jesus Christ withdraw from their communion, that he might not be accounted a partaker of their evil deeds? Did he think it needful to break off, that he might thereby testify against their multiplied errors? No such thing. He testified minutely, he testified boldly, he testified to the last against all error and in behalf of all truth; but to the day of his death

he was in communion with that church; and never shunned any of her ordinances, never absented himself from any part of her communion, because most of her members were a disgrace to their profession. He never commanded his disciples to withdraw, lest they, weak and ignorant, should be ensnared by those corruptions: “the Scribes and Pharisees,” said he, “sit in Moses’ seat: all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not.”* They were however to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees;” they were to “obey God rather than man;” they were to cleave to the Pharisees as authorised teachers in the true though unhappily very corrupt church of God, as far as they cleave to the ordinances of divine appointment; they were to unite, and till cast out of the synagogues they *did* unite, with the whole body of the Jewish people as far as they walked in the way prescribed: but they did nothing more. And this *casting out of the synagogue* was the way in which our Lord warned them that they would be separated from a very corrupt communion, because that church would not bear a faithful testimony to truth. Here then we have evidence of the most decided kind that you may testify against men’s errors without separating from their communion: and that the being *cast out*, not the *going out*, is the regular mode of separation from a church of the character in question. But if

* Matth, xxiii. 2, 3.

she be God's church, however defaced, however impure, however erroneous in innumerable points, you act far otherwise than did our Lord, or than his disciples were enjoined to do, if you withdraw yourself from her fellowship in things undeniably Christian in order to testify against others which are not so.

It is easy to say, indeed, that under the former dispensation there was but the one temple and the one church, so that men could not withdraw under those circumstances without unchurching themselves entirely. And so you may invent a thousand other sapient distinctions. But all that kind of discrimination is perfectly idle. The *facts* prove that testimony against that which is wrong *may* be maintained without abstaining from fellowship in that which is right. And your maintaining that the necessary unity of the church in those days, because there was but the one temple, was the thing that prevented a complete separation, is begging the question. How do you know that this was the reason of our Lord's conduct and of his injunction upon his disciples? *He* does not say so! It is no where so written in any portion of the scriptures. Whence then did you gather it?—Verily it is to be feared that Scribes and Pharisees were not the only people who have set up their traditions to make void the law of God. But would it not be rather strange if the reason suggested should happen to be the true one! According to the assumption, we are bound to separate from acknowledged Christians in every thing, because we believe

them to be wrong in many things; and unless we separate we countenance their error: but according to the matter of fact, under a former dispensation, our Lord Jesus Christ and his disciples could not separate, because there was but the one temple, and at this all *must* worship. Strange indeed if the constitutions of God thus interfere with one another! if they thus smite against one another! and matters, through the influence of human depravity, get into such a state that one or the other of God's constitutions must give way!! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."——"I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan!"

But it is not barely under the Jewish dispensation that we find our Lord himself proceeding upon principles directly opposite to those which in our day are supposed so necessary to preserve the conscience clean: the very same thing has been done by him since the introduction of the new dispensation. Look at his epistles to the seven churches of Asia. Mark the requisitions contained in those epistles. And then say, if you can, that any trace of the modern spirit and modern mode of managing testimonies against the people of God is any where to be found. Against "the Nicolaitanes," against those who held "the doctrines of Balaam," against such as said they were Jews and were not, but were the synagogue of Satan, you will find a forcible and ample testimony. You will see the followers of the Lamb

commended for withdrawing themselves from such, and for trying “them which said they were Apostles, and were not.” But with respect to the multitudes of defections among the people of God themselves, you hear of no such thing. Though there were only “a few names in Sardis” who had kept themselves in every respect as it was their duty to have done, yet you do not find those few reprov’d because they had not withdrawn themselves from the great mass whose works were not found “perfect before God.” You do not read that they were enjoined thus to withdraw that their testimony might be maintained. And even upon the church of Thyatira still more unpromising as her condition was, we read that he imposed this burden only: “that which thou hast already hold fast till I come.” Here indeed the laxity of discipline is severely blamed; for gross breaches of the law of God had been committed: but this was not a reason why the purer portion should withdraw. It was their business to “hold fast.” How much worse the condition of most of those churches was than that of most modern evangelical churches from which it is held needful to stand entirely separate; and how much more flagrant than modern differences in points of “doubtful disputation,” were the departures that called for no such measures then, he who runs may read.

Precisely in conformity with these views do we find the Apostles acting. When the church of Galatia, after beginning “in the Spirit,” sought to be “made perfect by the flesh,” the Apostle

Paul feared lest he had “bestowed upon her labour in vain:” he argues, he illustrates, he reproves, he threatens, he laments: but it is nowhere written that he separated from her communion, or enjoined it upon others so to do, in order to bear testimony against her defections from the faith. They who troubled her are spoken of as pernicious and malignant persons upon whom the Apostle wished that, for the deliverance of the brethren, God would lay his heavy hand;—he wished “they were even cut off:” but that Paul thought her recovery hopeless, notwithstanding the pit into which she had fallen; or that he thought himself or other faithful men obliged to separate from her to discountenance her error, is very, very far from appearing from his epistles. The whole spirit they breathe teaches us the contrary. And yet how malignant were those errors, how disastrous those departures, compared with what is to be complained of among evangelical churches, every one must see; unless indeed it be the man who, inattentive to the merits of the case, regards every error vicious because he testifies against it, and every fault of the utmost consequence because it has elicited the vigour of his arm. Such characters we must refer for an answer to our quotation from Dr. Owen in the preceding number, page 80. “You seldom see a man take up a bye-opinion,” &c.

Now though it is certainly true that the Christian church in those ages was not divided as at present, and therefore that the cases are not perfectly parallel, yet let it teach us that divisions

often have been made upon grounds most unscriptural, under the pretence of testifying against error; and that we are bound to no such abstinence. . It certainly shews us moreover that, however circumstances may differ in this respect, yet in the nature of the thing there is no necessity for a refraining from all intercourse and fellowship in order to testify against corruptions not inconsistent with a sound profession. If no such thing was requisite while the Christian church was one, by what rule do you find it now more necessary, when she is unhappily shattered? If *then* men could communicate together who professedly held the head, and yet could “bear testimony to the evil” wherever the evil was conceived to be, why not do so *now*? Why is your total abstinence from the communion of another denomination needful as a testimony against *some* of their doctrines and practices, if the same was not necessary while the churches were yet one, and is not now judged necessary within your own denomination?

Crying out therefore against the criminality of holding fellowship with those who unhappily mistake or perversely neglect some Christian regulation or salutary truth,—saying that in doing so we sanction their misdeeds, support their errors, declare ourselves in every respect one with them; —is to strike at the Apostles, is to villify the conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *never* sanctioned any man’s enormity, who *never* gave countenance to erroneous principles, who *always* protested in favour of the truth, but who never

separated, in the worst of times *never* separated himself from any, further than they separated from the law of truth.

If in order to faithfulness *you* judge such a course needful, you must even act as you think fit. But remember that in doing so, you act not only without a scriptural warrant, but in direct opposition to all scriptural example. *This* then you cannot call “the good old way,” however pleasing to your heated spirit: here you are not following the “footsteps of the flock,” unless you choose to consecrate with that venerable name their obvious defections from “the footsteps” of their master. You have therefore no right to enjoin it upon others to follow your example: you have no reason to separate from those whom in all other respects you would call faithful brethren, because they are in this case the imitators of him who breaks not the bruised reed, nor leaves his brethren to themselves because of their many and lamentable imperfections. And however frequently those questions may recur, why then remain separate at all? Or how join in Christian fellowship with a church which still perseveres in those defections that at first occasioned the division: let, we beseech you, the answers that have been furnished recur along with them:—it is obvious from our Lord’s conduct and that of his Apostles, that most of those separations among evangelical churches have taken place in an unscriptural manner and upon unscriptural grounds. There *never was* good reason for such secession; a testimony for truth and a walk of

purity might have been maintained without it. And as such differences *never were*, they cannot *now* be a ground of parting fellowship in matters about which all are agreed. Nevertheless, for the reasons already submitted, it by no means follows that all distinctions should be in a moment done away. Commune together the churches *may*, at once and without injury; it will tend to draw them nearer and nearer in the bonds of charity: but hastily and perfectly *unite*, they obviously cannot; it would bring their habits and views into perpetual conflict, and we know who hath said “an house divided against itself cannot stand.” The one course would ripen for a permanent and salutary union; while in the mean time the benefit of nothing Christian in which they agree is lost: the other would render union itself a grievance, and secure no comfortable prospect of benefit from any thing.

‘But is it not written,’ it is urged with pertinacity and triumph, ‘is it not written in the scriptures, “Cease my son from the instruction that causeth to err”—“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins”—“Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly,” &c. &c. And is not the holding fellowship with other churches which we believe to be disorderly, a most daring violation of these positive injunctions?’ Yea it is doubtless so written, and it becomes all men to be careful how by their own traditions, and by the interpretations of their self-will, they make void the law of God. But what mean you by that injunction, “cease my

son from the instruction that causeth to err?" or rather what does the scripture mean by it? *That injunction* was delivered so long ago as the days of Solomon. We have often heard what kind of teachers were "the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses' seat." And yet our blessed Lord was in the habit of attending on the Sabbath-days the synagogues of those teachers: he likewise enjoined it upon his disciples, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." No commandment was laid upon any Jew to cease from the worship of those congregations which, however corrupted in very many respects, were still the congregations of the Lord. And yet you will hardly undertake to say that our blessed master authorized men to disregard his own injunction, by the mouth of his servant Solomon. You give therefore a wrong interpretation to the passage: the very conduct of our Lord, and of his Apostles, who still conformed so much to Jewish rites after the dispensation which required them was done away—that very conduct shews that your interpretation is inadmissible. Our Lord *never* encouraged or sanctioned the unholy traditions of the elders, though he bade his disciples go where they must have been often heard: the Apostles *never* encouraged and emboldened men to cleave to Judaism and reject the New Testament order of things, though they so often attended and even conformed to rites no longer obligatory. By ceasing from the instructions, or *from hearing* the instructions that cause to err, we cannot therefore understand that

we are to keep away from every worshipping assembly, or from every Christian ordinance, where it is probable, and even certain, that we may see and hear some things which we cannot approve. The meaning obviously is, that we are not to give a willing ear to such instructions, that we must not approve them, must not comply with them, but “try the spirits whether they be of God.” Yet so far as God is worshipped we are nevertheless to unite in his worship; and in so far as his saving truth is made known, we are to distinguish it, to receive it, to rejoice in it. Therefore it was that while our Lord bade his disciples to attend to those instructors, he uniformly cautioned them likewise to beware of their errors. Interpret the passage in any other way, and you cannot avoid making our blessed Lord himself and all his Apostles the promoters and open countenancers of error. For you cannot say that one rule of procedure was applicable to then, and to that age, and that another rule is to be pursued in *our* age, without at the same time denying that they are our exemplars whom we are to imitate. But indeed, upon this subject, there is infinitely less pains taken to shew how the great Pattern and his inspired followers acted, than to display a multitude of reasons why we should NOT conform to their example. And yet, strange to be told! those very passages of scripture to which men now appeal, are the ones which existed or were dictated in *their* days, for the government of *their* conduct, under the circumstances of *their* case. How marvellously words can change their meaning!

The other two passages commonly alleged are, if possible, still less to the purpose. That command, "Come out of her my people," &c. so frequently brought forward as an argument against all Christian fellowship with defective churches, was addressed by the Redeemer to his scattered people in the church of Rome, at a very advanced period of her apostacy. She had long ceased entirely to "hold the head;" she had long been known as "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth;" she had long made the nations drunken with the blood of the saints: and yet (wonderful to think of! considering the purpose for which this passage is adduced), it was not even at the commencement of her apostacy, it was not till that very advanced stage of it which synchronizes with the predictions of the *eighteenth* chapter of Revelations, that it became the imperious duty of the people of God absolutely and entirely to withdraw even from her communion. When long suffering and patience had been exerted to the utmost, when that barren and baleful tree had been fruitlessly revisited for many an age, when her sins had reached to heaven, when God was just about to let loose his fearful judgments as upon a creature *given up*—then, and not till then, was that commandment issued, "Come out of her my people;" for grievous as was her sore, it seems God had a people in her still. And who can say how many may yet be in her, who do not hear his voice in that particular, and according to the threatening are "partakers of her plagues?" When you find an

evangelical church circumstanced like Rome, when you find a people whose ignorance and corruptions and disorders you lament, but whom nevertheless you discern to be “sealed with that holy spirit of promise,” and shewing that they walk in the spirit by producing in their measure “the fruits of the spirit:”—when you see such a church and such a people circumstanced like Rome, at that period of corruption noticed in the prophecy, *then* you may reverberate, *then* you may obey that voice from heaven, “Come out of her my people.” But you are in the mean time to recollect that by taking passages of scripture *out* of their connexion, and applying them in cases utterly foreign to the circumstances under which they were employed, you not only make plain things “hard to be understood;” but you certainly approximate a “wresting of the scriptures” to the destruction of the churches, if, through the infinite mercy of God, it be not to your own. It is extremely ill-advised, my brother, it is dangerous, it is ruinous, thus to bend into an *accommodation* to every little controversy those passages of scripture of such weighty import, “the sense” of which “is not manifold, but *one*.”

‘But is it not a fact that every individual and every church which errs in doctrine or in practice from the written word, is a disorderly walker? And does not the Apostle Paul command us, “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” to withdraw ourselves “from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition

which he received" of him?" To this it might be abundantly sufficient to object that the passage cannot be interpreted in this sense and to the extent for which it is brought forward, without making the Apostle's own example contradict his precept. He never thus withdrew, he never threatened thus to withdraw himself from the disorderly churches of Corinth and Galatia. He makes it no part of the fault of the more steadfast in either of them that they had not thus withdrawn from their offending brethren. And in the numerous controversies on which he has decided relative to meats, and holy-days, and things offered to idols, he is far from teaching that his tradition, his exposition on this subject, however authentic, should be submitted to on pain of expulsion. Such as received and acquiesced in the Apostle's view are not commanded to withdraw themselves from every member who walked not according to the tradition then delivered. No: the conclusion of the whole matter is, "let every man be firmly persuaded in his own mind;" and the common duty is declared to be that "we judge not another man's servant."—Clearly then the injunction before us must be made to cover immensely more than the Apostle had in his eye, or we shall have him times without number, both by precept and example, contradicting his own principles as set down in the words under consideration. The same remarks might be made with respect to our Lord's own conduct while on earth; and to the glaring omission which upon this principle must be admitted in his e-

pistles to most of the seven churches of Asia.— Those churches are repeatedly applauded for withdrawing from, or rather for rejecting the corrupt Nicolaitanes and Gnostics, persons who made void entirely the gospel of his grace: but they are no where censured for neglecting to pursue the course attempted to be imposed by the quotation in question, in relation to many among themselves who were far from abiding in every thing by the rules laid down in scripture. And yet an attentive reader of those epistles must see that they had not pursued that course. Once more then we must object to this arbitrary mode of interpreting scriptures without any regard to the connexion in which they stand, or to the circumstances to which they have respect.

The fact is that the Apostle is not speaking of the exercise of church discipline at all: and it is doubtful whether the injunction to withdraw has the most remote reference to christian ordinances. The passage is as follows: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For you yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: FOR WE BEHAVED NOT OURSELVES DISORDERLY AMONG YOU; NEITHER DID WE EAT ANY MAN’S BREAD FOR NOUGHT; BUT WROUGHT WITH LABOUR AND TRAVAIL NIGHT AND DAY, THAT WE MIGHT NOT BE CHARGEABLE TO ANY OF YOE: not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an

ensample unto you to follow us. For even
 when we were with you, this we commanded
 you, *that if any man would not work, neither
 should he eat. For we hear that there are
 some which walk among you disorderly, work-
 ing not at all, but are busy bodies.* Now them
 that are such we command, and exhort by our
 Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work,
 and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be
 not weary in well-doing. *And if any man obey
 not our word by this epistle, note that man and
 have no company with him, that he may be
 ashamed.* Yet count him not as an enemy, but
 admonish him as a brother." 2 Thess. iii. 6—

15. What the Apostle means by disorderly
 walkers, in the sixth verse, he immediately ex-
 plains by adverting to the manner in which *he*
 had walked among them. And in the eleventh
 verse we find him giving the reason for the in-
 junction he had just laid on them: "*for we hear.*"
 says he, "*that there are some which walk among
 you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-
 bodies.*" These then were the people whom the
 Apostle calls '*disorderly;*' and he says that his
 reason for giving the command in question was
 that he had heard there were such in Thessaloni-
 ca. Persons who calculated on living entirely
 upon the liberality of their brethren; for which
 the notorious liberality of christians in that age
 afforded them great opportunity. And as peo-
 ple who have nothing to do, or who neglect their
 proper business and live upon their friends, are
 of course exposed to all the temptations incident

to idleness; it is not to be wondered at that the church of Thessalonica should, under these circumstances, be infested with "busy-bodies," who as they had nothing to do but talk, and no concerns of their own to employ their minds, would naturally "busy" themselves about their neighbours' concerns, and to the vice of lounging join most of the vices of the tongue. The mischiefs of such a state of things any body can imagine. Now what was the Apostle's remedy? "Withdraw yourselves from" such says he; "note such men, and have no company with them, that they may be ashamed." Do not associate with them: give them no kind of countenance: and when your table fails them they will be obliged to work. Do not listen to their "whisperings and backbitings:" discountenance by every mean their intermeddling spirit: shame will compel them to hold their tongue. This it must be granted was the best mode of treating tattlers. A craving appetite would speak more in praise of industry than a thousand friendly cautions; and to make an idler work is the best of all methods for suppressing the mischiefs of a restless tongue. When people find something else to do than gadding about, they are generally little disposed to collect or retail the news of the neighbourhood.

Such then is evidently the Apostle's drift.—Such is the kind of persons from whom he commands us to withdraw. He addresses himself moreover to the great body of the faithful, in their individual capacity: he does not say, as in

the case of the incestuous person at Corinth, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." The disorders of Thessaionica were of such a nature as can with difficulty be made objects of church discipline; and can in fact never be so treated until the evil has increased to a very great degree. Yet every body can discern the evil; every body have it in their power to apply the proper remedy: they have only to withhold bread from the saunterer, and their ear from the busy-body, and the means and incentives to his criminal and injurious course will be at once cut off. This then is exactly what the Apostle directs to in the passage before us: and powerfully as these words have been often wielded to beat down every thing like intercourse among christians of different denominations, there is no small reason to apprehend that if all the churches rightly understood and faithfully practised them, the men by whom they are handled, with most dexterity and warmth would often be the first to feel their weight.

The communion of saints then, though it be "extended to all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus," by no means contravenes any of those scriptures which are supposed to make against it. It neither binds us to walk with any christian man, farther than he walks in the commandments of the Lord; nor

does it cut us off from the privilege of walking with the churches so far as they do this, though in many things besides they may be wanting to their duty, and in many things contrary to it. It neither countenances the supposition that we approve of every thing in the churches with which we hold christian fellowship; nor does it seal up our lips from testifying against their errors. In one word, the truths which they *do* hold correctly, the ordinances which they *do* administer rightly, are the Lord's truths, are the Lord's ordinances: these we *may* partake with other christian men, wherever we can find them. But their ignorance, their errors, their perverseness, their evil practices are their own: from these we must in all cases not only abstain, but we must testify against them. Thus did our Lord in the church of the Jews; thus did his Apostles among the churches of the Gentiles: and unless we are prepared to say that no denomination except our own is a church of Jesus Christ, unless we refuse to recognize the fruits of his Spirit, and to extend our love and countenance where he has shed his grace, we must do as they.

'But what shall we do with our confessions of faith upon this principle? What force can they have as testimonies for truth or barriers against error, if we open our gates to men who refuse to subscribe them, and run ourselves to churches that adopt a different standard?' This is the last objection we can pretend to notice: it does not need a very laboured answer. Men mistake entirely the nature and intentions of confessions of

faith, distended like those in modern use, when they can allow themselves to suppose that an objection drawn from that quarter has any bearing on the point in hand. It has already been shewn that even sacramental communion amounts to nothing like a declaration of our agreement in most matters of Christian faith. This is not at all the design of these ordinances. Even those confessions upon which the last stand is made will tell you that this is by no means their design. Men who make use of them as a testimony of their agreement in a circle of christian doctrines, and as a declaration of their adherence to the same confession of faith, are not only guilty of perverting them to a purpose for which they were never ordained, but they do so in the very teeth of that confession to which they thereby profess to set their seal. If then your communing with a christian brother, or a christian church, does not express your adherence to certain standards; how does your holding fellowship with one who does not profess to receive those standards, imply a desertion of them on your part? How does it attest your agreement in any matter save those great truths about which you are then conversant, and to which your communion has respect?

But were it indeed the case that participation in the sacraments amounted to a declaration of our agreement in the same ecclesiastical standards, then must the churches be enormously guilty in making their standards so extensive and minute. It is the commandment of the Lord

that the "weak in the faith" should be received, that "babes in understanding" shall be admitted to his courts; and if the objection is a sound one, you must pair down your standards, you must moderate the effulgence of your glorious and lucid testimonies to the truth of God; for that which the labour of years has produced, that which the research of generations has unfolded, that which the most enlightened of the fathers have studiously put together, never can be an object for a babe to grasp, nor will any honest man call him "weak in the faith," in the Apostle's sense of those words, who is able to say of it with a good conscience, 'all this is agreeable to the word of God; to this I set my seal.'—But look about among your churches! How few in them have read, how very few are capable of fathoming those vast and pregnant productions which most evangelical churches hold up as the standards of their doctrine, and their testimony for truth! They contain the substance of all the light of all the learned of every preceding age. Verily if no man is worthy the communion of the church whose powers of research cannot fathom this; if no man may be acknowledged as a faithful brother, except he sets his seal to this; if no man can be safely regarded as a saint if he demurs at this,—then how few should be looked upon as entitled to the communion of the body of Christ! and how much fewer shall be saved!

And yet it must be acknowledged that some of the churches, or at least considerable portions of them, *do* go thus far. They *do* make "an appro-

bation of the confession of faith" and sundry other things, "the terms on which any person or persons shall be admitted as a member or members of their church;" and *do* use language which strongly implies that such approbation is comprised within their "terms of communion." But what then? The language thus employed evidently, and indeed declaredly, refers to the admission of persons into full and regular standing in said church, not to the terms of intercommunion among various churches. But against the declaration, even as thus explained, there lie the most solid and weighty objections. No man, we dare repeat it, who is "weak in the faith," no man who is a child in the knowledge of the holy scriptures, no man who has not formed habits of reading, reflection, and even of *close* thinking,—none of these persons *ever can* yield an intelligent and well-founded expression of their approbation to the extent required. What then? You who dare require such a thing, contradict both the letter and the spirit of your own confession, by the very act that ostensibly does it honour: you lord it over the heritage of God; and in fixing a standard so high as will necessarily shut out FROM YOUR CHURCH vast multitudes whom the Lord hath received, and bids you receive, you make void the law of God by your traditions: you are guilty of the absurdity of fixing the same standard of acquisitions for him who is to be taught in all things and for him who is to teach: you are compelled in practice to desert your own principles; for you neither have

nor could have a church of any reasonable extent constituted solely of members of this description. ---It is very much to be lamented that the zeal of christians should so frequently outstrip their discretion: and that in the application of their *prudence* for the preservation of God's order in many things, they should themselves exhibit such lamentable departure from it in things of greater consequence. Such siftings as this to preserve a church from the stains of heterodoxy, are not a whit more wise, not a jot more scriptural, and will not in any instance be found more successful, than the kindred attempts which fanaticism has repeatedly inspired to erect a communion "without spot or wrinkle." It is an attempt to secure an object which we have no reason to believe ever can be attained. And in thus endeavouring to forestal the enemy, by picking out the tares before the seed is committed to the ground, no man need wonder if valuable grain should be likewise thrown away.

No: let your confessions but occupy their proper station. Let them be your "fixed testimony" for the truth of Jesus Christ. Let them be the standards by which to try the doctrines of your clergy. Let them be a medium of deliverance to your people from the impositions of unsound and unchristian pastors. Let them be a source of perpetual instruction to all who have an opportunity of studying them, till the feeble among your people become as David, and the house of David "as the angel of the Lord before them." But never imagine that you are to secure these

happy results by withholding from men the symbols of the bread and water of life, till they are thus able two of them to chase ten thousand.

NO. VI.

There are few things in which the deceit of the human heart is more displayed, than in the application and interpretation of scripture. However contrary a man's conduct may be to the moral law, or to his own professions, he is scarcely ever at a loss for an excuse—and an excuse too, apparently founded on some passage of scripture.

The beautiful unity of "the body of Christ" has been much defaced by deceits of this kind. Every separatist, whether he goes by himself or takes along with him a number of others, or whether he does what is still worse, drives good men from the communion of the church, sanctions all that he does or says by scripture.---Nor have we any disposition to call a large number of those offenders hypocrites, or wilful perverters of scripture. We sincerely believe that a vast number of them are good honest men, and are really conscientious in their application of scripture. Yet they are deceived, and they have been and are the instruments of deceiving others.

Perhaps no passage of scripture has been as grossly abused in this way as the well known

words of our Lord: "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." As an example of the abuse of this passage we beg leave to tell a short story.

Many years ago, in a respectable and flourishing congregation, at a considerable distance from the woods of Kentucky, on a Saturday morning before the communion, an elder whose name was William, called a member of the church aside whose name was George, and thus addressed him: "George, I thought you the other day manifested a disposition to take the advantage of neighbour Marshal, and procure from him his patch of oats at an under value." Says George, "you may have thought so, but I was not conscious of having any such disposition. I only said I did not think the oats would measure so much as you said they would." "Ah no, George," says William, "that won't do; you certainly intended to cheat Marshal out of five or six bushels of oats; and you must not apply at this time till the matter is settled---for, George, you know that if you bring your gift to the altar, and there rememberest that your brother hath ought against you, you are to leave your gift, and go and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." "Since you say so, William, I can stand back at this time—yet, were I to insist on my privilege, I think you could not keep me from it."

The origin of this difference was shortly this: Neighbour Marshal had sold to the brother of George, a small lot of oats as they stood, at so much per bushel, and William was to say what quantity of oats the lot contained. On the morning on which William was to give his judgment, George had accompanied his brother to the place, and had been there sometime before William arrived. The conversation having turned on the business of the morning, George had expressed his opinion respecting the quantity, and William having fixed on a larger quantity, George adhered to his own judgment, and perhaps also said, that if he had been to receive the oats, he would not have taken them at William's estimate. Yet for this George was denied admittance to the Lord's table a week or two after, and the text before us was the authority under which the officer of the church acted.

Now who was in this case the injured person? The elder who excluded or the private member who was excluded? No person who has not some private purpose to serve but will, we are bold to say, unite in saying that the elder was the offender, and that George was unjustly deprived of his privilege---was in fact suspended from the communion of the church. Yet the elder we are persuaded acted what is called conscientiously; i. e. he was regulated by scripture, and was not conscious of misapplying the text. Nay such is and has been the force of habit, that had the excluded member appealed from his elder to the session, we are persuaded that that ses-

sion, consisting of twelve or fourteen intelligent and pious elders, with a clergyman of considerable standing at their head, would have confirmed the exclusion.

We only add, that when the oats were threshed out, it was found that William's judgment was not beyond the mark; and that by the next time the subject was discussed, George and William were perfectly reconciled. In a year or two after George sickened and died; but died very comfortably: William and other christian neighbours accompanying his departing spirit to the very gates of glory by their prayers and praises.---But had George been of a turbulent disposition, and when he was kept back from the table of the Lord, insisted on the matter being fully investigated, and complete justice rendered to him, it is easy to see how the peace of the church would have been disturbed.

Perhaps few of our readers will be at a loss to find examples of congregations being much hurt, and in some cases almost destroyed by a similar perversion of scripture. The minister, or an elder, or some leading man in the congregation *takes an offence* at the conduct or opinion of another member of the church, and will not suffer him to have communion, till he gives what he calls satisfaction, and pleads as his authority the text before us. The excluded member perhaps bears for a while, but at last he turns on his heel, with, Well, well, since it is so, you may have your church, and your communion table, and even your religion too, & yourself for me.

And thus our churches are left empty, and the neighbourhood filled with half infidels.

To warrant the application against which we are contending, the text ought to have read thus: "Wherefore if thou seest thy brother bringing his gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thou hast ought against thy brother, force him to lay down his gift, and go and be reconciled to thee, or to thy friend, and then allow him to come and offer his gift." Do we shudder at such a perversion of scripture? Then let us never hear the text offered as it has been.

But what is the meaning of the text, and what is its use? Read it as it was uttered by our Lord, Mat. v. 23 and 24.

It is plain that this text is addressed to the offender and the offender only. It is not addressed to the person who has received the injury, far less to the person who only supposes that he or some of his friends are injured. It can be a rule of duty consequently only to the offender, it can never be a rule of duty to a second or third person.

Every person approaching God's altar is here solemnly called to the duty of self examination—and if upon this examination he is convinced that he has injured any one of his fellow men, he is to leave his gift and go and offer to his injured brother, a reasonable satisfaction. If the satisfaction is accepted the matter is at an end—but if it is not accepted the guilt now lies on the person who has refused a reconciliation—not on the person who has made an attempt to be reconciled.

We are indeed to be our brothers keeper as well as our own, and it is the particular duty of church officers, to be active in keeping back the ignorant and the scandalous, from the seals of the covenant. But the text under review has no reference to such cases. It is a general rule for every man to *take care of himself*—and see that HIS OWN dispositions are such as the head of the church will approve.

We may have our suspicions of the right which this or the other fellow worshipper has to the enjoyment of certain privileges,—we may even have in our possession considerable proof that he is a very unworthy partaker,—but till we can substantiate a charge before an orderly court of the church, we have no right to say, that that man shall not enjoy the ordinance—the man who does so, let him be member or elder, or who you will, is to all intents and purposes, “THE POPE, *the Anti-christ.*”—Every man is to be considered innocent till he is on legal evidence convicted of guilt.

Another misapplication of the text may be noticed. A member of the church fails in getting a member whom he considers unworthy excluded—or he has not an opportunity of using any means for the exclusion of a member whom he considers unworthy, therefore he himself stays back. “If that member,” says he “is admitted I will not partake.” And the text before us is frequently pled as justification for such withdrawal.

To warrant their withdrawal, the text should

read thus. "If thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and there seest thy brother against whom thou hast something, about to offer his gift—leave thy gift by the altar, and presume not to offer thy gift till that objectionable brother is some way or other removed." Have we any such scripture? Will any thing less than this justify the withdrawal supposed?

We repeat it—the text under review has no reference at all to the conduct of another person. It applies solely to *your own* conduct, and *your own dispositions*. See that they be right. In the present case it is not supposed that you have offended or in other words, *injured* the unworthy member. You are therefore so far as this text is concerned to attend upon God's ordinances as if no such unworthy member were present. Do you suppose that the pure are polluted by partaking with the individual who ought to be excluded? Then our Lord, as has been shown in another section of these essays, must have been polluted, in holding communion with the corrupted and corrupting members of the Jewish church. Imitate our Lord's example. Neglect no opportunity of testifying against corruption in principle or practice. But at the same time also keep your place in the church. Attend upon all God's ordinances. Pray that a blessing may rest upon God's own doctrines—God's own worship, and God's own government. And while you thus use your little strength, and walk in your little light, the head of the church will give more light and more strength, and through you

and others, more perfectly purge his church.

But, “*can two walk together except they are agreed?*” Amos iii. 3. The advocates of restricted communion are certainly put to their shifts when they urge this text. Can a church, can a neighbourhood, can even a family, or any society be produced, where the members are exactly agreed in all things. My wife and I differ very widely, about the character of a considerable number of our acquaintances, yet we cordially agree in loving one another, in loving the children whom God hath graciously given us, and generally in all the arrangements which are necessary for the welfare of the family. I have one neighbour who is a Roman Catholic; another who is a Methodist; and a third who is of the same communion with myself. We have thus very little religious intercourse with one another, yet in every thing else, we are comfortable neighbours. We cordially agree in politics, which in these days is a great matter; we agree in endeavouring to have good roads and good fences, in the neighbourhood; and in vying with one another in raising good crops and good cattle. In some of the churches we find individuals, who maintain that it is a moral duty to have slaves, and realy *a sin* to attempt to have the state of these unhappy creatures changed. The most of their brethren differ very widely from them in this important article; yet they can mutually forbear on this point. The doctrine of slavery breeds no disturbance in their church courts, nor at their communion tables. But when

a noted individual of one church presumes to sit down at the Lord's table with the members of another, who give all the evidence that can be given that they are united to *our one and common head*, the man who pleads for the divine authority of slavery, unites with the man who maintains, that it is a gross violation of almost every principle in the decalogue, and both cry out, "the church is destroyed—the faith is given up—all order is at an end." Your proof fathers and brethren? Can two walk together except they are agreed?

To cut the matter short, let us apply this divine and very much perverted maxim to the holy ordinance of the supper. When we observe this ordinance aright we have sweet communion with one another, and sweet communion with our common head—and in order to have this communion we must be agreed. But in what? Agreed that every thing which is stated in a lengthy publication called a Testimony is matter of fact? Agreed that the anti-burgher brethren performed a very reasonable and important duty when they excommunicated their burgher brethren? Agreed that the prayers of Almighty God cannot be acceptably sung unless we use Rouse's version of the Psalms of David? Agreed that there is only one connection of ministers who can be acknowledged as in all things faithful? Ah no, no such agreements are necessary for the worthy partakers of the Lord's supper.

What are the great and leading doctrines of the gospel which are recognized in the ordinance

of the supper? That we are lost sinners—that there is no salvation but through the vicarious death of Immanuel---and that we, as individuals, are resolved to receive this crucified Saviour as our own, and live and die by faith in his blood. Does our creed embrace these articles? Does our conduct correspond to our profession? We are then agreed as to the nature and use of the ordinance of the supper: we may therefore walk together to the table where the solemn rites are to be performed.

Again....What is it that gives a sinner a *right* to the table of the Lord? Nothing but an interest in this Lord, or union to him as his new covenant head. Will any man dare to say, that this union supposes any thing like an agreement on all that we comprehend under the phrase, the doctrine, the worship, the government, and discipline of the Associate Reformed, or Seceding, or Covenanters, or general assembly Presbyterian, church? If he does he must also maintain, that there is not a single believer without the pale of his own particular church. But if union to our Lord as the living head is that and that only which gives a *right* to a seat at the Lord's table, all who agree in having this right may and *ought* to walk together to the table, however much they may differ in other matters.

The manner in which the text under consideration has been wielded in the controversy about communion, has brought to our remembrance the birth and life and death of a sect, who some fifty or sixty years ago, made a little noise

in some part of the world. The members of this sect were in their own opinion the only church; they were also all believers. It was also a fundamental article in their creed, that nothing could be done in a church capacity, unless it was done with *one accord*. Their scripture proof was Act. ii. 1 and 46. That is, the whole church were to be *agreed* before any thing could be done. For a few months this pure society made out pretty well, but a diversity of opinion got among them as well as among other people. And what was to be done? The church could not act, for the scripture was plain and express in requiring that *all* should be done with *one accord*. And yet the church must act or she was good for nothing.

To keep out of this difficulty it was suggested, that the Spirit was to continue with the church till the end of time; and that all believers were taught and led by the Spirit, and must at all times and in all places be of *one mind*. Hence the *minority* in the church could not be believers, and consequently, according to another fundamental article, not members. By this argument the church indeed got on with her business; but on every division, the minority were, *ipso facto*, excommunicated. In a short time the church was so purged that there remained only two members. These were one day sitting together, and were mutually lamenting over the apostacy of the times. One ventured to say, that he *feared* the church would soon perish. The other immediately declared him *an unbeliever*, and by the

authority of the church excommunicated him--- for the scripture was plain and express in stating that the church was founded on a rock, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against her.

Comparisons are generally odious, but periods arrive when we are bound to speak, and write, and print what we think. We must then say, that the disposition which has prevailed, and which has been cherished for at least one generation, in almost all the Protestant churches, is a disposition not much different from that which actuated this association. And it is a disposition which has a natural tendency to *narrow* the church of the living God, and to crumble down into atoms the most flourishing society. On every little difference we separate, and my opinion is just as good as yours; and I can have a church just as well as you can. We cannot walk together because we are not agreed. Nor can we offer our gifts at the same altar, because you won't give me satisfaction for some supposed offence. And the sum of the whole matter is, our own humour or our own prejudices are to be gratified; and every other thing, even God's ordinances, and the plain and natural meaning of scripture are to be rejected, when they do not harmonize with them.

No. VII.

RESULTS.

WHAT then are the legitimate grounds, and who are the proper objects of discipline? If errors, if what we judge to be violations of the law of God, are not to cut off the offender from our fellowship, where are Zion's ramparts? What are our defences, and the defences of our little ones, against the disorders among which our lot may be cast? What, in one word, is the use of church courts at all? — Such may be supposed to be difficulties that will naturally and *commonly* present themselves to the mass of those to whom the foregoing exposition is new. They must learn to distinguish. In very many instances those errors and irregularities must be matters of absolute forbearance. This is a duty repeatedly enjoined by the Apostle upon christians who found fault with one another's views and practices. Forbearance, it has justly been remarked, does not relate to things indifferent, but to those which are supposed to be injurious and sinful. The idea of exercising this christian virtue towards a brother who is only using his liberty in a way which you cannot condemn, but because in things indifferent he follows his own pleasure rather than yours, is supremely ridiculous. The Apostle enjoins it under circumstances in which the parties severally held one another to be in the wrong; and in which one of them, at

least, was looked upon by the other as violating the laws of God. The Apostle decides indeed in that case that the thing was in itself indifferent; but at the same time, seeming not to expect their acquiescence in his judgment, he tells them "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind:" and he shuts up the discussion by referring them to that tribunal where alone such controversies can be finally and profitably settled: "why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.*" The very fact of men's presuming to judge and condemn a brother, and the instructions here given them, rather to submit the case to him that judgeth righteously, equally prove to us that the things in controversy must have been regarded as questions of sin and duty, referable to the word of God. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our instruction; and it becomes us to remember that as we have not, like those Romans, an apostle at our elbow, we are doubly obligated to pursue the same course. But at the same time we are to beware of the peril of using this our liberty unwarrantably; for though the apostle called not upon the proper authorities in the Roman church to censure the stumbler of his christian brethren in

* Rom. xiv.

such event, yet he puts him in mind that the Lord is judge: his decisions are not idle. The difficulty then about censures in a church, proceeds, in very many cases, upon a false assumption. The fact is that many modern churches are by far too free as well as too rapid in their censures about matters of opinion. We appeal to apostolic precedent and precept—we appeal to the dealings of our Lord Jesus Christ with his slow-hearted and often erring followers; *and then* it may be trumpeted in the face of heaven and earth, that the churches very often and very unwarrantably array, in all the solemnities of judicial process, multitudes of cases which *never were* made the subjects of any other kind of dealing than private exhortation, instruction, or rebuke. Paul could call upon his youthful associates to rebuke, and that “sharply,” on the ground of their individual ministerial authority: he could bid them “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with *all long-suffering*,” as well as “doctrine.” And all this without once suggesting that it was proper, in those kinds of cases, for the husbandman to be impatient for the fruits, and to subject his trees to the wintry cultivation of the green-house, the scorching operations of judicial process, provided the sun of righteousness himself did not speedily shed his influence to invigorate those plants. Here then is your mistake;—your difficulty about bringing matters to the desired conclusion is of your own creating: you have no right to *urge* the matter to such a conclusion.—You are to bear with the infirmity of your brother,

and try all the methods of caution, instruction, and reproof. Unless his malady increases to something of a much more threatening aspect, it is all you are called upon to do. The anxious assimilation of the church of Christ to the ways and maxims of the world, and the consequent zeal to ape the spirit and regulations of civil courts, have generated much of the mischiefs that distract her. These are (at least in part) the things that cherish a spirit of boundless litigation, and under the guise of a love of order, uniformity and truth, have seldom generated any thing else than

“Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimeras dire.”

The above remarks, however, do not apply to all the matters of dispute with which christians may be conversant, or to all the irregularities of professors which may fall under their observation. There are obviously multitudes of departures from the law of God, about which there neither is nor can be any division of sentiment among truly christian men: there are others not less disgraceful, and not less dangerous in some cases, which may be ignorantly disregarded, or stubbornly disputed by a few back-sliding churches, professors of very questionable character, and probably other individuals under the influence of strong temptation; but the precision with which they are noticed in the word of God, and the destructive consequences with which they are attended, may in all ages and under all circumstances readily point them out to the attention of the church at large. No man, for instance,

is at a loss to distinguish murders and revelings, adulteries and thefts, in the prohibitions of the scripture; and in general all those points which fall under the denomination of immoral conduct, are so recognized by all christians, and by most other men whose consciences are at all enlightened by the word of God. The same thing may be said of the great truths and duties, peculiarly and eminently christian. They are written as with a sun beam; hardly any body, except determined heretics, ranks them among "doubtful disputations." Obviously then, a breach of duty or corruption of principle in these respects, is of a character entirely different from every thing that is ordinarily to be supposed in the cases before spoken of. He who, while a wearer of the christian name, indulges in the courses which he himself, as well as all the world, acknowledges to be sinful, is certainly to be regarded in a very different light, and therefore to be treated in a very different manner, from the man who conscientious yet misled, obstinate yet sincere, gracious yet perplexed by doubtful disputations, errs in his views of many minor principles laid down for our direction in the word of God. In the latter case the conscience needs to be enlightened, in the former it needs to be aroused: in the one there is required the language of instruction and the patience of love; in the other the language of reproof, and if this be insufficient "the rod for the fool's back." Moreover, a thousand blunders in the dark, and a thousand mistakes in arranging our views of

truth, are perfectly consistent, not only with sincerity, but with grace; but sin persevered in, sin unrepented of, sin still rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue, by those who “know the master’s will, *yet do it not*,” is a strong evidence of a reprobate mind. In this case judicial process itself is either a mean of recovery, or a discoverer of the rottenness of the heart; and every consideration demands that the man should be cut off, whose evidences of connexion with the living head, are at least so very doubtful, and who manifests by perseverance in known iniquity, and a refusal to repent, that he loves his sins more than he loves his master and the privileges of his church.

The same remarks may be made with respect to *erroneous* professors. There are obviously many who wear the name of Christ, while they hold and avow principles absolutely incompatible with the profession which they make. If then a man or a church *avowedly* builds upon the sand, you have no reason for proceeding with them as if they built upon the rock. If they do not profess to “hold the head,” but to look for salvation in some other way, you have no right to acknowledge, but are bound to *deny* their title to the privileges of the christian church. How can you hold *christian* fellowship with those who hold not their fellowship with the Father and the Son? How can you extend the symbols of that salvation to sinners from whom the salvation itself is far? To do so would be to acknowledge their christianity, and so to merge *the truth*

in darkness, and to lay stumbling blocks before the world. Here indeed they may be sincere enough, zealous enough, noisy enough; but it is *christianity alone* that entitles men to the privileges of a christian; and if their own doctrines condemn them, if they found their hope in fallacies—their building on the sand, you must deal with them as sinners who yet need God's salvation, and not as saints who are made partakers of it. Possibly indeed some of them may be christians after all; but then *you* cannot penetrate their hearts; you must determine according to the evidence before you.

The rule, therefore, in both the cases we have reviewed is one: “now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man *that is called a brother* be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one **NO NOT TO EAT.***” “A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition **REJECT.**”† There are men “having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such **WITHDRAW THYSELF.**”‡ Finally: “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”§ The reader will re-

* 1 Cor. v. 11. † Titus. iii. 10. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 2—5, § 2 John 9, 10.

collect the discrimination on this subject, to which we have been helped by Dr. Owen. He will distinguish for himself who it is that “abideth not in the doctrine of Christ,” and therefore “hath not God.” He may learn at his leisure from many other sources who are the heretics—the persons who desert the fundamentals of christianity. We have room at present only to remark, that the common error consists in blending things which the Holy Ghost, and the uniform practice of our Lord and his Apostles, kept perfectly distinct: in putting the mistakes, ignorance and misconceptions of the conscientious christian upon the very same footing with the “damnable heresies” of men who denied “the Lord that bought them.” It is likewise worthy of remark, that we are to hold ourselves at a much greater distance from persons who are ejected for false doctrine or unholy conduct, than from “the world that lieth in wickedness.” For in the one case it is said that “if any of them that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go,” your christian profession imposes no restraint, you may lawfully go*; nay, you may lawfully have intercourse with “the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters:”†--but with a professor whose errors or crimes separate you from his communion, you are to have no sort of fellowship, “no, not to eat,”—no, not to “receive him into your house, neither bid him God speed; for in so doing you make yourself a partaker of his

* 1 Cor. x. 27.

Ibid v. 9, 10.

evil deeds.” How, some persons and churches can neglect this part of God’s ordinance, while they are so over rigorous about the other—can become partakers of men’s evil deeds from whom they *should utterly* withdraw, while to escape pollution they separate from others from whom God *never* commanded them to separate at all, can *abridge* the list of crimes, and *increase* the scroll of heresies, *let him that runneth read.*—Happy the man who esteems all God’s commandments, *concerning all things*, to be right!

We enter, however, into no discussion of this subject. It falls not either within the plan or limits prescribed for this essay. The suggestions that have been dropped are intended solely to deliver from the imputation of undervaluing, or setting aside the legitimate exercises of discipline in the church of God. Let that discipline be vigorous as you please; but let it be directed to legitimate objects and conducted in a scriptural manner. It is the *abuse* not the use, the *perversion* not the *exercise* of the authority delegated from God the Saviour, against which we are constrained so warmly to obtest. We have therefore, but one more remark upon this subject and it shall be dismissed. It is this: that even the ejection of men of corrupt conduct, or of heretical principles, can be only your duty when the power is in your hands; and that if the power be with them, it does not by any means follow that you are to withdraw yourself from the communion of the church to which you are both attached. In the first instance, having the

power, you are bound to employ it for the correction of the abuse; in the latter case you have only the power to testify against the evil, and to keep away from it yourself; and to that only you are bound. This was all that was enjoined on the purer part of Sardis and Thyatira; all that was expected from the faithful in Galatia, (if any such remained;) and all that our Lord himself did in the Jewish church, most of whose members were as vile in conduct, and, idolatry excepted, as heretical in doctrine as ever was the church of Rome. Let persons who are for hoisting the signals for division at every little difference of practice or opinion, let men whose zeal in a particular controversy magnifies into heroism the ill-tempered, ill-informed procedure of every whisperer and schismatic that abets them, let such men think of the procedure of our Lord Jesus Christ, while among the minority in the worst of churches, and let them hide their heads for shame.*

* The following extracts from Mr. Boston's sermon on schism will serve to evince that even in these strong and unfashionable sentiments the writer is by no means singular. They are here introduced for the double purpose of countenancing the sentiments sketched in the above, and of backing the still more distended views of christian duty with respect to the errors and practices of smaller consequence, which have been submitted in the preceding number. It had been intended to introduce those which follow, together with several others from Neale, at an earlier period; but as they were not necessary to the argument itself, want of room has hitherto excluded all, as it must still exclude the most of them. Those which we propose here

On the merits of this controversy we have nothing more to offer. It will doubtless suggest itself to every thinking mind that even upon admitting the doctrine here advocated to be correct, the “charity which edifieth” would not

to introduce are as follow: “I will follow Christ to the synagogue of the Jews, (I hope some of you at least, may understand what I say,) and in so doing I will be more strict than these that scruple to follow Christ’s example, for fear they may be involved in the guilt of the corruptions among them; for the nearer I follow Christ, the more strict I am, if strictness be measured according to the word of God.” “But so it is that our dissenters do thus reject communion with us, and separate from us, while, in the mean time, they might keep communion with this church without sin,—therefore their separation is schism, and they are schismatics. That they might keep communion with us without sin, that is, *without involving themselves in the guilt of the corruptions of the Church*, will appear, if ye consider, that there are no corruptions among us, whether real or pretended, *which the Church OBLIGETH THEM TO APPROVE; OR JOIN IN THE PRACTICE OF, as terms of communion with her:* nor is there any real or pretended truth which they own, *that the Church obligeth them to RENOUNCE,* as a term of communion with her.” From these two facts, that dissenters were not forced to own any thing which they did not believe, nor yet to renounce any thing which they did believe, but would have been permitted to hold their own views of things, and to practice accordingly, where they were in circumstances to do it, Mr. Boston infers that they not only sinned in keeping back from the fellowship of saints in the established church of Scotland, but were downright schismatical. After saying that they might have always protested against every thing amiss, and informing us by the way that ministers only were bound to own the confession of faith in order to admission, (a comment—

suggest the immediate adoption of it in practice to the extent it will bear, as a thing commendable in all places and under all circumstances.—The ordinances of grace, like the Sabbath, were made for man, not man for them. And considering what has been so long the view and practice of the churches in many places, christian principle will dictate attempts to enlighten rather than to drive. But that delay which may be proper in some portions of a church, may be altogether needless in others. In every place

able distinction, and still kept up, we believe, in that church, as also under the burgher synod,) he goes on to say: "It remains then that they may keep communion with us without sin, *unless mere joining in communion in a church, wherein there are many corruptions, be a sin, and defile a man.* To this narrow point I think the controversy betwixt them and us is brought: this I take to be the very foundation of the separation, which if it fall, all falls together with it: **AND THAT THIS IS A GROSS UNTRUTH,** I shall evince by two arguments." Mr. Boston's *two arguments* are drawn from the case of Thyatira in Rev. ii. and from the conduct of our Lord as recorded in Luke iv. 16. Under the first he says, "In the church of Thyatira Jezebel was suffered to teach and seduce Christ's servants; for suffering her the angel is reprov'd, and consequently called upon to amend this fault." But "*the party that kept themselves pure are not required to separate; nay in effect ARE COMMANDED TO CONTINUE IN THE COMMUNION OF THAT CHURCH,* while the Lord expressly tells them, *He will lay no other burden upon them,* but commands them "to hold fast," to keep themselves pure. This could not have been, if their keeping communion with the Church of Thyatira, in which there were such gross corruptions, and corrupt members, had been a

and on either hand prudence must determine: "He that eateth eateth to the Lord:—and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not." Those demands upon one church or one country, to wait the progress of another's light and the perfecting another's liberty, before they use their own, are extremely childish and petulant, not to say, excessively imperious. Charity itself will dictate most infallibly the manner and time: if charity be lacking, no system of rules can be made so lucid or so full as to answer in its stead.—It is presumed, however, that in churches which have the advantage of every necessary mean of instruction, no christian duty should be very long delayed, in compliance with their op-

sin." The other argument is managed in the same way. In concluding Mr. Boston says, "let them that would find this point more largely proved consult *Rutherford's peaceable plea for presbytery*, and *Durham on scandal and on the Revelations*, both proving this point against the separatists of their time."

LET SEPARATISTS HEAR!! Who are the supporters and who the opposers of the ancient faith and practice of the churches? We are obliged to be content with referring the reader to Boston. Boston tells his readers that they will find the same views stated at large by *Rutherford* and *Durham*. Now, it is very true that they introduced these arguments "against the separatists of their time," and not on the controversy now before the reader: but let the reader remember that they **ADOPT THE PRINCIPLES**; they say **THE VIEW IS SOUND**. And, if this be so, the reader has no reason to complain of the application of them by us to a different controversy. But he may try, if he pleases, to evade their force—he may shew, if he can, that they are misapplied.

position or backwardness to adopt it. Much less may any man who sees it to be duty, and whose business it is to point it out to others, delay this obvious and ever-imperious duty, because the churches lack the light upon that subject, which it has therefore become his business to strike up. This folding of the hands and crying, "the time is not yet come, the people are not ready," when used as a dissuasive from attempts to make them ready, is cowardice instead of prudence, is unfaithfulness instead of charity; and deserves the reprobation of every honest man. Doubtless when the proper means have been used for a proper length of time, and of that the prudence of the party can be the only judge, it becomes men however few, to act according to their light. If the mountains still remain immovable on every hand, if the Red sea be before them, if the host of the Egyptians press behind; let them not always stand and cry to God; let them "speak unto the people that they go forward."

The revival of this ancient and extensive communion of the saints, however diverse their sentiments in matters of subordinate moment, is certainly one among the striking features that characterize the present period. While God is pouring forth his fury upon the old destroyer; while he is shedding the light of truth upon those valleys of the shadow of death, the lands of paganism under every clime; while he is reviving his cause in many churches whose lamps were almost out; while he is distributing his

word in almost every language under heaven; he is likewise taking measures to unite more closely the hearts and efforts of his people, by drawing them to the open acknowledgment and more intimate feeling of their common relation to their common Lord: and thereby also distinguishing them *as a body* from heretics and from the world. It is worthy of remark that the first annual meeting (if we mistake not *it was* the *first*) of that missionary society in England, whose formation has been the birth of so many blessings to Europe and the world, was marked by such a communion, in which all its members, from various denominations, joined. "THIS DAY WE BURY BIGOTRY," said the heaven-taught tongue of him who distributed the symbols of their common hope; and from that auspicious hour the memorials of the monster have perished day by day.

When we can see the same spirit of approximation kindled in the west, there will be ground to expect not only the termination of "backsliding and bitterness," but such a calm comparison of sentiments as shall assimilate our views; such a junction of all the faithful, that the heretic, the careless and the unbeliever, shall be compelled to notice, and all others to discern, the boundaries which separate them; and such a union of hearts, and interests, and efforts, as may adorn our profession, chase away our sorrows, and facilitate, in every respect, our labours and our comforts, till at length "we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of

God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

No. VIII.

RESULTS.

The elucidation and defence of the preceding deduction have been extended to a much greater length than was originally designed, and indeed swell far beyond all reasonable proportion. If any apology can be admitted as sufficient for this breach of rules, it must be that the novelty as well as importance of the subject imposed a necessity for minute discussion. It would not, however, be at all strange if the reader, in wading through an argument so long and varied, should have in a great measure lost sight of the original principles upon which these deductions are framed. We must therefore beg leave to call his attention again to the declared and acknowledged principles of federal representation; and especially to those corollaries in pages 33—37, which have been deduced from the discussions of the second number. It is there, among other things, infered that “the constant flux of individuals never affects the standing of the body:” that “whatever be the actual limitation as to the number of individuals comprised in any association, or whatever be the intention of the head of the associa-

tion relative to such limitation, the system itself is capable of embracing individuals without number:" and finally, that "not only the whole body is identified with the head of a system, such as we have had in our view, but every individual member, every constituent portion of that body is thus identified." Taking with us these principles, as detailed and illustrated in the pages referred to, we proceed to state as

A SECOND DEDUCTION from the foregoing display of the imputative principle, that the difficulties with which the questions of the *extent* of the Redeemer's purchase, and of the universality of the gospel offer, have been often looked upon as burdened, originate entirely in mistaken notions of the doctrine of federal representation, and are not at all connected with the true principle, either as generally adopted in the affairs of men, or as assumed and announced to us in the plan of redemption.

It is no unusual circumstance in the history of intellectual strife to meet with instances of embattled hosts who profess to differ *toto cœlo* in almost every point, but the whole foundation of whose difference may nevertheless be traced to a strange, and indeed often ludicrous concurrence, in the adoption of some one common but erroneous first principle, which they severally connect with dissimilar and opposite assumptions; and thence proceed to construct their different systems, as contrary to one another as could well be supposed. Thus it is well known that the Arminians and Antinomians start out from a common

point in which they most cordially agree; but each so connects it with a different train of assumptions as to produce together two schemes professedly Christian, which are as remarkable for their mutual oppugnation, as for their individual contrariety to all that is holy and all that is precious in the gospel of God's son. The principle to which they both give assent, and which is undoubtedly false, is this: that it is not consistent with the righteousness of God to impose a law upon the creature, and consequently upon man in his present state, more holy or more exact than the moral powers and dispositions which he possesses enable him to fulfil. Hence the antinomian concludes that Christ has released us from all obligation to obey the moral law: for to that principle just specified as adopted by both parties, he joins this other, that man is a depraved being, and so cannot completely fulfil the moral law. Ergo, says he, that law cannot be binding. The Arminian on the contrary adopts as his second principle that the moral law is actually binding; and connecting this with the one assumed on both sides, infers that man is not that corrupted creature which the Antinomian would have him be, but is able perfectly to keep the law of God. It will at once be perceived that in the assumption of their second principle, both are undeniably correct, however opposed to each other, while they *agree* to err by mutually adopting a first and monstrously absurd maxim, that the depravity attendant upon sin should of right relax the obligations of the creature.

Upon surveying the positions too generally assumed by the combatants on either side of the great questions which we profess now to illustrate, it is not possible to avoid the suspicion, not to say *conviction*, that the very same kind of game has been played here as in the case just specified. It appears to have been very commonly adopted as a plain case, that if indeed the plan of redemption is constructed on the federal scheme, properly so called, then all those who are to be saved were individually (so to speak) specified in the covenant transaction, and known in law as of the Redeemer's body, from the very first moment in which he undertook the responsibilities of their head. The reader will have to excuse us, if he perceives some obscurity in this statement, or in any thing of the same kind that may be met with hereafter. The scheme itself is obscure, palpably obscure, and in attempting to reduce a statement of it to form, we cannot do more than its own warmest advocates have in every age effected. Such however is the *common* assumption; such both sides appear to think the only alternative, provided the principle of federal representation be at all adopted. Hence, there immediately arises the strife of combatants. On the one part the ideas that the Redeemer should have represented through life, should have represented on the cross, should now represent in heaven, all the individuals who have been or shall be saved, and no other whatever; and that all these individuals, *in their individual capacity*, should have been con-

tinuedly, and from the first, recognized in law and in the provisions of the covenant, as included under the representation of Christ, and therefore as one with him; and no other individuals whatever represented, recognized, or in any way interested:—All these ideas, we say, are on the one part rejected, as destructive to the hopes of men, incompatible with the universality of the gospel offer, and in direct oppugnation to many plain and express declarations of the scriptures. And consequently the whole doctrine of federal representation is discarded in the gross; and is made to give place, either to the re-establishment of the law of works, or to a crude, undefinable, untangible sort of notion, that while the Redeemer did not in fact and formally represent any thing, or any body in particular: he nevertheless gave being to such an order, that any body or every body *may* or may not receive the benefit of his acts, according as they do or do not put themselves under his protection. A scheme of this kind is susceptible of being moulded into almost innumerable forms, and may be made to approximate very near the truth. or diverge immensely from it, just as the speculator may be more or less possessed of, and governed by other principles really scriptural. But mould the idea as you will, it is not a natural, not a possible thing to adopt and act upon a scheme which recognizes an head, but without a body; or, which really amounts to the same thing, an head specifically, exactly, minutely defined, with a body incapable of any sort of specification, and the very existence of which

is far from being removed above the inconvenience of contingency.

On the other hand, the scheme of federal representation, as already delineated, and as conceded on both sides to be the natural one, is adopted by a far more sober and permanent order in the churches, notwithstanding all the difficulties under which it labours, and all the objections to which it not only *seems*, but actually *is* liable. Holding, as they do, that the individual names of all who shall be saved, and those only, were born upon the breast of our great high Priest; that in their individual names he acted and suffered; and that the covenant recognizes them, and the law recognizes them, in this specific and individual way:—they *do* shudder at the least approach to any thing like a concession, that the plan of God in any sense admits the possibility of another's deliverance; and they *do* meet all the difficulties and all the objections that seem to lie against this scheme, **IN THE BEST MANNER THEY CAN.**

It may however be said without the smallest hesitation, that the last mentioned view, **NEVER YET WAS, AND NEVER WILL BE** made appear consistent with itself, or with the word of God. The gospel of God's son never could be tendered with truth and innocency to any soul that shall finally be lost, if that representation were consistent with the facts: the sin of unbelief, in its genuine colours, never could be imputed to any who shall perish: the exploded doctrine of eternal justification would be proved neither fanciful nor false: and, **ABOVE ALL,** many of those passa-

ges in the word of God which Arminians have wielded with such triumph and effect, never can admit of a satisfactory interpretation, even though we should succeed in wresting them from *their* hands.

But the fact is, that the prevailing idea relative to the application of the imputative principle is wrong—radically wrong. For it is not true, neither *can* it be true, of any system whose development is progressive, that all who shall be parts of it are formally and in law recognized as parts, whether they exist or whether they do not. Neither is it true that the contemplated results which are to arise out of such a constitution, or what in the present case amounts to the same thing, the *contemplated numbers* to the reception of which it shall be limited, diminishes in the least the capacity of the system to receive indefinitely above those limits, and that without any kind of violence to the constitution under which they might be received. Finally, it is not necessary in order to the recognition of a body or association, as well defined and as clearly specified as the head which represents it can in any given case be supposed to be, that all the parts or members which may eventually enter into the constitution of that body, should either exist in fact, or be known in law previously to the moment when they are made to assume their station in the body.—These positions we will endeavour to confirm and illustrate with a direct reference to the great questions before us.

1. We say then, in the first place, that it is an error to suppose that all who shall be at any time members or parts of a federal system, the development of which is progressive, are therefore recognized in the plan, or known in law as parts of that system from the commencement of its operations. Thus, in the case before us, it is not true that all the elect of God, or in other words all who shall be saved, were *individually* recognized as members of Jesus Christ, and as included under his federal representation, at the time when his obedience was yielded, or his atonement made. Neither is it true of any unconverted man at any given moment, although he be of the election of grace, and shall therefore finally be saved, that he is known in law as occupying any standing but that which is common to "the world that lieth in wickedness." In other other words, they who are in Christ, they who are called and justified and sanctified, these, *and these only* are recognized as under the representation of the surety: and neither the uncreated nor the unconverted man are in any sense included under the same representation, whatever may be the purposes of God concerning them as respects the future.

Let us first examine in a few instances how this principle applies in other associations or combinations of men into a federal system. There are no doubt many at this moment on the plains of Europe who will one day become to all intents and purposes constituent portions of the American people. At present however, they are not so. They are subject to governments with which

we have little or no connection; or perhaps as the subjects of a foreign power, they may be preparing to level the instruments of death against the bosoms of our countrymen. Who pretends to say that their future destination affects their present standing? Who doubts but that the man who is now an alien enemy entitled to none of our precious privileges, may one day become a fellow citizen with ourselves, and from the very moment in which the relationship commences, have the colouring of his future life in a great measure determined, not only by the future transactions of a government by which he at present cannot be affected, but even by transactions that are long since past? The moment that gives birth to the relationship in question, shall not only interest him in all that will then be future, but no less strongly connects him with all that may be past. This then is at the same time the moment in which such persons begin to be recognized in law, and in which the operations of all preceding acts begin to take place upon them. Upon this same principle undeniably proceed all those permanent institutions among men under which the individuals may be forever changing, while the system itself changes not.

Again, it is very certain that human nature was represented by our first father in Eden, and that we feel to this day the consequences of his procedure as our federal head. But it is not true that all the individuals who have successively sprung from him were individually and formally recognized in law as included under the repre-

sentation of their father. In order to make out such an assumption it would be necessary to maintain that the world must have stood for precisely so many ages, and have witnessed the birth of precisely so many human beings, let the event of his trial turn out what it might. Had Adam stood, faithfulness would have required the production of just so many men, and consequently the continuance of the established order for just so many ages as the specification in the covenant called for; otherwise the life that was promised would not be imparted to *all* who would have had a right to the blessings thus secured. On the other hand, the world could not have stood a moment longer for the purposes in question, otherwise all its additional inhabitants must have been totally destitute of a federal head, and so in no sense upon the same footing with their fathers. On the contrary, since Adam actually fell, had his representation been as specific as we now suppose, the world must have stood for the very same length of time, to afford means for the production of the very same individuals, that they might inherit the curse entailed upon them, although the considerations of Messiah's intervention had afforded no new reason for continuing its duration; and it could not consistently have been continued any longer, lest the production of additional human beings, *not* under the representation of the fallen father, should have created the same embarrassments noticed in the former case. Upon the whole, the assumption binds us down to conclusions, mould it as you will, which run di-

rectly counter to all our apprehensions of the sovereignty of God, and of the fitness of things. We conclude therefore, that as in the case of nations, so it is with the world of men at large; that which unites them to the system represented is the thing which effects their specification in the covenant. Until they exist they cannot be so specified, and until that order takes place which we call the bond of union to the first representative of man, till *that bond itself is*, the union and consequently the representation, *cannot be*. It would surely be very absurd to talk of our personal, individual representation by our father Adam, at the moment when he fell; and yet to admit (as is on all hands admitted) that natural generation is the bond which unites us to him. Very strange indeed, if the union could exist some six thousand years before the bond itself existed by which alone it is confessedly effected. The statement furnished upon this subject in a preceding number is undoubtedly the correct one. "Adam was the representative of *human nature*; and whether that nature was to be developed in ten generations or in ten thousand, was a matter of no consequence at all in the application of the principle. Upon no man could it have its influence of whom he was not the federal representative; upon every man to whom he might afterwards stand in that relation its influence was to be direct. That is to say, human nature, as descending from him by ordinary generation, was the object specified; and the application of the covenant terminates upon A, B and C, not in conse-

quence of any individual specification in the compact, but because they are of that *body* which the compact specified.”

Here then, we have a scheme not only consistent with itself, and perfectly flexible to that sovereignty of Jehovah, which prolongs or terminates his constitutions at will, but also one which is in every respect perfectly analagous to all other constitutions of the federal kind with which we have any thing to do. For the very same kind of reasoning by which we establish the principles and order of the compacts just reviewed, will be found to apply for the same reason and with the same force, to that “better covenant established upon better promises.” Our representation by the Lord Jesus Christ is the direct as well as necessary consequence of our union to him. We must therefore *be*, before we can be recognized as of the body of Christ; and we must be *of* the body of Christ, before it can be said of us in any case, that he bore *our* sins in his own body on the tree. Our individual representation by Christ therefore commences with the fact of our union to Christ, and not, as is often assumed, with his assumption of the mediatorial character.

We know that controversy has so sharpened the spirits of men, and taught many to attach such high importance to the view we are combating, that these positions will be regarded by not a few with a kind of horror as well as surprize. But let them not decide too hastily. So far are they from defending the *only* view upon this subject that can make head against Armin-

ianism, that they have unwarily taken a position as unfavourable for that end, as could be wished by their warmest adversary; and if the sentiments which they deprecate be unscriptural and injurious, let them know that their own upon this head are not a jot more scriptural, and very little less injurious.

We say again, that no man can be under the representation of Christ till he be in actual existence; and that even his existence, even his eternal election alters not his standing with respect to the covenant, or with respect to the law, so long as he continues an unregenerate man. The scripture also says the same thing. The Apostle Paul in the beginning of the seventh of Romans, lays it down as an axion, and indeed one would think it a very plain one too, that no person can at the same moment be under two distinct and opposite federal heads; that is to say, we cannot be at one and the same time under the representation of the first and second Adam. If then we admit the doctrine of original sin, or in other words of our covenant relation to the first federal head, that very concession cuts of all pretence in favour of the very common notion of an individual and formal, and legal interest in Christ as *our own* representative throughout all time. On the other hand, if we adopt the notion of such a specification in the terms of the covenant, and in the eye of the law, we virtually deny that we ever did or could stand in a covenant relation to the first offender, and plump into the labyrinth of eternal justification.

The argument furnished us by the Apostle on this subject is so concise and lucid that it is worth while to transcribe it. "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth: but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law: so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law* BY THE BODY OF CHRIST; *that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*"* The Apostle then not only assures us that a man can no more be at the same time under the first and second Adam, than a woman can be the lawful wife of two husbands at once; but he also states that it is by the fact and in the very act of our uniting to "the Body of Christ," that we become "dead unto the law." Our representation by the second Adam is the state which not only succeeds but destroys our relation to the first; so that the moment of our becoming members of the body of Christ, is that which is the commencement of our personal interest in him. And if we may be allowed here to anticipate an idea

* Rom. vii. 1—4.

which will fall more properly under a different part of this discussion, we may safely say when thus countenanced by the Apostle, HIS OWN BODY is *that which the head—the Saviour represents*, and it is “*by the body,*” i. e. by our becoming a part of it, and so one with it, that we fall under his representation, and can say therefore with truth, and in conformity with that which the law will then, *but not till then*, allow, “he gave himself for me;” “he bare *my* sins in his own body upon the tree.” Previously to this, the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Apostles and the Martyrs, all who ever have, or who ever yet shall “wash their garments and make them white in the blood of the lamb,” are declared by this same Apostle to be “children of wrath, even as others.”* They are exactly in the same condition, of the very same denomination, unknown of Abraham, unacknowledged by Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, and differing in no one particular of their case from those who shall finally perish. The purpose of God to include them *afterwards* under the Saviour’s representation, does not enclose them *now* within the bow of the everlasting covenant; the gift of them by the father to the son, does not now bring them out from the common condition. They remain “even as others,” in the eye of the law, and in point of fact, till the moment arrives when the spirit of the son unites them to himself; and when thus united to “the body,” they fall under the

* Ephes. ii. 3.

denomination and partake all the blessings inherited by it.

The neglect to distinguish between the purpose of God to bring men under the covenant, and the actual operation of the covenant itself, is the thing which involves this matter in perplexity. And so long as we will not discriminate between his purposes and his law, between the structure of a system and its practical operations; so long, in one word, as we persist in confounding things totally distinct, and imagine to ourselves a structure without a likeness either in heaven or on earth, it will not be strange if we should wander,

“In endless mazes lost.”

No. IX.

RESULTS.

If the reader is satisfied, by the assertion of our Apostle, that no being can be recognized as in any sense or to any extent under two federal heads, at one and the same time; if he thence gathers that elect men are not represented by Christ till they are actually *in* Christ; and if he is able to perceive that this statement is perfectly analagous to the application of the principle of federal representation, in every other constitution known among men; he is now in need of little aid in order to adopt with full conviction the

2d. Position hazarded upon this subject, viz. that it is not true with respect to any federal system progressive in its development, that the measure of results which it is intended to produce, is commensurate with all that it is capable of producing; or that the numbers to the reception of which it shall be actually limited, are to be regarded as the utmost it is capable of receiving. A nation is undoubtedly a federal association, constructed, as we have seen, upon precisely the same general principle with "the body of Christ." But who ever yet imagined that the civil compact ever did or ever could set bounds to the numbers of the people, so that the operations of government must necessarily terminate upon a specific number, neither more nor less? Who ever supposed that when a nation increases to a two or three fold population, it is necessary that the sanction of her laws, the functions of her government, and every bond by which the federal head is united to the body, must be proportionably augmented, proportionably distended, in order to cover this vast increase of members? Who ever reasoned thus with respect to the corporation of a city? Or who does not know that the increase or the shifting of the body produces no manner of change in any of these respects, in any federal combination known among men? let the body be increasing or diminishing, it is still one, it is identically the same, and the *form of law* recognizes no manner of difference, let the case in that respect be as it may. That which for the time being is *of* the body, or rather, that which is the

body, is the subject operated upon; and the addition of constituent atoms, not destroying the identity of the system, can create no kind of embarrassment—can give occasion to no kind of new demand upon the resources of the head.

The whole difficulty upon this point, as applied to the question of the *extent* of Christ's satisfaction, is bottomed upon the presumption that every particle in a federal body, and every accession to that body, must be formally and specifically recognized in the terms of the compact; so that really the plan of grace is made to proceed upon the system of *item contra item*, as it is displayed in the pages of a Ledger, rather than upon the plan of the federal compact, as recognized by men in all other matters, and as it *must* be organized where it exists at all. It is this assumption that gives birth to all that hesitation about determining the point whether our blessed Lord must have suffered more than he actually did, if it had been his pleasure that more should have been saved. Doubtless, if there were that specification of all individuals, and of all their individual sins—if there were *item contra item*, so much obedience for just so many men, and so much suffering for just so many sins, there must have been accessions to the Saviour's merits, there must have been augmentations of the Saviour's anguish, in order to procure additional titles and to wash away additional guilt. But who ever thought of a similar arrangement in any other federal system! Who ever thought that the proclamations of our President, that the ordinances of our con-

gress, that any act of any officer of our general government, must be just so much the stronger now than it was ten years ago, as will render it capable of binding two million people more! The notion is palpably absurd. It is an application of one class of rules and system of ideas, to an other order of things about which they can have no place.

But let us apply the same wild notions to another federal scheme, confessedly divine. Adam was the representative of human nature. Will it be said that if he had stood, the merits of his obedience would have been partitioned out among all whom he represented, so that each must have had their exclusive portion of the claim? Will it be said that if the world should have stood for one generation more than is contemplated in the plan of God, that generation must have been without any title to the inheritance he earned? And as the matter stands, as Adam has actually fallen, will it be maintained that the guilt of his transgression is thus partitioned out? Or does any body imagine that if the world were to stand for a generation longer than is actually designed, Adam must have sinned a little more heinously than he actually did, in order to involve that generation likewise in the common ruin; or that otherwise they would escape the infection of their fellows? Every body will see that all this is perfectly absurd. Every body will admit that it is a matter of mere indifference to how many or how few generations the duration of the world shall be protracted. He was the representative of *human nature*, descending from him by ordinary

generation, and the individuals, wheresoever, and in whatever numbers found, are visited with the penalty, because of the system against which it was denounced. Had they never existed, the system would have been still complete, even as a city or nation is complete in itself, whether with a smaller or larger population, and as not being of the system, the law could not have recognized them, neither would it have missed them. The body—the whole body is the object upon which the law takes hold, and which the covenant formally recognizes, and that body would still exist in perfection, whatever might be the case with them.

Further: the imputation of Adam's offence is not thus parcelled out among the individuals who fall under his representation. It has been stated and proved in another part of this essay, (page 36,) that "in the first covenant, the guilt of Adam's sin is not partitioned out among his descendants, but the whole of that guilt, and the whole burden of the curse entailed with it, descends *undivided* to every soul of man." For the illustrations of this point the reader can, if he please, look back to the page referred to.

Thus much then is certain, than in all federal bodies the idea of partitioning out either merits or demerits among the individuals composing the system, is impracticable and absurd. The whole merit, the whole demerit, descends upon the whole system *as one*, and rests undivided upon every member, upon every constituent atom of that system, as fully and as really as if it alone

were the whole body. That which is imputed to any portion of the body, because of the body, by no means weakens the imputation of the same to any and to every other portion. Were mankind to be extended to a million generations they would make but the one system under the same one head, and the guilt of that head would descend as fairly and as fully to them, and to every individual of them, as it has awfully descended to the reader or the writer of this little work.

Why then foist in a notion so contrary to every thing admitted in other cases, when we set about construing the covenant of God's peace? Why suppose that the most august and beneficial of all the federal systems which the universe has witnessed, must be more defective in its provisions and more imperfect in its structure than any other system with which we are acquainted? Why allow that even man, feeble and short sighted, can adopt, can act upon the principle according to its genuine nature, while in the hand of the author of all wisdom, and when employed as an engine for the most beneficent of purposes, it must unavoidably become

“A mighty maze and that without a plan!”

But we are under no necessity of closing this discussion by an appeal to the frail and fallible reason of humanity. We have yet a greater witness. The Apostle Paul tells us repeatedly that the constitution of the body of Christ is not thus diverse from all other federal systems. He teaches us again and again that it is precisely paral-

led with the former constitution, headed by the first of men. We infer then, that if under the first covenant guilt descends undivided to every soul of man, even so under the second covenant, righteousness descends undivided too. We infer that if this guilt might descend to an indefinite number more than shall ever be born, even to a thousand or to ten thousand generations, even so righteousness might be extended indefinitely to those who never shall be born again, even to millions upon millions. We infer that as both systems are alike susceptible of indefinite and of illimitable augmentation, so they are both limited in fact only by the numbers that are actually within them; and that as it is the sovereignty of God, and not the terms of the covenant of works, that fixes the numbers that shall be born of Adam; so likewise it is the same sovereignty, and not any restrictive clause, or limited provision in the covenant of grace, that restricts the numbers that shall be born to Christ.

Indeed, if the discussions in the preceding number be admitted as sound, it must at once be perceived that in setting aside the idea of an individual and specific representation, such as is often contended for, every pretence in favour of this second wrong assumption is taken away: and that nothing more would have been needful in order to fix the true principle on the subject just discussed, than to remove the former false one upon which not only this, but all the other erroneous positions on this subject are declaredly

founded. Of these considerations we shall, at least, avail ourselves when managing the

3d. Postion which has been laid down upon this subject: viz. that "it is not necessary, in order to the recognition of a body or association, as well defined and as clearly specified as the head which represents it, that all the parts or members which may eventually enter into the constitution of that body, should either exist in fact, or be known in law, previously to the moment when they are made to assume their station in the body."

The soundness of this principle in its application to every other federal system with which we are acquainted, will be admitted without difficulty; nay *must* be admitted by every person who is disposed either to think or reason on the subject. In arranging the concerns of nations or corporations, it is not possible and certainly is not necessary to define upon whom, or upon how many of the yet unborn the passing transactions shall be found to terminate. The nation, the corporation, the body politic, of what kind soever, is the thing known in law, is the thing operated upon exactly as it is developed at the moment; and he would be looked upon as a madman who should call in question the completeness and definiteness of that body, merely because he could not define its future extension, or specify its future members.

The only difference therefore, between the "body of Christ" and other federal bodies, consists in the capacity of the head of this system to

control and define the body at his pleasure. HE knows, because he determines the number, the name, the time, and every thing respecting the accession of individuals to the mass. Still, however, it is upon that mass that the law takes effect; that mass is in every stage of its development as definite and as complete as is any other federal system in any stage of its existence; and the fact that it does not yet contain all the individuals that it is designed to comprehend, no more militates against its definiteness and completeness, as one great body, than the fact that additional births shall take place in a nation the next year, destroys its pretensions to the attributes and honours of a perfect nation throughout the present year.

It were easy to confirm and illustrate the position now before us, by an appeal to every federal system of progressive development; to every constitution, indeed, about which the perplexing question of identity can be agitated, from the animal body, or plant, or mineral, constituted of perpetually varying, and generally increasing atoms, up to those vast and ever-abiding nations concerning which it has already been discovered that they never change. It would, however, be a needless waste of time and pages, again to run over those numerous illustrations which have been already substantially before the reader. It is sufficient for our present purpose to remark, that upon our admitting the Apostle's principle, that no man can be regarded as under two distinct and opposite federal heads at the same time, we

are likewise constrained to admit the position now contended for. For if it be a fact that no man can be regarded in law or in theory as included under the mediatorial representation, while in an unregenerate state, then it would follow from the rejection of our position, that the Redeemer never did and never can represent a definite system—that he never was and never will be the head of his body, the church, until that day when the last whom it is his purpose to include is gathered in. The erroneousness, absurdity, and danger of such a notion need not be here displayed.

We conclude then, that while the body of Christ is, like every other federal system, susceptible in its own nature of constant and indefinite augmentation, and is actually and even declaredly designed to be thus augmented to the end of the world, it is nevertheless, like every similar constitution, "one and indivisible," an entire and well defined system in every stage of its development.

In exact conformity with this view, stands all the imagery employed in scripture to illustrate this great system. The vine is regarded as complete in itself, the olive tree is a system perfectly defined, independently of the branches at any time to be grafted on them. When the branches are thus grafted, they do not add to the entireness of the system, though they add to its extent; they do not make a complete vine, or a complete olive tree of that which was only *part* of one before, but they add to its sum of beauty and of fruitfulness; and from the moment of their be-

ing engrafted, they become a part of a system, which even with this addition is still nothing more than entire.

Accordingly all the language of scripture, as well as its imagery, is predicated upon this idea. "It is a light thing," says God, "that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth."* In this passage, and in multitudes of similar ones that might be adduced, it is easy to see that the whole turn of expression, depends for its beauty and correctness on the assumption of the true idea of federal representation: i. e. that the system represented is in every stage of it complete, and at the same time susceptible of still further augmentation. Israel was at that time the whole church of God, the whole body of Christ, and for aught that could be objected from the nature of the system, the process might have been ended without the introduction of any new parts. But the plan of God was not therefore complete; the whole purposes of his mercy were not yet fulfilled, and could not be until a multitude of branches from the wild olive tree were grafted on this fair and fruitful stock. He therefore calls it "a light thing," to terminate the operations of his system upon the house of Abraham to the exclusion of all others; it is more worthy of his vast and mighty plan, more wor-

*Isa. xlix. 6.

thy his mercy, more worthy of his son, that he should be also given “for a light to the Gentiles, and for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” But had the common notion of the individualizing scheme been the one on which the plan of grace was predicated, had the body of Christ, when constituted solely of the sons of Jacob been deficient as a system till the Gentiles were received, then there would have been neither beauty nor propriety in the expression of the prophet. For instead of being merely “a light thing” to bestow upon our Lord no larger body, as the recompense of his toil, it would have been an unjust thing; it would have been putting him off with a part of that which he represented and had purchased; and while it restricted, contrary to faithfulness, the operation of the plan, it would have secured to the Redeemer an imperfect headship over a mutilated system.—Such incongruous imagery, such unapt expression, is not to be imputed to the word of God.

The language of our Lord too, in what may be called his mediatorial prayer, amply serves to confirm and illustrate our position. For whom does he pray, when in a moment of peculiar interest addressing his wishes to his God and father? Had he, or had he not a definite object in his view, the interests of which were pressing upon his heart? And of what nature and extent was that object? Let a simple quotation satisfy these inquiries.—“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and

thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.—I pray for them: I PRAY NOT FOR THE WORLD, but for them which thou hast given me.”* Here is certainly something as definite as could be expected or desired. *Not the world*, considered as a system, *but his own body* considered as a system, is the subject of his prayer. Not that body as afterwards to be developed to the extent of his plan, but as it existed at the moment of his supplication—they who had “believed”—they who had “kept his word.” AFTERWARDS he extends the blessings of his intercession to that same body in all the future stages of its development; and does it in a style which sufficiently intimates that in *his* view the completeness of the system at any given time, and the future augmentation of that same system are things perfectly distinguishable, and perfectly consistent. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they ALL MAY BE ONE; as thou father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”† No illustration of ours could make these expressions appear more determinate than they may at first sight appear to every dispassionate reader. The object for which the Redeemer *did* pray is certainly well defined:—it was “not the world; it was “them which God had given him.” And yet this object, so accurately defined, does not embrace all the individuals that shall in the end be compre-

* John xvii: 6—9.

† Ib. 20, 21.

hended under it: for he again petitions, not “for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word:” He prays for them not as *now* included under his representation, but as future members of the body which he *now* represents: He prays for them not under the idea of their being one with him, but that they “MAY” be so. Here then we have a body—the very body too which we want, as clearly specified and as well defined as the head by whom it is represented; and yet the future members of that body are not spoken of either as existing in fact, or as known in law to be part of the constitution. The prayer is, that the plan *may* take effect upon them when they shall exist in fact, and that when in fact united to him, they *may* be recognized in law. It would appear that it is somewhere in these depths that the advocates of what is called an indefinite atonement, and their opponents who adopt the individualizing scheme of representation, both founder. They seem to assume it in common as a principle that in order to the representation of a definite object, all the members which are, or ever shall be combined into that system, must likewise be specifically and formally recognized in their individual capacity, in the terms of the compact itself. The one party dreading, as they justly may, the admission of such a principle into the plan of grace, take refuge from its consequences in the mazes of metaphysical subtilty, and wildly talk of an atonement made for sin without any legal and formal aspect toward the particular object upon

which it is designed to terminate.—If such a scheme is proposed in lieu of the principle of federal representation, as it is interwoven in the plans of Providence, and largely recognized in the affairs of men, it will be no bold assumption to decide at once that the view is inadmissible; for the plan of God's salvation is avowedly and incontestably of the federal kind. But if it be, on the other hand, adopted as a modification of the general principle in question, then it may be said with as little hesitation that it is such a modification as can exist no where, but in the brain of a speculatist. A federal head must have a federal body, a definite head, a body as well defined, and all transactions declaredly federal, a declared object upon which they are to terminate. It is neither less nor more than a metaphysical bull to talk of a federal head which represents nothing definite, and of federal transactions which have respect to nothing specific.

The objections which may be laid in against the system of our friends who adopt the other side of this melancholy and disastrous alternative, will be noticed more properly in a succeeding paper. That both are wrong in almost the only assumption in which they are agreed, appears to be a matter of easy demonstration. And assuming the position already laid down as proved, viz. that neither the specification nor even the existence, nor the recognition, in any shape, of all the individuals that may enter into a system, is necessary in order to identify and operate upon that system, and upon every individual of which

it may be composed, we conclude, that “the body of Christ” is as clearly defined as any federal system in the nature of things can be. And also, that this body, as thus defined, and as it exists at any given moment, is precisely and exclusively the object represented by our federal head. And also, that the capacity of the system to receive still greater accessions, or the intention of the head to procure it those accessions, neither obliterate the boundaries which the compact prescribes to it, nor affect the specification of its present limits.

And in still more general terms we conclude from the whole of the preceding discussions, that as under the first covenant the body represented by the first man was always definite and always complete, though always susceptible of still further and further development: as the transactions of Adam terminated and still terminate upon human nature, descending from him by ordinary generation, whensoever and wheresoever it appears: and as the application of the covenant knows no man in an individual capacity, but recognizes each and every man as constituting a part of that one system, upon which and every part of which the guilt and curse came down undivided and unimpaired:—even so it is in every respect with “the body of Christ.” “As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men” (came upon the whole system, and upon every individual belonging to the system that is united to Adam by ordinary generation—as his offence came upon them one and all) “to condemnation; even so, by

the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men," (came upon the whole system and upon every individual man belonging to the system that is united to Christ in regeneration--the free gift came upon all these) "to justification of life."* So that "as in Adam all die" (the whole system, distend and prolong it as you will,) "even so in Christ shall all be made alive;"† (the whole of *his* system, distend and prolong it as you will.)

But it is not even sufficient for the Apostle's purpose to shew that the capacity of the new system for diffusing the blessing is as unshackled, and its provisions as efficient, as was the capacity of the former for dealing death around. For if the law can know no limits to the infliction of the curse but those which the sovereignty of God prescribes to the production of its subjects, then "much more" says Paul, may we justly insist that "the grace of God and the gift by grace," is capable of the same unshackled and interminable application. The ill-boding restrictions which the unphilosophical and unscriptural individualizing scheme would impose upon the operations of this blissful plan, could leave no room for the "MUCH MORE" so fondly and frequently reiterated by the Apostle.

* Rom. v. 18.

† 1 Cor. xv. 22.

No. X.

RESULTS.

From the preceding discussions it would appear that God's plan for saving sinners is predicated neither upon the undefinable, impalpable, inconceivable scheme of indefinite atonement, nor yet upon the more generally received but equally untenable principle of individual specification in the federal compact; but is bottomed and built up upon the simple, common, and well defined principles of federal representation, as understood and adopted in the affairs of common life, and as clearly proceeded upon in God's dispensations towards the nations of the earth.

We are then in possession of a secret by which fairly to untie those Gordian knots about which human ingenuity has so often perplexed itself in vain. The Lord Jesus Christ as the wearer of our nature is at the head of a system which in no case can recognize, and in no degree can cover any thing that is not a constituent portion of itself; but which like all other systems constituted upon the same principle, is capable of receiving into its capacious body beings of the same order without number and without end. Those resources which are sufficient to meet the demands of any one individual, are on the same principle equal to the demands of any or of all

other similar individuals similarly circumstanced; for as the curse of the broken covenant comes down upon the mass, and every individual of which it is composed, undivided and unimpaired by the frequency of its previous application, even so, and “much more” the blessings and the privileges of the covenant of peace.

Answer then in the way which these discussions have suggested the often reiterated inquiries, for whom did Christ obey? for whom did he suffer? whom does he represent? and you have at once the solution of the appalling difficulty relative to the extent of his purchase.—He obeyed for his body, for it he suffered, and it he represents. That body, like every other federal system is capable of embracing individuals without number; and it is merely at the option of the regulator of the system, it is at the option of Christ our Lord, *whom, how many, and when* he will receive. The benefits of the constitution terminate at all times upon those, and those only, who are actually under it, and the sum of those who shall be so found in the day of last accounts will be that for which he intentionally as well as actually suffered. The everlasting love of God, therefore, to the individuals who do at this time, or who finally shall compose this mighty system, is evinced in the fact of their comprehension under it; the election of his grace decides the happy allotment to “this man, and that man;” but it is their actual union with the body of Christ, which both in law and in fact brings down on them the blessings procured only for the body; it is the fact of their

being brought under the operation of the plan, and neither the facilities of the plan to operate upon them, nor yet God's purpose that it shall do so, that distinguishes their condition, their denomination, and their allotment from those of "the world that lieth in wickedness."

But further: take up the subject in this point of view, and no difficulty remains relative to the sincerity, or the truth of those tenders of the gospel, which appear at first sight so inconsistent with the fact that the Saviour actually died, no more than he prayed "for the world" at large, but only "for them that were given him out of the world." As the wearer of our nature, we again repeat it, he heads a system which cannot possibly have any bounds prescribed to its operations, but such as the controler of the system chooses to prescribe in the fact of his bringing or not bringing men under its saving operation. The capabilities of the system know no limits. Heading such a system then, where is the great difficulty of his inviting human beings into it without number and without exception! Full well we know, indeed, that the mere invitation will not bring them there; but that argues nothing against the propriety of inviting them, when there actually is no impediment in the way of their being made partakers of the blessing, except that which arises entirely from themselves, from their blindness, their enmity, their unbelief. "Compel them to come in:" "yet there is room," may very consistently be the commandment of the Saviour to his messengers, and his assurance to

the world at large, to the very end of time. For the consummation of his plan in embracing the last person whom it is his intention to receive, will be so far from diminishing the capacities of his system to receive more, or the resources of his merits to cover more, that the command might even then be fresh and green as ever, "compel them to come in:" faithfulness might still declare it as faithfully as ever, "yet there is room:"—"Much more," "much more," "much more the grace of God and the gift by grace" is yet capable of abounding unto many.

Clearly then there is an abundant foundation laid for those august titles bestowed upon the Saviour, such as "Saviour of the world," "a light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world," "the Saviour of *all* men, especially of them that believe." He heads a system which is literally and absolutely capable of embracing the whole mass, and every individual in the mass. Thus furnished, he takes upon himself exclusively the wondrous office of saving sinful men. They are not to be sure regarded as in the system; for were that the case, they would be already saved. But the system is adapted to receive them; it is designed and fitted up exclusively for the purpose of saving such as they are. And thus, not taking upon him "the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," he stands professedly, stands officially the deliverer of guilty men. He is therefore by office the Saviour of our race; he is able to extend deliverance to the whole of it; he formally and unequivocally proffers such deliverance

wherever his gospel comes; every man who reads or hears the message has a right to apply to him forthwith for the execution of his trust in his individual behalf: to none who do apply can the Saviour refuse redemption, consistently with fidelity to the office he has accepted; and whether men do or do not apply to him is a matter of perfect indifference, in so far as respects his claim to the title "Saviour of the world"

Thus then he is by office, according to the Apostle's expression, "the Saviour of all men," though he will be found to be in fact and in pursuance of the actual duties of his office; *only* and "*especially* the Saviour of them that believe." So too he is by office, so in the capacities of the system which he heads, so also he is by unequivocal proffers of his aid, the teacher of the ignorant, the leader of the blind, "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,"* though multitudes may abide in the valley of the shadow of death, and multitudes of others choose the darkness rather than the light. Hence too, considering his official standing as bottomed upon the boundlessness of his ability to save, we may solve the enigma how it can take place that men may "deny he Lord that bought them," and thus "bring upon themselves swift destruction."†

The whole of these expressions, and multitudes of others which Arminianism has tortured with so much ingenuity and wielded with so much effect, are abundantly capable of a clear, consis-

* John i. 9.

† 2 Peter ii. 1.

tent and luminous exposition when understood as predicated upon the actual constitution of the plan of grace; but never yet were, and we will venture to say, never will be explained, justly and fairly, upon any other principle.

It is not unknown that the above mentioned passages may be explained upon a principle even broader than that which has been suggested in the preceding pages. But the adoption of that view of the subject will be found, so far from militating against the smallest portion of the display here submitted, to be in fact that very same display in its most expansive shape. We allude to the principle often and by no means obscurely hinted by the Apostles, that the Redeemer occupies the station of a second head to this whole system, in the room of our first father, who was not merely the federal representative of the whole human race, but the federal head of this whole system of things. The Apostle Paul is pretty explicit in his suggestion that it was by Adam's sin that "the creature also (the creation, it should be, i. e. this whole system) "was made subject to vanity." And he is express that through the operation of the second covenant as headed by the second Adam, "the creature (the creation) itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God."* And he yet more explicitly declares that "in the dispensation of the fulness of time God will gather together" (*re-head* is the Apos-

* Rom. viii. 20, 21.

tle's phrase, God will *re head*) "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth."* So that in this perfect restoration of order and innocence, to this whole system now debased and deranged by sin, we shall have the accomplishment of that exhilarating promise of "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." But though it will be identically the same system restored in Christ that has suffered under Adam, we have no reason to expect that every thing which has at any time gone to constitute a portion of the system while defiled, will belong to it when pure. We have seen that though a nation suffers perpetual changes in the numbers and persons of its inhabitants, though thousands are born and thousands are dying every hour, the nation never changes; men regard it and God regards it, and both God and man deal with it as identically the same. Such too is our estimate of the human body; the particles that go to constitute it are never for an hour precisely the same, and we know not whether one remains at present that belonged to it two years ago. But yet the reader and the writer are respectively the same persons now that they were ten or twenty years ago. So too in the management and purgation of this system, many of its constituent portions will fly off and perish, "the wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God," but the identity of the system will not be impaired; every thing is retained which

* Ephes. i. 10.

is necessary to secure that; and this system, thus “re-headed,” and purified, and saved by Jesus Christ, shall abide and flourish forever. Meanwhile the particles or portions which fly off and perish, do so because they are not under this second head, and so in no wise connected with the system as built up anew.

In this view then, it is true in its utmost latitude that Christ our Lord is “Saviour of the world.” And the most general expressions that can be found in scripture, expressions upon which Arminianism has triumphed above measure, will be found susceptible of an interpretation the most logical, philosophical and scriptural, and one which at the same time deals double destruction to their green devices.

It is needless however, to take this expansive range in order to effect the object we have in view. The principle before delineated so very much at large, is precisely the same one presented under a more limited and more manageable form. And this principle, so perfectly distinct from the “indefinite” scheme of many modern theologians, and from the individualizing plan, esteemed so sacredly orthodox by others,—this plain and simple principle is in reality the one upon which the plan of God’s salvation is constructed; and upon which alone, therefore, the scriptures can be fairly interpreted, and their decisions consistently pursued.

Let this remark be verified in a very short and obvious contrast between the respective bearings of the two last mentioned systems, upon several

of the acknowledged doctrines and duties every where inculcated in the word of God. We say between the two *last mentioned* systems; for the notions of a general, and of an indefinite atonement, properly so called, are equally subversive of all the known principles of federal representation, and equally repugnant to every dictate of the word of God. As such, therefore, they can have no claim to occupy a place in this comparison.

The offer of the gospel is to be made “to every creature,” without restriction and without exception, wherever there are men found on this side the place of punishment. This position we do not attempt to *prove*: we assume it as the common faith of all the evangelical churches.—For though there are some, even within the knowledge of the writer, who *do* deny this point, yet they cannot otherwise be regarded than as ignorant of the very nature of that gospel which they profess to preach, and of being as lamentably defective in their views of almost all truth, as of the all-important one in question. It would be needless to sacrifice time, and torture the reader or the writer’s patience in combating such notions. They interfere not with our subject. It is the faith of the churches, a *scriptural* and *common* faith that the message of Messiah’s peace is to be breathed into every ear; that the proffers of his pardon are to be made to every soul.—Let the reader mark it! Expositions of christian doctrine in a didactic style, luminous exhibitions of the scriptural principles upon which God is just and

the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, however useful and however indispensable, do not amount to proclamations of the gospel. All these might be done in the most masterly manner and with prodigious effect, and yet the gospel never be preached at all, yet the herald never execute his most prominent and important duty. Angels may thus learn, angels may be delighted with the wisdom and goodness that this kind of exercise may be instrumental in displaying; angels themselves may be benefited by it. Devils too may hear, devils too may learn, devils may also wonder, but to angel or to fiend the gospel is not preached.

The “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people,” specifically consists in the tender of these blessings to the party addressed, in his own proper person, as definitely as if he were the only sinner in the world, and as assuredly as if Christ had formally laid down his life for him and him alone. This is what the Apostle styles his own ambassadorship*: It is not simply opening up the way in which men *may* be reconciled to God: it is the authoritative proffer of reconciliation in that way: it is as Christ’s ambassadors, in his name, and “in his stead,” as though God the Saviour did himself beseech the individual—it is thus formally, pointedly, individually, and without exception, to make tender of the blessing of reconciliation with God.

* 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, 21.

Clearly then if the commission embraces "every creature," and is to be executed in this way, the proffer of the gospel must include all the virtues of the atonement, intercession and every other official act of our Lord Jesus Christ, which enter into the ground work of salvation. Now let it be inquired how such a proclamation of the gospel of peace can possibly comport with the assumptions laid down in the individualizing scheme. — Did our Lord Jesus Christ formally and from the first, include under his representation all those whom it is his pleasure shall be saved? Did he do it in such a way that the virtues of his office, while they must of necessity extend to them; formally and legally speaking, cannot by possibility be extended to others, but upon the supposition that as they were not represented they must be pardoned without satisfaction, justified without righteousness, and saved without intercession? — THEN, we say, that the proclamation of the gospel to characters of this description would not merely amount to a piece of solemn mockery; it would be directly and unequivocally the proclamation of a lie; and the doctrine which authorizes it is nothing less than blasphemy against Almighty God. What! men officially appointed to offer pardon and righteousness, and eternal life, in God's name, "in Christ's stead," when no pardon has been produced that the law will permit to be applied to them! when no righteousness has been prepared that by possibility of application might succeed to cover them! when no intercessor could, consistently with his

official engagement, undertake for them! and when they are left, to all intents and purposes, in the same relations and in the same condition in law and in fact, as if no such thing as a saviour had been appointed for the world! Who dare ascribe to God this worse than Punic faith? Who that does ascribe it, dare presume to say that “faithfulness shall be the girdle of his reins?”

We are aware that it has often been said, and may be again said with some little plausibility, that this omission to include men within the covenant of peace does not at all affect their duty to believe, and that as they neither will nor can believe, but by the saving operations of the Holy Ghost, this tender of the gospel may serve as an admirable mean to manifest the height of their enmity and the justice of their punishment. God indeed knows that they will not believe, will not embrace his offers; but that prevents not him from making such a tender as will make manifest before all the principles which actuate them, and will therefore abundantly vindicate, while it must assuredly heighten, their final condemnation.

All this is very distinctly understood; nay more, it is heartily subscribed to. It is indeed very good reason why the gospel very consistently may be, and even *should* be offered to the millions who, it is not expected nor intended, shall embrace it. But does it do away any portion of the difficulty before us? Is it not a complete and shameless sophism when urged as an

answer to the objection of falsehood, in a universal tender upon an individual scheme? *That* is the point upon which our contrast hinges.—The gospel says, and its authorized ministers are commissioned to declare, “*to every creature,*” that there is a way of life; that it is opened for *themselves*; that Christ bears a commission which will enable him to save, and that he therefore stands ready and willing to save, without exception and without restriction, all them that come unto God by him. This salvation is officially and formally tendered to every creature, then, whether they shall be finally saved or lost; and whether saved or lost, they have identically the same assurance given them in the offer that every thing transacted by our Lord Jesus Christ in the character of Saviour, may be lawfully and unhesitatingly appropriated by themselves.—Though then men’s inability and indisposition to apply to the Redeemer might be supposed to prevail to the concealment of the fallacy, not to say the falsehood, of such offers, on the individualizing scheme; would it alter the nature of the things themselves? Would it not still be fact, that Christ in no sense bore the commission of *their* Saviour, that pardon could not possibly be extended to *them*, that no righteousness had been wrought out which could cover *their* deformities? And would not every one of these facts be directly in the teeth of the gospel promulgation, when fully understood and rightly executed? Is not the offering pardon where none has been procured, the offering righteousness

where none has been provided, the offering eternal life where none can be communicated, any more than if no plan of salvation had been instituted,—are not all these things, upon the supposition we are combating, as contrary to fact as any statement or proffer can be? And will the mere assumption that because none uncomprehended in the covenant can comply with the terms, the truth of the declarations never can be tested, or rather its falsity never can be exposed—will this mean and meagre and miserable assumption, convert into truth declarations which are not true, or shield the pure and splendid throne of God from the imputation of a subterfuge so shallow that imbecility itself might blush to father it? O shame! O shame! ———“Let God be true, and every man a liar.” Let this contradiction, let the imputation of this folly, rest upon the head of the weak and fond systematizer who, rather than let fall some darling hard-wrought scheme, will make the Living and the Holy God stand sponsor for the follies of his lackbrained labours, and silence by the thunders of sovereignty and omnipotence all familiar exposition of the defects it may present. Gentle reader, this quarrel is not God’s. “He is the rock, his work is perfect, all his ways are judgment.” And believing, as you do, the declaration of the scripture, that to every creature without exception and without limitation, all the blessings of this salvation are to be proffered, you are not also bound to embrace that individualizing scheme which stamps with every mark of the most unqualified falsehood the blissful de-

claration, and immolates upon the altars of human infallibility, the truth and honour of Almighty God. The Saviour himself has given the commandment that the gospel of his grace should be thus illimitably proclaimed: he has stamped the commission of his messengers with the seal of faithfulness: and every scheme which would set limits to the efficacy of his official deeds, short of those limits which his gospel has marked out, every scheme which would circumscribe a power which he proffers to exert on every individual to the earth's utmost end, must be branded as an arrogant and blasphemous imputation, not less inimical to the dearest hopes of men than dishonourable to the integrity of the God of truth.

In fact, even upon the most limited scale imaginable, even upon that scheme for which individualizers themselves contend, the gospel of Jesus Christ never could be preached, if *their* views are to be admitted as correct. Let it be repeated, that to preach the gospel is not merely to give a sound exposition of christian truth; it is as Christ's ambassadors to tender to them who are the objects of the proffer, the redemption he brings near. Now, evidently, in order to do this with perfect truth, upon the scheme which we are combating, the subjects comprehended within the Saviour's commission must be distinctly and individually known. To them you may, nay if you really preach the gospel, to them you *must* proffer it, because for them it is prepared. But yet not to all that are included in the cove-

nant, but to the unregenerate alone. Because properly speaking it is to sinners, not to saints, that the message of the Saviour, rigidly denominated, is brought nigh. Pardon to them who need it, not to them who have it: life to them who are dead, not to them who are already made alive: Peace to them who are at enmity with God; citizenship to such as are in an alien state; but none of these things, formally and properly, to such as already have them. They may be nurtured, they may be protected, they may be increased, their salvation may be perfected; but they cannot properly be the object of a message framed for sinners considered merely as such, for they already have much of that which it is profered to bestow. — But how is your unconverted elect man, to be distinguished by your preacher from any other man? That is, how, upon the supposition we are endeavouring to beat down, is the messenger to execute the commission entrusted with him? The alternative must be this: a gospel which can be specifically and unerringly applied, or no gospel at all: a preacher who is infallible, a preacher who is omniscient, or no preacher at all. A most miserable alternative for short sighted humanity!

Take now the other supposition. Suppose that the federal system, headed by the Redeemer, is constituted like every other one bearing the same name. When we see that it recognizes nothing save that which is already within its limits, but at the same time can admit illimitably and interminably into its capacious bosom; we

feel that we survey a structure to whose operations sovereignty may prescribe whatever limits it sees fit, while with perfect consistency and undissembled truth it tenders the blessing without any kind of limits to all who wear the nature to which the plan refers. Such however is the enmity, such is the blindness of the carnal mind, that none to whom it is tendered, following the bent of their corrupt nature, ever would embrace it. But with respect to the election of grace, the Spirit of the Son comes in aid of the general offer; and while that offer authorizes, the gracious influence of God's gracious Spirit "persuades and enables" the subject of mercy to lay hold upon the hope set before him. Thus does it happen according to that which is written in the scriptures, "the election hath obtained it, and the rest are blinded:" meanwhile no imputation lies against the truth or sincerity of him who offers; and no palliation can be plead by those who despise the overture of mercy. He who believes, embraces the sinner's hope upon that "general warrantry of heaven," which would equally authorize every other human being, and without which no human being whatever would have any foundation to "believe unto righteousness."

Which of these views are the most consistent with the uniform tenor of the gospel message, with the nature and foundation of that faith by which we stand, and with the majesty, wisdom and faithfulness of God, let the reader judge.

But again: It is very certain that such as do not believe the gospel, and that upon the ground

of the general proffer, will be held guilty of the sin of unbelief; and that this will be the great aggravation of their sin, and the specific ground of condemnation, that in refusing to believe in the saviour of the world, they have been making God a liar.* Unbelief, in other words, the scriptures uniformly and strongly assert, shall be the damning sin of all who hear but receive not the gospel. This is an axiom of which all who know the scriptures are abundantly possessed; and it neither requires nor shall have a laboured confirmation in this place. Suffice it to say that it is, upon broad and scriptural grounds, a common article in the faith of all evangelical and of many other churches. But what is it to believe, and what is it not to believe in Christ the saviour of the world? To believe in Christ is not simply to believe that the scriptures are the word of the Living God. This wicked men often do; and not so much as one accursed spirit, whether human or angelic, doubts the truth of the proposition. Neither is it to embrace or to defend a scheme of doctrine, however luminous or however sound. Intellectual light does not necessarily sanctify the heart. Hypocrites, and devils, and even persecutors themselves, have often been convinced of the truth in this sense; the former are abundant in every church through every age, yet surely not believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently as unbelief, in its scriptural and appropriate sense, is exactly the opposite of sa-

* 1 John v. 10. John's Gospel iii. 18, 19.

ving faith, that damning sin cannot properly be construed into either the simple rejection of the scriptures, or a fatal mistake with respect to their essential doctrines. Either of these will, to be sure, involve the crime we are in quest of, together with more or less of its atrocity; but neither faith nor unbelief are exclusively limited to mere intellectual process, nor does their essence so much consist in the credit or discredit attached to the channel by which the proposition is conveyed, as to the naked proposition itself in which is involved the issues of eternity. True, they who do not believe that the scriptures are indeed the word of God, will likewise disbelieve “the record which God hath given of his son:” They who adopt a scheme of doctrine utterly subversive of the necessity or possibility of vicarious sacrifice, will in like manner, by a similar necessity, be compelled to reject the record. But this rejection, this unbelief, this condemning sin of which we speak, is quite a different thing from either of them, however true it may be that both of them involve it. These are respectively the opposites of mere general assent to the truth of scripture, and of general subscription to articles of soundness. But neither unbelief itself, nor its opposite, that is *faith*, in the strict, theological, and scriptural sense of the word, fall properly under any of the preceding denominations. We repeat then the questions, what is faith? what is unbelief? No man, it is conceded, can have faith in Jesus Christ who does not believe the scriptures to be the word of God, and who

does not at the same time believe those doctrines of the scriptures which are fundamental principles in the scripture scheme. But if, as we have seen, the belief of these things, however indispensable to faith, is so far from being faith itself, that many false professors upon earth and all the inhabitants of Tophet are in possession of the soundest views,—if, in one word, sound views neither necessarily save nor sanctify, it is plain that the faith which *does* save, and which is invariably and necessarily joined with sanctifying influence, must be yet a very different thing. Reader, we hope you have not yet to learn that *it is* a different, and a much more simple thing. It is neither more nor less than accrediting the sincerity, the graciousness, the faithfulness of the Saviour's promises, made over to yourself in the broad charter of his universal offer: it is laying hold "with the heart," upon this hope; and crying and trusting to the Almighty Saviour to have mercy upon you according to his word. This is faith. This that glorious and happy principle which resting not in the speculations of the head, nor dealing arrows and death in conflicts about doctrine, lays hold of the glorious gospel for one's self; pleads before the Saviour the universal charter; cherishes the promise as a ground of action, not a butt for controversy; and taking the direction to which the promise points, leaves it to the Saviour—puts it upon the Saviour to perform his word:—does more therefore than quench the violence of fire and stop the mouths of lions; quenches the lightnings and chains up the thun-

derbolts of Sinai herself, and piles brazen mountains on the mouth of Hell. You cannot be smitten, no you cannot; you cannot become a denizen of misery's vail; for you have believed the Saviour, you have taken him at his word; he must be faithful, and your faith has saved you.

You believe, my fellow sinner, that this is genuine faith: That *this alone* is the faith of God's elect. Then you must believe that the reverse of this, that an indisposition to accredit the Saviour's proffers to ourselves, a consequent refusal to *act* upon those proffers, and so a neglect to lay hold upon the hope of eternal life, is specifically and formally that unbelief which shall be at last the condemnation of the world; as really and fully the condemnation of them who believe the scriptures, who embrace sound doctrine, but who never have embraced the proffer of the Saviour directed to themselves, as it can be the condemnation of the most licentious sceptic or abandoned heretic. Yes, that proffer of salvation to "whosoever heareth, whosoever will," that assurance of the Saviour that "whosoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out," and "whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed," constitute the broad, and, together with other scriptures of similar import, the *alone* foundation of a sinner's faith. They are the *common* foundation of our common hope, and all the light of heaven upon the general scheme how God may be just and the justifier of sinners, all the cold-blooded zeal of harpy handed orthodoxy, in dis-

puting and in fighting for these precious truths, is not worth a rush, will in fact be the saviour of death to those who do not recognize the simple principle of applying to the saviour in the faith of these his promises, and believe upon this broad sealed warranty of heaven that the proffer is to us:—that unto *us* even *us*, and to our children is the word of this salvation sent. He who does not believe it is of course a doubter of the living God's sincerity; he makes God a liar, says the Apostle John; his blood remains upon his own head, for he will not summon confidence to apply the remedy; he dies in unbelief.

Now let the individualizing advocate declare how his scheme, which in the other case made God a liar, can here ward off the no less fearful charge of sullyng the throne of his eternal justice. The condemnation is, what? not merely the rejection of the oracles of God, not merely the adoption of erroneous principles fundamentally subversive of the grace of God;—it is one which may be extended with equal facility to millions who devoutly receive the scriptures, and who unhesitatingly adopt as their speculative creed and bond of church connexions, all the leading, and, if you please, all the minuter views of doctrine and order, with all imaginable soundness:—this says John, this is the condemnation, "because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God hath given to us, eternal life, and this life is in his Son." A refusal to believe in Jesus for the pardon tendered to ourselves, is, in the Apostle's

account, the making God a liar; the refusal to embrace the hope of eternal life as made over to ourselves in the gospel, is the event which converts the cornerstone of Zion into a heavy weight, which shall grind into powder the rejecters of his grace. But how can God condemn for refusing to trust in the gospel proffer to the sinner, how can it be guilt to doubt whether in Christ there can really be pardon and eternal life for me, if, in pursuance of the individualizer's plan, it shall be found at last that I never was interested in any shape in the sacrifice of the Redeemer, and so could not have been pardoned even if I had applied. It is not true, upon the plan we combat, that the salvation of God's Son can, by possibility of construction, be extended to any whose salvation was not from the first secured, legally and formally, by their representation in the Saviour; it is not true that any righteousness was provided which could be employed to cover them; not true, therefore, that they ever had, in any sense, any interest in Christ, any more than devils, who, it is not pretended, are capable of such representation.—Christ died for all these, Christ rose for these, as he had at first specifically obeyed for them, as it were by name. But for those he obeyed not, he died not, he rose not; and their names being thus left out of the compact which so pointedly specifies the others, either there must be a new representation before they could, on the utmost supposition of possibility, be pardoned at all, or their pardon and life must proceed upon a principle different from,

if not subversive of every thing deemed so indispensable in the actual plan of grace. This is the result. Let the advocate of the doctrine look at it. And then let him say, when this view of things is conceded, as it must be, then let him say upon what principle of right, a neglect in a being for whom no Saviour and no salvation was provided (in his own sense of the words let him construe it),—let him say on what principle a neglect to apply for a deliverance never provided, no not even by possibility of construction, can be construed into a mortal sin! If this individual and eternal recognition of an interest in the great redemption be formally a part of the construction of the plan, and if the Saviour himself, without a new atonement and without renewed obedience, cannot by possibility extend the charter of deliverance, then let him say where the great criminality of refusing to believe that a name is written in that covenant charter, which actually never did, and never shall contain it. Yet this, upon the principle of individual specification, is the totum of the charge; this the colour of the damning crime. So that the unbelief which shall condemn the world at last, would turn out to be a correct anticipation of the actual state of things; black unbelief would be a believing what then was, and always had been true; and the condemnation of the world would proceed upon a ground on which, if there had been any right side, it had belonged to them. Is it then the unbeliever that makes God a liar? that is to say, is it he who had always believed according to the actu-

al state of things? Or is it the inventor, is it the defender of a christian scheme of doctrine, who states that there may be proffers of eternal life where none can be bestowed; and that there may be guilt in not relying on a Saviour who never was in fact, nor in form, nor in law, no not by implication, not by possibility, placed in that relation to the party thus condemned! *They too* could not believe that he ever stood in such relation to them, and (upon the supposition) their just apprehension is their crowning sin!

NO, we again repeat it, "let God be true and every man a liar." If the rejection of salvation be the damning sin of man; if a refusal to believe that the proffer is to us, that the Saviour stands commissioned and able to deliver us,—if this be so emphatically the damning sin, let no man presume to sully the purity of God's eternal justice, by pretending that any thing short of truth in the proffer can induce the infliction of a penalty for rejection. Whatever be the mystery, whatever be the difficulty, though principles opposed it more than mountain high, yet if God in his righteousness condemns for unbelief, then the things disbelieved must be literally true: if the aggravation shall consist in making God a liar, then he is a liar who dare insinuate a principle which would establish the correctness of the unbeliever's views.

It is hardly worth while to be at the trouble of contrasting with the foregoing view the bearings of the true system upon these points, as developed in preceding pages. Every one must

be able to discern that a federal system which recognizes nothing without itself, but is susceptible of indefinite augmentation, will very fairly admit of the proffer of all those blessings which result from connexion with it to all who are without, whether they shall or shall not become, at any future period, “members in particular.”—The assurance to be believed is that there is yet room for them; and not that they are already actually within. The application to be made by them, is that of persons who *need* an interest in Christ; and not as having possessed such an interest from the beginning. Now, upon our supposition, the plan of redemption not only warrants all these proffers on God’s part, and endeavors on man’s part to embrace them; but it clearly involves in the charges of unbelief and contempt of God, all who refuse or neglect to rely upon him for this great salvation. Whether men do or do not believe it, Christ according to his proffer, is abundantly able to relieve them; whether they regard or disregard his proffer, the sincerity and truth, and righteousness of God stand abundantly vindicated by the very nature of the constitution under which he makes the tender of his mercy. While therefore the view against which we have been contending, involves in the very preaching of the gospel, when performed in the manner confessedly required, the proclamation of a falsehood; the federal principle, as explained and defended throughout this essay, not only admits the same thing to be done with the most scrupulous regard to *truth*, but

renders this very proclamation a broad foundation for the faith and comfort of every sinful man, and exhibits in the utmost profusion the resources and the goodness of Almighty God.—While the former view converts the condemnation of man for unbelief into a something little short of a tyrannous infliction of misery upon them for their correct anticipation of the actual state of things; the latter vindicates the scriptural assertion that unbelief regards God as a liar, and justifies the utmost severity of condemnation, because of such an outrage against his truth and power.

It would be no very difficult task to extend this contrast to a multitude of other points admitted and held by those who so widely differ when agitating this momentous question; and we are persuaded that in every instance in which the contrast could be attempted, the views which have been advocated [in the preceding pages, would be found to possess the most decided advantage in consistency and simplicity, and in the clearest correspondence with the general tenor of scripture language. The task however would involve unnecessary trouble. With the contrast already submitted, together with the preceding exposition of the scheme, we turn over the whole burden of more minute research upon the shoulders of the reader.

It cannot, however, be amiss to remark, before we take entire leave of this interesting subject, that awful as are the consequences which we are apt to deduce from the assumption of false

principles in discussions like the present, and highly charged as has been our own language in depicting some such consequences, yet it is neither honest, nor even fair, to impute to the adopters of any false hypothesis, as a part of their belief, all the results which may be legitimately deduced from it; nor is it wise or salutary to speak of the truth as if it were endangered, or of the souls of men as if they were really jeopardized, to the full extent of all the error logically deducible from an erroneous first principle. Nothing is more certain than that every error, though it be the very smallest, though it be not connected immediately with any point of morals or of theology, any little mistake about any small part of God's great and general arrangement of his universe, would, if pursued through all its ramifications, if pushed to its utmost consequences,—would involve every other error, and (if really operative) produce universal derangement and destruction in all the plans and ways of God. Yet who ever anticipated consequences of this description from any false principle whatever. It is only in so far as wrong premises actually lead men to the adoption of wrong conclusions, and these too of *practical* and not merely speculative bearing, that injury can be justly charged upon error. And though it is undeniable that men who are better reasoners than either divines or christians, often *do* push out their conclusions to a most ruinous length, having built them upon principles which demand such conclusions; yet to infer this as a necessary consequence, or to believe that it is always done,

is to libel the forbearance and wisdom and goodness of Almighty God, who has often permitted his people to wander in much darkness and to adopt many principles radically wrong, while with happy inconsistency they hold the opposite truths, and evidence a faith much sounder than their logic.

We apprehend that very much of the forbearance and charity which such cases require, is needful among the evangelical churches of the present age, and especially of the western country, while differing as they do upon the very question which it has been attempted to settle in the preceding pages.

So far as we have been able to see or hear, all the combatants are strictly evangelical. They all build upon the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope, they all admit the helplessness and depravity of man, they all entertain one view of the agency of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration and sanctification, they all bow to the supremacy of God, as the shewer of mercy to whom he will shew mercy, and the hardener of whom he will. But they differ among themselves as to the constitution of the plan, in pursuance of which all these things have been or are effected. Now nothing is more certain than that wrong assumptions here will logically lead to wrong conclusions; but it by no means follows that all who make the wrong assumption should be such good logicians as to adopt the wrong conclusion, nor is it fair to charge them with it. It is true that many principles may be interwoven

in God's plan which are equally important, and even essential, to its order and efficacy, but it is not of equal practical importance, that we should be able equally to comprehend those several principles. Some of them may be exclusively the rule of the divine procedure. As such it may be desirable, but cannot be essential, that we too should recognize them. Others are the foundation of *our* procedure as well as of the divine. Upon them we can act profitably only in so far as we know them, and misconception here must be proportionably injurious.

It is pretty plain that the matter of the greatest controversy at present, viz. the precise organization of the federal scheme, is of the former order: absolutely indispensable to the plan itself, but not indispensably necessary to be known by those who are to reap advantage from the plan. Though therefore we may show that such and such destructive consequences would flow from the actual perversion of that principle; or that the omission of it would be the destruction of the whole plan of salvation; yet we should likewise remember that the same danger does not result from human misconception of a matter which is intirely managed by the hand of God; and that so long as men do not speculatively connect it with other principles equally important in the plan itself, and at the same time the immediate ground of their own procedure, so as to pervert or nullify them, it is imprudent, it is dishonest, it is wicked to sound the alarm in such terms as

if all things were actually hastening to “destruction and misery.”

It must be admitted that the circulation of the blood through the lungs is an arrangement as indispensable to the animal economy as the upholding of the system by means of daily sustenance. But surely it is not equally indispensable to the welfare of the animal that it should be acquainted with both arrangements. Had any one in England been so preposterous as to insist that daily food was not requisite to man’s welfare, but that the English nation might at once save themselves from the whole expenses of the table; and had there been any danger of this conclusion being generally adopted; the whole faculty of physic might have taken the alarm. No man would have blamed them for publishing the assurance that if this doctrine were once universally received, the prosperity of Old England was at an end, for that in a few weeks she would not contain a dozen people. But when Dr. Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood, he surely was not at liberty to use the same kind of argument against the multitudes who opposed him. He might have proved indeed the reality of his system from an exposition of the evil that would necessarily result from the want of this arrangement: he might have shewn that the circulation of the blood by the lungs was no less indispensable to the life of man than the formation of chyle in the stomach; but had he threatened that if the doctrine of his adversaries prevailed, all England must expect to be shortly visited with

a universal corruption and destruction of the bodies of its inhabitants, the greatest admirers of the judicious and ingenious Doctor would have concurred in pronouncing him a fit candidate for Bedlam.

Something like the same distinction between the necessity of an arrangement, in itself considered, and the importance or necessity of its being known to them for whose good it is ordained, should doubtless be made about many of the subjects with which theologians are conversant. And when this distinction is totally neglected, we cannot but expect to meet with much of that absurdity and many of those groundless fears expressed in the productions of those who hold the truth, which, if hazarded on any other dispute, the champions in question being themselves the judges, would endanger the reputation of their adventurous author.

Happily “the author of eternal salvation” no more exacts from us the fulness of wisdom than of grace, and it is our felicity to know that amid all the darkness of our minds as well as amid all the depravity of our affections, there is one who “knows our frame,” and who has insured our safety, not by the infusion of universal knowledge, but by protecting from the consequences of error as well as crime; by suspending our safety on *his* knowledge not on *ours*, and by leading us on gradually towards the city of our God by “paths which we have not known.”—Far be it, however, from us to insinuate that any error can be absolutely harmless, or any revealed truth

unimportant to be known. We are sure that it is the interest as well as duty of God's people to "grow in the knowledge" as well as in the "*grace* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The labour of these pages must itself attest that doctrinal mistakes are not unimportant in our view. We only obtest against that *undue* importance which illy-assorted zeal often attaches to individual truths,—an importance much above their comparative influence,—and against those frequent and false alarms which are sounded by controversial leaders, when they foolishly attach to our right apprehensions of a thing, as much, or even much more importance, than in the scale of doctrine or the constitution of the plan, belongs to the thing itself.



No. XI.

RESULTS.

"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. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." Thus amazing, yet thus simple, is the constitution of God, ordained for the salvation of "the human kind"! In investigating the nature of this prodigious structure, we have fully ascertained that "as the Father is distinct from

the Son, and the Son from the Holy Spirit, and yet Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but one Jehovah: so, also, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ “grow up into him in all things which is the head;” form really and truly but one great body, vivified and actuated by the Holy Spirit, even as the human soul pervades and actuates the members of the body; and derive from this source all their importance, all their feeling, all their interest, nay their very being, considered as *living* members of the living head*” We infer then, and it is our

THIRD DEDUCTION,

That “religion pure and undefiled before God and the Father,” consists in the occupancy of a station in this system; and that where such a relation does not actually subsist, there is but the one alternative for the unhappy individual:—he is “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

Reader! have you ever pondered the immensity of the difference between a faint and undefined and general hope that your character is christian, and that vivid perception of your relations and destinies which may be expected to result from “the Spirit itself bearing witness with your spirit that you are a child of God”? If you have not done it, do it now. So long as we are inattentive to the nature and requisitions of the christian faith, nothing can be more easy, and in fact nothing is more common, than to flatter ourselves with the belief that all may be well—in-

deed that all *is* well. But the greater part of those who sit down contentedly with this kind of lame and hap-hazard conclusion, drawn from crude and indigested premises, would be very loath to draw a conclusion virtually the same, from the answer they must feel themselves compelled to give to a demand whether indeed the Spirit of Christ dwells in them. And yet a conclusion, favourable to our interests, drawn from premises short of this, must be just so far unfounded. A hope that cannot anchor upon the sense or the faith of our union with the Son, is so far vain as the expectation of the hypocrite. Your being of the body of Christ Jesus, your being animated by that Spirit of glory and of God, is the only possible ground of justification, the only appointed mode of sanctification, the only authorized means of entering into life. Evidently then, to hope or to believe that we are really christian, without venturing to hope that the union in question has been already attained by us, is to hope in defiance of all scriptural requisitions and in palpable contempt of God's eternal plan. You are not a christian; no, my fellow sinner, you neither are nor ever can become a christian, but upon the assumption of that august relationship which, possibly, has entered but very sparingly into your calculations, when estimating your prospects for the world to come.

Let the giddy and the gay think of it! Let the zealous defender of "the orthodox faith" think of it! Let the proud, and very often *illy-informed*, stickler for purity in the ordinances of God's

worship, think of it! Let those who boast of their own denominations, as Corah boasted of the host of Israel, “all the congregation are saints, every one of them”—let those zealots of party, not of piety, think of it! Whatever be your errors, whatever be your weaknesses, whatever be your falls, or, on the contrary, whatever be your attainments, and however bright your hopes, there is but the one and the same way of life, common to yourselves and to all other men:—vital union with our Lord Jesus Christ, by the actual participation of that Holy Spirit who is the vivifying principle common to the Head and to all its members. If you stand thus united, then all the errors that enthrall your feet, all the backslidings that obscure your hope, all the ills, of whatever magnitude and whatever name, that threaten to sever you from God the Saviour, never shall prevail to work your ruin: the eternal God will avouch himself your refuge, and underneath you shall abide the everlasting arms. Obscure and imperfect as are your views of truth, the “teacher come from God” will preserve from fatal snares, and will guide you by *his* council in that “highway” to life, concerning which it is written that “the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” But if not united to the Son by the Spirit of his grace, if not of that “body” for which he suffered and ascended, you may adopt the purest of churches for your foster-mother, you may make the rapidest advances in the knowledge of all truth, you may contend with zeal and success “for the faith once deli-

vered to the saints," you may "speak with the tongues of men and of angels," you may "understand all mysteries and all knowledge," you may "bestow all your goods to feed the poor" and even yield up your body to be burned,—you may be regarded and saluted as a prodigy of light, a prodigy of saintship, a demigod on earth; but you have no solid pretensions to the christian name, and it is presumption in you to indulge the least of christian hopes:

How dreadful the execution which these conclusions produce, not only among the giddy, fluttering, uninstructed, unconcerned, who never think of pretending to so august a standing as that to which our motto points, but would nevertheless esteem it an outrage to question whether they may not be

"Unreconcil'd as yet to Heaven and Grace:"

but especially, how dreadful, (a consideration doubly awful!) among the numerous churches of our age and land, who make their distinguishing tenets the test of christianity, and their official recognition the passport to the skies! How vile, how villainous, how monstrously subversive of all true religion, of all scriptural evidence, is this abounding and abandoned spirit, which stakes on subscription to some favourite tenet, or upon abstinence from some real or imagined error of but secondary moment, all those high and holy interests which can flow from nothing, and which can be designated by nothing, but vital union with the Son of God!

My fellow sinner, whatever be your name, whatever be your standing, ponder this great truth: grave it on your memory, wear it in your heart's core, that it is not the abundance of your acquisitions or your gifts, not the purity of your church connexions, not your escape from this or the other overflowing error, not the approbation of heated and deceived and interested partizans, that can render you accepted in the sight of him, all whose judgments are according to the truth. How many do you witness out of every church, making shipwreck of the faith! how many do you witness in multitudes of churches, walking worthy the vocation wherewith they have been called, and evincing by the undoubted "fruits of the Spirit," in abundance and maturity, that verily the Spirit of the Son dwells in them! We would not, by any means, have you hastily conclude that all errors are therefore things of small importance, and that all diligence in ascertaining, and zeal in defending truth, is labour spent in vain. A very little reflection, and especially a very little experience, will serve to convince you that no error can be absolutely blameless, and no truth absolutely indifferent. But it is one thing for you to prize God's wise arrangement, even in matters the most minute, and to reverence his authority, when and wheresoever it is expressed; and it is another and a very different thing to attach to these matters an undue importance, by giving them a station which they have no right to claim in the appointed method of en-

tering into life. By doing the former, you express a beautiful and becoming reverence for the August and Gracious Being from whom is all your hope. By giving way to the latter, you enter upon a species of refined and covert Phariseism, subversive of that gospel which you profess thereby to honour, and almost infallibly destructive to your hopes. Never, never regard the soundness of your views, the order of your worship, the momentum of your zeal, as any thing like a safe and certain test, or in fact as *any* test, of your spiritual condition in the sight of God. These are not union with the Saviour. They may readily exist where such a union is not.—That union may really be, while you appear in these respects as the least and most defenceless among the tribes of Israel.

Where God has planted the anchor of your hope, there do you direct your principal concern. Labour above all things to secure that interest in the Saviour; which depends not on degrees of knowledge or of grace. Let union with Christ Jesus be the test of your acceptance, union with Christ Jesus the standard of your hope, union with Christ Jesus the alpha and omega of your christian profession. Attain this, and you will have attained every thing: neglect it, and you have done nothing. Were this great truth realized by all men who wear the christian name, were they diligent to employ it, not merely as a speculative assumption to knock down an adversary, but as a means to help themselves forward towards the one thing needful; were it the sum

of their desires, the burden of their prayer,—did they esteem it “all their salvation and all their desire” to become united to the Son of God, many who now figure as the champions of the church, the “defenders of the faith,” and whose zeal far outstrips either their knowledge or discretion, would never have emerged from merited obscurity; many who are now tossed upon the mountains of vanity, might have been peaceably reclining by the river of life; and many who have been destroyed by the “knowledge which puffeth up,” might have been humbly triumphing in Messiah’s grace.

It cannot, however, be denied that this truth, which discovers so clearly the vast foundations of a “sure and certain hope,” and sheds such lustre on the name of christian, appears, at first view, much calculated to damp the expectations and weaken the efforts of those who feel themselves to be perfectly uncertain whether indeed “the Spirit of Christ dwells in them;” and yet more decidedly to cast a gloom over the minds of such as *know* that they are not of this favoured body. Why, if such be the indispensable acquisitions of the christian, if *his* attainments in his lowest state be an actual participation of the Spirit of Christ,—such are the reflections which naturally suggest themselves to the “fearful and unbelieving,”—what pretensions have I, that will justify my attempt to lay hold upon the hope of eternal life? Or what encouragement to make an effort to escape? what ground to indulge one hope of future happiness? I cannot ascend into

Heaven there to link my destinies with those of God the Saviour, or to unite me to his person by the Spirit of his grace. I cannot descend into the depths to bring up with me that Spirit from the awful place where the wicked make their bed. I cannot here on earth command his sacred influence, any more than I can “bind the sweet influence of Pleiades,” or

“Bid the main flood bate his usual height.”

But know, thou arguer against thine own distinguished privileges, know thou neglecter of thine own unbounded prospects, that you *actually have* pretensions which will abundantly justify your attempts to lay hold upon that hope of life,—you have encouragement unshackled by any hard terms to aspire after this distinction for which you are called to exert yourself:—you are a sinner against God; you are at the same time a son of Adam. Upon these facts are bottomed the whole of that dispensation which has given birth to all those prospects which you deem so remote from you; and it is because you *are* a sinner that you are permitted this hope. You have not to mount the heavens, there to accomplish this august alliance; you have not to dive into the secret parts of the earth, there to meet with that Spirit of all grace: He who proffers you his pardon *now*, proffers you in the same words that union with himself through which alone the pardon can be ministered. He who would transform you, even in this life, into the image of his holiness and righteousness, can expect to do it only by ministering of that Spi

rit from on high, who is the author and finisher of every gracious work. The difficulties you propose, therefore, are wholly imaginary: the objections you start are totally unfounded. When God the Father gave his Son to the world, he “poured grace into his lips,” and these gracious lips have spoken it, that if any father will not deny bread to a son who shall ask it; neither for a fish will give him a serpent, or for an egg a scorpion, much—much less will your Heavenly Father deny the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. “The word, then, is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart:” Confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus; believe in thine heart the sincerity and truth of this his declaration; apply for the remedy he has so liberally proffered; put it upon his faithfulness to perform for you his word:—And when he shall make void the covenant of his promise, by withholding that Spirit whom he has proffered to bestow; when there is no more hope of access by becoming united to the Saviour; when *his* powers become enfeebled, or his kingdom full: *then* fold thy hands and conclude there is no hope; or else seek some other way of access to the Father than the appointed connexion with his Almighty Son.

No. XII.

RESULTS.

THIS essay has been already extended so very far beyond the bounds originally assigned to it, and the evolution of our “results” has so far exceeded the proportion allotted to the discussion of first principles, that the reader will no doubt be willing to glide over our

FOURTH AND LAST DEDUCTION,

in as little time, and with as little pains as possible. Without, therefore, attempting to discuss the points, let it just be hinted that from the very nature and extent of church connexions, it must appear, that every individual is bound by his profession to desire, and as far as possible to *promote*, the welfare of all persons and all parties, really belonging to “the body of Christ,” however remotely situated from his country, or however widely distinguished from his own denomination.—We have already heard it from the mouth of Doctor Owen, that the different views and practices which gave rise to the various denominations of his day, were affairs that “signified very little in themselves,” however fashionable it might be for the contending parties to exalt their points of difference into considerations of the utmost moment.* In so saying, the Doctor spoke like a man who understood his Bible, and really had the interest, not meerly of his par-

ty, but of the Lord's party—the whole church of God at heart. We ask our readers to turn back again to the portion of this work referred to. Let them read over the list of denominations furnished by the Doctor's pen. Then let them ask themselves, whether among the Evangelical churches of the present day, there are really any differences more ruinous, or any errors more destructive than those which they must suppose to have infested those churches against whose party spirit and selfish devices the Doctor so emphatically declares, while he at the same time decides, in terms no less emphatical, that really in themselves and in the sight of God those differences and errors were very small matters, however magnified into things of most serious moment by ignorant and inflamed and selfish partizans. Mr. Hearle, the successor of Dr. Twisse as moderator of the Westminster assembly of divines, held a similar language in one of his pamphlets, written, we believe, during the sitting of that assembly, against the Independents. These things we merely mention, that the reader may not again revert to the old and shameful course of thinking and speaking of his own denomination, as if it were exclusively the church of Jesus Christ; and so contrive to elude the force of the reflections we mean merely to suggest, not to pursue at large.

Taking it for granted then as a matter fully established heretofore, that within the vast circumference of the body of our Lord are included many sections and denominations of the earthly church, and believing that the candid and ju-

dicious portion of our readers have had evidence enough to make them conclude with Doctor Owen, that they who think otherwise are just such characters as the Doctor said they were: adopting his conclusion that that which “holds the head” is the church of Jesus Christ, however defective in doctrine, multiform in discipline, or various in worship: and pouring unceasing and unutterable contempt upon the pharisaic sectarian who makes his creed the standard of purity in discipline, in doctrine, and in worship, and regards every departure from scriptural order as a crime which must unchurch a people:—We go on to remark that it becomes every christian well to consider the exquisite analogy drawn by the Apostle between a human body and the church of Jesus Christ, in a passage already submitted to the reader (1 Cor. xii. 12—27). In the passage alluded to, the Apostle lays it down as a maxim not to be disputed that christians are to have the same kind of feeling for each other and for the whole church of God, which the various members of the animal system evince for one another, and for that whole system which they together constitute. The human body, he tells us, is not a single member, feeling only for itself, and acting for itself; but it consists of a great many members, all of them combined into the one system: “so also is Christ” (verses 12—14). If any member could be supposed to refuse connexion with and interest in the rest, that connexion and interest would not thereby be destroyed: Thus too it is in Christ (15—19.)

No portion of the body can decide concerning any other, that it is a useless member: This also holds good in Christ (21). It is the dictate of nature that the weaker or disordered parts should be treated with the greatest tenderness and shielded with the greatest care; thus should it be in Christ (22—25.) Every member is gratified and benefited by the pleasure or distinction conferred upon any other portion; and is affected by the injury which any other part sustains: so will it naturally and necessarily happen to all the members of Christ (26).

It is not then merely a *duty* which we owe to the church catholic of Christ, and to every portion, every denomination of which it is composed, to wish for “prosperity to all her palaces” and “peace” to all her sons;—it is not merely a state of mind which reason *should* dictate, which reason *must* approve: but it is a feeling which very nature will immediately and vigorously prompt, independently of any reasoning about the matter; it is a feeling that must subsist in every portion of the body, and without which it is hard to conceive how any person pretending to christianity can be really connected with the body of our Lord. Dr. Owen, in a passage already submitted, has said the thing is impossible, unless, perhaps, such a lethargic state of feeling may be accounted for from the influence of very strong temptation.

Then let the christians of the West consider how far they are manifesting their own union with the head, their own membership in the body of

Christ, when they, as members of particular denominations, are so often employed in “biting and devouring one another;” when they account it a splendid and a glorious triumph to build up a congregation upon the ruins of another belonging to a different sect; when they manifest a more than Pharisaic zeal “to make one proselyte” by even doing more than “compass sea and land;” and when, as if they had rendered him, just like the Pharisees, seven fold more the child of hell than ever, they engage him to villify his former church connexions, and applaud his spitefulness against all who will not follow his example. This is a kind of trade too common in the West; and by no means confined to one or two denominations; though certainly there are many in very many denominations, who think and speak of it as they should. But if by admitting their members to join your congregations without insisting that they should be re-baptized, and allowing their ministers to fall under your ranks without requiring that they should be re-ordained, you avow your belief that theirs was christian baptism and christian ordination, and so the churches they belonged to, churches of Jesus Christ:—why wound your master’s honour by blazing abroad the miscarriages of his disciples who still are within the separate pale? Why account it so glorious an exploit to break into their folds, like beasts of prey, and scatter and devour the little handful, that might have been safely fostered for the general fold? why not rather consider yourselves as favoured, your own interests as ag-

grandized, by every item of prosperity which any section of the church enjoys? Why not delight to aid by your influence all their attempts in every quarter, and to foster by your example that brotherly interest and brotherly affection which the mere fires of dissention in contending legitimately and fairly for all truth, are but too apt to wither? Men indeed may tell you that by putting to your hand for the prosperity of another church, you so far promote all the errors in that church, and render yourself, therefore, even still more guilty than those who in their ignorance embraced the error. But is this a fact? Has it not already sufficiently appeared that our Lord and his Apostles found no difficulty in discriminating, and that we too are able to discriminate and conduct as they. But even admitting all that is assumed on this point,—*admitting* that if you promote the increase of a church you contribute to the influence of the errors which are in it, and which cannot be separated from its growing interests:—even *admitting* that all this is true, as in effect it no doubt would be; what then? If this be a christian church notwithstanding all its errors; if those be christian people, though debased and weakened by much ignorance and folly: yet—is it not better, taking them as they are, is it not better to aid them where we can, in making of others christians such as they are, than to let those converts remain in their old condition and perish with the world? Is not real christianity, is not vital piety, though in a miserably degenerated form, infinitely to be preferred to the

reign of those corruptions which whelm their votaries in the second death? Verily if we can only get a human soul without the region of the Devil's rule, if from a church degenerate and corrupt, we can hope for his transfer to the heavens of God, then we will sing Hosannah to her triumphs, however materially she may differ from our own: then we will put to our hand to help her forward; we will be fellow workers with our master, in lengthening her cords and strengthening her stakes; and though we may thus indeed contribute to circulate her errors, together with her excellence, though we cannot so divide as not to promote her influence exactly as she is, yet if that influence is to spring up into eternal life, yet if her disciples may be rendered "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty," *that* influence we may further with a pure and honest conscience, and rejoice with the angels over the sinners that are repenting and flocking to her portals. As an exclusive denomination let her sons rejoice, I too am "one member," though of a different sect, I will rejoice with them; as an exclusive denomination let her name be honoured, I too am "one member," I will feel as if honoured with her.

Far be it from us, however, to say that the evils connected with the influence of any church, ought not to be matters of proportional regret; or that the prosperity of the church with which we are formally connected, and the increased influence of her more sound and extensive views, ought not to be a matter of proportionably greater

joy. If it be alike the dictate of reason and of scripture that we are “to do good to all men, **ESPECIALLY** to those of the household of faith;” if nature prompts, and scripture commands us, to “provide for our own, **ESPECIALLY** for those of our own house:” then, for the very same reason, nature will prompt, and religion will allow, that we should be most concerned about the prosperity of the denomination with which providence has most intimately connected ourselves; and that those whom habit has rendered dearest to our hearts, and whose superior attainments most recommend them to our judgment, should have a decided preference in our efforts and in our wishes.

But there is a wide distinction between this decided preference and superior claim; and that exclusive interest and only admitted claim against which we have been obtesting as repugnant to every christian principle, and hostile to the interest of the general church. This distinction a christian should bear in mind. He can, at any time, if he pleases, draw it for himself.

Let the churches, too, consider how far the marked and remarkable indifference to the prosperity and extension of the Redeemers kingdom in other quarters of the world, which so lamentably betrays itself in the christian community, bespeaks a union with the living Head. It is certainly the shame as well as the bane of the west, that while political effusions and articles of intelligence are circulated every where by the almost innumerable gazettes of the day, it is

found impossible to support for any length of time, or to circulate to any desirable extent, publications which record the achievements of the saints while toiling in “the battle of the Lord of Hosts against the mighty.” This circumstance, which at any time would be humiliating and disgraceful, is doubly surprising at the present æra, when the movements to be recorded of the church of Christ are still more extensive and still more eventful than any that are occurring in the political world.

We know that it may be and actually is plead in excuse for this indifference, that *our* reading or hearing of these events will not help them forward: that the gospel may be diffused abroad among the Heathen, that nations may be born to the Redeemer in a day, just as soon and just as well, when we are minding our own little affairs, and laying out our money “especially for them of our own house,” as if we were spending our time and means in poring over records of these distant and often doubtful matters: and especially it is plead that these religious publications are apt to contain so many ill written or useless things, that it is throwing away money to buy them; and frequently such offensive and disgusting, and even abusive things, that it is provoking to read, and wrong to encourage them.

Against the truth of the facts thus alledged as apologies we have not a word to say. But admitting that they are true, do they lay a good foundation for so huge a superstructure?—Very

true: the work of God can go on among the distant nations of the world just as well without your knowing any thing about it as if you were receiving regular intelligence every day. But then is not this just as true of all those movements in the civilized world which are afflicting and affrighting the nations of the earth? Why then, why should it be a fact so glaring, that intelligence of these affairs should be courted with so much eagerness, that almost every man who can muster his three dollars will open himself a sluice by which to receive the news; will often subscribe for papers, more than one or two, while intelligence that concerns him much nearer as an immortal, and which should be a thousand fold more interesting to his heart as a christian, cannot be purchased at a much less expense? Our Lord has decided it as a common sense suggestion, that the heart will always veer towards the depository of our treasure. Why then, thou christian, if thy treasure be in heaven; why, if thy main interest be in Zion's welfare; why, if her extension be the burden of thy prayer; why, if Gods dealings be the theme of celebration and the source of joy,—why manifest so little of the interest which a christian *should* take, and which a lively christian *must* take in the great and glorious working of our God, since he has come forth from his place to scatter all his enemies, and to establish far and wide the foundations of his praise. You cannot, you say, help him forward: but then would not an indifferent person naturally suppose that you

would manifest more anxiety to see how he is going forward, and that you would at least take as much pains and be at as much expense to know it, and to diffuse the knowledge of it among your friends, as you confessedly undergo to be informed about matters of much less importance. At all events does it look like that lively interest, that thrilling sense, which the Apostle ascribes to the members of the body, in relation either to the prosperity or sufferings of the whole or of any part?

Nor will the objections that these works contain much that is useless and much that is offensive, weigh a great deal heavier. Badly as we write ourselves, we will not undertake to become the apologists of bad writing; much less will we make excuse for provoking and offensive attacks in a religious work. But it may still be inquired whether there is not a proportion far greater which you consider as useless in your expensive newspapers? Whether there are not many political effusions, many party squibs, many disgusting and disgraceful puerilities, which you cannot but regard with contempt or abhorrence, but which nevertheless do not weaken your interest in the articles of intelligence, nor provoke you to reject as an unnecessary incumbrance, the vehicle of so much vice and folly. Why then, if you never either read or regarded any thing but the news, why be so little anxious about Gods dealings with Zion, as to reason in this case as you reason in no other, and contribute by your negligence to put down every at-

tempt to kindle in the bosoms of the religious public, a devotedness more settled to “the great concern.” Does it not look as if you were forgetting Jerusalem, before your “right hand has forgot its cunning?” Does it not look as if you were careless of being bettered by the display of God’s mercy and kindness to the nations? Does it not appear, at least, as if it were a very narrow view which will content you with singing of God’s wonders of old which he “wrought in Egypt land;” while you will neither sing nor speak, nor even *hear* of his still greater wonders now wrought in every land; because, alas! it would be prodigiously expensive! and some (good souls!) would rather sing for generations of the kindness expressed towards the seed of Abraham, and dispute for whole moons whether any thing else should be matter of their song, than hazard a very small expense to furnish them with a source of “joy and thanksgiving,” on account of all that God is doing now.

Christian, for shame! rouse up thy slumbering spirit. Harken and observe the procedure of your master. Mark him going forth “conquering and to conquer.” And let your future conduct vindicate the truth of that divine aphorism, that “whoso is wise and observeth these things, even he shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.”

Finally. If you would vindicate your claim to membership in Christ, let not your hand be idle. The “trees of righteousness” are “the planting of Jehovah.” But be both plants and

waters through the instrumentality of men. You are not therefore at liberty to content yourself with enjoying the means to promote your own spiritual growth, or that of your household and friends. You must labour to promote the growth of the body. You may do this in other denominations, as well as in your own. You may do it in behalf of distant churches, as well as those of your own country. You may contribute your mite, as well as prayers, to do it among Heathens as well as Christians. As a member of the body, you promote your own best interests, in promoting in any shape the interests of your master. And while you have now abundant calls to assist the general church in circulating the scriptures among the ignorant and destitute; while most of you have calls to aid your own denomination, in furnishing through all its branches, a learned and well trained ministry; see that you do not belye your profession or render doubtful your connexions, by asking the selfishly prudent and unfeeling question, what likelihood is there of *your* being benefited, or of your children being benefited, by any of these attempts? and therefore, what inducements *you* can have to contribute? let not “the eye thus say unto the hand, I have no need of thee.” Let not “the head thus say unto the feet, I have no need of you.” If the church of God be gainer in any quarter or in any shape, *that* is motive enough for you to give. If there be a bare hope of furthering the honour of your master, *that* is reason enough to toil. If you refuse

to “gather with him” upon those remote and general considerations, think what hazard you run of becoming liable to the judgment which his lips have denounced against “the scatterer abroad.” If you refuse to be his helper, except when you can calculate on your own, or your party’s immediate gain, reflect whether He too, in pursuing His great interests, may not in justice leave you, in the things of last importance, to be the helper of yourself!

1774

The first of the year was a very cold one, and the snow lay on the ground for several weeks. The weather was very disagreeable, and the people were much distressed. The crops were very poor, and the people were obliged to buy their provisions at a high price. The king was very angry with the people, and he sent orders to the governors to punish them. The governors were obliged to do as the king commanded, and the people were very much distressed. The king was very angry with the people, and he sent orders to the governors to punish them. The governors were obliged to do as the king commanded, and the people were very much distressed.

APPENDIX.



ALTHOUGH there has been adduced in the body of the foregoing work, such a multitude of declarations and facts, as one would think sufficient to set at rest forever the questions of the doctrine held in the Westminster age, and avowed in the Westminster Confession, on the subject of communion; yet the reader will hardly be disposed to think it an unprofitable piece of service, should we furnish him with some additional authorities and quotations on that debated point. There now lies before us a very considerable mass of evidence, which goes to decide what really was the reformation principle on this important article. But we regret to say that our limits being now restricted to ten or a dozen pages, we have no alternative left but the very troublesome one, of selecting and copying off a few passages from the mass that had been furnished for insertion; which must be submitted to the reader almost without comment or illustration.

We begin with a "treatise on the sacrament," written by Mr. Richard Vines; one of the most admired and revered members of the Westminster Assembly.— We have already taken occasion to remark,* that in an age, when the communion of all the faithful, however distinguished by various names, was common and commonly allowed, we are not to expect that laboured comment on it, or those direct and frequent assertions of its propriety, which are only to be expected on controverted points, especially in ages when controversies run high. Our object therefore, in the following extracts is to shew that the whole of Mr. Vines' scheme and appeals are built upon this principle; and that it was one which

* Page 96.

he did not think it needful to defend or illustrate, because denied by hardly any body. The following passage, however, furnishes something like an exception to the last remark, and because bearing directly on the point, shall be first submitted. In his xiith Chapter, he treats of the causes which had brought the sacrament of the supper under an "eclipse," as he terms it. The second cause noticed by him was as follows :

"They" (i. e. some separatists before mentioned) "planted their battery here upon this sacrament, and cryed down promiscuous communion with all their might, laying a good foundation, 'that only *visible* saints are fit communicants,' which is true as to the church's admission; 'that *real* saints only are worthy communicants,' which is true too, as to the inward grace or benefit. But then, (as always in such cases it is,) the superstructure was hay and stubble; 'that saints are only such as are of *their* making and judging,' and that they that are of their *opinion* or party, though vicious in life and empty of true grace, are saints.—And thence"—LET THE READER MARK IT—"thence come the several communions and divisions moulded up together into several bodies, for and by interests, passions, and worldly ends, which I speak not of all; for some Godly souls might be carried away to enjoy this sacrament in a communion more pleasing to them, as Aaron was in the business of the golden calf: and others were mightily taken with it, who hardly passing for honest men at home in their own churches, were presently cannonized for saints."—*Treatise on the sacrament, Pages 166, 167.*

These pretenders then to a love of greater order and purity "cryed down promiscuous communion with all their might." They nevertheless laid "a good foundation," Mr. Vines says, for they held that a credible profession, or in his own language visible saintship, was the proper ground of admission to this ordinance; and that upon the principle that actual union with our Lord and Saviour is the *common* and *only* ground of legitimate communion. The reader will compare this concession with the views submitted in the preceding dis-

course, pages 52—60.—But while the separatists who “eclipsed” the glories of this ordinance established just premises, they built upon them a miserable superstructure in maintaining that their own churches were the only true churches, and thence crying down “promiscuous communion” with other denominations.... Such were the views of that Westminster Father.

Hear him again in continuation of this subject.—“When I look upon the standing ministers who should dispense the sacrament, I must plead this for them, that while it is their intention and practice to make the door of this sacrament no wider, no narrower than Christ hath made it, they cannot be condemned. It may be so wide as to let in the uncircumcised to the pass-over, and bring Greeks into the temple, as they said of Paul. It may be so narrow as to shut out fit and worthy communicants for circumstances, for mere ceremonies, as in former times. There is great difference between Christ’s real members and guests at this table, and (as I may say) the visible church members and guests.—If he be a visible professor of faith unshipwrecked, of capacity to discern the Lord’s body, of life without scandal, he is a guest of the church; and yet not happily a true member of Christ, but a Jew outwardly in letter, a Simon Magus, a Judas, an hypocrite. We are not *Domini*, but *dispensatores*; *Lords* of the sacrament we are not, but *stewards* we may be; but the steward cannot invite to his master’s table whom his master will not have for his guest; nor shut out any whom the master hath invited.” Page 168. On another part of the subject he says “If God afford his communion with a church by his ordinances, and grace and Spirit: It would be unnatural and pievish for a child to forsake his mother, while his father owns her for his wife.” Mr. Vines here quotes a Mr. Brightman in confirmation of his views, “*will they be ashamed (saith he.) to sit down where they see Christ not to be ashamed? Are they holier and purer than he?*”

Unless, then, men are prepared to assert that the churches of other denominations are no churches; unless they are so scandalously ignorant or wickedly per-

verse, as to make their little matters of difference about government, magistracy, psalmody, &c. &c. which have divided the churches into so many sections,—unless they are determined to make their “bye-opinions,” as Dr. Owen calls them, the sum of purity and test of piety, they must agree with this Westminster Father, or they must not complain to wear the mark which he affixed to those who shouted against promiscuous communion in his own day, and who he insinuates, maintained a doctrine, which none but Donatistical schismatics had advocated before,

When upon the question of debaring from the Lord's supper, Mr. Vines asserts that there are but two proper and adequate and immediate objects of debarment. 1. scandalous and atrocious sins, for which he quotes 1 Cor. v. Gal. v. 19, and 1 Cor. vi. 9. 2. Heresies, properly so called. His prerequisites to condemnation are 1. That the sin be really grievous: “quotidian sins of daily incursion,” he says “are not to be knocked down with so great a hammer.” 2. It must be an open, manifest sin; a thing which will not bear question of its sinfulness. “For a thing” says he, “may be commonly cried down under the name of an enormous crime, and yet indeed be very doubtful.” When therefore you, or a church, may be fully satisfied of the evil or sinfulness of a thing, it will not follow that it has a right to debar persons who think and practice differently; “for there may be names” says he in the instance adduced by him, “of great learning and Godliness, who deny it, i. e. deny the sinfulness of the matter disapproved by you. If then the learned and the Godly conscientiously differ in their views of the sinfulness or allowableness of a thing, the one party may not set up itself, as the infallible head of Rome, to judge and condemn the other, or to refuse them fellowship in things allowedly lawful. It must be “manifestly a sin,” says Mr. Vines, not a question capable of dispute; a thing which the differences of the “learned and Godly do not render doubtful,” that will warrant your debaring any man or church, for thinking and practising differently from yourself.

And yet more pointedly, when treating professedly of errors which may be a ground of debaring, he says, that they must not be "such things wherein the kingdom of God consists not." i. e. they must not be any thing except the allowed fundamentals of religion; and what they are we have already settled.* "Such discord," Mr. Vines continues, "need break no music: we may as soon make all faces alike as all judgments; and we should not be so proud as to think all are blackmores besides us. For God hath received him, therefore *let us receive him, and let him receive at the Lord's table.*"—Page 236—243.

We might fill an hundred pages with similar quotations: but our approach to the end of the last sheet allowed us, reminds us that we have already gone too far in making extracts from this work. The reader may by this time see what really were the views of a Westminster Father, when treating professedly of the general theme; and to satisfy him on this point: to shew that our own views are neither novel nor inimical to the standards of Westminster is all that we intend.—Hear then a last quotation, "The church may be corrupted many ways, in doctrine, ordinances and worship; and this I account the worst, because it is the corruption of the best; as the corruption of blood that runs through all the body, the poisoning of springs and rivers that run through a nation, is worse than a sore finger in the body, or a field of thistles in the nation. And there are degrees in this corruption, the doctrine in some remote points, hay and stubble upon the foundation, the worship in some rituals or rites of men's invention or custom. How many scripture churches do ye find thus corrupted, and yet no separation of Christ from the Jewish church, nor any command to the Godly of Corinth, or of Gallatia, or those of Asia, in the revelation. I must in such case, **AVOID THE CORRUPTION, HOLD THE COMMUNION: HEAR THEM, IN MOSES CHAIR, AND YET BEWARE OF THEIR LEAVEN.**"—Page 265.

* Page 86, et seq.

We are obliged to omit other valuable authorities for want of room, and must close this collection of extracts with a few from Durham, a man of deservedly high authority in all the Presbyterian churches. We must submit them too, without note or comment.

An intelligent and industrious correspondent has furnished us with a considerable number of extracts from his celebrated work on the Apocalypse, taken, he says, *verbatim*, from the Glasgow edition of 1764. We are sorry that want of room must preclude our use of most of them; the following, however, will be abundantly sufficient to show the reader what really was Durham's sentiment upon the subject.

Reasoning for the unity of the church he says, "There is an unity among all professors in all parts of the world, that live in the same time; they all are of this one church; and there is one integral catholic church, that is made up of them all. For 1. there is in all the world but one heaven, and kingdom of heaven, that is the visible church, as there is one earth or world distinct from it, and it cannot be said there are two: there is but one temple (as there is but one ark) that in darkness all are shut up in, and which, when liberty cometh, is but that same temple opened, and is still one although it be enlarged to receive more. And as all professors in a nation, become one national church; so all professing nations do become one catholic church by the same grounds proportionally followed; For now they become his not only severally, but conjunctively, and these have their national unity, as being parts of that whole with a subserviency thereunto. There is in all the world one *woman*: when she travaileth, there is an unity and conjunction for her delivery, as there was common hazard: and so all professors and churches did join in prayers, judicatures, &c. for this end, there is but one spouse to Christ, the visible church, married to him by the same gospel-band every where. For to say that Christ had many spouses, would sound monstrously, and not answer the analogy of that oneness that is between Christ and his church, as between a man and his own wife: there is but one mother bring-

eth forth, and all visible professors, who were either liable to heathenish, or Anti-christian persecution, in any part of the world, they are children of this mother. Gal. iv. 27, and seed of this one woman, which showeth she must be one: all the prophets and ministers, wherever they serve, they feed this one woman, and are appointed for that end, as is clear, verse 6, (Rev. Chap. xii.) all professing christians, who possibly belong to no particular congregation are of this church; for they are not of any particular church and yet cannot be without even the visible church, but in that respect have a mother: this church is the church that the twelve apostles and their successors adorn, verse 1 (Rev. xii.) and if that be not, there can be no solid exposition of the xi chapter and of this." (the xii.)

"Neither hath this been accounted strange doctrine in the church; for before Christ, this church was one; and if after his coming her unity was dissolved, then she were not the same church, or woman, but many churches, or women, that one were many: the primitive times knew no miss; but the church and these that were without the same, who were baptized, were added to one church. Acts ii. ult. 1. Cor. xii. 13, &c. and these who were rejected were cast out of this one church, John ii. Upon this ground all the Apostles fed but one church, when they fed Christ's lamb's every where. Upon this the general councils are founded: and there is nothing rarer and more ordinary than such phrases, as *the unity of the church, &c. renting of the church, persecuting of the church, &c.* mentioned among the fathers, and later divines, yet none will think that any particular church is meant, or that the visible church is not intended. Hence the Novatians, Donatists* and others of old, and the Anabaptists of late, have been by all the orthodox, branded with this

* The Novatians and Donatists of old, and the Anabaptists in Mr. Durham's days, refused communion with any other denomination; and it was considered by all as their distinguishing blemish. See Note A. page 97. Boston's sermon on schism, and Milner's Church History, Cent. v, Chap. vi

that they rent and separated from the church, which certainly can be meant of no particular congregation; and how often is the seamless coat of our blessed Lord spoken of? Thereby to show how they conceive the unity of the church visible, which ought not to be rent, being by him appointed to be one entire piece; yea this form of speech is not abhorred by many judicious men of the congregational way, we will find also the most solid writer Cobbet, of New-England, assert it, and own that, as a principle destructive to rule; Antipedo baptism, Chap. Sect. 5, at the close. So doth Cotton, Cant. vi. 9. and Robothom appositely maketh the garden Chap. vi. 2. to be the Catholic church, and the gardens to be particular churches comprehended under the same, as parts thereof: though all these and the catholic church be not in themselves different parties, but she existeth in them as the world existeth in particular nations and persons."

"We gather that this catholic church is the first church, and fountain from which all particular churches do flow, and of whose nature they do partake; for she is the mother and they are the seed, which doth demonstrate the same; she is the travailling woman, and they the birth brought forth and exalted, and they are churches as they partake from her, and are of that same homogeneous nature with her. This first gospel church, in which the Lord sets the Apostles, as it were travaileth, and begetteth more, and (as the prophet saith Isai. xlix. 20) when the place of meeting becometh too narrow then is it subdivided, as divers branches spring from one root; and when it increaseth in number or distance, accordingly this springeth still the broader, as branches when they extend themselves from the root, or shoot forth new branches, yet is the root still one; or as a family increasing must have diverse rooms, yet still is the family one and the mother of the rest; so is it here: So the root is first and beareth the branches, and not the branches the root, which would be inferred if particular churches were first.— Thus one is entered into the catholic church as the

mother, when he may be no member of a particular church."—*Essay on the unity of the church. Chap. xii. of Rev. and Lecture 3.*

Hear him on schism. "Separation from the unity and communion of a true church, whether more or less pure, if it *be* a true church, is simply and always sinful; because *it is* a true church." He then quotes St. Augustine, "not a difference in doctrine (*diversa fides*), but a withdrawment from communion constitutes schism." schism, he says, is positive "when it not only withdraweth, but setteth up another worship or church, (as the Novatians and Donatists did,) to keep communion *only with themselves.*" Again "when separation is from a true church, (though with some defects) totally, or beyond that wherein she is corrupted, that is sinful, and as Cotton saith, Cant. vi. a condemning as no church that which Christ accounteth one; and is too much nicety not to keep communion with them with whom he keepeth communion." Once more hear him: "It followeth that when God warranteth separation, it is from a company that is no church, and must be supposed a Babel; and therefore there is no separation allowed by him from a true church. He calleth none of his to separate from such as are his.—*We may and should keep church fellowship with a church that is a true church, though in many things sullied and corrupt.*"—*Lecture I. on Rev. xviii.*

We close these extracts from "authorities," with the following short specimen of a right Reverend Archbishop's sentiments, who lived in the beginning of the last century. The letter, it will be seen, not only recognizes the principle of communion with various churches, but very strongly implies that all the protestant churches of Europe thought with the Archbishop, an hundred years ago. The extract is taken from "*THE CHRISTIAN'S MAGAZINE,*" Vol. II. No. iii. page 360; and is as follows: "God forbid that I should be so iron-hearted, as on account of such defect," viz. the want of Episcopal order, "to believe that some

of them," the foreign protestant churches, " should be cut off from our communion ; or with certain *insane* writers among us, to pronounce that they have *no true and valid sacrament* ; and so are hardly christians."*

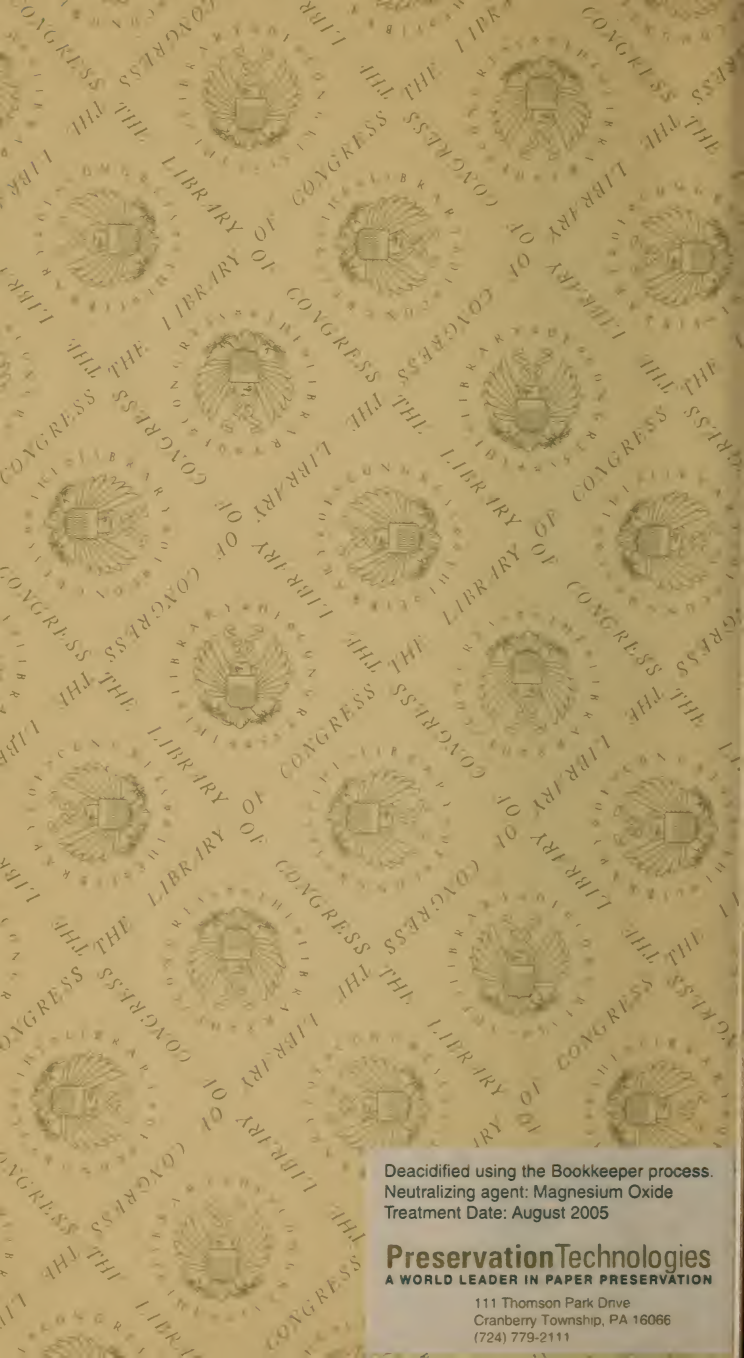
Reader ! you must weigh for yourself, and appreciate as you can, these " traditions of the Fathers " In laying them before you our labour terminates. We have nothing more to say.

* Letter to Le Clerk, April, 1719.





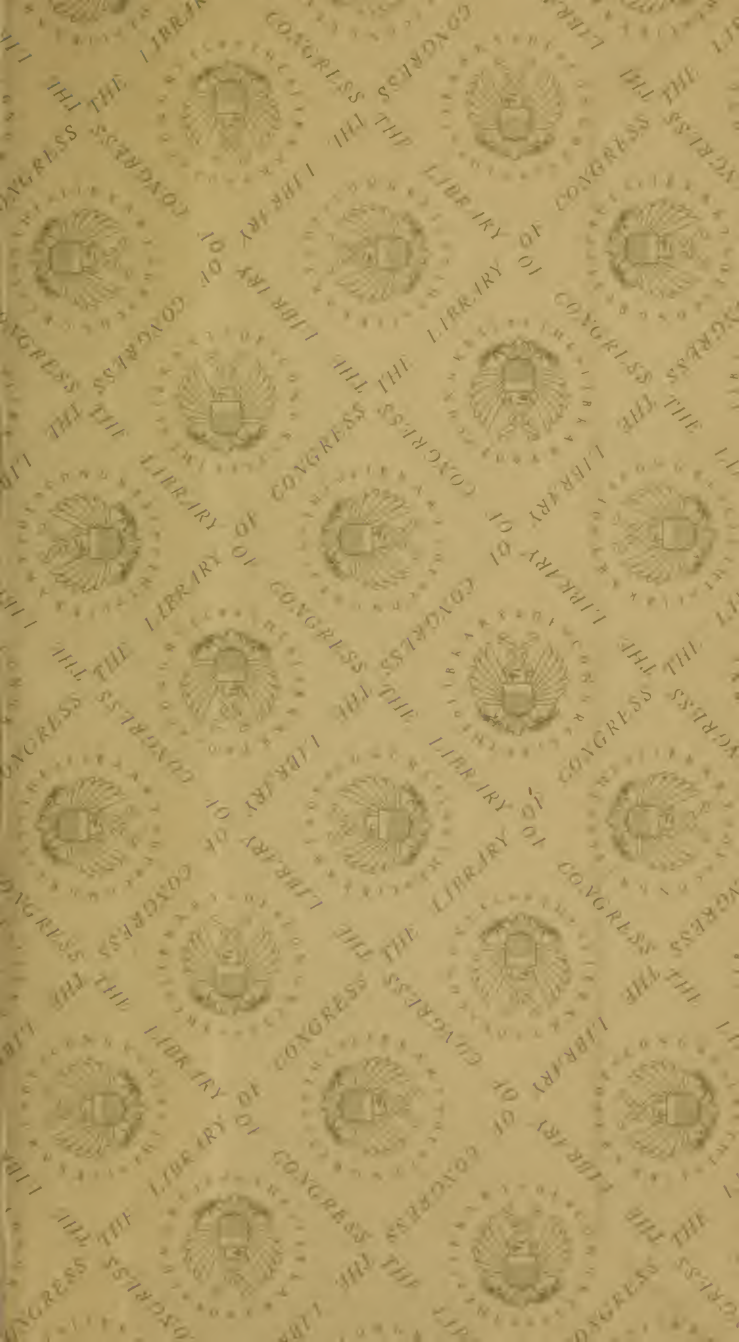




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