

THE  
SPRUCE STREET LECTURES,

DELIVERED

BY SEVERAL CLERGYMEN, DURING THE AUTUMN AND  
WINTER OF 1831-32.

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TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A LECTURE

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS : WITH  
AN APPENDIX,

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

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TO  
THE ELDERS  
OF THE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES,

THIS VOLUME

IS  
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE EDITOR.



## THE EDITOR'S ADVERTISEMENT.

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To the Members of the Presbyterian Church.

THIS course of Lectures was founded in prayer. The design was to furnish the members and families of the Presbyterian Church, with a Manual containing interesting and popular discussions of some of the most important subjects, both doctrinal and ecclesiastical, taught in the "Confession of Faith."

When doubts are entertained in regard to any point of faith, taught by our holy religion and our venerable standards, it is important that the members of the Church should be furnished with a calm and able defence of those truths which are called in question.

The well known character of the gentlemen engaged in this course, will be regarded as a sufficient recommendation of the volume.

Although the work is especially dedicated to the Elders of the Presbyterian Church, yet it is commended to the patronage of all its members. And that the Spirit of God may attend this defence and inculcation of the truth which He inspired, is the prayer of your brother in the Gospel,

SAMUEL G. WINCHESTER.

Philadelphia, January, 1833.



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## ERRATA.

Page 10, line 7 from top, *for* declation *read* declaration.

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| " 12,  | " 14 | " | <i>for</i> divide <i>read</i> describe.  |
| " 37,  | " 1  | " | <i>for</i> planned <i>read</i> placed.   |
| " 74,  | " 5  | " | <i>for</i> And the <i>read</i> Another.  |
| " 92,  | " 2  | " | <i>strike out</i> must.                  |
| " 173, | " 5  | " | <i>for</i> sustain <i>read</i> restrain. |
| " 210, | " 8  | " | <i>for</i> ask <i>read</i> act.          |



## INTRODUCTION,

BY REV. ASHBEL GREEN, D. D. OF PHILADELPHIA

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THE framers of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, introduced their Form of Church Government by specifying certain "preliminary principles," or fundamental truths, as the basis on which the whole superstructure had been erected, or by which, as they express it, "they were governed in the formation of the plan." In this statement of radical or elementary principles, the fourth section is as follows: "That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness; according to our Saviour's rule, 'by their fruits ye shall know them.' And that no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd, than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, they are persuaded that there is an inseparable connexion between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it."

"The innocence of error," was a favourite dogma of infidel writers and loose moralists, of the last age; and it was

against this, that the foregoing statement was intended to be more immediately directed. But this mischievous sentiment was, it is believed, never so openly avowed and formally defended, as in the present age; for it is only a modification of the principle, while the essence is retained, which we find now advocated by some of the most distinguished literary men of Europe, in the position "that a man is not responsible for his belief or opinions." To demonstrate the falsehood of this baleful doctrine, which goes to the subversion of all moral obligation, and all religious faith and practice, is now the task of the able and erudite friends of revealed truth and Christian duty, both in the old world and the new.

But many reject (it may be with honest abhorrence) the error we contemplate, when broadly stated and viewed in its extreme, who, nevertheless, tolerate it, and even plead for it, in some of its degrees and modifications. What but this is virtually advocated, when a strict and strenuous adherence to *sound doctrine* and a jealous fear of its violation, are made the subject of undisguised reproach, or represented as the indication of a narrow and bigoted mind; and when active exertions for the promotion of visible religion are extolled, as marking not only greater liberality of mind, but more of genuine piety, than is to be expected among those who are tenacious of an orthodox creed? This we often hear; and does it not imply that truth, or just principle, is not *necessary* to the best action? is not always *favourable* to it? or, may be even *less fu-*

*vourable* than principles received with little examination, and partaking of a mixture of error? Now the very opposite of this is held, and it is believed must be held, by all who understand and honestly profess an attachment to the standards of the Presbyterian Church.

It is readily admitted that there may be a zealous contention for abstract principles of truth, or for sound and orthodox doctrine, without activity in promoting the cause of God in the world; yea, with the destitution of all vital and practical godliness. The truth may be held in unrighteousness. Let this, whenever apparent, be unsparingly censured and pointedly condemned. Let it be shown, as it easily may be shown, that there is a glaring inconsistency between what they profess, and what they do, or what they *refuse* to do, in all who maintain with ardour the truth as it is in Jesus, and yet violate his precepts themselves, by withholding their best energies for the extension of his cause and kingdom, and the salvation of perishing sinners. But let it not be intimated or implied, that there is any other *safe and firm basis* for right action, than truth or sound doctrine; far less, that without this, there may be a better practical system than with it. If such, for a time, seem to be the fact in any given instance—as it is conceded that it may—the result will assuredly prove, that when the mixed system of truth and error becomes fully developed, and is seen in its fruits, effects and consequences, the want of strict adherence to sound doctrine will be strikingly and lamentably apparent, in practical evils of a very pernicious character. In a word,



let it be remembered, that as there is an *icy orthodoxy*, so there is also a *fanatical heat*, and that both are to be carefully avoided; that the truth is to be strenuously maintained, and to be fully carried out into practice; and that *that* practice or course of action will be the most correct, the most exemplary, and the most firm and efficient, which rests for its foundation on the greatest measure of truth, held in its greatest purity. So says, and truly says, our Constitution, as already quoted, “Truth is in order to goodness—there is an inseparable connexion between faith and practice, truth and duty; the great touchstone of truth is its tendency to promote holiness.”

The fact is too palpable to be denied, that in the Presbyterian Church, at the present time, doctrines not in accordance with our public standards, are freely promulgated, both from the pulpit and the press; that it is a favourite topic with many of the advocates and propagators of these doctrines, to represent them as better adapted to the awakening of careless sinners, producing revivals of religion, and multiplying converts, than those contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms—understood as these formularies certainly were understood, by those who formed them, and as they are still held and taught, by those who adhere to them in their genuine import. Those who think that they ought to disregard or violate our doctrinal creed, do not act consistently in retaining their connexion with a Church whose standards they consider as impeding and restraining the best and most efficient action for the good of mankind, and the glory of the

Redeemer: and while they remain, it is reasonable to think that they will embrace any favourable opportunity to effect such changes in the doctrinal system of the Presbyterian Church, as shall render it more in conformity with their own opinions—unless, indeed, the example of Geneva shall be preferred and followed, where the doctrinal standards, framed under the auspices of Calvin and Beza, have remained untouched, while all the leading doctrines they embrace are renounced and ridiculed, and their adherents reviled and persecuted.

Believing that the doctrines of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Presbyterian Church, are those of the revelation of God, most accurately systematized and correctly stated; and consequently that they must be more favourable than any other to the advancement of genuine Christianity, and the eternal salvation of the souls of men; believing also that they admit of a fair and effectual defence, on the principles of sound reason and philosophy, as well as of sacred Scripture; and believing, in fine, that such a defence was loudly called for, when these doctrines were impugned, mutilated, disparaged, or disfigured, even by writers and speakers who had adopted them solemnly and formally—those who planned the *Spruce Street Lectures*, determined to solicit from some of their brethren, whose talents and opinions were known to qualify them eminently for such a service, the discussion of certain leading and fundamental points of our doctrinal standards, in a series of Lectures, of which each speaker should deliver one. It is greatly regretted that the

series is less complete than it would have been, if several of the brethren to whom application was made, and all of whom approved the plan proposed, had not found it incompatible with their health, or with previous engagements, to contribute their aid.

But notwithstanding every deficiency, there are still so many cardinal points of doctrinal and practical theology discussed in this volume, and in a manner so clear and impressive, that it is confidently believed that every candid and attentive reader will receive sensible benefit from its perusal—the well informed, by the revival in their minds of a distinct view of truths which have long been most precious in their estimation; and those who need instruction and the removal of doubts and difficulties, by finding the information, explanations and illustrations, which their circumstances require.

The method of communicating instruction and defending truth, by courses of *lectures* professedly prepared and delivered for the purpose, is well known not to be novel. In the country from which we derive our origin, lectures of this character have long been in use; and in our own country there have been a few instances, in which something of the same kind has heretofore been attempted. That they will hereafter be frequent, is not improbable; as this mode of conveying to the public the opinions and reasonings of men of learning, piety and talents, is recommended by many considerations. The preparation of a



single discourse is not onerous; and when but one is demanded, and its occasion and connexion are considered, it is not likely to be a hasty or careless production; and the concentration of the talents of able men, each discussing an important point in a single lecture, may be expected to prepare for the public volumes of much value. The Lime Street and Bury Street Lectures, contain some of the most able, useful, and pious disquisitions of the English dissenting divines. The Spruce Street Lectures accord entirely in doctrine and spirit with those admirable discourses; and without claiming to equal them, it is humbly hoped that the same blessing from the Spirit of grace and truth, which is known to have attended the former, may also be vouchsafed to the latter.





# SPRUCE STREET LECTURES.

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## LECTURE I.

*Delivered on the Evening of the 2d November, 1831, by the  
Rev. Ezra Fisk, D.D. of Goshen, N. Y.*

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### THE INABILITY OF SINNERS CONSIDERED.

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“No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me,  
draw him.”—*John vi. 44.*

It has pleased God to reveal, not only his existence but his personality, in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In the glorious economy of redemption, the Father sends the Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from both the Father and the Son. The agency of the Holy Spirit is ascribed to both, sometimes to one person and sometimes to the other. When Christ said, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,” he ascribed the influence of the Spirit to the Son: in my text, he tells us, the Father draws by the same agency.

On this fundamental doctrine of the Holy Spirit’s official influence, executing the commission of the Father and the Son, rests the propriety of ascribing his agency to either or both. The recognition of this doctrine seemed necessary, to understand definitely the meaning of the exception in

my text. I consider it as referring to the agency of the Holy Ghost, in bringing men to Christ. With this influence, men can come and do come to him ; without it, they do not and cannot come. This is the plain and only meaning of the passage. With the agency intended in the exception, men are capable of doing all that God requires of them. Leave out the exception, and modify the declaration so as to include the agency, it would read thus, "every man can come unto me, if the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." This is a precious and encouraging truth to all who preach the gospel of Christ. The whole economy of grace illustrates this great fact; all Christian experience proves it; and the great day will reveal its glory in the redeemed millions, brought home to Christ in heaven. But leaving out this agency, the whole is reversed—man is only taught his helplessness and made to feel his misery. The declaration in our text, as it fell from the lips of Jesus Christ, expresses an important fact, which should be well understood.

Before I proceed to consider the *inability asserted*, which is the principal object of this discussion, there is an important inquiry to be answered:—*What is coming to Christ?*

I answer the *question*, and discuss the *assertion*.

I. The *question* is of great importance, and the illustration of its answer might profitably occupy the whole of this hour. But it admits of a brief solution, which is all that is necessary for my present discussion.

*Coming to Christ*, in these days, is altogether a mental process. In the days of our Saviour's pilgrimage in the flesh, some might have understood it otherwise. When he tra-

versed the regions of Palestine, the people flocked to the places of his instruction, and, doubtless, many thought of nothing else. On the mountain, in the plain, by the sea side, and in the wilderness, he stood before them in tangible human form. Their eyes saw him, and looked on his miracles; their ears heard the gracious words as they proceeded from his lips. But since his bodily presence is withdrawn and enthroned in glory, he is to be approached by us only in mind. Mind alone can now penetrate the heavens, and contemplate the Saviour where the beloved and exiled disciple saw him, exalted in purity and splendour, with the rainbow of Jehovah's merciful covenant reflecting his delightful radiance.

We recognize, it is true, the grand and glorious principle of his spiritual divine existence, one attribute of which is his omnipresence: and we know, that in reference to this attribute, "he is not far from every one of us." But we speak of a moral approach to Christ, as the Redeemer and Saviour.

A brief sketch of this mental process may be comprised in *spiritual apprehension, gracious feeling, and holy action*. Nothing is more certain than the fact, that the pure, spiritual, holy and gracious character of Jesus Christ, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, is not apprehended at all, or misapprehended, by men who are "far from him." Coming to Christ, must include some apprehension of his character as found in the gospel, of his divine existence and glory, of his holiness and compassion, of his grace and loveliness, and of his suitedness to the case of lost sinners. In this spiritual apprehension is included faith in his offices of prophet, priest and king, in his atoning sacrifice and intercession; at least, so much of faith is included as belongs

to the exercise of intellect. I am aware that something more than a mere apprehension of character, or accrediting a matter of testimony, is included in that faith which the gospel demands. There is a reliance upon the merits of the Redeemer's sacrifice, an affection of the soul, resting on the loveliness which is spiritually apprehended; but in the intellectual exercise there is a spiritual discernment, which the unbeliever has not, and which fallen spirits, who tremble before the majesty of the Son of God, never possess. It is a discernment of the excellence, glory and loveliness of Christ, and an appropriation of his rich and gracious promises to the soul. There may be degrees of clearness and strength in this spiritual apprehension, but the characteristics are essential. They divide its nature, by which, rather than the degree, the estimation is to be made.

*Gracious affection* is an essential part of the mental process, in coming to Christ. Penitence, humility, gratitude, love, and faith, are connected with that spiritual apprehension just named. These are feelings of the heart, without which there can be no Christian grace. Sorrow for sin, hatred of its intrinsic loathsomeness and opposition to God, humility under a sense of unworthiness, and forsaking the servitude of Satan, are indispensable, in a sinner's approach to Christ. Gratitude for such a Saviour and such a privilege, must be called into exercise in this transaction. But *love* to Christ is the most direct and important exercise in the process. It is love by which faith works; in fact, it is an essential part of that faith which relies on the great atoning sacrifice, and unites the soul to Jesus Christ.

By *holy action*, I mean, not only a living exercise of gracious affections, but a subjection of the will to the obedience of Christ. I mean directing all the faculties of the



mind in the service of him “who gave himself for us, and called us with an holy calling:” I speak now of mental, not external action, profession, or observance of religious duties. These all have their importance in their proper place, but they are the result of coming to Christ, and necessary evidences of the fact. The man who spiritually apprehends, trusts, and loves Christ, comes to him, and none others come. All this is often expressed in the gospel by a single comprehensive term, *faith, love*. Sometimes faith expresses the whole transaction; it “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Sometimes love is used in the same comprehensive sense—“love is the fulfilling of the law.” The reasons why these graces are used for the whole process, are very obvious, because faith and love are so prominent and vital in the transaction; and because either of these graces implies the whole. It may, perhaps, be asked, whether the “coming to Christ,” mentioned in the text, intend union to him, or merely an approach, to ask some blessing? To this, I answer, the former, beyond peradventure. It is coming to him for salvation—into covenant union with him, perpetual in its glorious results. But while the text is thus interpreted, the exercise of these graces should be cultivated in all approaches to Jesus Christ.

II. The *assertion* of the text, that without the agency of the Holy Spirit no man can come to Christ, demands careful attention. Taking the obvious scriptural interpretation of this coming, and its form may be thus stated: without the Spirit’s agency, no man can *love* Christ, or *believe* on him.

I am aware that this doctrine is denied, and the whole agency of the Holy Ghost rejected. His divine existence is

also denied, and the doctrine is propagated that man needs no aid to his reason, except what instruction he gains from nature and some moral maxims found in what we call revelation, to love God and fulfil all the obligations of his being. But this doctrine I need not refute. It necessarily includes a denial of God's plain declarations, and sets aside the whole gospel of Christ. Few in this land, it is to be hoped, have the hardihood unequivocally to espouse an opinion so directly in the face of divine revelation.

But there is much speculation on the *inability* intended in this declaration of Jesus Christ; and there is certainly great importance attached to the inquiry into its meaning. The importance, however, arises not so much from any inherent difficulty in the investigation, or any liability of an honest mind to err, in the interpretation of the text, or in its practical application, but from the multiplied speculations and bad philosophy of the age. It is undeniably true that no man ever did come to Christ without the agency of the Holy Spirit; no believer of the gospel can suppose that any man ever will come without it; and the Saviour asserted that none *can* come, except by this agency. What more is necessary then, to admit that the inability is entire, a complete preventive?

Apart from the meddlesome philosophy which has intruded its blindness to obscure the light, I perceive only one reason for pursuing the inquiry another step. That is, to show the consistency of this announcement with God's commands, which bind us to love him and believe on Christ. On this subject, the facts, as stated in the Scriptures, are entirely satisfactory to my mind. There can be no doubt that God's commands are peremptory and binding on all individuals of the human family, to whom the word of his



revelation is sent. Nor can there be any doubt that men are unable to come without the agency of the Holy Ghost. Here are two facts, revealed with equal plainness, and each positively asserted. Are they consistent with each other? This is the question. If they are not, there is inconsistency and inequality with God, because he has asserted both, and applied them to the same persons. We come, therefore, to this examination, with the assurance of their entire consistency in fact; and if *we* cannot perceive it, we may be certain the defect is in us, and not in the divine administration. It is a case in which we are not at liberty to hold to one and reject the other. Both are facts, and must be consistent.

Whether such commands would have been given to us if there had been no mission of the Holy Spirit, perhaps we are not competent to say; but we know that they are not given without it. I speak not now of the providential agency which God exercises over and in his creatures, but of that mission of the Spirit whose object is, by an unseen influence, to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto his people. This influence constitutes an essential part of God's administration, and he is ever ready to "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

The character and effect of this inability to come to Christ, is a proper subject of inquiry, and should, in these days, be well understood. The subject embraces much, and can only receive a brief examination at this time. Here let me say, that the circumstances under which I address you, and the occasion, together with the false philosophy so often mingled in the discussion of this subject, must be my apology for detaining you with a philosophical

investigation. Some apology seems necessary, for I have not forgotten the Apostle Paul's caution to "avoid oppositions of science falsely so called." But since this subject has been so involved, I may be permitted to recollect another caution by the same Apostle: "beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." I hope to regard these cautions, and show how philosophy has obscured this subject.

The terms which indicate *power*, are used more vaguely and more variously than almost any others in the English language. The reason is obvious. We know not what is power. No man has ever defined it. We know how we get the idea, but the thing itself is beyond our cognizance. We perceive the relation between cause and effect, and call that power which constitutes this relation. What it is, we do not know, and it is useless to attempt its definition. But if we take that relation which suggests the idea of power, in the place of its definition, we shall not err in any of its important applications or uses. The relation between volition and the effect which follows, may be used for a definition of man's power. Yet the will is not power, nor is volition ability, nor is the effect power, nor is it true that the connexion is ability; but that on which the connexion rests is precisely what we call power. Nothing else can be properly so called, which belongs to man. Now if we substitute this connexion for that which constitutes it, I can see no error in any of its applications in argument or illustration.

Perhaps some may be disposed to ask here, why I would substitute any definition for ability, which, in itself, is undefinable? I answer, because it is desirable to divest it of the perplexity and vagueness to which usage and speculation

have subjected the term. This is reason sufficient. To illustrate my meaning, take the case before us, *coming to Christ*. Is there a connexion between volition and spiritual discernment—between volition and love—or between volition and the appropriate holy exercise of all the mind's faculties? If there be such a connexion as between cause and effect, a dependence of this discernment and love on volition, then, certainly, men have the power of coming to Christ, without the agency of the Holy Ghost; and there is no addition of ability in the conferring of divine grace. If there be no such connexion, men have not the power.

But here it will be said by some, that this description of ability is of that which is physical or natural. Be it so; it is asserted by many that men have natural power, but lack moral ability, to obey the command—"come to Christ." What is moral ability? Is it not that which connects moral effects with volition? Is volition a moral act?—whether it is so or not, love to God is a moral act. And if the latter be the effect of the former, that which so connects them is moral power. Call it physical, natural, or moral—let it be remembered—it is all the same; that which connects the event with volition, is ability, and nothing else can be properly so called. I know there are other notions of power, which will presently be examined; but let not this view be yet forgotten. Now, if men have this ability of any kind—I care not what it may be called—without the drawing of the Father, to come to Christ, or to love God, it must have been ascertained by the fact having, at some time, taken place. No other evidence can be admissible, in opposition to the positive declarations of Jesus Christ. Show me such a fact, and I will admit the ability in that case. But such a fact has never occurred, and is utterly impossible.

If Christ had said, it is impossible for any man to come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him, it would not have varied the meaning of the text. What, then, becomes of the distinction between *natural* and *moral* ability and inability? It is set aside as useless, so far as its application to this case is concerned.

Ability always indicates a connexion between cause and effect; and if I have not greatly mistaken the meaning of those who contend for man's natural ability to love God, they consider it as something which is connected with volition, or that belongs to the will. They represent the whole process of coming to Christ as depending on a man's choice; and this is because men have natural power to come, if they choose.—Whenever they choose to exert that power, they come. All that is necessary, therefore, is, that they should be induced to *choose* to love God, and then they will actually love him. Now if all this were true, it would indeed be a fact, that men have natural power to love God. But is it so? Let us examine the case. The volition does not govern the understanding. It does not depend upon a man's will whether he discern spiritual things, or whether his intellect possess spiritual illumination. I think the mere statement of this fact, is sufficient. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

The volition moreover does not govern the heart. It does not depend upon a man's will, whether he love God or hate him; “because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The truth is, by an irreversible law of mental operations, the will is governed by the *affections*, and they

must be changed, before there can be any love to God. If it were so that the affections followed and depended on volition, every sinner, alarmed at the prospect of the everlasting wrath which awaits him, and accrediting the fact that love to Christ would deliver him from going down to the pit, would certainly love him. On this supposition, there could be no danger of self-deception; no need of so much anxiety among Christians to know their state; no need of a warfare with the lusts of the flesh; no danger of being brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members. It cannot be true, that the will governs the affections. I can just as easily conceive that a man's volitions may govern his appetite for food, as his taste for moral truth. A sick man might as well transform, by the influence of volition, his aversion to a medicine which he chooses to take, as the sinner change, by the same influence, his aversion to holiness:—both are impossible. If natural ability, therefore, be indicated by a connexion between volition, or will, as the cause, and loving God as the effect, men have not natural power to love God.

But some use the phrase natural ability, to indicate merely the possession of faculties, which, rightly employed, do love God, and perform Christian duty. That men have faculties which constitute them free, moral, and responsible agents, is true, and of great importance to be recollected. As I am not disposed to contend for words, I will examine this meaning of ability. The understanding perceives; it is proper, therefore, in this sense, to say, that it, or man, has ability to perceive. But has it the ability of spiritual discernment, without divine illumination? Certainly not. The heart loves; in the same sense it is proper to say, the heart has ability to love. But has it ability to love holi-



ness? Nay, it is enmity against God, and cannot be subject to the law of God, which enjoins holy love. The will chooses; it, therefore, has ability to choose. But here are two questions to be answered—has the will ability to choose independently?—and can the choice control the affections of the heart?

To the first question, I answer, that man's will has no self-determining power, but is always governed by the pleasure of the heart; that is, by the prevailing affection. This is a principle so well settled in mental philosophy, that I consider it unnecessary, at this time, to investigate the proof.

Although the will cannot act independently, it may choose subordinately, and ultimately. The *ultimate* choice always terminates on the object most agreeable to the heart. A *subordinate* choice terminates on some object, not always for its own sake, or because it is in itself agreeable, but for the sake of something with which it is connected that is agreeable. Now, I conceive that an awakened sinner may have such a sense of his danger, and be so fully convinced that away from the Saviour he must perish, that he may really choose to come to Christ for the sake of escaping hell; not because he discerns any beauty in Christ, or has any love to him. He may choose subordinately, as the sick man chooses medicine, for the sake of his health. This is not only conceivable, but is matter of frequent occurrence. It is, obviously, the usual course with sinners, when they begin to seek the Lord. You cannot convince them that they do not choose to come to Christ; you may convince them that their choice is of no avail while the heart does not love him; but their own consciousness of choice is paramount to all argument. Tell them that it

depends on their choice, and that if they chose to come, they certainly would do it; they will say, as in such cases many have said, it seems to us we do choose to come, but we know that we have not come; and we suppose therefore we do not choose it, because those who have a right to know tell us it depends on our choice. Such is generally the case with not a few, who are taught to believe that coming to Christ depends on their own will. Man's own consciousness, in such a case, is more likely to accord with fact, than are the inferences from speculative theories.

If the will can thus choose subordinately, the second question—can the choice control the affection?—is easily answered in the negative. It is perfectly evident that the highest affection is placed on the ultimate object, which, in the case just now mentioned, is safety from impending wrath; coming to Christ is, therefore, chosen subordinately, and has no tendency to change the affection. It should here be observed, that the Spirit of God often convinces men of their sin and danger, and the necessity of loving Christ, long before they do love him. With these thoughts distinctly before his mind, the awakened sinner tries the process of subjecting his heart to his will, for days, or even weeks, before he learns that he must despair of accomplishing the object, and must rely on the Spirit's influence. The more he tries to love God in this way, the more hard his heart seems, and the farther he goes from the object which he seeks. The truth must be realized, “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

Let me here state, briefly, the doctrine of the will's government and freedom, in accordance, as I conceive, with the Scriptures and with fact. The will always obeys the

pleasure of the heart, and in this consists both its government and freedom. To present the whole operation in its philosophical form, it is thus—the heart, or faculty which feels, is the spring or source of action—the ultimate object is the excitement to action—and pleasure is the motive which the will always obeys. Thus, the choice of the will is entirely governed by the pleasure of the heart; and this is the highest kind of freedom conceivable. Can the will be more free than to choose as is most agreeable? Can any man desire any other liberty of will than to choose just as he pleases? If he had liberty to choose what is disagreeable, he never would use it. Such choosing could not be freedom, except in cases already referred to, where disagreeable objects are chosen subordinately for the sake of the ultimate, which is always agreeable.

We have heard of a dogma which teaches, that men may choose to be damned for the glory of God, from which, although it be most lovely in itself, they expect no enjoyment, nor to see any loveliness. This, verily, looks like another kind of freedom—choosing without any motive except pain. But this figment of the last century is generally laid aside, and disowned by those who are willing to bear the name of its author. It is well that so monstrous an absurdity should die; and it would be still better, if the two remaining absurdities, which constituted the peculiarities of the system to which it belonged, were as generally exploded. One of these dogmas I have occasion to examine in a single aspect, viz. that all holiness and sin consist, *exclusively*, in free voluntary exercises. The other, which is, God's *efficiency* in producing sin, although it belongs to the same philosophical speculation, falls not immediately within the range of my subject.



Since, according to this dogma, all holiness and sin consist *exclusively* in voluntary exercise, all the moral excellence included in coming to Christ is volition only: and since the will is not governed by any good or evil principle, it is just as easy to choose right as wrong; men, therefore, have as much power to love God as to hate him. It is furthermore inferred, that regeneration is only a new and right choice, which all men are naturally able to exercise. This, I believe, is a fair representation of the doctrine. Now, if this were true, I would think it a waste of time and breath to pray for the Holy Spirit's influence to renew and sanctify men. But is it true? I admit that volitions are sinful; but I maintain that feelings are sinful, and that the principle or propensity from which they proceed is also sinful. "Out of the heart (not volition) proceed evil thoughts." I am aware, however, that some use, though inaccurately, voluntary exercises to include all the feelings of the heart. On that principle, I ask, what feels—what chooses—has it no character? I ask for the appositeness of many of our Lord's parables, such as of the tree, leaven, and mustard seed. What connects the exercises with the man? What is punishable? But I cannot pursue the many absurdities to which the principle leads.

The way is now prepared to examine the real character of that inability which keeps the sinner away from Christ. *It is sin.* It is not want of faculties, which are capable, under the Holy Spirit's influence, of all that is implied in coming to Christ, but without that influence, men cannot so employ them. The inability is recognized in three aspects—*blindness* of the understanding—*hardness* of the heart—and *perversion* of the will. These qualities are again expressed, by *ignorance*, *deadness*, and *obstinacy*. Is it

right to call this sin, moral inability? Or shall it be called natural inability? The truth is, the whole use of this distinctive phraseology is out of place, and worse than useless, in the explanation of this subject. Men are depraved in the heart, that seat of the affection and source of action; and this is evinced by blindness and perverseness. However we may describe this depravity, and whatever we may call it, this is the only impediment in the way of sinners coming to Christ. In order that any man should love God, repent of sin, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or what includes them all, come to Christ, his heart must be regenerated. There must be a new propensity or preparation of heart to love holiness and hate sin, and the understanding must be enlightened to discern the spiritual excellence and loveliness of Christ. The impenitent man has neither of these; and without them, coming to Christ is impossible. Should it here be said that the development and propensity is coming to Christ, and that the inquiry respects the fact, whether he has or has not the ability for their production and exercise; and what is the nature of that ability or inability—I answer in several particulars. It is admitted on all hands, that the impenitent sinner has not this discernment or propensity; he cannot, therefore, develope what he has not. That he has not power to enlighten his own understanding, or to originate a propensity to love holiness, I have already shown. As to the character of that inability, I have already said it consists in a *principle of sin*, affecting all the mental faculties, and having its primary seat in the heart.

Now, what the *nature* of that inability is which renders man incapable of regenerating his own heart—for the whole inquiry may concentrate here—it matters very little

to define. Let us examine more carefully the philosophical definitions of the day. If we call it *physical*, it is philosophically true; but is an improper use of the term, therefore calculated to mislead. Physical ability, though ever so great, could not produce the moral change called regeneration. If a sinner had ten times as much physical power as a fallen angel, it would be just as impossible as it is now for him to renew his heart. Physical power never originates moral results in responsible agents. All their physical ability is employed for physical purposes, except as it is used instrumentally, by the governing principle of the heart. The principle which moves and controls all physical action, is to be the subject of change. It cannot be changed by that which only acts under its direction and control. Thus, the truth of the assertion is evident; but such are the associations and uses of the term *physical*, that it is improper to employ it here, and is calculated to mislead. The more common and familiar uses of the phraseology, connects it with volition and external action. Thus, a man chooses to walk, and the effect follows; but his limbs become palsied, and then he is physically unable to walk. A child cannot perform the operations of a man. But illustrations need not be multiplied; they are familiar to all. Such want of power is evidently excusable; and from this fixed and warrantable use of the phrase, if we say sinners are physically unable to love God, it is liable to mislead them to the inference that they are excusable. If we call any thing else, except that which connects the effect with volition, physical power, it makes confusion, and obscures the subject to which it is applied.

If we call it *natural* inability, the terms are liable to a similar abuse. It is nevertheless true, that man's inability

is by nature, because it is his depravity which the Scriptures represent to be natural to him. But if we use *natural*, in distinction from *moral*, it means the same as physical, and ought not to be employed in theological discussions of this kind. If, however, natural inability mean a want of the requisite faculties to constitute man a responsible agent, it is not true that men are naturally unable to love God. They do possess all the requisite faculties; but very few men have so disciplined their minds to technical distinctions and theorising, as to carry along with the terms and their use this meaning. It ought not, for these reasons, to be used. In its technical and differently explained meanings, it is true, or it is false; but in its common appropriate meaning and use, it is altogether inapplicable to this case.

Now, if we say it is *moral* inability, the terms are quite as objectionable as the former. If I understand the term *moral*, it indicates something which is either holy or sinful, right or wrong. The inquiry should, therefore, be made in this place, what belongs to man of a moral nature, and why is it moral? Any thing which belongs to man, that is either sinful or holy, is moral, and nothing else, whether it be faculty, principle, or conduct. I would say the primary seat and source of all that is moral belonging to man, is in his heart. What, then, is moral power to love God? Several answers are given to this inquiry, besides the one which I have before given. Take one that some use, it is a heart prepared to love God and holiness; sinners have not this. But take another meaning, the possession of a faculty or faculties which are moral; and sinners surely have moral power to love God. I am unable to perceive why it is not just as proper to say that they



have moral, as natural ability, to change their hearts. It is said, in one case, if men have not natural faculties or power, they cannot be obliged to keep God's law—so it may, with equal propriety, be said, if men have not a moral faculty or power, they cannot be obliged to obey the moral statute. But I am aware, that moral ability is often understood to mean willingness; and great wisdom is affected in using the distinctive terms in question. On this supposition, I ask, why that, which, in the estimation of those who use the distinction, is considered the essence of obedience, should be called power of any kind, and in any sense? No good reason can be given. The truth seems to me, that those men who use the distinction of natural and moral in explaining the inability of sinners, are deceived, by transferring an association which belongs to external actions, and is true where it belongs, to mental affections, where it is not true; a transfer which will, therefore, always mislead.

It will now be asked, how can a sinner be blamed for not loving God? The answer to this question, will lead to a more definite view of the inability under discussion. Men are to blame for nothing except *sin*, and for that always. Now, whether sin be in action or principle, in the temper of the heart or in volition, it is the object of God's displeasure, and for it men are criminal. It is a specimen of the bad philosophy which is becoming prevalent in this age, that no being can act wrong unless he has ability to do right; and none can act right, unless he has ability to do wrong; all this is applied to mental operations as well as to external actions. But is not God always right and good, although he cannot err? Is not Satan sinful and blameable, although he cannot love holiness? Certainly. But if this principle may not

be applied to men, will not the guilt of the damned be greatly diminished, the moment they are placed beyond the impassable gulf? Are those of whom the prophet speaks, less criminal than others, because their habits of sin are as difficult to change as the Ethiopian's skin, and fixed as the leopard's spot? Are those comparatively innocent of whom the Apostle declares, "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance?"

The true account of the case is, the source of all human agency and ability is sinful, and must be changed by divine grace, or God will forever hate it, and punish men for its character and agency. Is it asked, how man can be blamed for sin, if he has not power to change that principle from which all his criminal agency proceeds? If I understand this question, it is precisely of the character of one proposed to Paul, "why doth he [God] yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" Although connected with the subject in a different aspect, it is the same inquiry. I might give the Apostle's rebuke with great propriety, "nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Here it would be proper to leave the inquiry, were it not that modern philosophy laughs at all authority, though it be divine, by which a question is settled without explanation. Let it be remembered then, that it is not the province of philosophy to explain *how* God's law reaches the heart and binds, but every man's conscience can testify the fact, and reproach him for his malice. If the question be, how man became thus sinful? let those who ask it, read the history of man's fall, in the third chapter of the book of Genesis, and Paul's account of the covenant relation and imputation, in his epistles to the Romans and Corinthians, for a solution of this question; and there we leave the inquirers.

Take another method of solving the difficulty. God has constituted his own perfections, which are holy, the standard of right and moral obligation. Every intelligent, free, responsible agent, tried by this standard, and found opposed to it, is an enemy of God. The rule shows him to be such, no matter what his power. His power is not estimated by this standard, but simply his moral character. Ability is not the basis or measure of responsibility in this case, but the faculties which constitute man a free, moral agent. I repeat again, to prevent all mistake, that I am now speaking of obligation to love God, not of external actions, where physical or natural power is employed, and for which a man is responsible, according to that which he has, and not according to that he has not. Man does not love God with his physical ability. He is responsible to God for the exercise of all his faculties; if they are wrongly employed, it proves the source of action is wrong; and the more depraved is that source of human agency, the worse is the character—the more criminal.

I recur now to the question, whether this doctrine is consistent with God's commands—or, in more explicit terms, has God a right to command men to love him, if they have not the ability to obey? I answer yes, most undoubtedly. Be it remembered that this refers not to external conduct, where physical power is employed, and concerning which it would not be true. A man who has no hand or foot cannot be rightfully commanded to use them. An idiot cannot be rightfully ordered to solve a mathematical problem, or an infant to calculate an eclipse. But what has all such ability to do with loving God? I speak now of God's command over the heart, and man's inability by nature to turn the affections to God. Let me here repeat, that

God does command men to love him, and at the same time says they cannot love him. Moreover it is right; because the only impediment in the way of their obedience is that sinful principle, which God condemns, and for which he will punish men. This fact and this reason of the righteousness in the command, show the character of the inability to be sin. Further we need not speculate.

The great question now recurs, what saith the Holy Ghost? After all the speculations on this subject, to explain its philosophy, the simple and very plain language of the Holy Scriptures is incomparably more satisfactory than all that philosophy ever can teach. Love to God is a fruit of the Spirit, so are all the Christian graces. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Salvation is all of grace, in its plan, developement and completion, "not of works—for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Regeneration is by the agency of the Holy Spirit—"according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost—born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God—born from above—transformed by renewing of the mind." Christians are thus challenged—"who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Christ said to his disciples, "without me ye can do nothing." Said the Apostle, "not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." What language, plain or figurative, could more explicitly declare man's inability without the Holy Spirit, than the Scriptures use again and again? It is twice stated in the chapter of my text—Elsewhere sinners are repre-



sented as “alienated from the life of God”—having a “carnal mind,” which “is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”—under the power of Satan—and of sin—dead in trespasses and sins—their hearts fully set in them to do evil.” Man’s deliverance from this spiritual death and servitude to sin and Satan, “is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” But quotations need not be further continued. Take all those very numerous passages of Scripture which ascribe to the Holy Spirit, as his fruits, the graces of piety—all those which ascribe regeneration to the same agency—all those which represent this change as a new creation—all those which represent the character and state of fallen men as dead in sin, under its dominion, lost, blind, enemies to God and helpless—all those prophecies, in which the figures of dry bones, sterility and the curse, are found—all those records of history, which describe the progress of the gospel and the conversion of men to God—and all those supplications, directions, facts, and promises, which indicate a reliance on Christ and the Holy Spirit for sanctification and salvation: then tell me if there can remain a doubt of man’s inability and crime.

What now are the *uses* to be made of this doctrine?

One very important use is to *humble* man before God. If men are so sinful that they cannot deliver themselves, either from its curse or from its dominion, they have reason to be humble. They have reason to be humbled under a sense of their sinfulness and their impotence. There are few things of which men are more inclined to be proud than of power. Children early discover a disposition to glory in their strength, or their capacity to accomplish what they

consider important. Men are naturally fond of power in all its relations and influence, and are prone to become vain in their imaginations, forgetting their sin and weakness before God. But when once they are taught this doctrine by the Holy Spirit, they are prostrated in the dust, and feel themselves at the disposal of sovereign mercy. The pride of man needs to be humbled for his own benefit; and God will have sinners humbled, that his own power may be manifested in them. "Whoso exalteth himself shall be abased."

2. Another *use* of the doctrine is to *convince men of sin*. So long as sinners perceive no danger, and feel confident in their ability to turn themselves to God at any time, they will not listen to the invitations of mercy, or care for the representations of their danger. No sinner will be likely to feel much anxiety for the salvation of his soul, while he considers it as depending on his own choice or ability. There is no truth, which the Holy Ghost more frequently and efficiently uses, to convince men of their sin and danger, than their lost, helpless condition by nature. The publican felt this when he cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." So fully does the Spirit convince men of their helplessness, when he draws them to Christ, that their cry is, "Lord save, or we perish;" and ever after they live and walk by faith, looking to Christ, in whom is their strength, and depending on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

The Spirit often teaches sinners their danger before he teaches them their helplessness; they look more at the sin of their conduct than the sin of their hearts. In such cases they commence an effort to make themselves better. They try expedient after expedient, confident that they can turn themselves to God. But under the teaching of the Spirit

they learn that they make themselves worse instead of better. Let a sinner perceive that he deserves endless misery and is in imminent danger of his soul—if he has, or think he has power, he will make exertion for his safety. But let him perceive that he is ready to sink into everlasting perdition, and feel that his sin renders him helpless, an agony of distress will fill his soul; and if Christ had not sent the Holy Spirit, despair would drink up his own spirit. Then he trusts in Christ, and is thus drawn by the blessed agency of the Holy Ghost.

But here it may possibly be asked, if this doctrine be not calculated to discourage sinners from seeking the Lord? I suppose it is possible for cavillers to pervert the truth, and even wrest it to their own destruction; but that it is calculated to discourage men from trusting in Christ and accepting salvation, as it is freely offered to them, I cannot admit. I know that some have said the doctrine is calculated to lead men to sit down quietly and wait God's time to save them, alleging, that if he do not save them, the fault will be in the Saviour, and not in themselves. This cavil never came from a sinner, deeply anxious for his soul's salvation. But if the objection were founded in fact, the influence would not be to quiet the feelings. Suppose a case, which, I think, may illustrate the influence of the sentiments intended in the objection. Were it announced to us, that the flames are encroaching upon this house, and that if we remain in it a few moments longer we must inevitably be consumed, and that we are unable to get out of the house: would we lie down and sleep? No, every bosom would be filled with wakeful agony. But to make the case somewhat parallel to the real situation of the sinner, we must suppose two things more—that our sinfulness alone disables

us from escaping, and that God is entreating us to accept his efficient and certain relief. Then if we should perish in the flame to night, would there not be crime as well as helplessness in our case? Would there not be a striking analogy in the feeling, likely to be excited in such a case, to the conviction of sinners taught of God? To my mind the analogy is easily traced.

2. It is again objected that this doctrine sets aside the use of means with impenitent sinners. To this I reply, in unqualified terms, that exactly the reverse is true. If the excellency of the power were of men, every thing would be confused, uncertain, and discouraging. But since it is of God, and not of men, we may hope for success, relying on his ability, which is constant and efficient to connect the means with the end. This is too plain to need further illustration.

3. It is further objected, that it is inconsistent and useless to exhort sinners to repent or perform any Christian duty, if this doctrine be true. I know it sounds very singular to some ears to hear such addresses to sinners as "look ye blind—hear ye deaf—awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." I doubt not many think such exhortations useless. But so it is, men are thus described and thus exhorted in the gospel of Christ; and who will undertake to say they are inconsistent? God has ordered us in the gospel commission to announce most distinctly the guilt, helplessness, and misery of sinners; and at the same time to exhort, entreat, and command them to repent. Our warrant is plain, and our prospect of success, in these announcements, rests on the mission of the Holy Spirit. When the voice of the Spirit accompanies the exhortation, sinners hear and come to

Christ. I have already shown the consistency of the doctrine with God's commands, and this rests on the same principle. But I must not longer dwell on this topic: let me say once for all, the human heart and human ingenuity have employed their utmost efforts to multiply and propagate objections and cavils against this doctrine. Here let a very strong fact be distinctly marked—one fixed and intelligent look within, upon the character of the heart as disclosed by the light and teaching of the Holy Ghost, disarms every objection, and prostrates the sinner in deep self-abasement, and covers him with shame, crying, “wo is me, for I am undone.” No cavil or objection can stand before a conscience enlightened by the Spirit of God.

A very important *use* of this doctrine is to lead Christians and ministers of the gospel to cultivate a sense of dependence on the special influence of the Holy Spirit, and pray for his agency. No matter how great man's physical power may be considered by others, Christians must feel their entire dependence on the Spirit's blessed agency, which alone can bring men to Christ, enlighten their minds and sanctify them for his service and glory. The more sensible men are of their helplessness and real necessity, the more they will pray for the grace of God. The doctrine tends to induce in Christians a more constant sense of responsibility under the gospel administration, where the Holy Ghost is sent to humble, enlighten, sanctify, and guide them in the knowledge of his will, and discharge of Christian duty. Dependence on the Spirit and responsibility go together. The whole gospel urges upon us this sense of dependence on the Holy Ghost. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us; and we cannot be too thoroughly impressed with the importance of relying



on this influence. Christians do not pray enough for this blessed agency; and too often they attempt the performance of duty with little or no sense of their dependence. This explains their frequent failure and the meagreness of their graces. While Paul recognized, fully, the truth of Christ's declaration, "without me ye can do nothing," his humble and confident reliance on the influence of the Holy Ghost, enabled him to say, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." It is not a sense of inability, which prevents Christians from growing in grace and fulfilling their obligations, but leaning upon their own understanding, and relying on their own strength.

Under the influence of this sentiment of dependence, and a view of the helpless condition of sinners, ministers of the gospel will be more likely to rely on the Spirit's influence, and pray for his agency to accompany their ministrations. They will keep the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's agency distinctly in their own and the view of others. It was a judicious remark of a sensible elder in the Church, "if ministers of the gospel would honour the Holy Ghost more in their preaching, the Holy Ghost would honour them."

One direct object of preaching the gospel is, to convince men of sin—of their lost, disabled, perilous condition under its influence—of the direct and certain consequence of sin, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. Another important object is, to convince or teach them of the righteousness, not only of the law which condemns them, but of Christ, by which alone they can be justified—to explain the scheme of salvation by Christ, and the principles of the administration

under which they are planned. This is to be done, "not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches." O how necessary that ministers of Christ should be deeply impressed with the sense of their dependence on this heavenly instruction and influence! They should go from their closet to the pulpit, to the family, and every parochial service. They should carry the case of sinners before the mercy seat, unite the conviction and conversion of their souls to the intercession of Jesus Christ, which alone can prevail, to send down the answer of peace.

One important practical question must close this protracted discussion. I propose it to every individual in this assembly. Is the agency of the Holy Spirit drawing you? If you feel inclined to seek the Lord, be sure the Spirit is striving with you. That some such inclinations are awakened here, I doubt not. Be cautious that you resist not the Holy Ghost. Recollect that you live under an administration in which this is the last agency employed for your salvation; resist this, and you must perish forever. Recollect that you live in a time greatly distinguished for the outpouring of this blessed influence. You take upon yourselves a fearful responsibility, if you resist the gracious influence. You may, for aught I know, have come very near to that point, when it shall be said of you as of Ephraim, "let him alone." How tremendous the prospect! How urgently should this caution be pressed upon your excited attention! And ye careless ones, remember that your carelessness costs you no small efforts to resist the Holy Spirit; and woe be to you, when you shall have succeeded effectually in quenching the Spirit.

Christian brethren! take heed that you grieve not the Holy Spirit of promise. Cherish his influence; live under his guidance; pray for his agency to convince and convert perishing sinners. May the Lord hear, answer, forgive bless, and save us all in Christ Jesus. Amen.







# SPRUCE STREET LECTURES.

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## LECTURE II.

*Delivered on the Evening of the 27th November, 1831, by the  
Rev. Jacob J. Janeway, D. D. of New York.*

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### THE FALL OF MAN AND ITS EFFECTS.

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ROM. v. 12.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

THE subject assigned for discussion this evening, is, "*the fall of man and its effects.*" The passage just read will bring both parts of the subject distinctly to view.

The inspired writer's chief design in this epistle is, to illustrate and establish that fundamental article of our holy religion, justification by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The necessity of this free and gracious method of justification, is founded on the sinful and guilty state of the human race. Having proved all mankind, Jews as well as Gentiles, to be in such a state, and under the curse of God's violated law, the Apostle deduces from his premises, this incontrovertible conclusion: "Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by

the law is the knowledge of sin.”\* He then proceeds immediately to exhibit the plan of infinite wisdom for delivering us from our fallen and helpless condition; showing how believers are “justified freely” by divine “grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;” or, in other words, “how God imputeth righteousness without works—to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.”†

To remove the prejudices of the Jews, and to reconcile them to the truth, he evinces that Abraham, their illustrious father, in whom they gloried, was justified, or made righteous, in this way; that he was thus justified while uncircumcised; that circumcision was designed for the purpose, not of introducing a new method of justification, but of confirming that by faith, and transmitting this inestimable blessing to every believer, whether Jew or Gentile, through the operation of that gracious covenant, in which Abraham was constituted father of the faithful, under Christian as well as under the Jewish dispensation.‡

Pursuing his design, the Apostle begins in the text the parallel he runs between Christ and Adam; and by showing that as all mankind fell, by the offence of their common progenitor, into a state of sin, guilt, and condemnation, so all who believe are restored, by the obedience of Christ, to a state of righteousness, peace, and acceptance with God; and then he establishes the adaptation of this gracious plan to the case of all men; and, consequently, proves the Jews to need its relief as really as the uncircumcised Gentiles.

The text contemplates the fall of the first man, and the fall of his posterity. Both parts of our subject are included

\* Rom. iii. 20.

† Rom. iv. 5, 6.

‡ Rom. iv. 9, 17.

in its terms, and to both I invite your serious and unprejudiced attention.

I. *The fall of the first man.*

Adam, it is well known, was created in a holy and happy state. As his body was brought into existence in a mature condition, capable of performing all the operations of a full grown man; so his soul was created in a corresponding state of maturity, with all its noble faculties fully developed, and fitted for all the diversified acts of intellect, volition, and affection. The knowledge he displayed of the marriage relation, the facility with which he imposed appropriate names on all the animals brought to him for the purpose, and the intelligent intercourse he enjoyed with his Creator, furnish clear proofs of his having been created in a state of mental maturity.

Besides, we are distinctly informed by the sacred historian, that Adam was created “in the *image* of God, after his *likeness*;”\* and by an inspired Apostle, we are taught that the image of God denotes especially knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.† “Lo, this only have I found, that God made man (Adam) upright; but they have sought out many inventions.‡

That our first parent possessed as distinct a knowledge of God, of himself, of his relations, and of his duties, as his state of probation required, is clear. His heart was as pure as his mind was enlightened. The volitions of his holy will accorded entirely with the dictates of his perfect judgment. He loved his Creator as fervently as duty demanded; and he was fully inclined to render all the acts

\* Gen. i. 26, 27.

† Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24.

‡ Eccles. vii. 29.

of homage and obedience prescribed by the law. In a word, he was entirely free from every moral defect, and was what his Maker required him to be.

Created in this state of intelligence, purity, and holiness, Adam was perfectly happy, enjoying not only the pleasures of that delightful garden in which he was placed, and intercourse with that rational and unequalled female companion whom the bounty of his Creator had given him; but also, and chiefly, the smiles and communion of his Maker. In his garden he walked, the admiration of angels and the envy of devils, lord of this, and heir to a better world.

With this highly gifted creature, the Most High condescended to enter into a covenant, in which life was promised as the reward of obedience, and death threatened as the penalty of disobedience. It is worthy of remark, that in every age, God has regulated his dealings with men by covenant engagements. He established a covenant with Noah and his descendants; with Abraham and his seed; with David and his offspring; with Phineas and his children; and ought any to be surprised, when it is affirmed that God made a covenant with the parent of our race? In the brief history given of him by Moses, we discern all that belongs to a covenant; the parties, the stipulations, the promise, the threatening, the seal, and the assent. And when it is recollected, that a covenant was established with Christ, the head of the new creation, the second Adam, can it be doubted that a covenant was established with him who was his type, the head of the old creation, the first Adam? Reproving his ancient people, the Lord says, by his prophet Hosea, "They, like men," (*Adam*

in the original) "they, like *Adam*, have transgressed the covenant."\*

This covenant was not only just and equitable, but also gracious. Adam was endowed with ample powers to perform its condition, and thus secure the promised reward. By the positive precept annexed to the moral law, his obedience seems to have been so concentrated to one point, that here alone danger of failing was to be apprehended; and had he duly guarded himself in this quarter, he would probably have been safe in every other point. Besides, his trial, which, without this covenant arrangement, would have been indefinitely extended as to time, was reduced to a very brief term, that would not probably have lasted longer than the fruit he was forbidden to eat.

But this noble creature, adorned as he was with the moral image of God, honoured with his smiles and communion, and aspiring after a higher state of being, fell from that holy and happy condition, in which he had been placed by the munificence of his Creator. The circumstances of this most deplorable apostacy are briefly stated by the inspired penman. Through the agency of Eve, whom, when alone, he had previously and successfully tempted, Satan, the great enemy both of God and man, prevailed with our common parent to violate the covenant made with him, by eating the forbidden fruit.†

How sin could gain admission into the minds of our first parents, who had been created perfectly holy, or how it gained an entrance into the holy minds of angels, and converted them into fiends of darkness, I do not undertake to explain. It is a deep, unfathomable mystery,

\* Hosea, vi. 7.

† Gen. iii. 1, 6.



which God has not revealed. I content myself with stating the fact, and the circumstances that are revealed.

Dreadful were the effects of the first man's apostacy. Conviction of guilt made him sensible of his nakedness, and filled him with shame. Conscious of ill-desert, that voice, which was before music to his ear, and awakened in his breast no emotions but those of delight, now inspired him with terror, that prompted the vain attempt of hiding himself from an omnipresent and omniscient Being, among the trees of the garden. At the command of his Judge, the culprit is compelled to appear. Convicted of having violated the covenant, sentence is pronounced on him. The ground is cursed with barrenness on his account. He is doomed to labour and toil, and to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and in sorrow of heart. Sentence of death was passed on him: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Deprived of that divine image in which he was created, he became totally depraved, dead in trespasses and sin, and alienated from the life of God; and had it not been for the wonderful interposition of divine grace in his favour, through the promised seed, the calamities of his earthly life would have been succeeded by the bitter pangs of eternal death. Our great progenitor, stained most deeply as he was with the guilt of a ruined world, was, we hope, selected to be the first triumph of that rich grace, of which it is recorded, "That where sin abounded, grace might much more abound."

II. *Having contemplated the fall of the first man, let us now contemplate the fall of his posterity.*

The connexion between the apostacy of Adam and the apostacy of his children, is a subject worthy of our serious

and devout investigation; a subject that has been frequently discussed, and in their views of which Christian divines differ widely.

Some boldly affirm, we have nothing to do with Adam's first sin. It was his, not ours. We are not at all responsible for it. *We* did not eat the forbidden fruit; *we* had no existence when our common father fell. The imputation of his sin is a novel doctrine, a mere fable.\*

\*In the first number of the 2d vol. of "the Biblical Repertory and Theological Review," edited at Princeton, N. J. p. 77, will be found a valuable paper, entitled "THE EARLY HISTORY OF PELAGIANISM." In that paper, the writer traces up the belief of the *imputation of Adam's sin* to the days of Augustin, who flourished in the fifth century, and shows that it was then regarded as a doctrine that had always been commonly received in the Church.

That the Jews were familiar with the doctrine of *imputed* sin, is perfectly manifest from the sacrificial system, in which it was daily held up to their view, and especially on the great day of atonement. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the *iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sin*, PUTTING THEM *upon the head of the goat*, and shall send him away by a fit man into the wilderness; and the *goat shall BEAR upon him ALL THEIR INIQUITIES* unto a land not inhabited." *Lev. xvi. 21, 22.*

In the conclusion of *Edwards'* discourse on original sin, will be found a number of extracts to show, that "there is a great deal of reason, from the ancient Jewish writers, to suppose, that the doctrine of original sin had even been allowed in the open profession of that people." In that taken from *2 Esd. iii. 21*, who wrote before the Saviour's birth, are contained these remarkable words, which looks very like an acquaintance with the doctrine of imputation: "O thou Adam, what hast thou done! For though it was thou that sinned, *thou art not fallen alone, but we all that come of thee.*" Still more to our point is the language of another ancient Jewish writer, who lived after Christ's appearing: "It is no wonder that the sin of Adam and Eve is written and sealed with the king's ring, and to be propagated to all following generations; because on the day that Adam was created, all things were finished, so that he stood forth the perfection and completion of the whole

It is perfectly easy to make such assertions; but they are reconcileable neither with the language of Moses, nor with the language of those theologians who utter them. How obvious is it to any one who attentively examines the inspired history of the fall, that the Judge of all the earth had, in passing sentence on the offending pair, respect to all their descendants? That all mothers participate in the peculiar sorrows of their mother Eve, is undeniable; and alike incontestable is it, that all men are doomed to the toil and sorrow to which Adam was sentenced. If we had nothing to do with the first sin of Adam, why are we included in the sentence pronounced on account of it? Why was the entire constitution of nature changed for its punishment? And why did the curse of barrenness descend, not only on Eden, Adam's residence, but on the whole earth?

Equally irreconcilable are these assertions with the language used by those Christian divines who utter them, when speaking on the subject. That "Adam was our federal head and representative," and that he "was not on trial for himself alone," is admitted by them. They also teach "that by a *divine constitution*, all his descendants were to have, in their natural state, the same character and condition with their progenitor;" and that "the universality and certainty of sin, therefore, are not the result of imita-

workmanship of the world; so that when *he* sinned, the *whole world* SINNED; whose *sin* we BEAR and SUFFER. But the matter is not thus with respect to the sins of his posterity." How clear and decided this language!

From this, we may learn how valuable are the recent discoveries in theological science. A doctrine that has been taught in the Christian Church in every age, and in the Jewish Church before the advent of our blessed Lord, has, in this age of discovery, been found out to be a *novel doctrine*!

tion or accidental circumstances, but of a *divine constitution*." Who can reconcile such conflicting statements?

We have nothing to do with Adam's sin; and yet we are, in consequence of it, born under a divine constitution that renders the sinning of every one of his natural descendants *certain* and *inevitable*! We are not at all responsible for Adam's sin; and yet, on account of it, we are delivered up to the *certainty* of SINNING! Is not this a terrible punishment? If these opposite statements can be reconciled, I confess it to be above my comprehension.

The fall of the first man, and the fall of his posterity, we believe to be inseparably connected. To the scriptural statement of your Shorter Catechism, we cordially subscribe: "The covenant being made with *Adam*, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression." By this is not meant that we, with our own hands, actually plucked the forbidden fruit from the tree, and eat it with our own mouths; nor that we had, at the time of Adam's fall, a real existence so as to be capable of *personally* sinning; nor that we constituted with our first parent *one natural person*, so that his sin was one *actual* and *personal* sin. Nothing of this kind is intended. Our brethren know it, or ought to know it.

But we mean, that as Adam was, by the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, in that covenant he condescended to make with him, appointed our *federal head and representative*, his act was, in this sense, regarded as our act; and we are justly viewed as having sinned in him, our representative, and as being rendered guilty in the sight of God, by his first transgression. His sin is imputed to us, not on

the ground of our relation to Adam as our common father, but on the ground of the relation we sustain to him as our *covenant representative*. The former relation constituted indeed a proper foundation on which to establish the latter relation; but it by no means follows, that we are justly chargeable with the offence of Adam, because we are his children; for then all his sins ought to be imputed to us, contrary to the doctrine of Scripture, which plainly teaches us, that we are held responsible for his first sin alone.

The principle of *imputation* is interwoven with the very texture of human affairs. Remove it, and the wheels of civil government would cease to revolve, confusion would prostrate the fair edifice of civil society. "*Qui facit per alium, facit per se*," is a Latin maxim familiar to every student of law, which may be rendered in English thus: "he who does any thing by another person, is justly considered as having done it himself." Who does not know that the act of an attorney is the act of his principal; that the act of an agent is the act of his employer; that the act of a representative is the act of his constituents; and that the act of an ambassador is the act of his government? In this State, the people make all their own laws, not by a *personal* attendance at the seat of government, but by sending thither a few individuals chosen by them, and invested with power to deliberate and act in their name.

Now, in all these cases, the principle of *imputation* is applied, so that the personal acts of certain individuals are, for *particular purposes*, and to a *definite extent*, reported to be the acts of other individuals by whom they are not *personally* done.



Precisely similar is our meaning, when we affirm that all mankind sinned in Adam. We do not say they sinned *personally* or *actually*, but *virtually, federally, representatively*. Jehovah, who determined to try the whole race of men in their first parent, and who, for this purpose, was pleased, in his infinite wisdom, to appoint him their federal head and representative to act for them, justly imputes his first sin, by which the covenant was violated, to them, as if it had been committed by them, holds them responsible for it, and subjects them to its threatened punishment.

This is our meaning, this the doctrine of your Church, and this is the doctrine of the Bible. But it is contested, and must be proved.

My hearers, if it can be proved, from clear scriptural testimonies, that all the natural descendants of Adam are condemned on account of his first sin—that they are all subject to its threatened penalty, and would have to endure it, in its whole extent, were it not for the interposition of divine grace—that infants are condemned and actually die for this sin—that all men receive from Adam a depraved nature—and that the inspired writer tells us, almost in so many words, that all men sinned in Adam; if all these arguments can be fairly made out, then, surely, the great truth we wish to prove will be fully and firmly established.

It will be seen that in this argument I do not address infidels, who reject the authority of the Holy Scriptures. The truth under consideration is matter of pure revelation, and, of course, the arguments to prove it, must be drawn from the Scriptures, and they will have weight only with those who are willing to submit their faith to the testimony

of God speaking in his word. Such I address; and, while urging my proofs, I could wish my hearers had their Bibles in their hands, and were looking carefully at the latter part of the chapter containing my text. That portion of divine revelation will, in connexion with a few other passages elsewhere recorded, furnish ample and decisive evidence of the important truth to be established by the arguments which have just been stated, and which we now proceed to illustrate and urge.

1. All the natural descendants of Adam are *condemned* on account of his first sin.

With so much plainness is this fact taught, that it seems surprising how any professing Christians can deny it. In the 15th v. we read these words: “for if through the *offence* of *one* many be dead;” that is *legally*, by a sentence of death passed upon them: in the 16th v. “for the *judgment* was *by one* to CONDEMNATION:” and in the 18th v. “by the *offence* of *ONE judgment* came upon all to CONDEMNATION.” Plainer language than this could not be used to teach us, that we are *judicially condemned* on account of Adam’s first sin. Were you to enter a court of justice, and hear a judge solemnly pronounce sentence of death on a human being for some crime, you would immediately conclude he was guilty, and deserved to die: and when, led by sacred Scripture, you enter the court of heaven, and hear the Judge of all the earth solemnly pronounce sentence of death on all men for Adam’s first sin, can you hesitate to believe, that they are guilty; that they are justly chargeable with it; and that in some way they have committed it, or, in other words, have sinned in Adam, their great representative? Surely a just and holy God would

not lay this sin so to their charge, as to condemn them for it, if it were not theirs in a just and legal sense.

2. All men are actually subject to the *penalty* due to Adam's sin, and would have to endure it, in *all its extent*, were it not for the merciful interposition of divine grace in favour of some.

This follows as an indisputable inference from the argument just closed; for if men are condemned for Adam's sin, they must certainly be subject to its penalty; because sentence of condemnation always expresses the punishment due to the transgression. "And so death," affirms the Apostle in the text, "passed upon all men; for that all have sinned." Again, in the 14th v. he says, "Nevertheless *death* REIGNED from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Death has reigned from the days of Moses to the present time; and death, "*the wages of sin*," will continue to reign over unborn generations, as they shall come successively into existence, till the end of time. And death, in its more terrible forms, will reign over millions of our race, and would thus reign over every son and daughter of our fallen parents, were it not for that rich "grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Contemplate, my hearers, this universal reign of death; look at the immeasurable triumph he has gained in this fallen world; behold the desolations he has made in the earth, the generations he has trodden in the dust: and when you reflect that he received his commission thus to reign and triumph over men, on account of the sin of Adam, can you doubt that we have a deep interest in that sin? If it were not justly imputed to us, why should the

penalty be inflicted on us; and that too in execution of a formal sentence of condemnation passed on us, by the righteous Judge, for this very sin? We might suffer much in consequence of the sins of others, and yet be entirely free from the guilt of them; but it is not possible, that we should be condemned for Adam's sin by the Almighty, and endure the penalty, and yet be entirely free from its guilt.

3. Infants are condemned, and actually die, for ADAM'S SIN.

Their case is worthy of attentive consideration. Contemplate the manner in which they enter this fallen world. How are they born? Not in ease and pleasure; not amid smiles and joy; but in pain and sorrow. They come crying into the world; and often perish on the very threshold of life. How is this to be accounted for? Pain and sorrow are the penal consequences of sin; but why are infants, before they are chargeable with any actual sin, subject to these penal evils? Why does a good and righteous God treat them as *sinner*s, if they are in no sense sinners? Why are they brought to the grave by severe pains and convulsive agonies? What multitudes of infants perished in the general deluge? How many suffered in the conflagrations of Sodom and Gomorrah, those wicked cities which an angry God consumed with fire and brimstone? What immense numbers have, in successive generations of men, perished by disease and different calamities?

If infants are not fallen creatures; if they are in no sense sinners; this procedure of divine providence cannot be explained and vindicated. But admit that they are fallen creatures, who have sinned in Adam, their federal head and representative, and, therefore, justly subject to the

penal consequences of sin; and then the question is solved; the difficulty pressing on this fact of God's moral government over the world, is removed. We see the reason why infants, whose mental powers are not sufficiently developed to make them moral agents, are treated as sinners, and subjected often to great pain and agony.

Speaking of infants, the Apostle says, in the 14th v. that they "have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression;" but he does not assert that they have not sinned at all; for his argument is designed to prove, that, although they have not sinned *personally*, yet they have sinned in their covenant-head; because, if this were not the fact, divine providence would not mark them out as sinners, by subjecting them to the dominion of death, the penalty of sin. "*By one man's disobedience,*" he tells us in the 19th v., "*many were MADE SINNERS.*"

4. All men derive from Adam a *corrupt moral nature*.

How depravity is transmitted from the parent of our race, through each successive generation of men, I shall not undertake to explain. Sacred Scripture is silent on this point; and it were pretending to be wise above what is written, to attempt an explanation. The *particular mode* appears to be beyond the reach of human intellect. But the fact is revealed, and ought to be believed.

That all men are sinners; that no man, save Jesus Christ, our immaculate Lord, was ever perfectly free from sin, since our first parent's apostacy; might be very easily evinced. Scripture, history, and observation, furnish incontestible evidence. Our race is universally depraved; and how is this universal depravity of mankind to be accounted for? Neither education, nor imitation will ex-



plain the awful fact; for we see this depravity corrupting minds that, from infancy, have been blest with the influence of the best education, and watched over with the greatest care that parental affection and anxiety could afford; and sometimes breaking down, in its mad career, the strongest barriers raised for the purpose of restraining and checking its ruinous progress: and we see it displaying its hateful aspect in children, before they are capable of being influenced by example.

This wide spreading flood of iniquity, which bears along the whole human race, must be traced to some common source. Depravity first polluted Adam; and it has ever since come down from father to son, as a sad inheritance. The language of our Saviour proves this: "That which is born of the *flesh* is FLESH;"\* corrupt, depraved, sinful. "Except a man be born again;" receive, by spiritual birth, a new and holy nature, as he received a depraved nature from his first and natural birth; "he cannot see the kingdom of God."† The lamentation of David proves this: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."‡ Other testimonies of inspiration prove this: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of his thoughts was *only evil continually*."§ Speaking of Seth, Moses says, "Adam begat a son in *his own* likeness, after his image;"|| not in the image of God, which was impressed on his soul when first created; but in that deformed likeness to fallen spirits, which he contracted by his disobedience to his Creator. His posterity, like himself, are

\* John viii. 6.

† Job iii. 3.

‡ Ps. li. 5.

§ Gen. vi. 5.

|| Gen. v. 3.

deprived of original righteousness; despoiled of those splendid endowments of a holy nature, with which he was adorned by his Maker; abandoned to the dominion of a corrupt heart, and dead in trespasses and sin.

But if we have nothing to do with Adam's sin, why are we born with a corrupt nature? To be thus degraded; thus deprived of the divine image; thus alienated from the life of God; is surely a severe punishment. But for what but the imputed sin of Adam can this punishment be inflicted? Were we free from the guilt of this sin, surely we should enter this world in a very different way, and be born with a very different nature; we should come forth robed, as our first parents were, with the glorious image of God, and exhibit, as they did, holy desires and obedient acts in the commencement of our moral agency. But how different is this from the fact! Our very first desires are sinful, and our first acts disobedient. The manner in which we are born, and the nature we bring with us into the world, can be accounted for, only by admitting that we are guilty of Adam's sin. The belief of this revealed truth sheds light upon the conduct of divine providence; and it explains to us why inspiration affirms, "we are by NATURE (mark the expression) by NATURE *the children of wrath*;"\* born under the righteous displeasure of the Almighty. The reason is, all the children of Adam have become sinners through his fall. Jehovah views all who descend naturally from his loins, as such; and, therefore, justly withholds from them those original gifts of his bounty with which he had beautified his nature, and abandons them to that wretched servitude to sin which they have wickedly chosen.†

\* Ephes. ii. 3.

† A recent writer, in his "views of theology," insists that Calvinistic

5. The Scriptures teach us, *almost in so many words*, that all have sinned in Adam.

These identical terms, in this precise arrangement, are not, we acknowledge, to be found in Scripture; but the language of the Apostle is, in our opinion, entirely equivalent, and a near approximation to them.

“By one man,” says the inspired writer, “sin entered into the world.” That by the term *world* we are to understand its inhabitants, and not the earth itself, will hardly be disputed; and consequently it must be admitted, that the Apostle affirms that sin entered among the inhabitants of this earth by *one man*. To ascertain the meaning of this affirmation it will be necessary to determine the sin of which the inspired penman is speaking. The context defines it to be “the offence by which many are dead;” the offence by which “judgment was by one to condem-

authors teach the doctrine of *physical* depravity; that is, that it belongs to the *essence* of the soul. He knows, and admits, that they disclaim the doctrine; yet he will have it that they do in reality teach it. But after all the extracts he gives in proof of his assertion, and all his reasoning, it amounts to no more than the inference he chooses to draw from their language. By the same process it might be proved, that the inspired writers themselves teach *physical* depravity; for they use, on this subject, language as strong as that of the Calvinistic writers he cites, and as liable to a perverted construction. Indeed, if he were to write a treatise on the *nature* and *faculties* of the soul, it would be no difficult thing to prove, by the same process of reasoning, that he taught the doctrine of *materiality*; because, in speaking of the soul, he would necessarily use terms that primarily belonged to *material* things.

Both holiness and depravity are *separable* from the soul. Man was holy, and he is now depraved. Man is now depraved, and, by divine grace, he may become perfectly holy. What is thus separable from the soul, cannot belong to its *essence*; because the soul is a *spiritual indivisible* substance. Consequently there can be no such thing as *physical depravity*, or *physical holiness*, in the sense in which this writer uses these terms.

nation ;” the “one man’s offence,” by which death reigned; “the offence of one,” by which “judgment came upon all men to condemnation.”\*

Now, the sin thus characterized cannot be merely Adam’s *personal* sin; because this, although it brought on him judgment and death, did not affect his descendants, but terminated, in its penal effects, on himself. It must be a sin, which, in some sense, is their sin; for it is not possible the world should be subject to the penal consequences of a sin in which they had no concern, and from the guilt of which they were entirely free. Yet the Apostle tells us expressly it was the sin of one man, Adam. But how could his sin be the sin of his descendants, in any other way than by its being imputed to them, because committed by their representative? Such Adam was; and consequently it was just in God to subject them to condemnation and death, for the sin of one by whom they were to stand or fall.

The distinction made between Adam’s *personal* sin and the sin committed by him as his children’s *representative*, in reference to *one* and the *same* act, may be thus illustrated. Suppose a parent, by his last will and testament, bequeathes to a son a portion of his estate in *fee simple*, and bequeaths the other portions, intended for the use of his other children, to this son as *trustee*. In reference to the estate, such a man would act in a twofold capacity; by *personal* act, and in a *representative* character. By a *personal* act he would bind his own interest in the estate; and by his act as *trustee* he would bind the interest of his relatives. Or, by *one* and the *same* act, by signing his name to a paper drawn up for the purpose, he might bind

\* Rom. v. 15—18.

both his own interest and that of those whom he represented. In this case, one act would be viewed in a twofold light, as a *personal* act, and as the act of a *trustee*, or the act of his *relatives*. So it was with Adam. In the covenant he acted both for himself and for his posterity whom he represented; and, consequently, the sin by which he violated the covenant was both a *personal* sin and the sin of a *representative*. As *personal* it affected only himself; but as *representative* it affected all his natural descendants, and was, by a *legal imputation*, their sin.

Now, I ask, if we are taught all this by the Apostle, is it not equivalent to his saying that all men have sinned in Adam?

But in the close of the text, we find a nearer approximation to this phrase; for there these words are written: "for that all have sinned." What is the meaning of this declaration? In the Apostle's argument we shall find it. He had affirmed that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" and he subjoins this declaration, as a proof that the sentence of death passed on all men was just. Does he mean, then, to tell us that all men have committed actual sin, and therefore deserve to die. We apprehend not; because this would render his argument illogical and inconclusive. He had spoken of Adam's sin, and the declaration under consideration is brought as a proof of the justice of a sentence of death passed on all men for that sin. But, if it refer to their actual sins, while it would be a proper reason to assign for a sentence of death on their account, it would furnish no proof at all of the justice of the sentence of death passed on them for Adam's sin.

If then this meaning be excluded; if it do not refer to man's actual sin; to what can it refer, but to their sin in



Adam as their representative? His meaning then is, that "all have sinned" in the "one man by whom sin entered into the world." This makes his argument perfectly logical and conclusive; for if all have sinned in Adam, then all deserve to die for his first sin.

That this interpretation is correct, will further appear, from considering that infants must be included in the universal term *all* in the declaration: for undoubtedly when the Apostle assigns the fact, that "all have sinned," in justification of the sentence of death passed upon all men, he must refer to *infants*, as well as adults; because the sentence is passed upon them also, and "death reigns over" them. Infants, then, have sinned. But how? Not *personally*; for they are not capable of moral action: yet an inspired Apostle affirms infants have sinned. This can be true only by their sinning in Adam, their representative.

I am aware that some interpret the declaration to which we have endeavoured to assign a true and consistent meaning, as referring to native depravity. But to this interpretation the same insuperable objection will apply, that was urged against referring it to man's actual sins. It renders the Apostle's argument illogical and unworthy of the pen of an inspired writer; because the native depravity of infants and adults cannot, with any propriety, be offered as a proof of the justice of a sentence of death passed upon all men for *Adam's sin*. No proof can sustain it but that which the Apostle presents—the fact that "all," both infants and adults, "have sinned," in their *covenant representative*.

Let it be further remarked, that the phrase translated, "for that all have sinned," may be rendered, "In whom all have sinned." This translation is contended for by

good Greek scholars; and they bring sufficient proof that the two original terms may properly be so rendered as to establish this translation.

In view of all that has been said under this argument, I leave it with my hearers to decide, whether the Apostle does not teach, *nearly in so many words*, that ALL MEN HAVE SINNED IN ADAM?

Review, my hearers, the arguments which have been illustrated and urged. All the natural descendants of Adam are condemned for his first sin:—All are subject to its penalty, and would have to endure it, in all its extent, were it not for the merciful interposition of divine grace in favour of some:—Infants are condemned, and actually die for this sin:—All men derive from Adam a corrupt moral nature:—And Scripture teaches us, nearly in so many words, that all men have sinned in Adam. Can more proof be required? Is not this enough to satisfy us, that Jehovah has revealed the fact, that he does *impute to us the guilt of Adam's first sin*; and that he regards us as *having fallen and sinned in him, our great representative*?

Two objections to this doctrine merit notice: and, in opposition to them, I shall endeavour to show, that the covenant-arrangement of infinite wisdom, which has resulted in an event so calamitous, was both *just* and *good*.

Its *justice* is strongly contested. Where, it is demanded, where is the justice of a procedure that holds us responsible for a sin we did not commit; and that appointed Adam to be our representative, before we had existence to consent to such an arrangement?

The latter part of this objection is based on the supposition, that our *consent* was necessary to bring us under the operation of the covenant. But such a supposition is

incompatible with the supreme authority of God Almighty. An earthly parent can impose duties on a child, and subject him to the authority of a teacher with whom he covenants for his instruction, not only without his consent, but in opposition to his inclination. Can it then be believed, that it was necessary for our Creator to ask our consent, before he could include us in that covenant which he condescended to make with Adam? He did not ask our consent to be created. In the full exercise of his adorable sovereignty, he selected the time for giving us existence, determined the place and circumstances of our birth, and designed the parents from whom we should descend, without deigning to consult us, or to ask our consent; and could not the same sovereign Lord of all comprehend us in a covenant affecting our interests, without stooping so low as to ask us whether we were willing to abide by such an arrangement of infinite wisdom? The seal of his covenant was impressed on many of you who compose this audience, when, in obedience to his will, your parents presented you in baptism. You were then incapable of understanding the meaning of the Christian rite, or of yielding your consent; yet, by the surrender of your parents, you were bound, when arrived at an age to understand the subject, to accede to the terms of the covenant, and to devote yourselves personally to the adorable Three, in whose name you were baptized. If, then, Jehovah had a right to bring you, without your consent, within the Christian covenant, and to impose its obligation on you—a transaction which may, through your unbelief, result in fatal consequences—can it be doubted that *He*, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, had a right to make all whom he determined should descend naturally from the first pair of human beings, parties in that gracious covenant, which his infinite wisdom deemed

proper to establish between himself and our common parent?

When God proposed the covenant to Adam, it is plain *he* could not refuse to accede to it without sin. The perfections of his Creator were a sufficient pledge that the proposal was just, equitable, and good; and the dependance of man on him, and his infinite obligations to him for his existence and faculties, made it his duty instantly and without inquiry, to embrace the offer with adoring gratitude. The proofs, then, that the covenant was just, are to be found, not in the fact that Adam acceded to it, but in its very nature, and in the infinite rectitude of the Supreme Being who devised it. And to the same sources are we to look for proofs of the justice of the covenant transaction, in reference to his posterity. The justice and equity of the covenant did not depend on the consent of the first man. It was inherently just and equitable, before his consent was obtained. Nor did the justice and equity of it depend at all upon the consent of his offspring. So just and equitable was it in its provisions, requirements, responsibilities, promises, and threatenings, that had we all been in existence at the time, and it had been proposed to us by our Creator, to entrust our vital interests in the hands of our first parent to act as our representative, we could not have declined the proposal, without dishonouring his infinite wisdom, and opposing his sovereign and righteous will.

As the justice, so the *goodness*, of this dispensation of divine providence, is questioned and denied.

Had the result of Adam's trial been different; had he, by his obedience, merited for himself and his posterity eternal life, none would have complained; all would have rejoiced in the benefits secured to them. But the result was unfortunate and calamitous. Adam fell by transgres-

sion, and involved all his children in the wide-spreading ruin; and now, many of them murmur and complain about the consequences.

How unreasonable such conduct! The goodness of God in this transaction, is not to be determined by the result of man's trial, but by the nature of the covenant, and by the endowments of his new made creature. Had man full ability to perform the required obedience? Was the threatening just, and the promised reward glorious? These are the questions to be asked, in relation to the goodness of God in this most interesting transaction. And who that understands the subject, can hesitate a moment, in giving an affirmative answer to the inquiries?

The covenant, then, was good, before the apostacy of man; and if it was good *then*, its goodness could not be affected by the unreasonable and inexcusable conduct of Adam, in violating its precepts, and thus ruining himself and his unborn race. How extravagant would it be in a criminal, suffering justly the penalty due to his offence, to complain of the severity of an administration that would have rejoiced to protect and favour him, if he had been obedient to the laws. If, then, the goodness of this covenant transaction, in reference to Adam, was not affected by the fatal result of his trial, the goodness of it in reference to his posterity, could not be affected by the same unhappy event. That the covenant, in its application to our first father, was good, has been shown; and none, it is presumed, will venture to deny it. This being admitted, it can never be proved to be otherwise than good, in its application to his offspring; because the same reasons that establish the one, can, with equal force, be urged to prove the other.



Besides, it ought to be considered, that this covenant dispensation was peculiarly kind in respect to Adam's children. He, in the mature state of his mental faculties, and with his glorious endowments, was unquestionably far better qualified for the trial, than any of his children could have been, who are brought into existence in an infantile state, and who must live some years before their faculties can be developed and matured. He had stronger motives to bind him to obedience than any other man could have had; for he knew that he was constituted the acting representative of all his posterity, and that their highest interests, as well as his own, depended on his compliance with the divine will. Had we all been in existence when God established his covenant with our common parent, we would, most cordially, have consented to his appointment as our federal head and covenant representative, and would have believed our interests to be more secure in his hands than they would have been in our own. The covenant therefore was "holy, just, and good."

Several appropriate reflections might be subjoined to this discussion. But neither our time, nor your patience will grant the necessary indulgence. I forbear to trespass. Yet one reflection must not be omitted. It is this: how grateful should we be to God for the gracious and glorious provision which his infinite wisdom and mercy have made, for our recovery from a state of sin, guilt, and misery!

By the first Adam we fell; by the second Adam we rise. The same principle, which, in the covenant of works, resulted in our ruin, applied to the covenant of grace, affects our salvation. Adam, our representative in the former, sinned, and thus destroyed the hopes of the world; but Christ, the Lord of glory, the representative of his

people, in the latter, by yielding the required satisfaction for sin, and by performing most perfectly the demanded obedience, saves from sin, and death, and hell, and leads to everlasting happiness and glory, all the millions of our fallen race, who believe in him. Our first parent was overcome by Satan in a garden of delights; but Christ, our Lord, foiled him in a wilderness, combatted him amidst poverty, sorrow, and persecution, and finally triumphed over him on his cross.

The intelligent reader of our chapter cannot fail to notice the parallel which the inspired writer runs between Christ and Adam, and how he shows that, as by the disobedience of the latter we were made sinners, so, by the obedience of the former, we may be made righteous; and that the grace of God, through his Son, triumphs, not only over the first sin of Adam imputed to us, but over our numberless and aggravated personal transgressions, and secures to us eternal life. And this parallel might be urged, as an additional proof of the truth contended for this evening.

Believe it then, my dear hearers; it is not, as some imagine and represent it, an unimportant doctrine. On the contrary, it is highly important, particularly in its bearing upon another doctrine of deep and vital interest in the Christian system. Deny the imputation of Adam's sin, and then, to be consistent, you must discard from your creed the *imputation of Christ's righteousness* to believers, for their justification before God; a doctrine which, in the opinion of the great reformer Luther, was of paramount importance in the religion of sinners. Indeed, it is vital; for although a man may, through prejudice of education, disbelieve this doctrine, and be saved, yet it is true, that no sinner ever was or will be conducted from this

fallen world to heaven, without the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Believing, then, our fall in Adam, confess before God, that for his first transgression, as well as for your personal sins, you are justly condemned. Both classes of offence, original as well as actual, should be regarded as proper causes for shame and humiliation in the presence of infinite purity. Bewail, therefore, at the throne of grace, your fall in Adam, and that deeper ruin into which you have plunged yourselves, by your numberless and aggravated personal transgressions. But despair not; mercy reigns and triumphs. In the second Adam, there is life for the dead. "I am the resurrection and the life," said Jesus to Martha; "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." Delightful truth! Joyful news! Let us bless and praise God for the wonderful provisions of his infinite wisdom and mercy, by which the ruins of man's apostacy are repaired, the lost recovered, rebels pardoned, the guilty justified, sinners saved, hell-deserving wretches glorified, and the prisoners of justice exalted from the prison house to thrones in heaven, and changed into companions for angels, who never fell, but always retained their first and holy estate. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Amen.

\* John, iii. 16. 1 Cor. xv. 24—26.

# SPRUCE STREET LECTURES.

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## LECTURE III.

*Delivered on the Evening of the 25th December, 1831, by the  
Rev. Samuel B. Howe, D. D. of Carlisle.*

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### THE USE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE.

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“Strive to enter in at the strait gate.”—*Luke xiii. 24.*

THE importance of genuine piety, and the difficulty of its attainment and cultivation, are frequently pressed on our attention in the sacred pages.—The salvation of our souls depends on our possessing it, and yet, in our efforts to obtain it, innumerable foes oppose us, and innumerable obstacles must be surmounted. To encourage us, however, to meet every foe, and to bear every evil with unshrinking constancy, we are addressed with most urgent exhortations and alluring promises; assistance from on high is offered us in the conflict, and to him who overcometh it “shall be given to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

In the passage before us, and in a similar passage in the gospel of Matthew, the design of our Lord is to show the necessity of directing our attention to secure the salvation of our souls, from a consideration of the difficulties which we

must encounter in so doing, and from the ease with which we may mistake and perish. He represents us as travellers, journeying to unchanging abodes of bliss or wo, and assures us that our final destiny will depend on our present conduct. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat."—While "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." It becomes us, therefore, carefully to seek to enter in; since, if we mistake and fail, the consequences will be tremendously fearful. The exposition of the passage is easy. A *gate* usually stands at the head of a way, and through it we are admitted into the way,—the term *way*, when applied to the actions and condition of men, means their habitual temper and conduct; and the narrow way, of which our Lord speaks, means that temper and conduct which are necessary for our admittance into heaven. We enter on this way only by a thorough conversion from sin to holiness, evidenced by unfeigned repentance and faith; and, until we have experienced this conversion, we have not taken one step in the pathway to bliss. This gate is called *strait*, because of the anguish of mind which usually accompanies the commencement of a religious life. Into this gate our Lord commands us to *strive* to enter. In the original, the word which is translated *strive*, is very forcible. It signifies, to make a violent effort; to contend as in combat; to labour against opposition with the utmost endeavour, both of body and of mind. This command is evidently addressed to the unconverted; to those who have not entered the narrow way, who are outside of the gate, who are living impenitent in sin. Such are commanded "to strive to enter in at the strait gate"—that is, to seek for the con-



version of their souls, that in the exercise of repentance and faith, they may enter on and lead a new life of holy obedience. We need not fear to imitate our Lord Jesus; and here is a direct exhortation to the unregenerate to seek for repentance and faith. But how are they to be sought, since they are the fruits of the Spirit, the gift of God, and without his grace we never shall attain to them? We reply, they must be sought in the diligent use of those means of grace which God has appointed, and which are usually accompanied with the influences of the Holy Spirit. To illustrate, confirm, and enforce this truth, is the object of the ensuing Discourse; and may the Holy Spirit bless to our edification what shall be spoken.

Two propositions invite our attention.

I. There are means of grace; and in the use of these means divine influences are usually received, both for the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers.

II. It is the duty of all men diligently to use these means. Having discussed these two propositions we shall,

III. Notice some objections which have been urged against the doctrine which we advocate, and then,

IV. Conclude with the practical improvement of our subject.

I. There are means of grace.

By a *mean*, is intended that which, as an instrument, conduces to the attainment of an end; and by *means of grace*, are meant all those institutions of God in the use of which man seeks and usually obtains divine grace. All these means are adapted to the rational nature of man, and are fitted to inform his mind, to touch his conscience, and to awaken his affections.

It pleases God for the illustration of his wisdom, his

goodness, and his power, to administer his government by the intervention of means. Were it his pleasure to do so, he could, by a direct and immediate act of his own, bestow on us all that we need, preserve our existence, give health to our bodies, and knowledge to our minds; or he could rain down manna from heaven; or, without the toil of the husbandman, he could cause the harvest to spring up in rich abundance from the earth. Such, however, is not the method which his infinite wisdom has seen fit to adopt. His blessings flow to us through the intervention of means; we can obtain them only when we seek them by the use of proper means.

If we would preserve life, we must use food; if we would enjoy health, we must practice temperance and prudence; if the scholar would acquire rich stores of various knowledge, he must give his days and his nights to unremitted study; and if the husbandmen would rejoice in the abundance of his crops, he must submit to the toil of breaking up the ground, and of casting into it the precious seed. The success of these efforts depends on the blessing of God, and without that, they will be wholly ineffectual. We are commanded, therefore, to put them forth in humble dependence on his assistance and blessing, and thus we are taught to recognise him as the author of all good, and carefully to notice and admire his perfections as exhibited in his works.

The same system is established in the kingdom of Grace as that which prevails in the kingdom of Providence. They who ask, receive; they who seek, find. He who "watches daily at Wisdom's gates, waiting at the posts of her doors, shall find her," and, along with her, life and blessedness.

The means of grace become such only in consequence of the appointment of God. It is of the utmost importance to keep this truth steadily in view, for there is a sinful pro-

pensity in men to substitute their own inventions in place of the divine appointments. This propensity God frowns upon and rebukes. “In vain do ye worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Our warrant for using any ordinance, is derived from his appointment of it, while our encouragement to observe it, arises from his promise of accepting and blessing us in so doing. Whatever appearances of zeal, or of devotion, or of success, may be exhibited, awful delusion must attend the pursuit of any measures which God has not ordained.

Among the means which are designed for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers, the three principal are, *the preaching of the Gospel; the written Word of God; and fervent prayer.*

One of the chief means of grace, both for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers, is the preaching of the Gospel. “It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them who believe.” “How,” asks the apostle, “shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

The ministry of reconciliation was appointed by the Redeemer, just before his ascension to glory, when he commanded his disciples to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” After Paul had been called by his grace, he was sent as a messenger of mercy “to the Gentiles, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” The divine blessing has accompanied the ministers of the word from the days of the apostles to the present time. On the day of Pentecost, thousands were converted by the preaching

of Peter; the Lord opened Lydia's heart to attend to the things which were spoken by Paul; and in every succeeding age the preaching of the Gospel has been to thousands "the power of God unto salvation."

And the principal instrument employed by the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration and sanctification of our souls, is *the written Word*. The apostle Peter reminds his other brethren that "they were born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever." "The law of the Lord," says the Psalmist "is perfect, converting the soul."

The special design of God in giving to us his Word, is to lead us into the knowledge of himself, and in the paths of life. "All scripture," says the apostle, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." It has guided through life, up to the third heavens, myriads of the redeemed who are now walking in the presence of God, and we shall do well to take heed to it "as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts." Any attempt to sink the value of the living ministry, or of the written Word, is injurious to the highest interests of mankind. The Word without the ministry would be neglected, and the ministry without the Word, would run into error, and introduce woful delusion. The word and the ministry united, are the great bulwarks of religion, and the instruments which God designs for the conversion, not merely of individuals, but of the world.

To the ministry and the Word, we add fervent prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find;

knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Prayer is the great medium of the intercourse which man holds with God, in which he opens the most secret desires of his soul, and confesses and deplores his sins, and makes known his wants. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

Besides the means of grace already mentioned, there are others which are highly important in themselves, and in the use of which, God has promised to bestow on us his grace. Among the chief of these we place the religious education of children. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The neglect of this duty is a principal reason of the awful amount of irreligion which every where prevails; for the surest method to banish religion from the world, is to banish it from families. The pious Baxter has given it as his opinion, that if every parent would faithfully discharge his duty in bringing up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, it would almost render unnecessary the living ministry. Certain it is, that the neglect of it brings deep guilt on the parent, and shows an awful unconcern in relation to the highest interests of his child, by leaving him exposed to the pernicious influence of false sentiment and vicious example, without any fixed principles to save him from their contagion. The consequences on the part of the child are, generally, such as might be expected—an irreligious life, and an unhappy death. From the lips of pious and faithful parents, especially from the lips of a pious mother, the child generally receives his earliest, his best, and his



most lasting impressions. To her it belongs to direct his first thoughts, to mould his temper; to give an impulse to all his feelings and desires; and her instructions, and warnings, and prayers, and tears, are the things which, amid all the waywardness and folly of mankind, are last forgotten by her child; which exert over his heart a most salutary influence, and are often recalled with fond remembrance and gratitude. Should he be so unhappy as to be enticed by ungodly companions, and to fall into dissolute habits, the remembrance of his mother's instructions and prayers will haunt his gayest hours, and check his mad career; and though he may have run deep in sinful excesses, will probably bring him back a humble penitent to God—blessed reward for the anxieties, and sorrows, and instruction, and prayers, of maternal love, thus to have trained a child for holiness, and heaven, and God! Precious is the memory of such a parent to her offspring, for “her children rise up after her and call her blessed.”\*

\* A striking instance of the correctness of the above remarks occurred to the author immediately after he had preached this discourse. On his return home from Philadelphia, there was in the stage with him, as a fellow-passenger, a respected brother in the ministry, who resides in one of the western States. In the course of conversation, he gave to the author a short account of his religious history. He is the son of pious parents, who had devoted him in early life to God, and carefully instructed him in the principles of religion. When he had attained a sufficient age, he studied medicine, and, if I mistake not, attended the medical lectures at Philadelphia. Unfortunately, by perusing the works of some infidel writers, and by the influence of ungodly companions, his mind was corrupted, and he became a sceptic. He remarked, however, that he never could entirely embrace the sentiments of sceptical writers, owing to his having read so extensively in ancient history, which enabled him to detect the falsehood of many of their statements. He afterwards commenced the practice of physic, and his irreligion and scepticism were fre-

Without enlarging on the other means of grace, we shall content ourselves with simply mentioning them. They are the following:—

Serious meditation. “I thought on my way,” says the Psalmist, “and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.”

Self-examination. “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, except ye be reprobates.”

The company of pious men. “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a company of fools shall be destroyed.”

The sacraments, which are especially designed to edify believers.

It is by the diligent and conscientious use of these means, that men are commanded to seek for spiritual blessings, and

quently noticed by others, and caused great grief to his pious parents. One day an infidel neighbour began conversing of his irreligious conduct before a company, one of which was his mother, and with a view, it was thought, of wounding her feelings. He scoffingly said that there is no truth in the old saying, “train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it;” that those children who were brought up religiously always turned out more wicked than others, and noticed him as an instance. His mother, a pious Scotch lady, was indignant at the impiety of the declaration, and afterwards said, that, at the time, she felt more anxious that God would vindicate the truth of his declarations than even for the salvation of her son. She had been anxiously praying for his conversion, but now she prayed that God would exhibit his glory by proving the truth of his word. About this time her son was led to read the Scriptures with Scott’s notes; deep impressions were produced on his mind; he was led to a salutary concern for the salvation of his soul, and became, we trust, a sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is now a minister of the Gospel, and nobly exerting himself to bestow on others those blessings which the Gospel alone conveys. He considered his conversion as an answer to the prayers of his parents, and said to me, “I was saved because I am a child of the covenant.”

when they thus use them, these blessings are usually received. God will have his own appointments honoured, nor have we any right to expect his blessing while we neglect his institutions, or violate his commandments. The most diligent use of these means, however, does not lay him under any obligation to bestow on us his grace; for if so, God would be our debtor, and bound in justice to save us. But, in the same individual, grace and merit cannot co-exist; nor can any unregenerate man perform good works acceptable to God. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”

Considered simply in themselves, these means have no efficacy to convert the soul; but all their efficacy is derived from the accompanying influences of the Holy Spirit. They are, indeed, adapted to our rational nature, and suited alike to inform the mind and to affect the heart. In effecting the work of regeneration, God deals with man as a rational creature, by placing before him motives; by addressing to him commands, promises, warnings, threatenings, and invitations; and by appealing to every passion and desire of the soul—to the affections, the reason, and the conscience. In the preaching and reading of the Word, truth comes to us clothed with the authority and majesty of God; our attention is called to subjects the most sublime, interesting, solemn, and affecting. The worth of the soul, the solemnities of death, the terrors of the judgment, and the glories and horrors of eternity, are placed before us to rouse us from the slumbers of sin. The indignation of the Lord is denounced against the hardened transgressor, and he is warned of that awful perdition which awaits him; while the sweet message of mercy is addressed to the humbled

penitent, and he is pointed to the cross of the Redeemer, and assured that there is forgiveness for the chief of sinners. In prayer we approach into the immediate presence of the eternal God; we contemplate his infinite majesty, his spotless purity, his boundless power, and his amazing compassion; we confess our depravity, our unworthiness, our guilt, and our dependence on his grace; we offer our thanksgivings for mercies, and we humbly ask his pardoning and sanctifying grace. Every thing in prayer is calculated to produce deep impressions on the heart, and to awaken its best affections. Still, without the influences of the Holy Spirit, all will be in vain. The new heart is the gift of God. Even the eloquence of an Apostle will be of no avail for the conversion of the soul, without the accompany influences of the Holy Spirit. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man." "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." Any success that may attend our efforts should be ascribed to the power and goodness of God. "The weapons of our warfare," says the apostle, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Having thus exhibited the nature and design of the means of grace, we proceed to consider,

II. Our second head of discourse, which is to show,

That it is the duty of all men to use with diligence these means.

We are not aware that any have denied that it is the duty



of sincere believers in Christ to use them, but it has been questioned whether the unregenerate should be exhorted to the use of them. Much of the difficulty on this point will, we think, be removed by a clear apprehension of their nature and design. They may be considered under three aspects: as duties, arising out of the relation which exists between man and God; as means, in the use of which sinners usually receive divine grace; and as means of edification to believers.

1. The means which we have specified may be considered as duties arising from the command of God, and the relation which exists between him and man. The Gospel message and the written Word are addressed to every creature, and every man is bound to listen when God speaks. Prayer is an humble acknowledgment of God as our Creator, Ruler, Preserver, and Judge. No man on earth has authority to say to another, that it is not his duty to listen to the preaching of the Gospel, or to read the Scriptures, or to offer prayer. These are solemn acts of worship, in which we acknowledge God as our God, and therefore no man is at liberty to neglect them.

It is in vain to reply, that since unregenerate men do not perform these duties from holy principles, they will not be pleasing to God, and therefore the observance of them ought not to be enjoined; for the same objection will apply to every act of the unregenerate, and, if pushed to its utmost, will reduce them to a state of complete inactivity. We are commanded "whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." But must we forbid sinners to eat or drink, because they are not influenced by holy principles? Our obligation to obey God arises not from the possession of holy principles of action,



but from the relation which we bear to him as his rational creatures, endowed with faculties which render us capable of knowing, loving, and obeying him. As the most glorious Being in the universe, and infinitely perfect, he is worthy of our supreme affection; and, as he is our Creator, Preserver, Ruler, and Judge, we are under the strongest possible obligations to love and obey him. We are bound to believe all that he says, to perform all that he commands, to submit to all that he appoints, and to consecrate to his service and glory all the powers which we possess. It is therefore, the duty of every man to hear, and believe, and receive the message which God addresses to him in his holy Word; and by humble prayer, and supplication, and thanksgiving, to acknowledge and worship him as God over all; and nothing can release him from these duties.

Moreover, since our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded his ministers to preach the Gospel to every creature, it is the duty of every creature to hear; and not merely to hear, but to remember, to meditate upon, to lay to heart, and to pray over, what he hears; to examine it by the light of the Scriptures, and to compare with it his own temper and conduct. It will not, we imagine, be asserted that all they of Berea, who are spoken of, Acts xvii. 11, were truly converted, and yet, they are commended, because they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so; therefore, it is added, "many of them believed."

The numerous, and strong commands which are given to the unregenerate, to seek for the divine favour, in our opinion, decisively settles the question. "Strive to enter in at the strait gait." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." "Stand ye in

the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls." "Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." These, and a multitude of similar commands, are addressed to all men alike, urging them to the use of the means through which divine mercy is obtained.

2. Another consideration which establishes our doctrine is, that, on the use of these means, sinners usually receive the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit.

When we look back on the history of the Church, and of the world, we find, that true religion has prevailed among those nations who enjoyed these means, and, generally, in the same degree as they were enjoyed in purity and abundance. The condition of the heathen nations who were destitute of them was truly gloomy. It was among the descendants of Abraham, who were blessed with the priesthood, the Word, and the ordinances of the House of God, that the great body of the pious who lived before the coming of Christ were found. Since that event, true piety has prevailed, almost exclusively, in the Christian Church. It has been preserved by means of the various institutions which God has appointed; and if these institutions were once abolished, or neglected, impiety would universally prevail.

When we turn from nations and communities, to contemplate individuals, we still find the divine blessing accompanying the use of these means. We pretend not to limit the Holy One of Israel; nor, do we deny extraordinary instances of conversion; but we find, in fact, that God puts

honour on his own institutions; that the Gospel has most success among those who, from infancy, are instructed in its truths, and in the strict observance of its ordinances. Thousands have been brought to saving faith in Christ, through the divine blessing accompanying the preaching and reading of the Word, when attended on with devout meditation and prayer. In one of the most admirable uninspired representations of the rise and progress of religion in the soul, with which the world has ever been blessed, the awakened sinner, oppressed with the burden of his sins, is represented as seeking for retirement, there to read, and pray, and meditate, till Evangelist meets him, and directs him to the narrow gate, and to Christ, for salvation. The excellent Dr. Scott, in his "Force of Truth," has given us the history of his own conversion, and it clearly shows, that they have reason to expect the divine blessing, who seek it by a devout perusal of the Scriptures, with meditation and prayer. In one word, divine grace has flowed forth in this way, to the myriads of the redeemed. While they were seeking God in the use of the means, his Spirit came upon them with his renewing influences, and wrought in them unfeigned repentance and faith.

3. A third argument in favour of the sentiment which we are advocating, is, that those who live in the wilful and habitual neglect of these means, have no right to expect the salvation of their souls. If the divine blessing usually accompanies them, then, to neglect them, is to guard against the reception of this blessing, is to put ourselves as far as we can out of the reach of mercy, and deliberately to choose the paths of death. Whoever acts thus, will, hereafter, in the bitterness of his soul, repent of his folly. By so doing

he incurs the displeasure of God. An awful denunciation is pronounced by the Redeemer himself, on those cities which rejected his preaching. "Wo unto thee, Chorazin! wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." Impenitent sinner, it is no speculation, it is solemn truth, that if the Gospel message is rejected by thee, if it does not lead thee to offer fervent supplication for the renewing influences of the Spirit of God, and if it is not cordially received with penitence and faith, thy condemnation is certain and terrible; more terrible than that of Sodom and Gomorrha. To thee, the Gospel message is now addressed; to thee, pardon, purchased by a Saviour's blood, is freely offered; to thee, the hour of mercy is announced, and thou art pointed to the throne of grace, and a compassionate Saviour, that thou mayest obtain salvation. Reject not the message, refuse not the mercy, lest, peradventure, throughout eternity thou mayest curse thy folly and thy sin.

4. But finally, the question of the propriety and importance of a diligent use of the means of grace, is settled, in fact, by the conduct of every awakened sinner and every pious parent. When the arrows of conviction have pierced the sinner's breast, you cannot prevent him from praying, from reading, from hearing the Gospel preached. He sees that he is a guilty and ruined man; he feels himself to be sinking amid the billows of wrath; and fears lest the shadows of everlasting death are coming over his soul. Oh, how vain is every effort now to deter him from asking for mercy from his God! His cries pierce the heavens—"What shall I do to be saved?"—"God be merciful to me a sinner." How precious to him now, is his once slighted



Bible, and with what intense anxiety does he listen to the minister of Jesus, hoping for some message of mercy, some glad tidings of peace, some promise of salvation, that may soothe the anguish of his wounded spirit. Helpless and ruined, he casts himself at the feet of the Redeemer, resolved that if he perishes, he will perish with the cry for mercy, as the last sound that is uttered by his lips.

Again: Does the pious parent, because he fears that his child is unconverted, hesitate to place him under the preaching of the Gospel; or to teach him to read the Scriptures; or to offer his prayers to God? How strange, how utterly absurd would it sound, to hear a pious parent plead, as an excuse for the neglect of these things, that he has no reason to believe that his child is regenerate. No! he knows that the most important duty which he owes to his child is to "bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." He therefore devotes him, as Samuel was devoted, to the Lord; he teaches him, as Timothy was taught, "from a child to know the Holy Scriptures;" he accustoms him to the use of the means of grace, because he knows that in this way divine grace is usually received, and he asks, with fervent supplication, that the divine blessing may accompany his efforts.

Such, then, are our reasons for asserting, that a diligent use of the means of grace is the duty of every man. There is not a sinner on earth to whom we dare say, 'you must not attend the preaching of the Gospel; you must not read the word of God; you must not pray, or attend to any religious duty.' It would be as absurd to do this, as it would be to forbid a beggar, who is dying with hunger, to ask for food; or to debar a sick man from the use of medicine for the recovery of health. It would be to exclude men from



the remedy which God has provided for their healing; from the very means which he has instituted for their recovery from sin and death, and in the use of which only, we can hope to receive those influences of the Holy Spirit which prepare us for heaven. But,

III. Objections have been raised against the doctrine which we are advocating, and it is proper that they should be considered. We shall notice but two, since they are the most common and important.

1. The first is, the decree of God renders the use of means unavailing; that, if God has predestinated us to salvation, we shall be saved whether we use or neglect these means. To this objection our reply shall be short. It proceeds on a misrepresentation and mistake of the nature of the divine decrees. The Bible speaks of no absolute, unconditional decree, but always represents the means as decreed in connexion with the end. The divine decree extends to every event and to all concerns; but they who raise this objection apply it exclusively to our religious concerns; whereas, to be consistent, they should carry it throughout all their affairs, and use no means for the attainment of any end; if sick, they should take no medicine; if poor, they should use no efforts to obtain wealth; for, on their own principles, if God has decreed that they shall recover health, or obtain riches, these events will happen as certainly without as with effort. Every one sees the absurdity of this sentiment when applied to the common affairs of life, and it is just as absurd when applied to religious subjects.

2. A second objection, which has been very strongly urged against the truth we are advocating is, that it is unscriptural and dangerous to exhort sinners to use the means of

grace, since, to do so, has a tendency to lead them to rest in the means, without exercising saving repentance and faith. It is contended, that sinners should be exhorted to immediate submission to God; to immediate repentance and faith; and that it is at our peril, if we exhort them to any thing short of these, or which does not include them. To render this objection plainer, we state the following case: A sinner, awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger, anxiously inquires "what shall I do to be saved?" He is told "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He replies, my mind is so blind, my affections are so depraved, there is so much hardness and corruption in my heart, that I cannot believe, I cannot repent. I am as helpless as I am guilty; all my resolutions and efforts are ineffectual, and, unless I receive mercy from God, I am forever lost. What shall we say to him in reply? Shall we direct him to ask, by importunate prayer, for the influences of the Holy Spirit to enable him to repent and believe? Shall we exhort him to break off from every sinful practice; to read, meditate upon, and pray over the word of God; to attend on the preaching of the Gospel, and seek the company and conversation of the pious, that thus he may obtain the blessing of God? No, say some, this would be to give dangerous, soul-destroying advice, and to be accessary to the sinner's perdition. Immediate submission to God must be enjoined on him, and he must be warned, that if he does not immediately repent and believe, his damnation may be sudden and awful.

There are two classes of theologians who maintain this last sentiment. One class holds it in connexion with the belief of the moral inability of the sinner to change his heart, and that repentance and faith are the gift of God:—

the other maintain, that it is as easy to repent and believe as it is to perform any bodily action; that there is no other divine influence necessary or bestowed in our religious concerns than is exerted in the preservation of our lives, and the performance of our common daily actions; and that man is *universally, necessarily, and absolutely active in regeneration*.

We are constrained to observe in relation to this last sentiment, namely, that man is active in regeneration, that we consider it a fearful departure from fundamental Gospel truth. The most eminent and successful divines of former days considered it a matter of the first importance, that a sinner should be convinced of his entire inability to perform good works acceptable to God, or to recover himself from a state of sin and misery; that being thus convinced, he might be brought, as a depraved, guilty, and helpless creature, to renounce all dependence on his own strength, and cast himself entirely on the mercy of God through Christ. Even within our own recollection, a remarkable difference has taken place in the theology and mode of preaching, of a large class of divines in our Church. The distinction between a natural and a moral inability was formerly much insisted on, and it was considered of great importance to represent the inability of the sinner as of a moral kind. This was then represented as a new and important improvement in theology, though the distinction had been made long before, in the writings of some of the soundest Calvinistic divines, and when properly explained, is wholly unobjectionable. Now, however, the *ability* of the sinner to repent and believe, and his *activity* in regeneration, are earnestly inculcated as most important improvements in theology, and intimately connected with the prevalence of revivals of

religion. The sinner is called on to repent and believe instantaneously, and is assured, that it is as easy for him to do so as to raise an arm, or to perform any bodily motion; and they who exhort him to use the means of grace are frowned on, as though they would delude, or mislead him.

In relation to this sentiment, several remarks present themselves to our minds.

1. If sinners have power to believe and repent instantaneously, then, they must, necessarily, have ability to use the means of grace aright. Surely it will not be asserted, that a sinner has power to regenerate himself,—to believe, and repent—and yet, that he has not power to hear, or read the Word of God, and pray aright. There can, therefore, be no possible reason for discouraging him, any more than for discouraging the truly pious from the use of these means. The objection carries along with it its own refutation, and we think, that we might rest the subject here, were it not too serious to be thus dismissed.

2. To discourage a sinner from using the means of grace, under the pretence that he has ability, in himself, to believe and repent, is alike delusive and dangerous. We retort the charge, and say, that it is at our peril, if we do not exhort men to hear, and read the Word of God with prayer. The opinion, that they are able at any time to repent and believe, is precisely the grand delusion which keeps impenitent men careless in sin. Every unrenewed man, whatever may be his speculative opinion, trusts, in fact, in himself, in confidence of his power to perform all duty. Here, all impenitent sinners are agreed with that class of divines who maintain human ability, and it is no wonder that the doctrine has many advocates, for it entirely accords with the feelings of the unrenewed heart. But it

is somewhat remarkable, that the grand blunder of which man has been guilty in every age, since the apostacy of Adam—the error to which he clings with the fondest attachment, and the last which he relinquishes in accepting of Christ,—that this error is now represented as a great improvement in theology; as evidencing the march of mind, and the possession of superior light; and that they who do not assent to it are often assailed as unfriendly to revivals, as behind the improvements of the day, and as lukewarm formalists. Gospel truth is, however, too precious to be lightly abandoned, and it is our duty at every cost to defend it. We do not hesitate, therefore, to declare, that we consider the representations which are frequently made in relation to human ability, as directly at variance with the Word of God, and the experience of every real believer in Christ. Do the Scriptures speak of the condition of men while unregenerate? They are then represented as dead in trespasses and sins; as without strength; as alienated from God; and the carnal mind is declared to be enmity against God, so that they who are in the flesh cannot please God. Is the deliverance of men from this state of spiritual bondage and death described? Then God is uniformly declared to be the author of this deliverance, and the strongest terms which language can supply are used, to express the greatness of the work, and the power which is exerted in its accomplishment. It is a resurrection from the dead—a new creation—a victory gained over enmity and opposition. Let it not be objected, that these representations are figurative. True, they are; but the figures are strong and expressive. What is a resurrection but the infusion of new life into a dead body, into an inactive and inert corpse? Yet, the apostle asserts, that such is the change which is effected in



regeneration. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." What is the work of creation but bringing into being that which did not previously exist? Yet, to denote the absence of all holy principles and qualities in men, previous to regeneration, and their first production in the soul by the Holy Spirit, when he effects this work, the apostle calls it a new creation. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature;" and again, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works." Nay more, to show that men neither concur in, nor favour the work of regeneration, that it is in no respect theirs, it is declared, to be the overcoming of enmity and opposition. "You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." Let it be remembered, that such are the representations of this work which the Holy Ghost has made in the volume of Inspiration, and though the argument derived from them, may be dismissed with a cavil, and a subterfuge, we are satisfied, that it cannot be fairly refuted. To represent the sinner as having full ability to repent and believe, in opposition to such plain, and strong declarations of Scripture, is equally erroneous and dangerous. It encourages him to trust in himself; it prevents a suitable conviction of his sinfulness, and weakness, and danger, and thereby interposes a serious obstacle in the way of an immediate application to Christ, and an entire dependence on him.

3. We remark, still further, that the manner in which sinners are exhorted to immediate submission to a sovereign God, has excited both surprise and alarm. No truths are more clearly, strongly, and repeatedly taught in Scripture than these two: that we are reconciled to God through Christ; and that we are renewed and prepared for heaven,

only by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the centre in which all the lines of the Gospel must meet; the only medium of access to the Father; the only source of forgiveness and peace to the sinner; and yet, we sometimes hear addresses to unregenerate men, exhorting them to immediate submission to a sovereign God, to be disposed of according to his will, irrespective of Christ, and losing sight of him as the only source of salvation. We believe that this mode of address arises from peculiar views of the nature of the atonement, as a mere exhibition of divine displeasure at sin, and from not considering Christ, in his mediatorial characters, as the Covenant Head, Substitute, Surety, and High Priest of his people. But, from whatever source it may arise, we cannot but think that it derogates from the honour of the Redeemer, and that it jeopardizes the salvation of the sinner, by not calling his attention with sufficient clearness to Christ, as the only source of eternal life.

The work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating men, is another fundamental part of the Gospel scheme. "We are saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." He sheds celestial light into the darkened mind; he elevates, and purifies the debased affections; and revealing to the sinner his guilt, and helplessness, and misery, enables him by his grace to receive, and rest on Christ for salvation. What then are we to think of those exhortations, which lose sight of these important Gospel truths; which would persuade the sinner of his ability to repent and believe, and which do not direct him to the Holy Spirit, who alone can renew and purify his heart?

They may be boastingly proclaimed as improvements in theology, and as evidencing the march of mind, and the increase of light; but they really divest the Gospel of its most

peculiar and lovely features. Those exhortations, which, instead of directing the sinner to Christ that he may glorify the Father, by believing in the Son, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, direct him to submit to God, to be saved or damned according to his sovereign will, by withdrawing his attention from Christ as the only Saviour, do practically, though we hope unintentionally, withhold from both the Redeemer and Holy Spirit that honour which the Scriptures ascribe to them, in the deliverance of our souls from spiritual death.

4. Our last remark under this head is, that usually a work of conviction precedes a work of true conversion. Sudden or instantaneous conversions, such as happened on the days of Pentecost, sometimes occur; but they should be considered as remarkable occurrences; and special care is necessary, to be satisfied that they are true conversions. The events of the day of Pentecost were for the special purpose of attesting the divine commission of the apostles, at the commencement of their ministry; and though the same divine influences are now exerted in the conversion of sinners, it yet appears to us to be an erroneous procedure, to hold up the immediate conversions of that day, as a model of what we are now to expect to be of frequent occurrence. I am aware that I am touching a delicate point, and that I shall, probably, be denounced by some, as an enemy to revivals of religion. The accusation I indignantly repel as a slander. A real revival of religion is the greatest blessing which God bestows on apostate man. But the danger of self-deception in religion is great; and it is an awful thing to be accessory to leading men into spiritual delusion. Hence we find the most skilful practical writers, carefully distinguishing between mere conviction of sin and real

conversion; laying down marks from the Scriptures by which we may judge whether we have, indeed, experienced a change of heart; guarding against a too hasty conclusion in our own favour, and exhorting us to make sure work for eternity. Now, frequently, we hear of sudden and almost instantaneous conversions—and these conversions are spoken of with the utmost confidence, as though it were criminal to doubt their reality, and the number of converts is sometimes, we fear, ostentatiously proclaimed to the world. Caution and reverence are never more necessary than when we speak of the work of the Spirit of God; and woe to the man who reviles or opposes that work! But there are some points on which we may speak without fear. The present age is remarkable for a fondness for innovation and novelty, and for contempt for what belongs to other times. But the old precious truths of the Gospel, which were preached by apostles, and martyrs, and reformers, are those only which the Holy Spirit will make effectual for the conversion of sinners. It is the old Gospel which Paul, and Augustine, and Luther, and Owen, and Whitefield, and Davies, and Edwards, and Witherspoon preached, that the Holy Spirit always has, and always will bless, and we dare preach no other Gospel, we dare embrace no mere modern refinements or innovations, lest, haply, the apostolic malediction should fall upon us “if any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that which you have received, let him be accursed.” Magnifying the ability of the sinner; diminishing a sense of our indebtedness to the grace of the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit; confidently pronouncing on the reality of what are represented as immediate conversions; undervaluing the attainments and graces of aged Christians, and determined denunciation of those who do



assent to these things, as though they must be cold hearted formalists, and enemies to revivals of religion—these, we are confident, are not the fruits of the Spirit of God. Indeed, there is reason to fear, that dark days in relation to real religion are before us. While we bless God for the revivals with which different parts of our land are favoured, there are yet many things to awaken serious apprehensions, that the benefits which would otherwise be derived from them, will be greatly diminished. A fondness for new measures in action, and for new metaphysical speculations in theology, as though that which is old must therefore be wrong,—the assumption of arbitrary principles in philosophy, and bringing these principles to the explanation of Scripture, instead of implicit submission to its plain declarations—opposition to creeds and confessions, and denunciations of them, as though they were hostile to freedom of inquiry, and the various attempts which are made to force innovations on the Church, with the distractions which these attempts cause—will, we greatly fear, produce in the minds of many a heartless indifference to religion, or open infidelity. The advocates of error have always laid claim to superior sanctity, zeal, and benevolence; they have always been loud in proclaiming their own superior wisdom, and piety, and success; but they have also always been distinguished for undervaluing the importance of sound doctrine, for a bitter and crafty disingenuousness, which, under the pretence of liberality, denounces, as bigotted and narrow minded, all those who contend for the importance of the truth which is according to godliness, and who oppose with firmness the inroads of error; and if ever that time comes, when mere conviction of sin shall be generally mistaken for a thorough conversion to God, and when multitudes,



under a transient excitement, shall be hurried, in an unconverted state, into the communion of the Church, and when in addition to these things, Gospel truth shall be undervalued, and error on fundamental points shall be extensively preached, then will the glory have departed from our Church, and the paralysing chills of spiritual death pierce its vitals.

The plainness of these remarks, will, no doubt, be censured by many, who are for treating with gentleness the inroads of error, and would cast the mantle of charity over the defects of those who are its advocates. To such we would reply, that the most effectual aid which they can lend to the cause of error, is to palliate, excuse, or defend the conduct of its advocates, and represent them as holy, devoted, and zealous above others, while they censure those who oppose their errors as exhibiting a rash and mistaken zeal. Truth is not thus to be sacrificed, nor is its cause to be thus defended; and we remember who has condemned the prophet and the priest of ancient Israel, for having "healed the hurt of the daughter of his people slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace."

We remarked, that there is a second class of divines who, while they assert the inability of the sinner to change his own heart, yet maintain, that it is perilous to exhort him to any thing short of immediate repentance and faith. One of the most distinguished advocates of this sentiment is the late excellent Andrew Fuller, who contends not only that a sinner is unable to change his heart, but that a conviction of our being utterly lost must precede an application to the Saviour. "So long" says he, "as a sinner can find any hope, or any help in himself, he will never fall at the feet of Christ as utterly undone."

To this class of divines we reply,

1. Their objections would be valid, if we exhorted sinners to *rest* in the mere use of the means; for it is at our peril, if we exhort them to rest any where but in Christ. This however is not the question before us. The only point of inquiry is, whether there are not means, in the diligent use of which, a sinner may hope to receive those influences of the Holy Spirit, which are necessary to enable him to rest on Christ by faith. If any exhort sinners, as it has been asserted that some do, to lay at the pool of ordinance waiting, and satisfied with their waiting, till God shall bestow on them his grace, they greatly err. Such, however, was not the practice of sound Calvinistic divines of former days, neither is it the practice of their admirers in the present day. From the multitude of passages which can be selected with ease, from the writings of the old divines, we take but one, which however is a fair exhibition of their sentiments as a body. The quotation is from Aliene's Alarm, and is as follows: "Settle it," says he, addressing the unconverted sinner, "Settle it upon thy heart, that thou art under everlasting inability ever to recover thyself. Never think thy praying, reading, hearing, confessing, amending, will work the cure; these must be attended to, but thou art undone if thou retest in them. *Rom. x. 3.* Thou art a lost man, if thou hopest to escape drowning on any other plank but Jesus Christ. *Acts iv. 12.* Thou must unlearn thyself, and renounce thy own wisdom, thy own righteousness, thy own strength, and throw thyself wholly upon Christ, as a man that swims casts himself upon the water, or else thou canst not escape. While men trust in themselves, and establish their own righteousness, and have confidence in the flesh, they will not come savingly to

Christ. *Luke* xviii. 9. *Phil.* iii. 3. Thou must know thyself to be but loss and dung, thy strength but weakness, thy righteousness rags and rottenness, before there will be an effectual closure between Christ and thee. *Phil.* iii. 7, 8, 9. *2 Cor.* iii. 5. *Isa.* lxiv. 6. Can the lifeless carcase shake off its graves clothes, and loose the bands of death? Then mayest thou recover thyself, who art dead in trespasses and sins. Therefore, when thou goest to pray, or meditate, or do any of the duties to which thou art here directed, go out of thyself, and call in the help of the Spirit, as despairing to do any thing pleasing to God in thy own strength. Yet neglect not thy duty, but be at the pool, and wait in the way of the Spirit. While the eunuch was reading, then the Holy Ghost did send Philip to him. *Acts* viii. 28, 29. When the disciples were praying, when Cornelius and his friends were hearing, then the Holy Ghost fell upon them and filled them all. Strive to give up thyself to Christ; strive to pray; strive to meditate; strive an hundred and an hundred times; strive to do as well as thou canst, and while thou art endeavouring in the way of thy duty, the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and help thee to do what of thyself thou art utterly unable to perform."

2. We reply again, that the objection would be valid if sinners were exhorted to use the means from sinful motives, or in a sinful way. It is agreed that the works of unregenerate men are all sinful—but some actions are vastly more sinful than others. It is absurd, and dangerous to maintain that all the actions of the unregenerate are equally sinful; that they are equally guilty, whether they pray or whether they swear; whether they speak truth or utter falsehood; since, if this is true, there can be no reason for

choosing a virtuous, rather than a vicious life, and they would be emboldened to commit every crime. It is better that they should attend on, than that they should neglect the means; and they should be warned of the sinfulness of formality and lukewarmness in religion; that thereby a conviction of the deceitfulness and wickedness of their hearts may be fastened on their consciences.

There is, moreover, a great difference in the religious performances of unregenerate men. Some aim only to promote their reputation, or interest, or wealth, and thus make these performances subservient to their worldly interest. Of such, it is said, that "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination." Others are sincere in their desires and efforts to be saved, and though these desires and efforts arise not from faith and love, but from the fear of deserved wrath, yet they are more acceptable to God, than the heartless performances of the former. These desires and efforts which arise from conviction of sin, and fear of perishing, are often preparatory to saving repentance and faith; and hence it has been said, that "religion begins in fear, is carried on by hope, and ends in love." How far the cry of nature, apart from grace, avails for the procuring of blessings, we pretend not to decide. God hears the young ravens when they cry; because Ahab humbled himself before the Lord, the evil which had been threatened to him and his posterity, was averted during his days; and Nineveh was spared from destruction, because its king and people fasted, and prayed, and forsook their evil ways; and how far the cries for mercy of an awakened sinner avail with God, we shall not pretend to determine. Besides, no one can tell when the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit are first communi-



cated, or what actions of an awakened sinner proceed from nature, or from grace.

3. We observe still further, that, when men seriously attempt to use the means of grace, that they become acquainted with their real character and condition; with their depravity and helplessness; and thus their self-confidence is destroyed. The chief reason that is offered against exhorting the unregenerate to use the means of grace is, lest they should rest in them; and that by urging them to immediate repentance and faith, they will be kept from trusting in any thing which they can perform. But to address a sinner, who is distressed with the perplexity and anguish of an awakened conscience, in the language only of denunciation, and tell him he must instantly believe or perish, and that you have nothing further to say to him, appears to us to be a treatment, as unskilful as it is unkind. We are told of the blessed Redeemer, that "the bruised reed he did not break, and the smoking flax he did not quench," and that "he spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." The preacher of the Gospel is commissioned to proclaim a message of mercy, and should sympathize with those who are alarmed at their guilt and danger, in all their doubts, and discouragements, and temptations, and should cheerfully afford them the instruction and encouragement which they need.

Besides, as it has been already observed, it is only when sinners are awakened to a sense of their danger of perishing, and make an effort to save themselves, that they feel their utter inability to repent, or believe, or do any thing which is spiritually good. Then first, when they attempt to put forth strength, do they learn their weakness. When first they seriously attempt, in sincerity, to use the means; to



hear the preached word that they may learn and live; to read, and meditate, and pray, it is then that they become sensible of the impenitence and depravity of their hearts, of the blindness of their minds, and of their alienation from all good. They are often filled with surprise and dismay, when they contemplate the sin that attaches to all their religious performances; the coldness and formality of their prayers; their weakness, and failure in the fulfilment of their resolutions, their many omissions of duty, and their backwardness to hold communion with God. It is after sad experience has taught them their weakness, and they are compelled to cry "help, Lord! we perish without thine aid," that grace is bestowed, and the Holy Spirit enables them to believe in Christ, that they may be saved. Thus, while they are striving to enter in at the strait gate by the use of means, God meets them in mercy, and places them in the way to life.

IV. A few remarks designed for the *practical improvement* of our subject, shall close our discourse.

1. Let those who are anxious for the salvation of their souls, be encouraged fervently and perseveringly to seek the mercy of the Lord. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Let no obstacles discourage, no difficulties affright, or weary you. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" The present is the season of conflict, heaven is the abode of perfect bliss. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Prize the Sabbath, and the ordinances of the House of God, and take his Word for your counsellor and guide. "Search the Scriptures." Read them frequently, devoutly, and with deep meditation. By daily and impor-

tunate prayer, ask that your sins may be forgiven, and your hearts be renewed. Repair to the merciful Redeemer, and commit your souls to him; live in dependence on his grace, and he will keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

2. While we exhort impenitent sinners to use the means, we also solemnly remind them, that repentance and faith are their immediate duty; that impenitence and unbelief are hateful to God, and will ruin their souls. Unbelief in Christ is, emphatically, the great soul destroying sin. It will be of no avail to plead in excuse your inability to repent and believe, for that inability arises from, and is a proof of the corruption of your natures. The carnal mind is enmity against God; and are you content to live at enmity with God, and under his displeasure. Will you say, "Lord, such is my aversion to thee, that I cannot mourn over my offences against thee—such is my delight in sin, that I prefer it, even before thy approbation?" "As ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Is the enmity of your hearts against the divine government and laws so strong that you cannot subdue it; do you find that no efforts, no promises, no resolutions, no vows can avail to deliver you from the debasing influence, that sin sheds over your souls?—go, then, to the mercy seat, and confess before God your depravity and weakness, and ask that he would give his Spirit to renew your souls. Suffer me, however, to remind you that you are now in an awful state of sin and spiritual death; that you are neglecting your most important concerns, and becoming more hardened in irreligion under the very means which are designed to promote your salvation. Remember the many privileges which

you have abused; the many sabbaths which you have profaned; the many prayerless days which you have spent; the many admonitions which you have slighted; how much your Bible has been neglected, and how often the voice of conscience has been stifled, instruction despised, and reproof hated. Think you that it will be a light thing to stand convicted of all these sins, before the throne of your awful and incensed Judge. You may now jest with these things, and in scenes of riot and mirth with your sinful companions, you may scoff at the sacred institutions of religion, but you will stand confounded in the presence of Almighty God. When the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth be burnt up, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and assembled worlds stand before Christ to be judged by him, jesting and scoffs will cease. Can your heart endure, or your hands be strong before the consuming fire of the Almighty's wrath? Be entreated then to become wise in time. As yet you have lived in vain. Immersed in worldly pursuits, you have forgotten the heavenly inheritance, and have been posting with rapid strides to ruin. But there is yet hope concerning you. To you the voice of mercy calls, inviting you to return to your God that you may live. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon."

3. Finally. In the use of the means of grace we should endeavour to hold communion with God, and to make advances in knowledge and holiness. Through these means we hold intercourse with God, we express our reverence

and love, and implore his grace; and through them he bestows on us heavenly blessings. Let us guard against resting in the mere lifeless formal use of them, or imagining that by such a use we have fulfilled our duty. In all our attempts to worship, we should remember the declaration of the Redeemer, "God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Whenever we have attended on the means, we should press on our consciences the inquiry, "what spiritual benefits have I received? what good resolutions have I formed? what advances have I made in wisdom and purity?" Thus shall we become more meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and when death shall remove us from this region of shadows, of conflict, and of sin, we shall be admitted into the immediate presence of God, and unite with the whole company of the redeemed in the exalted worship of heaven.

# SPRUCE STREET LECTURES.

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## LECTURE IV.

*Delivered on the Evening of the 22d January, 1832, by the  
Rev. Alexander M'Farlane, of Carlisle.*

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### OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

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Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.—  
1 Cor. v. 13.

A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.—  
Tit. iii. 10.

THE Church of God is a regularly constituted society, possessing laws and government, adapted to secure her purity and permanence, and to manifest and vindicate the honour of her Lord. The glorious Mediator, being exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and having received all power in heaven and on earth, promulgates laws and institutes ordinances, establishes government in his Church, and appoints officers for its administration. “And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” The language of the Lord Jesus, addressed at first to his apostles, applies in a subordinate sense to all the ministers and rulers of the Church; “What-



soever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." The pastors and elders were authorized and required, by divine institution, to teach and to rule in the Churches. "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves," says the apostle Paul to the elders of Ephesus, "and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you *overseers*." "The elders which are among you I exhort," says the apostle Peter, "feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the *oversight* thereof." On the other hand, the people were required to render obedience and honour, to those appointed to rule over them. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." "Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

In every society, government of some kind is indispensable. No community can exist among men without laws, and an adequate power to put them in execution. What would become of the family circle, sacred to order and harmony, if the parental authority were prostrated? How could public tranquillity, or private security, be maintained, if none were empowered to assert the majesty of the laws? The Church is distinguished from other societies, not by being without law and government, but by possessing them from divine appointment. The Lord Jesus has ordained officers in his Church, whose duty it is to teach and to rule; to make known the laws of his kingdom, and to secure their observance by all its subjects. The government of the Church, therefore, is established by the wisdom and authority of her glorious head; and whatever acts are done according to the instructions which he has given, receive his sanction and ratification.

But here perhaps it may be inquired, is there no uncertainty about the laws of Scripture? Do not different denominations of Christians understand the doctrines and institutions of revelation very differently? Does not this fact prove our liability to mistake in this matter? Is it not possible, that whilst we are claiming to be administering the laws of Christ, we are in reality enforcing nothing better than the inventions of men?

To these inquiries we reply, the Holy Scriptures give no intimation that the laws of God are ambiguous or uncertain. If they were so, the Church would be left without laws; for laws that are doubtful or incomprehensible, are of no validity where righteousness directs the administration. On the contrary, it is invariably assumed, that the doctrines and ordinances of the Bible are, to the humble and teachable, easy of comprehension, and remote from all uncertainty. It is true, Christians differ in their interpretation of Scripture; but where is the denomination of Christians who will impute this diversity, in matters of importance, to the ambiguity or uncertainty of the sacred record, or will admit that there is no fault in those who differ from their interpretation? We are not entitled to the name of Christians, if we be not prepared to affirm the perfect plainness of Scripture, in all things essential to faith and godliness; and the obligation resting upon all, to understand aright its doctrines and precepts, its commands and institutions. No man can be innocent, whilst pretending to deduce from the inspired volume a system of error; or whilst maintaining opinions in opposition to the pure doctrines of Divine revelation. It is absurd to object that the Bible is a communication from heaven, and yet unintelligible; that the laws of God are so obscure or ambiguous, that they

may be misunderstood or disregarded with impunity. We therefore consider ourselves as chargeable with neither presumption nor usurpation, whilst interpreting the doctrines and institutions of the Gospel, and applying them for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

The officers appointed by the Lord Jesus in his Church, are invested with authority to prevent the entrance of the unworthy; to exercise salutary discipline upon offending members; and to exclude the contumacious and impenitent.

I. It belongs to the officers of the Church, to prevent the admission of unworthy persons to her fellowship.

We cheerfully and readily recognize the obligation of our Saviour's command, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." We acknowledge it to be the sacred duty of the Christian ministry to preach the Gospel to all, to inculcate upon men universally, the duty of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to make known to them the encouraging and gracious promise, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." We rejoice in the new and animating prospects furnished by the favour of Providence, for the promulgation of the glad tidings of salvation, to the remote and destitute. We rejoice to hear of multitudes, who having received Christian instruction, and having given credible evidence of faith and piety, are admitted into the bosom of the Church. We take pleasure in believing that exertions to evangelize the world will not cease, or be relaxed, whilst any portion of the human family remains estranged from the household of God. It is our joyful anticipation, as it is our constant prayer, that the righteous and benignant reign of Immanuel will soon extend over the whole earth, bless all the nations, and continue to the end of time.

It is lamentable, however, to observe how many, to whom the Gospel is published, remain unqualified for membership in the Church. Look upon the population of our cities, towns, and country at large; you will find immense numbers, who think so little of Christ and his salvation, that they have never been baptized in his name. They give no evidence that the message of heavenly grace has ever engaged their serious attention. They hear the Gospel, at least occasionally, and witness the solemnities of our holy religion; yet they show an utter aversion to the sacred obligations and duties of the Christian profession. We deeply deplore, whilst we state, the melancholy fact. We lament the insensibility, and criminal apathy, of so many who hear the Gospel; and we pray that the Holy Spirit, by his efficacious influence, may incline the hearts of men universally to hear, believe, and obey the words of eternal life.

But are the doors of the Church to be opened wide for the reception of all who, for any reason, may seek to enter? Is every restriction, upon the indiscriminate and unlimited admission of members, to be removed? Most assuredly not. In every age, and in every condition of the Church, some corrupt and vicious men have been willing to assume the name and profession of Christianity; and even to undertake the sacred functions of the Christian ministry. To the officers of Christ's kingdom it belongs to judge of the qualifications of applicants for admission; and fidelity to their Lord requires them to prevent the entrance of the ignorant, the profane and licentious. To admit the wicked and irreligious to the privileges of Church membership, would be a grievous violation of the command of Christ, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs." "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God:" he cannot



understand the nature, perform the duties, or participate in the enjoyments, of the kingdom of grace upon earth, or of the kingdom of glory in heaven. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." Under every dispensation of the Church, God commands his ministers to "put a difference between holy and unholy, between unclean and clean."

The existence and purity of the Church require this discrimination. The promiscuous introduction of men of every character would destroy its essential and appropriate nature. Of whom does the Church consist? of them certainly who know and believe the truth; who give evidence of repentance for sin, union to Christ, and conformity to his image; who, being delivered from the delusions and corruptions of this world, manifest by a life of holiness that they are partakers of the divine nature, and of the righteousness of our Lord Jesus; who, by a diligent obedience to the commands and institutions of Christ, and by the sanctifying operations of his Spirit, are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in glory. Are the ignorant and erroneous, the profligate and profane, to be received into such a society as this? Nothing so incongruous would be tolerated in any other case. Would you admit the declared enemies of your country, and of all the liberal and equitable institutions, to the rights and privileges of citizens? Would any society receive to its fellowship men whose opinions and conduct are in manifest hostility to its primary design and fundamental principles? It surely requires no labour to prove, that the unholy and profane are not qualified for membership in a community whose grand



characteristic is holiness to the Lord; that the enemies of truth and righteousness ought not to be admitted into the Church, to dishonour the doctrine of Christ, and the profession of his name.

The officers of the Church are required to guard with assiduous care against the admission of the ignorant and unsanctified. From the desire prevalent, in most Christian communities, to increase their numbers, to extend their influence, and to gratify those who evince a prepossession in their favour, there is reason to fear that sufficient caution will not be employed to exclude the unworthy; and especially to prevent the sacred ministry from being profaned, by the conceited novice, the corrupt worldling, and the equivocating heretic. Hence the danger of filling the Church with men who neither know nor obey the truth, and of admitting to the sacred office those who have never learned the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity. There is cause for apprehension, where large numbers are hurried into the Church, upon the feeling and impulse of a moment; and many are added to its ministry, who are not at the pains of concealing their hostility to its peculiar and acknowledged principles.

It is undeniable, that within a few years a great change has taken place in the theological opinions of many of the teachers of our denomination. Are we expected to find, in every Presbyterian minister, a lover and defender of the venerable standards of our Church; one who zealously inculcates upon the people the doctrines which they contain, and which we believe to be faithfully derived from the Holy Scriptures. Now it has become no uncommon thing to hear of Presbyterian ministers sneering at the Confession and Catechisms of the Presbyterian Church; pronouncing

the very idea of a creed an absurdity; and, as might be expected, industriously setting forth a system of opinions as different from that of our standards as darkness from day. This state of things the revered fathers of our Church could scarcely have anticipated. The language of the standards which they adopted, is remarkable for precision and perspicuity. It is not possible to mistake the system of doctrine which they were designed to teach. Could it be thought, therefore, that any would seek a connexion with a Church, without believing her articles of faith? Might it not have been supposed, that every feeling of candour, honour, and uprightness, would deter men from solemnly professing to receive and adopt a system of doctrine which they do not believe, and which they consider themselves required to contradict and repudiate?

Our Presbyteries are bound to watch, with vigilance and fidelity, against the entrance of unsound men into the ministry. Whatever might have been anticipated, the history of the Church abundantly shows, that the matter cannot be safely left to the honour and conscience of the applicants themselves. If permitted, every kind and degree of error will gain admission into the Church. The doctrines of our standards will be forgotten, or calumniated; and purity and peace will be estranged from our borders. A tide of innovation and error, will sweep away all the landmarks of truth and order, erected in the early and purer times of the Church. As watchmen on the walls of Zion, it belongs to us to see that no enemy, whatever disguise he may put on, be permitted to enter our gates; as constituted guardians of the public welfare, we must beware of committing the direction of affairs to men who are hostile to our best interests. A man who is not cordially and thoroughly at-

tached to our system, ought not to obtrude himself upon us; and if he should attempt it, the Presbytery must abhor the thought of participating in the guilt of his prevarication and falsehood.

The present distracted state of the Presbyterian Church is owing, in a great degree, to the facility with which men of almost every shade of opinion have been admitted to preach among us. Some Presbyteries, it is said, have dispensed with the Constitutional questions required to be proposed to every candidate at his ordination; and others have not considered opinions, the most remote from our standards, a sufficient cause for rejection. Perhaps I may say with truth, that none have been duly alert in guarding the entrance to the holy ministry. We are now suffering the deplorable consequences of such unconstitutional and culpable remissness.

Some departures from truth are far more pernicious in their nature and tendency than others: against such it becomes us to guard with special care and diligence. An error may be of such a nature, and lead to such consequences, as to be incompatible with a sound and scriptural system of divinity. Any material error in respect to the all important doctrine of atonement, is of this character. Such an error, we hesitate not to say, is committed, whenever the atonement of Christ is represented as *indefinite* in regard to its objects; and as not insuring the salvation of those for whom it was made. Indeed it is nothing better than an abuse of language, to denominate any thing an *atonement*, which does not make an effectual satisfaction for the offences of him or them, in behalf of whom it is offered; and insure, as its consequence, the reconciliation of the parties previously at variance. The inconceivable suffer-

ings of our Lord Jesus Christ may be called an *exhibition*, or a *display*, or a *symbolical representation*, or whatever else you please, except an *atonement*; but an *atonement* they can with no propriety be denominated, if they did not fully satisfy the divine justice for the sins of men, and make certain the reconciliation with God, of all those for whom the atoning Redeemer became the substitute and surety.

An error here never remains solitary; it will soon be found in company with a denial of the doctrine of original sin, of the vicarious nature, altogether, of the sufferings of Christ, of the imputation of his righteousness to believers for justification, and of the necessity and reality of the Spirit's operations, in regenerating and sanctifying the soul. Did time permit, it would be easy to show how all these pernicious errors are naturally, and almost unavoidably, connected with each other; but it is enough to know that in fact they are usually seen associated. How extremely hazardous is it then, to admit any man who holds one of them, to be a teacher in the Presbyterian Church? One of these errors admitted, we must expect to find a host of others following in its train.

Let those, then, who are appointed to guard the avenues to Church membership, and to the office of the ministry, justly appreciate the high and responsible trust reposed in them. Let them beware of receiving into the Church of Christ the ignorant, the scandalous and irreligious; let them beware of admitting to the office of teaching and ruling in the Church, men who, they have reason to believe, do not accord in judgment or practice with its authorized principles. An increase of numbers will be a poor compensation for the introduction of unsoundness and irreligion into the Church.

2. The officers of the Church are required to exercise discipline upon offending members. In every society, whose members are imperfect, discipline is necessary. If one of your children do wrong, you admonish, reprove, or chasten him, as the case may require. In seats of learning, from the village school to the dignified university, the disorderly are reclaimed, and a healthful state of the institution maintained, by the application of suitable discipline. The Lord Jesus has appointed discipline as the means of restoring his erring children, and of promoting the purity and welfare of his Church. Warnings, admonitions, rebukes, and even separation from the communion of the saints, are to be employed for these purposes.

In the reception of members to the Church, the ministers and elders are not exempt from mistake. Notwithstanding the utmost caution, some unworthy persons gain admission; and even the real disciples of Christ are imperfect, and liable to error and transgression. In what manner then shall the honour of Christ, and the authority of his laws, be vindicated? How shall the erring disciple be restored, and the Church preserved from the contamination of the wicked? The Scriptures point out discipline as the proper means. No discredit can be incurred by the Church from the misconduct of its members, if the salutary rules of discipline be promptly applied. No encouragement is given to transgress, if there be reason to expect that transgression will be followed by adequate correction.

3. The rules of the Church possess the power to exclude the contumacious and impenitent. If every means employed to reclaim an offending member be found insufficient, he must be separated from the communion of the Church. The Scriptures prefixed to this discourse leave



no room for doubt on this subject: "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject." Other quotations might be made to the same purpose. "If he neglect to hear the Church, says our Saviour, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican;" an apostle commands the Thessalonians to "withdraw themselves from every brother that walketh disorderly." Every society must possess power to exclude those whose membership is found incompatible with the chief design of the institution. The Church can be no exception to this. Its members associate upon the basis of certain recognized principles, and for the attainment of certain important ends. If the connexion of any one be found to infringe these principles, and to frustrate these ends, it is within the province of the constituted authorities of the Church to declare him to be no longer in its fellowship. The exercise of this power, when a proper occasion calls for it, is an indispensable and very important duty. However unpleasant to our feelings, a due regard to the command and glory of God, to the purity, peace and welfare of the Church, requires that we should not shrink from the performance of it.

But here the question will arise, by whom is the discipline of the church to be administered? Who are authorized to judge of the qualifications of members, to apply the laws of Christ for the correction of what is wrong in them, and to exclude the scandalous and contumacious offender? I have no disposition to enter into an argument in relation to ecclesiastical polity; whether the government of the Church belongs, by divine right, to pastors in conjunction with ruling elders, or to the congregation at large. You are satisfied with the doctrine and practice of the Presby-

terian Church on this subject. You have no disposition to renounce the system approved by Calvin and Knox, and by the able and pious founders of our religious community. The Waldenses, those famous witnesses for God and truth, retained the simple and scriptural form of Presbyterianism, when all the world was corrupted by the abominations of the Romish hierarchy. Under the influence of this system, the most glorious triumphs of the Reformation were achieved. When strictly maintained, it has ever been found most effectual in checking the aberrations of heretics; in purifying the Church from error and licentiousness; and in promoting sound doctrine and pure religion.

Shall the degenerate Church of Geneva, the corrupted Presbyterian Churches of England, or even the present condition of our own Church, be adduced to prove that Presbyterianism is not adequate to prevent the entrance of baneful error, or the prevalence of pernicious practices? We deeply lament the degeneracy of churches planted and watered by the labours of Calvin, and Beza, and Turretin. We are grieved to learn that places of worship, dedicated to the honour of the Son of God, by the pious and orthodox Presbyterians of England, are polluted by the blasphemies of Socinianism. And we are no less grieved to learn that, in our own beloved community, opinions have gained a currency, which are more in harmony with the creed of Pelagius, than with that of the excellent men who founded our Church, or framed its standards.

Whilst we admit and lament these departures from the purity of the Gospel, we are far from conceding that they can be fairly imputed to any defect in the Presbyterian form of church government: or that the rules and discipline of Presbyterianism, if faithfully applied, would have been

found insufficient to prevent them. The noblest ship that ever floated on the bosom of the deep, must have her efficient commander, her able and faithful crew; if these be wanting, the ill-fated vessel will soon run upon the shoals, or be dashed against the rocks. The constitution and laws of the country may be wise and excellent; but if the administration become corrupt, and the execution of the laws be neglected, it is preposterous to suppose that the commonwealth can escape detriment.

If the discipline of the Church be relaxed, or wholly neglected; if no pains be taken to prevent the entrance of men whose adverse propensities and foreign attachments are notorious; if public teachers be permitted to declare themselves in opposition to the acknowledged doctrine and order of the Church, whilst the appointed guardians of her purity and peace make no effort to repress their presumption, and punish their treachery; ought it to be looked upon as a matter of astonishment, that the floodgates of error and delusion should be opened upon us, that orthodoxy should become a term of reproach, and a strict adherence to our standards be branded as illiberal and sectarian? If the majority of pastors and elders become corrupt or remiss, it cannot be expected that care will be taken to preserve inviolate the pure and scriptural doctrines of the Church, or to inflict deserved censure upon treachery and licentiousness. In such a state of things, corruption and error of every kind will not be slow in making their appearance.

But if, whilst the Church is substantially sound, whilst the pure doctrines of the Gospel are venerated, and the duties it enjoins generally practised, heresy and immorality show their hated front, there is no system of government

which possesses superior facilities for checking and extirpating them. A church session can act with incomparably greater promptness, decision, and energy, than the entire body of the congregation. Its members are, in general, more exempt from the influence of passions and prejudices, adverse to the right discharge of duty; they are less likely to be deceived by the wily arts of heresy, or the imposing pretensions of specious iniquity; and from their superior intelligence, and deeper sense of responsibility, they are better qualified, as well as more anxious, to do what is just and right.

The advantages of the Presbyterian organization for the support and defence of truth, and for the suppression of error, are great and obvious. The members of the Presbytery, after full examination, judge of the qualifications of the candidate for the ministry, and if they find him deficient in ability, soundness, or piety, they have the power, as it is their duty, to reject him. The avenue to the sacred office is, by this arrangement, guarded in the best possible manner.

To the Presbytery it also belongs to watch with solicitude over the reputation and conduct of all its members; to arrest those who abandon the safe course marked out by our standards, and launch into the sea of novelty and error; and to preserve the churches under their care from the contagion of wickedness and false doctrine. The happiest effects, it may be expected, will follow from a faithful adherence to our ecclesiastical standards, and a firm determination to assert their authority. It will be found that a decided movement in condemnation of erroneous opinions, will operate effectually to cool the ardour of heretical enthusiasts, and to check their presumptuous career into the wild regions of delusion and fanaticism.

To the higher judicatories, to our Synods and General Assembly, it pertains, to superintend the concerns of the Church more at large, to correct what is amiss in the lower courts, to defend the sacred cause of evangelical truth and piety, to guard the churches against the approaches of pestilent error and to devise and execute measures, for the more general prevalence of truth and holiness in the world.

Here, then, is a system of ecclesiastical government, harmonious, compact, energetic. According to it, the united wisdom and piety of the Church may be exerted for the correction of what is wrong in any part; and on the other hand, whatever is judged useful can, in an orderly and authoritative manner, be established for the common benefit of the whole. Whether we contemplate this system in theory or practice, or in regard to scriptural evidence and authority, we can see no reason why it may not compare to advantage with any other.

When the Lord Jesus organized his Church, he imparted the keys of the kingdom, not to all the people, but to the apostles whom he had chosen. And the apostles, acting by the authority of their Master, committed the power of government and discipline to the elders, whom they ordained in every city. The people having exercised their right of choosing, in the case of the seven deacons, were afterwards to obey, not to rule. The administration of ecclesiastical authority by the people at large, is an assumption, not countenanced in the New Testament.

The uses of discipline are various and important.

1. It is necessary to prevent the anger of God from resting on his Church; which must be the case, if sin be allowed in its members. The ancient Church were commanded to put a difference between the clean and unclean,



between the holy and unholy; and to remove far from them every cause of pollution and guilt. When they neglected to do so, they were soon visited with the manifestations of God's displeasure. The same obligation rests upon the New Testament Church. "Be ye holy; for I am holy." Sin, at all times, and wherever found, is offensive to the Divine Majesty. The wicked he reserves to the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. He will then make it evident, that his forbearance is by no means inconsistent with the strongest disapprobation of sin, and an unchangeable determination to punish it. His chosen and redeemed people are, indeed, delivered from condemnation and the wrath to come. Yet, whilst in this life, they are liable to faults and imperfections. If, therefore, sin be allowed in them without admonition or correction, Christ will rebuke and chasten them; and if corrupt doctrines and practices be tolerated in the Church, he will come and fight against it, and remove its candlestick out of his place, except they repent. To avoid, therefore, or remove the Divine displeasure, discipline must be faithfully applied. The faults of God's children must be corrected, and the heretical and abominable must be excluded from the communion of the faithful.

2. Discipline is necessary to promote the sanctification of believers, and to reclaim them from what is offensive and sinful. For these important purposes, the ordinary dispensation of the word and ordinances are of great and indispensable utility. The ambassador of Christ must show unto the people their transgressions and sins; and by a faithful exhibition of the admonitions and reproofs of the Divine word, as well as by the sweet accents of the Gospel, he must call them to repentance and amendment. But if an

offending member be not reclaimed by the common ministrations of the Gospel, and if the private means enjoined by our Saviour have been used without effect, the Church must have recourse to discipline, properly so called. Public admonition, rebuke, suspension, or separation, must be employed as the case may require. If milder remedies be found insufficient, we must not neglect the use of the more severe. There is hope that the erring brother will be brought to wise reflection, and humble penitence. "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 a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." "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." Discipline, among its other uses, ought to be regarded as a means, appointed by our Lord for the recovery of his straying children. When, therefore, the conduct of any of the members requires the salutary correction of discipline, the rulers of the Church ought not to permit an ill-judged tenderness to lead them to withhold it.

3. Discipline is necessary to preserve the purity and peace of the Church. The greatest defections which have taken place, from the purity and simplicity of the Gospel, have proceeded from small beginnings; from deviations, slight at first, from the authorized language and approved customs of the Church. These, under the notion of *improvements*, the young and unstable are too often ready to adopt. If permitted to pass without animadversion, or rebuke, something more decisive, and still more dangerous, will soon follow. The standard doctrines of the Church will be

assailed; pernicious errors will be embraced and propagated; and licentiousness, and every enormity, will come in like a flood. Look at the degenerate Churches of the old and the new world; you will find that such has been the progress of things among them. No sound community becomes wholly corrupt at once. From slight beginnings, and by little and little, the most dreadful and ruinous apostacies have been brought about. We ought not, therefore, to account any departure from sound doctrine and evangelical practice, as void of danger. Some may, perhaps, in judging from the supposed greater light of the present age, and from the apparent piety of those who are given to change, consider our Church secure from the catastrophe which has befallen others. To such I would say, in the language of the apostle, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump."

The peace of the Church will be endangered and destroyed, if discipline be neglected. Unless unscriptural innovations be discountenanced and suppressed by the judicial acts of the Church, disputes and distractions must be perpetual; at least, as long as there remains in the community any regard to truth and piety. Are we charged with disturbing the peace of the Church? There is no good reason why we should be discomposed under such an accusation. The charge applies with much more propriety to those who have given us sufficient cause to sound the alarm of danger; who have brought into jeopardy the doctrines and institutions which we are under the most solemn obligations to cherish and defend. Disturbers of the peace of the Church! Sweet peace! heavenly peace! much as we love thee, we are willing to dispense with thy presence, whilst a hostile banner waves over our Zion, and her bulwarks are assailed by

an invading foe. Whilst opinions and practices, unknown to our standards, and abhorrent to the judgment of the Church in every age, possess credit and currency within our ecclesiastical limits, we neither expect nor desire peace. Changes cannot be introduced into any religious community without producing disturbances and contentions. The evil, if these changes be unscriptural, must be charged upon those who attempt to introduce them. Opposition to them is matter of praise, not of censure. To preserve the tranquillity of the Church, therefore, and to promote its highest permanent welfare, the correction of errors and abuses by discipline is often indispensable.

4. Discipline is necessary to vindicate the honour of Christ and of religion, by separating from the Church whatever is offensive and scandalous. "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned, and avoid them." "Now, we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly." What will become of the honour of Christ, the sacredness of the Christian profession, and the veneration due to the holy institutions of the Gospel, if the ignorant and heretical, the vicious and profane, be allowed to participate in the sacramental solemnities, and still more, in the functions of the sacred ministry? Before the world, the Church must put a difference between truth and error, between holiness and sin. By the authority of Christ, for the glory of his name, for the reputation of religion in the world, the licentious and disorderly, the blasphemer and the heretic, must be excluded from the fellowship of the saints.

Discipline, to accomplish its purposes, must be exercised

with tenderness, impartiality, and solemnity; and, when the case demands it, with promptness and vigour. The rules laid down in the constitution of the Church, in conformity with Scripture, must be scrupulously followed. There must be no appearance of personal hostility, or private revenge, or a disposition to seek an occasion for discipline. It must be evident that the officers of the Church, are influenced by upright intentions, and conscientious motives; by a solemn regard to the authority of Christ, and a sincere desire to promote the welfare of the Church, and of the offender himself. If the case be otherwise, if there be a manifest exhibition of passion and prejudice, of partiality and injustice, it would be vain to expect that discipline should produce a favourable impression upon the Church, or upon the world.

In this age of affected liberality, but of real licentiousness in religious belief, the ordinance of discipline is divested of much of the weight and solemnity which it ought to possess. It is not unfrequently contemned and set at defiance, by men who justly incur its inflictions. This cannot be done, however, without extreme peril. He that despises the discipline of the Church, despises the institution and authority of the Son of God. The impenitent and presumptuous offender, will find the sentence of the Church confirmed by the Supreme Judge, at the day of final account. "Whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." The man who has fallen under the righteous censures of the Church, is bound to practise submission, humiliation, repentance, and amendment. If he do not, his abuse and contempt of this Divine institution, will aggravate his condemnation and punishment, when Christ shall judge the world.



It is not possible, perhaps, nor is it of importance, to mention every occasion upon which the exercise of discipline is proper and necessary. Whatever is proved to be wrong by the sacred Scriptures, and by the authorized standards of the Church, may, in certain circumstances, require the correction which discipline alone can furnish. It is the intention of discipline to encourage and promote every thing that is pure, and lovely, and of good report; to remove every stain and imperfection from the Christian character; and to banish from the Church every cause of offence, dishonour, and guilt. If any professor of religion be guilty of neglecting the worship of God, of profaneness, or Sabbath breaking; if he be grossly deficient in the performance of relative duties, if he be chargeable with fraud, falsehood, covetousness, malignity, or licentiousness; if he be intemperate, or a promoter of intemperance in others; he is certainly a proper subject for discipline. The private means for reclaiming offenders having been found insufficient, the Church must resort to public censure, or excommunication. The command and honour of God, the purity and tranquillity of the Church, the welfare of the offender himself, render the employment of discipline, in such cases, an imperative duty.

The discipline of the Church must be used, when occasion requires, to maintain and vindicate the truths of the Gospel, and to suppress heretical innovations.

The maintenance of evangelical doctrine, is of the highest possible importance. It is by the manifestation of the truth that God is glorified, the Church preserved and extended, sinners converted, and believers prepared for celestial blessedness. On the contrary, false doctrine tends necessarily to dishonour the divine perfections, to corrupt the

Church, and to ruin the souls of men. It is possible that error may be employed successfully in catching the attention and exciting the feelings of the ignorant; but after all, a counterfeit Gospel can produce nothing better than a counterfeit religion. We must be able to furnish more authentic proofs of the correctness of our opinions, than that they are adapted to arrest the attention, to alarm the fears, and to agitate the passions of the hearers. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The transcendent value of truth will be in some measure appreciated, if we remember that it is only in connexion with it that God is pleased to exert his power, for the conversion, sanctification, and salvation of men. Beyond the limits of Christian instruction, there is no indication of divine influence descending to renew the nature of man, and to qualify him for the holiness of heaven. The history of the Church also shows, that a perversion or abandonment of the truth, is soon followed by an interruption of the refreshing showers of heavenly mercy. Surely, then, the Churches redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, have the highest interest in the preservation of the truths of the blessed Gospel; and no zeal, however ardent, no exertions, however strenuous, directed to this object, can be considered disproportionate to its importance.

It might perhaps have been thought that the exercise of discipline would, on no occasion, be necessary for the defence of the truth; that no man would seek to obtrude himself upon a community, whose religious faith was not in harmony with his own; and that no minister, of any denomination, would venture to contradict the established principles of the Society of which he is a member. But

these anticipations, however reasonable, are contradicted by ample experience, both of the past and the present. Too often has the Church been surprised and outraged, by finding her ministers acting in direct contravention to the obligations they assumed, and the professions which they made, at the time of their ordination.

Most of the communities into which the Church of God is divided, have published to the world a Confession of Faith, exhibiting the doctrines believed, and the rules practised among them. The design of this exhibition is to give information to all whom it may concern, of the principles upon which any particular association of professed Christians is founded; and to provide a common ground of agreement among the members of the same society. This conduct is frank, upright, and honourable. The world has a right to know the principles upon which any religious society is constituted. Concealment is disingenuous, illiberal, and a just ground of suspicion. How indeed can any thing deserving the name of a society exist, unless there be some basis of agreement, some principles which are recognized by all as true and important? In this there is no encroachment upon the rights of others. We have unquestionably the right of choosing our associates; of settling the rules of our intercourse, and the terms upon which we are willing to admit others to our fellowship.

Some professed Christians have indeed opposed all creeds and confessions of human composition. The Bible, say they, is our creed: and they speak, in no measured terms, of the presumption, folly, and danger, of introducing any other creed into the Church. The plan which they propose would answer every purpose, if all who profess to believe the Scriptures concurred in the same interpretation of

them. The profession of faith in the Bible would then secure an agreement, about the truths contained in the Bible. But this is so far from being the case, that we find every shade and variety of opinion, among men who equally profess to believe the Bible—from the pure doctrines of salvation, down to the rejection of all that is peculiar and essential to revealed religion. It is evident therefore, that this profession alone cannot secure sound doctrine in any Church, nor exclude the most destructive errors; that there can be no agreement, no harmony, among men differing so widely as they do, who are equally ready to make this profession.

In fact, every religious denomination have some standard of belief among them, besides the Bible; some creed, avowed or understood, which expresses their judgment respecting the chief articles of faith. Perceiving this to be the case, some object, not so much to a creed or confession, as to one so extended and particular as those are, which the churches have thought proper to adopt. The creed of the Church, say they, ought to be confined to a few simple principles, in which all Christians can unite. But here it is obvious to inquire, who shall ascertain these few simple principles, in which all Christians can unite? or rather how shall we settle the preliminary question, Who are Christians? Is there no difficulty in answering these inquiries, to the satisfaction of all who may be interested in them?

What remains, then, but that men, agreeing about the chief principles of religion, form themselves into a society upon the basis of this agreement, upon the profession of their common faith; and that they commit their principles to writing, for the information and satisfaction of all concerned. Heretical departures from the truths of the Gospel, gave occasion to the formation of creeds and confes-

sions; and the number of articles to which they are extended is regulated, in a great measure, by the number of errors to which men are exposed.

A few simple principles, however, do in reality determine the whole extent of the theological creed of every denomination of Christians. The details which fill up the volume, are either held in common by all, or are logically deduced from the cardinal principles of the system. The opposers of our Confession of Faith object, not so much to its details, as to its fundamental doctrines. They may profess to find fault with it as too minute, too particular, too far extended; but when they come to explain themselves, it is soon discovered that their hostility is directed against its *principal* doctrines, its *essential* characteristics. This will be apparent from an enumeration of some of the grand principles of our theological standards.

These venerable instruments teach the doctrines of divine predestination and eternal decrees, that "God hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass," and in particular, that "some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death." "Yet, so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." See Confession of Faith, chap. iii. sec. i. iii. vii. Larg. Cat. 12.

They teach the complete representative character of Adam, "that the covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him, in his first transgression;" that in consequence of the imputation of Adam's sin, all men are



by nature in a state of condemnation, depravity, and helplessness, “utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good: so that having wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good, and being dead in sin, man is not able by his own strength to convert himself.”

They teach that “the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, was made the Substitute and Surety of his people; that by his vicarious obedience and sufferings, he hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, but the elect only.”

They teach that believers are justified on account of the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ, imputed to them, and received by faith alone.

They instruct us to believe that effectual calling, or regeneration, is the work of God’s almighty power and grace, in which man is altogether passive; and that by the immediate, internal, and effectual operations of the Holy Spirit, believers are enlightened, sanctified, and sealed, to eternal redemption.

They show that holiness and good works are the proper fruit and evidence of eternal election, and that without them there can be no well-founded hope of everlasting life.

They instruct us, that all who are brought into a state of acceptance and sanctification shall, from the unchangeable love of God, the efficacy of the death and intercession of Christ, and the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit, certainly persevere to the end and be eternally saved.

These are some of the essential and characteristic princi-

ples of our religious system. If any man believe them, there is no danger of his quarrelling with our Confession of Faith; of his objecting to its extent, or the minuteness of its details. It is against what we deem the essential truths of Divine revelation, the very basis of our religious system, that the enemies of our Confession take exception. Before satisfaction could be given to them, we must cast away what we consider the chief excellence and glory of scriptural Divinity; we must change our system to a form as remote from pure Christianity, as the wanderings of the human imagination are from the infallible dictates of Divine inspiration.

In framing the standards of the Church, every reasonable allowance ought to be made for the weakness of the human understanding; and for the diversities of opinion which are unavoidable among men of independent minds. A determination ought not to be attempted of questions of no importance, or of doubtful disputation, concerning which there may be a difference among men who agree in the main points of Christianity. It is highly expedient, however, that every religious society should furnish an exhibition of the principal articles of their faith, and of the rules and practices prevalent among them. By these symbols of the Church, a bond of association, a basis of agreement and communion, is provided among the members; a fair and liberal disclosure is made to the world; and useful aids are furnished in subserviency to the Scriptures, for the instruction of believers and of their children.

But the most important ends of a Confession of Faith are not to be attained, unless it be strictly regarded by the community in which it is adopted. Will the creed of a Church indicate to the world the opinions of its members,

if every man allow himself an unlimited license in the reception and interpretation of theological doctrines? Can any harmony of judgment or sentiment exist in such a community? Is not the bond of union and fellowship virtually and necessarily broken, by such unwarrantable liberties?

We have often heard of such a state of things in the secularized Church establishments of Europe; of men embracing every opportunity to impugn the very doctrines which the standards of their Church pronounced true and sacred: and we have heard of it with amazement. We never considered it short of insincerity and treachery of the most malignant kind. What judgment, then, shall we form of the same conduct when found among ourselves? Shall we pronounce it a flagrant breach of faith, a scandalous dishonesty in the Churches of Europe, but quite innocent and reputable in the Presbyterian Church of America? It is not to be denied, that there are among us men who have embraced a scheme subversive of the known and established profession of the community to which they belong; who do not hesitate to use the language of disapprobation and contempt, when speaking of the doctrines, which, at their ordination, they solemnly declared to be agreeable to the Holy Scriptures. However this conduct may appear to others, to me, it seems an outrage upon the rights and feelings of their fellow members, a violation of the fundamental principle of the association, and a gross imposition upon the world.

It may indeed be alleged by these men, that the system of doctrine which they once professed to believe, has fallen far behind the improvements of the age; that new light has lately burst upon their astonished minds; and that it is unreasonable and impossible to cramp the expansive energies

of their original and powerful genius, by the framework of creeds and confessions.

If it be true, that the new light, of which they boast, has enabled them to detect the errors of all former times, and to make improvements in divinity far beyond the attainments of their fathers; if it be admitted, that their masterly intellects have proved the old system to be essentially erroneous, and that some new scheme is alone worthy of their high approbation, what is the consequence? What course of conduct would a due regard to sincerity and integrity dictate? A continuance in the Church, to contradict and vilify its acknowledged doctrines? Certainly not. Every manly and honourable sentiment, every principle of consistency and duty, requires them to withdraw from a community whose doctrines they think proper to repudiate, and attempt to bring into reproach. They may advance high pretensions to new light, and an improved system of theology; but these claims cannot be made whilst they retain their connexion with the Church, whose doctrines they reject, except at the expense of every title to fairness and honesty. We admire the ingenuousness of a man who, at every hazard, separates himself from a community, when dissatisfied with its principles; we detest the baseness which can convert office and standing, in any society, to the destruction of its vital interests. Such a course deserves the indignant rebuke of an offended community, and the severe disapprobation of all honourable men. Every religious denomination has an interest in stamping the mark of condemnation upon a procedure so remote from all fair and honourable dealing. The common sentiments of mankind pronounce it uncandid, offensive, and wrong. If any man disapprove the constitution of his Church, let him, be-

fore he permits himself to impugn it, renounce a profession which he knows to be neither cordial nor sincere.

It is well known that opinions are entertained in some portions of our Church, very different from what we are taught in our sound and scriptural standards. These differences are neither few nor unimportant. If adopted, they would be fatal to the venerable system of truth, which we have received from our fathers, and which we believe to be founded on the word of God. The covenant made with Adam, is exploded. The doctrines of redemption and justification are moulded into a form, in which we can discern scarcely a lineament of their former perfection and glory. The ability of fallen, sinful man, is maintained to be ample and universal; whilst the agency of the Holy Spirit is limited to the presentation of truth to the mind, by the external instrumentalities of the Gospel. These are some of the changes, which are so zealously recommended to our acceptance, and which are so confidently pronounced improvements in theology. When such innovations are attempted, the duty of all who know and love the truth, cannot be a matter of uncertainty. Has the Lord Jesus made us acquainted with the glorious and precious doctrines of his word? and can we be indifferent about their reception and success in the world? Shall we have no zeal for the suppression of baleful error? Shall we do nothing to discountenance a presumptuous and dishonest departure from the acknowledged doctrines of the Church to which we belong, by those, who, above all others, are bound to be faithful?

The attachment of the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland and Ireland to the genuine doctrines of their ecclesiastical standards, has proved to be powerful and most salutary. It has done much to purify these communities



from the pestilent influence of heresy. The former unsoundness of some of their ministers is well known: and nothing has contributed more to preserve those churches from total corruption and apostacy, than their firm adherence to their excellent and scriptural standards. A determination has been evinced, to assert the authority of the doctrines of the Church, and to compel the patrons of different schemes to seek their sphere of action elsewhere.

American Presbyterians! Here are examples worthy of your imitation. It is becoming and right to emulate the commendable fidelity and zeal of others, in behalf of the truth; and the happy success which has crowned the efforts of your transatlantic brethren, may well serve to stimulate your exertions. It is animating, it is delightful, to behold the noble stand taken by some of the British churches, in defence of truth, and in opposition to error and delusion. May we not hope, that at length the same spirit will be awakened in our Church; that a determination will be manifested to preserve inviolate the pure doctrines of Scripture and of our Confession; and that a state of things will soon exist, in which heresies, whether old or new, can no longer be avowed and propagated with impunity by men, who, to the sin of disseminating false doctrine, superadd that of contradicting their profession, and infringing their solemn engagements.

Nothing operates more powerfully to destroy the peace and prosperity of the Church, and to excite wrath, and strife, and every evil work, than heretical departure from the truths of the Gospel. Would it not be strange, if the guardians of the purity and welfare of the Church had no authority to arrest an evil so formidable and ruinous? The Scriptures recognize this authority; and not only so, they

enjoin its exercise as an indispensable duty. We are commanded to avoid, to reject, to cut off, those who corrupt and trouble the Church, by the propagation of false doctrine. We are not permitted to bestow upon them the least countenance, much less to receive them to our fellowship, or to retain them in it. "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."

In the infliction of discipline, on account of error, the judicatories of the Church must be regulated by her established standards. We maintain, indeed, that the Scriptures are the supreme and ultimate rule of truth and duty, and that the subordinate standards of the Church ought to be framed in strict accordance with the suggestions of Inspiration. If they be not, they ought to be thrown aside, or corrected. But whilst the Confession of Faith retains its authority, no member of our community is permitted to appeal from its decision. It is the proper and immediate criterion of truth and error, in the Presbyterian Church. No man has a right to complain, if he be judged by the law under which he has placed himself. If he become dissatisfied with it, he is at perfect liberty to withdraw beyond the reach of its jurisdiction. We must pronounce that to be truth which accords with our standards, and that to be error which contradicts them.

The most consummate address has always been employed by the advocates of error, to cover their advance, and to screen themselves from deserved rebuke. At one time, you will find them attempting to bring forward their new divinity, during the heat and tumult of a religious awakening; at another time, they are seen

labouring to recommend it, by subtle argument and metaphysical reasoning. If one of these men be called to an account for his heretical opinions, he is found ready to defend himself with a world of *explanations*. He positively asserts, that he differs from you only in words, or in points not essential. He declares that he believes the same doctrines which others believe, and that he differs only in his explanation of them: although it is evident, that what he calls his explanation, is a flat contradiction of the doctrine. Much is heard of the spirit and improvements of the age, of new light, and more liberal ideas in religion; of the importance of being divested of prejudice and a servile dependence upon authority. It is enough to excite our amazement, if not our indignation, to see a youth whose attention has been directed to religious subjects only a few years, perhaps months, undertaking to depreciate the attainments of the Church in all former times; and to set himself in advance of the most learned and able divines which the world has ever known. But surely to talk about the improvements of the age, will not cover the arrogance and absurdity of such pretensions. Improvements of the age! Improvements in divinity! Has any new revelation been received from heaven? Can any important truth be named, to which the Church, in former ages, has been a stranger? Nothing of the kind. In what, then, consist the boasted improvements in divinity, of which we hear so much? I answer, in the revival of old and exploded errors, upon which the Church has long since, and repeatedly, placed the mark of reprobation. Our modern discoveries are derived, not from the lively oracles, but from the graves of Pelagius, Socinus, and other heretics.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we call upon all

the members of our Church, deeply and solemnly to consider the present state of things among us. At no time in the history of our community, has the aspect of affairs appeared so dark and appalling. The tide of delusion and innovation has been advancing upon us with portentous impetuosity, threatening to sweep away all that we venerate as excellent, and lovely, and scriptural, in our doctrines and institutions. We beseech every Presbyterian, therefore, to awake to the dangers which threaten the purity, the peace, and the highest welfare of our denomination; and to repel every attempt which may be made, to set aside, or mutilate, the genuine and approved system which we at present enjoy. We ought to, and I hope we do, love and revere the established principles of our standards. We know that under their influence, our society has greatly prospered; and it should be our ardent wish, that they may be transmitted unimpaired to our children. How then can any be unconcerned, whilst many among us are labouring to bring them into disrepute, and to substitute another, and, in many essential respects, an opposite system, in their place? We entreat you, then, for your own sakes, for the sake of your children, for the regard you have for the honour of Christ, the advancement of truth, and the prosperity of the Church, to beware of giving encouragement, in any way, to the promulgation of notions unknown to our orthodox and scriptural Confession of Faith. The indignant rebukes of the churches, ought to meet every attempt to introduce another Gospel, in the place of that which you have learned from the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We call upon the ruling elders, the guardians of the purity and welfare of our churches, duly to reflect upon the high obligations which devolve upon them at this eventful juncture. Beloved brethren, it is your province and duty

to see that the people under your care be instructed in the pure doctrines of the word of God, and that the acknowledged principles of our Church be respected and maintained. It belongs to you to prevent, so far as your authority extends, the propagation of a system of opinions unknown to our standards, disowned by the Church of God in all past ages, essentially repugnant to the Holy Scriptures, and destructive to all true and scriptural religion. Much is expected from your firmness, your soundness in the faith, and your just sense of the duties which belong to your station. We look to you as most likely, under God, to sustain the cause of evangelical truth, and to arrest the tide of novelty and delusion, which, for some time past, has been advancing within our limits.

Ministers of the everlasting Gospel, we call upon you to exert the authority, which you have received from the Lord Jesus, in defence of the truth, and for the prevention of error, delusion, and discord, in the Churches. To you, especially, it pertains to provide that the people be fed with knowledge and understanding; and to see that the poison of heresy be not administered to them, instead of the bread of life. When men corrupt the Gospel, and distract the Church by their pernicious innovations, you are under obligation to stay the plague, and to restore the body to a sound state, by the use of discipline, the remedy which Divine wisdom has appointed. In the discharge of this high obligation, you are required, it is true, to act in the exercise of Christian meekness, forbearance, and kindness: but you must not permit a feeling of tenderness, or a dread of opposition and censure, to deter you from the performance of an indispensable, although an unpleasant duty. You may expect to incur odium, suspicion and reproach.



But, being actuated by a pure regard to the honour and command of God, the glorious truths of the Gospel, and the best interests of the Church, you can well endure them. To the sincerity and uprightness of your intentions, you will have a witness in your own hearts—you will have a witness in heaven. May the great Head of the Church give you light and direction in all things; and enable you, with fidelity and firmness, to stand for God and truth; and to resist the progress of unscriptural novelties, and the encroachment of mischievous errors.

And let us all, my beloved hearers, be assured that we possess a spiritual discernment of the excellence and glory of divine truth; and that the truth has made us free from the predominance of corrupt desires and affections. Unless we have come to Christ, in consequence of our having heard and learned of the Father; unless we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit through the truth, a mere speculative understanding of the doctrines of religion will not accomplish our salvation. Let us endeavour, by a life and conversation becoming the Gospel, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, that when he shall appear, we may also appear with him in glory.



# SPRUCE STREET LECTURES.

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## LECTURE VI.

*Delivered on the Evening of the 5th February, 1832, by the  
Rev. Charles Hodge, of Princeton, N. J.*

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### NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT.

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“When we were enemies we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son.”—*Rom. v. 10.*

THE truth that man is a moral, and consequently an accountable being, is the foundation of all religion. It is necessarily involved in this truth, that our happiness depends on the favour of God, and that this favour is forfeited by sin. Just so far, and so clearly, therefore, as men are conscious of sin, are they convinced that they are the objects of the divine displeasure. As the consciousness of sin is universal, so also is the apprehension of God's anger. The question, therefore, forces itself on the attention of every considerate human being, with an energy and importunity which cannot be resisted, How is the favour of God to be regained? The answer to this question decides the religious character and the destiny of him who gives it. For, if he is mistaken here, if he adopts a wrong method of securing this object, he is, on his own principles, undone.

Here, then, more immediately than any where else, are we in contact with the vital principle of religion. For as there can be no real happiness, so there can be no holiness except in the enjoyment of God's favour, (*Rom. vi. 14*), and consequently there can be no true religion where the method of securing his favour, whatever that may be, is denied or neglected. Such being confessedly the importance of this question, it need hardly be remarked, that this of all others is the subject on which mere speculation and theorizing should be forborne. When a man is seeking for himself a footing on which he can stand alone in the presence of his God, or on which he is willing to assume the responsibility of exhorting others to stand, he needs, if ever, the rock of the divine testimony beneath his feet.

Happily we are not left in uncertainty on this subject. There is no one doctrine of the Bible more frequently asserted, more variously implied, more intimately interwoven with all the rest, than that which teaches the method of regaining the forfeited favour of God. The declaration is so explicit, and so frequently repeated, that we are reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, that no class of men, professing to recognize the authority of the Scriptures, venture to deny that it is in some way through the death of Christ this result is secured. But the question here arises, what is the nature of this connexion—how is it that the sufferings of the Son of God secure the remission of sins? It must be admitted that there is no little diversity of opinion as to the answer which should be given to this question. But why need the question be agitated? Why not be contented with the general statement, we are saved by the death of Christ, without perplexing ourselves or others by inquiring how these events are related? We should be

at a loss for an answer to these interrogations, and feel ready to admit that all such inquiries are worse than useless, if the Bible was silent on the subject. Did the Scriptures teach us the fact only, that the death of Christ is connected with the pardon of sin, without explaining the nature or mode of that connexion, then indeed would inquiry on the subject be vain, if not impious. But this is not the case. The manner in which the sufferings of the Redeemer are connected with our salvation, is as much revealed as the object of our faith and ground of our hope, as the fact itself. Besides, this question is most intimately connected with all true piety. If the death of Christ has no other connexion with the remission of sins, than as it confirms his doctrines, then must our views of the divine character, of the ground of a sinner's confidence towards God, of the nature of faith, and mode of salvation, all be changed; then have we another Gospel; and all those exercises of piety, which suppose a different view of this subject, are fanatical delusions. We are not, therefore, travelling beyond the limits of revealed truth, nor instituting an inquiry unconnected with practical religion, when we ask, How it is that the death of Christ secures the remission of sins? Various as are the opinions entertained on this subject, they may all, it is believed, be reduced to these three general views.

The first is that which represents the death of Christ, not as the immediate or proximate ground of pardon, but as securing this result only so far as it is instrumental in producing a change of character in the sinner himself. Its tendency to effect this change is ascribed either to the confirmation which it gives to the Gospel in the general, or to some one truth in particular; to the exhibition which it makes of the divine mercy, or the excellence of the Re-



deemer ; or to some more mysterious and undefinable influence. The effect, however, in what ever way it may be produced, is on the sinner himself, and it is in virtue of this effect that pardon is secured. According to this view, every constituent idea of the doctrine of Atonement is rejected, and Christianity is either a modified system of natural religion, or of mystical philosophy.

The second general view proceeds on the assumption, that as the end of punishment is the prevention of crime, if this end can be otherwise attained, the obstacle to the exercise of mercy would be removed. The death of Christ is designed to accomplish this object, by making an impression on the intelligent universe at least as efficacious in deterring from sin, as the punishment of the actual offender would have produced. Such being the object of the Atonement, it consists in sufferings not of a penal character, nor inflicted in the execution of the law, but endured under circumstances adapted to produce the desired impression. Its effect is to remove a governmental difficulty to the dispensation of pardons.

The third view proceeds on the principle, that the necessity of punishment does not arise merely out of the necessity of making an impression on the universe, and on the sinner himself, adapted to deter from sin, but also and primarily out of the inherent ill-desert of sin itself, and the infinite rectitude of the divine character, in which the idea of distributive justice is included. Consequently, while the Atonement is designed and adapted to produce the deepest impression of the holiness and justice of God on all intelligent beings, its primary object is to answer the demands of divine justice. It is, therefore, of the nature of a satisfaction, consisting in vicarious punishment, or in the infliction

of the penalty of the law on Jesus Christ as the substitute of the sinner. And its effect is to secure reconciliation on the condition of faith and repentance.

It is the object of this discourse to endeavour to show that the third of these views is the form in which the doctrine is presented in the word of God. Before entering on the subject, it may be necessary to state the sense in which the terms here employed are used. When it is said, the sufferings of Christ were of the nature of punishment, the word punishment is used in its ordinary acceptation, for suffering judicially inflicted, or sufferings imposed in execution of a legal sentence. The idea, of course, is not included, that the sufferer himself must be chargeable with sin in a moral sense. This would be no less abhorrent to the feelings of those who use this expression, than inconsistent with the plainest declarations of Scripture. Again, when it is said that the penalty of the law was executed on the Redeemer, it is not intended that his sufferings were, either in nature or degree, any more than in duration, the same as would have come on the sinner himself. Such an idea is not necessarily, nor properly, conveyed by the expression. The penalty of the law is not any specific degree or character of pain which the law imposes, but it is any and all pain, which sustains to the law the relation of a sanction. Thus, the word death, according to its scriptural use, does not import any one definite form or amount of suffering, but all evil, however varied in nature or intensity, by which sin is punished. Even with regard to human laws, the penalty never involves precisely the same kind and degree of pain in its execution. The terms may remain the same, but the character and amount of suffering are modified by ten

thousand circumstances in the moral character, natural temperament, and physical constitution of the individual. A youth of tender feelings, susceptible conscience, alive to the good opinion of society, with fair prospects and many friends, suffers unspeakably more and differently under the same sentence, than a hardened offender differently circumstanced in all these respects. It is, therefore, of all objections, the least worthy of notice, that Christ's sufferings were not penal, because they were not the same in character as those which the actual sinner would have experienced. There may be even an entire commutation of the punishment, without the penal character of the infliction being lost.

We cling to these expressions, not from any fondness for terms, but because those which we are urged to substitute for them do not express the idea we mean to convey. It is, therefore, in the sense just stated, we maintain, in accordance with the language of the Scriptures, that Christ suffered the penalty of the law. The law threatened death—and Christ suffered death—in the proper scriptural meaning of the term; that is, misery or pain judicially inflicted in support of the claims of the law.

The definition of the phrase vicarious punishment, we give in the words of a modern Lutheran divine.\* “It is suffering judicially inflicted on condition of the exemption of the actual offender.” It derives its character from its being judicially substituted for the punishment of the real transgressor, with a view to his pardon. The correctness of this definition is evident from the nature of the transaction, and from all the examples and illustrations of vicarious

\* Storr, Object of the Death of Christ.

sufferings recorded in the Scriptures. It is true, the exemption of the offender need not be, and in the case before us, is not, absolute and immediate, but may be suspended on any condition the judge and substitute have pleased to determine.

Christ, then, saves us from the penalty of the law by vicariously suffering that penalty in his own person. That this is the doctrine of the Word of God, on this subject, we think can easily be shown, if the two following principles of interpretation be admitted, and faithfully applied. The first is, that as the sacred writers unquestionably meant to be understood by the persons to whom they wrote, they must have employed the terms which they use in the sense which they knew would be attached to them by their readers or hearers, and, consequently, that the business of an interpreter is to ascertain the sense in which the cotemporaries of the sacred writers employed the terms these writers used, and the mode in which they would naturally conceive the doctrines which they presented. In doing this, he ascertains the mode in which the inspired penmen meant to be understood; and the mode in which we are bound to receive their meaning. This simple rule lies at the foundation of all certainty in the interpretation of written documents, ancient or modern.

The other principle is, that although it is not only proper in itself, but absolutely necessary in a teacher to accommodate himself to the capacity, the modes of thinking and speaking of his hearers, it is not consistent with fidelity or honesty to employ such a mode of instruction as would naturally lead them into error; or, by adopting their false opinions, to confirm and sanction them. Much less would such a course be consistent with the character of inspired



teachers, and least of all when teaching the plan of salvation. We are, therefore, never at liberty to assume that the sacred writers really meant something different from the obvious import of their language, on the ground of their having accommodated themselves to the opinions of those to whom they wrote. To attempt to draw a distinction between what is exegetically true, and what is doctrinally correct, is at once and entirely to destroy the authority of the Scriptures as a rule of faith. The Scriptures become a mere set of cabbalistic signs for every man to interpret as he pleases. Nothing more is necessary than this principle to enable any one, not only to explain away every doctrine of the Bible, but to make the Scriptures teach any conceivable system of opinions. And in point of fact, they have thus been made to contain every form of doctrine, from icy deism to ideal pantheism; and the Apostles alternately presented as heathen moralists, and mystic philosophers. It is clearly impossible to prove any thing from Scripture, to the satisfaction of those, who either avowedly, or practically, adopt such a principle of interpretation. If we are not to take the simple exegetical meaning of the Bible for its true meaning, then we can never know what its meaning is. Let us, under the guidance of the simple rule of construction, that the sacred writers say what they mean, and mean what they knew their readers would understand them to say, inquire in what way they teach the doctrine of Atonement. That they represent the death of Christ as a vicarious punishment of our sins, we think clear from the following considerations :

I. This doctrine is taught in all those passages in which Christ is said "to bear our sins." Thus, repeatedly, in the



fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare the sins of many." "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." It is our duty simply to inquire, what was the import of this phrase among the ancient Hebrews; what idea did they attach to the expression, "to bear sin," for this must be the idea which the sacred writer meant to convey. This point is easily decided, as the phrase is one of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures. Thus, in *Levit.* v. 1, it is said of the man who gives false testimony, "he shall bear his iniquity." As an equivalent expression in the next verse, it is said of him who touches any thing unclean, "he also shall be guilty." In v. 17, he who violates the law, though he does it ignorantly, "yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity." In chap. vii. 18, he that eateth of a peace-offering on the third day, "shall bear his iniquity." So, xvii. 16, he that does not wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh after eating any thing torn by a wild beast, "shall bear his iniquity." *Numb.* ix. 13, he that does not partake of the passover "shall be cut off from among his people—he shall bear his sins." This expression is sometimes interchanged (and thereby explained) with the phrase "he shall die," "he shall be cut off from among the people," (*Numb.* xix. 19.) or, "he shall be guilty." In all the numerous passages, therefore, in which these words occur in reference to men, the meaning is obvious and uniform, for a man to bear his sins, is to bear the blame of them, to be punished for them. And, accordingly, to bear the sins of another, is to bear the blame of them—to be punished for them. So, in *Numb.* xiv. 33, Jeremiah's *Lam.* v. 7, and *Ezek.* xviii. 19, 20,

“The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son, but the soul that sinneth it shall die.” Where the sense is too obvious to be at all questionable. That this is the meaning of the phrase as applied to Christ, by the prophet, is not only evident from the constant usage of the Bible, but from the prophet’s own explanation, “to bear our sins,” is to bear our sorrows, stripes, sickness, chastisement; that is, our punishment. It is to be afflicted, wounded, smitten, and that of God, for our sins. It is plain, too, from its use in the sacrificial services. After the imposition of hands, and confession, *i. e.* after the act of substitution, and the symbolical transfer of sin, the dying victim was said to bear the sins of the offerer. And, finally, the same thing is evident from the admitted opinions of ancient nations in reference to this subject. The case, indeed, is so plain, that the interpretation just given has secured the assent of all impartial commentators, orthodox or infidel. One of the most distinguished of the latter class, remarks on this phrase, “If we wish to understand such expressions, we must revert to the opinion of all early nations, and especially of the Hebrews, that all calamities, particularly those of more than ordinary severity, were punishments inflicted immediately by God, and that they could only be removed by an innocent victim undergoing the punishment as a substitute, and thus stilling the anger of the offended Deity.”\* Another of the same class, says, in reference to representations contained in this chapter, (*Isa.* liii.) “The majority of Hebrew readers, having their minds filled with the ideas of sacrifice and substitution, must, of necessity, have so understood these pas-

\* Martini on Isaiah, liii.

sages ; and it is not to be doubted, that the mode in which the apostles presented the atoning death of Christ, rests mainly on this ground.”\* It is, therefore, with the fullest authority of scriptural usage, Grotius asserts, that, “To bear sins by suffering, that others may be pardoned, can mean nothing else than to bear the punishment of those sins.”† And Archbishop Magee, though he is willing, for the sake of peace, to give up the word punishment, says, “But it is evident, that it (the suffering of Christ) is, notwithstanding, a judicial infliction;”‡ the very idea which the word is intended to express.

Although, therefore, the expression, “to bear sin,” may to our ears, mean either, 1st, to remove it; 2d, to suffer on the occasion of it; or, 3d, to suffer its punishment; to the Jews, it could in such connexions, convey only the last idea, and consequently, to substitute for this either of the two former, is to make it express a sense, which, as we have shown, is contrary to Scripture usage, the opinions of the people to whom the prophet wrote, and therefore contrary to the obvious intention of the sacred writer, and mind of the Spirit.

It is in this sense, too, the New Testament writers, in addressing those “whose minds were filled with the ideas of sacrifice and substitution,” who were imbued with the ideas and language of the Old Testament, assert that Christ “was offered to bear the sins of many,” *Hebrews* ix. 28, that he “bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” *1 Peter* ii. 24. So in *John* i. 29, “Behold the Lamb of God which beareth the sin of the world,” (according to the reading of the margin), and *1 John* iii. 5, “He was manifested to bear our sins.”

\* Gesenius on *Isaiah* liii.

† Grotii *Opera Theologia*, vol. iv. p. 300.

‡ On the Atonement, vol. i. p. 347. See also p. 346.

II. Precisely the same idea is clearly expressed by the apostle in *Gal.* iii. 13. In this chapter the apostle is engaged in proving, that faith in Christ is the only means by which we can attain the favour of God. One of his arguments is the following: "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." But "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one who hangeth on a tree." It will of course be admitted that "the curse of the law," is its penalty, and that to be under this curse, and to be 'a curse' mean the same thing, the apostle himself teaches, as he substitutes for both expressions, the word "cursed." We are "under the curse," because it is written, "cursed," &c. and Christ was "made a curse," for it is written "cursed, &c. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the literal meaning of this passage is, 'no one can be saved by obedience to the law, because, as the law demands perfect obedience, he who violates the least commandment is exposed to its penalty; but Christ has redeemed us from this penalty by bearing it in our stead.' It hardly seems possible to interpret the apostle's language in any other way. That Christ was properly considered as suffering a penalty, the apostle confirms by appealing to a declaration of the law, that every one judicially condemned was accounted accursed of God, (as the expression is in the passage quoted, *Deut.* xxi. 23,) *i. e.* exposed as an object of divine displeasure; one on whom, by the divine law, a penalty has fallen. So far, therefore, is this reference to the Old Testament from explaining away the previous assertion, that it is intended to confirm it. According to the doctrine of the apostle, then,



we are saved from the penalty of the law, by Christ bearing it in our stead. And this seems to be the ground of his arguing so often that Christ's death is tantamount to our death, and that it is not by the relaxation of the law, as to its penalty, but by its execution that we are saved, "For I, by the law, am dead to the law," *Gal. ii. 19. i. e.* free from its demands, so that there is now no condemnation to me, nor to any who are in Christ Jesus.

III. *Rom. viii. 3.* The same course of reasoning occurs in *Rom. viii. 3.* "The salvation which men in vain look for through the law, God has secured in another way. For as the law was insufficient, God having sent his Son in a nature the same with our own, and as a sin offering punished sin in him, that thus the demands of the law might be satisfied by us." This seems to be the view of the passage best suited to the context, and the peculiar expressions which the apostle here employs. In this passage God is said to have sent his Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and it was in this flesh, (or nature) "that he punished or condemned sin," not in our flesh, for this the context will not allow, but in the flesh in which his Son appeared, *i. e.* in his person, and the object of this vicarious condemnation is our exemption.

IV. The same representation is found in *2 Cor. v. 21.* The apostle had stated "that God was reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and then states how it is that pardon was thus secured; "God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He treated the Redeemer as though he were the sinner—that



we might be treated as though we were righteous." As, "to be made the righteousness of God," means to be justified, so, "to be made sin," is to be condemned or made subject to the penalty of the law. As we are not constituted morally righteous, by the death of Christ, so is it infinitely far from the apostle's intention to say, that Christ was made, morally, a sinner. Both expressions are obviously used in their usual forensic sense.

V. We may now refer to those numerous passages in which Christ is said, "to die for us," "to suffer the just for the unjust," &c. These texts all prove the doctrine of substitution, *i. e.* that Christ died in our stead. It is true that taken by itself this expression might mean nothing more than that Christ suffered for our benefit, but the following reasons seem sufficient to prove that this is not all the sacred writers mean by it. 1. One of the prepositions ( $\alpha\nu\tau\iota$ ) thus translated, seldom has any other meaning than, "in the place of." 2. In some connexions this sense is required, as when it is said, "he gave his life a ransom for many," where the force of the word ransom, requires the last words to be rendered, 'in the place of many.' 3. In *Rom. v. 7*, it is said "scarcely for a righteous man will one die," which seems clearly to mean, in the place of a righteous man; and, therefore, when it is said, "but when we were yet sinners Christ died for us," it must mean, in our place. 4. The very expression, to die for a man, who is exposed to death, that he may live, seems with sufficient clearness to express the idea of dying in his stead. 5. The manner in which the death of Christ is said to benefit us, requires this interpretation—it is by bearing our sins—being made a curse for us, *i. e.* enduring the punishment we had in-

curred. 6. Finally: If the sacred writers clearly elsewhere teach, as we have seen they do, the doctrine of legal substitution, then, as their meaning is ascertained as to this point by passages which are obvious as to their import, it can be no longer doubtful what they intended when they declare that Christ "died for us."

VI. Another important class of text is that in which Christ is called a ransom, and his work a redemption. It is freely admitted that the words "to redeem" and "redemption" are often used when merely the general idea of deliverance is meant to be conveyed. As when God is said to have redeemed his people out of Egypt. Their primary and proper meaning, however, as is on all hands admitted, is to deliver by the payment of a ransom. That it is in this, and not in the more general sense of mere deliverance, they are used in reference to the work of Christ, is evident from the simple consideration that the ransom, or price paid for our deliverance, is expressly stated. Thus in *Eph. i. 7*, "In whom we have redemption through his blood." *1 Cor. vi. 20*. "Ye are bought with a price." *1 Peter i. 18, 19*. "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish." *Gal. iii. 13*. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." In all these cases, it is not mere deliverance that is asserted, but deliverance by a specific method; by a ransom, by the payment of a price. It is true these and all similar representations are figurative, but figurative language is often as intelligible as literal, and sometimes more so. The simple question is, what idea would this language naturally excite in the minds of men accus-

tomed to regard their sacrifices as ransoms, and familiar with the mode of deliverance which these expressions properly describe? It is impossible that this mode of representation should fail of exciting the idea of deliverance on the ground of a satisfaction. This Christ and his Apostles knew; and this idea, therefore, they must have intended to convey.

VII. We may appeal to the frequently recurring passages in which Christ is said to propitiate God, or to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; or to be himself a propitiation, which all imply that the object of the atonement is to satisfy divine justice. God is represented as angry with the wicked, and the death of Christ, as the means by which he is propitiated. As anger among men is commonly a modification and expression of malice, we know that from association these expressions are apt to excite ideas derogatory to the divine perfection, and furnish an easy topic of declamatory misrepresentation. But it should be remembered, that these are scriptural expressions, expressions intended to convey important truth, and to represent ideas, which, so far from being inconsistent with divine excellence, necessarily enter into the conception of infinite perfection. The anger of God is the expression of his disapprobation of sin; the exhibition of his holiness in view of moral evil; or, in other words, the manifestation of his justice. It is to turn off from us this anger, by rendering our pardon consistent with the justice of the divine Being, that Christ died. And this is expressed in the terms just mentioned. For when God is said to reconcile the world unto himself, or we to be reconciled to him; (in such connexions,) the idea is not that we are led to lay aside our

enmity towards him, but that this favour is propitiated for us, as the word means, 'to restore to the favour of any one.' It is thus used, in the command of our Saviour, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, first go and be reconciled to thy brother," *i. e.* first go and satisfy him and regain his favour. And in *Rom. v. 10*. "In whom we have obtained reconciliation," *i. e.* restoration to the the divine favour. In the phrase "making reconciliation for sin," *Heb. ii. 17*, it, of course, can have no other meaning. That this is the sense of these expressions is further evident from the means by which this reconciliation is effected, it is "by the death of his Son," by his cross, by Christ being made sin for us.

VIII. The only other class of texts to which our limits will permit us to refer, is perhaps the largest and most important of all. The work of Christ is at least more fully illustrated, if not more frequently expressed, by a reference to the sacrifices of the Old Testament than in any other way. He is called the Lamb of God, *John i. 19*, a propitiation, or propitiatory sacrifice, *Rom. iii. 24*, a sin offering *Rom. viii. 5*, an acceptable sacrifice, *Eph. v. 2*. He is declared and proved to be a Priest, *Heb. v.* and all the duties of the office are ascribed to him, the sacrifice, which he offered, was himself. "He offered himself without spot unto God," *Heb. ix. 12*. "He was once offered to bear the sins of many," *Heb. ix. 28*. He offered a sacrifice for sin, "once when he offered up himself," *Heb. vii. 27*. The effects of his sufferings are in like manner described in terms borrowed from the sacrificial services. "Having by himself purged our sins," *Heb. i. 3*. If the blood of bulls and of goats was of any avail, "how much more shall the blood



of Christ purge your consciences for dead works," *Heb.* ix. 14. "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," *Heb.* ix. 26. "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ," *Heb.* x. 10. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin," *1 John* i. 7. All these expressions refer, not to moral purification, but to the removal of the guilt of sin, by atonement. So also the mode of application of the benefits of his death is expressed, by sprinkling his blood on the conscience, to indicate its pardoning efficacy; or on the throne of God, as expressive of its influence in propitiating the divine favour. Is it conceivable that such representations, made not casually, or by allusion, but dwelt upon, urged, defended and argued, could fail to produce in the minds of those, who from their youth had been familiar with sacrificial rites, the conviction that the sacred writers meant to teach, that Christ was really a sacrifice in their sense of the term, that his death saves us from the penalty of the law in the same way as the sacrifices of the old dispensation saved the Jews from the consequences of the transgression of the law of Moses? If this be admitted, then must we admit, that the sacred writers intended to produce this conviction. For who will maintain they designedly led their readers into error; that inspired men were intentional deceivers while propounding the method of salvation.

In what light, then, are the sacrifices of the Old Testament presented in the Scriptures? We are clearly taught that they sustained a two-fold relation; the one to the theocratical polity of the Jewish state, and the other to the great truths which were afterwards to be revealed. In the former respect, we learn, in the first place, that they were concerned about God, designed to propitiate his favour, and thus secure



the pardon of sin; and in the second that this was effected through the medium of vicarious punishment. Both of these points seem evident from the language, rites, and opinions of the ancient Hebrews, and the ancient world in general. The design of these services, is, indeed, clearly indicated by the expressions to propitiate, make reconciliation for, and others of similar import, as already remarked; and the nature of the observance shows how this was to be accomplished. When a man had violated any of the laws of Moses, the penalty was excision from among the people. The method prescribed by the judge and head of the Jewish state for averting this evil, was to present a victim to suffer in his place. But suffering, judicially imposed on one with the view to the exemption of another, is the definition of vicarious punishment. This idea of substitution and transfer of sin, was clearly expressed by the imposition of hands and confession of sin over the head of the sacrifice. And hence, after this ceremony, the victim was said to bear the sins of the offender, *i. e.* to bear the blame or guilt of them, and being thus laden, was considered unclean, and, at times, burnt without the camp, and all who touched it were regarded as defiled. All this to be sure is figurative, but these figures are designed to teach something, to teach that pardon was to be obtained only through the medium of vicarious punishment. This is the essential, formal idea of a sin-offering. In the language of Grotius, "They secured pardon, by inducing God to forgive, on the ground of a satisfaction." p. 330. Such being the obvious nature and import of those rites in relation to the Mosaic ceremony, their connexion with the Christian dispensation is not less clear, and far more important. As typical institutions, they were designed to teach by significant actions,

by prefiguring, to predict and explain the method of salvation through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who was to bear the sins of the world. Their own efficacy, in securing pardon, did not extend beyond the mere ceremonial and civil penalties of the old dispensation. As it was impossible that the blood of bulls or of goats could take away sin, they had no bearing on the relation of the offender to God as Judge and moral governor of the universe. But if, as the Apostle reasons, they availed to the purifying of the flesh, to the removal of mere external disabilities, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, possessed of an eternal spirit, *i. e.* a divine nature, offered himself unto God, avail to the pardon of sin. In the comparisons so frequently instituted between Christ and the ancient sacrifices, it is to be remarked that it is not the result or effect merely that is taken into view. He is called a sacrifice, not merely because he secures pardon, but the mode in which this is done is the very point of the comparison; he is a sacrifice, because he takes our place, bears our sins, is made a curse for us, and thus propitiates God in our behalf. All the ideas, therefore, of substitution, legal transfer of sin, vicarious punishment, and propitiation, which enter into the Jewish idea of a sacrifice are, over and over, asserted to meet in the great atonement by Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, in the Jewish sense of the term, that he is called a sacrifice for sin.

It is easy, indeed, to get over all this, by simply substituting for the ancient view of sacrifices, our own idea of what they were, or ought to have been. To assert that they were merely symbols, or signs of God's disapprobation of sin, designed to exhibit and impress that truth on the minds of all concerned; and thence infer that in this sense, and to

this extent, Christ was a sacrifice. Or, as others have done, maintain that they were only intended to make the sinner feel his guilt, and assure him of pardon, and then limit the death of Christ to the same objects. This, however, is interpreting Scripture not according to the views of its writers, but according to our own views of the nature and fitness of things. It is not taking the sense of the Bible as we find it, but interposing a sense of our own. It is obvious if we once abandon the rule of interpretation so often referred to, if we do not understand the Bible in the way in which the inspired writers knew they would be understood by their readers; then are we far and hopelessly at sea, without a star to guide us. One man has as good a right to interpose his sense of the terms of Scripture as another; one may as well say, a sacrifice was designed to impress the offerer, as another it was intended to impress spectators. Which is right, or whether either, is a matter to be debated at the bar of reason; and the plan of salvation is made to await the decision. Our only hope of any solid foundation for faith, or of any security for truth, is to receive the Scriptures in the sense which they were designed and adapted to convey to the minds of their original readers.\*

When, Christian Brethren, we remember that the representations just given, are not casual or incidental, but that they pervade the sacred volume, are insisted upon, illustrated, established and defended, made the grounds of doctrinal and practical inferences; when we remember, that Christ is said to have borne the punishment of our sins, in the plainest terms the language of the Old Testament admits of; that he

\* The limitations to which this principle is subject, do not affect the view here given.

was made sin, or treated as a sinner in our place; that he bore the curse of the law; that he died in our stead; that he gave his life as our ransom; bought us with his blood; that he propitiated God on our behalf, and saved us as a sacrifice; can we hesitate to admit that the **very** constituent idea of atonement is vicarious punishment.

This doctrine, thus clearly taught in the word of God, has an advocate even in natural conscience; for this is the light in which sacrificial rites have been viewed in all ages, and among all people, Gentiles as well as Jews. No matter how various the offerings, nor how diversified the ceremonies, the object of such rites was the satisfaction of divine justice, and the means, vicarious punishment. And it may be assumed that this is the form in which the doctrine presents itself to every pious unsophisticated reader of the Bible. When oppressed with a sense of sin, he feels that some atonement must be made to God. The attribute which leads Him to punish, the convinced sinner sees to be perfectly lovely and excellent, and it is not until he discovers some method by which the exercise of mercy can be reconciled with justice, that pardon appears possible. Such a method he finds revealed in the cross of Christ. There he sees that the penalty of the broken law has been endured in his stead. It is this that reconciles him so cordially to the Gospel, and enables him to embrace, without any misgivings, the offers of mercy there presented. It is not until he has been taught by others, what is called, the philosophy of the subject, that he is led to imagine all this is a delusion, that the atonement, instead of being designed as a satisfaction or propitiation to God, is intended either to impress his own heart, or to symbolize a general truth for the instruction of the universe. And even when thus in-

structed, he reverts in his ordinary exercises of faith and devotion to the scriptural representations of the subject. This too, let me add, is the form in which the doctrine has been held in the Christian Church from first to last. For although during the ages in which the Scriptures were buried, many absurd ideas were entertained on this subject; yet when the Reformation brought them again to light; this was the doctrine which burst with redeeming brightness from the sacred pages. Much and bitterly as the men of that day disputed about other points, in this they were agreed. Lutherans and Calvinists, the Hugonots of France and the Reformed of Holland, the Scotch Presbyterians and English Reformers, all conspired to represent this as the cardinal doctrine of the Gospel, the article of a rising or a falling Church.

The Atonement, then, Christian Brethren, as exhibiting the mode of the sinner's salvation, is the characteristic doctrine of the Gospel. Its direct object is the reconciliation of men to God. To secure pardon of sin, the sanctification of their nature, and eternal life. In this light, who can comprehend the importance of the work of Christ! Let any one endeavour to estimate the value of these results in the case of any one individual. Let him ask, what it is for one soul to be delivered from hell and raised to heaven; to be freed from eternal degradation and misery, and raised to eternal purity and happiness; let him strain his powers to the utmost to take in the full blessedness of such a redemption. And when he finds how vain is the effort, let him ask himself what he ought to think and feel in view of the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands redeemed out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue under the whole heaven, a multitude which no man can



number, whose robes have been made white in the blood of the Lamb.

Inconceivably great as is the amount of blessedness thus effected, its accomplishment is not the sole object of the death of Christ. The rays from the cross are cast far onward to the utmost verge of the universe of God. Wherever there are immortal minds to see or learn the exhibition here made of the divine character, there do the effects of the atonement reach. So far from supposing that the view of the subject, which we have endeavoured to present, excludes the idea of a moral impression on the world of intelligent spirits, we consider that the Atonement derives its adaptedness to produce this impression, from the fact of its being a satisfaction to divine justice. When that most wonderful of all commands was heard in heaven, "Awake O sword, against the man that is mine equal, saith the Lord," then was it seen and felt, that though heaven and earth should perish, the law of God must stand; that sin was indeed an evil so enormous that to pass it with impunity was impossible. Only so far as the atonement involves an exercise of justice, is it a manifestation of justice. Viewed in the light, not of setting aside the penalty of the law, but as involving its execution, it is better adapted to seal the conviction on all minds of the immutability of the law, and of the certainty of sin being punished, than the eternal condemnation of ten thousand worlds. It is, as the Apostle informs us, the fact that Christ was possessed of an eternal spirit, or divine nature, *Heb. ix. 14*, and thus was equal with God, *Phil. ii. 8*, which gives the Atonement its efficacy. It is this that fills the wondering universe with awe, and constitutes the most effective of all exhibitions of the divine holiness and justice. Whatever moral impression,

therefore, the exhibition of divine justice can produce, is thus most effectually made, and whatever benefit, in deterring from sin, this impression can effect, is thus secured. The law is sustained and vindicated, by being executed; or its transgression, with impunity, by man or seraph, is felt through all worlds to be impossible.

This truth is made to bear with all its force upon the sinner. "If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry,"—if it was not possible that the cup of wrath should pass from the Saviour's lips, from whose lips shall it pass? Where is the man who believes the doctrine of Atonement, who does not feel that his destruction is just and inevitable, if he neglect the salvation of the Gospel? Who does not feel that it is the utmost limits of infatuation to believe that the sinner can escape, if God spared not his own Son?

The ill desert of sin, and the certainty of its punishment, are, however, not the only truths exhibited in the death of Christ. God commendeth his LOVE towards us, in that while we were yet enemies Christ died for us. God so LOVED the world that he sent his Son. It is this attribute which is most conspicuously displayed in the cross of Christ. It is this, therefore, which is the constant theme of praise with the sacred writers; a love whose height, and depth, and length, and breadth, are beyond our knowledge. As it is by the exhibition of truth, and especially of the character of God, that holiness is sustained and exercised in all created minds; so does the Atonement become of all means perhaps the most effective in promoting holiness throughout the whole universe. It is the exhibition here made, which commonly leads men to repentance. It is here they see the evil of sin; the holiness and love of God;

the wonderful grace of their Redeemer. It is here they learn the vileness and ingratitude of their conduct; it is when they look on Him whom they have pierced, that they mourn and turn unto God with contrition and penitence. It is from the cross, too, that the Christian derives his most active impulses to duty and self-denial. Constrained by the love of Christ, Paul laboured and suffered with constancy and alacrity. And it is the same influence which now restrains from sin, and urges on to duty, all faithful followers of the Redeemer. Nor is the effect confined to our world. If, when God spread these garnished heavens, and called these countless worlds, with their endless variety of happy inhabitants into being, a shout of rapture was heard in heaven, at this display of his wisdom, power, and goodness; we need not wonder that the sons of God regard with interest the work of Redemption. It is into the deeper wonders and brighter glories of this new creation, they desire to look; and thence they derive their chief materials of praise. As a means of promoting holiness and happiness, therefore, among all orders of intelligent beings, and throughout all eternity, the cross of Christ is perhaps of all others the most effective.

The effect which the consideration of this doctrine ought to have on Christians, time does not permit us to indicate. Paul tells us, that having such a high Priest, we should hold fast our profession, never be tempted to give up either the faith or hope of the Gospel; that we should come with boldness to the throne of grace; that we should live for Him, who died for us; that, having experienced the unsearchable riches of Christ, we should esteem it the chief business and honour of our lives, to endeavour to bring others to the enjoyment of its blessing; that we should fix

no limits to our desire for the extension of the knowledge of the Saviour, until it covers the earth as the waters do the great deep. We should esteem all sacrifices and all efforts slight for the attainment of this object. Do what we will, suffer what we may, for the salvation of others, it will all be little, compared with what Christ has done and suffered for us. And it will all appear little in our own eyes when we enter in the eternal world.

Though this doctrine has always proved a stumbling block in the way of some, and foolishness in the eyes of others; it is nevertheless the wisdom of God unto salvation. Presenting the plan which infinite wisdom has devised for the redemption of men, it teaches most clearly to those who refuse to accede to its terms, that they make their own destruction sure. The refuges of lies to which they betake themselves will not stand a moment before the coming storm of divine wrath. Their prayers or penances; their deeds of charity or honesty, will avail nothing in averting the sword of divine justice. Rejecting the offering of Christ, there remains no other sacrifice for sin; refusing this Saviour, there is no other name given under heaven whereby they can be saved. The obvious imperative duty of all such, is an immediate return to God through Jesus Christ, a sincere and penitent acquiescence in the plan of salvation proposed in the Gospel. Hear, then, and obey the voice of the dying Saviour from the cross, "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved."

And now, unto him who loved us and gave himself for us, be blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, even unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.





# SPRUCE STREET LECTURES.

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## LECTURE VII.

*Delivered on the Evening of the 12th February, 1832, by the  
Rev. Samuel Miller, D. D. of Princeton, N. J.*

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### ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY.

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“The Elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.”—1 *Peter* v. 1, 2, 3.

THE Bible knows nothing of a solitary religion. The spirit and duties of Christianity are, characteristically, *social*. Man, in his state of primitive rectitude, was made a social creature; and redeemed and restored man, when he shall reach that holy heaven which is in reserve for him hereafter, will find it to be a state of perfect and most blessed society. It is true, the Christian, in the course of the spiritual life, is required, and finds it to be as profitable as it is delightful, to be often alone with his God. But the object of this retirement is, like that of *Moses* in ascending the mount,—not that he may remain there; but

that he may come down with his face shining; his heart expanding with holy love; and all his graces refined and invigorated, and thus prepared the better to act his part in those interesting relations which he sustains to his fellow men. Accordingly, the visible Church, with which we are all bound to be connected, and which is the means of so many blessings to its members and to the world, is a social body. It is called in our text a "flock," under the care of the great "Shepherd and Bishop of souls," and under the immediate superintendence of the under-shepherds, commissioned and sent for this purpose. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ. Feed the flock of God which is among you." The word here translated "feed," literally signifies to perform the work of a *shepherd*;—to *guard* and *govern*, as well as to *dispense food* to the flock. And, accordingly, this rendering is confirmed, not only by many other Scriptures, but also by the charge which immediately follows:—"Taking the oversight thereof;—not as lord's over God's heritage, but as examples to the flock." We have here presented, then, very distinctly, the idea of the Church, or the "flock" of God, being under GOVERNMENT. It is represented as being placed, by its great Head and Lord, under SUPERINTENDENCE and REGULATION. In all society there must be government, from a family to a nation. There *was* government in the garden of *Eden*, where human nature was perfect; and there *is* now, and ever *will be*, government in *Heaven*, where the happy inhabitants, redeemed from all the remains of sin, shall be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity.

There have been, indeed, enthusiasts and fanatics, in

ancient as well as modern times, who taught that, in the true Church there can be no need or place for government; "because," said they, "the members of the Church being all holy persons, cannot be supposed to require either law or authority to sustain them; nothing but the evangelical law of love, by which they are all spontaneously and, of course, regulated." But the advocates of this delusive theory forgot that the members of the visible Church are not all truly sanctified persons; and that even those of their number who are the sincere friends of Christ, are sanctified only in part, and, therefore, need the salutary application of discipline. They forgot, too, that in almost every page, the New Testament recognizes, either directly or indirectly, the necessity and the actual existence of rule and authority in all the apostolic churches, even in their simplest and purest form. Nor must *we* forget that the vain theory of these fanatical teachers has been invariably found as worthless, and even mischievous in practice, as it was contrary, at once, to the principles of human nature, and to the instructions of holy Scripture. It has always resulted in disorder, licentiousness, and every evil work.

Quite as erroneous and no less pernicious in its consequences, was the doctrine of *Erastus*, the learned and ingenious contemporary of the Reformers.\* He taught that the Church, as such, can possess no power, and ought not to be allowed to exercise any authority or discipline; upon the alleged principle, that "a government within a government" is a practical absurdity, and by no means admissible. His theory, of course, was, that all lawful authority

\* See his work, *De Excommunicatione Ecclesiastica*.

resides only in the civil government; that the ministers of the Church may instruct, persuade and exhort, but nothing more; and that when crimes against religion occur, the offenders can be reached and punished only by the civil magistrate. In short, his doctrine was, that the civil government alone can exercise authority in any community; and, consequently, that no man, as a professor of religion, can incur any penalty, for the most serious delinquency, with regard either to faith or practice, unless he be prosecuted and convicted before the tribunal of the State. A theory more weak and fanciful, could scarcely have been proposed. It contradicts the most abundant scriptural testimony in favour of ecclesiastical government, as distinct from the civil, hereafter to be produced: and it is practically refuted by the experience of every day. The authority and discipline exercised in every family, and in every seminary of learning, plainly show that the fundamental principle on which the whole theory rests is altogether delusive; that there may be ten thousand governments within a government, without the least collision or interference.

Accordingly, in whatever direction we turn our eyes among the apostolic churches;—whether to *Jerusalem* or *Antioch*, to *Ephesus* or *Crete*, to *Corinth* or *Rome*, we find the corruption of human nature disclosing itself in various forms; we find the outbreking of pride, ambition, heresy, and moral irregularity, disturbing the peace of the Church, and calling for the application of its wise and wholesome discipline; in other words, for the exercise of its government. Now, if such were the case in the days of inspiration and miracle, under the eyes of the apostles themselves, and when the spirit of love might be said pre-eminently to

reign in the Church; what is to be expected when these extraordinary aids are taken away, and the covenanted family of Christ left to the ordinary power of the means which he has appointed for its edification?

It is evident, then, that there is, and, from the very nature of the case, *MUST* be, ecclesiastical government; that the Church of Christ, as such, has essentially vested in her a certain kind and degree of *AUTHORITY*, which she is bound, in fidelity to her Lord and Master, to exercise for the great purposes which she was founded to accomplish.

The principal questions in relation to this subject which demand an answer, are the three following: What is the *NATURE* of this government? What are its *LIMITS*? And what is its legitimate and scriptural *END*? Let me request your serious and candid attention to some remarks intended to furnish a brief answer to each of these questions.

I. Let us begin with inquiring into the *NATURE* of that ecclesiastical government which the Word of God appears to warrant.

And in order to ascertain this with any degree of certainty and clearness, it will be necessary previously to determine what are the *purposes* for which the Church was founded: because it is manifest that all that power which is really indispensable to the attainment of these purposes, must, of course, be considered as vested in the Church; and she, as not only *at liberty*, but as *bound* to exercise.

We are taught, then, in Scripture that the visible Church is a body, called out of the world, and established under the authority of her divine Head and Lord, that she may be a faithful depository of Gospel truth, worship, and order; that she may carefully maintain, and diligently propagate the genu-



inedoctrines of our holy religion, in opposition to all heresy; that she may preserve in their simplicity and purity the ordinances which the Master has appointed, bearing testimony against all superstition and will-worship; that she may promote holy living among all her members, in the midst of a world lying in wickedness; and that she may thus be a nursery to train immortal souls for the kingdom of heaven. All this is so evident from Scripture that formal proof is unnecessary. And if this representation be correct, then it follows,

1. In the first place, that in all legitimate ecclesiastical government, *the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole Fountain of power*. By his authority the Church is instituted. He is her divine King and Head. His word is her statute-book; her only infallible rule of faith and practice. She has no power to institute other rites or ceremonies than those which he has appointed; no right to enjoin any thing which is not found in Scripture, or which cannot “by good and necessary consequence,” be established by Scripture. “All power in heaven, and on earth is given to him. He is the head over all things for the Church. Call no man master, for one is your Master even Christ.” All the authority, then, of ecclesiastical rulers is derived. They can exercise no power but that which is delegated to them by Him in whose name they come, and by whose commission they act.

2. The authorized government of the Church is wholly *moral* or *spiritual* in its nature. That is, it has a respect, exclusively, to *moral objects*, and is to be carried on, exclusively, by *moral means*. “My kingdom,” said the Saviour, “is not of this world;” by which he meant to say, that it is wholly separate from, and independent of, all earthly governments. It is not conducted on worldly principles.

It is not maintained by "carnal weapons." Its laws, its sanctions, and its end are all spiritual. It has nothing to do with corporeal penalties, or secular coercion. No means, in a word, but those which are moral, that is, those which are addressed to the understanding, the conscience, and the heart, can be lawfully employed in that kingdom which "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

3. Further; in laying down the nature of ecclesiastical authority, it is plain, from the design of the Church, that she must be considered as invested with power to *maintain, within her sacred precincts, the pure doctrines of the Gospel*. If these doctrines were delivered to her, that she might be their *keeper* and *guardian*, then, surely, she not only has the right, but is bound to adhere to them;—to maintain them against all opposition;—and to publish her testimony in their favour, from time to time, in the form of creeds, confessions, and other formularies, as the state of the Church and the world may demand. The Church, indeed, has no right to *compel* any one to receive her doctrines; no right to *impose* her creed or confession on the conscience of any human being. But she must, obviously, have power to do that which her Master has commanded her to do, viz. to "hold fast," for herself, "the form of sound words once delivered to the saints;" and to prevent any, within her bosom, from denying or dishonouring it. Even if the Church were a mere voluntary association, she would, of course, have the power, which all voluntary associations have, of declining to receive as members those who are hostile to her essential design; and also of excluding those who are found, after admission, to entertain and publish opinions subversive of her vital interests as a body.

But the Church is more than a mere voluntary association. She is a body organized under the authority of her divine Head and Lord; and must, of course, be vested with power to decline all fellowship with those who reject that system of holy doctrine which she is required to maintain. It is perfectly manifest that the exercise of this power is neither inconsistent with the acknowledged supremacy of Christ in his Church, nor hostile to the most perfect enjoyment of Christian liberty. It cannot be deemed inconsistent with the supreme authority of Christ; because the Church, in forming, publishing, and maintaining her creed, professes to receive no other doctrines than those which Christ has revealed; and to receive them *as being*, and *because they are taught in his Word*; and to warn all her members against opposite doctrines, for this very reason, that they are opposed to the will of Christ. Nor is the exercise of the power in question in the least degree hostile to the enjoyment of Christian liberty. Because the Church compels no one to enter her communion; she only states what she considers her divine Master as requiring her to believe, and to practice; and practically declares, that those who reject any of the important doctrines, which go to make up the substance of that Gospel which he has committed to her to keep and to propagate, cannot be admitted to her fellowship. Is this an invasion of Christian liberty? Nay, is it not rather one of the indispensable means of *protecting liberty of conscience*? Surely a body of professing Christians have a right to decide, and to profess what doctrines they consider as agreeable to the Word of God, and as represented by that Word as essential to the Gospel. And they have, quite as evidently, a further right of agreeing among themselves that none can be admitted to the number of their members,

and especially of their public teachers and rulers, who avow opinions adapted, in their view, to destroy their purity and peace. If they have not this right, there is an end of all religious liberty. If an individual, who entertains materially different views of Gospel truth and order from those received by such an associated body of Christians, can force himself, contrary to the wishes of the body, into the ranks of their instructors and guides; on whose part, I ask, are the rights of conscience in this case, invaded? Surely the individual who thus intrudes is the invader, and the Church which he enters becomes oppressed. If the rights of conscience either mean or are worth any thing, they are *mutual*; and, of course, a body of professing Christians who think alike, have as good a right to enjoy them in undisturbed peace, as any individual who differs from them, and yet wishes to join their body, can possibly have to enjoy without molestation *his* opinions. If so, every attempt on the part of the latter to intrude himself among the teachers of the former, is an invasion of that "liberty wherewith Christ came to make his people free."

4. Again; it is manifest, from the purpose for which the Church was founded, that she must be, and is vested with the power to exclude from her fellowship those who *violate the laws of practical holiness*. To deny the Church this power, would be to deny her that which is indispensable to her obeying the Master's command, to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them." She is said to be "the light of the world;" to be "the salt of the earth;" to be a "witness" of the holiness as well as of the truth of God, in the midst of a rebellious and unbelieving world. She is commanded to "withdraw herself from every brother that walketh disorderly," and to



“keep herself unspotted from the world.” But how are these characteristics to be realized; how are these commands to be obeyed, without the possession, and the exercise of a power to exclude from the Christian society those who are found to bear a character inconsistent with the honour of religion and the edification of the sacred family? Without this power to rebuke, to censure, and ultimately, if need be, to banish from the fellowship of the professing people of God, the Church can present no visible, effective testimony in favour of Gospel holiness; there can be no real separation between the precious and the vile; no sacred fence, inclosing the “garden of the Lord” from the world. And, without such an inclosure, there may be a CONGREGATION, but I will venture to say, there can be no CHURCH. Of course, one of the most important purposes which a visible, professing people of God were intended to answer, would be, in this case, virtually abandoned.

5. It is further manifest, that the nature of ecclesiastical government must be such as will enable the Church to regulate, agreeably to the laws of Christ, THE CHOICE AND INVESTITURE OF ALL HER OFFICERS. If the Church were, in this respect, powerless; if all that pleased, however ignorant, erroneous in doctrine, or profligate in practice, might thrust themselves into the number of her teachers and rulers, contrary to her wishes and the command of her Master, she would be destitute of the means of self-defence, and self-preservation. Corruption, dishonour, and eventual destruction must inevitably ensue. No society could exist in peace and order for a year together, without the power of regulating the choice and induction of her own officers. Accordingly, the New Testament abounds with directions in reference to this important



point of ecclesiastical order. It every where represents the Church as authorised and required to exercise a sovereign power in this matter; to examine and make trial of those who are candidates for sacred office; and to commit the great work of instruction and rule in the house of God to none but those whose knowledge, soundness in the faith, fidelity and zeal, are adapted to promote her edification.

6. It is clear also, from the nature and design of the Church, that her government, if it be of any value, must be of such a nature as will enable her to settle within *herself all the ordinary controversies and difficulties which arise within her bosom*. The members of the visible Church, even when sincere in their religious profession, are sanctified, as was before remarked, only in part. Of course, they are compassed about with many infirmities; and hence differences of opinion, variance, conflicting claims, and multiplied forms of offence and complaint often arise—between the private members of the same Church; between ministers, and the people of their respective charges; between the pastors of different churches; and between different churches of the same denomination. Now, when these complaints and controversies arise, the Church ought to be prepared to meet them; and when she is obliged, from the want of appropriate and adequate provision in her form of government, to resort, for settling them, to foreign arbitration, and even to civil courts; she undoubtedly labours under a serious defect in her ecclesiastical organization. It cannot be such an organization as the Master has appointed. The inspired Apostle expressly reprobates the practice of Christians going out of the Church to reconcile differences, and to adjust matters in controversy. He evidently teaches that the Church

ought to have tribunals of her own, by which all questions and difficulties, of an ecclesiastical kind, may be authoritatively decided. And that Church which is destitute of such tribunals—however richly and happily furnished in other respects—will undoubtedly find herself unable to carry into effect some very important provisions exhibited in the New Testament for maintaining Christian order and edification.

7. Another characteristic of ecclesiastical polity, indispensable to the attainment of the great purposes for which it was instituted is, that it *be such as will bind all the parts of the Church together in one homogeneous body*; and enable all these parts to act together with authority and efficiency, for the benefit of the whole.

There is a visible Church catholic, comprising all those of every denomination, who profess the true religion, together with their children. These, though divided from each other by oceans and continents, as well as by names and forms, are all one Church, “one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” They do not, nay, they cannot, all worship together. Prejudices and misapprehensions, as well as local separation and numbers, prevent them from all assembling in the same edifice. But still, as they are all united to the same divine Head, so, it is delightful to remember, whether they acknowledge it or not, that, in a very important sense, they are one covenanted people, and are bound to recognize each other as such, as far as circumstances will admit. But if this be so, much more ought those Churches which bear the same name, profess the same faith, and are so situated as to admit of their being ecclesiastically connected, to make a point of sustaining this connexion with each other

in reality, as well as nominally. Now, I say, that such a Church cannot be so united as to answer all the purposes which her divine Head, as well as her own peace and edification require, without a form of polity which will enable all the several parts of the body, to meet together, by their representatives, in appropriate judicatories; to plan, consult, and decide for the benefit of the whole body; and that not merely by way of *advice*, but by *authoritative acts*, to correct abuses, redress grievances, obviate the approach of error, heal schismatic contention, promote the unity, purity, and co-operation of the whole body; and employ this co-operation in spreading the glorious Gospel for the conversion of the world. If the Church is commanded to maintain this unity; if she is required, in all her several branches, to “walk by the same rule,” and to “speak the same thing;” and if she is commanded, AS A CHURCH, to be active in sending the Gospel “to every creature;”—then, surely her Master has not withheld from her the means which are indispensable to the attainment of the end. If this principle be admitted, then the system of our Independent Brethren, who reject all authoritative Synods; all courts of review and control; labours under a defect of the most serious kind. It makes no provision for the Churches of the same denomination acting with harmony and authority as one body. And so far as Congregationalism is chargeable with the same deficiency, as it undoubtedly is in some parts of our country, as well as in Great Britain, it is altogether powerless in respect to many of those things in which the Church is called to act as a united body.

8. A farther and very important feature of that government which the Church is warranted in exercising,

is, *that it be of such a nature as that it may be carried into execution in all parts of the world, and under any and every form of civil government.* As Christ's kingdom "is not of this world;" in other words, as the government of the Church has no necessary connexion, and ought never to be in fact connected, with the government of the State; it can, of course, operate without obstruction, and accomplish all its legitimate objects, without the aid, and even in spite of the enmity of the civil government, whatever may be its form. Of this we need no stronger evidence than the *fact*, that the Christian Church, for nearly three centuries, *did* exist, and *did* exercise all the power for which we contend, while it had no connexion with the State; nay, while the State frowned and persecuted, and did all in its power to destroy the Church. Amidst all this hostility from the world, the rulers of the Church went forward, without turning to the right hand or the left, carrying the Gospel of the grace of God wherever they were permitted; instructing the people; baptizing and receiving to the fellowship of the Church those whom they thought worthy; exercising a sacred moral inspection over all their members; admonishing and censuring the disorderly; excluding those who were incorrigibly offensive, with regard either to faith or practice; and, in a word, exercising, for all moral purposes, that authority which the King of Zion had committed to them for the edification of his sacred family. Here was an undoubted example—notwithstanding the dream of *Erastus* to the contrary—of a government within a government, and each proceeding without interference; because, as long as each kept in its proper place, they could not possibly come in collision with each other. In like

manner, the Church of Christ, in all ages, as long as she adheres to the spirit of that government which alone the Saviour has warranted, may carry it into plenary execution in any land, in any state of society, and under any form of civil government; nay, though all the governments of the world should again be, as they once were, firmly leagued against her.

9. The last characteristic which I shall mention of that government which the Church is warranted by Scripture to exercise, is, that it be not, in any of its features, *adapted to promote ambition, to excite a lordly and aspiring spirit in the Church*. "Neither," says the Apostle, "as LORDS OVER GOD'S HERITAGE, but as examples to the flock." A love of pre-eminence and of power is natural to man. It is one of the earliest, strongest, and most universal principles of our nature. It reigns without control in wicked men; and has more influence than it ought to have in the minds of the most pious. And when we recollect to what complicated and deplorable mischiefs this spirit has given rise in the Church of God,—corrupting her doctrines, alienating her members and ministers, disturbing her peace, and breaking her unity;—it is surely desirable that every thing in the form of ecclesiastical polity should be, as far as possible, adapted to obviate and repress the spirit of which we speak. Accordingly, our blessed Saviour, not only while he was on earth, frowned with severity upon every thing which looked like aspiring and ambition among his followers, declaring that the question, "which shall be the greatest?" ought to have no place in his kingdom; for that all his ministers were fellow-servants, and that none of them should seek to be called "master," or "rabbi:"—but he also, as we confi-



dently believe, after his resurrection, appointed a form of ecclesiastical order, which placed all pastors upon an equality, and precluded the possibility of any one “lording it” over another in virtue of any official pre-eminence. When, therefore, I find the inspired Apostle saying to his son *Timothy*,\* “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work”—I had almost said that if there were no other text in the Bible declaring against Prelacy, this alone would convince me that it was contrary to the mind of Christ. For, if we interpret the word, “bishop” in this place to mean, what Presbyterians say it means, the pastoral or ministerial office;—an office of great labour and self-denial; then the whole passage conveys an idea, the seasonableness and importance of which is obvious to every one, and the consistency of which with the rest of the Epistle, and with the spirit of the New Testament, is equally obvious. But if, by this title, we are to understand an office of pre-eminent rank and authority, above that of the ordinary authorized dispensers of the Word and Sacraments; no gloss, it appears to me, can prevent our making the Apostle *Paul* a favourer of ambition and aspiring in the holy ministry. He surely meant to encourage a “desire” for the office of a “bishop;” nay, an *earnest* and *eager desire*, as the original word undoubtedly signifies; a desire like that of a hungry person to obtain food. But if this be an office of pre-eminent ecclesiastical rank, as our Prelatical brethren say it is, then, undoubtedly, *Paul*, upon this construction, encourages every Presbyter eagerly to covet the place of his diocesan. On this supposition the inspired Apostle is set at variance with himself, in many other parts of his Epistles; at variance with his brother

\* 1 *Timothy* iii. 1.

Apostle, *John*, who strongly censures one who “loved to have the pre-eminence” in the Church; at variance with his Master, who, on so many occasions, reprobated all aspiring after mastership, or priority of place among his ministers; and, indeed, at variance with the whole spirit of the Gospel.

It is by no means contended that the exercise of individual ambition is either necessarily, or in fact, precluded by the adoption of Presbyterian parity in the holy ministry. This spirit is found, in a greater or less degree, wherever there are men. But, as the constitution of our truly primitive and apostolic Church, precludes all official inequality of rank among pastors, their ambition can only take the turn of aspiring to be more learned, more pious, more diligent, and more conspicuously and extensively useful in the same office. An ambition which, in many cases, may be, no doubt, sadly unhallowed; but which is, surely, less dishonourable and corrupting in its influence, than that which exhausts itself in canvassing for titles, chief seats, and emoluments; and which is tempted, of course, to be most intent on the culture of those personal qualities which are most favourable to the attainment of official precedence.

Having endeavoured to show the real nature of that ecclesiastical polity which the Scriptures warrant, by pointing out, in detail, its essential *features*, and the specific *purposes* which it ought to be, and must be intended, and adequate to answer; let us now see whether we do not find the apostolic churches *actually exercising* their ecclesiastical power, in *the very cases* and for the *very purposes* which have been specified. If so, the testimony is irresistible, that we have not misapprehended or misapplied the foregoing principles.

We find ministers of the sanctuary, then, in various parts of the New Testament, distinguished by *titles* which plainly imply that they were invested with authority for the benefit of the Church, which they were bound to exercise in the fear of God, and under a deep sense of accountability to the great "Shepherd and Bishop of souls." They are called "rulers" in the house of God; "shepherds over the flock;" "stewards of the mysteries of God;" "overseers;" "ambassadors of Christ;"\*—all implying *office* in the Church;—all implying a *delegated power*, to be exercised for the edification of that spiritual body of which He who "sits as King upon the holy hill of *Zion*" is the sovereign Head. Further: the Apostles, again and again, exhort the churches to which they wrote to "obey them that had the rule over them, and to submit themselves," remembering that those rulers "watched for their souls as they that must give account."† Our blessed Saviour himself, in giving direction to his disciples respecting offences, evidently authorizes the Church, by her proper officers, after due inquiry and evidence, to pass a judicial sentence against incorrigible offenders, cutting them off from the fellowship and privileges of the Christian body.‡ In conformity with this direction, the actual exercise of ecclesiastical power in the excision of the heretical and the immoral from the Apostolic Church, is expressly and repeatedly recorded. In several cases the Apostles enjoin that those who denied the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, so as to preach "another gospel," should be refused admission to the Church; or, if already admitted, excluded from its

\* *Rom.* xii. 8. 1 *Tim.* iii. 4. 1 *Peter* v. 1—3. 1 *Cor.* iv. 1. 1 *Peter* iv. 10. *Acts* xx. 28. 2 *Cor.* v. 20.

† *Heb.* xiii. 17. 1 *Thess.* v. 12.

‡ *Matt.* xviii. 15—19.

privileges. “The man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.” “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” “If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” “Who-soever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. 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.”\* Equally undoubted are the examples of judicial censure and exclusion from the Church on account of corruption in practice. In the Church of *Corinth*, the rulers are directed to assemble, and authoritatively to cast out of their communion a man who had fallen into gross immorality. “Wherefore put away from among yourselves,” says the inspired Apostle, “that wicked person.” And again, in writing to the Thessalonians, the same Apostle directs—“If any man obey not our word by this Epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”† The New Testament, moreover, abounds with directions concerning the proper character, the choice, and the ordination of Church officers; prescribing those qualifications without which they ought not to be admitted to office; and committing to the rulers of the Church the arduous duty of judging of these qualifications, rejecting the unworthy, and presiding over the choice and investiture of those whom they approved. And, to crown all, we have an example in the Apostolic Church of a Synodical Assembly, brought

\* *Titus* iii. 10.    *Rom.* xvi. 17.    *Gal.* i. 9.    2 *John* 9, 10, 11.

† 1 *Cor.* v. 1—15.    2 *Thess.* iii. 14.

together, not by the civil government, but by ecclesiastical men, for deciding matters of great importance, in the name, and for the benefit of the whole Church. I refer to the Synod of *Jerusalem*,\* formed by "the Apostles and Elders," convened in that place, who decided the question concerning Jewish observances, so interesting at that time, which had been sent up for consideration from *Antioch*. And, what is no less remarkable, having authoritatively decided, they transmitted their judgment, under the name of "*decrees*," to be recorded and observed by all the Churches. In a word, ecclesiastical rulers are represented, throughout the New Testament, as entrusted with "the keys of the kingdom of God," that is, with authority in the visible Church; with the power of "binding and loosing," in the name of the King of *Zion*; with the power of superintending all the affairs of the Church, as such; of judicially directing what appears to be for edification; and seeing that all things be done decently and in order."

Such is the *nature* of that spiritual government which the Church is authorized to maintain. Our next inquiry is,

II. What are the *limits* of that authority which belongs to the Church?

And in determining these, we shall be aided essentially by keeping in mind that *nature* and *design* of this authority which we have already endeavoured to ascertain. For we may rest assured that the Church has no superfluous power; no power beyond what is absolutely necessary for the attainment of those great moral purposes for which she was formed by her divine Master. And,

1. The Church can have *no authority over any but her*

\* *Acts* xv.



*own members.* There have been periods indeed, in which an encroaching, tyrannical Church claimed universal dominion; when she arrogated to herself the power to set up and put down whom she would; when she undertook to dispose of crowns and kingdoms at pleasure; and to make kings and emperors bow before her with ignoble homage. I need not say, that this was most presumptuous usurpation; contrary to reason and Scripture; and adapted to destroy the Church of God in her appropriate character. It follows, from the very nature and design of the Church, that she can have no authority beyond her own pale. And it was, no doubt, because she so frequently transgressed this rule, in former times, that so many adopted, without due examination, the principle before noticed, that “a government cannot exist within a government.” If the Church had not so often transcended her proper limits, this principle would never have occurred to a thinking mind. Be it remembered, then, that she can judge only those who are “within” her bosom. To those who are “without,” she may send missionaries. She may instruct, invite, and persuade them to come in, and accept of her privileges; but until they comply with her invitation, and become her members, she has no right to extend to them her appropriate authority.

2. Again; the Church has no power to control, even her own members, *in any other concerns than those which relate to their moral and spiritual interests.* She has no right to interfere with their political opinions; with their domestic relations; or with any department of their secular pursuits. As long as they infringe no law of Christ’s kingdom, it is no part of her sacred trust to call in question or censure their course. It cannot be too fre-

quently repeated, or too constantly remembered, that Christ's "kingdom is not of this world," and can never authorize its rulers to be "judges and dividers" in the temporal concerns of men. Yet if a member of the Christian Church, in the course of his political conflicts, or his professional avocations, be visibly and palpably chargeable with a departure from purity, either in faith or practice, it is incumbent on the Church to call him to an account; not for his political partialities, or his secular employments, but solely for his moral delinquency.

3. Further; the Church has no power to hold in a state of inspection and discipline, even her own members *any longer than they choose to submit to her authority*. I am not now speaking of the right of these members in the sight of the divine and heart-searching Head of the Church. No doubt, all who depart from the body of his professing people, and refuse to submit to the just and scriptural authority of his sacred household, commit sin against him; and, however lightly they may think of it, will be held accountable at his bar for their disobedience. But still the Church has no means, and ought not to claim the power, of compelling any to remain under her "oversight" and authority an hour longer than their judgment and their conscience dispose them to remain. He that *will* depart, must be allowed to depart. The Church can only follow him with her tears, her prayers, and her parental censure.

4. Closely allied to this, or rather involved in this, is another limit to the power of the Church; and that is, that *the highest penalty she can inflict upon any one, however aggravated his offence, is exclusion from her communion*. She can exact no pecuniary fine. She can inflict no corporeal pains or penalties. She cannot confiscate the

property, or incarcerate the person, or touch a hair of the head, of the most obstinate offender. When she has shut him out from her fellowship, in other words, disowned him as a Christian brother, she has done the utmost that she has a right to do. Her power is exhausted.

5. Intimately connected with the foregoing, is the last principle of limitation which I shall mention, which is, that *the power of ecclesiastical rulers is strictly ministerial*: that is, they have only the power, *as servants, of communicating what the Master has taught them, and of doing what the Master has commanded them*. They derive their power, not from the people whom they serve, and whom they represent, but from Christ, the King and Head of the Church. In his name they come. By his authority they speak and act. Their commission is "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." "Preach the preaching that I bidd thee." "Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." Their office is "*is a ministry, not a dominion*." Teachers and rulers have, of course, no right to prescribe terms of communion which the Bible does not warrant; no right to denounce or condemn any thing which the Bible does not condemn; no right to enjoin that which the Bible does not enjoin. Like ambassadors at a foreign court, they cannot go one jot or tittle beyond their instructions. I am not ignorant, indeed, that ecclesiastical bodies, calling themselves Churches of Christ, have often set up other standards, both of faith and practice. Tradition, the Fathers, general Councils, and the judgment of the Church, have all been prescribed as authoritative guides both to truth and order. Every thing of this kind is an invasion of Christ's supremacy in his Church, and a practical denial of the suffi-

ciency of the Scriptures as the great code of laws of his kingdom. It is not maintained, indeed, that there must necessarily be a direct scriptural warrant for every minor detail of ecclesiastical polity. But it *is* maintained, that for every leading, governing feature in the system, there must be the warrant of either scriptural *precept*, or scriptural *example*. And, above all, it is maintained, as a radical principle on this subject, that nothing can ever be lawfully made *a term of communion* for which a warrant from the Word of God cannot be produced. It remains that we consider

### III. *The legitimate and scriptural End of Church government.*

The great end of all good government is the benefit of the community over which it is exercised. For this purpose it was instituted at first by the Governor of the world; and to this end ought its whole administration, in all cases, to be supremely directed. Tyrants in the state, indeed, have taught, and acted upon the principle, that the great end of all civil government is the aggrandizement of a few at the expense of the many. Of course, they supposed that the grand design was most successfully accomplished, when the rulers were most enriched and honoured, and the ruled kept in the most abject and unresisting subjection. And it is deeply to be deplored that the same principle has been too often adopted, if not avowedly, yet really, by bodies calling themselves Churches of Christ. Hence the ecclesiastical exactions and edicts to which hood-winked and infatuated millions have so often, in past ages, and so long submitted. Hence the haughty Papal “bulls” and “interdicts,” by which kings, and even kingdoms have



been frequently made to tremble. Nothing can be more opposite than these things to the spirit and law of the Redeemer. The "authority" which the inspired Apostle claims for the rulers of the Church, he represents as "given for edification and not for destruction."\* Not for the purpose of creating and pampering classes of privileged orders, to "Lord it over God's heritage;" not to build up a system of polity which may minister to the pride, the cupidity, or the voluptuousness of an ambitious priesthood; not to form a body under the title of *clergy*, with separate interests from the *laity*, and making the latter mere machines and submissive instruments of the former. All this is as wicked as it is unreasonable. No office, no power is authorized by Jesus Christ in his Church, but that which is necessary to the instruction, the purity, the edification, and the happiness of the whole body. All legitimate government, here, as well as elsewhere, is to be considered as a *means*, not an *end*: not as instituted for the purpose of acquiring *dominion* over the bodies, the minds, or the property of men; but for promoting their temporal and eternal welfare; and as no further resting on divine authority than as it is adapted to propagate and maintain the truth, to restrain vice, to secure the order and well-being of society, and to build up the great family of those who profess the true religion, in knowledge, peace, and holiness, unto salvation.

Accordingly, the divine Founder of our religion himself tells us that he "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;" not to gratify himself, but to obey, and suffer, and die, that he

\* 2 Cor. x. 8.



might “seek and save that which was lost.”\* And, in conformity with this declaration, the inspired Apostle, who had drunk deep into the spirit of his Master, declares, “We preach, not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake.” And again: “Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.” And again: “All things,” says the same Apostle, addressing himself to the body of a Christian Church—“all things are yours, whether *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, all are yours.” And again: “Who is *Paul* and who is *Apollos*, but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man?” Accordingly, the same inspired man reminds his son *Timothy*, and commands him to teach, that “the servants of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if, peradventure, God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” Accordingly, in pleading before king *Agrippa*, he declares that the great design of the Saviour in sending gospel ministers to the children of men, is, to “open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith in Jesus Christ.” And when he tells the Ephesian Church for what purpose apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers were sent forth, he declares it was not for any purpose of self-aggrandizement, but “for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect

\* *Matt.* xx. 28. *Luke.* xix. 10.

man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”\*

This subject, my friends, however dry and speculative it may have appeared to some of my hearers, is all practical. It enters more deeply into the daily walk and duties of the Christian life, than is commonly supposed. Suffer me, then, to trespass a little longer on your patience by stating, and recommending to your attention some of the many *practical inferences* which may be naturally drawn from the subject. And,

1. From what has been said, it is evident that *Church government is a very important means of grace*. To many, I know, this whole subject appears unimportant, if not repulsive. They are apt to consider and represent all exercise of ecclesiastical authority, and especially the *discipline of the Church*, which is nothing more than the application of the Church's authority, as an officious and offensive intermeddling with Christian liberty. But I need not say to those who take their views of ecclesiastical polity from the Bible, and from the best experience, that it is not only *important*, but absolutely *essential* to the purity and edification of the body of Christ. It ought, undoubtedly, to be regarded as one of the most precious means of grace, by which offenders are humbled, softened, and brought to repentance; by which the Church is purged of unworthy members; offences removed; the honour of religion promoted; the office of the Christian ministry regulated and “magnified;” real Christians stimulated and guided in their spiritual course, faithful testimony borne against error

\* 2 Cor. iv. 5. i. 24. 1 Cor. iii. 22. 1 Cor. iii. 5. 2 Tim. ii. 24. 25. Acts xxvi. 18. Ephes. iv. 2.

and crime; and the professing family of Christ rescued from disgrace, and made to appear orderly and beautiful in the view of the world. The truth is, the faithful maintenance of Church discipline; in other words, the exercise of a faithful watch and care among Christians, over the purity of each other, in doctrine, worship and life, is so important a part of the purpose for which the Church was founded, that we may say with confidence, *she cannot flourish, as to her best interests, without it.* It may be safely affirmed, that a large part of all that is holy in the Church, at the present day, either in faith or practice, may be ascribed, under God, as really to sound ecclesiastical discipline, as to the faithful preaching of the Gospel. No matter how many precious plants may be introduced into "the garden of the Lord," or how much time and labour may be expended in endeavouring to fertilize the soil, and to apply to it the most skilful and diligent culture: if there be no *fence* kept up to defend the whole from intruders, all culture will be vain; every beast of the field will devour it; and what ought to be a beautiful and productive inclosure, will be a barren and dreary common.

2. If the foregoing representation be correct, then *the plenary and constant exercise of ecclesiastical authority is not usurpation, but simple obedience to Christ.* There is extreme sensitiveness on this subject in the minds of many, who profess to be zealous for the "rights of conscience." They believe, and sometimes very clamorously assert, that all ecclesiastical censure on any one, for any moral delinquency, and especially for any departure from the true faith, is an interference with the prerogative of God, who alone is "Lord of the conscience." But if Christ, the divine Head of the Church, has solemnly en-

joined on his professing people the exercise of this authority, and the faithful infliction of this censure, there is surely an end of all controversy on the part of those who acknowledge the Scriptures to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Suppose the proprietor of a beautiful and valuable garden to have committed it to the entire care of servants, formally chosen and commissioned for that purpose. Suppose the master to have given them a strict and repeated charge, carefully to exclude from it all mischievous intruders, and as soon as possible to banish those who had improperly made their way into the inclosure. And suppose, when these servants faithfully obeyed their orders, any one were to denounce them as usurping power, and as presumptuously interfering with the liberty of their neighbours. What would be thought of the charge? Would it not be regarded as the most preposterous that could be conceived? Every one must see, in a moment, that if the servants had not done exactly as they did, they would have been liable to the charge of unfaithfulness and gross disobedience. Precisely so is it in the case before us. The command of Christ, to his commissioned servants, to watch over, rule, and guard the Church committed to their care; and to exclude from it all those whose principles or practice are manifestly hostile to its great design; is plain, repeated, and decisive. Can it be for a moment doubted, then, that when they obey this command, they are so far from usurping power, that a failure to obey it, strictly and faithfully, would be an act of direct rebellion against Him who is "Head over all things for the Church?"

3. From what has been said, it is plain, that *every departure from the essential principles of Gospel order,*



*will be likely to exert an unhappy influence on the best interests of the Church, and may be productive of the most injurious effects.* It is the habit of many to speak of the established rules of ecclesiastical order, with sneer and contempt, as if they were cold and spiritless forms, the observance of which is rather adapted to repress and hinder, than to promote the real life, the spiritual prosperity of the Church. Unless the preacher is greatly deceived, a more erroneous estimate was never made. There is no doubt, indeed, that there may be much pompous and rigid adherence to ecclesiastical form, where there is little or no life. And there is as little doubt that the rigour of Church order may be maintained at the expense of more vital interests. But the question is,—will the garden of the Lord be likely to flourish when its fences are broken down; when not only old, but important landmarks are disregarded; when rules of order, as wise as they have been long established, are set at nought? Can there be a moments' doubt what answer ought to be given to this question? "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace and order in all the Churches." Let no one imagine, then, that he will be likely to render God service, or permanently to build up the Redeemer's kingdom, by violating the order of his house; for example, by giving encouragement to "lay-preaching;" by favouring the introduction into the ministry of men with talents adapted to dazzle as meteors, but destitute of sound principles, and other prescribed qualifications; by violating wholesome scriptural rules, for the purpose of either favouring a friend, or opposing an adversary; by giving countenance to proceedings manifestly disorderly, for the purpose of carrying a point, or with the hope of gaining some temporary advantage; or by adopting measures in the



public service of the sanctuary, better fitted to inflate or intoxicate, than to enlighten the understanding, convince the conscience, or impress the heart. It is in ecclesiastical affairs, as all wise men acknowledge it to be in civil life, a single departure from some important principle of regularity, may lead, directly or indirectly, to mischievous consequences, of which a whole generation may not see the end. Such deviations may appear to do good for a while; but the appearance is delusive. Like the excitement of strong drink, they may stimulate, and even appear to strengthen, for a short time; but they only prepare the way for increased weakness and disease in the issue. It were unwise, indeed, to insist on adhering to form at the expense of substance; but it were equally unwise to cherish the hope, that the substance will long be retained, when form is abandoned. The instructions of history on this subject are most ample and decisive.

4. A further inference from what has been said is obvious and irresistible, viz: *that the Presbyterian form of ecclesiastical polity is manifestly, and by far, best adapted to strengthen, purify, and build up the Church of Christ.* If *uniformity* of faith, order, and worship, among all the Churches which bear the same denomination, and profess to walk by the same rules, be of real importance; if the maintenance of enlightened and faithful *discipline*, be essential to the purity and genuine health of the body of Christ; and if that ecclesiastical polity which shall be adapted to answer the great purposes for which the Church was founded, must be such as will authoritatively bind all the Churches which profess to receive it, in one compact and homogeneous body; then it is manifest that no other form than the Presbyterian is adapted to attain all

the purposes, and secure all the advantages which the government of the Church was intended by the Master to promote. In saying this, I have no desire to denounce, or even to depreciate, the forms of government preferred by other denominations of our fellow Christians. With the utmost cordiality can I adopt as my own the language of the framers of our excellent ecclesiastical Constitution, when they say, "We embrace in the spirit of charity those Christians who differ from us, in opinion or in practice, on these subjects." This, however, is perfectly reconcileable with the conviction, that one form of ecclesiastical government is more scriptural, and better adapted to promote good order, purity, and edification than another. On the one hand, to speak with frankness, we have no doubt that a Church formed on the plan of our Episcopal brethren, may be a true Church of Christ, and may be, and has been blessed to the everlasting welfare of many souls. Yet we are persuaded, that the peculiar features of that system, besides having no foundation in the word of God, are by no means adapted to the maintenance of a scriptural discipline in the Church, and, indeed, scarcely compatible with it. On the other hand, we are as perfectly confident that the plan of our Independent brethren, and, to a considerable extent, that of our Congregational brethren, is no less materially defective as a means of promoting the unity, and the efficient and authoritative co-operation of all the Churches of the same nominal communion. It obviously leaves them entirely powerless in regard to many points, which it would seem no friend of ecclesiastical order can deem of small importance. In both these respects, as well as in many others which might be specified, the Presbyterian system is, at once, liberal and efficient; in the highest

degree friendly to the claims of Christian liberty; and yet adapted to maintain the purest discipline, and the most entire harmony and energetic co-operation of the whole body. Much depends, it must be acknowledged, on the *spirit* with which this system is borne forward. For, although I am not prepared to adopt, in all its extent, in reference to ecclesiastical government, the sentiment which is so often repeated as an admitted maxim, that “that which is best administered is best,” yet I am free to acknowledge, that the Presbyterian form of government and discipline may be administered with so little of the spirit of charity, and of zeal for the glory of God, and the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom, as to make it little more than a course of vexatious and unedifying litigation. But this is only saying, that the infirmity and corruption of man may sometimes mar the beauty, and invalidate the efficacy of the best provisions of a benevolent God. Some adequate and adapted impelling power is necessary to set the most perfect machine in motion. And when the vital spirit of the religion of Christ is present and active, here is the noblest plan of machinery in the world with which it can operate. Where this spirit habitually governs, there is no other plan of ecclesiastical polity so well adapted as the Presbyterian to secure order; to promote peace; to accomplish every thing with fraternal counsel and deliberation; to maintain impartial and equitable discipline, at once over ministers and private members; to secure the rights of the people; to protect pastors from injury and oppression; to guard, on the one hand, against the intrusions of *laymen* into the functions of the *clergy*, and, on the other, against the encroachments of clerical ambition; to promote uniformity of doctrine and worship; to afford redress in every species

of difficulty; to bring the state and proceedings of every part of the Church under the distinct and official review of the whole; and to enable the whole to act together as one body, under the authority and guidance of a common head. Are these things *desirable*? are they really *important* to the greatest strength and purity of the body? If so, I will be bold to say, they can be fully attained only by that form of ecclesiastical polity under which *we* are so happy as to live.

5. From the view which has been given of this subject, it is plain that *diversity in forms of Church government ought not to interfere with the communion of saints*. As “Christ is not divided;” as there is but “one Christ;” so all who are really united by faith to Him who is “the Head of all principality and power,” are “one body in Him, and every one members one of another.” We all grant, that among individual Christians there may be “diversities of operation,” that is great variety in the order, intensity, and aspect of those exercises which mark the entrance as well as the progress of the divine life;—and yet that “it is the same spirit which worketh in all.” Why may there not be a similar variety in the modes of organization adopted by ecclesiastical bodies, without destroying their ecclesiastical character? While, therefore, the great importance of the subject of ecclesiastical polity is maintained; and while we may safely assert, that no material departure from the scriptural order of the Church can ever occur without subjecting those who are guilty of it to a serious disadvantage; let us guard against the mistake of those who place it among the *fundamentals* of our holy religion. This, it is apprehended, is an entire and mischievous mistake. The holy Scriptures manifestly do not, like some ecclesiastical men, of



narrow views, and of more zeal than knowledge, cut off from the "covenanted mercies of God" those who reject a certain favourite form of church government;—but only those who reject the Gospel of Christ. We undoubtedly sin against the great Head of the Church, when we consider and treat as a matter of *indifference* that which he has appointed; but we may be considered as equally sinning against Him, and against "the generation of the righteous," when we attempt to place the external order of the Church among those things on which its vital character depends; on which the exercise of Jehovah's mercy is suspended.

6. If what has been said be correct, it is evident that *an honest attachment to a particular form of ecclesiastical order, does not, necessarily, deserve the name of high-church and sectarian bigotry.* There is a strong tendency, at the present day, to stigmatize with these epithets every thing that indicates a marked preference to any one denomination of Christians. If a book be written, or a plan formed for recommending any particular portion of the Christian community, as, in the estimation of the author, more conformed to Scripture, and more worthy of adoption than others, it is immediately denounced, as a "high-church" book; as an illiberal, "sectarian" plan. Nor are any more disposed to utter, and clamorously to urge this denunciation, than those who, under the pretence of a most expanded "charity," are far more exclusive and intolerant in contending for some opposite peculiarity. None are more severe on bigots and bigotry, than the most intensely bigoted. But can any thing be more unreasonable and unjust? If the visible Church exist at all, it must be organized in some particular form: and it is manifest that all forms of Church order cannot be equally agreeable to Scrip-



ture. Some one is, of course, nearer to the primitive model than the rest. And if any one honestly believes this to be the case, with the form with which he is particularly connected, and prefers, and endeavours to recommend this form accordingly; provided he do it without uncharitableness, and with due respect to the opinions of others, who has a right to complain? Surely to censure him for this course, is to abridge, instead of maintaining, Christian liberty. The truth is, the sincere and intelligent inquirer *must* prefer one form of faith and order to others. If he proclaim this preference with bitterness and rancour; if he assail those who cannot agree with him with unsparing denunciation; if he exhibit himself as a “fiery, controversial zealot, who can see no evil in his own party, and no good out of it;” let the terms “high-churchman,” “bigot,” “sectarian,” be heaped upon him without reserve. He richly deserves them all. But, if he meekly and humbly obey those convictions of duty which he considers the Bible as warranting; if he lay no more stress upon modes of faith, and forms of order than the Bible lays upon them; if he, not merely in words, but practically, allow to others the same liberty which he claims for himself; and if he look with unfeigned and equal affection upon all who bear the image of Christ, whether they belong to his own denomination or not;—such an one, whatever opprobrious epithets the latitudinarian, or he who is “fierce for moderation” may heap upon him, has little reason to fear the abuse of men. Those who would call such an one “bigot,” or “sectarian,” would, undoubtedly, if they had lived in the first century, have applied the same appellation to the Saviour himself and his inspired Apostles.

7. From the foregoing discussion it is manifest, *that all*

*alliance between the Church and the civil government, is unscriptural, and replete with mischief of the most serious kind.* It is *unscriptural*; contrary alike to the letter and the spirit of the New Testament; and, therefore, solemnly forbidden. It is *unhallowed in its origin*, the offspring of *priestcraft*, or *statecraft*, or both, and, of course, entitled to no countenance from the real friends of the Church of Christ. And its *tendency* and *effects* are in all cases injurious; necessarily and universally injurious. All civil establishments of religion, then, ought to be opposed to the utmost by those who wish well to the cause of Zion. Whatever may be their form, or the degree of their rigour; whether they are intended to operate by force, by fear, or by bribery; whether we consider them as “a tax on error,” or as “a bounty on faith;” as a legal provision for instructing the people in what the civil magistrate, (who may be an infidel or a gross heretic) chooses to say is truth; or as a convenient engine in the hands of government for reaching and controlling the popular mind; in all cases they are corrupt in their principles, and pernicious in their influence; and adapted to generate and encourage hypocrisy; to degrade the Christian ministry; to make the care of souls an affair of secular merchandize; and to prostrate the Church of God, with all its officers and ordinances, at the feet of worldly politicians. Such *have been* the effects of religious establishments from the days of *Constantine* to the present hour; and such *will be* their effects as long as human nature remains what it now is. Every friend of Christ, then, ought to recoil with instinctive dread and horror from *every attempt to support religion, in any form, by law.* Nay, they ought to recoil from every attempt, on the part of the civil government,

to interpose in the least degree in the affairs of the Church, *even to help her*. All experience has shown that it is less, far less, injurious to the Church to be *persecuted* by the State, than to be pampered by her caresses, and laden with her treasures.

8. A further practical inference from our subject is, that *the trust committed to Church rulers is in the highest degree weighty and solemn*. To conduct the momentous affairs of the Christian Society, in which so many interests, divine and human, temporal and eternal, are involved; to sit in judgment in cases in which doctrine and order, Christian character and Christian peace and edification are all deeply concerned; to administer the laws of Christ with fidelity, and yet with prudence; with proper zeal for Gospel purity, and at the same time with a sacred regard to the Church's peace; surely requires all the wisdom, and all the grace that mortals can exercise. The trust committed to *civil* rulers is, no doubt, in a high degree important and arduous; and will be felt to be so by every thinking man. But to the *ecclesiastical* ruler are committed interests unspeakably more momentous; which put in requisition all the sagacity, discretion, meekness, benevolence, and zeal for the honour of Zion's King, which belong to the most intelligent and devoted Christian; and in the view of which, he who sustains the trust, ought, with unceasing solicitude, to implore divine aid and guidance. Into this sacred inclosure, prejudice, passion, partiality, rashness, or unhallowed feelings of any kind, ought never to be permitted to enter. The grand, and only leading question to be asked, as a guide to duty, is, not what course will tend most effectually to build up this party, or to defeat that adversary; but what course will be most likely to promote the purity, the harmony,

and the edification of the Church of God? This is a camp in which every banner that is raised, save that of the Redeemer's glory, ought to be held in the deepest abhorrence. Here, if ever, the tribunal of *conscience* ought to be consulted with the most sacred vigilance, and the *Statue Book* of the Master's kingdom studied with unceasing diligence.

9. Another plain inference from all that has been said, is, *that it is incumbent on professing Christians to make themselves acquainted with the subject of Church government.* Is every professing Christian a member of that body called the Visible Church? Does he bear, of course, intimate and most important *relations* to that body? And has he, consequently, important *duties* to that body every day devolving upon him? Can it be necessary, then, to demonstrate, that he ought to know something of the *nature* and *structure* of this body; to understand, in some good measure, the *constitution* and *laws* under which it is not only authorized, but required to act; and the various *obligations* resting upon its officers and its members? It were an insult, my friends, to your understandings, to attempt to reason on a point so perfectly self-evident. As well might I consider it as necessary formally to demonstrate, that a member of civil society ought to understand enough of the government under which he lives, to enable him intelligently to discharge the duties of a good citizen, and to avoid violating the law of the land? I have no doubt, indeed, that a man may be a *real Christian*, who is in a great measure ignorant of the subject on which I have been addressing you this evening. But a *wise* and *intelligent* Christian he cannot be. A Christian ready to *perceive*, to *appreciate*, and to *discharge* the various duties which he owes to his Master in heaven, to his brethren of the Church,

and to his own best edification, he cannot be. And the only wonder is, that so many professing Christians who would be ashamed of ignorance on a thousand other subjects, of far less importance, are willing, on this subject, to remain profoundly ignorant. Such persons, however sincere and devout, ought to know that they are in danger every hour, when they undertake to speak or ask in reference to this subject, of giving a touch to the Ark of God, the character and effect of which, if they understood the subject, they would deprecate in their inmost souls. Many a real Christian, from ignorance of the very elementary principles of this subject, has spoken and acted in such a way as to inflict wounds on the Church of God which no subsequent regret or tears could ever heal.

10. The last inference with which I shall tax your patience, is one which, in closing, I must respectfully and affectionately beg all my hearers to remember and lay to heart. It is, *that a man may be perfectly sound on the subject of Church government, and yet be utterly defective as to the essentials of Christian character.* There has been a tendency among those who called themselves Christians, in every age, to attempt a kind of commutation with God for that which his word requires; to substitute rites and forms for the religion of the heart; to cry out with confidence, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we,” while their hearts were going forth after covetousness or sensuality. Hence that fury of zeal for an ecclesiastical name and connexion on which many appear to rely as a passport to heaven. Against this fatal mistake, my beloved friends, I desire to warn you. It is a mistake not confined to any particular denomination; and a mistake as insidious and dangerous as it is prevalent. It is more than possible



that a caution, in connexion with the subject which we are now considering, may be neither unseasonable, nor useless.

Be entreated, then, my friends, to lay no stress whatever, as to the great question of your acceptance with God, on the correctness of your opinions and practice as to Church government. In the religion of Jesus Christ, as in other matters, there are *outworks*, and there are *vital parts*. Real Christianity may exist without the former, but not without the latter. With respect to the former, you may be perfectly fair and faultless; while, in respect to the latter, you may be as “whited sepulchres.” It is my earnest desire to see you well informed, intelligent, thorough Presbyterians; because I verily believe, as before stated, that this form of ecclesiastical government is more closely conformed to the Apostolic model than any other; and better fitted, by far, than any other, to promote all the great ends of government in the Church of Christ. But I beseech you to remember, that you may be *zealous Presbyterians*, and yet *not real Christians*. You may contend strenuously and ably for those outward forms which Christ has established in his Church, and retain every one of them with scrupulous exactness; and yet be strangers to that “Spirit without which we are none of his.” Let no one, then, who desires to see the face of God in peace, rest in forms of ecclesiastical order, however scriptural. They are important in their place; but they are not that “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” They are useful as means, but they are not the foundation of that “hope which maketh not ashamed.” While, therefore, we neglect nothing which Christ has revealed; let our first and highest attention be directed to that regeneration of the heart, by which alone we can be “made meet for the inheritance of

the saints in light;" and to that vital union by faith and love to the blessed Saviour, which alone can give us an interest in his atoning blood, and a title to eternal life. Without the sanctifying and justifying power of that blood, no man is a Christian. To this great foundation of Gospel hope, then, be entreated, every one of you, my beloved brethren, first of all, and above all, to turn your eyes and your hearts. Here rest. Here live. Here rejoice, in holy hope of "the glory that shall be revealed." And to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, our God, and our father's God, be glory forever! Amen!





# SPRUCE STREET LECTURES.

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## LECTURE VIII.

*Delivered on the Evening of the 20th May, 1832, by the Rev.  
Samuel Martin, D. D. of Chanceford, Pa.*

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### ON REGENERATION.

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Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Cor. v. 17.

PAUL and his fellow apostles, as the Master whom they served, were constantly exposed to the reproach and hatred of the enemies of the cross. Their zeal was regarded as fanatic, their eloquence as pompous display, to attract notice and procure applause. Their success excited suspicion, and exposed them to unspeakable malice. The purity of their lives, their disinterested labours, and their extensive charity, instead of procuring esteem, heated public resentment. To whatever quarter they turned their eyes, causes of trouble and perplexity arose before them; deaths and dangers stared upon them. Did these things move them? Did they retard their motion, or drive them from their course? Instead of this, they rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the sake of Christ." The entreaties of friends enforced with tears, and the terrors of death in joint array, could not stay the progress of Paul on his journey to Jerusalem, though he well knew that



“bonds and imprisonment awaited him.” “What mean ye,” says he, “to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready, not be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.” Nor were these the vauntings of a desperado, nor the ebullitions of an overheated imagination; but the composed and well digested resolutions of a soul devoted to the will of Christ, and “strong to do exploits,” in his service. But this fortitude, this devotion to Christ, did not spring from any resources common to man. They were not the attainments of native greatness, improved and cherished in the most favoured schools of science or experience. They arose out of a depression of all these, and the possession of a spirit akin to that which pertained essentially to the Master whom they served. Their pure, and sublime addresses, their self-denying and heavenly conversation, clearly proved that they were born from above. He that had created them at first, had created them anew. They were in Christ Jesus. They were new creatures! New creatures, in a new world. “Old things were passed away, behold all things were become new.” Nor was this peculiar to Paul and his fellow apostles: “For, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

To be in Christ, involves every thing, immediately or remotely, that is or can be important to man.

It implies an interest in his vicarious righteousness, through a cordial acceptance of it for all the purposes for which he fulfilled it, and for all the ends of its imputation.

To be in Christ, supposes union with Christ, by which union the sinner is made one with Christ in reckoning of law, and so, by the obedience of Christ his Surety, accounted his, he is delivered from condemnation. “For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; for the law

of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made them free from the law of sin and death."

To be in Christ, implies the possession of the Spirit of Christ; of whom the Saviour says to his disciples, "that he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." For this, believers are called "temples of God." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."

To be in Christ, implies an alliance to Christ so intimate, that all the supplies of the spiritual life are derived from him, and that this life is entirely dependent upon him for its maintenance. "Because I live," said the Saviour to his disciples, "ye shall live also." And this view is in exact accordance with Paul's experience. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And does light dwell with darkness? Does love enclasp enmity in its bosom? Does holiness entwine herself around the filthy, deformed, and loathsome monster sin? Not at all: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The God of grace prepares the human heart for his reception. He builds for himself a new temple. He sweeps and garnishes it, and takes possession.

The regeneration or new creation of the sinner, is at once a mysterious and an almighty work. It is exclusively the work of God. Speaking of Christ, John states as follows: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." *John* i. 12, 13. Speaking of himself and his fellow Christians, Paul says "we are his, that is, God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, created unto good works." The creation of all things was by the word of God's power, without the supposed pre-existence of any materials. And the spiritual creation, is

the exertion of "the exceeding greatness of his power;" a power compared by the apostle to that which "he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." The above passages, to which many might be added, directly ascribe to God the regeneration of the sinner. But besides this direct testimony, the form of expression furnishes an argument equally forcible with the positive declaration. They are created; to create is exclusively the prerogative of the Almighty. When the Saviour said to the man sick of the palsy, "thy sins be forgiven thee," the Scribes, kindling into rage at the apprehended blasphemy, exclaimed, "Who can forgive sins but God?" The conviction from which this proceeded was just. With equal justness we all exclaim, Who can create but God? In one of the above passages, it is said, concerning those that are brought to Christ, "He," that is God, "gave them power to become the sons of God," and he describes them as "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Why, I ask, was Christ called the Son of God? because he was begotten of the Father. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Peter ascribes to God, in behalf of the regenerated, special praise, in that "God the Father had begotten them again to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The full grown man, or woman, is begotten again by God the Father, and is born again. Surprise may force the exclamation from a carnal heart, 'Can a man be born when he is old?' No; if reference be had to created power—No. But if the case be taken as it is; if a spiritual truth be the thing intended; if God be the agent, the answer is, Yes. It is God that worketh in them to change them from carnal, sensual, and devilish, to spiritual, holy, and heavenly. If the phrases 'begot-

ten again,' 'born again,' 'created anew,' mean any thing, they must mean something above human conception, something beyond the reach of human agency. We infer, then, that regeneration is a glorious work of God.

Again: If the estate of man be such as the Scriptures represent, regeneration must be a supernatural work. Two appellations fully describe the whole human race; the righteous and the wicked. The term, righteous, includes all, who, being united to Christ, have, by divine appointment and reckoning, his righteousness as theirs. They are renewed after the image of Him who created them; and have the Holy Ghost within them, to perfect what he has begun. Of these two descriptions of men, the apostle speaks as follows: "We know, that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not; and we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness"—All except the justified. The word translated *lieth*, is often used by Homer, to denote one who lieth slain. The whole world lieth slain in wickedness. "Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceits, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" "The Lord looked down from heaven, upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God." And what is the report which he brings? "They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good; no, not one." And Paul's quotation and paraphrase upon this Psalm, presents this picture in shades of still deeper darkness.

"All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"—such is the description, which



He, who well knows what is in the hearts of men, gives of our race, out of which many are to be so transformed as to be like angels; yea, like to God. And who in earth or in heaven, but God, can effect the wondrous change? Can any heal themselves? Can any turn their hatred of God and holiness, into love and delight? Then "can the Ethiopian change his skin;" then "can the leopard change his spots." Can any produce the required change upon his fellow man? Recourse has been had to human justice to stay the progress of wickedness. The experiment has been fully made, through a series of years, reaching back to the youth of time, now become old and hoary. All the while, the protection of law, and the immunities of organized governments, have joined their influence with the fear of hell and the hope of heaven, to prompt men to the practice of virtue. Penalties, graduated by the enormity of crime, have been threatened and inflicted. Justice has dealt out its severities. And what has been effected? Avarice has put forth its greatest strength, in laying schemes too deep for the discernment of justice, or too intricate to be scanned by man. The assassin has been taught more covertly to aim his deadly thrust; the debauchee to look for thicker darkness; and the voluptuary, still more devoted, to abide steady at his stall. Philosophers, and wise men, and prophets, and teachers have spent their skill and power upon our race, and all in vain. Parents, to instructions, have added watchfulness, and correction, and entreaties, and prayers. And where is the proselyte? Let the panygerists of human nature point him out? Sportive nature might produce a white crow or a black swan; but in the production of man, a field of operation far more splendid, nature is utterly impotent; her offspring are all of a spot—all guilty, all polluted. The enemy occupies the citadel, all



the springs of human action are poisoned; every power of soul and body partakes of vileness. And as wise physicians sometimes say of chronic diseases, "it were easier to make a new man than cure them." So in this case, the only cure for man is new creation. And who, but God, can create?

Bear with me, while I place before you another class of Scripture testimony on this gloomy view of human nature; and be assured, I should not call upon you to look so long upon the melancholy scene, did I not believe that a long and attentive look might prove the means of exciting you to flee from the grasp of death, now binding many of you fast, to the arms of Christ your deliverer. The Scriptures we shall produce specify the extent of sin's dominion over the powers and faculties of man. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." *Rom. viii. 7.* "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The Apostle describes the heathen, as "having their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." Over Israel and Judea God lamented: "My people is foolish; they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding, they are wise to do evil; but to do good they have no knowledge." Paul speaks of Christians as alive from the dead, and as quickened or brought to life from an estate of death. These are a few, out of many passages, which show the reign of sin over all that pertains to man. Over his

intellectual powers,—“every thought of the imagination of the heart” is affected. “The carnal mind,” or the mind of the flesh, ‘is enmity against God.’ Here the understanding, together with the will and affections, are included, as subject to the ‘enmity.’ The other passages are equally comprehensive: while, in some, our ruined and helpless estate is signified by a term, whose import duly felt, depresses the human spirits and inclines to melancholy. “*Dead* in trespasses and sins.” Deplorable condition!—and desperate too; were it not that a life giving-spirit, the Spirit of Christ, is promised to raise men from the dead. Knowledge, which once ruled the whole man, and so spread the image of God before the soul as to engage all its powers in cheerful harmony and delightful unison, in the praise and enjoyment of Him who is alone lovely and who alone can bless, is supplanted by ignorance: its seat is become the abode of darkness. Without knowledge, man in paradise had not been man. Until the understanding is restored to its rightful dominion, man will still be far below himself. None of our powers are whole. Sin has universal possession, and universal dominion. Our bodies are vile, nor can they be refined till they turn to dust, and are raised and fashioned anew. What a wreck is the nature of man! The shattered framework around a ruined soul, reminds us of what it once contained; but when we ask what is now within, we are told that it is a vile, polluted, deformed thing, which, ere long, is to be torn from its insecure moorings, to be engulfed in a Charybdis that casts out none of its dead.

But I have said that the work is mysterious as well as almighty. Who can trace and develop the operations of Jehovah in the creation of the world? Who can tell by what process rude and undigested chaos, from nothing, was brought into being? Who can explain the way of the

Lord, in reducing the jumbled materials into order? Who can illustrate the manner of balancing and adjusting the worlds, so that each maintains its destined place, and moves under laws eternal as its existence? "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," when they gazed with astonishment on the finished and stupendous system. Its mystery and magnificence inspired their song, and gave elevation to their praise. When one sinner repenteth, or is new created, there is joy in heaven. "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." *Luke* xv. 10. This is a part of the work of man's redemption into which "the angels desire to look;" and where they adore the author, whose way to them is hid. Though in lower strains, the glorified saints join the heavenly choir, in notes like these, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever, amen." The people of God, who witness the happy change in others, look on with devout admiration, and as they see the babe in Christ growing to maturity, their anticipations of the crowning scene, when they shall put on immortality, how transporting!

Though the way of God in operating on the nature of man in regeneration be thus mysterious; yet he has graciously revealed the means which he employs, while he has enjoined on us the duty of seeking to become partakers of it. When we speak of means as employed by God, and as enjoined on us, we do not mean to intimate that God cannot, or does not, renew sinners without the use of external means. For ought that we can discern, our salvation was conferred by Christ on one of his fellow-sufferers on the

cross, who, until on the cross, was ignorant of him. One of the Evangelists testifies, that "they, that were crucified with him, reviled him." Yet to one of these, the Saviour declared, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." What we affirm on this subject is, that means go into the general plan of God in the regeneration of sinners.

Allow me here to say, that men are to be regarded, ordinarily, as possessing all the faculties and powers proper to man; this I presume will be called in question by none. As little, surely, ought any to doubt that all these, of whatever name, are so perverted and polluted, that, until renewed by grace, the exercise of them in every case is sinful. We are men, but men fallen! We are men, but men dead, as to holy or spiritual action. We are men, but men in ruin, and exposed to the wrath to come. Now, that men may be prepared for heaven, which is at least the secondary end of the Gospel dispensation, it is obvious, that they must undergo a thorough reform. Every power and faculty of their nature must become the opposite of what it was. The mental faculties, which especially distinguish man from the inferior creatures, and which are the light which ought to guide, and the power which ought to impel all the rest, must, in the order of nature, as well as of grace, first be acted upon. Hence the grand means which God uses for the conversion of sinners, is his Word. Believers are said to be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." The word of God is addressed to the understandings of men, whether in the reading or preaching of it: and if the heart is to believe unto righteousness, it must be reached through the intellectual faculties. In proof of this, I refer you to the manner of the divine Saviour, in his Sermon on the Mount. What does it contain that is not



directed to the understandings and consciences of men? By what other avenue does he seek to approach their hearts? The sermon of Peter, so justly celebrated for its power and success, had plainly for its aim the conviction of the consciences of his hearers. The burden of his preaching was, the proof that he whom they had lately crucified, was constituted both Lord and Christ. The effect was, their convinced consciences compelled the inquiry addressed to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Agreeably to the promise of Christ, the Holy Ghost prepared their hearts to receive the truth, and wrought through its means the proper effects. Vainly do men address the feelings of the human heart, in the hope of changing it. Let any show me an instance wherein Christ or his Apostles endeavoured to back sinners into a religious course, by direct addresses to feelings and dispositions, and I will consent that they preach to these, "till sides and benches fail." Faith is the grace that savingly unites the sinner to the Lord Jesus Christ; but "how can the sinner believe in him of whom he has not heard, and how shall he hear without a preacher." So "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The word of God, I admit, addressed to the human mind with all the native force of truth, and adorned and softened with all the persuasion of human eloquence, if there be nothing more, will leave the human heart a stone unbroken. Yet if the same word come to the ear by the utterance of the Holy Spirit, though it come as a still small voice, and even lisp its whisper, it will reach the heart. Its power will be felt, and the heart will, as He pleases, either melt or break. When He bears home the truth upon the heart, or rather when He prepares the heart to receive it, and wills its renovation, the designed issue may be confidently ex-



pected. When chaos lumbered in impenetrable darkness, God said, "Let there be light:" and light shone all around: and this same God "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," says the Apostle, "hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The Gospel preached, "not with the enticing words of man's wisdom," but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, is the grand means to give to the cross of Christ full effect. "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell his dream," but let him that hath God's word, speak it faithfully; for, says God, "what is the chaff to the wheat? Is not my word like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" *Jer.* xxiii. 27. "It is quick and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." *Heb.* iv. 12. When the Lord speaks, will not all nature hear? On one occasion, while the Saviour slept, the winds and waves had combined their forces, and his disciples felt that their ship must sink. The Saviour arose and rebuked the winds, and commanded the swollen billows, "Peace, be still, and there was a great calm." "Lazarus, come forth," exclaimed Jesus, and the man of Bethany, already four days dead, comes forth alive. Unclean spirits depart at his rebuke. Diseases, the most inveterate, are healed by his word. And cannot Christ by his Spirit and his Word, quicken into life the dead in sin, and lead them forth to follow him? Ignorance of our natural condition, and mistaken views of the plan laid for our salvation, may, and often do give occasion to devise plans, and form purposes, to turn to Christ; and these purposes are often accompanied with strong expectations of success. How hollow, how airy, are such hopes! A

scribe, a man skilled in the law, comes to Christ, and declares his purpose in terms most liberal, most unreserved: "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Christ treats his proposal with respect, and tells him plainly what he might look for. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." This was enough. His expectations were all cut off. He slips out of view; you hear no more of him. Again; the Lord Jesus fixes his eyes on one, and addresses him saying, "Follow me." He entreats a delay until he should perform the last offices of filial piety to a deceased father. "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Here, there is no further objection. This, indeed, was a call to a special end, but then it was a call to an arduous office, to greater danger and more self-denial, than ordinarily falls to the lot of the private Christian.

Here it is proper to remark, that Christ, while he presents divine truth before the mind in the execution of his prophetic office, exerts his power as a king upon the human heart; as a prophet or teacher, he speaks as never man spake. The brightness of truth shines upon the mind with a lustre unknown before, when he comes to show the way of life. Though the truths exhibited, are none other than those contained in the Scriptures, the light is withal supernatural. It comes home upon the mind, accompanied with evidences of truth that constrain conviction;—while, as a king, he exerts his mighty power upon the soul to give it efficacy. As a king, new powers of perception, of apprehension, judging, and choice are given. While truth is exhibited to the mind, so that the word is with power, the soul, being at the same time convinced, persuaded, and enabled, accepts the offered salvation. As a prophet, Christ

acts immediately by the word, at the same time that he acts immediately and directly upon the soul as a king, in its renovation. Thus far we have ventured to speak of the manner of this mysterious work of God. In this light the Apostle seems to our view to exhibit it. "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of God, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 *Cor.* iii. 10. Analagous to this is the instance of the cure performed on the man whose hand was withered. Christ commanded him, "Stretch forth thine hand; and he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other." Here the communication of health to the motionless and diseased member, was plainly at the time when the command operated on the mind. While Paul talked with a little group of women assembled at Philippi, the Lord opened the heart of Lydia. In common with others, she listened to Paul's instructions; but she had listened in vain, unless the Spirit had turned her heart to the truth, or prepared her heart to receive it.

If what I have said be scriptural; and for one I believe it is; then we may boldly affirm, that all shall be regenerated that were given to Christ in the eternal purpose of God; the means shall never be withdrawn, nor the operations of grace suspended, until all that are bought with the blood of Christ shall be cleansed and brought home to heaven. "For, saith God, as the rain that cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be, that goeth out of my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it."

In the past discussion on the importance of the word of God as a means of salvation, as used by the author of regeneration to produce it, I have necessarily exhibited its usefulness as employed by man in seeking salvation; and shall now trouble you farther but with a few remarks. It will be admitted, that in the use of the word, as read and preached, there is a fitness for the accomplishment of the end intended. It reveals all that is necessary to be known, or believed, or done by men. It presents to our view all that God hath done, and all that he hath promised to do, to effect it. We are enjoined to hear the word; to meditate upon it; to believe and obey it. It is recommended under prospects of unspeakable benefit. "It is able to make wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Jesus Christ. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work." The Scriptures "convert the soul; they make wise the simple." As the word is the important means by which God approaches the sinner, so that the sinner may be found in the various uses of it, which it recommends, must be a matter of much concern. While the Eunuch read the Scriptures, the Spirit told Philip to draw near and instruct him; and the effect was, that he that read believed. "While Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled."

The sacraments, considered as means of grace, are mainly concerned with real Christians. They are employed as seals, to renew and confirm their covenant engagements; and in general, to promote the growth of the life already given. Attention to these is not, therefore, necessary in the present discussion; in which we are singly concerned



with the instrumentality employed, in procuring and constituting the new, the heavenly life.

Let us turn our attention to prayer as a duty, which the Holy Ghost may bless to our souls, as instrumental in their regeneration. Of this our Saviour says, that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." Paul, in addressing the idolatrous Athenians, states to them, as reasons which ought to bend them to the worship of the true God, that all nations are made of one blood; that they are all dependent on God their Creator, whose extended providence embraces the most minute concerns and relations of their lives, and that he does this, that they may be excited "to seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him." *Acts xvii. 27.* This seeking is here held up to view as reasonable, and not altogether hopeless to the heathen. "O thou that hearest prayer," says the Psalmist, "unto thee *all flesh* shall come." *Psalm lxxv. 2.* Peter, who says of Simon, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," yet commands him "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee!" *Acts vii. 22.* That prayer is the duty of all men, whether regenerate or the contrary, the above passages seem to prove. And I have never yet ascertained upon what grounds, prayer has been forbidden to the worst of men. If the purity of the heart, and the perfection of the performance, constitute the reasons of the command, then the command were vain; all would fail of acceptance, for none could so pray. Were they capable of performing it perfectly, then were it unnecessary. There could be no reason for prayer to Adam in paradise; he possessed all that he could wish or enjoy. Abundant indeed was his reason for praise. We never hear that



angels pray, nor the spirits of the just made perfect. For praise they have ample reason. It will be noticed here, that we use the word prayer, singly to signify petition. We offer then, as one reason of preferring requests to God, or of the duty of prayer, our forlorn and necessitous condition. The Gospel is addressed to us as sinners, under, and liable to all the consequences of sin; and our duty is, to come to God as we really are, encouraged by his gracious promises. This duty again, we say, is founded on the fulness of blessing treasured up in Christ, in behalf of sinners. "When he ascended up on high he received gifts for men," even for the rebellious. These he holds in possession. Another reason on which is founded the duty, and I will add, the encouragement to pray, is, that all the fulness of Christ, as mediator, is in Him, by the gift of God the Father, for the specific end of bestowing it on those that were chosen in Him to eternal life; and, therefore, He that is thus full of blessing is willing to give. Who is there among you, whose conscience condemns him as guilty? What will you be told that you must do, to escape punishment? The modern theology commands, repent. Can you repent? No: it is only obtained by the gift of God. But if you could repent—could you by that means cancel the account that stands against you? Impossible; what course then can be left for the sinner, but to ask forgiveness? and why not with prayer? when inspiration tells you, that "with the Lord there is forgiveness, with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."

I say again, that the earnestness, ardour, sincerity, or even the faith of the suppliant, cannot be the reason why God accepts his prayer or his person. The unregenerate sinner is acted upon by the Spirit of Christ, as a prophet and as a

king, in regeneration. The sinner is passive, he is a mere recipient. Christ finds him dead; he gives him life. The Father finds him guilty, and reckons to him his Son's righteousness; he forgives him, and adopts him as his son. For what reason, or on what account? For none other surely, but the sacrifice and intercession of Christ. Now that he is become a new creature, how does he live, and by what means does he grow? He lives, "by Christ living in him." He grows by him, who, while he is "the author, is also the finisher of faith." He now works, but it is by God that worketh in him to will and do of his good pleasure. If God, then, accept and bless even a real Christian, he cannot be moved so to do, either by what he does, or by his manner of doing it; but because he is in Christ, because the fulness of Christ is his. He belongs to Christ's fold, and the great Shepherd of the sheep is bound by covenant engagement to feed him. For Christ's sake, and for his sake alone, good men receive a gracious answer to their prayers; and they all, with one accord, do ask, that the spirit of prayer may be given them; they all do thank God when they receive it; while they jointly exclaim, "Thou, Lord, hast wrought all our works in us." Should any one declare the contrary, and affirm that his ardour and importunity had melted the heart of Jehovah to pity, and rendered him propitious, ye all would say to such a one, "Thou hast a lie in thy right hand." Were you to suppose that God would weigh the prayers of the righteous in a scale of equity, having separated what is pure from what is vile, the latter would still preponderate, and the side of purity would kick the beam:—but this purity, of whatever amount, has been communicated to them; and to God be the praise. The elect of God in Christ Jesus are, in common with others, the subjects of sin, and charged

with guilt while in their natural condition; and as they are not yet united to Christ, nor dealt with as those that are in him, their prayers, cannot be approved by a Holy God. Yet I contend that there is unspeakable importance in prayer to them.

1st. Because they are chosen in Christ, that they should be holy, and so Christ is concerned to make them so. For this end the great High Priest above intercedes for them. "I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for those which thou hast given me out of the world, for they are thine." Here he intercedes for his disciples, as being given him by actual calling. But again he says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, who shall believe on me through their word." In this you behold the Saviour looking forward to generations rising into existence in orderly succession to the end of time, as embraced in the travail of his soul, as objects of his intercession, as to be made the subjects of his grace. To all quarters, too, is his attention turned. "Other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." How will this shepherd gather his flock together? He will send his word to the places where they wander and address them; he will turn their hearts to prayer by speaking through his Spirit to them, and compel them to come. Now what man that prays, can tell when the Spirit of God may inspire him, or that he will always pray in vain. If he be one for whom Christ intercedes, there surely will be a time when means will encompass him, and when the power that raised up Jesus from the dead, will give elevation to his soul, and lift it up to heaven. The opposition made to Paul's ministry at Corinth, had discouraged him, and had tempted him to turn away; at which crisis the Lord spoke to Paul in the night

by a vision, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no one shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." Thus does he, to whom the kingdom belongs, provide that all things shall conspire, whether preaching or praying, reading or hearing, with the Almighty power which he waits to employ at the proper moment appointed in the eternal decree, for calling the elect from darkness to light, for creating them anew.

If I have succeeded in showing that regeneration is exclusively the work of God, all the powers and faculties of men being deeply depraved, and incapable of any right exercise or employment towards God; then it will be asked, why does God command what no man is able to perform? and why does he punish them for not obeying? I know not a better answer than the old one given by our fathers, who have long since fallen asleep in Christ.—That God's right to obedience cannot be dissolved by the disobedience of his subjects; and that the lower we are sunk in a spirit of rebellion, the greater is our guilt. But I enter my solemn protest against all the reasoning of men on the subject of ability, as concerned with the question whether God is justified in requiring what we are unable to perform. To those who labour to defend the Divine plan in this particular, I seem to hear God asking, who hath required this at your hand? Sure I am, that the discussion of this subject, has brought forth sentiments near akin to blasphemy. To theories of men on this subject I pay no attention. I shall simply lay before you what I believe the Scriptures teach. I trust none of you will condemn me, when I say that all men, in an estate of nature, are under the curse of the law? I care not, in this case, whether you regard original sin, or depravity, or both united, as the cause, if



you admit that all the world stands guilty before God. It will surely be admitted, that from this damnation none can deliver themselves. If any could, then hath Christ died in vain. That God hath interposed for our deliverance, is matter of unspeakable joy and praise. What then is the plan which God hath laid, and which he is executing? He hath appointed his Son, and sent him to obey the law in our room and stead. In his life he has fulfilled the righteousness of the law, or the obedience which it required of us, as our substitute. In his death he has offered himself a sacrifice, and made an atonement for the sins of his people. By these means God has opened a channel of intercourse between himself and sinners. Through Christ as the way, God comes down with blessings to men. Through Christ the intercessor, men appear before the mercy seat above. All fulness dwells in Christ, as mediator—as the fruit of his purchase—to be bestowed on men. On this account, all the promises are said to be “in him yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God.” This accomplished, God calls sinners to come to Christ, to believe in Christ—surely not because he knows they are able and ready to comply; for their inability and aversion are most fully known to him; but he does so, because he has amply provided through his Son, whatever exertion of power on his part may be needful, and whatever gift to be bestowed for fulfilling his merciful design. If any contend that they have power to believe—I care not whether they call it natural or moral power—they are aside of the Gospel plan of salvation, which proposes faith, and every thing else needful to the sinner, as matter of gift. Such, seeking to be justified by the deeds of the law, or deeds of their own, “are fallen from grace.” If a man is able to believe, why is he not able to love? If he is able to repent, why is he not able to avoid sin and



render repentance unnecessary? The truth is, that the Gospel scheme contemplates man as guilty, as condemned, as utterly impotent, as lifeless in a spiritual sense. And the grace of God takes man as it finds him. The sinner does not hear the voice, (so deaf is he to the things that ought to alarm him,) which tells him, "the soul that sinneth it shall die"—until the Spirit open his ears to hear it, and stir up in his soul the fear of death. What shall I do? says the guilty rebel; what shall I do to escape hell and secure heaven? Believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, is the order. Alas! says the sinner, I cannot apply the remedy. Unbelief reigns, enmity rages, I cannot believe. But let the sinner recollect, that if God demands faith of an unbelieving man, he bestows it too, for Christ's sake, who hath purchased faith for him. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Faith is the gift of God, to all that have it. The sinner's duty, under these circumstances, clearly is, diligent attention to all the outward means ordained of God for men in seeking; and in this, through the grace of God, his hope rests.

Sinners, you are commanded to repent. Repent and be converted. "God commandeth all men every where to repent." Ye exclaim—"Impossible.—My heart refuses to look back upon my sins, it will not glance at my vileness, it cannot bear the purity, nor look upon the spirituality of God's law. Oh, that I could feel as I ought to feel, as a bold offender against God: and fear, as I ought to fear, his hot displeasure." While your heart is sore, because of its hardness, think of this, and see if it will not apply to your case.—God says concerning his Son, that he has "exalted him a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and the forgiveness of sins." Turn your whole attention hither, and seek relief. Ask what God offers.

Again. You are commanded, "Wash ye, make ye clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well." You are commanded to regenerate yourselves. I cannot, you exclaim, and so indeed it is. As well might you undertake to pull down your clayey tabernacles, and build them up again. As well might you attempt to extinguish the immortal spark that is within you, and kindle it again. Regenerate myself! Angels could not. None but the Almighty can. Sinner, hear again the welcome voice of mercy. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Here you discern the promise of God covers the whole ground of the command.

Again. God commands you, "Cast away all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will you die?" Hear again the grace provided and ready. "A new heart will I give you, a new spirit will I put within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Here again the promise and the provision made, cover the whole ground of the command.

Do not the above promises address men in their natural condition? and when the condition of any is described in a promise, is it not to be regarded as specially directed to them, and more especially, when the promise contains the very blessings which they feel that they need? If I can affirm that any thing is the duty of a man in any case, I can affirm, that when a man sees and feels himself painted in the description annexed to a promise, it is his duty to plead it: not to plead it, is wilful unbelief. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give

you rest." Now I assert, that he that is toiled and oppressed with the burden of sin, is a wilful unbeliever, if he does not plead "Lord sprinkle me with the blood of reconciliation, and grant me peace of conscience and peace with thee." So it is with all the promises, as addressed to the various conditions and necessities of the people of God.

The same is true with respect to unregenerate men. Their duty is to plead promises that describe them. They have hearts of stone; they have sins, many and aggravated. Can they regard God as a God, keeping covenant and mercy, if they fail to plead, "Lord sprinkle clean water upon me, and I shall be clean, from all my filthiness and from all my idols, do thou cleanse me." Sinners, be exhorted to wait on God, in an attendance on all His ordinances. Seek an acquaintance with your own hearts; keep the promises of a faithful God upon your minds; wrestle with God in prayer, and cease not to strive till ye receive the blessing. May the God of grace and peace grant you peace. If I have spoken the truth, may the Lord bless it to you all. If I have erred from the truth, Oh, Lord, forgive; and do thou show me wherein I have mistaken thy holy will. Amen.

In conclusion. I ask any one to tell me why God promises to do for men the very things which he requires them to do, in order to their salvation, if he contemplates men as in any sense able of themselves to do what he requires?

Again, I ask, that with the substitution of Christ in our room and stead, how it can consist with this substitution, that man himself should be the performer?

Again. The demand is not, do and live, but believe and be saved. To talk of doing, is to reject substitution, and to risk the natural plan.

# SPRUCE STREET LECTURES.

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## LECTURE IX.

*Delivered on the Evening of the 6th November, 1832, by the  
Rev. William Neill, D. D. of Germantown.*

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### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

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Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.—*Rom. iii. 28.*

THIS conclusion is the result of argument. The question is, concerning the ground, on which a sinner is acquitted, accepted, and saved. A momentous question, indeed. It is shown, in the preceding context, that all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, have sinned, and failed to promote the glory of God; and, of course, are liable to be punished. The law, under which they are placed is holy, just, and good; every way suited to secure the honour of the Lawgiver, and the happiness of the subject. It cannot, therefore, be mitigated in its rigour, without a reflection on the wisdom and goodness of the Creator; and to give up its claims to obedience, altogether, would be to open the flood-gates of profligacy, and encourage universal anarchy and confusion. To expect a *perfect* obedience from a creature who has, even *in a single instance*, violated the rule of duty, would



be to expect an impossibility; and to talk of God's accepting *sincere* endeavours to honour him and do his will, instead of *entire* conformity to his law, as the ground of acceptance with him, is to talk at random,—darkening counsel by words without knowledge. If then the sinner is to be justified at all, it seems plain, that it must be by virtue of something done for him by another, whose interposition is recognized by the law, and accepted by the Lawgiver, as answering all the purposes contemplated in the administration of a holy and righteous government. The apostle's doctrine, therefore, "That a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law," is, from the nature of the case, at least plausible.

The text might be rendered rather more literally, thus: We conclude, then, that man is justified by faith without works of law. That is, mankind are justified by faith, without regard to works, performed by them in obedience to any law, natural, ritual, or moral; which, though of vast importance in other respects, are of no account whatever in the matter of justification. This doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, stands out, in bold relief, in the Gospel plan of salvation. It occupied a high and warm place, in the estimation of Paul the apostle; as is evident from the pains which he has taken, particularly in his epistle to the Romans, to state and defend it: Luther pronounced it, emphatically "The article of a standing or a falling church." And all the reformed churches, of Protestant Christendom, regard it as a fundamental and essential article of religious belief, as appears in their respective creeds.

To exhibit and illustrate the doctrine by a series of remarks, and by the induction of several passages of sacred Scripture, bearing on the subject, is the simple and sole de-



sign of this lecture. And as the discussion is to be mainly doctrinal, it may be proper to advert, here, to what is taught on the subject in the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church. See "Confession of Faith;" chap. XI. sections 1, 2, 3. "Those whom God effectually call-eth, he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone: not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other act of evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith; but worketh by love. Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for any thing in them, their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice, and rich grace of God, might be glorified in the justification of sinners."

See also, "Larger Catechism," answers to questions 70, 71, 72, and 73.

"Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all their sin, accepteth and account-

eth their persons righteous in his sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone. Although Christ by his obedience and death, did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in the behalf of them that are justified: yet, inasmuch as God accepteth the satisfaction of a surety, which he might have demanded of them; and did provide this surety, his only Son, imputing his righteousness to them, and requiring nothing of them for their justification but faith, which also is his gift, their justification is to them of free grace. Justifying faith is a saving grace wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and word of God; whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the Gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ, and his righteousness therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation. Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of the other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it; nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification; but only as it is an instrument, by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and his righteousness."

These views, it will be seen by a reference to the proof texts, are well supported by Holy Scripture; and, while we claim for them, no inspired authority, and are far from placing them on a footing with the "lively oracles," we must, as consistent Presbyterians, be allowed to regard

them, as of weighty import, and in good keeping with the whole analogy of the Christian religion.

I. On the negative branch of the apostle's general conclusion, we need spend but little time: "Without works of law." The holiest and best meant works of righteousness, that can be performed by a frail, fallen creature, must be but as filthy rags, in the eye of that rule of moral rectitude which detects and denounces the thefts, the adulteries, the murders of the heart, before they are disclosed to human view. "The commandment is exceeding broad," covering the whole system of man's motives, ends and aims, no less than his overt acts and professed principles. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, that are written in the book of the law to do them." "He that faileth in one point is guilty of all." Of what avail, then, can our best works be, in procuring, for us, forgiveness of sins and a title to eternal life? All that the law can do for us, in our present ruined condition, is to show us the extent of our malady, the malignity of sin, the justice of our condemnation, and thus act upon us, "as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." It is true, that the Christian delights in the law of the Lord, after the inner man, regarding it, as forever the rule of duty, the high and holy standard of moral rectitude, in heaven and earth, to which it would be his glory and his happiness to be perfectly conformed. But with the holy apostle, he finds another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, aiming continually, to bring him into captivity to the law of sin. Good works, *i. e.* works, good as to the matter of them, *are, and ought to be* maintained, "for necessary uses." They are useful to our fellow-sinners; and they are important, too, as evi-

dences of a divine principle in the heart, that works by love; but as to their constituting, either in whole or in part, the ground of our acquittal before God, or of our hope of everlasting life, it is a thing not named or known, in the revealed plan of redeeming love. In regard to what the apostle James says of works, in the business of justification, we have only to observe, that the scope of his epistle; the examples he adduces; the illustrations he employs, when expounded by the application of the acknowledged principles of sound biblical interpretation, make it evident to our minds, that his design is to show that good works, where opportunity offers, are necessary to satisfy ourselves and others, that we really possess that faith, by which it is affirmed, in the text, that man is justified, in the sight of God. Let those who put a different meaning on his language, reconcile him if they can, to the apostle of the Gentiles.

II. To justify, in its primary import, is to acquit; to absolve from a charge of criminality; to declare one, who has been put on trial, righteous, according to law, and entitled to all the privileges of that community to which he belongs.

It is a term taken from the practice of courts of justice, expressive of an official act of a judge, quite different from, and indeed inconsistent with, the idea of pardon. If a man is arraigned before a human tribunal, he is, upon due investigation, either acquitted or condemned. If *condemned*, he may be *pardoned*, on certain conditions; but if *acquitted*, he cannot be pardoned; in this case he needs no pardon; the law has nothing against him; the charge has not been substantiated; and he is therefore pronounced *legally just*, or *justified*. When applied to religious sub-



jects, these terms, *justify* and *justification*, are commonly used with some variation of meaning from their original import; though we do not see the *necessity*, and have some *doubts* as to the wisdom and expediency of the change. It is true that every one who is justified, in a theological sense, is also pardoned. But is he not likewise regenerated, adopted, and invested with the privileges of the sons of God? These acts of Divine favour take place, we suppose, simultaneously; but they are *distinct acts*; and, in our apprehension, the terms that denote them, ought not to be used interchangeably, as if nearly or quite synonymous. Those who are in the habit of regarding *justification*, and the *forgiveness of sin*, as one and the same thing substantially, will be very likely to overlook the ground, the reason, or the meritorious cause of the sinner's acquittal and warranted hope of Heaven. This thought is respectfully submitted to those beloved fellow-servants, whose official duty and business it is, to preach the Gospel and expound the Scriptures, "*rightly dividing the word of truth.*"

III. The *faith* by which it is said in our text, that man is justified, is evangelical faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That faith which credits the divine testimony, concerning the Son of God, the only Redeemer; which apprehends him, and confides in him, as "the Lord our righteousness, and the propitiation for our sins;" as, by divine constitution, possessed of all fulness, and "able to save, to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him." This is so obviously involved in the whole process of the apostle's reasoning, in the context, that any attempt on the present occasion, to make it more plain, would be deemed an ill-judged use of our limited time.



But how does faith justify? Wherein consists its peculiar efficacy, in the article of a sinner's justification? To believe, considered merely as a mental exercise, is the creature's own act; and does not seem to require more self-denial, or to possess more merit than many other intellectual operations. Nay; the human mind is so constituted, that it believes truth, which is accompanied by sufficient evidence, and which does not interfere with predominant passions, very readily; and in some cases, instinctively, or by a kind of qualified necessity; so that, in *this* species of faith, there would seem to be no special merit. And as to saving faith, as it is sometimes and very fitly denominated, it is the gift of God; i. e. it is the result of a divine influence on the heart; and how can any credit be due to us, for the possession of *that* which we cannot originate or command, and for which we are indebted to the special grace of God? How, then,—the question returns upon us—does faith justify a sinful man?

The solution of this problem is the main point in this discussion. And we solve it by saying, in the spirit, if not in the very words of the Holy Scripture,—That saving faith has for its object, the merits, or, which is the same thing, the righteousness of Christ; an object of infinite value in itself, and intimately related to the law of God; an object, in which the law finds its uncompromising claims answered; its majesty maintained; its authority vindicated, and its great end and design accomplished. Hence Christ is said to be “the end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth.” *Rom. x. 4.* The *righteousness of Christ*, then, and *not the sinner's act of believing*, is the ground,—the reason,—or the meritorious cause of justification. By the Redeemer's righteousness, we mean his ac-

tive and passive obedience; or that perfect obedience which he rendered to the moral law, as well in its penalty, as in its precepts, in the room and stead of his people. And, thus, by his voluntary and wonderful mediation, *grace reigns through* righteousness, unto eternal life, in all them that are saved, of our fallen race, from the beginning to the end of the world.

The righteousness of Christ having been wrought out expressly for his people, is imputable, or capable of being accounted to them, and is actually imputed to them, or set to their account, in the divine act of justification. It is represented, in the chapter from which our text is taken, as a robe, that is put on believers: what else does Paul mean when he says: "But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus, *unto* and *upon* all them that believe."

*Rom. iii. 21, 22.*

This righteousness, moreover, is available, for the justification of as many as the Lord our God sees fit to call to a participation in its merits, because of the glorious excellency of the Redeemer's person; Immanuel, God-with-us, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and, yet, God over all, and blessed forever; wearing our nature, and embodying the fulness of the Godhead; angels, and principalities, and powers being subject unto him.

It is very properly said, in our Shorter Catechism, that, "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

On this part of the subject we would remark very briefly:

1/ That *this*, like all God's acts, is without repentance, and must take full effect: "Whom he calls, them he also justifies; and whom he justifies, them he also *glorifies*." Those who are justified, are not furnished with their title to heaven, and left to themselves. They are sanctified progressively, in soul, body, and spirit; and "kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." 2/ It is "an act of God's free grace" undoubtedly to *the redeemed sinner*, as are all the expressions of divine favour, which he receives; while to the redeeming Substitute, it is an *act of justice*. He has a fair claim to "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." 3/ "Our sins are pardoned" too; *i. e.* they are remitted to us; but the penalty of the violated law, due to us, on account of our transgressions, was exacted at the hands of Christ, when he "bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" and when "by his stripes we were healed." Sin is never connived at, or allowed to pass unpunished, in the kingdom of Jehovah. "God is love;" but he is, also, "a consuming fire," "a just God, and a Saviour." Let all the earth fear before him.

Having thus presented the subject in a summary, but, we trust, in an intelligible form, we have only further to invite your attention, for a few moments, to a few passages of Scripture, confirmatory of the doctrine, that "man is justified by faith, without works of law."

The first is, Isaiah liii. 11, latter clause: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Christ is the righteous servant here spoken of, in the capacity of Mediator. It is said he shall justify many by his knowledge, *i. e.* by the knowledge of himself, with which he acquaints them by his word and Spirit: "for," or because "he shall bear their iniquities."

Now, how shall he justify them, or declare them *legally righteous*, in consequence of bearing their iniquities, except by giving them an interest in that righteousness, which the law demands, and which he alone fulfilled? “Who, of God is made unto us righteousness.” Another passage is, *Jeremiah xxiii. 5, 6.* “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous BRANCH, and a KING shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days, Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name, whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” This is a prophecy concerning Christ. And to represent the intimate relation between his righteousness and his people’s salvation, and, as it would seem, to perpetuate the knowledge and secure the acknowledgment of the precious doctrine, that all who shall cordially receive and own him, as their Lord, are authorized to regard his perfect obedience as theirs, for justification, it is declared that he shall be *called*, and *known*, and *honoured* by this singularly compounded title, THE LORD,—OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

A third passage is, *2 Cor. v. 21*: “For he hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Now, how can we be made, or constituted so righteous that God can look upon us with approbation? or, in other words, how can we, in any intelligible sense, be said to be righteousness of God *in Christ*, except by his obedience being reckoned, or placed to our account, in the eye of the divine law, upon our faith in him, and acceptance of him, as “THE LORD—OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS?”

The last text that we adduce, is in the epistle to the



Phillippians, iii. 8, 9: where the apostle tells us that he had suffered the loss of all things, and accounted them but dung that he might win Christ, "and be found in him," says he, "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." There is an allusion in this passage to a mariner, when shipwrecked. He would cast away, and disencumber himself of any thing, and every thing, that might interfere with his rescue from a watery grave: So, Paul would renounce, utterly abandon, as, not only useless, but detrimental to his own safety, and derogatory to his Saviour's honour, all his self-righteousness, and cling to that which is by faith in Jesus Christ, as the only plank on which he could float safely, amid the wreck of fallen nature, into the haven of eternal bliss.

If these passages, taken, as they are, from both Testaments, (and many others might be cited, of like import) do not tend, strongly, to confirm the conclusion, in our text, "That man is justified by faith without works of law," then, we have yet to learn how to interpret and apply the holy oracles, by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

#### PRACTICAL INFERENCES.

1. Salvation is of God. The method of saving sinners, by the merits of Christ, is a matter of divine and eternal purpose; and this purpose is carried into effect, by a gracious influence on the hearts of men, through the efficient agency of the Holy Spirit, and, ordinarily, by the instrumentality of revealed truth. The entire scheme, in its origin, its progress, and its consummation, is such as to secure the glory of God, and the most perfect safety and happiness.



to his people. The Lord Jesus, our legal Substitute and redeeming Saviour, is the gift of God; the Holy Spirit, in a way suited to our moral and accountable character, makes us willing in a day of his power, to be saved by grace; and the sacred Scriptures give us all needful instruction in righteousness, and all desirable encouragement, in the good word of promise, while we pursue the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Let there, therefore, be no attempt to divide the honours of eternal redemption between works of law, done by fallen, guilty man, and the *perfect, finished, and accepted* work of *Him*, “Who, of God, is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, *He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.*”

2/ Those who believe this doctrine of justification, by faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ, should be very careful to demonstrate the holy tendency of the doctrine, by a life of piety, charity, and active benevolence. The most plausible objection to it is, its supposed liableness to abuse, as if it superseded the necessity of personal holiness, or that love of righteousness, which is, confessedly, the basis of moral virtue. This cavil ought to be refuted and put to silence by the holy temper and upright deportment of professing Christians; and the doctrine should be so exhibited by preachers and writers, as to show that, while justification takes place *solely on the ground of Christ's righteousness* accepted by faith, the believer's personal righteousness, or sanctification, is secured by the bestowment of a new heart and right spirit, and by the Lord's blessing on Gospel truth, Gospel ordinances, and all instituted means of perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

3/ Let Christians act up to their professed belief, that Jesus Christ is the only Redeemer. Vast multitudes of mankind are setting in heathenish darkness, living and dying, and passing to the final judgment, ignorant of the true God, and his published way of saving lost men. We profess to believe that no human being can be saved, but through the merits of the Son of God; who teaches us, that his Gospel is the chosen instrument for the illumination and recovery of mankind from the ruins of the common apostacy. We know, too, that it is a part of his redeeming plan, to employ the efforts of those whom he has called and justified, in making known to the world the riches and efficacy of his truth and grace; and we hear him, in tones of commingling authority and mercy, saying: "Go, preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." How can we, dear Christian brethren, in the honest and cordial belief of these truths be lukewarm, inactive, or indifferent in the cause of God, and the millions of souls, that are perishing for lack of vision? Oh, when will Christendom feel her responsibility in this matter, and, awakening to righteousness, pour forth her joint supplications, and make exertions proportionate to the sublime magnitude and benevolence of the object, for the conversion of the world to the faith and fellowship of the Gospel! Come, thou blessed Spirit of Missions; warm the hearts, increase and crown the efforts of thy people, with divine favour, till it shall be *felt* on earth, and *celebrated* in heaven, that the prophecy is fulfilled, that the kingdom of God is fully come, that truth and grace have gloriously triumphed over ignorance and sin, and that Jesus, the Christ, is acknowledged as LORD,

to the glory of God, the father, "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth!!"

4/ There is an obvious use, which every reader should make of this subject for himself. If you are a believer, you have been justified, graciously, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and justification is, in God's unchanging purpose, connected with holiness and heavenly bliss. Surely, then, you will feel that you are not your own; but that you are the Lord's, and that he has an indubitable right to assign you any service, or subject you to any tribulation, in this life, which he shall see fit and proper. See to it, that you resign yourself wholly to God, actively and passively, living and dying. You can afford to deny yourself, and be reproached, if need be, for your firm adherence to Christ; for you are interested in his victory, and intercession. Because *he* lives you shall live also: your life is hid with Christ, in God. Death is yours. Heaven and eternal life are yours. But if you are yet in your sins, not having believed on the Son of God, you are in a state of condemnation, with the wrath of God abiding on you; and, in this state, you cannot see life. Should this be your case, be entreated to lay hold, straightway, on the hope set before you in the Gospel. Your works of law will never justify you. God has revealed but one method of saving sinners, of our guilty race; and that is by the blood and righteousness of his only begotten Son. If you reject this, you embrace death. In any other way, all your best works, seconded by the deepest repentance, and the most painful self-imposed penances will not—cannot save you, "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you, by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God: for

he hath made *him* who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In the religion of a sinner, "CHRIST IS ALL." "Neither is there salvation in any other."

# SPRUCE STREET LECTURES.

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## LECTURE X.

*Delivered on the Evening of the 13th May, 1832, by the Rev.  
John Breckinridge, of Philadelphia.*

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### CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

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This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.  
—*Isaiah* xliii. 21.

That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—1 *Tim.* iii. 15.

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.—1 *Thess.* i. 6—8.

IF the Church of Christ had been in any adequate measure pure in her spirit, and faithful to her trust, as the depository of the Gospel for mankind, then the history of the Church would have been the *history of missions*.\*

But on the contrary, the history of the Church is often,

\* Some of the views advanced in this Lecture were published by the author in the *Biblical Repertory*, October, 1830.



in a principal degree, the record of its corruptions in doctrine and life ; and when we would trace from its rise to the present time, the pure stream of Christianity, instead of "the river of God," we find in many ages only a scanty brook, well nigh lost amid the rubbish and delapidations through which it wends its weary way.

The Apostles of Christ, in a qualified sense, may be said to have defined with their own hands the *present* frontier-line of foreign missions; and what has since been done for the conversion of the world, has been the result more of natural causes, than of the spirit of missions. What they achieved in a few years, under divine influence, by heroic enterprise, was ignobly left by after ages, to a great extent, to the work of time, and to the *indirect* influences only of Christianity.

Indeed, for several centuries before the days of Luther, the *Church itself was missionary ground*. The religion of Christ lay expiring on its own altar, the victim of its professed votaries and friends. And when at the ever memorable reformation, "the spirit of life from God entered into her, and she again stood upon her feet," the servants of Christ found Paganism within the very recesses of the sanctuary. *They* had but little leisure for the cultivation of a foreign field, who were absorbed in purging out abominations from the very temple of God itself. Their hands were busied in breaking down the idols from the holy places, in casting out those that made merchandise of the truth, in overturning the tables of the money-changers, and in restoring to its purity the worship of God. And then, alas! almost before the work of reform had been sufficiently extended to give numbers and strength to Christianity, the spirit of contention and of schism arose ; the progress of the holy

cause was arrested by the fatal divisions of its friends ; and the Reformed Church

“To party gave up, what was meant for mankind.”

The revival in latter days of the spirit of missions in Protestant Christendom, is a great epoch in the history of the Church and of the world. We have no doubt that future generations, passing by the fading glories of this world, will regard this as the most brilliant characteristic of the age in which we live: and if we are faithful to God and man, it may become the first in a series of progressive movements, which, with the divine blessing, shall issue in the conversion of the world.

But if we would take the proper impression of the subject, and gird ourselves fully for the great and solemn service we have to perform, then must we esteem the work of missions for the conversion of the world as but just begun. For though, compared with the spirit and labours of some other ages, much is doing now for this noblest of causes, yet, compared with the vast extent of unreclaimed heathenism, with the bountiful compass of the divine command, or with what we can and ought to do, our achievements are matter much more of humiliation than of mutual congratulation.

The subject of Christian Missions having, in the order of discussion, been assigned to us, we proceed this evening to present some hints in relation to it, which we trust will not be found unprofitable.

The passages selected from the word of God are intended to form rather the basis than matter of discussion; and may be considered more a continued motto, or running caption, than as a text for regular analysis. The first named passage

exhibits the divinely derived character, and appropriate influence of the people of God. "*This people have I formed for myself: they shall show forth my praise.*" This is expanded as follows by the Apostle Peter: "*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*"\* The next portion refers to this peculiar and chosen people, organized into a church, furnished from on high, as the house of God, with the means of extending "the truth" through the earth, and put by its great Head under requisition for this labour of love. "*The house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*" Not that the Church is that on which the truth rests, for the truth rests on God; and it is the action of the truth by the power of God which called the Church into being, organized it into form, and furnished it with beauty and the means of doing good. Hence it is the *effect* of the truth, and, of course, can never be that on which the truth depends, to be what it is. But it is that, without which, according to the divine arrangement, the truth of God will never be adequately extended in the world. "*It is the ground of the truth,*" as God's chosen seat on earth; where 'his truth is stationed, supported, and upheld,'—the pillar on which the truth is continually held to view, as a public proclamation of mercy to a lost world.

The last passage represents to us this Church in successful action—in the work of faith and the labour of love. "*From you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place; so that ye became ensamples to all that believe.*"

\* 1 Peter ii. 9.

It is taken for granted in this discussion, that the glory of God is the great end of all his works. In his dealings with our world, he has made his supreme glory to depend upon the influence and final triumph of Christianity. "He has magnified his *word* above all his name."\* The plan of redemption subordinates to itself all beings and all things in our own, and, so far as we know, in all other worlds. "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, hath set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."† In the economy of redemption, man is regarded at once as an *object* and an *agent*; as an object, it proposes his eternal salvation; as an agent, he is to be occupied in extending the knowledge of this salvation to his fellow men, in all the world. By the comprehensive and general terms of the subject, "CHRISTIAN MISSIONS,"‡ we are to understand the nature, obligations, importance, &c. of that work in which we are required to engage as *agents* or *instruments* in the hands of God, for publishing the Gospel to every creature.

In examining this important subject, we remark:

I. *That the Christian man is, in the very constitution*

\* Psalm cxxxviii. 2.

† Ephes. i. 17, 20—23, and iii. 10.

‡ A series of subjects, of which this is one, had been previously selected, and assigned to the several speakers.



*of his character, a missionary; or, in other words, that which makes him a Christian, endows him in the same degree with the missionary spirit and influence.*

The Christian character and spirit, properly so called, are peculiar, original, and from God. In the new and divine constitution of this character, the Christian differs in many essential respects from his fellow men, who are not Christian, and from his former self. A profession of religion is a declaration of this difference—the life of a Christian is its continued exhibition, or it is embodied Christianity. Our first proposition is, that this spirit and character are intrinsically fitted in themselves, and designed by God, to extend the influence of the Christian religion. In order to establish this, let us for a moment look at some of the distinguishing characteristics of a Christian.

*The Christian is distinguished by a supreme regard for divine truth, and lives under its controlling influence.* Divine truth exhibits God as he is, and man as he is, and all things in their true light and just proportions. It gives him right views of time and of eternity, of sin, and of the soul, of the law of God, of the plan of redemption and its glorious author; in a word, it gives right principles of action, sets a true value on all things, gives the just expression to all his relations, and by reducing his knowledge into practical use, under the divine Spirit, makes the believer, in some degree, feel, and think, and act like him “*who has left us an example that we should follow his steps.*”\*

*Personal holiness is an essential characteristic of a Christian.* “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” “Ye are a holy nation.” “If any man be in

\* 1 Peter ii. 21.



Christ, he is a new creature.” He is renewed by the Spirit of God, “being his workmanship,” “created after the image of God in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained that he should walk in them.”\* By a holy man, we mean one cleansed from the pollution and delivered from the curse of sin, and having been made so, is kept so by the power of God. Holiness also includes the idea of dedication to God, being God’s temple, inhabited by his Spirit, and set apart for his service. This is that ‘beauty of the Lord our God upon his people,’ which is seen of all men, by which the world take knowledge of them that have been with Jesus, and glorify God on their behalf. This characteristic will necessarily lead a man to hate sin for its own evil nature, for the indignity it offers to a holy God, and for the unbounded ruin which it occasions; and will impel him to seek its extinction every where.

*Holy love is a leading characteristic of the Christian.* We can, of course, do no more than allude to these qualities, while forming an argument out of their united force. But supreme love to God, and a disinterested love to his fellow men, is a summary expression of the spirit and duty of a Christian. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself. This is the great commandment.”† And this love God-ward is not a vague and heartless theism, but a supreme, intelligent, commanding, and practical affection for the God of the Bible—God in Christ. And this love of man is not a vain sentiment, or a wild spirit of religious knight errantry; but a wise, dutiful, and disinterested love which

\* Ephes. ii. 10, and Colos. iii. 10.

† Luke x. 27. Math. xxii. 37.

seeks to do good unto all men. It is a faint, but real copy of the spirit of Him who so loved the world, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, and gave himself up unto death, even the death of the cross, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life. This spirit necessarily leads its possessor to make every sacrifice which is clearly required, for God and his fellow man.

*The Christian man is characterized by holy obedience to God's commands. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," is the great test of Christian character. "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way."* As sin is the transgression of the law, so he cannot be a holy man, a Christian, who permits himself to live in disobedience to, or any known transgression of, any law of God. Now he who commands us in the decalogue to keep holy the Sabbath day, and says "thou shalt not kill," has also said, "do good unto all men as ye have opportunity."\* "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Go teach all nations" the Gospel of the Son of God. He who requires us, under pain of eternal death, to obey the first table of the law as to the duties especially owed to God, under the same pain, requires us to obey the second table, which defines the sum of our love and duty to our neighbour, and especially to his soul; and a neglect of these is, by eminence, offensive to God, because it kills the soul, beyond the tomb! "*If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and them that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest behold we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth*

\* Galatians vi. 10.

*thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his work?"\**

Once more: It is a distinguishing characteristic of the Christian, that he intends to glorify God in all his actions. It is one great law of the kingdom, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." "Glorify God with your bodies and your spirits, which are his." But the chief glory of God results from the triumph of the Gospel. This "*is glory to God in the highest, because it brings peace to earth, and good will to men.*" To the accomplishment, therefore, of this great end, the desires, labours, sacrifices, prayers of the believer are directed, in a degree that is supreme and controlling, even in his darkest and coldest hours. All things and all beings glorify God in some shape; but it may be reluctant, extorted, and unknown. "The wrath of man praises him." If not, "he restrains it." But it is the purpose and the effort of the Christian to give glory to God, and especially by the universal diffusion of the religion of Christ. Now this is the very spirit and work of missions.

There are other characteristics which distinguish the Christian, as the spirit of prayer, self-denial, &c. But these just named may suffice for the present use. Now our argument is, that these qualities do, in their own nature, constitute a missionary spirit, and fit their possessor with the divine blessing, to extend the influence of Christianity in the world. For, in the first place, the very presence of such a being in such a world as ours, is honourable to our holy religion, and useful to his fellow men. Such a man is the representative of an unseen Saviour; he is a *specimen* of the religion which he professes; a practical proof of its

\* Proverbs xxiv. 11-12.

truth, value, and divine power. “*He shows forth the praises of him who hath called him out of darkness into his marvellous light.*” “*He is an epistle of Christ known and read of all men.*”<sup>\*</sup> Sometimes such a man, like lot in Sodom, stands the solitary, but yet expressive earnest of the divine presence among a guilty people; a living witness for the God of heaven; at once their honour, their reproof, and their security; “*the salt of the earth, the light of the world.*” But the influence of such a man is not merely the result of proper character. He is, in the next place, intentionally and actively useful. His views of divine truth lead him to *set a proper price on man*. He has an impression of the *true* value and importance of the soul, infinitely more just and elevated than ever entered the cold and narrow calculations of infidel philosophy. He measures it by the word of God, in the scale of an eternal existence; he sees his ruin by sin; he beholds a great salvation provided for him; he takes *truth’s* view of all things, and is properly affected by them. His holiness makes him hate sin, the common foe of God and man, while his love for both will impel him to seek the honour of the one, and the eternal salvation of the other. His obedience to the law of God—the law of love, will forbid him to stand still, when the great command sounds forth “Go ye unto all the world, and teach all nations;” “let him that heareth say come.” His nature is an active nature; his affections are strong affections, and eminently social. The influence of religion will give to them intensity, refinement, and elevation. He will labour where labour can avail. Where he cannot go in person, he will give of his substance, and give on a scale which shows the greatness of his holy pity to a

<sup>\*</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 3.



ruined world, and the supremacy of his love, with the entireness of his dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ. He will not give grudgingly, or by measure, unto that beloved Lord who poured out his soul unto death for him. And having *influence in heaven* by his prayers, he will send out his alms, directed by his supplications, and by steady and fervent intercession, press the throne of grace with the wants of a ruined world. Oh! brethren, is this no more than a lovely vision—a fair, but impracticable theory! When we read the history of the Church in past ages, or even look around upon its professing millions now, in search of such examples, we may well tremble while we see the truth still indicated, that only a “*remnant shall be saved.*” But yet the character is not ideal. God requires this very spirit at our hands. It is that, and that alone, with which we can enter heaven.

It is then apparent, that the very constitution of the Christian character, is missionary in its nature, and that what makes a man a Christian, endows him in the same measure with the spirit and influence of missions.

II. *We remark that the Church of God is essentially, in its organization, and in the purpose of God, a Missionary institution.*

We speak, of course, of the visible Church catholic, properly so called. The Church of God was established, in order to keep alive and extend the true religion in the world, and thus to glorify God in the salvation of men. It has been essentially the same institution during the several dispensations through which it has passed; and every successive development of its scheme of mercy to mankind, has added new sanctions and helps to its missionary constitution.



If, as we have shown, the individual Christian who truly possesses, and properly displays the spirit of his religion, is a *missionary man*; when united into a society, with the accession of power, under God, peculiar to combined action, and when invested from on high with corporate rights, and qualifications for the work of missions, the body thus organized must be, in the highest form, a missionary institution.

*The Church is a social institution.* “A chosen *generation*, a holy *nation*, a peculiar *people*, called out of darkness into God’s marvellous light.” Each living member, of course, brings into the body, if we may speak so, in his person an accession to the common stock of missionary influence. Thus united to Christ, the common head, and being all members one of another, “*the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love:*”<sup>\*</sup> and in the same degree is it fitted for harmonious and efficient action, in the work of faith and the labour of love.

But, besides the *relation of society*, or the collective effects of numbers, “the house of God, which is the Church of the living God,” is *eminently a missionary institution in its furniture*. For this “peculiar people” are endowed by their sovereign for the work of missions. It is in the sense already explained, that the Church is “the pillar and ground of the truth.” To her “are committed the oracles of God,” and that not for her own manifold “advantage” alone,<sup>\*</sup> but as a depository of the matchless blessings therein revealed, for all the world. “The truth by which she is sanctified,”

<sup>\*</sup> Ephes. iv. 5.

† Roms. iii. 2.

is the sword of the Spirit for cleaving the closed hearts of men, and thus opening their darkened understandings to the light of an eternal day. And in order to give to this people the standing means to "show forth God's praise," his *public worship* is established, and sustained by his authority. The ordinances of his house are observed, and its sacred rites performed in public, with direct reference to the presence and the good of men. And with infinite wisdom and mercy, a day, originally set apart to celebrate God's praise, and keep alive the knowledge of Him in the world, is turned to the peculiar use of publishing the salvation of the Gospel. It is in an emphatic and peculiar sense, *the Lord's day*; and returning, in the measured and rapid revolutions of each succeeding week, renews to the listening earth the evidences of his resurrection, and the incessant calls of his mercy.

In addition to all this, there is *an order of men, given by God to the Church, set apart for the special purpose of ministering in his house, and of preaching to all men the Gospel of his Son*. The ministers of reconciliation, if truly called of God, go forth, furnished for their work by his holy Spirit, as well as commissioned by his authority. This is his chosen method of missionary effort; it has been selected by his wisdom, and is made successful by his Almighty power. Now this great mean of evangelizing the nations of the earth, is committed, if we may say so, to the fostering care of the Church of God. She is, under God, the mother of her ministering sons. The Head of the Church gives them unto her for the work of the ministry. "*When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men: he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and*

*teachers, for the works of the ministry.”\** And God is prepared to give them in sufficient numbers, and in heavenly fitness, for the perfecting of the saints, and for the conversion of the world, whenever the Church truly asks them at his hands, and is really prepared to make the necessary sacrifices, in order to train them, and send them forth under the great commission, to preach the Gospel to every creature.

*But the Church of God is attended by the Spirit of God, to give direction and effect to her missionary action.* Each believer, as such, is “*a temple of God*,” that is, a *spiritual* man sanctified by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, his graces the gifts and adornings of the Spirit: and each minister, who is truly such, is personally and officially attended by the Spirit: and the collective body of Christians has the Spirit of God in the midst of it. Even to two, and to three, is this Spirit promised by the gracious Head of the Church; and He dwells perpetually in the Church, as the divine representative of Jesus, as her Holy Paraclete and Guide; and goes forth, “without measure,” amidst the administrations of the Gospel to convince men of sin, and to convert them unto God. It is the glory of the Gospel, that it is the ministration of the Spirit; and that the Church is inhabited and attended by His perpetual presence. Thus “*all the body fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom his people are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*”†

And while the Spirit of Truth is thus vouchsafed to the Church, as an abiding gift, there “are seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,” in which this greatest of blessings is dispensed with peculiar plenitude and power;

\* Ephes. iv. 8. 11—12.

† Ephes. ii. 21—22.

when the Holy Spirit, by a simultaneous and diffusive work of grace, gives new impulse to his people in the divine life, and converts great numbers of sinners unto God. These special and illustrious occasions hasten, in an especial degree, the conversion of the world. They outrun the ordinary means of grace; they transcend all the resistance of men and devils, and divinely furnish a faithful and revived Church from on high, for spreading to all lands the saving knowledge of the Son of God.

We might add, *that the Church is a self-perpetuating institution*, and thus, under the divine blessing, is fitted to extend her influence from generation to generation. And it is equally true, that *success from God is promised* to the proper action of the Church in sending abroad the Gospel of Christ. But we have dwelt sufficiently on these suggestions, to answer the end in view, which is to show that the Church is furnished for the successful prosecution of the great work of missions, by her glorious Head. She has numbers and union; she has the truth and its preachers; the social ordinances of religion, and the time, and the opportunities, for their public, ever-returning and successful administration; and the Eternal Spirit attends his truth, and gives divine effect to the calls and labours of the Church.

What then is wanting, (to say no more,) towards a missionary institution? And how apparent is the intention of its divine Author in its entire constitution? Is it not the very husbandry (plantation, or nursery) of God, from which every wind that blows should waft its odours abroad; and carry forth its winged-seeds to every forest, and to every field!

*But it is time that we pass, in the third place, to consider the direct commands of the Lord Jesus Christ, as to the work of missions.* What we infer from the organiza-



tion and furniture of the Church, we learn explicitly from the standing laws of Christ, that the work of missions is *commanded duty of the Church*. "DUTY," (as has been admirably said by a modern missionary, now in the field)\* "*resulting from the command of Christ—obligation founded on the authority of Christ, is the great argument in behalf of missions.*"

\* William Swan, Missionary in Siberia. The following remarks are so apposite and forcible, that we cannot forbear to give them a place here:—

"Suppose an order issued from the highest authority in the kingdom, requiring certain faithful subjects to perform a specific service in the character of soldiers, and commanding all faithful subjects generally to be aiding to the utmost of their power in the execution of the will of their sovereign. In urging the people to obedience, what would be the most obvious, and we might almost say, exclusive topic that could present itself in the way of argument? unquestionably the *authority of the command*. It must not be resisted. It must not be neglected. It is at the peril of the sovereign's displeasure and the loss of character—and, it may be, under the pain of condign punishment, if it be not fulfilled. It would be self-evident that no one could justly retain the character of a loyal subject if he disobeyed; and he must forfeit the esteem and confidence of his better affected brethren if he not merely should refuse obedience, but should attempt to justify his conduct."

"I feel that this illustration, as indeed every illustration taken from earthly and sensible objects, must fall short of the paramount authority of the command of the King and Head of the Church, in reference to the extension of his kingdom and the subjection of all nations to *Him*. An earthly king is a mortal man, and he may err through ignorance or passion. His commands may be the dictates of cruelty, or imbecility, or ambition, or a wanton exercise of power; but even allowing his will to be in all respects accordant to the principles of the strictest justice and highest honour and universal benevolence—his subjects can never be under such obligations to obey him, as Christians are to "bring every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ." And if any one should disregard *his authority*, I would not endeavour to work upon that man's mind by any other consideration. I allow other arguments a place, but that place is a lower one than the authority of Christ."



The ultimate appeal is to the authority of God. What then does He command. "*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go YE, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*" "*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.*" "*And he said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem; and ye are witnesses of these things.*"\* Such is the language of standing, sovereign law. It was addressed, it is true, to but a little band; but it was *to* the Church, and *for* the Church, and the *entire* Church. It extends to all who have an interest in Christ, and to all who ever heard of Christ; and he who would excuse himself from its obligation, shuts himself out from the blessings it announces. It runs to the last day—and the last man. It is the great law of the Lord: it comprehends all the rest. Though the direct and official work of "preaching the Gospel" regards especially the ministers of Christ, yet the ministers must spring from the Church; they must be sent forth by the Church; and the only choice of every one in the Church, is between *going* or *sending*; between preaching the Gospel, or causing it to be preached. It is under law, the royal law,

\* Matt. xxviii. 18—20. Mark xvi. 15—16. Luke xxiv. 46—48.

that the Church of God is required to do this. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they *be sent*?"

Now the whole duty comprehends all the parts essential to its constituent character, and the end includes the means necessary to its accomplishment. Therefore, as they cannot hear without a preacher, nor preach except they be sent, so they cannot be sent, except they be trained. If others *may* train them, the Church *must* do it, or sin against the fundamental law of the kingdom. If others *may train* them, she alone, in her official character, can *ordain* them for the work of the ministry; and she cannot divest herself any more of the duty to send them forth, than she can alienate, or delegate to another, her ordaining rights, or her love and duty to her risen Lord.

While all the people of God agree that the Church of Christ is thus bound to send forth the Gospel, they differ as to the *form* of doing it. Some prefer the action of the Church, as such, in her ecclesiastical organization; while others choose an association, (unhappily denominated voluntary, since the ecclesiastical is voluntary too,) not officially the Church, nor the ordaining body, nor directly constituted by it, or responsible to it; but formed for the same great end. The most important part is to DO THE WORK, AND TO DO IT AT ONCE; and none but God's people ever will do it. But surely it is also important, that it be properly done, since on it will, in a great measure, depend both the speed and the efficiency of the service. It will not be denied, that the Church, as such, ought to do what

she can in this cause; and we suppose it will be allowed, that if her ecclesiastical action be equally good, it ought to be preferred to any other form. And as the preliminary acts, such as receiving the candidate for the ministry into her communion, ordaining him for the work of the ministry, &c. are peculiar to the Church, so there would seem to be a special fitness and unity in her carrying forward the entire work, from first to last. And as the Church, as such, is, without a question, responsible to God for the universal publication of the Gospel, it would seem to be proper, requisite, and even obligatory, to subordinate to her ultimate direction, the agents and the operations by which it is accomplished. If the organization of any Church necessarily unfits it for the work of missions, in its proper person, then we should think it time to question the authority of that Church, and its conformity to the principles of Gospel constitution and order. Not that mere adaptation to missionary action is an evidence of this conformity; but to be without it, seems incompatible with the very genius of an institution, which has been organized and commissioned for the conversion of the world.

To convince us that the organized Church can do the work, we need not look beyond the very striking specimens afforded to the world in the Methodist Episcopal circuit system at home, or that of the United Brethren abroad. While we consider neither of these schemes a perfect model, yet they stand forth to the view of reproof and admiring Christendom, illustrious examples of what the Church, in her organized form can do, to save the world. Especially do we admire, while we gaze upon it, the unparalleled self-devotion and attendant success of the labours of our Moravian brethren. They pitched their

tents in the open plain, like two little flocks of kids, before an enemy that well nigh filled the world.\* But God was with them, and they have sent through all the earth the praises of Him in whose name they have prevailed. May they never lose that godly simplicity, that supreme faith, that disinterested self-denial and holy love, which have made the page that records their labours, the most brilliant in the history of missions!

In regard to our own institutions, we freely acknowledge that we have been far from realizing our hopes or our duty in doing good. But the defect has been in us, not in our system. The organization of the Presbyterian Church fits it, in no ordinary measure, for combined and efficient action, to an unlimited extent. The gradation of its various ecclesiastical bodies, through the whole line of which the great principle of representation runs, renders it next to impossible to usurp power, and entirely so to hold it long: and the continued responsibility of its peculiar institutions to the whole Church, gives unity, without consolidation, and secures supervision, without impairing efficiency.

One reason why we are so earnestly desirous that our Church should be occupied in her ecclesiastical character in the conversion of the world is, the happy influence it must exert upon its various official bodies, as well as on the spirit of the people at large. The very name by which we are accustomed to define them, "Church-courts," indicates that they have been too exclusively devoted to conducting business and directing discipline, in contradistinction to the specific work of missions.

Again; if others feed, and clothe, and train, and establish

\* 1 Kings xx. 27.



our children, and leave to us only the duty of government and of the rod, our children may give to our authority a cold assent, but their hearts will flow out after their benefactors. The parent's sweetest privilege, which blesses him in blessing them, is to *give* to his children. In its place, discipline also is a duty. But these are relative and inseparable; they are wisely and mercifully blended in the same person; and are necessary to the right support of the respective relations of parent and child. And so it is with the ecclesiastical relations. For the sake of our candidates for the ministry, and of our official bodies, as well as for the sake of the people, these great duties, joined together by God, ought never to be put asunder by man. The bodies who act in these benevolent institutions, both directly and in general supervision, if properly engaged in them, would find it their most pleasant, honoured, and useful occupation; and it would bind our youth and the people in love and confidence to the judicatures of the Church, while it would make every ecclesiastical body an apostolical assembly for doing good.\*

\* It is due to ourselves, and the noble institutions of our age and land, which have arisen in aid of the various benevolent operations of the day, here explicitly to declare, that we do most cordially approve them; that we think them highly necessary, as well as greatly useful, and that they can no more be dispensed with by the several great families of the Church of God, than each family can dispense with its peculiar institutions and ecclesiastical order. Without interference with the proper action of the Church, as such, they sustain the union, and extend the influence of the people of God, and afford a fine moral demonstration of the truth of Christianity; "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." John xvii. 17. And we are equally far from intending to assail those valuable sister institutions, which are now carrying forward in our own Church, by voluntary associations, the work of missions, either foreign or domestic, or of education for the ministry. Their existence is called for by the present cir-



But however this question may be settled, as to the *form* of the service, (in the discussion of which we have already been too long engaged,) the work must be done by the Church of the living God. Nothing can be more clear or urgent, than the divine command respecting this duty; and we need rather to be incited, with all speed to obey it, than to be reasoned with in evidence of its obligation. Is it borne in mind by the people of God, that obedience to this standing law is a discriminating test of our fidelity and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ? If ye love me, keep my commandments, is his own affecting standard of Christian character. And how can we love him, and yet forget or violate his great, his last command? To this, he set the seal of his own blood in death. To this, he added the sanction of divine authority and power, when he arose from the dead. In this, all other commands centre. The service it enjoins is in the direct line of the operation of providence, the work of redemption, and the glory of God. To this is appended, the overwhelming condition of heaven or hell, the decisive alternative of redemption or ruin; and when he ascended on high, he appointed obedience to this command, not only as the test of his people's love, but as the supreme method of doing honour to Him, and good to man. In a word, however our patient and injured Lord may have borne with the ignorance and lethargy of other ages, now that channels for missionary charity and effort

cumstances of the Church; their continuance is necessary to call out its entire resources; and peace will be best secured, by the spirit of an enlarged and mutual toleration. But yet we insist that the organizations of the Church are binding on her and her people; that they are peculiarly adapted to the end intended; and without them the Presbyterian Church cannot long exist in its present form.

are opened to our very doors, from the most distant Heathen lands—all disregard of this great law, is to be esteemed a deliberate and continued sin; and as the effect of disobedience is to prevent Christ's kingdom from being set up in the world, it is no less than high treason against the Son of God.

While the authority of God is the supreme reason for missionary effort, yet there are other and most affecting considerations, which cannot properly be omitted in such an inquiry as this.

Consider, then, in the fourth place,

*The spiritual state and prospects of the Heathen, without the Gospel.*

We here waive a discussion of the state of those who have heard the Gospel, and rejected its merciful provisions, taking it for granted, that there can be no difference among Christians as to their guilt and exposure to eternal death.

In our attempts to assert the claims of foreign missions, we have too commonly taken for granted, that the great body of professed Christians was correctly informed as to the spiritual condition and prospects of those who have never heard the Gospel. We forget that the objects of their compassion are out of their sight. They seldom hear of them. They seldom think of them. When they do, there is nothing definite or palpable before the mind as to their religious state. They feel a vague pity for distant and endangered nations, whose condition they would gladly better. But they hardly apprehend their exposure to eternal ruin: they scarcely believe it. And while they thus think and feel, perhaps the teachers of religion among them shrink with a false and fatal sensibility from the proper exhibition of the awful subject: or if they are faithful, the

people too often view it with suspicion as a romantic cause, partaking of the nature of a religious crusade, and wasting without profit the treasures of the Church.

But what is in fact the divine testimony on this question? The following propositions no Christian can, we think, consistently reject, viz:

1. That in all ages since the fall, the natural state of every man has been a sinful, and therefore a lost, one.

2. Hence no man in any age or country can reach the kingdom of God, without the interposition of Jesus Christ in his behalf.

3. God *may* interpose for the salvation of sinners, as he does in the case of those saved in infancy, and of those who received immediate revelations, before the written word was given.

4. But the decided intimations of the Bible are, that as a great fact, Jesus Christ is revealed to adult men, through the ordinary means of grace alone. "For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."\* And that this is the clear import of this passage, none can doubt who will look at its connexion. According to the second proposition, all are lost who are not saved by Jesus Christ. And then the prospect of salvation to those who have not the Gospel, is in proportion to the probability that Jesus Christ will save them by direct interposition.

\* Rom. x. 13, 14, 15. 17.

5. A holy\* man has never been found on earth, so far as we know, since a written revelation was given, who had not been made so by the power of the Gospel. No apostle, no foreign missionary, has ever reported a single case of this character. And yet they have traversed every sea, explored every country, and in some age and form, offered the Saviour to almost every nation under heaven. Now allowing that men are made holy in heathen lands, without the instrumentality of the Gospel, yet when that Gospel is made known to them, would not such persons instantly receive it, and with spiritual relish adopt it for their own, as kindred sunbeams mingle into one? But no such persons have ever been found, since a written revelation was given, unless indeed Cornelius, the centurion, be considered an example. Allowing him to be such, how sadly solitary is the specimen! But the apostle distinctly declares in his sermon on that memorable occasion, that Cornelius and his household were *already* acquainted with God's written revelation to the Jews; with the doctrine and baptism of John; and with the work and ministry of the Son of God.†

The inhabitants of the Sandwich islands made perhaps the nearest approach to this. They abolished idolatry, though ignorant of Christianity. But when Christian missionaries arrived, they found them unholy and degraded men, having no taste for a spiritual religion, and like all other sinners, needing the renovating grace of God to fit them for heaven: and any previous changes had been little more than the wearing out of an obsolete, impure, and idolatrous

\* We use this word, of course, in the Gospel sense; not to mean perfect, but religiously dedicated to God, and delivered from the dominion of sin.

† Acts x. 36—39.



religion, which had been outgrown by their wants, and made no response to their cry for succour.

Again; if such cases of salvation *without* the Gospel were numerous enough to justify the pleasing hope of an extensive redemption, surely out of hundreds of millions of men, and through a series of ages, multitudes would be found exhibiting the evidences of having felt its influence. Such cases as Job, and Jethro, and Lot, and Melchisedec, and Abraham, might be looked for in every land. But no missionary or apostle, as far as we know, has been ever cheered by the discovery of a single case. While then the hope still trembles in our breasts, that some may be redeemed by the direct interposition of God through Christ, yet who that loves the Saviour, or the souls of men, would make this the exclusive ground, or in any degree the ground, on which to rest the salvation of the heathen? Or who that believes the word of God, would suspend his own eternal life upon such a condition? With these overwhelming facts full in view, we are in some measure prepared to understand and feel the urgency of those motives which press us to send forth the Gospel, as "on the wings of the morning," to the uttermost parts of the earth. Here we may know the meaning of our Master when he tells us, that he will require *their* blood at our hands, if we neglect our momentous duty to them. Here, with the map of the world before us, we may survey whole continents immersed in Pagan darkness, and count the innumerable millions of heathen population; and looking up into heaven and down into hell, may calculate the worth of all their souls by the value we set on our own. He who can look unmoved at such a spectacle, cannot be a Christian, and is devoid of the sympathies common to all the race.



In fine, there is one view, in which all Christians can meet, and which directly transfers this awful subject from our sympathies, to our consciences, and identifies our personal interests, in some degree, with the state and prospects of the heathen world. It is this, that however we settle in our own minds the question of *their* condition in a future world, our own will, in a degree, depends upon the way we feel and act and give for their salvation: and God has declared, that when we withhold the Gospel from them, He will treat us precisely as if they were lost; and lost by our disobedience.

*Consider, in the fifth place, in affecting contrast with the last view, the very limited extent of Christianity in the world.* It is not now our place to inquire into the cause of this, but into the fact. It may be proper, however, in passing, to remark, that the cause is chiefly to be sought in the inefficiency of the Christian Church. But that such is the fact, no one can doubt, who is at all acquainted with the history and present state of the world. After the many ages which have elapsed since the command was given to make Christianity universally known, how little has been done towards this result! The Church has always been kept alive in the world: and millions, without number, have been saved from eternal ruin, by her instrumentality. But the great mass of men, in the successive generations which have passed into eternity since the death of Christ, have been strangers to his religion. And even in this age of the world, not one-fourth part of the population of the earth have even heard of the Saviour of sinners. Look at the whole continent of Africa, lying under the thick darkness of Mahomedan delusion, or of pagan superstition: converted by *Christian* America and *Christian* Europe into a field of blood, a market, where *men* are bought and sold! Look at India,

and China, and the Islands of the Sea. What has been done toward giving them the Gospel? The whole force of our missionaries abroad, if distributively disposed, would scarcely afford a *pastor* for a nation; and the points of their impression, on a world in ruins, break at distant intervals on the view,

“ Like sunny islets, in a stormy sea,  
Like specks of azure, in a cloudy sky.”

At this moment, the race as such may be said to be still a revolted, lost race; and at the present speed of our efforts for its recovery, though greatly accelerated in latter years, the world will never be saved!

VI. Our next suggestion is, *that the best interests of the Church of Christ at home require her to be actively engaged in the work of missions.*

What we mean to say is, that the Church, as well as the world, gains by this service; and that it is even as necessary to the healthful action of the Church, as it is to the salvation of the world.

One of the most extraordinary facts in the history of the present age is, that a grave attempt had been made, in the name of religion, to prove that the Church and the domestic field are in danger from an excessive issue of foreign missionaries. We regret that we cannot present in a tabular view, the number of evangelical ministers in the world who are labouring in what is called the domestic field, with the amount of their hearers on the one hand, and on the other the number of evangelical missionaries, with the amount of heathen population in the world.

In such a view, the disparity would be made to appear unspeakably great and awful. By the scale it afforded us,

more millions would be assigned to each foreign missionary, than the same number of thousands to each pastor at home. It would be found that the ministers of Christ were crowded into a few corners of the earth, while the wide field of pagan desolations was surrendered to the holy daring and generous self-devotion of a little band of foreign missionaries.\* At the *present time*, therefore, there is no ground for the fear that we shall feel too much interest in the foreign field, or send so many ministers abroad as to damage the domestic

\* The following remarks, from the pen of the lamented and extraordinary youth, John Urquhart, are so admirable and appropriate, that we cannot forbear their insertion here in a note.

“Let us imagine, that instead of the world, a single country had been pointed out by our Lord as the field of action. And since we are most familiar with our own land, let us just suppose, that the particular country specified was the island of Great Britain: and that, instead of the command to go forth to all nations, and preach the Gospel to every creature, the order had been to go through all the counties of this island, and preach the Gospel to every inhabitant. I find that on a scale which would make the population of Great Britain represent that of the world, the population of Mid Lothian might be taken as a sufficiently accurate representation of the population of our own land.

“In order, then, to have a just picture of the present state of the world, only conceive that all who had received the above commission, some how or other, had contrived to gather themselves together within the limits of this single county. Imagine to yourselves all the other divisions of Scotland and England immersed in heathen darkness; and that by these Christians who had so unaccountably happened to settle down together in one little spot, no effort was made to evangelize the rest of the land, except by collecting a little money, and sending forth two or three itinerants, to walk single handed through the length and breadth of the country.

“I shall be told, however, that illustration is not argument; and so distorted have our views been on this subject, that you will be disposed to think this a perfect caricature of the matter. But I deny that this is an illustration at all. It is merely a representation on a reduced scale; and I believe you will find it to be a correct representation of the state of the world.”

work. The wonder only is, that any one acquainted with the history of missions, should apprehend such a result even in a distant futurity. A blush of shame would seem a much more appropriate concomitant of such a history than idle and ill-omened auguries about the danger of excess in our efforts for the heathen.

It is one of the most striking and merciful features in the constitution of Christian character, that duty and our best interests are inseparably blended. "Do thyself no harm," "do good unto all men," meet in the result, "give and it shall be given unto you." We do ourselves harm, when we refuse to do others good, and wisdom unites with love and duty, in prompting us to seek the salvation of our fellow-men. It is the great law of moral action in the kingdom of grace, "*that it is more blessed to give than to receive.*" It is promised alike to individuals, and to communities of Christians, "they that water, shall be watered also." To be good, is to do good: and to do good is to get good more abundantly. As well might the husbandman in time of spring withhold his seed from the fallowed earth, to rescue it from waste, as for us to look for injuries to the Church from the sending forth of foreign missionaries. "If we sow sparingly, we shall reap sparingly." If we save the seed, we shall lose the harvest!

Did not the Jews lose their birthright in the Church of Christ by refusing to give their religion to the Gentiles? "I say, then, have they stumbled that they might fall? God forbid; but rather through their fall, salvation is come to the Gentiles."\*

It is a memorable fact, that the corruptions of the primi-

\* Rom. xi. 11.



tive church increased in proportion to the decay of missionary enterprise. Nor is it less true, that, in our day, the revival of religion at home, appeared and grew in perfect harmony, and even exact degree, with the spirit and work of foreign missions. It is not necessary to determine whether this spirit be the cause or the effect of reviving religion among the people. If it be the uniform effect, then its absence denotes religious decay; if it be the uniform cause, then is it a blessing to the Church. The truth is, it is at once the cause and the effect. As Christians awake to an increased regard for God, and for their own souls, they acquire also an increased regard for the well-being of other men: they feel a more tender and holy pity for the perishing heathen. An increased interest in their welfare produces increased efforts for their salvation; and every prayer they offer, every gift they bestow, every effort they make, returns into their own bosoms. Thus, every impression made abroad is felt with electric force at home, as Scipio raised the siege of Rome at the gates of Carthage: and thus a repercussive influence is constantly exchanged. Let those, therefore, who shelter their consciences against the claims of foreign missions, under the idle and fallacious adage "that we have heathen enough at home," henceforth remember that the Church cannot *afford* to do without the foreign field; that the best way to carry on missions at home is to carry on missions abroad; and that all neglect of this great cause not only violates the last command of Jesus Christ, and endangers the souls of innumerable millions of our fellow-men, but impairs the vital energies of the Church itself.

VII. We remark again, *that the world never will be*



*converted to God, without the active and intentional agency of the Church of Christ.*

It is evident from the word of God, and the past history of Missions, that the world never will be saved without the instrumentality of the people of God. Not that this is necessary on God's part; but it has pleased Him that it should be so. In this way God puts eternal shame upon Satan, and eternal honour on his Son, by using so frail an agency to destroy the kingdom of darkness; and at the same time, as we have already seen, the instrument which he uses to break the oppressor's power, and rescue the oppressed, is prepared for heaven by the service which he performs. This plan of operation is not only determined on, but if we may speak so, the divine veracity is pledged, and the divine honour committed, on the principle that men, Christian men, are to take the Gospel to their fellow men. The divine influence must of course attend and bless human exertion and Gospel means. But human agency is inseparable from the success of the arrangement. "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; and Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!*"

In all ages, since the apostles closed their illustrious labours, the grand difficulty has been to induce *men* to do their part in this great work. In the propagation of the Gospel by his holy providence, it may almost be said of the Redeemer, that of "the people, there is none with him."\* If we subtract from the sum of what has been effected for Christianity, all that the course of human affairs overruled by God has done; all that natural generation has done; all that

\* Foster.

emigration and colonizing (with Christian population) heathen lands, have done; all that the bringing of the heathen to the Gospel has done; all that wars and revolutions, inventions and discoveries, and human enterprise have *unintentionally* done; in a word, if we subtract all the *indirect* influences of Christianity, and all the overruled events of the world, from what has been done for the cause of Jesus, then how much will remain?

Now by all these agencies, and indeed by the whole universe of agencies, is the great Head of the Church carrying on the work of Redemption. But the tide of providence, which steadily sets in with the final conversion of the world, is only the *stream* on which the "tall and goodly vessel" of the Gospel floats: and to reach its desired haven, the navigator *man* must take the helm, as well as the Spirit of Jesus fill the sail. Heretofore, if we may so speak, the work of the Lord has been carrying forward the Church; but the Church is required to carry forward the work of the Lord. God demands of us that we give not only an overruled and indirect assistance (for that he extorts even from his foes,) but that we should *co-operate with him in a positive, direct, and intentional instrumentality*.

VIII. We proceed to remark, *that a crisis appears now to have been arrived at, in the history of the world, in which it is peculiarly important for the Christian Church to bear with all her resources on the conversion of the heathen.* In a somewhat inverted application of the apocalyptic symbol, a "voice" seems to "come forth from the temple of God, saying, thrust in the sickle and reap, for the *time* to reap has come; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." The spirit of the age is *ripe* for action, for

it is a spirit of extraordinary enterprise. It is a *public* spirit also, and is ripe, if well directed, not only for action, but for *combined* action, on a scale of noble daring and sublime extent, hitherto unknown on earth. It is an age of revolution; and it is ripe not only for change, but for improvement too. While the God of providence is shaking all nations, the *desire* of nations must be at hand. "While he removes diadem after diadem, and takes off crown after crown,"\* *He* must be near whose right it is to rule.

And then our facilities for the universal diffusion of the Gospel, are great and manifold, to a most surprising extent. By all the power of the press, by all the commerce of the nations, by arts, by arms, by the progress of improvement, by the spirit and growth of liberty, by the decay of the great rival systems of religion, and by the general state of the heathen world, as well as by all the provisions of the Gospel, is the way of the Lord prepared before us, and our long delay reproved.

And again, every step we take seems to be divinely seconded and sustained. Success beyond our faith, above our hopes, has attended our efforts, and beckoned us on to a more devoted and extended work of missions. That which seemed a rock has sent forth gushing waters, when smitten by the rod of the Gospel herald, in the Redeemer's name. Nations have thrown away their idols to receive us, or have given them up at our bidding; while other nations are inviting us to come, and weep when a Christian sail appears, bringing no Bibles and no missionaries. And a reproving providence, opening a way for the Gospel to

\* Haggai iii. 7. Ezekiel xxi. 27.

mankind, seems to say, in the voice of all its operations, "go forward, go forward," to the lingering, hesitating Church.

IX. The next suggestion has reference to our own country. It is this: *that the genius of our institutions, and the concomitant spirit of the people, fit them in a peculiar manner to receive with favour appeals in behalf of missions.* There exists in the bosom of the people a constitutional sympathy for oppressed nations, and a fervid desire to impart to others the blessings which we enjoy. It is, in this respect, a nation of philanthropists; a depository of civil and religious liberty for the population of the earth. Here, then, we may successfully approach them as the guardians of the Bible for other lands. Here we have a national highway to the hearts of the people. The transition, though delicate, is not difficult, to a more elevated freedom; to more pure and enduring blessings. We may say to them with a force which it will not be easy to resist, you, the people of this happy land, who, in the noble disinterestedness of freemen and of brethren, exult in the political independence of Spanish America, in the emancipation of injured Greece, and the rising liberties of France; you who welcome with enthusiastic hospitality the arrival on your shores of the oppressed Irishman and the persecuted Pole; you who pant and pray for universal freedom, and delight to impart the blessings of your national republican institutions to an admiring world; will you stifle the convictions which rise up in your breasts to plead for the rights of man? Can you withhold from heathen nations the covenant of their spiritual peace, and bury in your rusting coffers their heavenly citizenship and



their eternal freedom? And if such is the feeling of freemen and the spirit of American citizens, what ought we not to look for from the *Christians* of America, upon whose hearts have been superinduced the unearthly influences and resistless appeals of eternal truth and holy love!

X. Finally; *it is a missionary spirit which we need in the Church of God, in order to give her the proper efficiency in the work of missions.* By this we mean a spirit of supreme devotion to the divine Redeemer; a spirit in unison with the end for which the Saviour died; a spirit which properly estimates the value of the soul; a spirit of enlarged and generous love to man, and of holy pity to the perishing heathen. In a word, we mean the spirit of true religion, and of Jesus Christ. This is the spirit of Christian enterprise, which is attributed in ancient prophecy to a Christian people. "The people that know the Lord shall be strong, and shall do exploits." It is this which burnt with holy and consuming ardour in the great apostle's breast, when he declared, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." "I have strived to preach among the Gentiles, where Jesus was not named, the unsearchable riches of Christ."\* Under the influence of such a spirit as this, a new order of men and of movements would arise, altogether above the tame and long tolerated standard of the Christian Church. Such men as Paul, and Luther, and Whitfield would re-appear. The sons of thunder would again fulminate upon the nations, and the sons of consolation again pour into the weary and heavy laden hearts of pagan men, the oil of Gospel joy

\* Acts xxi. 13. Romans xv. 20. Ephesians iii. 8.



and gladness. The heroic heralds of the cross, clad in the might of God, and fired with the spirit of missions, would transcend all human calculations; impatient of delay, they would outstrip the tedious and timid expedients of human policy; they would hasten with the Gospel to the dying nations, and fly through the earth as *avant couriers* of the approaching King of Kings.\* A few such men as these at home and abroad, would kindle the whole Church of Christ into one broad blaze of light; would call out into action every spiritual energy, and every temporal resource; and cause a resistless enginery of Gospel means, to bear upon the entire destruction of heathenism.

It has been the uniform fate of all great enterprises to meet in their origin with resistance and even with ridicule from the weak, the selfish, and the over cautious. The ancients called profane, and even mad, the first brave mariner who ventured out to sea: Columbus was for almost an age an unheeded suppliant at the feet of European princes, though he asked at their hands the permission to present them with a **NEW WORLD!** Our own glorious revolution was, at its dawning, the wonder of one half mankind, and the derision of the other. So it has been with the missionary enterprise. Even at the present day, it is the by-word of "the wise and prudent" of this world; and a great number of professed Christians, preferring ease to self-denial, and thinking the state of the heathen so good, and the value of the Gospel to them so small, regard every such attempt as in the last degree extravagant and wild.

We are aware that this spirit, like every other, is liable

\* "Aut inveniam viam aut faciam," is the true missionary principle, when sanctified by divine grace.

to abuse. We remember the crusades of one age, and the fanatical zeal of several others. We are no friends to religious knight-errants, or crazy cosmopolites, who travel through the world "without wisdom to direct" in quest of adventures. It may be worthy of remark, however, that the very attention which such counterfeits excite, shows the fine impression that the true missionary character is fitted to make, when embodied in the persons of such men as Whitfield, Buchanan and Martyn. But we are no advocates of extremes on either side. The extreme of indifference or of cowardice is criminal in itself; is more common, and perhaps more hurtful, than that of fanatical rashness. The extreme of mere worldly expediency and secular policy in missions is as evil as presumptuous enterprise. The system of the Jesuits was as fatal as the spirit of the crusaders to true religion. The author of the work, entitled "For Missionaries after the Apostolical School," is on one extreme. He would storm the world, and spurn all helps, and outfits, and means, save only the vagrant and unfurnished missionary. This is quite excessive, and is destined to live only in the fervours of his own warm but wild fancy. The work, on the contrary, entitled "Hints on Missions," is quite as extreme on the other side. The plan of operation which it suggests would be more disastrous in its consequences, because not speculative and impracticable like the other, but mainly secular, and requiring only secular men to promote it. The author would civilize and colonize the world into Christianity; he would make a mere business-matter of giving Christianity to heathen nations; in a word, he would so adjust things, that the world should *grow up* into Christianity.

Now, the medium between these extremes is the true Gos-

pel plan. No scheme abounds so much in practical wisdom, and powerful means, directly adapted to produce the intended end, as the Gospel method of converting the world. And the spirit of missionary enterprise of which we speak, is that *divine influence* by which man is at once qualified and impelled to spread this salvation.

The great agents must be the ministers of reconciliation, sent out into all the world, under the supreme dominion of this spirit: the people of the Lord, who cannot, and ought not to go, yet if they possess this spirit will help them in heaven by their intercessions, and in heathen lands by their manifold and abounding charities. On such a spirit God will "shed his selectest influences;" a resistless power will attend every effort directed by this spirit; and to universal effort would succeed universal impression. Thus the promises of the Gospel would travail in the birth of nations, and soon a renovated world would people the Church, and a glorified Church would people heaven.

We have pursued these suggestions so far, that little room is left for the application which we had intended of this discussion.

It may seem in strong contrast to some of our remarks, yet it is in perfect consistency with them, to say, that prophecy, by general consent, represents the conversion of the world as near at hand. When the Apostle Paul assured the crew who were about to flee out of the ship, "except ye abide in the ship ye cannot be saved," he did not forget or disparage the revelation of the Angel of God, who had said unto him, "There shall be no loss of any man's life among you; not a hair shall fall from the head of any of you."\* And so the

\* Acts xxviii.

world must soon be converted to God; but this must be done by the agency of man. The means are no less necessary and certain than the end; and as in order of time, they must precede, and by divine appointment bring it about, so nothing ever can nor ever will be done without their proper use. When "Daniel understood by the books" of divine prophecy, that a time was set for the restoration of Israel, he at once, and for that reason, betook himself to the work of intercession for the predicted deliverance. If it were not that the conversion of the world is a predicted and promised event, who could believe that it ever will occur! But God has said it, therefore it is true; and we expect it at his word, not only certainly, but soon. In order to this, however, Christians must begin to feel, and pray, and labour, and give and make sacrifices, in far another style; and great events must succeed each other, with a celerity and effect heretofore unknown on earth. The last forty years, compared with the centuries past, have been distinguished by many such events; and may be a type of the years to come. But in these few years just before us, the world and the Church *must live very fast*. The friends of God must be multiplied like the dew of the morning; and they must grow in stature, as they augment in numbers. The irreconcilable enemies of God may expect to perish with accelerated speed, and great terror. As it is written, "*one woe is past, and behold, there come two woes more hereafter; and, behold the third woe cometh quickly.*"

One most cheering characteristic of the present crisis is, the increasing union of the people of God. Another is the spirit of enlargement that now possesses and distinguishes many of our national benevolent institutions. Beginning, perhaps, with only a very distant regard to so



great a work, they have imperceptibly, and even rapidly, been led on by the finger of God, until now the Bible, and the Tract, and the Sunday-school, and the Temperance, and the Mariner's Societies have, in succession, passed the limits of our own country, and taken the *world* for their theatre of action. It is a heavenly token too, *that God is pouring out his Spirit upon our missionary labours and institutions abroad*; thus setting his approving seal to the work, and, by divine interposition, giving evidence of his being the God of the *Bible*, and the God of the *race*. And still the most important of all the tokens for good is this, *that God's method of converting the world, viz. the preaching of the Gospel, has begun to take its true place in the regards of the Church of God*; a great number of devoted youth have dedicated themselves to the honoured work, at home and abroad; and the earth seems preparing to hear the word of the Lord. Who, then, will dare to slumber at such a time as this? Who will dare to shut up his bowels of compassion *now*? Who will hoard God's treasure, when the life of souls may be in it? Who will refuse, when God calls him from on high, to come up to his help? Who will refuse to say, "*here am I, send me?*" Did Christ Jesus pour out his soul unto death for us, and shall we now refuse to give our substance or ourselves unto Him? To every hesitating heart I seem to hear an injured Saviour, speaking from heaven, "*If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise from another place; but thou shalt be destroyed.*"\*

The organization, the numbers, the character, and the influence of the Presbyterian Church in the United States

\* Esther iv. 14.



have justified the expectation of a noble effort by her in the cause of foreign missions. *She has not met this reasonable hope.* She has not acted on this subject in a way worthy of her avowed allegiance to God, of her professed love to man, and of her pure and powerful witness to the truth at home. Her disregard of foreign missions has been in singular contrariety to the promptitude and effect with which she has sustained each great domestic enterprise in behalf of Christianity, as they have in succession presented themselves before her. At this moment every Presbytery in the Church (and they amount to more than one hundred) ought, on a general average, to provide one foreign missionary, and then to sustain him in the field of his labours. Whether our lethargy on this subject result from the want of missionary organization in the bosom of the Church, or from the still more distressing and criminal want of a missionary spirit, we have all a great public sin to confess and to forsake. The *Church* has sinned; and *we her ministers* have sinned *still more*. It is high time that we had all repented of this sin, and evinced the soundness of our repentance by a due and deep reform. Then let every minister awake, and let every member awake, at the call of the divine Redeemer, to regard the claims of the dying Heathen?

To the youth of our Church who are preparing to preach the Gospel we especially look for that Christian enterprise, which, under God, shall rouse the energies of the Church; shall rescue her venerated name from reproach among men; and bear her heavenly charities to heathen lands. To these young brothers in the Lord, who are standing on the threshold of the most elevated and most awful of human trusts, we would most affectionately say—take not your

standard of action from your fathers and elder brethren in the ministry. Shame covers our faces when we turn them towards the continents, where darkness and death eternal reign. Pause before you select a field of future labour; and survey these wide and awful desolations of many generations! Listen to the groans of dying millions as they ascend to heaven! Count not your own lives dear to you, in comparison of their eternal good! Come forth from your sacred shades of study and devotion to kindle our hearts anew in this great service! Come! not only to point us, but lead us to that field to which the finger of God directs you, and the wail of perishing nations calls you!

Finally. In associating ourselves with the empire of God, as agents in this great work, it is a most affecting consideration, that we are a spectacle to men and angels: that we live in a *public* world, which has been selected by God, as a theatre for the display of the most sublime and awful events in the history of the universe. We allude more especially to the entrance of sin into it, with all its train of death, and ruin, on the one hand—and the method of its destruction on the other, by the death of the Son of God. In the contest which is going forward, all creatures may have a *part*; in its issue all beings have an interest. Our world, which is now its field, is appointed of God, to be the tomb of sin, and the trophy of Divine Redemption. And are we actors on such a stage? Oh distinction full of terror! “SEEING THEN, THAT WE ARE COMPASSED ABOUT WITH SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES, LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT, AND THE SIN THAT DOTH MOST EASILY BESET US, AND LET US RUN WITH PATIENCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US, LOOKING UNTO JESUS.”



## ADDENDUM.

Dr. Miller's celebrated Lecture on "*The utility and importance of Creeds and Confessions*," has been out of print for a considerable time. Frequent reference is made to it, and, especially of late, it has been much sought after. As it falls in so happily with the general scope of the "SPRUCE STREET LECTURES," it has been deemed advisable to supply the demand, by giving it a place, as an *addendum*, in this volume; with a view to which, the author has carefully revised, and somewhat enlarged it, and also added the "Appendix." This Lecture unquestionably adds much to the worth and utility of the volume. ED.



THE  
*UTILITY AND IMPORTANCE OF CREEDS AND  
CONFESSIONS:*  
AN  
INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,  
DELIVERED  
AT THE OPENING OF THE SUMMER SESSION OF THE THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,  
PRINCETON, N. J. JULY 2, 1824.

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BY SAMUEL MILLER, D.D.  
Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in said Seminary.

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"In necessariis unitas, in non necessariis libertas, in omnibus charitas."  
*Augustin.*

SECOND EDITION,  
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1833.



AN

## INTRODUCTORY LECTURE, &c.

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BELOVED CANDIDATES FOR THE HOLY MINISTRY,

THE character and situation of one who is preparing for the Sacred Office, are interesting beyond the power of language to express. Such an one, like the Master whom he professes to love and serve, is "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." In all that he is, and in all that he does, the temporal and eternal welfare, not only of himself, but of thousands, may be involved. On every side he is beset with perils. Whatever may be his talents and learning, if he have not genuine piety, he will probably be a curse instead of a blessing to the Church. But this is not the only danger to which he is exposed. He may have unfeigned piety, as well as talents and learning; and yet, from habitual indiscretion; from a defect in that sobriety of mind, which is so precious to all men, but especially to every one who occupies a public station; from a fondness for novelty and innovation, or from that love of distinction which is so natural to men;—after all, instead of edifying the "body of Christ," he may become a disturber of its peace, and a corrupter of its purity; so that we might almost say, whatever may be the result with respect to himself,—"it had been good for the Church if he had never been born."

Hence it is, that every part of the character of him who is coming forward to the holy ministry; his opinions; his temper; his attainments; his infirmities; and above all, his

character as a practical Christian;—are of inestimable importance to the ecclesiastical community of which he is destined to be a minister. Nothing that pertains to him is uninteresting. If it were possible for him, strictly speaking, to “live to himself,” or to “die to himself,” the case would be different. But it is not possible. His defects as well as his excellencies; his gifts and graces, as well as the weak points of his character, must and will all have their appropriate effect on every thing that he touches. Can you wonder, then, that, employed to conduct the education of candidates for this high and holy office, we feel ourselves placed under a solemn, nay, an awful responsibility? Can you wonder that, having advanced a little before you in our experience in relation to this office, we cherish the deepest solicitude at every step you take? Can you wonder, that we daily exhort you to “take heed to yourselves and your doctrine;” and that we cease not to entreat you, and to pray for you, that you give all diligence to approve yourselves to God and his Church able and faithful servants? Independently of all official obligation, did we not feel and act thus, we should manifest an insensibility to the interests of the Church, as well as to your true welfare, equally inexcusable and degrading.

It is in consequence of this deep solicitude for your improvement in every kind of ministerial furniture, that we not only endeavour to conduct the regular course of your instruction in such a manner as we think best adapted to promote the great end of all your studies; but that we also seize the opportunity which the general Lecture, introductory to each session affords us, of calling your attention to a series of subjects, which do not fall within the ordinary course of our instruction.

A subject of this nature will engage our attention on the present occasion: namely, THE IMPORTANCE OF CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS FOR MAINTAINING THE UNITY AND PURITY OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

This is a subject, which, though it properly belongs to the department of *Church Government*, has always been, for want of time, omitted in the Lectures usually delivered on that division of our studies. And I am induced now to call your attention to it, because, as I said, it properly belongs to the department committed to me; because it is in itself a subject highly interesting and important; because it has been for a number of years past, and still is, the object of much severe animadversion, on the part of latitudinarians and heretics; and because, though abundantly justified by reason, Scripture, and universal experience, the spontaneous feelings of many, especially under the free government which it is our happiness to enjoy, rise up in arms against what they deem, and are sometimes pleased to call, the excessive "*rigour*," and even "*tyranny*," of exacting subscription to Articles of Faith.

It is my design, *first*, to offer some remarks on the UTILITY AND IMPORTANCE OF WRITTEN CREEDS; and *secondly*, to obviate some of the more common and plausible OBJECTIONS which have been urged against them by their adversaries.

I. By a CREED, or CONFESSION OF FAITH, I mean, an exhibition, in human language, of those great doctrines which are believed by the framers of it to be taught in the Holy Scriptures; and which are drawn out in regular order, for the purpose of ascertaining how far those who wish to unite in church fellowship are really agreed in the fundamental principles of Christianity. Creeds and Confessions



do not claim to be in themselves *laws* of Christ's house, or legislative *enactments*, by which any set of opinions are *constituted truths*, and which require, on that account, to be received as truths among the members of his family. They only profess to be *summaries*, extracted from the Scriptures, of a few of those great Gospel doctrines, which are taught by Christ himself; and which those who make the summary in each particular case, concur in deeming important, and agree to make the test of their religious union. They have no idea that, in forming this summary, they make any thing truth, that was not truth before; or that they thereby contract an obligation to believe, what they were not bound by the authority of Christ to believe before. But they simply consider it as a list of the leading truths which the Bible teaches, which, of course, all men ought to believe, because the Bible *does* teach them; and which a certain portion of the visible church catholic agree in considering as a formula by means of which they may know and understand one another.

Now, I affirm, that the adoption of such a Creed is not only *lawful* and *expedient*, but also indispensably *necessary* to the harmony and purity of the visible Church. For the establishment of this position, let me request your attention to the following considerations.

1. Without a Creed explicitly adopted, it is not easy to see how the MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF ANY PARTICULAR CHURCH, AND MORE ESPECIALLY A LARGE DENOMINATION OF CHRISTIANS, CAN MAINTAIN UNITY AMONG THEMSELVES.

If every Christian were a mere insulated individual, who inquired, felt, and acted for himself alone, no Creed of human formation would be necessary for his advancement in knowledge, comfort, or holiness. With the Bible in his

closet, and with his eyes opened to see the “wondrous things” which it contains, he would have all that was needful for his edification. But the case is far otherwise. The Church is a *society*; a society which, however extended, is “one body in Christ,” and all who compose it, “members one of another.” Nor is this society merely required to be one in name, or to recognize a mere theoretical union; but also carefully to maintain “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” They are exhorted to “stand fast in one spirit with one mind.” They are commanded all to “speak the same thing,” and to be “of one accord, of one mind.” And this “unity of spirit” is as essential to the comfort and edification of those who are joined together in church fellowship, as it is to a compliance with the command of their Master. “How can any walk together unless they be agreed?” Can a body of worshippers, composed of Calvinists, Arminians, Pelagians, Arians, and Socinians, all pray, and preach, and commune together profitably and comfortably, each retaining the sentiments, feelings, and language appropriate to his denomination? This would indeed make the house of God a miserable *Babel*. What! can those who believe the Lord Jesus Christ to be God, equal with the Father, and worship him accordingly;—and those who consider all such worship as abominable idolatry:—Those who cordially renounce all dependence on their own works or merit for justification before God, relying entirely on his rich grace, “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;”—and those who pronounce all such reliance fanatical, and man’s own righteousness the sole ground of hope:—Can persons who cherish these irreconcilably opposite sentiments and feelings on the most important of all subjects, unite with edification in the same prayers, listen

from Sabbath to Sabbath to the same instructions, and sit together in comfort at the same sacramental table? As well might Jews and Christians worship together in the same temple. They must either be perfectly indifferent to the great subjects on which they are thus divided, or all their intercourse must be productive of jarring and distress. Such a discordant assembly might *talk* about church fellowship; but that they should really *enjoy* that fellowship which the Bible describes as so precious, and which the pious so much delight to cultivate, is impossible;—just as impossible as “that righteousness should have fellowship with unrighteousness,” or “light hold communion with darkness, or Christ maintain concord with Belial.”

Holding these things to be self-evident, how, I ask, is any church to guard itself from that baleful discord, that perpetual strife of feeling, if not of words and conduct, which must ensue, when it is made up of such heterogeneous materials? Nay, how is a Church to avoid the guilt of harbouring in its bosom, and of countenancing by its fellowship, the worst heresies that ever disgraced the Christian name? It is not enough for attaining this object, that all who are admitted profess to agree in receiving the *Bible*; for many who call themselves Christians, and profess to take the *Bible* for their guide, hold opinions, and speak a language as foreign, nay, as opposite, to the opinions and language of many others, who equally claim to be Christians, and equally profess to receive the Bible, as the east is to the west. Of those who agree in this general profession, the greater part acknowledge as of divine authority the whole sacred canon, as we receive it; while others would throw out whole chapters, and some a number of entire books from the volume of God’s revealed will. The

orthodox maintain the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures; while some who insist that they are Christians, deny their inspiration altogether. In short, there are multitudes who, professing to believe the Bible, and to take it for their guide, reject every fundamental doctrine which it contains. So it was in the beginning as well as now. An inspired Apostle declares, that some in this day, who not only professed to believe the Scriptures, but even to "preach Christ," did really preach "another Gospel," the teachers of which he charges those to whom he wrote to hold "accursed;" and he assures them that there are some "heresies" so deep and radical that they are to be accounted "damnable." Surely those who maintain the true Gospel, cannot "walk together" in "church fellowship" with those who are "accursed" for preaching "another Gospel," and who espouse "damnable heresies," the advocates of which the disciples of Christ are not permitted even to "receive into their houses," or to "bid God speed!" How, then, I ask again, are the members of a Church, to take care that they be, according to the divine command, "of one mind," and "of one way?" They may require all who enter their communion to profess a belief in the Bible; nay, they may require this profession to be repeated every day, and yet may be corrupted and divided by every form of the grossest error. Such a profession, it is manifest, ascertains no agreement; is a bond of no real union; a pledge of no spiritual fellowship. It leaves every thing within the range of nominal Christianity, as perfectly undefined, and as much exposed to total discord as before.

But perhaps it will be proposed as a more efficient remedy, that there be a *private understanding*, vigilantly acted upon, that no ministers or members be admitted, but



those who are known, by private conversation with them, *substantially to agree* with the original body, with regard both to doctrine and order. In this way, some allege, discord may be banished, and a church kept pure and peaceful, without an odious array of Creeds and Confessions. To this proposal, I answer, in the *first* place, it is, to all intents and purposes, exhibiting a Creed, and requiring subscription to it, while the contrary is insinuated and professed. It is making use of a religious test, in the most rigorous manner, without having the honesty or the manliness to avow it. For what matter is it, as to the real spirit of the proceeding, whether the Creed be reduced to writing, or be registered only in the minds of the church members, and applied by them as a body, if it equally exclude applicants who are not approved?—But to this proposed remedy, I answer, in the *second* place, the question, what is soundness in the faith? however explicitly agreed upon by the members of the church among themselves, cannot be safely left to the *understanding* and *recollection* of each individual belonging to the body in question. As well might the civil constitution of a State, instead of being committed to writing, be left to the vague and ever varying impressions of the individual citizens who live under it. In such a constitution, every one sees there could be neither certainty nor stability. Scarcely any two retailers of its articles would perfectly agree; and the same persons would expound it differently at different times, as their interests or their passions might happen to bear sway. Quite as unreasonable and unsafe, to say the least, would it be to leave the instrument of a church's fellowship on a similar footing. Such a nuncupative creed, when most needed as a means of quieting disturbances, or of excluding corruption, would be rendered doubtful, and, of course, useless,



by having its most important provisions called in question on every side. A case in which, if it were made operative at all, it would be far more likely to be perverted into an instrument of popular oppression, than to be employed as a means of sober and wholesome government.

The inference then plainly is, that no church can hope to maintain a homogeneous character;—no church can be secure either of purity or peace, for a single year; nay, no church can effectually guard against the highest degrees of corruption and strife, without some test of truth, explicitly agreed upon, and adopted by her, in her ecclesiastical capacity; something *recorded*; something *publicly known*; something capable of being *referred to* when most needed; which not merely this or that private member *supposes* to have been received; but to which the church *as such* has *agreed to adhere*, as a bond of union. In other words, a church, in order to maintain “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and love,” must have a CREED—a WRITTEN CREED—to which she has formally given her assent, and to a conformity to which her ministrations are pledged. As long as such a test is *faithfully applied*, she cannot fail of being in some good degree united and harmonious; and when nothing of the kind is employed, I see not how she can be expected, without a miracle, to escape all the evils of discord and corruption.

2. The necessity and importance of Creeds and Confessions appear from the consideration, that one great design of establishing a Church in our world was, that she might be in all ages, a DEPOSITORY, A GUARDIAN, AND A WITNESS OF THE TRUTH.

Christians, collectively as well as individually, are represented in Scripture as WITNESSES FOR GOD. They are com-

manded to maintain his truth, and to “hold forth the word of life,” in all its purity and lustre before a perverse generation, that others may be enlightened and converted. They are exhorted to “buy the truth, and not to sell it;”—to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;”—to “hold fast the form of sound words which they have received;”—and to “strive together for the faith of the Gospel.” These, and many other commands, of similar import, plainly make it the duty of every Christian church to detect and expose prevailing heresies; to exclude all such as embrace radical heresy from their communion; and to “lift up a standard” for truth, whenever “the enemy comes in like a flood.”

But does not all this imply taking effectual measures to distinguish between truth and error? Does not all this necessarily infer the duty of *drawing, and publicly manifesting, a line* between those who, while they profess, in general, to believe the Bible, really deny all its essential doctrines; and those who simply and humbly receive “the truth as it is in Jesus?” But how is this distinction to be made, seeing those who embrace the essential doctrines of the Gospel, equally profess to receive the Bible? It can only be done by carefully ascertaining and explicitly declaring how the church herself, and how those whom she suspects of being in error, understand and interpret the Bible; that is, by extracting certain articles of faith from the Scriptures, according to her understanding of them, and comparing these articles with the professed belief of those whom she supposes to be heretics. And what is this but extracting from the Scriptures a **CONFESSION OF FAITH—a CREED**, and applying it as a test of sound principles? It does really appear to me that those orthodox brethren,

who admit that the church is bound to raise her voice against error, and to "contend earnestly" for the truth ; and yet denounce Creeds and Confessions, are, in the highest degree inconsistent with themselves. They acknowledge the obligation and importance of a great duty ; and yet reject the only means by which it can be performed. Quite as unreasonable, I am constrained to say, as the "task masters of *Egypt*," they require work to be done, without allowing the materials necessary to its accomplishment. Before the church, *as such*, can detect heretics, and cast them out from her bosom : before she can raise her voice, in "a day of rebuke and of blasphemy," against prevailing errors, her governors and members must be agreed what is truth ; and, unless they would give themselves up, in their official judgments, to all the caprice and feverish effervescence of *occasional* feeling, they must have some accredited, permanent document, exhibiting what they have agreed to consider as truth. There is really no feasible alternative. They must either have such "a form of sound words," which they have voluntarily adopted, and pledged themselves to one another to "hold fast ;" or they can have no security that any two or more successive decisions concerning soundness in the faith will be alike. In other words, they cannot attain, in any thing like a steady, uniform, consistent manner, one of the great purposes for which the visible church was established.

It surely will not be said, by any considerate person, that the church, or any of her individual members, can sufficiently fulfil the duty in question, by simply proclaiming from time to time, in the midst of surrounding error, her adherence and her attachment to the Bible. Every one must see that this would be, in fact, **DOING NOTHING** as

“witnesses of the truth;” because it would be doing nothing *peculiar*; nothing *distinguishing*; nothing which every heretic in Christendom is not ready to do, or rather is not daily doing, as loudly, and as frequently as the most orthodox Church. The very idea of “bearing testimony to the truth,” and of separating from those who are so corrupt that Christian communion cannot be maintained with them, necessarily implies some public discriminating act, in which the church *agrees upon*, and *expresses* her belief in, the great doctrines of Christianity, in contradistinction from those who believe erroneously. Now to suppose that any thing of this kind can be accomplished, by making a profession, the very same, in every respect, with that which the worst heretics make, is too palpably absurd to satisfy any sober inquirer.

Of what value, let me ask, had the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses* been, as WITNESSES OF THE TRUTH—as LIGHTS IN THE WORLD, amidst the darkness of surrounding corruption;—especially of what value had they been to the church in succeeding times, and to *us* at the present day, if they had not formed, and transmitted to posterity those celebrated CONFESSIONS OF FAITH, as precious as they are memorable, which we read in their history, and which stand as so many monumental testimonies to the true “Gospel of the grace of God?” Without THESE, how should we ever have known in what manner they interpreted the Bible; or wherein they differed from the grossest heretics, who lived at the same time, and professed to receive the same Bible? Without *these*, how should we ever have seen so clearly and satisfactorily as we do, that they maintained the truth and the order of Christ’s house, amidst all the wasting desolations of the “man of sin;” and thus fulfilled his promise,



that there shall always be “a seed to serve him, who shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation?”

3. The adoption and publication of a Creed, is A TRIBUTE TO TRUTH AND CANDOUR, which every Christian church OWES TO THE OTHER CHURCHES, AND TO THE WORLD AROUND HER.

Every wise man will wish to be united in religious duty and privilege, with those who most nearly agree with himself in their views of doctrine and order; with those in intercourse with whom he can be most happy, and best edified. Of course, he will be desirous, before he joins any church, to *know* something of its faith, government, and general character. I will suppose a pious and ingenuous individual about to form his religious connections for life. He looks round on the churches to which he has most access, and is desirous of deciding with which of them he can be most comfortable. I will suppose that, in this survey, he turns his eyes towards the truly scriptural and primitive church to which it is our happiness to belong. He is anxious to know the doctrine as well as the order which he may expect to find in connection with our body. How is he to know this? Certainly not by going from church to church throughout our whole bounds, and learning the creed of every individual minister from his own lips. This would be physically impossible, without bestowing on the task a degree of time and toil, which scarcely any man could afford. He could not actually hear for himself the doctrines taught in a twentieth part of our pulpits. And if he *could*, he would still be unable to decide, from this source alone, how far what he heard might be regarded as the uniform and universal, and especially as the permanent character of the church; and not rather as



an accidental exhibition. But when such an inquirer finds that we have a published creed, declaring how we understand the Scriptures, and explicitly stating in detail the great truths which we have agreed to unite in maintaining; he can ascertain in a few hours, and without leaving his own dwelling, what we profess to believe and to practice, and how far he may hope to be at home in our communion. And while HE is enabled thus to understand the system to which *we* profess to adhere, he enables us to understand *his* views, by ascertaining how far they accord with our published creed.

Further; what is thus due to ingenuous individuals, who wish to know the real character of our church, is also due to neighbouring churches, who may have no less desire to ascertain the principles which we embrace. It is delightful for ecclesiastical communities, who approach near to each other in faith and order, to manifest their affection for one another, by cherishing some degree of Christian intercourse. But what church, which valued the preservation of its own purity and peace, would venture on such intercourse with a body which had no defined system, either of doctrine or government, to which it stood pledged; and which might, therefore, prove a source of pollution and disorder to every other church with which it had the smallest interchange of services? One of the ministers of such a denomination, when invited into the pulpit of an orthodox brother, might give entire satisfaction; while the very next to whom a similar mark of Christian affection and confidence was shown, might preach the most corrupt heresy. Creeds and Confessions, then, so far from having a tendency to "alienate" and "embitter" those Christian denominations, which think nearly alike, and ought to

maintain fraternal intercourse, really tend to make them acquainted with each other ; to lay a foundation for regular and cordial intercourse ; to beget mutual confidence ; and thus to promote the harmony of the church of God.

I scruple not, therefore, to affirm, that, as every individual minister owes to all around him a frank avowal of his Christian faith, when any desire to know it ; so every church owes it to her sister churches, to be equally frank and explicit in publicly declaring her principles. She, no doubt, believes those principles to be purely scriptural. In publicly avowing them, therefore, she performs the double duty of bearing testimony to the truth, and of endeavouring to draw from less pure denominations, and from the surrounding world, new support to what she conscientiously believes to be more correct sentiments than theirs. She may be erroneous in this estimate ; but still she does what she can, and what she unfeignedly believes to be right ; and what, of course, as long as this conviction continues, she is bound to perform. And I have no hesitation in further maintaining, that, in all ages, those Christian churches which have been most honourably distinguished for their piety ; their zeal, and their adherence to the simplicity of the gospel, have been, not only most remarkable for their care in forming, but also for their frankness in avowing, their doctrinal creed ; and their disposition to let all around them distinctly understand what they professed to regard as the fundamental doctrines of our holy religion.

4. Another argument in favour of Creeds publicly adopted and maintained, is that THEY ARE FRIENDLY TO THE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, AND OF COURSE, TO THE PREVALENCE OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

It is the general principle of the enemies of Creeds, that

all who profess to believe the Bible, ought, without further inquiry, to unite ; to maintain ecclesiastical communion ; and to live together in peace. But is it not manifest, that the only way in which those who essentially differ from each other concerning the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, *can* live together in perfectly harmonious ecclesiastical fellowship, is by becoming indifferent to truth ; in other words, by becoming persuaded that modes of faith are of little or no practical importance to the Church, and are, therefore, not worth contending for ; that clear and discriminating views of Christian doctrine are wholly unnecessary, and of little use in the formation of Christian character ? But in proportion as professing Christians are indifferent to truth, will they not be apt to neglect the study of it ? And if the study of it be generally neglected, will not gross and deplorable ignorance of it eventually and generally prevail ? The fact is, when men love gospel truth well enough to study it with care, they will soon learn to estimate its value ; they will soon be disposed to “ contend for it,” against its enemies, who are numerous in every age ; and this will inevitably lead them to adopt and defend that “ form of sound words” which they think they find in the sacred Scriptures. On the other hand, let any man imbibe the notion that Creeds and Confessions are unscriptural, and of course unlawful, and he will naturally and speedily pass to the conclusion, that all contending for doctrines is useless, and even criminal. From this the transition is easy to the abandonment of the study of doctrine, or, at least, the zealous and diligent study of it. Thus it is, that laying aside all Creeds, naturally tends to make professing Christians indifferent to the study of Christian truth ; comparatively uninterested in the attainment of religious knowledge ; and,

finally, regardless, and, of course, ignorant of "the faith once delivered to the saints."

I would by no means, indeed, be understood to assert, that no heretics have ever been zealous in publishing and defending their corrupt opinions. The pages of ecclesiastical history abundantly show, that many of the advocates of error, both in ancient and modern times, have contended not only pertinaciously, but even fiercely, for their peculiar doctrines. But my position is, that the enemies of all Creeds and Confessions usually assume a principle, which, if carried out to its legitimate consequences, would discourage all zeal in maintaining the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel; that if all zeal in *maintaining* peculiar doctrines were laid aside, all ardour and diligence in *studying* them would be likely to be laid aside also; and that, if this were the case, a state of things more unfriendly to the growth and prevalence of Christian knowledge could scarcely be imagined. Look at the loose, vague, undecisive character of the preaching heard in nine-tenths of the Unitarian, and other latitudinarian pulpits in the United States, and, as I suppose, throughout Christendom. If the occupants of those pulpits had it for their distinct and main object to render their hearers indifferent about understanding, and, of course, indifferent about studying, the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, they could scarcely adopt a plan more directly calculated to attain their end, than that which they actually pursue. Their incessant cry is, "matters of opinion are between God and a man's own conscience. No one else has a right to meddle with them." Hence, in pursuance of this maxim, they do, indeed, take care to meddle very little with the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. We conjecture what their doctrinal opinions are, in general, not so much



from what they say, as from what they do *not* say. And the truth is, that if this character of preaching was to become universal, all discriminating views of gospel-truth would, in thirty years, be banished from the church.

If the friends of orthodoxy and piety, then, really desire to cherish and maintain a love for the discriminating study of Christian doctrine; a taste for religious knowledge; a spirit of zeal for the truth, in opposition to that miserable indifference to articles of faith, which is so replete with mischief to every Christian community in which it is found;—then let them be careful to present, and diligently to keep before the eyes of one another, and the eye of the public, that “good confession” which they are commanded to “profess before many witnesses.” If they fail to do this; if, under the guise of adherence to that great Protestant maxim, that THE BIBLE is the ONLY infallible rule of faith and manners,—(a precious all-important truth; which, properly understood, cannot be too often repeated)—they speak and act as if all who profess to receive the Bible were standing upon equally solid and safe ground; if, in a word, they consider it as unnecessary, and even criminal, to select from the mass of Scriptural truth, and to defend, as such, the fundamental doctrines of the gospel;—then, nothing short of miracle can prevent them from sinking into that coldness and sloth with respect to the study of doctrine, and finally into that deplorable “lack of knowledge” by which millions are constantly “destroyed.”

5. It is an argument of no small weight in favour of Creeds, that THE EXPERIENCE OF ALL AGES HAS FOUND THEM INDISPENSABLY NECESSARY.

Even in the days of the Apostles, when all their inspiration and all their miraculous powers, were insufficient to deter heretics from spreading their poison;—men, calling



themselves Christians, and professing to preach the religion of Christ, perverted his truth, and brought "another gospel," which He had not taught. In this exigency, how did the churches proceed? An inspired apostle directed them not to be contented with a general profession of belief in the religion of Christ on the part of those who came to them as Christian teachers; but to *examine* and *try* them, and to ascertain whether their teaching were agreeable to the "form of sound words" which they had been taught by him: and he adds with awful solemnity—"If any man bring any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be ACCURSED." Here was, in effect, an instance, and that by Divine warrant, of employing a CREED as a test of orthodoxy: that is, men making a general profession of Christianity, are expressly directed by an inspired apostle, to be BROUGHT TO THE TEST, in WHAT SENSE THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT GOSPEL, of which, in general terms, they declared their reception; and how they explained its leading doctrines. It would seem, indeed, that the Confession of Faith then required was very short and simple. This, the peculiar circumstances of the times, and the no less peculiar administration of the Church, rendered entirely sufficient. Still, whether the Confession were long or short; whether it consisted of three articles or of thirty, the principle was the same.

In the *second* century, in the writings of *Irenæus*; and, in the *third*, in the writings of *Tertullian*, *Origen*, *Cyprian*, *Gregory Thaumaturgus*, and *Lucian*, the martyr, we find a number of Creeds and Confessions, more formally drawn out, more minute, and more extensive than those of earlier date. They were intended to bear testimony against the various forms of error which had arisen; and

plainly show that, as the arts and corruptions of heretics increased, the orthodox church found more attention to the adoption and maintenance of these formularies indispensably necessary.

In the *fourth* century, when the church was still more agitated by the prevalence of heresy, there was a still louder demand for accredited tests, by which the heretics were to be tried and detected. Of this demand there never was a more striking instance than in the Council of *Nice*, when the heresy of *Arius* was under the consideration of that far-famed assembly. When the Council entered on the examination of the subject, it was found extremely difficult to obtain from *Arius* any satisfactory explanation of his views. He was not only as ready as the most orthodox divine present, to profess that he believed the Bible; but he also declared himself willing to adopt, as his own, all the language of the Scriptures, in detail, concerning the person and character of the blessed Redeemer. But when the members of the Council wished to ascertain IN WHAT SENSE HE UNDERSTOOD THIS LANGUAGE, he discovered a disposition to evade and equivocate, and actually, for a considerable time, baffled the attempts of the most ingenious of the orthodox to specify his errors, and to bring them to light. He declared that he was perfectly willing to employ the popular language on the subject in controversy; and wished to have it believed that he differed very little from the body of the church. Accordingly the orthodox went over the various titles of Christ plainly expressive of Divinity,—such as “God”—“the true God”—the “express image of God,” &c.—to every one of which *Arius* and his followers most readily subscribed;—claiming a right, however, to put THEIR OWN CONSTRUCTION on the scriptural titles in

question. After employing much time and ingenuity in vain, in endeavouring to drag this artful chief from his lurking places, and to obtain from him an explanation of his views, the Council found it would be impossible to accomplish their object as long as they permitted him to intrench himself behind a mere general profession of belief in the Bible. They therefore, did, what common sense, as well as the word of God, had taught the church to do in all preceding times, and what alone can enable her to detect the artful advocate of error. They expressed, in their own language, what they supposed to be the doctrine of Scripture concerning the Divinity of the Saviour; in other words, they drew up a CONFESSION OF FAITH on this subject, which they called upon *Arius* and his disciples to subscribe. This the heretics refused; and were thus virtually brought to the acknowledgment that they did not understand the Scriptures as the rest of the Council understood them, and, of course, that the charge against them was correct.

The same course was taken by all the pious WITNESSES OF THE TRUTH in the dark ages, when, amidst the surrounding corruption and desolation, they found themselves called upon to bear "witness to the truth." They all professed their belief in the BIBLE, and their love to it; they constantly appealed to it, as the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and they studied it with incomparably more veneration and diligence than any of the errorists around them. This all history plainly evinces. But at the same time, they saw the futility of doing nothing more than proclaim in general, their adherence to the Sacred Volume. This would have been no *distinction*, and, of course, no *testimony* at all. It would have been nothing more than the

bitterest enemies of the truth were proclaiming busily, and even clamourously, every day. They, therefore, did what the friends of orthodoxy had been in the habit of doing from the earliest ages. They framed CREEDS, from time to time, as the exigencies of the Church demanded, by means of which they were enabled to bear their testimony for God; to vindicate his truth; and to transmit the memorials of their fidelity to distant generations. And finally, at the glorious Reformation from Popery, by which the great Head of the Church may be said again to have “set his people free,” and the memory of which shall never die;—in drawing the line between “the precious and the vile,” the friends of truth followed the same course. They, with one accord, formed their *Creeds and Confessions*, which served, at once, as a plea for the truth, and a barrier against heresy. And it is not, perhaps, too much to say, that the volume which contains the collection of these Creeds, is one of the most precious and imperishable monuments of the piety, wisdom, and zeal of the sixteenth century.

What, now, is the inference from all this experience of the Church of God, so universal and so uniform? It cannot be misunderstood. It speaks volumes. When the friends of truth in all ages and situations, even those who were most tenacious of the rights of private judgment, and most happy in the enjoyment of Christian liberty, have invariably found it necessary to resort to the adoption of Creeds, in order to ascertain for themselves, as a social body, and to communicate to others, for their benefit, THEIR SENSE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES;—we are naturally led to conclude, not only that the resort is neither so “unreasonable” nor so “baneful” as many would persuade us to believe; but that there is really no other practicable method of maintaining unity and purity in the Church of Christ.



6. A further argument in favour of Creeds and Confessions, may be drawn from the remarkable fact, that THEIR MOST ZEALOUS OPPOSERS HAVE GENERALLY BEEN LATITUDINARIANS AND HERETICS.

I do not affirm that the use of Creeds has *never* been opposed by individuals substantially orthodox, and even by orthodox churches: for it is believed that a few rare cases of this anomaly have occurred, under the influence of strong prejudice, or very peculiar circumstances. Yet, so far as I can recollect, we have no example of it among the ancients. Such cases are the growth of very modern times. Nor, on the other hand, is it my purpose to deny that heretics have sometimes been extremely zealous in forming and maintaining the most corrupt Creeds. For of this the early history of the Church abounds with examples, and its later periods have not been wholly without them. But what I venture to assert is, that, as a general fact, the most ardent and noisy opponents of Creeds have been those who held corrupt opinions; that none, calling themselves Christians, have been so bitter in reviling them, in modern times, as the friends of *Unitarianism*, and those who were leaning toward that awful gulph; and that the most consistent and zealous advocates of truth have been, every where, and at all times, distinguished by their friendship to such formularies. Nor has this been by any means a fortuitous occurrence; but precisely what might have been calculated, on principle, as likely to be realized. It is an invariable characteristic of the orthodox that they lay great stress on the knowledge and reception of TRUTH; that they consider it as necessary to holiness; that they deem an essential part of fidelity to their Master in heaven, to consist in contending for it, and maintaining it in opposition to all the forms of error. On



the contrary, it is almost as invariable a characteristic of modern heretics, and more especially of those who fall under the general denomination of *Unitarians*, that they profess lightly to esteem modes of faith; that they manifest a marked indifference to truth; that they, for the most part, maintain, in so many words, the innocence of error; and hence very naturally reprobate, and even villify, all faithful attempts to oppose heresy, and to separate heretics from the Church. From those, then, who have either *far departed*, or at least *begun to depart*, from "the faith once delivered to the saints," almost exclusively, do we hear of the "oppression," and the "mischief" of Creeds and Confessions. And is it any marvel that those who maintain the innocence of error, should be unwilling to raise fences for keeping it out of the Church? Is it any marvel that the *Arian*, the *Socinian*, the *Pelagian*, and such as are verging toward those fatal errors, should exceedingly dislike all the evangelical formularies, which tend to make visible the line of distinction between the friends and the enemies of the Redeemer? No;—men, as has been often well observed, "men are seldom opposed to Creeds, until Creeds have become opposed to them." That *they* should dislike and oppose them, in these circumstances, is just as natural as that a culprit arraigned before a civil tribunal, should equally dislike the law, its officer, and its sanction.

Accordingly, if we look a little into the interior of Church history, especially within the last century, we shall find these remarks often and strikingly exemplified. We shall find, with few exceptions, that whenever a group of men began to slide, with respect to orthodoxy, they generally attempted to break, if not to conceal, their fall, by disclaiming against Creeds and Confessions. They have sel-

dom failed, indeed, to protest in the beginning, that they had no objections to the *doctrines themselves* of the Confession which they had subscribed, but to the *principle* of subscribing Confessions at all. Soon, however, was the melancholy fact gradually unfolded, that disaffection to the doctrines which they once appeared to love, had more influence in directing their course, than even they themselves imagined, and that they were receding further and further from the "good way" in which they formerly seemed to rejoice. Truly that cause is of a most suspicious character to which latitudinarians and heretics, at least in modern times, almost as a matter of course, yield their support; and which they defend with a zeal, in general, strictly proportioned to their hatred of orthodoxy!

7. The only further argument in support of Creeds on which I shall dwell, is, that THEIR MOST ZEALOUS OPPOSERS DO THEMSELVES VIRTUALLY EMPLOY THEM IN ALL ECCLESIASTICAL PROCEEDINGS.

The favourite maxim, with the opposers of Creeds, that all who acknowledge the *Bible*, ought, without hesitation, to be received, not only to Christian, but also to ministerial communion, is invariably abandoned by those who urge it, the moment a case turns up which really brings it to the test. Did any one ever hear of a *Unitarian* congregation engaging as their pastor a preacher of *Calvinism*, knowing him to be such? But why not, on the principle adopted, or at least *professed*, by Unitarians? The Calvinist surely comes with his *Bible* in his hand, and professes to believe it as cordially as they. Why is not *that* enough? Yet we know that, in fact, it is *not* enough for these advocates of unbounded liberality. Before they will

consent to receive him as their spiritual guide, they must be *explicitly informed*, HOW HE INTERPRETS THE BIBLE; in other words, WHAT IS HIS PARTICULAR CREED; whether it is substantially the same with their own or not: and if they are not satisfied that *this is the case*, all other professions and protestations will be in vain. He will be inexorably rejected. Here, then, we have, in all its extent, the *principle* of demanding SUBSCRIPTION TO A CREED; and a principle carried out into practice as rigorously as ever it was by the most high-toned advocate of orthodoxy.

We have before seen, that the friends of truth, in all ages, have found, in their sad experience, that a general profession of belief in the Bible, was altogether insufficient, either as a bond of union, or as a fence against the inroads of error. And here we find the warmest advocates of a contrary doctrine, and with a contrary language in their mouths, when they come to *act*, pursuing PRECISELY THE SAME COURSE WITH THE FRIENDS OF CREEDS, with only this difference, that the Creed which they apply as a test, instead of being a written and tangible document, is hidden in the bosoms of those who expound and employ it, and, of course, may be applied in the most capricious as well as tyrannical manner, without appeal; and further, that, while they *really act* upon this principle, they *disavow it*, and would persuade the world that they proceed upon an entirely different plan.

Can there be a more conclusive fact than this? The enemies of Creeds themselves cannot get along a day without them. It is in vain to say, that in their case no Creed is *imposed*, but that all is voluntary, and left entirely to the choice of the parties concerned. It will be seen hereafter that the same may be with equal truth asserted, in all

those cases of subscription to articles, for which I contend, without any exception. No less vain is it to say, again, that in their case the articles insisted on are few and simple, and by no means so liable to exception as the long and detailed Creeds which some churches have adopted. It is the *principle* of subscription to Creeds which is now under consideration. If the *lawfulness* and even the *necessity* of acting upon this principle can be established, our cause is gained. The *extent* to which we ought to go in multiplying articles, is a secondary question, the answer to which must depend on the exigencies of the church framing the Creed. Now the adversaries of Creeds, while they totally reject the expediency, and even the lawfulness, of the general principle, yet show that they cannot proceed a step without adopting it in practice. This is enough. Their *conduct* is sounder than their *reasoning*. And no wonder. Their *conduct* is dictated by good sense and practical experience, nay imposed upon them by the evident necessity of the case: while their *reasoning* is a theory, derived, as I must believe, from a source far less enlightened, and less safe.

Several other arguments might be urged in favour of written Creeds, did not the limits to which I am confined in this Lecture, forbid me further to enlarge.

It were easy to show that Confessions of Faith, judiciously drawn, and solemnly adopted by particular churches, are not only invaluable as bonds of union, and fences against error; but that they also serve an important purpose, as accredited manuals of Christian doctrine, well fitted for the instruction of those private members of churches, who have neither leisure nor habits of thinking sufficiently close, to draw from the sacred writings themselves a consistent sys-



tem of truth. It is of incalculable use to the individual who has but little time for reading, and but little acquaintance with books, to be furnished with a clear and well arranged, compend of doctrine, which he is authorized to regard, not as the work of a single, enlightened, and pious divine; but as drawn out and adopted by the collected wisdom of the Church to which he belongs. There is often a satisfaction, to plain, unsophisticated mind, not to be described, in going over such a compend, article by article; examining the proofs adduced from the word of God in support of each; and “searching the Scriptures daily to see whether the things which it teaches are so or not.”

It might also be further shown, that sound and scriptural Confessions of Faith, are of great value for transmitting to posterity a knowledge of what is done by the Church, at particular times, in behalf of the truth. Every such Confession that is formed or adopted by the followers of Christ in one age, is a precious legacy transmitted to their children, and to all that may come after them, in a succeeding age, not only bearing their testimony in support of the true doctrines of Jesus Christ, but also pouring more or less light on those doctrines, for the instruction of all to whom that testimony may come.

But while we attend to the principal arguments in *favour* of written Creeds, justice to the subject requires that we

II. Examine some of the principal OBJECTIONS which have been made to Creeds by their adversaries.

1. And the first which I shall mention is, that forming a Creed, and requiring subscription to it as a religious test, IS SUPERSEDING THE BIBLE, AND MAKING A HUMAN COMPOSITION INSTEAD OF IT A STANDARD OF FAITH. “The Bi-



ble," say those who urge this objection, "is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It is so *complete*, that it needs no human addition, and so *easily understood*, that it requires no human explanation. Why, then, should we desire any other ecclesiastical standard? Why subscribe ourselves, or call upon others to subscribe, any other Creed than this plain, inspired, and perfect one? Every time we do this we offer a public indignity to the sacred volume, as we virtually declare, either that it is not infallible, or not sufficient."

This objection is the most specious one in the whole catalogue. And although it is believed that a sufficient answer has been furnished by some principles already laid down; yet the confidence with which it is every day repeated, renders a formal attention to it expedient; more especially as it bears, at first view, so much the appearance of peculiar veneration for the Scriptures, that many are captivated by its plausible aspect, and consider it as decisive.

The whole argument which this objection presents, is founded on a false assumption. No Protestant ever professed to regard his Creed, considered as a human composition, as of equal authority with the Scriptures, and far less of paramount authority. Every principle of this kind is, with one voice, disclaimed, by all the Creeds, and defences of Creeds, that I have ever read. And whether, notwithstanding this, the constant repetition of the charge, ought to be considered as fair argument, or gross calumny, the impartial will judge. A church Creed professes to be, as was before observed, merely an *epitome*, or *summary exhibition* OF WHAT THE SCRIPTURES TEACH. It professes to be deduced from the Scriptures, and to refer to the Scrip-

tures for the whole of its authority. Of course, when any one subscribes it, he is so far from dishonouring the Bible, that he does public homage to it. He simply declares, by a solemn act, how he understands the Bible; in other words, what doctrines he considers it as containing. In short, the language of an orthodox believer, in subscribing his ecclesiastical Creed, is simply of the following import:—"While the *Socinian* professes to believe the Bible, and to understand it as teaching the mere humanity of Christ:—while the *Arian* professes to receive the same Bible, and to find in it the Saviour represented as the most exalted of all creatures, but still a creature:—While the *Pelagian* and *Semi-Pelagian* make a similar profession of their general belief in the Scriptures, and interpret them as teaching a doctrine, far more favourable to human nature, and far less honourable to the grace of God, than they appear to me really to teach;—I beg the privilege of declaring, FOR MYSELF, that, while I believe, with all my heart, that the Bible is the word of God, the only perfect rule of faith and manners, and the only ultimate test in all controversies—it plainly teaches, as I read and believe—the deplorable and total depravity of human nature—the essential Divinity of the Saviour—a Trinity of persons in the Godhead—justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ—and regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, as indispensable to prepare the soul for heaven. These I believe to be the radical truths which God hath revealed in his word; and while they are denied by some, and frittered away or perverted by others, who profess to believe that blessed word, I am verily persuaded they are the fundamental principles of the plan of salvation."

Now, I ask, is there in all this language, any thing dis-

honourable to the Bible? Any thing that tends to supersede its authority; or to introduce a rule, or a tribunal of paramount authority? Is there not, on the contrary, in the whole language and spirit of such a declaration, an acknowledgment of God's word as of ultimate and supreme authority; and an expression of belief in certain doctrines, **SIMPLY and ONLY BECAUSE** they are believed **TO BE REVEALED IN THAT WORD**? Truly, if **THIS** be dishonouring the Scriptures, or setting up a standard above them, there is an end of all meaning either of words or actions.

But still it is asked—"Where is the **NEED** of any definitive declaration of what we understand the Scriptures to teach? Are they not intelligible enough in themselves? Can we make them plainer than their Author has done? Why hold a candle to the sun? Why make an attempt to frame a more explicit test than He who gave the Bible has thought proper to frame:—an attempt, as vain as it is presumptuous?" To this plea it is sufficient to answer, that, although the Scriptures are undoubtedly simple and plain; so plain that "he who runs may read;" yet it is equally certain that thousands do, in fact, mistake and misinterpret them. This cannot possibly be denied; because thousands interpret them, and that on points confessedly fundamental, not only in *different*, but in directly *opposite* ways. Of course all cannot be equally right. Can it be wrong, then, for a pious and orthodox man—or for a pious church, to exhibit, and endeavour to recommend to others, their mode of interpreting the sacred volume? As the world is acknowledged, on all hands, to be, in fact, full of mistake and error as to the true meaning of Holy Scriptures, can it be thought a superfluous task for those who have more light, and more correct opinions, to hold them

up to view, as a testimony to the truth, and as a guide to such as may be in error? Surely it cannot. Yet this is neither more nor less than precisely that formation and maintenance of a scriptural Confession of Faith for which I am pleading.

Still, however, it may be asked, what *right* has any man, or set of men to interpose their authority, and undertake to deal out the sense of Scripture for others? Is it not both impious in itself, and an improper assumption over the minds of our fellow men? I answer, this reasoning would prove too much, and therefore proves nothing. For, if admitted, it would prove that all PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL is presumptuous and criminal; because preaching always consists in explaining and enforcing Scripture, and that, for the most part, in the words of the preacher himself. Indeed, if the objection before us were valid, it would prove that all the pious writings of the most eminent divines, in all ages, who have had for their object to elucidate and apply the word of God, were profane and arrogant attempts to mend his revelation, and make it better fitted than it is to promote its great design. Nay, further; upon the principle of this objection, it not only follows, that no minister of the Gospel ought ever do more in the pulpit than simply to READ OR REPEAT THE VERY WORDS OF SCRIPTURE; but it is equally evident, that he must read or repeat Scripture to his hearers, ONLY IN THE LANGUAGES IN WHICH THEY WERE GIVEN TO THE CHURCH. For, as has been often observed, it cannot be said, that the words of any translation of the Bible are the very words of the Holy Spirit. They are only the words which uninspired men have chosen, in which to express, as nearly as they were able, the sense of the original. If, therefore, the objection before us be ad-



mitted, no man is at liberty to teach the great truths of revelation in any other way than by literally repeating the *Hebrew text* of the Old Testament, and the *Greek* of the New, in the hearing of the people. So extreme is the absurdity to which an erroneous principle will not fail to lead those who are weak enough, or bold enough, to follow it to its legitimate consequences!

But, after all, what language do FACTS speak on this subject? Are those individuals or churches, who have been most distinguished for their attachment and adherence to Creeds, more regardless of the Bible than other professing Christians? Do they appear to esteem the Bible less? Do they read it less? Do they appeal to it less frequently, as their grand and ultimate authority? Do they quote it more rarely, or with less respect in their preaching? Where they once refer to their Creeds or Catechisms, for either authority or illustration, in the pulpit, do they not, notoriously, refer to the Bible a thousand times? Do they take less pains than others to impress the contents of the sacred volume on the minds of their children, and to hold it forth as the unceasing object of study to all? Look at the reformed churches of *Scotland* and *Holland*, of *France* and *Geneva*, in their best state, when their Confessions of Faith were most venerated, and had most power; and then say, whether any churches, since the days of the Apostles, ever discovered more reverence for the Scriptures, or treated them with more devout regard, as the only perfect standard of faith and practice, than they? Nay, am I not warranted in making a similar appeal with respect to those churches in our land, which have been most distinguished for their attachment to Creeds? Are not their ministers, in general, quite as remarkable for very rarely quoting



their own ecclesiastical formularies, for either proof or illustration, as they are for their constant and abundant quotations from Scripture for both purposes? Can the same incessant and devout recurrence to the sacred oracles be ascribed with equal truth to the great body of the opposers of Creeds, in ancient or modern times? I will not press this comparison into further detail; but have no apprehension that even the bitterest enemy of Creeds, who has a tolerable acquaintance with facts, and the smallest portion of candour, will venture to say that the result fairly deduced, is in favour of his cause.

2. Another objection frequently made to church Creeds is, that they INTERFERE WITH THE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE, AND NATURALLY LEAD TO OPPRESSION. "What right," say those who urge this objection, "has any church, or body of churches, to impose a Creed on me, or dictate to me what I shall believe? To attempt such dictation is tyranny; to submit to it, is to surrender the right of private judgment."

There would be some ground for this objection, if a Creed were, in any case, *imposed* by the civil government, or by an established Church; if any were *obliged* to receive it, under heavy pains and disabilities, whether they approved it or not. But as such a case does not, and, happily, *cannot* exist in our favoured country, the objection is surely as illegitimate in reasoning, as it is false in fact. One is tempted to suspect that those who urge such an objection among *us*, have found it manufactured to their hands, by persons living under civil governments and ecclesiastical establishments of an oppressive character; and viewing it as a weapon which might be wielded with much popular effect, they have taken it into their service, and thenceforward re-

fused to abandon it; though proved a thousand times to have no more application to any Creed or church in the *United States*, than to the inhabitants of another planet.

It will not, surely, be denied by any one, that a body of Christians have a right, in every free country, to associate and walk together upon such principles as they may choose to agree upon, not inconsistent with public order. They have a right to agree and declare how they understand the Scriptures; what articles found in Scripture they concur in considering as fundamental; and in what manner they will have their public preaching and polity conducted, for the edification of themselves and their children. They have no right, indeed, to decide or to judge *for others*, nor can they *compel* any man to join them. But it is surely their privilege to judge *for themselves*; to agree upon the plan of *their own association*; to determine upon what principles they will receive other members into their brotherhood; and to form a set of rules which will exclude from their body those with whom they cannot walk in harmony. The question is, not whether they make in all cases, a wise and scriptural use of this right to follow the dictates of conscience—but whether they possess the right at all? They are, indeed, accountable for the use which they make of it, and solemnly accountable, to their Master in heaven; but to man they surely cannot, and ought not, to be compelled to give any account. It is their own concern. Their fellow-men have nothing to do with it, as long as they commit no offence against the *public peace*. To decide otherwise, would indeed be an outrage on the right of private judgment. If the principles of civil and religious liberty, generally prevalent in our happy country, be correct, demonstration itself cannot be more incontrovertible than these positions.

But if a body of professing Christians have a natural right thus to associate, to extract their own Creed from the Scriptures, and to agree upon the principles by which others may afterwards be admitted into their number; is it not equally manifest that they have the same right to refuse admittance to those with whom, they believe, they cannot be comfortably connected?

Let us suppose a church to be actually associated upon the principle laid down; its Creed and other articles adopted, and published for the information of all who may wish to be informed; and its members walking together in harmony and love. Suppose, while things are in this situation, a person comes to them, and addresses them thus—"I demand admittance into your body, though I can neither believe the doctrines which you profess to embrace, nor consent to be governed by the rules which you have agreed to adopt." What answer would they be apt to give him? They would certainly reply—"Your demand is very unreasonable. Our union is a voluntary one, for our mutual spiritual benefit. We have not solicited you to join us; and you cannot possibly have a right to *force* yourself into our body. The whole world is before you. Go where you please. We cannot agree to receive you, unless you are willing to walk with us upon our own principles." Such an answer would undoubtedly be deemed a proper one by every reasonable person. Suppose, however, this applicant were still to urge his demand; to claim admission as a *right*; and, upon being finally refused, to complain, that the society had "persecuted" and "injured" him? Would any one think him possessed of common sense? Nay, would not the society in question, if they could be compelled to receive such an applicant, instead of being oppressors of others, cease to be free themselves?

The same principle would still more strongly apply, in case of a clergyman offering himself to such a church, as a candidate for the station of pastor among them. Suppose, when he appeared to make a tender of his services, they were to present him with a copy of that Creed, and of that form of government and of worship which they had unanimously adopted, and to say—"This is what WE believe. We pretend not to prescribe to *others*; 'but so WE have learned Christ;' so WE understand the Scriptures; and thus we wish ourselves, our children, and all who look up to us for guidance, to be instructed. Can you subscribe to these formularies? Are you willing to come among us *upon these principles*, and, as our pastor, *thus* to break to us, and our little ones what *we deem* 'the bread of life?'" Could the candidate complain of such a demand? Many speak as if the church, in putting him to this test, undertook to "judge for him." But nothing can be more remote from the truth. They only undertake to *judge for themselves*. If the candidate cannot, or will not, accept of the test, he will be, of course, rejected. But, in this case, no judgment is passed on his state toward God; no ecclesiastical censure, not even the smallest, is inflicted upon him. The church only claim a right to be served in the ministerial office by a man who is of the same religion with themselves. And is this an unreasonable demand? Are not the rights of conscience reciprocal? Or do they demand, that, while a church shall be prohibited from "oppressing" an individual, an individual shall be allowed to "oppress" a church? Surely it cannot be necessary to wait for an answer.

Accordingly, the transactions of secular life, furnish every day a practical refutation of the objection which I am



now considering. Does the head of a family, when a person applies to be received as a resident under his roof, ever doubt that he has a right to inquire whether the applicant be willing to conform to the rules of his family or not ; and if he decline this conformity, to refuse him admission ? And even after he has been received and tried, for a while, if he prove an uncomfortable inmate, does not every one consider the master of the family as at liberty to exclude him ? Has not every parent, and, of course, every voluntary association of parents, an acknowledged right to determine what qualifications they will require in a preceptor for their children ; and, if so, to bring all candidates to the test agreed on, and to reject those who do not correspond with it ? And if a candidate who fell totally short of the qualifications required, and who, of course, was rejected, should make a great outcry, that he was “ wantonly ” and “ tyrannically ” deprived of the place to which he aspired, would not every one think him insane, or worse than insane ? The same principle applies to every voluntary association, for moral, literary, or other lawful purposes. If the members have not a right to agree on what principles they will associate, and to refuse membership to those who are known to be entirely hostile to the great object of the association, there is an end of all liberty. Of the self-evident truth of all this, no one doubts. But where is the essential difference between any one of these rights, and the right of any community of professing Christians to agree upon what they deem the scriptural principles of their own union : and to refuse admission into their body of those whom they consider as unfriendly to the great purposes of truth and edification, for the promotion of which they associated ? To deny them this right, would be to make them slaves indeed !



It will probably, however, be alleged, that a church cannot, properly speaking, be considered as a *voluntary association*; that it is a community instituted by the authority of Christ; that its laws are given by Him, as its sovereign Head and Lord; and that its rulers are in fact only stewards, bound to conform themselves in all that they do to his will; that, if the church were *their own*, they would have a right to shut out from it whom they pleased; but as it is Christ's, they must find some other rule of proceeding than their own volitions. This is, doubtless, all true. The church of Christ certainly cannot be regarded as a mere voluntary association, in the same sense in which many other societies are so called. It is the property of Christ. His will is the basis and the law of its establishment, and, of course, none can be either admitted or excluded but upon principles which his own word prescribes. This, however, it is conceived, does not alter "one jot or tittle," the spirit of the foregoing reasoning. The union of Christians in a church state, must, still, from the nature of things, be a *voluntary act*; for if it were not so, it would not be a *moral act* at all. But if the union be voluntary, then those who form it, must certainly be supposed to have a right to follow *their own convictions* as to what their Divine Master has revealed and enjoined respecting the laws of their union. If *they* are not to judge in this matter, who, I ask, is to judge for them? Has the Head of the Church, then, prescribed any qualifications as necessary for private membership, or for admission to the ministerial office, in his church? If so, what are they? Will *any degree* of departure from the purity of faith or practice, be sufficient to exclude a man? If it *will*, to whom has our Lord committed the task of applying his law, and judging in any particular

case? to the applicants or delinquents themselves; or to the church in which membership is desired? If to the latter, on what principle is she bound to proceed? As her members have voluntarily associated for their mutual instruction and edification in spiritual things, have they not a right to be satisfied that the individual who applies to be received among them, either as a private member or minister, entertains opinions, and bears a character, which will be consistent with the great object which they seek? Can any such individual reasonably refuse to satisfy them as to the accordance of his religious sentiments with theirs, if they think that both the law of Christ, and the nature of the case, render such accordance necessary to Christian fellowship? If he could not reasonably refuse to give satisfaction *verbally* on this subject; could he, with any more reason, refuse to state his own sentiments *in writing*, and subscribe his name to that written statement? Surely to decline this while he consented to give a verbal exhibition of his Creed, would wear the appearance of singular caprice or perverseness. But if no rational objection could be made to his subscribing a declaration, drawn up with his own hand, would it not be exactly the same thing, as to the spirit of the transaction, if, with a view, simply, to ASCERTAIN THE FACT OF HIS BELIEF, NOT TO DICTATE LAWS TO HIS CONSCIENCE, a statement, previously drawn up by the church herself, should be presented for his voluntary signature? What is required of an individual in such case is, not that he shall believe what the church believes; but simply that he shall declare, as a matter of fact, whether he *does* possess that belief, which, from his voluntary application to be received into Christian fellowship with that church, he may be fairly presumed to possess. Again, I ask, is it pos-

sible to deny a church this right, without striking at the root of all that is sacred in the convictions of conscience, and of all that is precious in the enjoyment of Christian communion? I fully grant, indeed, that, as her authority rests entirely on the declared will of Christ, she has no right, in the sight of God, to propose to a candidate, any other than a *sound orthodox Creed*. She cannot possibly be considered as having a right, on this principle, to require his assent to anti-scriptural principles. Still, however, as the rights of conscience are unalienable; and as every church must be considered, of course, as verily believing that she is acting according to her Master's will, we must concede to her the plenary right, in the sight of man, to require from those who would join her, a solemn assent to her formularies.

But perhaps, it will be asked, when a man has *already become* a member, or minister of a church, in virtue of a voluntary and honest subscription to her articles, and afterwards alters his mind;—if he be excluded from her communion as a private member, or deposed from office as a minister, is not here “oppression?” Is it not inflicting on a man a “heavy penalty” for his “opinions;” “punishing” him for his “sincere, conscientious convictions?” I answer, if the Lord Jesus Christ has not only authorized, but solemnly commanded his church to cast the heretical, as well as immoral, out of her communion, and wholly to withdraw her countenance from those who preach “another gospel;”—then it is manifest, that the church in acting on this authority, does no one any injury. In excluding a private member from the communion of a church, or deposing a minister from office, in the regular and scriptural exercise of discipline, she deprives neither of any natural right. It

is only withdrawing that which was voluntarily asked, and voluntarily bestowed, and which might have been, without injustice, withheld. It is only practically saying—"You can no longer, consistently with our views, either of obedience to Christ, or of Christian edification, be a minister or a member with us. You may be as happy and as useful as you can in any other connection; but we must take away that authority and those privileges which we once gave you, and of which your further exercise AMONG US would be subversive of those principles which we are solemnly pledged to support." Is this language unreasonable? Is the measure which it contemplates oppressive? Would it be more just in itself, or more favourable to the rights of conscience, if any individual *could* retain his place as a teacher and guide in a church, contrary to its wishes; to the subversion of its faith; to the disturbance of its peace; and finally to the endangering of its existence; and all this contrary to his own solemn engagements, and to the distinct understanding of its members, when he joined them? Surely every friend of religious liberty would indignantly answer, No! Such a church would be the oppressed party, and such a member, the tyrant.

The conclusion, then, is, that when a church makes use of a Creed in the manner that has been described; as a bond of union; as a barrier against what it deems heresy; and in conformity with what it conscientiously believes to be the will of Christ; it is so far from encroaching on the "rights" of others; so far from being chargeable with "oppression;"—that it is really, in the most enlightened manner, and on the largest scale, MAINTAINING THE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE; and that for such a church, instead of doing this, to give up its own testimony to the truth and order of



God's house ; to surrender its own comfort, peace and edification, for the sake of complying with the unreasonable demands of a corrupt individual, would be to subject itself to the worst of slavery. What is the subjugation of the many, with all their interests, rights, and happiness to the dictation of one, or a few, but the essence of tyranny ?

3. A *third* objection often urged against subscription to Creeds and Confessions is, that it is UNFRIENDLY TO FREE INQUIRY. "When a man," say the enemies of Creeds, "has once subscribed a public formulary, and taken his ecclesiastical stand with a church which requires it, he *must* continue so to believe to the end of life or resign his place; new light in abundance may offer itself to his view; but he must close his eyes against it. Now, can it be right," say they, "for any one voluntarily to place himself in circumstances of so much temptation; willingly to place himself within the reach of strong inducements to tamper with conscience, and to resist conviction?"

In answer to this objection, my *first* remark is, that when a man takes on himself the solemn and highly responsible office of a public instructor of others, we must presume that he has examined the most important of the various Creeds, called Christian, with all the deliberation, sincerity, and prayer, of which he is capable, and that he has made up his mind with respect to the leading doctrines of Scripture. To suppose any one capable of entering on the duties of the ministerial office while he is wavering and unsettled, and liable to be "carried about by every wind of doctrine," is to suppose him both weak and criminal to a very great degree. I know, indeed, that some ardent opposers of Creeds, consider a state of *entire indecision* with regard even to leading theological doctrines, as the



most laudable and desirable state of mind. They wish every man, not only to feel himself *a learner* to the end of life, which is undoubtedly right; but, also, if possible, to keep himself in that equilibrium of mind with respect to the most important doctrinal opinions, which shall amount to perfect indifference whether he retains or relinquishes his present sentiments. This they eulogize, as "openness to conviction," "freedom from prejudice," &c. Without stopping to combat this sentiment at large, I hesitate not to pronounce it unreasonable in itself; contrary to Scripture; and an enemy to all Christian stability and comfort. We know what is said in the word of God, of those who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." I repeat it, we must suppose him who undertakes to be a teacher of others, to be himself, as the apostle expresses it, "grounded and settled in the faith." We ought to be considered, then, as having all the security that the nature of the case admits, that he who comes forward as one of the lights and leaders of a religious community, is firm in the principles which he has professed, and will not be very apt, essentially, to alter his Creed.

But further; the same objection might be urged, with quite as much force, against a man's making ANY PUBLIC DECLARATION OF HIS SENTIMENTS, either by preaching, or by writing, and printing; lest he should afterwards obtain more light, and yet be tempted to adhere, contrary to his conscience, to what he had before so publicly espoused. But does any honest minister of the Gospel think it his duty to forbear to preach, or otherwise to express his opinions, because it is *possible* he may afterwards change them? We know that if the preacher of a Unitarian congregation should alter his views, and become orthodox, he must quit his

place, give up his salary, and seek employment among his new connections. The same thing would happen, if a change the converse of this were to occur, and an orthodox preacher become a Unitarian. What then? Because an honest man, when he changes his mind on the subject of religion, will always hold himself in readiness to change his situation, and to make every necessary sacrifice, shall he, therefore, never venture to take any public station, lest he should not always think as he does at present?

Nay, this objection, if it prove any thing, will be found to prove by far too much even for our opponents themselves. The adversaries of Creeds acknowledge, with one consent, that every one ought to be ready to profess his belief in the *Bible*. But is not even this profession just as liable to the charge of being “unfriendly to free inquiry” as any other? Suppose any one, after solemnly declaring his belief in the Bible, should cease to believe it? Would he be bound to consider his old subscription as still binding, and as precluding further examination? Or would it be reasonable in any man to decline any profession of belief in the Bible, lest he should, one day, alter his mind, and feel himself embarrassed by his profession?

There can be no doubt, that every public act, by which a man pledges himself, even as a private member, to any particular denomination of Christians, interposes some obstacle in the way of his afterwards deserting that denomination, and uniting himself with another. And, perhaps, it may be said, the more delicate and honourable his mind, the more reluctant and slow he will be to abandon his old connections, and choose new ones. So that such an one will really labour under a temptation to resist light, and remain where he is. But because this is so, shall a man, therefore, *never join*

*any Church*; never take any step that will, directly or indirectly, pledge his religious Creed or character, lest he should afterwards alter his mind, and be constrained to transfer his relation to a different body, and thus be liable to find himself embarrassed by his former steps? Upon this principle, we must go further, and adopt the doctrine equally absurd and heathenish, that no parent ought ever to instruct his child in what he deems the most precious truths of the Gospel, lest he should fill his mind with prejudices, and present an obstacle to free and unshackled inquiry afterwards. For there can be no doubt that early parental instruction *does* present more or less obstacle, in the way of a subsequent change of opinion, on those subjects which that instruction embraced. Yet our Father in heaven has expressly commanded us to instruct our children, and to endeavour to pre-occupy their minds with every thing that is excellent both in principle and practice. In short, if the objection before us be valid, then no one ought ever to go forward in the discharge of any duty; for he may one day cease to think it a duty; in other words, he ought habitually, and upon principle, to disobey some of the plainest commands of God, lest he should afterwards entertain different views of those commands, from those which he at present entertains. Nay, if this be so, then every book a man reads, and every careful, deep inquiry he makes concerning the subject of it, must be considered as tending to influence the mind, and to interfere with perfect impartiality in any *subsequent* inquiry on the same subject; and, therefore, ought to be forborne!

Surely no man in his senses judges or acts thus. Especially, no *Christian* allows himself thus to reason or act. In the path of what appears to be *present duty*, he feels

bound to go forward, leaving future things with God. If subscription to a correct Creed be really agreeable to the will of God; if it be necessary, both to the purity and harmony of the Church; and, therefore, in itself a duty; then no man ought any more to hesitate about discharging this duty, than about discharging any of those duties which have been mentioned, or any others which may be supposed. There is no station in life in which its occupant does not find some peculiar temptation. But if he be a man of a right spirit, he will meet it with Christian integrity, and overcome it with Christian courage. If he be a truly honest man, he will be faithful to his God, and faithful to his own conscience, at all hazards; and if he be not honest, he will not be very likely to benefit the Church by his discoveries and speculations. Accordingly, the voice of history confirms this reasoning. On the one hand, how many thousand instances have the last two centuries afforded, of men who were willing to incur, not only obloquy and reproach, but also beggary, imprisonment, and even death itself, in their most frightful forms, rather than abandon the truth, and subscribe to formularies which they could not conscientiously adopt! On the other hand, how many instances have occurred, within the last fifty years, of unprincipled men, after solemnly subscribing orthodox Creeds, disregarding their vows, and opposing the spirit of those Creeds, and still retaining their ecclesiastical stations, without reserve! It is plain, then, that this whole objection, though specious, has not the least solidity. Truly upright and pious men will always follow their convictions; while, with regard to those of an 'opposite character, their light, whether they remain or depart, will be found to be of no value, either to themselves, or the Church of God.



4. A fourth objection frequently brought against Creeds is, that they have **ALTOGETHER FAILED OF ANSWERING THE PURPOSE PROFESSED TO BE INTENDED BY THEM.** "Churches," it is said, "which have Creeds the most carefully drawn, and of the most rigid character, are as far from being united in doctrinal opinions, as some which either have never had any Creeds at all, or have long since professedly omitted to enforce subscription to them. To mention only two examples: the Church of *England*, for nearly three centuries, has had a set of Articles decisively Calvinistic, to which all her candidates for the ministry are required to subscribe; but we know that more than a hundred and fifty years have passed away, since Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian tenets began to pollute that important branch of the reformed Church; and that within the last seventy-five or eighty years, almost every form of heresy has lurked under subscription to her orthodox Articles. And even the Church of *Scotland*, which has had, for nearly two centuries, the most rigidly and minutely orthodox Confession on earth, is generally supposed, at this hour, to have a ministry far from being unanimous in loving and honouring her public standards. Now, if Creeds have not in fact, been productive of the great benefit intended by them, even in some of the most favourable cases that can be produced, why be perplexed and burdened with them at all?"

This objection evidently proceeds on the principle, that a remedy which does not accomplish *every thing*, is worth *nothing*. Because Creeds have not completely banished dissension and discord from the churches which have adopted them, therefore they have been of no use. But is this sound reasoning? Does it accord even with common sense, or with the dictates of experience in any walk of life? Because the Constitution of the *United States* has not com-



pletely defended our country from all political animosity and strife; is it, therefore, worthless? Or should we have been more united and harmonious without any constitutional provisions at all? Because the system of public law does not annihilate all crime, should we, of course, be as well without it? No one will say this. Nay, may not the objection be retorted on those who urge it? They contend that Creeds are unnecessary; that the Bible is amply sufficient for all purposes, as a test of truth. But has the Bible banished dissension and discord from the Church? No one will pretend that it has. Yet why not? Surely not on account of any error or defect in itself; but on account of the folly and perverseness of depraved man, who, amidst all the provisions of infinite wisdom and goodness, is continually warring against the peace of the world.

But I go further, and maintain that the history of the practical influence of Creeds, is strongly in their favour. Though they have not done *every thing* that could have been desired, they have done *much*; and much in those very churches which have been most frequently selected as examples of their entire want of efficacy. The Calvinistic articles of the Church of *England* were the means of keeping her doctrinally pure, to a very remarkable degree, for the greater part of a hundred years. In the reign of *James I.*, very few opponents of Calvinism dared publicly to avow their opinions; and of those who did avow them, numbers were severely disciplined, and others saved themselves from similar treatment, by subsequent silence and discretion. The inroads of error, therefore, were very powerfully checked, and its triumph greatly retarded by those public standards. In fact, the great body of the bishops and clergy professed to be doctrinal Calvinists, until

a number of years after the Synod of *Dort*, when, chiefly by the influence of Archbishop *Laud*, and his creatures, Arminianism was gradually and guardedly brought in, in consequence of which the *faithful application* of the thirty-nine articles, as a test of orthodoxy, and of admission to the ministry, was discontinued. The articles continued to speak as before, and to be solemnly subscribed; but the spirit of the administration under them was no longer the same. It became predominantly Arminian. We may truly say, then, that the Creed of the Church of *England* continued to operate effectually as a bond of union, and a barrier against the encroachments of heresy, as long as it is continued to be faithfully applied, agreeably to its known original purport. When it ceased to be thus applied, it ceased to produce its wonted effect. But can this be reasonably wondered at? As well might we wonder that a medicine, when its use was laid aside, should no longer heal.

The very same representation, in substance, may be made concerning the church of *Scotland*. Her pre-eminently excellent Creed was the means, under God, of keeping her united and pure, as long as that Creed continued to be honestly employed as a test, according to its true intent and spirit. When this ceased to be the case, it would have been strange, indeed, if the state of things had remained as before. It did *not* so remain. With lax and dishonest subscription, heresy came in :—at first, with reserve and caution, but afterwards more openly. But even to the present day, as all know who are acquainted with the state of that church, the movements of heresy within her bosom, are held in most salutary check ; and her condition is incomparably more favourable than it could have been, had her public standards been long ago abolished.

Nor have the Creeds of those national churches of *Great Britain* yet accomplished all the benefits to the cause of truth and righteousness which they are destined to confer. Though their genuine spirit has been long since forgotten by many; this is by no means the case with all. There has constantly been, in both those churches, a body of faithful witnesses to the truth. This body, thanks to the Almighty and all-gracious King of Zion! is increasing. Their "good Confessions" form a RALLYING POINT, around which numbers are now gathering;—and those far-famed formularies, the favourable influence of which has been supposed by many to be long since exhausted, and more than exhausted, will again become, there is every reason to believe, an "ensign to the people," to which there shall be a flocking of those who love the "simplicity that is in Christ," more extensive and more glorious than ever before.

Nor are we without significant attestations to the efficacy of Creeds, and to the mischief of being without them, in our own country. Of the *former*, the Presbyterian church in the *United States*, is one of the most signal examples. Conflicts she has, indeed, had; but they have been such as were incident to every community, ecclesiastical or civil, administered by the counsels of imperfect men. Amidst them all, she has, by the favour of her Divine Head, held on her way, substantially true to her system of doctrine and order; and though constituted, originally, by members from different countries, and of different habits, she has remained united to a degree, considering all things, truly wonderful. Of the *latter*, the Congregational churches of *Massachusetts*, furnish a melancholy memorial. Though originally formed by a people, far more homogeneous in their character and habits, and far more united in their

opinions ; yet, being destitute of any efficient bond of union, and equally destitute of the means of maintaining it, if it had been possessed, they have fallen a prey to dissension and error, to a degree, equally instructive and mournful.

5. The last objection which I shall consider is, that subscription to Creeds, has not only failed entirely of producing the benefits contemplated by their friends; but has rather been found to PRODUCE THE OPPOSITE EVILS;—TO GENERATE DISCORD AND STRIFE. “Creeds,” say some, “instead of tending to compose differences, and to bind the members of churches more closely together, have rather proved a bone of contention, and a means of exciting mutual charges of heresy, and a thousand ill feelings, among those who might have been otherwise perfectly harmonious.”

In reply to this objection, my first remark is, that the alleged fact, which it takes for granted, is utterly denied. It is not true that Creeds have generated contention and strife in the bosom of those churches which have adopted them. On the contrary, it would be easy to show, by an extended induction of facts, that in those churches in which Creeds and Confessions have been most esteemed and most regarded, there union and peace have most remarkably reigned. In truth, it has ever been the *want* of faithful regard to such formularies, that has led to division and strife in the church of Christ. I doubt whether any denomination of Christians ever existed, for half a century together, destitute of a public Creed, however united and harmonious it might have been, at the commencement of this period ; without exhibiting, before the end of it, either that stillness of death, which is the result of cold indifference to the truth ; or that miserable scene of discord, in which “parting asunder” was the only means of escaping from open violence.



My next remark is, that, even if it were shown, that orthodox public Creeds are often indirectly connected with conflict and contention in the church ; it would form no solid argument against them. Ardent attachment to what they deemed truth, is the principle, in all ages, which has led Christian communities to adopt Creeds and Confessions of Faith. The same attachment to truth will naturally lead them to watch with care against every thing that is hostile to it; and to “contend earnestly” in its defence, when it is attacked. In this case, a Creed, supposing it to be a sound and scriptural one—is no more the CAUSE of conflict and division, than a wholesome medicine is the cause of that disease which it is intended to cure. The word of God commands us to “contend,” and to “contend *earnestly*, for the faith once delivered to the saints,” and to hold him “accursed” who preaches “another gospel” than that which the Scriptures reveal. But when such “contention” becomes necessary, who is to blame for it? Surely not truth, or its advocates ; but those who patronise error, and thus endeavour to corrupt the body of Christ; and, of course render contention for the truth a duty. It is granted, indeed, that, in this conflict, much unhallowed temper may be manifested. Not only on the part of the advocates of error ; but also, in some degree, on the part of the friends of truth. They may contend even for the truth, with bigotry and bitterness. Still, this does not render the truth itself less precious; or the duty of contending for it less imperative; or those summaries of it which Christians have been led to form, less valuable, as testimonies for God.

Before Christianity was preached in the Roman empire, the different classes of Pagans lived together in peace. The foundation of this peace was the opinion, that error



was innocent ; and that all classes of religionists were equally safe. But when the religion of Jesus Christ was preached ; when his ministers proclaimed that there was no other system either true or safe ; that there was no other foundation of hope ; that all false religions were not only highly criminal, but also eternally destructive ; and that the followers of Christ could not possibly countenance any of them ;—then a scene of the most shocking persecution and violence, on the part of the Pagans, commenced. But on what, or on whom, are we to throw the blame, for these scenes of violence? No one, surely, will say, on Christianity. We are rather to impute it to the corruption of human nature, and to the blindness and violence of Pagan malice. If the primitive Christians had been willing to give up the precious truth committed to them, and to act upon the principle, that all modes of faith were equally safe ; they might have escaped much, if not the whole, of the dreadful persecution which they were called to endure.

The only additional remark, therefore, which I have to make on the objection before us, is, that it can have no force, excepting upon the principle, that error ought to be left unassailed, and that contention for the truth is not a duty :—for all defence of the truth, against its active opposers—all “contending for the truth,” must, of course, disturb that cold and death-like tranquillity which indifference to the purity of faith tends to introduce. We are commanded, “if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men.” But it is not “possible” to be at peace with some men. We *must not* be at peace with error or wickedness. The Divine authority makes it our duty to oppose them to the utmost, at our peril. And if, in the discharge of this duty, the peace of the church is, for a time,

disturbed, the sin lies at the door of those who rendered the conflict necessary. Those summaries of truth, which particular occasions make it important to embody and to publish, are no more to blame for the struggle, than the wise and wholesome law of the land is to blame for that agitation which necessarily attends the seizure, the trial, and the execution of a malefactor.

But admitting Creeds to be lawful and necessary, it has often been asked by some who profess to be their friends, whether they ought ever to contain any other articles than those few which are *strictly fundamental*;—in other words, whether we ought ever to insert among the members of a Creed intended to be subscribed by all candidates for office in a church, any more than some half a dozen articles, the reception of which is generally considered as *absolutely essential to Christian character*? This is a question of real importance, which certainly deserves grave consideration, and a candid answer. And for one, I have no hesitation in saying, that, in my opinion, church Creeds not only lawfully *may*, but always *ought*, to contain a number of articles besides those which are fundamental. And to establish this, as it appears to me, no other proof is necessary than simply to remark, that there are many points confessedly not fundamental, concerning which, nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance to Christian peace and edification, that the members, and especially the ministers of every church should be harmonious in their views and practice. As long as the visible church of Christ continues to be divided into different sections or denominations, the several Creeds which they employ, if they are to answer any effectual purpose at all, must be so constructed as to exclude from each

those teachers whom it conscientiously believes to be unscriptural and corrupt; and whom, as long as it retains this belief, it ought to exclude.

To exemplify my meaning. The Presbyterian church, and most other denominations, who have a regular system of government, believe that the Christian ministry is a divine ordinance, and that none but those who have been regularly authorized to discharge its functions, ought, by any means, to attempt to preach the Gospel, or administer the Sacraments of the church. Yet there are very pious, excellent men, who have adopted the sentiments of some high-toned Independents, who verily think that every "gifted brother," whether ordained or not, has as good a right to preach as any man; and, if invited by the church to do it, to administer the Sacraments. Now, no sober minded Presbyterian will consider this as a fundamental question. Fundamental, indeed, it is, to ecclesiastical order; but to the existence of *Christian character*, it is not. Men may differ entirely on this point, and yet be equally united to Christ by faith, and, of course equally safe as to their eternal prospects. But would any real, consistent Presbyterian be willing to connect himself with a church, calling itself by that name, in which, while one portion considered none but a regular minister as competent to the discharge of the functions alluded to; as many of the other portion as chose, claimed and actually exercised the right, to rise in the congregation, and preach, baptize, and dispense the Lord's Supper, when and how each might think proper; and not only so, but when the ordained ministers occupying the pulpit, in succession, differed no less entirely among themselves in reference to the disputed question; some encouraging, and others repressing, the efforts of these

“gifted brethren?” I do not ask whether such a church could be tranquil or comfortable; but whether it could possibly exist in a state of coherence, for twelve months together?

Take another example. No man in his senses will consider the question which divides the Pedobaptists and the Antipedobaptists as a fundamental one. Though I have no doubt that infant baptism is a doctrine of the Bible, and an exceedingly important doctrine; and that the rejection of it is a mischievous error; yet I have quite as little doubt that some eminently pious men have been of a different opinion. But what would be the situation of a church equally divided, or nearly so, on this point; ministers as well private members constantly differing among themselves; members of each party conscientiously persuaded that the others were wrong; each laying great stress on the point of difference, as one concerning which there could be no compromise, or accommodation; all claiming and endeavouring to exercise the right not only to *reason*, but to *act*, according to their respective convictions; and every one zealously endeavouring to make proselytes to his own principles and practice? Which would such a church most resemble—the builders of *Babel*, when their speech was confounded; or a holy and united family, “walking together in the fear of the Lord, and in the consolations of the Holy Ghost, and edifying one another in love?”

Let me offer one illustration more. The question between Presbyterians and Prelatists is generally acknowledged not to be fundamental. I do not mean that this is acknowledged by such of our Episcopal brethren as coolly consign to what they are pleased to call the “uncovenanted mercy of God,” all those denominations who have not a



ministry episcopally ordained; and who, on account of this exclusive sentiment are styled by Bishop *Andrews*, “iron hearted,” and by Archbishop *Wake*, “madmen :” but my meaning is, that all Presbyterians, without exception; a great majority of the best Prelatists themselves; and all moderate, sober-minded Protestants, of every country, acknowledge that this point of controversy is one which does by no means affect Christian character or hope. Still is it not plain, that a body of ministers entirely differing among themselves as to this point; though they might love, and commune with, each other, as Christians; could not possibly act harmoniously together in the important rite of ordination; whatever they might do in other religious concerns?

In all these cases, it is evident there is nothing fundamental to the existence of vital piety. Yet it is equally evident, that those who differ entirely and zealously concerning the points supposed, cannot be comfortable in the same ecclesiastical communion. But how is their coming together, and the consequent discord and strife, which would be inevitable, to be prevented? I know of no method but so constructing their Confessions of Faith as to form different families or denominations, and to shut out from each those who are hostile to its distinguishing principles of order.

It is plain, then, that unless Confessions of Faith contain articles, not, strictly speaking, fundamental, they cannot possibly answer one principal purpose for which they are formed, viz. guarding churches which receive the pure order and discipline, as well as truth, of Scripture, from the intrusion of teachers, who, though they may be pious, yet could



not fail to disturb the peace, and mar the edification of the more correct and sound part of the body.

But for further details on this subject, both for and against the doctrine which I maintain, I must refer you to those works which have been devoted to its more extended discussion: more particularly to what is said by the judicious and excellent *Mr. Dunlop*, in the able *Preface* to his "*Collection of Confessions:*" to "*The Confessional,*" by *Mr. Blackburn*, one of the most zealous and formidable opposers of Creeds; which will prepare you for perusing some of the best of the many valuable *Answers* to that far-famed work: to "*Walker's Vindication of the Church of Scotland,*" &c: and, finally, to *Mr. Dyer's* "*Inquiry into the Nature of Subscription to Articles of Religion.*"

The subject, beloved Pupils, on which I have been addressing you, is eminently a practical one. It enters deeply into many questions of personal and official duty. I shall, therefore, detain you a few moments longer, by calling your attention to some of those PRACTICAL INFERENCES from the foregoing principles and reasonings, which appear to me to deserve your serious regard—and

1. From the representation which has been given, we may see HOW LITTLE REASON ANY HAVE TO BE AFRAID OF CREEDS AS INSTRUMENTS OF OPPRESSION.

There is something so perfectly visionary and unreasonable in the very thought of "tyranny," or "oppression," as connected with subscription to Creeds, in this country, that the only wonder is, how it can be admitted, for a moment, into any sober mind. Who does or can *impose* a Creed upon any one, or ever attempt to do it? Is any man

in the *United States* OBLIGED to profess any belief; to subscribe any Creed; or to join any church whatever? Every man, indeed, is bound by the law of God, to believe correctly, and to connect himself with a pure church. He is not and cannot be at liberty, in the sight of Jehovah, to neglect either. But is any man bound by *human law*, ecclesiastical or civil, to do any of these things? Is any man in the *United States*, after he *has* subscribed a Creed, and joined a church, *obliged*, by any human authority, to adhere to either a single day longer than he pleases? Is he not at perfect liberty to withdraw, at any moment, and that with or without giving a reason for his conduct, as he thinks proper? Everlasting thanks to Him who gives us this freedom! May it be perpetual and universal! Now, one would think, this is liberty enough to satisfy any reasonable man. But it seems there are really those who wish for *more*. They demand, in effect, that the church should be willing to take all manner of heresy, as well as orthodoxy, to her bosom, and to act as if she regarded both with an equal eye. Nay, they ask that heretics be freely allowed to IMPOSE THEMSELVES upon HER, whether she be willing or not—not to unite and edify her members, but to divide and distract them;—that they be at liberty to come into the Redeemer's family, and there, without any regard to its scriptural rules, or its happy harmony, to propagate such discordant sentiments, and to establish such new principles of order, or disorder, as the intruders may choose to adopt. But is this Christian liberty? Is this a kind of liberty which any benevolent, or even honest man would wish to possess? It is liberty, truly of the most extraordinary kind, to the individual who intrudes; but what becomes of the liberty of the ecclesiastical body which he thus enters, contrary to

its wishes and comfort, and to its real injury? It is, evidently, the same sort of privilege in the church, as the privilege of invading the retreat of private families, or disturbing the peace of civil society, at pleasure, and with impunity, would be regarded by the inhabitants of any free country.

2. We may see from what has been said, that subscribing a Church Creed, is not a mere formality; but a **VERY SOLEMN TRANSACTION, WHICH MEANS MUCH, AND INFERS THE MOST SERIOUS OBLIGATIONS.** It is certainly a transaction which ought to be entered upon with much deep deliberation and humble prayer; and in which, if a man be bound to be sincere in *any thing*, he is bound to be honest to his God, honest to himself, and honest to the Church which he joins. For myself, I know of no transaction, in which insincerity is more justly chargeable with the dreadful sin of “lying to the Holy Ghost,” than in this. It is truly humiliating and distressing to know, that in some churches it has gradually become customary, to consider Articles of Faith as merely *Articles of peace*; in other words, as articles which he who subscribes, is not considered as professing to **BELIEVE**; but as merely engaging **NOT TO OPPOSE**—at least in any public or offensive manner. Whether we bring this principle to the test of reason, of Scripture, of the original design of Creeds, or of the ordinary import of language among honourable men;—it seems equally liable to the severest reprobation, as disreputable and criminal in a very high degree. Nor does it appear to me to be any alleviation, either of the disgrace or the sin, that many of the governors of the churches referred to, as well as of those who subscribe, publicly avow their adoption of this principle; admit the correctness of it; keep each other in countenance; and thus escape, as they imagine, the charge of hypocrisy. What would be thought

of a similar principle, if generally adopted and avowed, with respect to the administration of oaths in civil courts? Suppose both jurors and witnesses, feeling it a grievance to be bound by their oaths to speak the truth, were to agree among themselves, and openly to give out, that they did not mean, when they swore, to take on themselves any such obligation; that they did not so understand the import of their oaths, and did not intend to recognize any such meaning? And suppose the judges were freely to admit them to their oaths with a similar understanding? Would a witness or a juror, in such a case be exempt from the charge of PERJURY, or the judge from the guilt of SUBORNATION OF PERJURY? I presume not, in the estimation of any sober-minded man. If it were otherwise, then bad men, who form a majority of every community, might, by combining, violate all the principles of virtue and order, not only with impunity, but also without sin.

Set it down, then, as a first principle of common honesty, as well as of Christian truth, that subscription to Articles of Faith, is a weighty transaction, which really means what it professes to mean; that no man is ever at liberty to subscribe articles which he does not truly and fully believe; and that, in subscribing, he brings himself under a solemn, covenant engagement to the church which he enters, to walk with it "in the unity of faith," and "in the bond of peace and love." If he cannot do this *honestly*, let him not profess to do it at all. I see not but that here, insincerity, concealment, double dealing, and mental reservations, are, to say the least, quite as mean and base as they can be in the transactions of social and civil life.

You will, perhaps, ask me, what shall be done by a man who loves the Presbyterian Church; who considers it as



approaching nearer to the scriptural model than any other with which he is acquainted; who regards its Confession of Faith as by far the best, in its great outlines, and in all its fundamental articles, that he knows; and who yet, in some of its minor details cannot entirely concur? Can such an one honestly subscribe, without any previous *explanation* of his views? I answer—by no means. Ought he, then, you will ask, to abandon all thoughts of uniting himself with our Church, when he is in cordial harmony with it in all fundamental principles, and nearer to it, in all respects, than to any other Church on earth? I again answer—by no means. I know of no other mode of proceeding in such a case as this, which Christian candour, and a pure conscience will justify, than the following: Let the candidate for admission unfold to the Presbytery before which he presents himself, all his doubts and scruples, with perfect frankness;—opening his whole heart, as if on oath; and neither softening nor concealing any thing. Let him cause them distinctly to understand, that if he subscribe the Confession of Faith, he must be understood to do it in consistency with the exceptions and explanations which he specifies. If the Presbytery, after this fair understanding, should be of the opinion, that the excepted points were of little or no importance, and interfered with no article of faith, and should be willing to receive his subscription in the usual way, he may proceed. Such a method of proceeding will best accord with every principle of truth and honour; and will remove all ground of either self-reproach, or of reproach on the part of others, afterwards.

3. From the view which has been presented of this subject, we may decide **HOW AN HONEST MAN OUGHT TO ACT, AFTER SUBSCRIBING TO A PUBLIC CREED.** He will feel it to



be his duty to adhere sincerely and faithfully to that Creed, in public and in private; and to make it his study to promote, by all means in his power, the peace and purity of the body with which he has connected himself. And if he should, at any time, alter his views concerning any part of the Creed or order of the Church in question, it will be incumbent on him to inquire, whether the points, concerning which he has altered his mind, are of such a nature as that he can conscientiously **BE SILENT** concerning them, and “give no offence” to the body to which he belongs. If he can reconcile this with an enlightened sense of duty, he may **REMAIN IN PEACE**. But, if the points concerning which his views have undergone a change, are of *so much importance* in his estimation, as that he *cannot be silent*, but must feel himself bound to *publish, and endeavour to propagate them*; then let him **PEACEABLY WITHDRAW**, and join some other branch of the visible Church, with which he can walk harmoniously. Such he may find almost every where, unless his views be singularly eccentric. But, at any rate, he has no more right to insist on remaining, and being permitted publicly to oppose, what he has solemnly vowed to receive and support; than a member of any voluntary association, which he entered under certain engagements, but with which he no longer agrees, has a right obstinately to retain his connection with it, and to avail himself of the influence which his connection gives him, to endeavour to tear it in pieces.

It is no solid objection to this view of the subject, to allege, that every man is under obligations to obey the great Head of the Church, altogether paramount to those which bind him, in virtue of any ecclesiastical engagements, to obey the Church herself. This is most readily granted.

No man can lawfully bind himself to disobey Christ, in any case whatever. But this principle, it is conceived, has no thing to do with the point under consideration. Though a man cannot properly bind himself *always* to believe as he *now* believes; nor *always* to remain in connection with the ecclesiastical body which he *now* joins; yet he may safely promise that he will be a regular and orderly member of the body, *as long as he does* remain in connection with it. When he ceases to be able to do this, without sinning against God, he will, if he be an honest man, immediately withdraw. If he remain, and suffer himself habitually to violate his engagement, under the pretence of benefiting the body to which he has vowed allegiance, he will be chargeable with the sin of treacherously and basely "doing evil that good may come."

To illustrate my meaning by a familiar example. Every student of this Seminary has, at his entrance, made a solemn promise, that "as long as he shall continue a member of it, he will conscientiously and vigilantly observe all the rules and regulations specified in the plan for its instruction and government, so far as the same relate to the students; and further, that he will obey all the lawful requisitions of the Professors and Directors," &c. As this engagement was voluntarily made, no honest man will doubt that you are all bound to act in conformity with it, to the utmost tittle, as far as you have ability. Suppose, however, that one of your number should become persuaded, that some of the "regulations specified in the plan" of the Seminary, are not only unwise, and inconvenient, but also immoral; what ought he to do? Ought he to remain in the institution, and habitually violate the regulations to which he excepted, pleading that he could not conscientiously obey them, be-

cause, though he had solemnly engaged to do so, he felt himself under a prior and paramount obligation to "obey God rather than man?" This, surely, no Christian would approve, nor any faithful government tolerate. No; every principle of honour and integrity would dictate, that he should immediately *withdraw from the Seminary*; and if, after withdrawing, he should be able to convince the General Assembly of our Church, that his exceptions were just, and should prevail with that body to alter the offensive rules; then, and not till then, he might, with a good conscience, resume his place in the institution.

4. We are led to reflect, from the representation which has been given, how easy it is for a SINGLE IMPRUDENT OR UNSOUND MINISTER TO DO EXTENSIVE AND IRREPARABLE MISCHIEF IN THE CHURCH. Such an one, especially if he be a man of talents and influence, by setting himself, either openly or covertly, against the public standards of his Church; by addressing popular feeling, and availing himself of popular prejudice; may do more, in a short time, to prepare the way for fatal error, than all his usefulness, though multiplied a hundred fold, would be able to countervail. Ministers, my young friends, may be said to hold in their hands the interests of the Church, to a degree which no other class of men do; and which ought to make them tremble under a sense of their responsibility! Such as is the character of the MINISTRY of any particular Church, will be, generally speaking, the character of the CHURCH ITSELF. On the one hand, if the ministers of religion be generally enlightened, orthodox, holy, diligent, and faithful men, the Church to which they belong, will never fail to display the influence of this character in happy results. On the other hand, never was the Church, in any country or age,

corrupted, divided, and ruined, but THE MISCHIEF WAS DONE BY ITS MINISTERS. However humiliating or painful this assertion may be, it is undoubtedly confirmed by all Scripture, and all experience. And as the general influence of the clerical character is so vital; so it is not easy to measure the mischief that may be done by one unsound, graceless, imprudent, turbulent minister. If, in every walk of society, "one sinner destroyeth much good," how much more wide-spread, deplorable, and fatal is the mischief, when the criminal individual is a minister! By erroneous opinions; by corrupt habits; by a love of innovation; by embracing himself, and extensively imparting to others, pernicious delusions;—he may do more in *five* or *ten* years, to agitate, divide, corrupt, and weaken the Church, than, perhaps, a score of the most faithful ministers in the land, can do, humanly speaking, for promoting its purity and peace, in half a century. The influence of two or three individuals, of popular talents, in *Massachusetts*, more than fifty years ago, in gradually undermining orthodoxy, and in reconciling the public mind to heretical opinions, is as well known, as it is deeply deplored, by many who are acquainted with the ecclesiastical history of *New England*. The authors of this mischief have long since gone to their account; but their works have survived them; and of their awful ravages, no one can estimate the extent, or see the end.

Beloved Pupils! be it your study, at all times, to cherish a deep sense of your solemn responsibility to God and his Church. In a little while, you will be among those to whom the most weighty interests that can be committed to man, will be entrusted. Be faithful to your high trust. Guard, with the utmost vigilance, the Church's orthodoxy. Nothing can be truly right, where her doctrinal principles



are essentially wrong. But, O, think not that mere frigid orthodoxy, however perfect, is all that is needed. Labour to diffuse, in every direction, the holy and benign influence of truth. If “the household of faith” be corrupted by heresy, or torn by schism, or agitated by unhallowed innovation, or become cold through want of ministerial faithfulness—see to it, that none of you be found among the workers of the mischief. See to it that you seek unceasingly, not “your own things”—your own aggrandizement—your own honour—your own fancies—or your own speculations—but “the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” If you cannot *benefit* the Church, (and no man has a right to say that he cannot, if he have a heart for the purpose) at least, do not lend your influence to the unhallowed work of corrupting and dividing it. And if you should ever be brought into circumstances in which you can do nothing else, see that you be found, like the “ministers of the Lord” of old—“weeping between the porch and the altar, and saying, spare thy people, O, Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach; save them, and lift them up forever!”

5. We may infer, from what has been said, the duty and importance of all the members, and especially the ministers, of the Presbyterian Church, exerting themselves to SPREAD A KNOWLEDGE OF HER PUBLIC STANDARDS. I say, her “*public standards*,” notwithstanding all the sneer and censure which have been cast on this language. For every intelligent and candid man in the community knows that we employ it to designate,—not formularies which we place *above the Bible*; but simply those which ascertain and set forth *how we interpret the Bible*. These formularies—if they be really an epitome of the word of God—and surely we think them so—every minister is bound to circulate,



with unwearied assiduity, among the people of his charge. This is so far, in general, from being faithfully done, that I seriously doubt whether there be a Protestant Church in Christendom, in which there is so striking a defect as to the discharge of this duty, especially in some parts of the country, as in the Presbyterian Church. Our Episcopal brethren exercise a most laudable diligence in placing the volume which contains their articles, forms, and offices, in every family within their reach, which belongs to their communion, or can be considered as tending towards it. Our Methodist and Baptist brethren, with no less diligence, do the same, with respect to those books which exhibit the doctrines and order of their respective denominations. All this is as it should be. It bespeaks men sincere in their belief, and earnest in the dissemination of what they deem correct principles? Why is it that so many ministers of the Presbyterian Church, with a Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, which, I verily believe, and which the most of them readily acknowledge, are by far the best that were ever framed by uninspired wisdom: and with a form of Government and Discipline more consentaneous with apostolical practice than that of any other Church on earth; are yet so negligent, not to say so indifferent, as to the circulation of these formularies? They, perhaps, do not take the trouble even to inquire whether there be a copy of the volume which contains them, in every family, or even in every neighbourhood, of their respective charges. How are we to account for the peculiar frequency of this negligence in the ministry of our Church? It would be far from being true, I trust, to say, that our clergy are more unfaithful in the general discharge of their duties, than those of any other communion. May we not rather ascribe the fact in ques-

tion to another fact, from which it might be expected naturally to arise? The fact to which I allude is, that, in the Presbyterian Church, at the present day, and in this country—whatever may have been the case in former times—there is less of sectarian feeling; less of what is called, the *esprit du corps*, than in any other ecclesiastical body among us. We are in truth, if I do not mistake, so *excessively* free from it, as to be hardly ready to defend ourselves when attacked. We are so ready to fraternize with all evangelical denominations, that we almost forget that we have a denomination of our own, to which we are peculiarly attached. Now, this general spirit is undoubtedly excellent; worthy of constant culture, and the highest praise. But may it not be carried to an extreme? Universal, active benevolence, is a Christian duty; but when the head of a family, in the ardour of its exercise, feels no more concern or responsibility respecting his own household, than he does about the households of others, he acts an unreasonable part, and, what is worse, disobeys the command of God. Something analogous to this, I apprehend, is the mistake of that Christian, or that minister, who, in the fervour of his catholicism, loses sight of the fact, that God, in his providence, has connected him with a particular branch of the visible Church, the welfare and edification of which he is peculiarly bound to seek. If his own branch of the Church have any thing of peculiar excellence in his estimation, on account of which he prefers it,—which is always to be supposed—can it be wrong for him to desire that others should view it in the same light? And if he be justifiable in recommending these peculiarities from the pulpit—as all allow—is he not equally justifiable in recommending them from the press, especially by means of accredited publications?

Happy will it be for our Church, then, if her future ministry shall be more attentive to the duty in question, than many of those who have gone before them. To you, beloved Candidates for the sacred office, let me recommend a sacred regard to this duty. Resist, always, to the utmost of your power, the littleness of sectarian bigotry, and strive to banish it from the Church. But, at the same time, cherish among her members an enlightened attachment to that particular branch of the family of Christ in which their lot is cast. For this purpose, strive to promote among them a general and intimate acquaintance with our Confession of Faith, and form of Government and Discipline, as well as our Catechisms, which latter, I fain would hope, are not entirely neglected in any part of the Church. Never advise the people to take the contents of these public formularies on trust; but diligently to compare every part of them with SCRIPTURE, and see how far they agree with the unerring standard. Thus will you be likely to become instrumental in forming solid, intelligent Christians. Thus may you hope to become the spiritual fathers of multitudes, "whose faith shall stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

6. Once more; if the foregoing principles be just, then how unhappy is the mistake of those who imagine, that BY ABANDONING ALL CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS, THEY ARE ABOUT TO RENDER THE CHURCH AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE; to build her up more extensively and gloriously than ever! There are those who imagine that a new order of things is about to open on the Church, amounting to as great a change of dispensation as ever marked the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom, in any preceding age. In this new and undefined prospect, they seem to themselves to see the ap-

proaching prostration of most of those fences, and the dissolution of most of those ties, which have heretofore been regarded as indispensable to the maintenance of unity and harmony in the family of Christ. I shall only say, that it will be time enough to provide for this new order of things when it shall arrive; and that, in the mean while, in the present state of the world, I should as soon think of extending and edifying the Church, by laying aside all the means of grace; as of promoting its purity and peace, by abandoning those methods of binding its members together, which have been found necessary ever since the days of the Apostles.

The apostle *Peter* thus exhorted the Christians in his day—"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour." And another Apostle, reminded those to whom he wrote, that this adversary oftentimes "transformed himself into an angel of light." So it was eighteen centuries ago; and so it is at this hour. The very blessings of the Church, as they have been in all ages, so they are now, converted into means of deception. The progressive harmony of the different evangelical denominations; their increasing zeal for the spread of the Gospel; their growing disposition to sacrifice many smaller differences on the altar of our common Christianity;—have so fired the imaginations of some ardent, sanguine spirits, that they have allowed themselves to be hurried on to the unwarranted conclusion, that all former rules were about to be laid aside, and all former barriers to be broken down. But remember, my young friends, that a similar notion has been entertained, and afterwards abandoned, in almost every century since the incarnation of Christ. Remember,



too, that even when the *Millennium* shall arrive, human nature will *still be depraved*, and will still stand in need of *law* and *regulation*, not, perhaps, as *much*, but as *really* as now. And, finally, remember that before that blessed day shall actually dawn upon our world, we shall probably have many a sore conflict with the enemies of truth, and stand in need of all those methods of *distinguishing* and *binding together* its friends, to which the word of God, and uniform experience have so long given their sanction.

While I exhort you, then, to hail with delight the spirit of harmony, of union, and of active co-operation, which is among the most precious and animating “signs of the times” in which we live; and while I earnestly hope that no student of this Seminary will ever stand afar off, or turn away with an evil eye, when the true standard of Christ is raised by any denomination; let me, at the same time, entreat you always to temper your zeal with soberness. I say SOBERNESS; for this is a quality, not always found associated even with great vigour of talent, and great warmth of piety. Many a man of admirable endowments in other respects; endowments which qualified him, if they had been happily directed, to adorn and bless the Church; has been either so transported by the visions of a heated fancy; or so deceived by keeping his eye fixed on a single point only of the vast scene before him; or so impelled by the approaches of others, as anomalous as himself; that, like the comet of the infidel philosopher, he has only been able to strike off a few wandering stars from the parent luminary, while he himself, given up to an orbit more and more eccentric, never returned, either to regularity or usefulness.

The Church is still “in the wilderness;” and every age has its appropriate trials. Among those of the present day,



is a spirit of restless innovation; a disposition to consider every thing that is new as of course an improvement. Happy are they, who, taking the word of God for their guide, and walking in "the footsteps of the flock," continually seek the purity, the peace, and the edification of the Master's family:—Who, listening with more respect to the unerring Oracle, and to the sober lessons of Christian experience, than to the delusions of fashionable error; hold on their way, "turning neither to the right hand nor the left," and considering it as their highest honour and happiness to be employed as humble, peaceful instruments in building up that "kingdom which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!" May God grant to each of us this best of all honours! And to his Name be the praise, forever! Amen!

## APPENDIX.

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[The following remarks on Creeds, in the form of a Letter from *Paulinus* to *Scripturista*,\* are from the pen of the Rev. Dr. JOSEPH BELLAMY, whose vigorous talents and ardent piety are so extensively known, and whose memory is cherished with so much veneration both *in* and *out* of New England. They are annexed to the foregoing Lecture, for the purpose of showing to its readers the views of a man of powerful mind, and who had no *Presbyterian* ties or prejudices, on the important subject of which it treats. And although the good Doctor has been dead more than forty years, it will not escape notice how strikingly some of his remarks apply to present times and tendencies.]

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### A LETTER TO SCRIPTURISTA.

SIR,—From the first settling of New England, it has been the constant practice of all our *Congregational churches*, to require a public assent to the chief articles of the Christian faith, as a *term of communion* in special ordinances. Nor is there to this day, one such church, or, to be sure, not above one, that ever I heard of, but what insists upon such a public assent, as that, without which they will not admit any to sealing ordinances. Our churches have formulas, which they call *the doctrines of faith*, or *the articles of the Christian faith*. The minis-

\* BELLAMY'S Works, vol. iii. p. 371—387.

ter publicly reads them to such as are to be taken into full communion; and they give their assent to them before all the congregation. For our churches believe, (and act upon it,) that none ought to be admitted to full communion, but such as are sound in the faith; and that the church has a right to judge of their soundness in the faith: and they do judge those to be sound in the faith who publicly profess, (acting, to a judgment of charity, *understandingly* and *honestly*,) their assent to the articles of the Christian faith, which they have agreed to, and drawn up to be used in the admission of members: as they are persuaded said articles do express the true sense of the Holy Scriptures.

Were they convinced, that any of *their articles* were contrary to Scripture, I know not of one, or to be sure not above one, of all our churches, but would immediately *alter* their articles. For we all profess, that the *Bible* is the *only standard* by which our religious sentiments are to be formed; and we mean, by our Creeds and Confessions, only to express *our sense* of Scripture: not to make a *new Bible*; but only to express how we understand *the Bible that God has already made*. And this to the end that others may know our principles, and we know theirs.

When therefore a number of ministers, and of private gentlemen, who belong to our churches, have in late years appeared so very zealous against *Creeds* and *Confessions*, as tests of orthodoxy, I was at a loss to know what they meant, and what they designed, and what alteration they would have in our customs and practices, if they could new model things just to their minds. Would they have men admitted into the church, and appointed public instructors, *without any regard to their religious principles*? Or, do they not like it, that our articles *should be writ*

*down?* Or, would they have *new creeds* drawn up, *contrary to our present*, and *imposed* on our churches, and our churches *not allowed to judge for themselves!* Or, what do they mean? And what would they have?

Thus stood the case in my view, when, two or three years ago, hearing that something new was about to be published *against Creeds and Confessions*, by a certain ingenious gentleman, I sent the following lines to the printer of the Connecticut Gazette, which he was so good as to give place in his paper, No. 149.

*'To the Printer,' &c.*

'As several pieces of late have been published against Creeds and Confessions of human composure being used as tests of orthodoxy, which are thought not fully to reach the merits of the cause: it is desired, that in the next piece of that nature the following questions may be answered.

*Quest. I.* Is it of any importance what men's principles be, if their lives are but good? For if it is not, then not their religious principles, but only their external conduct, need be inquired into; and they may be admitted to sealing ordinances in the Church of Christ, or be licensed to preach, and ordained to the work of the ministry, or be employed as president, fellows, and tutors, to take care of the education of our youth, whether they are orthodox or not. And so there will be no need of any tests of orthodoxy, human or divine.

'But if it be of importance that they should be sound in the faith, and if their religious principles must be inquired into: then it is inquired,

*'Quest. II.* Whether particular Christian communities, as well as particular persons, have not a right to judge for themselves, what is the true sense of Scripture, and what



principles are necessary, according to the Holy Scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to an admission to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructors?

‘For if particular communities have not a right to judge for themselves, they ought no longer to claim it. But if they may not judge for themselves, who shall judge for them? Shall all the various sects among Protestants go back to the Pope to be set right? But, if it be granted that particular communities have a right to judge for themselves, it is inquired,

‘*Quest. III.* Why they may not manifest what is their sense of Scripture, in writing, as well as by word of mouth? i. e. why they may not compose a written Confession of Faith to be used a test of orthodoxy.\*

‘Till a good answer to these questions can be given, it is not to be expected that the use of Creeds and Confessions should be laid aside. And they are proposed to the public, with a desire that they may be answered, with that seriousness and good nature, with which all religious controversies ought to be managed. And such an answer shall be attended to with an honest desire to know the truth, by

‘*Decem. 24, 1757.*

PAULINUS.’

\* A test is that by which we try something to discover what it is. The Bible is the test by which we try doctrines to discover whether they be divine truths. A Confession of Faith is a test by which we try those who offer to be of our communion, &c. to discover whether they are orthodox, i. e. whether they believe those doctrines which we judge true and necessary to be professed, in order to be admitted to communion, &c. In this latter sense *only* is it, that the Christian Church ever maintained, that confessions of human composure might be used as texts of orthodoxy. See Professor Dunlop, on Creeds and Confessions.

And now, after about two years, to consider of the matter, you, my good friend *Scripturista*, have been so kind as to give a public answer to my *three questions*. For which, (although you have misunderstood me in a very material point,) I return you my public thanks. And if you speak not only your own sense, but the sense of your whole party, I humbly conceive we are not so far apart in this particular controversy, but that it may pretty easily be settled to the satisfaction of all concerned. For if I understand you right, you have granted the whole I designed; and disputed against a point which no denomination of Christians ever maintained. Besure, none in New England.

I. You not only grant, but contend earnestly for what we all lay down as our first principle, and fundamental maxim, viz. That not Creeds, nor Confessions, but *the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are the only rule of faith*; by which we are, each one for ourselves, to be determined what to believe in matters of religion; and to which the final appeal is to be made by all denominations of Christians, and by which they ought to decide all their religious controversies. Our Creeds are to express nothing but what we verily believe to be the true sense of Scripture. And if any think we mistake the true sense of Scripture, the dispute is to be decided, not by our Creeds, but by the Scripture; comparing Scripture with Scripture. So saith our platform; and this we are fully agreed in. ‘The smallest grain of an *inspired testimony*,’ says Professor Dunlop, in his piece on Creeds and Confessions, ‘is momentous enough, in a just balance, to weigh down a cart load of human *canons and confessions*.’ Edit. 2. p. 78.

II. You grant, ‘that some of the principles of religion are

so important, that none ought to be admitted to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructors, who do not profess to believe them.' (p. 3.) Yea, you grant that if they do at first profess to believe them; yet if afterwards it appears they do not, 'ministers ought to be silenced;' (p. 13.) and by parity of reason, church members censured. You grant this, I say; and therefore, to silence and excommunicate such if they continue obstinate, provided it be done with a Christian temper, is so far from being persecution, that you look upon it a Christian *duty*; according to *Tit.* iii. 10.

And thus far you agree with the Church of Christ in all ages of the world.

III. And you also grant fully, just as fully as I would have you, 'that particular Christian communities, as well as particular persons, have a right,' not *had a right* once, ten or twenty years ago, but every day of their lives; 'have a right to judge for themselves, what is the true sense of Scripture; and what principles are necessary, according to the Holy Scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to an admission to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructors.' (p. 4.)

And if they have a right to judge for themselves, you must grant, that it is their duty to *exercise* this right, and not remain in suspense; but come to a judgment; not to be *ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth*, like the condemned by the apostle; 2 Tim. iii. 7. but rather to believe *with all the heart*, and to *continue in the things they have learned, and been assured of*. Ver. 14.

Yea, how can a Christian church admit any to communion, or settle a minister, until first they are agreed what principles are orthodox and necessary. If they put off coming to a judgment, and agree upon nothing as a rule for themselves

to act by, in the admission of members, or settlement of a minister, 'to be of any force till they are dead;' (p. 11.) then they must admit no members, and settle no ministers, till they get into the next world: or else must admit members and settle ministers on this maxim, 'that it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good.' Which still you will not allow. There is an absolute necessity, therefore, upon your own principles, that Christian communities settle these points, and agree what principles are necessary even at their first formation.

And, surely, a right to judge for themselves does by no means imply, that they must *never come to a judgment*; never be *grounded and settled* in a firm belief of all the great and important doctrines of the Gospel; but always be as *unsteady children, tost to and fro, and carried about* like leaves in autumn, *with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive*: for this is expressly contrary to the word of God. (Col. i. 23. Eph. iv. 14.) And equally contrary to common sense. For a *right to judge for ourselves* is so far from being inconsistent with our *coming to a judgment*, that it can be of no use to us but as it is improved to this end.

But you say, 'we must alter our belief, if afterwards we see just cause for it.' p. 5. 11. 19. True; and so we must give up the Bible itself if we *see just cause for it*. And cease any longer to believe that two and two make four; if we *see just cause for it*. And what then? Must we therefore never come to a judgment about the plainest and most evident matters? Or, do you think that the great truths of the Gospel cannot be clearly determined from the Bible? I hope that *believing* the great doctrines of the



Gospel *with all the heart*, with a *full assurance of faith*; yea, with *all the riches of the full assurance of understanding*, in the manner true Christians did in the apostolic age, (Acts viii. 37. Col. ii. 2. 1 Thess. i. 5. Heb. x. 22.) does not appear in your eyes like a groundless confidence, a faith built on no solid, rational, lasting evidence. I hope you would not have the minds of Christians always fluctuating and unsettled in their belief, *like a wave of the sea*, and so in consequence hereof, they be *unstable in all their ways*, like those condemned in James i. 6, 7, 8. Nor can I persuade myself, that you think that a firm and persevering belief of Christianity is inconsistent with the impartiality of an honest man, who is a *free inquirer* after truth. And that there is no way to be a strong believer, but by being a great bigot. If indeed you are thus far gone into scepticism, and feel yourself thus at a total loss what to believe, and what to disbelieve; I wonder not you should be for delaying to draw up a Creed for yourself, lest you should soon alter your mind, and get into another scheme of religion, a scheme condemned by your former Creed. But methinks, to put off 'till after death,' is too long, if you intend to be saved at last by Christianity. But if it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good; all is well, whether you ever get settled in your principles in this world, or in the world to come.

But why need I thus reason with you? For whatever sound some of your words may seem to have, and however some of your readers may understand you; yet you cannot really mean that Christians, or Christian communities, should delay and put off their being settled, fully settled in the belief of the great doctrines of the Gospel. For you do expressly grant, that it is of so great importance

that men be sound in the faith, that they must not be admitted to communion, or ordained to the work of the ministry without it. Which supposes that the great truths of the Gospel are so plain and evident, that they may and ought to be known and believed; and Christian communities to be well settled in these things, even at their first foundation.

IV. You grant, 'that particular Christian communities may manifest their sense of Scripture in writing, as well as by word of mouth.' p. 5. i. e. they may compose *creeds*. For a *creed*, (which comes from *credo*, *to believe*,) consists of a number of articles, which *I believe to be taught in the Holy Scriptures*. And what particular use is to be made of their *Creed* by Christian communities, you have already virtually granted, For

V. Although this clause, 'A written Confession of Faith to be used as a test of orthodoxy,' does 'really surprise you, (p. 6.) taken in the *frightful* sense you have put upon it; yet, taken in the sense I designed the words, it seems you fully approve the thing. The *name*, 'a test of orthodoxy,' frights you, and no wonder, considering the frightful idea you put to the words. But the thing designed by that name seems quite familiar to your mind. For there are some religious principles which appear to you of so great importance that you would neither admit to sealing ordinances, nor to the office of a public instructor, those who would not profess them. And these principles you fully believe are taught in the Holy Scriptures. So that, in the sense I use words, they are your *creed*, and your *test of orthodoxy*. For you believe them, and insist upon the profession of them as a *term of communion*. And possibly their evidence appears to you so clear and full, that you are persuaded

you state a question absolutely of your own making, and never shall, and in fact you never will, alter your belief, as to them. And yet you are no bigot. But rather you profess to stand ready to alter your belief, 'when you see just cause for it.' However, till then you would enjoin to silence, and excommunicate a minister who should be proved guilty of gross heresy, according to your notions of heresy, i. e. according to your Creed, used as *a test of orthodoxy*. (p. 13.)

Yea, it is plain you have no notion of any possible way for you to judge of your neighbour's belief, whether it be what you call orthodox or not, but by comparing it with your Creed, i. e. with what you *believe to be the true sense of Scripture*. For, as you say, (p. 20.) 'having settled your principles according to your understanding of Scripture, you do necessarily judge of particular cases according to them, or agreeable to your own judgment of the true meaning of the Scriptures.' Nor indeed, sir, has any body else any other way of judging. For there can be no other. And in fact, all parties, however they differ in their disputes, yet agree to a tittle in their conduct. They all have but one and the same way to judge of their neighbour's orthodoxy, viz. by comparing their neighbour's profession, with what they themselves *believe to be the true meaning of Scripture*, i. e. with their own Creed. For we must judge by what we believe to be the true sense of Scripture, or not to make the Scripture our rule of judgment, in any respect at all. \*

\* The admirers of Dr. Taylor look upon those as orthodox, who understand the Scripture as he has explained it. For they esteem his writings, 'as being a just exposition of the word of God in those doctrines or articles which are contained in them.' Nor would they choose a man to instruct their children in divinity, who did not *judge of truth and error*, as Dr. Taylor does. And

So that it is plain, that all the great zeal, loud outcries, and hot disputes against Creeds and Confessions, being used as a test of orthodoxy, must have arisen from some misunderstanding of the case; or else men have not been honest; but rather disputed against Creeds in general, merely because they hate and want to get rid of the established Creed of their country. Had it not been for this circumstance, they might have been as great friends to Creeds and Confessions as any of their neighbours. Now which of these, my friend, is the case with you? Do you hate Calvinism? Do you dispute against Creeds, because you disbelieve our Confession of Faith, and want to get rid of it? No, you say; the man is 'guilty of scandal who imputes any such corrupt design to you.' (p. 28.) Very well, sir; it remains therefore, that your dislike of Creeds, as tests of orthodoxy, must be founded on some mistaken notion of the thing. Which mistaken notion, were it removed, all the dislike of so orthodox and so honest a man, would immediately cease. And accordingly it is observable, that having in your letter granted the whole I designed, by my *three questions*, to lead gentlemen on your side to feel they must grant; or turn sceptics, on the one hand; or deprive particular Christian communities of the right to judge for themselves, and act according to their own consciences, on the other; I say, having granted the whole I designed, you set yourself to dispute against a point no denomination

why should they condemn that in others, which they approve of in themselves? Or why should they desire to misrepresent it to the world, when at the same time, rightly understood, they and all the world must agree to justify it? Let them confute, if they can, what we mean to maintain. Or if they know they cannot, let them own it; and not try to blacken, by misrepresentations, what they dare not but justify, rightly represented.



of Christians ever professed to maintain. To be sure, it appears to me so very absurd, that instead of its being espoused by almost all Christians since the reign of *Constantine the Great*, as you imagine, I very much doubt whether there ever was in any age, so much as one man of tolerable sense that meant to hold it. You indeed insinuate that *a certain gentleman* maintains it. But I dare say you can no sooner get him to believe it, than you can to believe that the same thing *may be*, and *not be*, in the same sense, and at the same time. And it is not fair to put a meaning to a man's words he never intended.

VI. The question you dispute against, is this, 'whether particular Christian communities, having drawn up in writing a Confession of Faith, agreeable to their present judgment of the true sense of Scripture, have not just right and authority to IMPOSE it on themselves, and all their members, as a test of orthodoxy, and term of communion; and for the future use it as such?' (p. 6.) By the word 'IMPOSE,' you afterwards explain yourself to mean, "they oblige themselves to use it as a test of orthodoxy as long as they live; even although they are in fact afterwards convinced that it is not orthodox." Or, in other words, "they bind themselves to believe, profess, and practice according to it, and not to alter in the least, although 'they see just cause for' alteration." (p. 11—19.)

Strange notion! *Bind themselves not to alter their belief, although afterwards 'they see just reason for it!'* But if I do, in fact, *see just reason to alter my belief*, i. e. what appears to me to be just reason, I cannot but alter my belief. It is not in my power to believe a doctrine to be taught in Scripture, while at the same time I am fully convinced it is not taught there. And no man

living ever meant to oblige himself to this. Indeed, it would be to oblige himself to an absolute contradiction; to believe a thing to be, and not to be, in the same sense, and at the same time. For, as I before said, ‘a creed consists of a number of articles, which *I believe are taught in the Sacred Scriptures*. And therefore said articles are not *my Creed*, if *I do not believe that they are taught in Scripture*. But to believe they are taught in Scripture, and to believe that they are not taught in Scripture, at the same time, is to believe a thing to be and not to be; which is what you must be sensible, on the least reflection, no man ever meant to do. If the Church of Rome is vain enough to believe herself infallible; yet she never was so absurd as professedly to oblige herself to persevere in her belief of her own infallibility, although in time to come she should be fully convinced of her mistake.

‘They may not alter their principles,’ (you say, p. 11.) ‘or at least their profession afterwards, though on further inquiry they should think they had mistaken the sense of Scripture at first;’ i. e. they are obliged to proceed to silence a minister, or censure a private Christian, as an heretic, directly against the light of their own consciences, when they are fully persuaded they are sound in the faith, the error not being in them, but in their own Creeds. To set which notion in all its horrors, you tell a long story of a church trial carried on upon this scheme, and conclude with saying, ‘That if the church have a right to make a contrary judgment, if they see just reason for it,’ then tests of orthodoxy must be given up. (p. 19.) So that this is the precise notion of tests of orthodoxy with which you are so terribly frightened, and against which you dispute so zealously, as having in all ages of the Church been the grand source of

all imposition, tyranny, and persecution. Although at the same time it does not appear that this notion of a test of orthodoxy, was ever embraced by any Christian church in the world.

Among all the reformed churches, none are more zealous for Creeds and Confessions, as tests of orthodoxy, than the Church of Scotland. And Mr. Dunlop, professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, in his preface to their Confession, who wrote to show the justice, reasonableness, and necessity of it, as a PUBLIC STANDARD OF ORTHODOXY, may be supposed to speak the common sense of that Church. But he expressly saith, edit. 2. p. 143: 'According to the principles of our Confession, every man would search after the truth with the utmost impartiality; attend to the voice of divine revelation, though it may sound very differently in his ears from the public standard of any fallible church. It is base and inglorious, for any person to dissemble the truth when he discovers it, or neglect any proper means of spreading it in the world, because he may thereby disoblige the majority and lose their favours,' Again, p. 147. 'As good men will never subscribe a Confession but when persuaded in their consciences of the conformity of its articles to divine revelation; so they will with courage oppose themselves to it, when convinced of their error; they will not be afraid openly to abandon it, and will prove as zealous in promoting what they now see to be the mind of God in the Scripture, as if there never had been such a thing as a human Creed in the world.' Thus far this author, celebrated by all the friends of Creeds and Confessions, as one who has written genteelly and unanswerably. Read him, my good Scripturista, and answer him fairly, and we will all come over to your side. For we all maintain, that we

have a right to change our sentiments, 'when we see just reason for it.'

But till then, we ought to persevere in the truth, how much misrepresented soever it is; yea, although dressed up as *absurd* in itself, and the native source of almost all evil.

But since you are so orthodox and so honest a man, and apparently a man of sense, pray let me stand and wonder a little, and in my turn be 'really surprised,' how you ever came to think the *Christian Church in all ages* meant to espouse *tests of orthodoxy* in the sense you have charged upon them. Can you produce any history to prove that this was the case in the primitive times, or in later ages? Does Eusebius say so, or the celebrated Du Pin? Does Sleidan, or Burnet, or Neal, or Bowers, or any other historian of credit? To be sure, so honest a man as you, would not charge so *black* and *absurd* an opinion upon the Christian Church in all ages, out of pure wilful malice, on purpose to bring an odium upon all the friends of *Creeds*. And how a man of your good sense, could possibly be guilty of so gross a mistake, is very hard to say. To attribute it to wilful malice, I cannot; to attribute it to your ignorance, I do not know how to do it. And on the whole, I am 'really surprised.' You don't pretend to quote but one author, and it is not only plain from his *piece*, but he expressly tells me by word of mouth, that he never meant any such thing; but if he did, how does this prove that the Christian Church in all ages have been in this scheme? Or what warrant had you to raise such an evil report against the Church of Christ?

As to the questions, you state, p. 6, 7, 8. &c. The answer is short.—'Who have right to make *such* tests of orthodoxy?' No body.—'What principles should be put



into *such* tests?' None at all.—'And who should be bound by them?' None in this world, or in the next.

But you have said so much about *imposition* and *persecution*, (p. 21—28) that we must stop here a few minutes, lest ignorant people should be *imposed* on. You do not mean to charge your own scheme, my good friend, with being a persecuting scheme. Nor do you think it necessary that our churches should give up their right to judge for themselves, and become indifferent to all principles, as willing to receive an Arminian or Socinian to communion, as an orthodox Christian; and particularly declare that it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good; and so commence Pagans,\* in order to avoid the dreadful guilt of *imposition* and *persecution*. Pray, my good Scripturista, do tell me who acts the manly honest part, and who the part of an *imposer* and *persecutor*?

Aristocles was educated in a Socinian church at Siena. One article of their faith was, that *Jesus Christ is a mere creature, who never had any existence before he was born of the Virgin Mary*. And they professed to understand all those texts of Scripture which speak of his divinity, to imply no more than that he was *God by office*. Aristocles, at the age of sixteen, joined in full communion with the church, and publicly gave his assent to *their creed*. At the age of *twenty-four*, the former minister being dead, Aristocles was chosen his successor, and put into possession

\* The Pagans in the apostolic age exceedingly cried out against the Christian sect, for *damning* all parties but their own, i. e. for preaching as their Master had bid them, *he that believeth not shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16. Now all the various tribes of heathen idolaters, with all their different gods, were in full charity with one another: and so they all joined to look upon the Christian sect, as unsocial and inimical to the human kind. See Warburton's *Div. Leg.*

of all their parsonage lands for life, on condition he should continue to preach the doctrines embraced by that particular church. Which, not having studied the controversy, he inadvertently engaged to do, being by the influence of education full in the Socinian scheme. However, within two years after his ordination, having carefully searched the Scriptures, Aristocles was fully convinced of his error, and became a sound believer and a good man. And having counted the cost, he came to a full resolution, at the risk of all his outward comforts, honestly to inform his church and congregation of the change of his sentiments; and to preach up the *divinity* and *satisfaction* of Christ, and endeavour to set these points in the clearest light from the holy Scriptures. And at the same time honestly to acknowledge to his people, that he had *broken the covenant*, which in the times of his ignorance he had made with them; and so forfeited all claim to the church's parsonage lands, which accordingly he resigned. 'And now,' says he, 'if you will choose me for your minister as I am, I am willing to serve you; but I claim no right to IMPOSE a Calvinist minister upon a Socinian church.' And pray, sir, did not this man act an honest part?\*

\* Did I therefore alter my notions as to *articles of faith*, which I had once subscribed, and came to perceive the falsehood of them, I would think myself obliged to follow the dictates of my own conscience, and would endeavour also by all due means to persuade the church to which I belonged to change their *faith* also. But if I were not able, it would be extremely foolish to fancy that they would act directly contrary to their own principles, in continuing me their minister, and endowing me with that salary, which they had allotted to a *pastor* that should teach them doctrines which I had found myself obliged to abandon. It were absurd to imagine that though *those who serve the altar should like the altar*, that yet I should live by an *altar* which I had abandoned, and set up one in opposition to, and indeed endeavoured to overthrow.' *Eells on Creeds*, p. 91.

*Authades*, in another part of the Christian world, where Calvinism was the only established religion, in his youth, joined with the church where he lived; and publicly gave his assent, according to custom, to the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in their formulas which were strictly Calvinistical, although the church was grown very lax in examinations, without which, formulas, though never so good, will not answer the end. He did not believe their articles at the time, but it was for his credit to be a church-member; therefore he kept his infidelity to himself, and made a public profession. At length the minister, a good old Calvinist, died. The church and congregation invited *Authades* to be his successor. All the time he was on probation, his chief study was to conceal himself. For by this time, he began to be full in the Socinian scheme. He generally preached on moral subjects, as these gave him the largest scope for popular declamation, and the best advantages to hide his principles. If at any time he preached on *original sin, regeneration, justification, the satisfaction of Christ, or the influences of the Holy Spirit*, as he was obliged sometimes to do, to prevent their suspicions, he took the greatest care to express himself so, as that his secret sentiments should not be discovered by the people. However, some of the more judicious sort suspected him, and feared he meant to act a part. Nevertheless, a great majority invite him to settle, and he is ordained. He expressly covenants to preach to them according to their Calvinistic articles of faith; and on this condition, they engage to pay him 100*l.* per annum. He knew they would not settle him, if he did not delude them. And he still knows he cannot keep possession of the 100*l.* per annum, unless he can keep them deluded. Therefore he uses all his art to

conceal himself from the congregation in general; and in the mean time, is usually cunning to make proselytes to the Socinian scheme, in a secret under-handed way. At length, having made a party he begins to take courage; and slyly dresses up Calvinists as *bigots*, and *vital piety*, as *enthusiasm*; and more openly declaims against *creeds* and *confessions*, as *impositions*, and *engines of persecution*, the result of a *proud and domineering spirit*; and in a word, *the fatal source of all mischief*. For so they feel to him. For as *he that doth evil hateth the light*; so he that is an heretic hates orthodox creeds and confessions. Poor Authades! he knows very well, that if his church and congregation would strip off his false colours, and get legal proof of his true character, he must lose his 100*l.* per annum. He thinks it no roguery for him to impose upon his church, and cheat them out of their money, and out of their principles; but he thinks it would be a piece of the greatest tyranny, and the most cruel and barbarous persecution, if they should find him out, and prove him to be a Socinian, and, as such, have him silenced, and take away his 100*l.* per annum. Thus every man lives, and thus he dies; and to be sure, you will, candid Scripturista, join with me to look upon and abhor him, as a thorough practised knave.

For you grant, the Calvinistic church had ‘a right to judge for themselves, what was the true sense of Scripture, and what principles were necessary, according to the holy Scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to be admitted to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as a public instructor.’ And if they had a right to do so, their doing so was an *imposition* upon Authades; but Authades was the only man worthy of *imposition*. He *imposed* upon the Church when he joined with it at first; he still in a higher



degree imposed upon the church and congregation too, when he settled in the work of the ministry among them. He wanted their money. He obtained it first by dissimulation, and kept it through his whole life by one series of deceit.

And if Calvinistic churches in the Christian world, in this corrupt age, have reason to fear that there are too many of Authades' character, the very *wolves in sheeps' clothing* our Saviour warned us to *beware of*, (*Matt.* vii. 15.) can you desire that instead of obeying the divine counsel, they should tamely resign their 'right to judge for themselves,' and admit to sealing ordinances and to the work of the ministry, any that offer, without any regard to their principles? And to suffer themselves to be imposed upon in the highest degree, to the great injury of themselves, and of their posterity, only to avoid the bitter resentments of such men as Authades, who will cry out, *Imposition! imposition! Persecution! persecution!* if you only insist on your right as Christians, to know the articles of their belief, and refuse to admit them to communion and into the ministry, unless they appear to be sound in the faith. No sir, you can, consistent with your own avowed principles, desire no such thing. But rather, as Christ has made it the indispensable duty of all his followers, openly to profess the doctrines of his holy religion, (*Mat.* x. 22. 32, 33.) charged them to *beware of false prophets*, (*Mat.* vii. 15.) and commended them for trying and detecting false pretenders, (*Rev.* ii. 2.) and as even common sense teaches, that the disciples of Christ have a natural right to know, and judge of the religious sentiments of those who claim to be their *fellow-disciples*, and expect to be treated as such; so instead of discountenancing the little concern of Calvinistic churches in the present day, to be consistent with yourself, you, who can-

not bear to be thought not a Calvinist, ought rather to blame their too great indifference, and call upon them to awake, stand upon their guard, and watch, lest cunning deceitful men slyly creep in, and before we are aware, bring *another gospel* into our pulpits, and the utmost confusion and discord into our churches. For how can we *walk together except we be agreed?* (*Amos* iii. 3.) Or keep the *unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*, except we have *one faith, one Lord, one baptism?* (*Eph.* iv. 3, 4, 5.)

But perhaps you will say, 'The Calvinists are too suspicious already. There are no Arminians, no Arians, no Socinians, &c. among us. The cry is raised by designing men merely to answer political ends.' Oh, my good Scripturista! O, that this were indeed the case! O, that our fears were quite groundless! How soon would I believe it, if you could help me to 'see just reason for it.' But how would the party through New-England laugh at our credulity in Connecticut, if their friends among us could make us believe all to be safe till they could carry their points here, as they have elsewhere. In New-Hampshire province, this party have actually, three years ago, got things so ripe, that they have ventured to new model our *shorter catechism*; to alter, or entirely leave out, the *doctrines of the Trinity*, of the *decrees*, of our *first parents being created holy*, of *original sin*, Christ *satisfying divine justice*, *effectual calling*, *justification*, *adoption*, *sanctification*, *assurance of God's love*, *perseverance in grace*, &c. and to adjust the whole to Dr. Taylor's scheme. And in their preface to this new catechism, they tell the world, that 'The snarling of party bigots will be little regarded.' i. e. if all the Calvinists in the country are disobliged, to see their whole scheme given up, *they do not care*. They look upon us all, as

*snarling bigots*, not to be regarded. This is honest : now they speak their hearts; and tell the world how they feel! Come from New-Hampshire along to Boston, and see there a celebrated D. D. the head of a large party! He boldly ridicules the doctrine of the Trinity, and denies the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*, in the sight of all the country, in his book of sermons: come nearer home, come to Wallingford: see there a young gentleman, bold to settle in the ministry, although opposed as an heretic by near half the town. Observe, and see how he conducts. How backward to let his people know his religious sentiments, while on probation! How resolved, never to be examined by the *consociation*, let it cost what it would, though charged with heresy, and cited to appear before them! Yea, although his opposers offer to accept him for their minister, if upon examination he should appear to be sound in the faith! And yet under these, even under these circumstances, he could find ministers to ordain him!

Sir, your already very much obliged and very humble servant,

PAULINUS.