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Strictures on occasional
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STRICTURES

ON

OCCASIONAL HEARING;

IN AN INQUIRY INTO SONG I. 7.

WHY SHOULD I BE AS ONE THAT TURNETH ASIDE BY THE FLOCKS OF THE COMPANIONS?

IN TWO PARTS.

- I. ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PRACTICE.
- II. ARGUMENTS IN ITS FAVOUR ANSWERED.

TO WHICH ARE SUBJOINED

OBSERVATIONS ON PRAYER FOR KINGS.

BY JAMES DOUGLAS.

Let us hold fast our profession without wavering—That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive—Search the scriptures—I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

SCRIPTURES.

“All that is meant is merely to suggest a few hints on the general aspect of the subject, and especially such as are calculated to guard against mistakes, and to expose the fallacy of some very popular doctrines, and predominant practices concerning it.”

CHRIST. MAG.



Paisley:

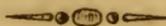
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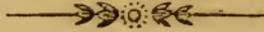
1817.

To the writer alone responsibility attaches for what is contained
in the following publication..... J. D.

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* Near the top.

† Near the middle.

‡ Near the bottom.

TYPOGRAPHICAL ESCAPES TO BE CORRECTED BY THE READER.

Page 3, line 3, for *flocks* read *flock* P. 19, l. 11, before *creed* insert *her*. P. 23, foot note, for *ingenuous* read *ingenious* ; and before *reputation*, for a read *high*. P. 33, l. 12, for *there* read *their*. P. 62, l. 4, after *heal*, for ; insert, P. 69, l. 5, for *if* read *of*. P. 99, l. 81, at the beginning, erase the name of. P. 108, l. 6, from the foot, for *circumstances* read *circumstance*.

P R E F A C E.



THERE are, perhaps, few subjects more unpopular than that discussed in the following sheets. The writer is aware that general custom, which is a prevalent principle of action, is entirely against him. It is not, then, popularity, but the reverse, that is to be expected as the reward of such an undertaking. And since the following observations drop from the pen of one whose circumstances are too solitary to procure general reception, his sole dependance for acceptance is upon the merits of the arguments and manner of execution. If these have the support of Scripture and reason, it is sufficient, —if not, other recommendations can be of little avail. It is requested, that, before decision be given, and the work condemned, these may be duly and impartially considered.*

Having had occasion to employ some verbal and epistolary communication on the subject, and especially by consulting the most judicious expositors, to whom he had access, on the passage of Scripture used as the theme of discussion, the writer's mind became deeply impressed with the leading idea suggested from it, which still increased the more he thought of it. An ardent desire to impede the progress of a growing evil induced him to exhibit a few considerations on the subject to public view.

A favourable reception can only be expected from those unbiassed in favour of the practice condemned. With relation to others, from the peculiar nature of the subject,

* "Blame not before thou hast examined the truth: understand first, and then rebuke." *Ecclus. xi. 7.*

their derision is rather to be expected. Nevertheless, if any thing be here suggested, in the least beneficial in directing to the footsteps of the Redeemer's flock, (those who wish, as the church here does, to avoid the flocks of the companions,) and to stop, if possible, the mouths of those who invidiously attribute all opposition to the practice to prejudice and bigotry, he shall the more cheerfully submit to that reproach, which is almost the unavoidable consequence of whatever is singular, and wants the sanction of custom. If, however, he fail, even in these respects, he shall not count his labour entirely lost, if any, qualified by more advantageous circumstances, be excited by this to undertake a work (already too long neglected) that shall more effectually accomplish these important ends.

However unpopular the subject here treated is, the writer's views are not peculiar to himself and the church to which he belongs. These obtain ample support from highly respectable writers, upon the same subject, of other communities. With a view to elucidate the subject, and render the essay as interesting as possible, large quotations are given from these writers.* In these quotations, to which particular attention is solicited, perhaps the greater utility of the present publication may consist. The writer hopes the judicious reader will allow the considerations here presented to his notice to have their due weight, and let the arguments for the respective sides be compared together, and both with the Scripture standard,—*the law and the testimony*.

* These quotations, with some notes, are mostly inserted in Appendix I. to which reference is made by letters in alphabetical order.

INTRODUCTION.



SONG i. 7.—WHY SHOULD I BE AS ONE THAT TURNETH ASIDE BY
THE FLOCKS OF THY COMPANIONS?

INTERCOURSE with Christ is the supreme desire of the church. For the enjoyment of this, she inquires where he feeds his flock, and makes them to rest at noon. Without this direction, on his part, she insinuates that she is in danger of turning aside after the flocks of his companions. Companions, in the proper sense of the term, design persons of friendly dispositions:—"The companions hearken to thy voice."*—"The virgins her companions that follow."† But in the present case, they are so denominated, merely from their appearance, rank, and circumstances in the church:—"Friend, how camest thou in hither?"‡—"Friend, wherefore art thou come?"§ The one at the marriage supper, the other giving the friendly kiss, appeared real friends, and were so denominated, though they sustained a character entirely the reverse. In the same situation are the companions, otherwise the church would not be so apprehensive of danger in turning aside after them. By these companions we are to understand the same as the mother's children, verse 6. They are nominally *in* the church, but not *of* the church. The idea that the companions are so denominated from their *resemblance* to those who are in reality devoted to the Redeemer's interests, appears from chap. v. 7, where the church designs them watchmen; a designation by which also, she denominates the faithful ministers of Jesus:—"The watchmen that go about the city found me," &c.¶ They have an identity of name from their striking resemblance, and sameness of office in the church; while, however, their real character is entirely the reverse. The one acts the part of a friend

* Chap. viii. 13.

† Psal. xlv. 14.

‡ Mat. xxii. 12.

§ Mat. xxvi. 50

¶ Chap. iii. 3.

and faithful guide, in directing her in quest of her beloved; while the other treats her with asperity, even barbarous cruelty, in smiting and wounding her, and taking away her vail from her.

This similarity in these companions, to those who are such in reality, is forcibly shown by Christ, Mat. vii. 15, where they are called *prophets*; but, to distinguish them from those who are really such, they are designed *false prophets*. Their resemblance, and yet destructive nature, is farther brought to view in the same passage, by their being designed *wolves in sheep's clothing*. Their real character as wolves is concealed by their woolly fleece, which represents those external circumstances that constitute their resemblance to real sheep. And their wolfish dispositions afterward appear in their voracious greediness to accumulate wealth; fitly designed "greedy dogs which can never have enough."* Converting the sanctuary into a house of merchandise, they are said to "look to their own way; every one for his gain from his quarter."* They are precisely like those of old, who said, "Put me into the priests' office for a piece of bread." Such are fitly described by an apostle as acting from the base motive of "filthy lucre;" and, says the same apostle, "through covetousness shall they, with feigned words, make merchandise of you."

They are farther represented as shepherds feeding themselves, and not their flock;—as clothing themselves with the wool, but scattering the sheep;†—as hirelings, who care not for the sheep, but leave them defenceless to the merciless attack of every depredator, instead of defending them by every possible mean of warning and reproof. Being actuated by the low motive of gain; or, as it is expressed in Scripture, "for sake of advantage," the appellation *hireling* is most descriptive of their real character.‡ These comparisons suitably represent

* Isa. lvi. 11.

† Ezek. xxxiv.

‡ To none is the term more applicable than to those who, in the face of every remonstrance, however rational and well-founded, are thrust into office by the most violent measures. Submission to such disorderly and unscriptural intrusion is expressive of a mind exceed-

the companions, both in respect of circumstances of resemblance, and of injurious consequences. This similarity is sometimes so strikingly great, that, saith Christ, "if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect." This says, "therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed." They all say, "Lo, here is Christ"—"This is the way, walk ye in it," &c.*

But when we consider Christ in the account given of him by these companions, we find him greatly in want of that fulness and glory, which, as Saviour and Head of the church, are ascribed to him in the divine word.

The injurious nature, at least, of some of the companions, arising from circumstances of resemblance, is well shown, 2 Cor. xi. 13, where they are represented as transforming themselves into the apostles and ministers of Christ, &c. No rational doubt can be entertained, that the companions are the very same with the persons designed in these different passages. If so, the danger of

ingly base. Can any who want an orderly call, from those over whom they are to preside, be viewed in any other light, than as thieves and robbers, however high the authority otherwise may be, by which they are patronised? Whether does gain or godliness seem more to influence their conduct? Whether do such seem to rank among the followers of Christ, or of his companions?

* This is done by those very notorious heretics, who have boldness enough to "deny the only Lord God, even our Lord Jesus Christ." Can any thing be more entitled to the designation "damnable heresies," than the denial of Jesus' divinity and the necessity of his atonement?—Can any heresies be more calculated to sap the very foundation of the Christian system?—Can any thing more effectually bring "swift destruction" upon themselves, and their deluded votaries, who follow their pernicious ways? Although such have a mode of worship protected under the shade of a toleration, which allows every heresy, however damnatory, to pass with impunity, yet since they want the most fundamental doctrine of the Christian system,—the acknowledgment of God in his scriptural character, they are not entitled even to the designation of companions: for, as already observed, the term denotes such circumstances of resemblance, that the church has difficulty in distinguishing them, and applies to Christ, her beloved, for direction. But the flagrancy of those is so manifest, that none can hesitate to ascertain their true character, except those to whom the gospel is hid, whose minds the god of this world has blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ the Son of God, should shine into them.

turning aside after them is the more manifest. And by the flocks we are to understand their deluded votaries; *flocks* in the *plural*, from the numerous herds that attend their dangerous ministrations; and also as distinguished from the few followers of Christ, designed *thy flock*, a *little flock*, &c.

But farther; by the companions, also, we are to understand those who claim supremacy in the church. Such are designed by an apostle, "lords over God's heritage."* This will apply to all dignitaries in the church, who occupy places for the sake of honour or advantage; or, as expressed by an apostle, "for filthy lucre's sake." Supremacy in the church, upon this principle, appears in the different orders of superior clergy in the two kindred churches of England and Rome; the constitutional and practical difference of which is more nominal than real. An essential principle of both is supremacy, with this difference; the one acknowledges the pope as universal head; the other, the sovereign of the nation over which he presides. The latter is, in this respect, joined by that of presbyterian name established in our own land. In nothing can any appear more the companions of Christ, than in claiming the prerogatives, which are his undeniable right.† Submission to such is tacit assent to a robbery of the most sacrilegious nature. It is supporting the Erastian claims of those who, instead of being nursing fathers to the church, rob her of her most invaluable privileges.

Farther; among the companions will, also, rank unqualified persons in the public station of teachers in the church. The indispensable qualification of *capacity*, is expressed by the apostle in these words; "apt to each;"—beautifully illustrated, Jer. iii. 15; "I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."‡ Another requisite qualification is an orderly call from those whom they

* 1 Pet. v. 3. See also Mark x. 42—44. † 2 Thess. ii. 4.

‡ See an excellent illustration of this passage by DR M'LEOD, on the *Constitution, Character, and Duties of the Gospel Ministry*.—*Christian Selector*, vol. i. p. 321.

are to teach; otherwise every appointment is but intrusion, and to officiate is only to invade a place to which they have no other claim than that of usurpation; or, to express it in Scripture language,—to “run unsent,”—to “prophesy while God hath not spoken.”*

In connexion with these companions, we may, also, rank such as “teach for doctrines the commandments of men,” and not the doctrine which is according to godliness,—sound doctrine only, which is productive of salvation. Public teachers may be free from the charge of error, and yet equally guilty in respect of neglect. As death is no less the effect of withholding support than it is of poisonous application; so the neglect of doctrines to be taught, or of duties to be performed, renders equally exceptionable as perverting the most obvious truths. The Christian minister is a steward under high responsibility, and has before him a variety of objects that claim his attention. He has not only to preach sound doctrine, which cannot be condemned, but must also warn of sin and danger. His duties are well shown in those of the watchman;† and in those of the shepherd;‡ and expressed in strong martial language by Isaiah: “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.”|| The Scriptures are given for correction and reproof, as well as for doctrine and instruction; and if they are to be received as the unexceptionable pattern of imitation, the Christian minister must act a similar part, or be liable to the charges brought against undutiful watchmen.§ Since to testify against prevailing evils is offensive, this part of ministerial duty they are careful to avoid. This cost the undaunted Harbinger his life; and Christ by testifying of the world, that the works thereof were evil, laid himself obnoxious to its censure and hatred. To avoid similar treatment, many of his pretended followers neglect the example which he hereby gave them: so, for want of warning and reproof, thousands

* See Appendix, Note A. † Ezek. xxxiii. 6, &c. ‡ Jer. xxiii. Ezek. xxxiv. || Isa. lviii. 1. § Isa. lvi. 10—12.

are allowed to perish in their ignorance and infidelity: Smooth and inoffensive doctrines being most acceptable, are almost the only subjects of public discussion. The faithful followers of Jesus have in every age distinguished themselves from his companions, by being explicit in warning, and sharp in reproof; in order to arouse from security, and endeavour, by every possible means, to prevent their eternal ruin. An end so important is not to be gained by soothing addresses;—fitly designed by an apostle, “flattering words.” Those who neglect this important part of ministerial duty, are, in very appropriate language, designed “dumb dogs, that cannot bark,”—a principal design of which being to prevent wandering and going astray.

The companions, also, appear in this respect; that the public interests of religion are to them a matter of little concern. As they do not value, they are little careful to regard, what God has done for his church in former times. Fond of popularity, they readily applaud, even with cringing adulation, existing systems, though constitutionally hostile to the interests of true religion. Approbation of any exercising supremacy in the church, and engaged in support of prelatie and antichristian systems; which, being eversive of the religion of Jesus, evidences that they rank among his companions. And as this approbation is shown by every community, whether publicly patronised, or existing under the shade of approved toleration, the charge must be of equal extent.

Without farther enlargement upon the character of the companions, it may be observed, in one word; that the expression includes all who are not “going forth by the footsteps of the flock.” Whatever circumstantial difference may appear among them;—whatever excellencies some may seem to have above others, if this characteristic be wanting, they must all rank among the companions. This, I apprehend, may be granted, without the supposition that they are all upon a level and equally guilty. There may be considerable difference, and even

superior excellence, and yet rank among the companions. Yea, many among these, may be distinguished with very liberal endowments of grace,—high degrees of communion with God,—and well ascertained prospects of eternal felicity, who, notwithstanding, are exceedingly defective in duty to him whom their soul loveth.*

* Note B.

* As it is of consequence in the present essay, to distinguish between the companions and the lawful ministers of Christ, the following passages, being exceedingly appropriate, are here worthy of quotation: “It is necessary that we must acknowledge them ministers of Christ, and his ambassadors, clothed with his commission, from whom we receive the ordinances of the gospel: for otherwise they must be looked upon as thieves, robbers, usurpers, and strangers, whom Christ’s sheep will not, nay must not hear. John x. 1, 5. And how shall they preach; or be heard, except they be sent? Rom. x. 15. For such whom we know may not lawfully preach, we cannot lawfully hear. Those from whom we may receive the mysteries of God, we must account ministers of Christ, and ambassadors for Christ, standing in his stead, beseeching us to be reconciled to God. Hence such as we doubt to acknowledge ministers of Christ, clothed with his commission, them we cannot hear without sin.”—*Hind Let Loose*, p. 273.

It is by no means meant to be insinuated, that there are no real Christians among other denominations than that to which the writer belongs; nor is it at all thought, that the doctrines of salvation by Christ, are not taught by the ministers of other churches. These God, in his holy sovereignty, may bless to the objects of his love, even in corrupt communities. It cannot, then, be said (as is basely alleged) that we allow none to be saved but those of our own connexion. As there are tares among wheat, there are also lilies among thorns. But the precise subject of discussion is, whether it be lawful for Christians, who have embraced the principles of the covenanted reformation, to countenance official administrations in communities where these principles are either avowedly opposed, or treated with silence and neglect. A proof of the negative is attempted in the following sheets.

PART I.

CONTAINING CONSIDERATIONS, OR ARGUMENTS, WHICH MILITATE AGAINST LATITUDINARIAN PRINCIPLES IN CHURCH COMMUNION; AND WHICH MAY BE REGARDED AS REASONS WHY THE CHURCH IS AVERSE TO TURN ASIDE AFTER THE COMPANIONS.

I. *The act of doing so leads to a violation of that unity, which ought carefully to be maintained in the church of Christ.*

As the church is “but one,” and designed *thy flock* in opposition to the *flocks of the companions*, unity must be regarded as one of her distinguishing characters. The practice opposed has a direct tendency to destroy this, by encouraging and increasing these flocks, in the multiplication of which, the church is already grievously rent. Saith an apostle: “Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”*—And, “Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.”†—“Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.”‡

These, and similar passages, show, that “unity in sentiment and design is absolutely necessary to the purity of the gospel church, and by a multitude of evidences it appears to have been the *great object* of the apostles, and primitive saints, in their church-fellowship.” This sentiment obtains ample support and illustration from the following appropriate passage, quoted from a paper on restricted communion.

“Now the first thing that determined me to abstain from occasional communion, was my abhorrence of divi-

* Rom. xvi. 17.

† 1 Cor. i. 10.

‡ Phil. i. 27.

sions in the Christian church. I find by reading the Scriptures she should be one. There is one body, one spirit, one faith, one Lord, one baptism; and we are called to keep the *unity* of the spirit in the bond of peace. We are directed also to *strive* for the faith of the gospel, by standing fast in one spirit and with one mind. The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of unity; and as a proof of this, our Redeemer, in his intercessory prayer,* speaks of unity as a mark of the disciples that belong to him. But at the present moment, this character of the Christian church seems to be, in a great measure, forgotten in all Protestant countries. On the most frivolous accounts, and often in a rash manner and with a vindictive spirit, a separate ministry is called in, a new place of worship is built, a different communion table is spread, and a new plan of church order and government is formed. At the present moment there seems to be no end of multiplying religious sects, and mournful are the consequences that flow from this custom. The lukewarm and the ignorant are indignant at the endless quarrels that prevail among those who make high pretensions to zeal; and they think themselves justified in that settled contempt they shew for sacred things. The influence of a gospel-ministry is decreasing every day, and there is some danger that these endless factions, which rage in the church, may discourage men of learning, piety, and of a candid and peaceable disposition, from coming forward to the ministry, as they feel their labours cramped by unwarrantable contentions. And a third evil that flows from them is, itching ears. A love of novelty, a spurning at any thing like restraint by Christian discipline, and a disposition to evil speaking, rapidly increase. All these things are opposite to the Christian temper.—

Now, one thing that prevents unity in the church, and that encourages division in her, and all the ill fruits which follow it, is the practice of countenancing every new scheme of religion that is set on foot. If a restless individual bring forward this with apparent piety, and a

* John xvii.

fervent zeal, however wrong this scheme may be, the multitude for a time flock to his ministrations, without taking time to examine them by the Scriptures, and the cry is raised, Lo, here is Christ, and lo, he is there! The countenance he gets from the fickle multitude strengthens his hands. He brings forth this as a proof that he has the presence of God with him; and if he had any doubts at the outset of his scheme about its goodness, every new proselyte he makes tends to dispel his doubts, and confirm him in the belief he is right. Now, the course of church-fellowship which I follow has a great tendency to counteract the plans of restless and enthusiastic men that rise up from time to time, and divide the church. If all would act as I do, though it would not hinder division from appearing, yet it would cause it to have little bad effect; it would waste away for the want of encouragement.”*—“This sort of communion is inconsistent with stedfastness in the maintenance of a Christian profession, and with the character of a witness for the present truth; it is equally inconsistent with that *uniformity* in the matters of religion which is expected of all those who are united together in the profession of the same faith; and accordingly all those who are chargeable with it are guilty of schism in the body.”†—“I take *schism* to be a factious and disorderly disjoining and breaking off from a constitute church, into which persons were formerly joined; and taking separate courses at their own hand, without any respect to the peace, or order of the church. If without any regard to this, we turn aside by the flocks of Christ’s companions, we commit schism, a great sin.”‡

It is objected that to prevent occasional hearing is to maintain difference among the various communions of professed Christians; for the practice opposed has a tendency to promote unity: but it has not, for it has no tendency to reclaim them; and unity in profession, without unity in

* Christ. Mag. for 1809, p. 254.
on Occasional Communion, p. 24.
on Occasional Communion, p. 276. See also Dodwell on Occasional Communion, pp. 5, 6.

† Rev. Mr Culbertsen
‡ Shield’s Letter in Renwick’s Collec. p. 276.

faith, could neither be beneficial nor of long continuance. The futility of this sentiment is well shown by a judicious American writer upon the subject, "Occasional hearers," says he, "contribute no more to true peace between opposite church communions, than whisperers and tale-bearers do to the reconciliation of two persons at variance. In both cases they seldom or never fail to imbitter the parties against one another by their anecdotes and misrepresentations. There will be no genuine healing of breaches, till churches be brought to an humbling sense of their errors and defections, and to a sincere, unanimous and particular acknowledgment of the various articles of divine truth, which they have injured, either by denying or refusing to own. In order to this healing, churches and their members must be brought under such deep concern to attain the true knowledge, and to walk in a stedfast adherence to it, as will cure them of the levity of occasional hearing," &c.*

II. *To turn aside after the companions, by attending their official administrations, is to encourage them in their corrupt evil courses.*

By our separate profession we declare our belief that they are wrong; but our countenancing them, instead of reclaiming them in the smallest degree, has the most direct tendency to strengthen the hands of evil doers. And, is it not sin to be accessory to the sin of others? But you will say, What sin in hearing the word of God preached?—But by whom? Are they not the companions, who have already been described as chargeable with propagating error, or of concealing truth? And is it not evil to attend the administrations of any such? Countenancing erroneous teachers, or praying for their success, is recognizing them as the ambassadors of Christ, and saying amen to the errors, with which they are chargeable. It must be a great curse to have shepherds that

* Anderson, of America, in his excellent Sermon on the sin and danger of countenancing erroneous teachers, pp. 50—53.

cause their flocks to err: for blind guides will unavoidably lead their blind followers into the ditch of error, profanity, and final ruin. They are injurious to their flocks, not only by erroneous doctrine, but by pernicious example. It is a maxim proved by long experience, that *Example has more influence than precept*. There is another of similar import and equally true; *Like priest like people*. When teachers themselves symbolize so much with the times as to countenance fashionable vices, cease to be examples to their flocks in personal and family religion, become partial in Sabbath sanctification, by paying social visits, perusing public newspapers, indulging worldly conversation, attending funerals, dishonouring it by the idolatrous designation of *Sunday*, &c. all contrary to Isaiah lviii. 13, it cannot be matter of surprise if in these and similar respects, their deluded votaries be their servile imitators. Thus, instead of being ensamples to the flocks over which they are overseers, they contribute to their sin and misery. The injury that the companions do the church by error, example, neglect of warning, &c. seems to be the very ground of complaint: "They made me the keeper of the vineyards;"* which design their erroneous systems of worship propagated under the notion of true religion. Their close connexion, *mother's children*, renders them capable of more injury than open enemies; as a man's greatest enemies are they of his own house. These are the false brethren, of whom an apostle most complains,—they are as wolves among lambs, and as little foxes that spoil the tender vines. "As we would not partake of their judgment, in countenancing their administration of ordinances, so we should keep ourselves free from all participation of their sin; for we must not be partakers with any in sin. And not only ministers in ordaining, but people in hearing may be in hazard of partaking of some men's sins, who enter into the ministry, and if we cannot hear them, without partaking of their sins, we must not hear them.†

"It is a self-contradiction to separate from a church

on account of her corruptions and yet countenance her ministers in their public services; and has a direct tendency to harden them in their evil courses." Persons of such a description we may not be able to reclaim, nor can our voice of reproof and warning reach their ear. The least testimony, then, of disapprobation that we can give, is to discountenance their administrations.*

It may farther be observed here, that while occasional hearing is practised and defended, sacramental communion, on the same principle, is rarely or never sought: as if an important difference existed between the one and the other. If a public character be possessed of sufficient qualification, in respect of talent, profession, conduct, and official appointment, to induce us to hear him, why not receive from him the seals of the covenant also? Hearing is an act of worship much more solemn than, perhaps, many are aware of. Very remarkable upon this subject are the words of the Centurion of the Italian band: "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."† We behove to be satisfied, as Cornelius was, that the person whom we hear is commissioned from God;—and that what he delivers has his command. In the belief of this we are to receive what is spoken; not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God. Through the divine ordinances, in this way, he continues to speak to us, as it were from heaven. And because in hearing, "we are before God," we are required to keep our foot with all diligence in the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools, who consider not that they do evil.‡ Without such considerations, there can be no hearing in faith. If these observations be admitted, the difference between hearing and communicating, as to administrators, entirely evanishes.||

* Note C.

† Acts x. 33.

‡ Eccl. v. 1.

|| Note D.

III. *To turn aside after the flocks of the companions is in opposition to the injunction in the following verse: "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock."*

Obedience to this precept all will acknowledge to be duty: but that these companions are not doing so is evident from the aversion which the church here expresses at turning aside after them. The very circumstance of being directed to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, is evidence sufficient that these companions are not doing so.

These footsteps, I apprehend, are just the attainments of the church in former times, in respect of greater conformity to Scripture in doctrine and practice. These are left on record for our imitation; and the divine command with relation to them is,—“Whereunto we have already attained let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing,—that which ye have already hold fast till I come,—hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown,—be followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises,” &c. To assist in distinguishing between sin and duty, truth and error, and to distinguish the flock of Christ from those of his companions, it has been the practice of the church to retain and bring to view in her subordinate standards the attainments of former times. The propriety of her doing this is well shown in the following quotation: “Upon this,” viz. the word of God, “the church is founded, and upon this she professes to be regulated. About the meaning of this rule, however, there may be, and often really are, very different sentiments. In order, therefore, to ascertain their harmony in the truth, the church is under the necessity of expressing her own views of the word of God, and fixing the sense in which she receives it, upon the controverted doctrines, in so many distinct propositions as subordinate regulations for the society. The necessity of thus forming a distinct, though not opposite system of regulations, arises not from any defect in the *divine* rule, but from the interposition and contrariety of human apprehension concerning it. And nothing can be more

weak and contemptible in point of argument, than to represent this as equivalent to the making of our own will or judgment our rule and standard, and not the authority of God."*

The Westminster Confession of Faith is partially acknowledged as the subordinate standard in all churches that bear the Presbyterian name, while, however, important parts of the same compilation are entirely omitted; as the Covenants, considered as national transactions. This is done even by some who once regarded the rejection of the covenanted uniformity of Scotland, a sufficient ground for secession from the National Church. But these now reject the whole civil part of the reformation, and deny the moral obligation of former deeds on succeeding generations.† This is the more remarkable, that the obligation of civil transactions is never once called in question.‡

As these covenants constitute a fundamental article of the reformation, the rejection of them necessarily includes a rejection of it. In vain shall any pretend to follow the footsteps of the flock, while they reject the most distinguishing articles of their creed, and the most approved part of their conduct. A profession of respect to their memory, and of adherence to their example, with the exception of these articles, is like a Unitarian professing faith in the Christian system. Is it asked, Why bring so frequently to view the leaders of the church in a former century?—Because they were most distinguished for their fidelity in the ways of God; most highly honoured as instruments for advancing the interests of his kingdom; and

* Note E.

† It was an erroneous assertion, and most unbecoming an Associate Presbyterian; that predecessors could in no respect bind their posterity; and that the latter had no concern in the deeds of the former. With some shadow of consistency might an Independent Baptist say so, who professedly acts upon this principle; but from a Presbyterian, who, in respect of baptism, is daily acting upon the opposite principle, it is wholly inadmissible.

‡ See the Rev. Messrs Mason, Paxton, and Wylie, on the nature and obligation of public covenants; and Thomson's, of Kirkintilloch, Sermon on stedfastness in the faith, from 1 Cor. xvi. 13. pp. 37, 38.

in all respects the most perfect patterns of imitation, that history has transmitted to us since apostolic times. This perfection designs only a high degree of superiority to others in the time specified; not that they were already perfect. Their view of hereditary succession to royalty is a prominent indication of that imperfection which is incident to the best in this life.* Their sentiments, however, of the qualifications and duties of Christian magistrates, are truly admirable. It may be presumed, that since Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, the Scripture doctrine upon that subject has never by any been brought to view in such a luminous manner, as by the Assemblies of Glasgow and Westminster, towards the middle of the seventeenth century. They held that magistracy is an ordinance of God, ordained by him for his own glory and his church's good; and of consequence, that those in office, in virtue of their character, ought to defend the first as well as the second table of the law; that the defence of the church in her privileges, belongs equally to the duties of their function, as that of men in the enjoyment of their civil rights. To deny this is to rob the church of a great privilege arising from an "ordinance of God," and to frustrate the precious promises made in her behalf; *viz. that kings shall be her nursing fathers;—kings shall minister unto her, &c.*

Farther; to deny that magistrates, as such, ought to regard the interests of the church, as involved in the duties of their office, is in effect to deny that "Jesus is the Prince of the kings of the earth,—that all dominion shall serve him,—that he is given to be head over all things to the church. In this way the Reformation is betrayed by these *mother's children*, who are unduly lavish, in their approbation of a system, by which, in many parts, that cause is so eminently overthrown. To acknowledge as the ordinance of God,—as ministers of

* The Westminster Divines, as a body, were truly eminent, though sentiments, by no means defensible, were, by individuals of them, entertained on different subjects. Their excellency and imperfections are impartially stated in their well written Biography, publishing at present, by the Rev. Mr Reid of Newton-stewart.

God,—as nursing fathers to the church, those who maintain a character entirely the reverse,—who exercise an antichristian supremacy over the church,—who give toleration to systems of worship even the most erroneous,—and who support the prelatie and popish religion, is not only giving up wholly with the reformation, but in effect pronouncing the reformers themselves erroneous in their sentiments and fanatical in their sufferings.* All of this, however, is perfectly consistent with the character of the *companions* and *mother's children*, who are ever angry with the church in all articles of creed, and in all parts of her conduct in which they do not find it convenient to follow her. This presents a forcible reason why the subordinate standards of the church fall so much into disesteem; viz. because the doctrines which they contain and the duties which they require, are entirely at variance with the views of those who thus oppose them. They are rejected professedly for the restraint which they are alleged to impose upon inquiry and freedom of thought; and to stand in the way of going on to perfection. This, however, is a charge entirely unfounded: for while they are a happy mean of holding fast what we have already attained, and of preventing innovations and novelties, which may, perhaps, be viewed as improvements, but are in reality the very reverse, they impose no restriction in the most diligent search after truth, nor stand the least in the way of progress in knowledge and reformation in either church or state.†

The rejection of the subordinate standards must be a great injury to the flock of Christ; for by these, former footsteps or attainments are brought to view as examples for their imitation.‡ Since it is the character of the true church that she goes forth by these; that is, makes advancement in religion upon the same principles, their acknowledgment will serve as a characteristic to distinguish between Christ's flock and those of his companions: and the rejection of these is reason sufficient why she should not turn aside after them. By this a ready criterion is

* Note F.

† Note G.

‡ Note H.

always at hand by which to judge of parties—Are they going forth by the footsteps of the flock?*

IV. *Turning aside after the flocks of the companions is inconsistent with that stedfastness which is necessarily required in a religious profession.*

It was the character of early Christians that they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. And it is the express command of Scripture to be stedfast and immoveable, and to hold fast our profession without wavering,—Be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive,†—Be not carried about with diverse and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace,—And beware lest, being led away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness.‡ And it is said of Christ's flock, that a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him, “for they know not the voice of strangers.”|| These passages unite in requiring stedfastness in religion, and of consequence forcibly forbid turning aside after the companions.

This practice, moreover, tends to encourage sectarianism, which is ever found injurious to the interests of real religion. But it is something more,—it is a step towards apostacy. This, however, is strenuously denied, by those who advocate the cause of occasional hearing. It is only in following the footsteps of the flock that true religion can be maintained; but turning aside is a deviation from the path of duty; and every deviation is a step towards apostacy. Of apostacy there are various steps; the last of which may be regarded a total relinquishment of a

* Note I.

† On this passage, a writer, (treating of the same subject) hath the following words: “Shew not when such a temptation occurs, that you are weak in knowledge, weak in faith, and wavering in judgment, by being caught, like children, with every thing that is new.”

‡ Acts ii. 42. 1 Cor. xv. 58. Eph. iv. 14. Heb. iii. 14. and x. 23. 2 Pet. iii. 17. || John x. 5.

religious profession; the criminality and dismal consequences of which are by all admitted. But to this abyss of profligacy, there are various steps. None become final apostates instantaneously. A primary step towards the deprecated ultimate, is that of considering stedfastness in religion a matter of indifference; the next will be that of turning aside occasionally after the flocks of the companions, which seems to be the very thing deprecated in the passage under consideration, and not final apostacy. Why, as if she had said, should I even seem to apostatize, by turning aside from Christ's flock after those of his companions?

All that is pleaded for is only occasionally, on particular occurrences, without any design of abandoning present connexion. But if occasionally, why not more frequently? and why not always? and so why separate at all? "I can perceive no proper ground," says a writer upon the subject, "for the idea of occasional communion. A man ought never to separate from a church, with which he can conscientiously hold communion. If I can hold communion with a church to-day, why not to-morrow? If I do not sin in this instance to-day, as little can I do so to-morrow. The difference of time can make no difference as to the morality of the action."* The same grounds that occasioned former separation still exist, and militate equally against occasional as constant communion.

One material cause of unstedfastness in profession, and even of desertion, is lax admission, which is no less injurious to the applicant himself, than to the community of which he becomes a member. In making a profession, principles ought carefully to be examined and approved of; not only those principles which that church holds in common with other churches, but those in which she differs from all others. These are chiefly the terms of admission to that distinct community. Every other mode of procedure is highly inconsistent; it is only acting on implicit faith; which is scarcely ever done in matters of common life. Without such examination, one can give

* Christ. Mag. for 1798. p. 544.

no satisfactory reason for his profession. This ought to be done equally in the profession in which he is brought up, as in the prospect of a distinct association; otherwise he never can in faith say, *Thus saith the Lord.** And the standard of examination is the law and the testimony. It is by these we are to prove all things: whatever principles differ from these are destitute of the truth, and to be rejected as the invention of men. "If I act like one privileged with reason and divine revelation," saith one, "I must consider it my duty to examine matters as impartially as I am able by the unerring rule, and whatever party I am convinced keeps nearest to the word of God, there my conscience binds me to connect myself, with an obligation far superior to empty name, or mere designation. It were much to be wished that young people, particularly, would consider this, when about to fix their religious connexion; and not suffer themselves to be imposed upon by empty sound. I would advise my young friends to consider, that the empty name of *Church, Secession* and *Relief, &c.* cannot bind their conscience: it is their duty to examine matters by the unerring rule, and whatever denomination they are convinced, in their judgment, comes nighest the divine rule, there they ought to fix their connexion."†

Instead of due pains in examining principles, a profession is often made from no higher motive than that of its being the religion of a friend or acquaintance, or some other circumstance of mere convenience. Stedfastness in such cases is not to be expected. A profession of religion without a knowledge of its principles is like a house founded on the sand, which must necessarily give way, when the storms of temptation and trial arise.‡

Fluctuation in religion indictates that conscience has been little exercised in its assumption, and as little in its relinquishment. With many, change in profession is esteemed a matter of as small importance, and is done with as much facility as they would the place of residence; and,

* Note J.

† Walker's Animad. p. 225.

‡ Note K.

perhaps, for the same reasons, merely circumstances of convenience.*

Farther; mutation in religion is not confined merely to practice, but often obtains also in the respective principles of a profession. Articles that stand in the way of accession are readily erased, and others less offensive are substituted in their place: the change has the designed effect. It is, with a witness, *becoming all things to all men, that by all means they may gain some!*

To be of a religion different from that designed the establishment is, by some, reckoned highly ungentle; while others join associations, whose religion, which differs from that of the state more in appearance than in reality, has acquired high reputation from eminent members of former times; whose constitutional name they are more rigid to retain than their faith and footsteps, in doctrinal purity or gospel conversation. Distinctive names are continued while the system is materially altered. Were names to be changed along with the system, it might excite suspicion and lead to inquiry; which might be productive of unfavourable consequences.†

V. *Turning aside by the flocks of the companions counteracts a Scriptural dissent, separation, and public testimony, which the faithful followers of Christ have lifted up against them.*

A Scriptural separation is one upon Scriptural principles; as when the constitution or administration of a church, from which the separation is made, is contrary to Scripture. It is not personal offence, nor circumstances of inconvenience, that will constitute a Scriptural separation. Whatever evils may attach to the church, every such separation can be viewed in no other light than that of schism or desertion. Separation from a community al-

* , Note L.

† This resembles the ingenious scheme of a London Bookseller, who paid to his predecessor, of long continuance and reputation, a considerable sum to allow his name to remain: the design is obvious.

ways supposes evils, on account of which association is no longer warrantable. Is it not, then, a direct inconsistency again to associate there, while former grounds of separation still continue? The same remarks will apply in regard of a public testimony lifted up against them. Separation itself is a part of testimony-bearing against a corrupt community; for when means of reforming them become unavailing, the Scripture call then is, "Come out from among them, and be separate, touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." A testimony is still more explicit in a judicial exposure of the errors with which they are respectively chargeable. Having subscribed this testimony by explicit assent, and engaged in its support, by countenancing those against whom it is directed, are you not acting a part very inconsistent; in as much as your present conduct is condemnatory of your former separation,—is an approbation of those against whom you have testified as the companions of Christ,—and is, for the time, a relinquishment of the testimony to which you have professed adherence?* and contrary to the divine command, "Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them."† But as this idea is well illustrated by the author last quoted, his observations may supply the place of any additional remarks by me. I only observe, as matter of regret, that that fidelity, in point of testimony-bearing, which he so ably defends;—that regularity, which he so warmly inculcates, are not shown in the party to which he belongs. The reasoning employed, nevertheless, forcibly shows the impropriety of the professed followers of the Redeemer's flock turning aside after those of his companions. "It is, in a particular manner, the concern of these men to bear testimony, in behalf of those truths which are most keenly opposed, and in greatest danger of being lost:—which truths have been emphatically styled *The present truth*, and *The word of Christ's patience*; yea, *Christ's name*."‡—Seceders are witnesses for the present

* Saith one, "It is destructive of all faithful testimony-bearing, as nothing can be more absurd than to testify against a church on account of unfaithfulness, and yet join with that very church in her public acts of worship." † Jer. xv. 19. ‡ Rev. iii. 8.

truth. The testimony of their church is lifted up in behalf of this, and in opposition to prevailing errors and corruptions. They have avowed their attachment to this testimony in the face of the sun, by publishing it, to be known and read of all men; and they cannot, in a consistency with the truth and dignity of that character which every honest Seceder is emulous to maintain, make any deposition which would contradict a single article of that testimony which they have espoused. Did they do otherwise, they would have no claim to the high character of being faithful. The witness who can swear to, and forswear the same thing, has no title whatever to the reputation of an honest man; and that person has as little claim to the character of being faithful for God, who can appear with Christ's Father's name upon his forehead to-day, and on the morrow can conceal it as in the hollow of his hand, or flatly deny it by an opposite profession.

In some of those communions with which the Secession church is surrounded, *the word of Christ's patience* is accounted as a thing of nought. In others it is furiously opposed; and in all of them there are some things which Seceders have declared they are bound, from a regard to truth and duty, to oppose. How, then, could any Seceder be consistent with himself did he join in these communions? In so far as the profession of any of these churches keeps the word of Christ's patience out of view, a Seceder, joining in that communion, would forfeit his claim to the title of a witness for it; and in as far as any of them are opposing the truth, and are aiding the common enemy in his warfare against it, a Seceder in joining with such would forfeit his claim to honesty and integrity in the matters of God. In short, every occasional visit paid by him to these communions would not only rob him of his character, as a witness for the present truth, but would be a practical declaration, that his testimony in other matters was not to be depended on; seeing in those articles where uniformity in the deposition is most to be regarded and expected, he would occasionally contradict all that he had asserted before. His character, therefore, as a witness for the present truth, requires that he shun the communion of

those churches where this article is counted as a thing of nought, and especially the communion of those who trample it under foot."*

VI. *The practice of turning aside after the companions is offensive to Christian brethren, who are endeavouring conscientiously to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and whose edification we are bound by the closest ties to promote.*

Supposing for a moment that the point in dispute were a matter of indifference, as it is generally imagined, then the decision of an apostle is in our favour: for what is a matter of indifference to one must be yielded to another, who holds the same thing to be a matter of conscience. It was a matter of indifference with the apostle to eat flesh, that had been in the idol's temple, but this became offensive to the conscience of weak brethren, who were imboldened to eat from mere example without knowledge. The apostle saw that by thus using his Christian liberty he contributed to the destruction of those for whom Christ died: but rather than offend even a weak brother he would eat no flesh while he lived. Agreeably to which he says, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one please his neighbour for his good to edification."† Christ shows the great criminality of offending any that belonged to him: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."‡ The supposition that the point under consideration is a matter of indifference, for sake of illustration, is no concession that it is so. The remarks already made evince the contrary. The practice is also incompatible with the apostle's injunction: *Let all things be done unto edifying.* It is evident that such instead of pleasing their neighbour,

* Culb. pp. 17—20. Note M.

† Rom. xv. 1, 2.

‡ Mat. xviii. 6.

by promoting his good and edification, act a part entirely the reverse. They would of consequence be much more consistent entirely to abandon present connexion, and associate with those whose ministrations they wish to enjoy. In doing so they would be much less injurious to their religious connexions. Not venturing to take the same liberty in following their example, but wishing to follow the footsteps of the flock, to contend for the whole faith, and to hold fast what they have already attained, they are reproached as bigots, contracted in their ideas, illiberal in their sentiments, and pretending to more strictness than those of superior discernment. Thus they put a stumbling-block and an occasion to fall in their brother's way.* But rather than give offence in this way, those devoted to the Redeemer's interests will not please themselves in turning aside after the companions.†

VII. *The practice here opposed is not calculated to promote practical and experimental religion.*

Were it otherwise, then it might reasonably be expected that those, who are most frequent in the practice, were the most prosperous Christians. But is this really the case? Are they the most intelligent Christians,—most tender of the Sabbath,—most regular in personal and family religion? Than which the very reverse is found most frequently to take place. Then, it can be no argument that the practice is subservient to the interests of religion. Various reasons may be assigned for this: one is, opposition of views; as in nature contraries destroy one another. It is not supposable that truths can be deeply impressed upon

* “This is properly, in the Scripture sense, giving offence to our brethren: for giving them offence, is not, as is commonly imagined, displeasing them, but rather being any way an occasion of their falling into sin. Besides, it is breaking the bonds of church communion, in vexing the hearts of our brethren, who rightly judge occasional hearing to be a sin, and inconsistent with our profession of Christ's name.”—*Anderson, of America, on the sin and danger of countenancing erroneous teachers: A Sermon on Prov. xix. 27. p. 35.*

† Note N.

the mind, that are keenly opposed by an eloquent or favourite speaker. If the speaker be consistent with himself, he must view your principles to be wrong, and he may have occasion to reprobate them in your own hearing.* If really wrong, it is proper; but in the whole of this tract it is taken for granted that your principles are right,—that you are following the footsteps of Christ's flock,—and that the persons opposed rank among the companions. And “it is surely a plain dictate of common sense, that nothing can promote real religion, which is unscriptural. No doctrine, nor religious service, can be really beneficial which is not warranted by the word of God.”

The consideration also of not being immediately connected, powerfully operates to prevent even salutary discourses from having the designed effect. Farther; fluctuation must be regarded a considerable obstruction in the way of benefit from ordinances. According to the proverb, “A rolling stone gathers no fog,” so frequent changes in religion materially prevent the advantages which stedfastness is calculated to afford. The fluctuating Christian remains in a great measure unfruitful, like the tree undergoing frequent transplantation; while the Christian who stedfastly adheres to his profession,—acts a

* “The ministry of any church must be supposed to be agreeable to their declared principles, and agreeable to the course they are in; and therefore the best in corrupt churches at this time must vindicate their own conduct, and their continuance where they are, on that very scheme of latitudinarian opinions, which it is the design of that testimony we maintain to oppose. If what we profess is right, the instruction of such men is manifestly calculated to make us err from it. The tendency of their ministry will ever be to draw us into the way they choose to walk themselves. If the ministry of such men has drawn the most of their ordinary hearers astray, as to their filling them with prejudices at any proper testimony against the common backsliding and indifference of this generation; will not occasional hearing of them by degrees produce the same effect?”—*Act of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylv. Against Occasional Hearing*, p. 8. “As I believe my principles to be scriptural, I consider it my duty to avow them; and I durst not seem to give up with them, no, not for an hour. But were I to countenance the ministers of others who are running them down, every thinking person must consider me as acting the part of the hypocrite.” *Christ. Mag.*

constant part,—will advance in religion, like the growing tree planted by the water courses. It has been justly remarked, that stedfast Christians are observed to be much more prosperous in religion, even where ordinances are rarely obtained, than others of latitudinarian practice, who have the most plentiful dispensation of divine ordinances. This receives illustration from a circumstance of frequent occurrence in common life; *viz.* versatility in trade and commerce, which is ever found to be highly disadvantageous. A person engaging in various pursuits, fluctuating from one employment to another, seldom or never succeeds like one pursuing a uniform line of conduct. A conviction of this is so universal and deeply impressed, that every precaution is employed to be stedfast and regular in the affairs of civil life. It is but reasonable to expect that the interests of religion should be promoted by a similar train of conduct. But another and more important reason is assigned why the practice fails of the designed effect; *viz.* the *want* of the Divine blessing. An experienced father like Paul, and an eloquent orator like Apollos, may preach, even with the utmost sublimity and cogency of argument, but it is the Divine blessing alone that can give the increase. The church was well aware that only with Christ's own flock his presence was to be enjoyed: for he hath said, "Lo, I am with *you* always." And for the enjoyment of his presence, she earnestly desires to be directed to the place where his flock fed and rested at noon; knowing that this was not to be expected with the flocks of the companions.

The Divine blessing is now little enjoyed in ordinances; because it is little sought. The eloquence of the speaker, or some other adventitious circumstance, is regarded sufficient reason for associating with a community, though the constitution be corrupt, and the administration impure. But no circumstance of eloquence, popularity, number, or patronage, will satisfy the believing spouse without Christ himself: so she goes through the streets of the city in quest of her Beloved, and says to the watchmen, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth; if ye find my Beloved, tell him that I am sick of love," &c.

It is true, without the Divine blessing the ear may be gratified, affections may be excited, and the understanding may be informed, while no real change is produced in the heart or conversation. I would not dispute that members of exceptionable communities may obtain the sanctified use of ordinances therein dispensed, while this is justly withheld from those who turn aside to gratify an itching ear. Were it here to be objected, that instances could be mentioned of real benefit being obtained in the case supposed, I would answer; that acts of Divine sovereignty are not the rule of human conduct. Pure doctrines may be preached by the most unqualified persons, and these may be rendered beneficial to the subjects of divine grace in corrupt communities. These observations may be realized in a Romish or a prelatie church, which, however, could certainly be no argument to become a member of these communities. We find persons may prophesy, cast out devils, and do many wonderful works in the name of Christ, and yet be entire strangers unto him.* Without regarding acts of Divine sovereignty, or the engaging eloquence of speakers, or the popularity of parties, we must exercise our own understandings, and bring the principles and practice of different parties to the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them.†

VIII *The practice of turning asside is contrary to the express commands and declarations of Scripture: and to none more than that under more immediate consideration: "Why should I be as one that turneth asside by the flocks of thy companions?"*

The language is expressive of strong aversion against her doing so; which, again, as it indicates high impropriety, amounts to a strict prohibition. She is well aware that to turn aside must be at the expense of forsaking her

* Mat. vii. 22.

† Note O.

Beloved, and incurring his displeasure by associating with his rivals, his pretended companions.

So direct and explicit is this passage against the evil complained of, that it were of itself a sufficient prohibition, though there were no other. But there are others which clearly support the same sentiment; says Christ, "*Take heed what ye hear.*"* The words require that they take heed both what persons and what doctrines they hear. If to hear any indiscriminately be a matter of indifference, the prohibition is unnecessary. The character and qualifications of gospel ministers are clearly described in Scripture: the caution imports that where these are wanting, *there* we are not to hear; otherwise the words can have no meaning. "The plain import of the injunction is, we are to hear only evangelical ministers, who preach evangelical doctrine." Again; "Be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."† "Be not carried about with diverse and strange doctrines."‡ These passages, without comment, are explicitly at variance with the practice of turning aside after the companions; who are the very persons designed in the verses.

"Withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly."|| They may be brethren, not only by profession, as the "mother's children," but in reality, being partakers of divine grace, yet to be separated from on account of disorderly walking. And unquestionably with this, those are chargeable, however gracious as to state, who go not forth by the footsteps of the flock, but rank among the companions. Upon the same principle that we are to withdraw from an individual for disorderly walking, we must also withdraw from a disorderly church. "Here we are evidently enjoined to withdraw from *every brother* that walketh disorderly; and, how much more forcible the obligation lying on us by this Divine command, to withdraw from a *church*, when the majority both of her

* Mark iv. 24.

† Eph. iv. 14.

‡ Heb. xiii. 9.

|| 2 Thess. iii. 6.

office bearers and members are become erroneous and disorderly, in their faith, their worship, discipline, or government?"*

“ Let them return unto thee ; but return not thou unto them.”† To return unto them is to turn aside after the companions ; but for them to return unto thee, is to return to their duty, and to go forth by the footsteps of the flock.

“ Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.”‡ This injunction evidently amounts to an express prohibition not to attend ; for if we must cease to *hear*, we must also cease even outward attendance. A good reason is assigned for this : “ For the leaders of this people cause them to err ; and they that are led of them are destroyed.”|| “ With respect to our public deportment, we are to withdraw from those church communions whose constitutions are founded on error and defection from the truth, and whose public administrations are thereto subservient.”§

“ Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned ; and avoid them.”¶ The practice of turning aside, it has already been observed, necessarily gives offence ; and offence as necessarily leads to divisions : so the persons chargeable with these evils are here strictly reprov'd. It is the character of the prudent man, that he foreseeth the evil and escapeth. A view of the pernicious consequences, mentioned in the verse, will induce every religious and considerate person, to avoid the evil

* *Walker's Animad.* p. 227.

On this passage see appropriate remarks in the *Christ. Mag.* for 1809. pp. 432, 433. And Mr Culbertson's *Vindication*, pp. 34, 35 ; where he observes on the 14th verse (which is “ If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”) that if it be the duty of a church to exclude from her communion, a disorderly and disobedient individual, it is equally the duty of individuals to withdraw from disorderly churches, and that until they be ashamed of their apostacy, and evidence a disposition to reform what is amiss in them.”

† Jer. xv. 19.

‡ Prov. xix. 27.

|| Isa. ix. 16.

§ Rev. Mr Anderson's, of America, excellent Sermon on the words, p. 23.

¶ Rom. xvi. 17.

practices that become their unavoidable cause. Those sectaries which are established upon an unscriptural basis, (as must be the case with the companions) occasion much division in the church. Although this evil, as such, is carefully to be avoided, it does not in the least prohibit secession from corrupt communities: when means employed to reclaim them become entirely unavailing, then separation becomes an imperious duty. Saith one on the passage: "Nothing is plainer than that they who teach such doctrine, and justify such corruptions, as render a state of separation necessary, are causing divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and therefore to be avoided; that is, ~~there~~ public administrations are not to be countenanced by us, lest we be chargeable with countenancing their corrupt schemes, whereby they cause divisions and offences."* This charge is undoubtedly applicable to all who are not going forth by the footsteps of the flock, who are not contending for the present truth against prevailing error, nor holding fast what they have already attained. Saith another: "We cannot join with such as thereupon *cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which we have learned*; either by maintaining the causes of these divisions, or casting fuel on the fire, by reproaching the faithful; or by good words and fair speeches deceiving the hearts of the simple."† This is frequently verified by the flattering address, and prepossessing manner, employed by many public characters, to insinuate themselves into the favour of those whom they wish to proselyte to their party. In this way they often succeed, when they could not by more judicious means; as that of solid argument,—an exhibition of superior principles,—and administration more conformable to Scripture precept and example: thus being crafty they take them with guile.

This passage, with others against the practice here opposed, is well illustrated and applied in Mr Culbertson's

* Anderson, p. 26.

† Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Shield's Letter upon the subject, in Renwick's Collection, p. 287.

Vindication, &c. pp. 34—39, to which I shall allow a reference to supply the place of any farther illustration.

“ Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”* By secession we profess a belief that those from whom we separate either omit articles of faith, for which we are enjoined to contend, or hold articles inconsistent with the faith once delivered unto the saints. In either way they are wrong; and in turning aside after them, instead of contending for, or holding fast the faith, we are countenancing and encouraging them in the opposition which they make to it. But to this it will be objected:—“ They preach the doctrines of grace and salvation.” It is not uncommon that doctrines, which immediately concern our salvation, are clearly taught and pressed upon the auditory, while others of equal importance are rarely noticed, and even by many reckoned a matter of little moment whether they be believed or not. Of this sort are; Christ’s headship of the church,—his dominion over all things, as mediator,—the form of church-government,—the duties of civil rulers relative to religion and the church, &c. One class of doctrines is called *essential*, and the other *circumstantial*: an erroneous distinction which leads to pernicious and disorderly consequences.†

* Jude 3.

† Note P.

PART II.

CONTAINING ANSWERS TO SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS, WHICH HAVE BEEN STATED IN OPPOSITION TO THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT IN THE FOREGOING PAGES.

I. *There can be no harm in hearing a good sermon any where.*

This is, perhaps, of all objections the most popular: in answering which, it may be observed, that a discourse of itself, however good, can be of no real benefit, without the Divine blessing; which, however, we have no reason to expect in the case supposed. Any, even the most erroneous, may make an unexceptionable discourse upon a subject, in which their peculiar errors are not concerned. An Arminian, a Unitarian, a Popish or Episcopalian priest, could make an unexceptionable discourse on moral honesty, brotherly love, filial and parental duty, &c. But does the bare circumstance, that a discourse is good and unexceptionable in itself, authorise us to countenance persons, who in other respects we know are erroneous, and hold sentiments utterly inconsistent with the scheme of the gospel? Persons may be wolves in sheep's clothing, and yet preach a good sermon.* But, says the apostle,† we are not to bid such God speed, lest we be partakers of his evil deeds.‡ But can any thing do this more than to countenance them in their administrations? As in common life, to be found among enemies is always construed

* Mat. vii. 22.

† 2 John 10, 11.

‡ "According to what is here enjoined us by the apostle, we are not to receive erroneous teachers into our houses, nor bid them God speed; much less, are we to hold ministerial and Christian communion and fellowship with them, for this is to countenance and bid them God speed with a witness. And, if we are not to bid a corrupt church God speed, we are certainly to separate from her, after every scriptural and orderly method of reclaiming her has been attempted in vain, whether she cast us out of her communion or not." *Walker's Animad.* p. 228.

into the circumstance of giving them encouragement and supporting their interest.

Although the preacher were wholly unexceptionable, both as to doctrine and to practice, yet as he ranks among the companions and is one with them, he becomes chargeable with the evils of the community of which he is a member. He has not acted the dutiful part of coming out from among them. He must of consequence partake of their sins, and is in danger of receiving of their plagues. Good preaching, as it is called,* is almost all that is sought; hence many embrace a profession from no higher consideration than the eloquence of an engaging speaker. Whatever preference is due to superior talent in the same profession, this is a low and unworthy motive in the choice of a profession; the principles of which ought primarily to be examined, and to regulate our conduct; and no recommendatory qualifications of particular members. The remark will equally apply in respect of occasional association. It may also be observed, that the reasons which originally led to a separation still exist, and continue equally to militate against turning aside, even but occasionally, after the flocks of the companions.

The observations of the following respectable writers will both farther elucidate the subject, and obviate the objection: "What harm can there be in hearing a good sermon from preachers of other denominations? I answer; none at all, provided that we do not, by hearing such a sermon, fail in the duty which we owe to the preacher and his congregation. In this objection, it is obvious that there is a great fallacy, which every pains is taken to conceal; but if the objection were fairly laid, a child might repel its force. Let us state it in this manner: What harm is there in hearing a sermon delivered by one from whom we have found it our duty to separate

* Good preaching designs faithfulness in all the duties of the ministerial function;—in reproving vice,—warning of danger, &c. as Acts xx. 27: I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. This, however, is not the idea that is generally attached to the expression, but eloquence in the speaker. It is, then, good speaking, and not good preaching, that is designed.

on account of his backsliding from Christ?—To hear in this case, he must either condemn his own separation as groundless, and therefore criminal, or he must affirm, that he has connected himself with a religious body, whose separation from that which he has been countenancing, is perfectly groundless, and consequently highly sinful. Whichever of these sides he takes, the defender of occasional hearing must either condemn himself, or the church to which he belongs.”*—“Is the apostle’s maxim true, that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” surely, then, these ministers, however respectable in their persons or administrations, are *leavened* in the corrupt communion of this national church. Made partakers of other men’s sins, they themselves cannot be pure. And when we go to hear such a minister, we cannot view him merely in his amiable personal character and in the purity of his administrations; but as a member and minister of an incorrigibly corrupt church.”† “These things, no doubt, say you, are very serious: but I cannot think yet, that I hold any communion with these men. O, Sir, do not, under the influence of prejudice, contradict common sense: Are you not in the same church connected together in the same establishment, and in subjection to the very same courts? Don’t your ministers sit in the same judicatories with these very men, and give them the right hand of fellowship? Don’t they deliberate together about the affairs of the same church? exert their mutual influence to preserve her peace? preach in each other’s pulpits, by mutual invitation, as brethren, and, as becometh brethren too, in the *same* church fellowship? Don’t your ministers use all their endeavours with the people of reclaiming parishes, to abide in the church? and for the purposes of *strengthening the hands* of the intruded, unsound brother, preach to them betimes, in order to cool their temper, and keep them from seeking the gospel in its purity out of her communion? You see then, Sir, you are mistaken. If you allow that you are in communion with your own minister, you must allow that you hold communion

* Robertson’s Letters, p. 32.

† Ramsay’s Review, p. 33.

with the rest also.*—“ If we may warrantably attend on the administrations of such ministers occasionally, we may attend on them always, and we may receive the sacrament from them as well as the word, and then separation from them must be unnecessary: and if unnecessary, then unlawful.”† “ It is an ignorant as well as a malicious calumny, to say that our withdrawing from some ministers, for their offensive defections, is a disowning all the ministry of Scotland. Though we do discountenance many of them with sad hearts, for not keeping the word of the Lord’s patience in this hour of temptation, nor adhering to the principles and constitutions of the Church of Scotland, yet this is not a disowning of the ministry, but a refusing to countenance them in their present administrations, till these offences be removed.”‡ “ It is in our day very common language: “ I will hear a good sermon where I can find it: there can be no wrong in this.” Nothing wrong, surely, if hearing sermon be not an act of public worship, in which you countenance the dispensation of ordinances in that church with which you refuse to hold regular communion.—You say, perhaps, that you continue separate from that church, because the majority of her ministers preach corrupt doctrine; and that you hear only those who are sound in the faith. But when you hear such, do you not countenance them in their public character, or as fulfilling their ministry in a church, from which your conscience declares it to be necessary to separate?—When you hear them discharge their office in that church from which, in your judgment, they ought to separate, do you not countenance them in what you account sinful; nay, virtually condemn yourself for the separation you have made? According to your principles with respect to the unity of a church, and diffusive influence of error when tolerated, do you not by hearing them, virtually countenance those very errors and defections, on account of which you have separated?”|| “ Is it possible

* Taylor’s Letters on Liberty, &c. p. 15.
 Sermon, p. 45.

† Anderson’s

‡ Hind Let Loose, p. 268.

|| This sentiment is denied by many; viz. that their occasional attendance upon any party implies an acknowledgment of any pe-

for you, in an act of public worship, to disjoin the individual from the church, to which he adheres? What induced you to leave the pale of that church of which you were formerly a member? It was not because you denied her the character of a church of Christ, or believed that the gospel was not preached by any of her ministers. Was it not in consequence of your being convinced, that as you could not reclaim her from error or corruption, no other way remained for you to avoid being a *partaker of her sin*? How does your conduct agree with the sense in which you understand the apostolical language, *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*? If you believe that those men, although good men, and sound in the great doctrines of Revelation, do not *keep themselves pure*, because they continue in an impure communion; can you keep yourselves pure, while you countenance their public administrations? If you can satisfy me, either that there is no communion in hearing the word, or that the holy Scripture permits this degree of communion with those with whom we cannot join in *breaking bread*, I will cheerfully give up the point in dispute. I can safely affirm, that I do not keep at a distance from others from love to separation. Nothing would give greater joy to my heart than to hold the most intimate fellowship with all who appear to have the image of Christ, notwithstanding differences comparatively of an inferior kind, if I could do it without *selling the truth*, or without sacrificing the honour of my Master, in various respects, to external and public communion with some of my fellow servants.”*

From the above remarks and quotations, it is evident

culiarities or errors attaching to them. But personal presence always implies consent; and is constructively an approbation of their principles. The circumstance that the persons themselves have no design of this, but positively refuse it, does not in the least prevent its being the case. In addition to the above authority in proof of this, we have the following: “Whoever attends on the public ordinances of any particular church, says he approves of the constitution and principles of that church, and that he is one body and one bread with the other members of it.” *Anderson’s Sermon*, p. 37.

* Note Q.

that the expression, *a good sermon*, is but common cant without any warrantable foundation : for all that is generally meant by it, is popularity in the speaker ; which things are in themselves entirely different, and may, and no doubt often do, actually exist apart. It is but a pitiable excuse, that a person, merely by his popularity and eloquence, however distinguished, should induce occasionally to associate with the corrupt community of which he is a member.* His talents, whether natural or gracious, do not in the smallest degree obviate the objections, to which the constitutional principles of his church are liable. If these are to be entirely overlooked, perhaps there are others of the same connexion, who have upon the occasional hearer greater claims for attendance. Though of less engaging address, which of itself can be of small avail, they may possess greater piety and orthodoxy, and on the whole be more adapted to general edification : “ for God hath chosen the weak things of the world, and the things which are despised, to bring to nought the things that are ; for it is not by the excellency of speech, or the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but by the foolishness of faithful preaching, in the powerful demonstration of the Spirit, God is pleased to save them that believe.”

As already observed, more is to be attended to in a discourse, than its perfection in composition, orthodoxy and delivery. It is necessary to take into view also the constitution and administration of the church to which the preacher belongs ; and the manner of his coming into office ; whether by the scriptural call of popular election ; or by the unscriptural law of patronage, which is at the expence of sacrificing a Divine ordinance to anti-christian usurpation. He may be highly exceptionable in these respects, while no blame can otherwise attach to his character or doctrine. And to every quantum of superior excellence possessed by any, whether personal

* The very circumstance of their popularity, on account of which they are attended, is rather an argument against them ; for thereby they induce others to remain in a community, from which they ought, (and might otherwise) on account of corruption, to separate themselves.

or ecclesiastic, we are willing to acknowledge its utmost worth ; but nothing of this kind will vindicate a violation of Scripture precept, consistency and good order. It will, then, perhaps, be asked ; is occasional hearing in every case unlawful, but at the place (that is, in the connexion) of usual attendance ? I answer no. The following considerations will, I apprehend, warrant occasional hearing : It is lawful in that connexion whose creed embraces more of gospel truth than that of your own community, —if their constitutional principles be possessed of more Scripture purity,—truth more clearly pointed out,—error more clearly exposed and testified against,—sin more faithfully reproved,—and speakers themselves qualified and called according to Divine appointment, &c. Occasional attendance in such cases is perfectly admissible : it must be so ; for such considerations claim *regular* attendance. It is further noticeable ; that in such attendance there is no relinquishment of any of your principles, for they are all included in the case supposed, and something more ; but the very reverse of this takes place in the case opposed. It is farther evident, that where the above considerations are wanting, no circumstances of popularity can, upon rational and Scriptural principles, claim attendance. And by the way ; is it not very inconsistent to join in ordinances, dispensed by persons in a community against which you have joined in lifting up the standard of a public testimony ? Besides, when we withdraw from the communion of a corrupt church, do we not also withdraw from the administrations of its ministers ? and while the reasons of former withdrawal still exist, does not every subsequent return condemn our own conduct in separation ? A regard to consistency in this, as in other respects, will impose a check upon the claims of curiosity.*

* Note R.

II. *It is objected, that by our restricted views we count all wrong but ourselves.*

Whatever blame may seem, from want of consideration, to attach to this idea, it must, from the nature of consistency and good order, necessarily be the case, in those particular points in which we differ from others; for opposite positions cannot be true: then, if I think myself in the right, I must of necessity reckon the man who differs from me in the wrong, in that particular point in which we differ.* “Seceders have been reproached, “that they think no body right but themselves.” Thus I think it ought to be; for if they can be supposed to believe that any other party have better principles than they have, more agreeable to the Divine word than their’s are; in that case they are obliged in conscience to relinquish their own, and to embrace the other; unless they shelter themselves under scepticism and indifference in religion, Laodicean-like, neither cold nor hot, such as God detests.”†

We find great men are not always wise, nor are good men always right. Paul withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed. Persons, when wrong, are to be separated from, whether they be good or bad. The words, “why should I be as one that turneth aside after the companions?” convey the idea that they were wrong; which is the very reason why the church is studious to avoid them. To countenance them, is not to reclaim, but to encourage them in their evil ways; and we are to withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly. This may be done without the smallest insinuation, that those from whom we separate are in a state of condemnation, as the charge seems to allege. It is a very rash and unfounded assertion, that because we refuse association with others in public worship, we reckon none are to be saved but ourselves: this is only the language of slanderous vilification, for between the two ideas, there

* *Christ. Mag.* for 1798, p. 496.
Apolo. p. 10.

† *Rev.* iii. 16. *Thom.*

is not the slightest connexion. Were they the most eminent characters under heaven, if they are not contending for the whole faith, nor going forth by the footsteps of the flock, we are enjoined to withdraw from them as disorderly walkers. Saith Paul, were we, or an angel from heaven, to preach another gospel, let him be accursed.*

“Perhaps you are now saying, that, by the principles laid down in my letters, Seceders consider every person who is not of their communion, as heathen men and publicans. But I beg leave to differ from you in this inference. It is by no means a just one, from the principles I formerly inculcated. There may be a two-fold withdrawing; one from the society of heathens and publicans; another, from holding church fellowship with churches walking disorderly. In the former case, we avoid the society of heathens and publicans, judging them to be the enemies of Christ; in the latter, we avoid the communion of disorderly churches, not as being heathens, but as being still brethren in Christ, although we cannot any longer keep church-fellowship with them, on account of their backslidings and apostacies. For, as the Scripture itself teaches us, that, when we have withdrawn from a disorderly-walking brother, we are still to account him as our brother; so, when we forsake the communion of corrupt churches, they still retain our charitable opinion that they are Christ’s, though fallen to such a degree, as to make a separation from them, on our part, absolutely necessary, in order that we may preserve our consciences void of offence towards God and men. This I deem sufficient to shew the injustice of your inferences; and as to the length to which we carry our withdrawing, when we are once convicted of pushing it farther than reason and Scripture require, we will give up the point.”†—“They have judged it inconsistent with that profession which they have espoused for the whole truths and interests of Jesus Christ, to have church-fellowship with any society, whose public profession, in any of its articles, is opposed to their own. And while, as a body, they have uniformly

* Gal. i. 8

† Rob. p. 41.

adhered to this principle, they have always suffered reproach on account of it; and from no party have they suffered more, than from those whose pretensions to candour, forbearance, and liberality of sentiment, have been most flaming.”—“Occasional communion cannot be held with any of those churches whose profession is opposed to that of our own, without losing our great end, in remaining, as a professing body, distinct from them.”*

III. *It is farther objected, that opposition to the practice is an indication of bigotry; and a want of that charity, and liberality of sentiment, which Christianity inculcates towards others: we are to love all, especially the household of faith, &c.*

For the want of charity there is, no doubt, much ground of complaint, but that this is really so in the case supposed, the ground of complaint is no indication. For allowing that they are of the household of faith, if they rank among the companions, which is still supposed, and must be the case, if not going forth by the footsteps of the flock, they must be separated from as persons walking disorderly. And in doing so, there is no reason for the charge, *a want of charity*. There is a love of commiseration, and a love of esteem. While they have forfeited the latter, by disorderly walking, they remain in every respect entitled to the former: which is really evidenced by discountenancing them in their evil courses; as it is in this way, and not the contrary, that they are most likely to be reclaimed. But the objection seems rather to indicate that an indiscriminate regard is due to all; at least such an unlimited charity as overlooks all distinction between right and wrong,—between the companions and the followers of the flock. Many, chiefly those tinctured with error, and fond of conformity, are very wishful to have all distinctions in matters of religion kept entirely out of view. “This must arise from the low ideas, which they have of the importance of divine

* Culb. pp. 4, 33.

truth. They are at no diligence to investigate it for themselves, and grow up in great unacquaintance with it; and either make no particular profession at all, or, in conformity to others, adopt that which is most convenient, having the same regard, or rather indifference, to all. And this false charity, the idol of the age, is made by many the standard of enlightened Christianity; while those who would discriminate and hold fast that which is good, are reproached as illiberal and austere; and all stedfastness and zeal in religion are promiscuously run down as bigotry and enthusiasm.* Farther; "The charity of the present age is as friendly to error as to truth, and such as oppose and condemn the former, or attempt to point out its pernicious tendency are accounted illiberal and bigoted."† It may also be remarked, that that charity, which overlooks all distinction between the companions and the followers of the flock, is entirely at variance with that *speciality* which is due to the household of faith. Besides, it is at variance with itself; in other words, the practice is inconsistent with real love; as is well shown in the following quotations: "Our duty to themselves, yea, our greatest office of love we owe to them in order to their conviction, does oblige us to withdraw from them. This may seem a paradox, yet it will be apparent, if we search the Scriptures to see what we owe to offending brethren. There we find it is a duty, to endeavour to shame them out of their sin; and it is an indication of hatred, when we do not rebuke our neighbour, or when we suffer sin upon him. If we consider them as neighbours and friends, we must endeavour to take away their sin from them. If we consider them not as such, but as enemies, then we must avoid them, and not be mingled with them. But I suppose all who oppose my thesis, would have them considered as friends; well, then, this is the way prescribed by the apostle, to deal with them, in order not to suffer sin upon them, that we should withdraw from them our company; and if we must withdraw our company, then

* Synod's Causes of Fast for 1812, p. 4.

† Thomson's Discourses, Preface, p. 4.

also much more must we deny them our religious communion."* "Is this tenacious strictness, then, justly liable to be impeached, as uncharitable; as inconsistent with that charity, which ought to animate all the children of God? No, surely: Christian charity can never oblige us, to make light of any truth of our God; or of any divine institution, or of any part of that *faith*, wherein we are called to *stand fast*. It cannot lead us into such a scepticism in religion, as that we should not, with any certainty, think ourselves right *in the faith*, and others who differ from us wrong. How frequently is that made a reproach, which is indeed essential, to a conscientious and steady conduct? *They think no body right but themselves*. I cannot help saying, *The man who thinks otherwise, neither acts a Christian nor a manly part*. If a man thinks others right, in what they differ from him, he is bound in conscience to give it up; if he looks upon the matters in difference, to be trivial, it is childish to be tenacious. But if the matters in difference are the things of God, the faith in which we are to stand fast; every man is to be fully persuaded in his own mind. Can the man act a conscientious, a Christian or manly part, who does not think he is right, in those things wherein others differ from him? There is no place for compliments in religion. If we will make compliments, we must not make them at the expense of our duty to God. But upon the other hand, charity itself calls for this tenacious and steady conduct in religion.—Every pretence, then, of charity, edification, or the like, must give place to these, a regard to which is our immediate allegiance to our heavenly Sovereign. And can we suppose, that Christian or gospel charity could require such indifference, about any truth of our God; or, that our edification would require such indifference? Nothing can be more vainly inconsistent."†

Farther; the objection supposes that opposition to the

* Hind Let Loose, p. 305.
 † Thomson's Ser, on Steadfastness in the Faith, p. 34. See also Christ. Mag. 1809, pp. 290, 291. Rob. pp. 25, 26.

† Thomson's Ser, on Steadfastness in the Faith, p. 34. See also Christ. Mag. 1809, pp. 290, 291. Rob. pp. 25, 26.

practice arises from bigotry, and illiberality of sentiment, &c. To refute this idea, attention may be paid to the following appropriate quotations, in which the futility of this consideration is amply shown.—“It is needful to understand what *bigotry* is, before we can avoid it. Now it is not bigotry, when we think ourselves right and others wrong, with regard to the particular point in which they and we differ; though we maintain that the system of religious principles which we profess approaches, upon the whole, nearest to the standard of God’s word, and therefore we wish that all others would accede to our church, and be of the same communion with us. Doing this is nothing more than consistency itself requires; for if we did not judge our own profession the best, why did we embrace it at first? And why do we continue to adhere to it, after we have embraced it? And if we believe it to be the best profession that is, the most Scriptural, and best calculated to promote the glory of God and the interests of our precious souls, surely charity obliges us to wish that all others may join in it, and be of the same communion with us. As the Apostle John says, That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”* “It is bigotry in the extreme, tenaciously to adhere to principles or opinions, merely because they are one’s own. It ought to be branded with a worse name than bigotry, to adhere to any thing as a matter of religious profession, without a persuasion that that article is founded on the word of God.”†

“Not a few who make great pretensions to liberality, discover even a bitterness of spirit towards those whom they are pleased to call bigots. They believe that those of whom they speak are good and conscientious men; but they are so narrow and confined in their ideas, that they can have no patience with them.—That indignation which some feel at bigotry is not liberality; it is itself the very soul of bigotry. You are displeased with another, be-

* Christ. Mag. for 1809, p. 259.

† Culb. p. 5.

cause he cannot see with your eyes, because he cannot make a present of his judgment to you. It was a striking likeness of that liberality, of which we have too many examples, that was unwittingly given by one, who meant in this respect to exhibit the character of a deceased friend in the most favourable light; he said, "he was the most liberal man I ever knew: he was so liberal that he could not *endure* any one who was not as liberal as himself." Some, who reckon themselves very far removed from bigotry, seem to be liberal of nothing so much as of severe reflections on those who differ from them."*

"The term bigotry seems now, especially among presbyterians, to be generally substituted for what was formerly called zeal for the truth, or stedfast adherence to it. Were those men to arise who were the instruments of a glorious reformation from popery, or of another from prelacy, they would be flouted off the stage, as a parcel of ignorant, ill-bred bigots. What opinion can the liberal Christians of this day consistently form of their predecessors, who would on no account submit to the ministrations of the curates, and who adhered to their principles as presbyterians, even at the expence of life, but that they died "as a fool dieth?" Rather than make any compliance with episcopacy, they cheerfully sacrificed every thing that men hold valuable in this world."†

IV. *An attempt is made to elude the objections made against occasional hearing, from a consideration that they will take the good and leave the bad.*

Both the circumstances of the case and the words of the objection suppose something to be bad. This may respect either error in what is delivered, or partial views of the important truths that are discussed. There is as much unfaithfulness manifested in the one way as infidelity in the other. Either or both evidence that the persons rank among the companions, and that their administrations

* Christ. Mag. for 1799. Very excellent Letters on Bigotry, p. 151. † Note §. Christ. Mag. for 1798. Letter ii. on Bigotry.

are unworthy to be attended. But some will be so simple as to say, *it is better to take it, such as it is, than entirely to want.* Would a thirsty person say it is better to take poisoned drink than want? The mode of reasoning supposes that means of themselves are sufficient without the Divine blessing. Nay, it supposes something worse,—that what is evil will really do good. But effects must always resemble the cause by which they are produced: “Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles.” We are not to do evil that good may come.*

* The remark supposes that a dispensation of ordinances in purity is rarely enjoyed. It must be confessed that the temptation, in this case, of turning aside, is much greater than otherwise. Yet even this will not vindicate the doing of what is in itself blamable. The temptation is to be overcome, by viewing it as a trial in Providence; as a part of the cross which, for Christ, the Christian is called to bear, as a necessary consequence of the church's being in the wilderness. Patience must be exercised, and submission yielded, while waiting upon him for a more abundant supply in the way of his own appointment. The trials, to which, in Providence, the flock of Christ are subjected are many; and this is no doubt one of considerable magnitude. This may be for a trial of consistency and steadfastness, if, under such a bereavement, they follow the Lord fully. This scarcity of public enjoyment may also be to check an undue attachment, that is sometimes formed for ordinances themselves. It is making an idol of ordinances, when, to obtain them, Scripture order must be violated. It is no wonder though in this case the God of ordinances deprive such of their enjoyment.—It may also be to check a disesteem of them, an evil of which there is much more danger than the other. Sometimes valuable objects come to be appreciated only by the want of them. It is an unhopeful way of obtaining a recovery of such a bereavement, by making an unscriptural administration supply the place of what bears the stamp of Divine authority. As it was said to some of old, “Go to the gods, whom ye have served;” so he may be provoked to punish the evil of turning aside after the companions by refusing to give pastors according to his heart; nay, he may be provoked to give up to such total indifference as to receive indiscriminately the followers of Christ, or his companions, just as convenience serves. But it may farther be remarked, that the very circumstance of attending the administrations of the companions, natively tends to prevent the enjoyment of ordinances otherwise dispensed; for where these are received, others more worthy of reception are necessarily excluded. It may also be noticed here as a circumstance intimately connected with this, that in the history of Christ's faithful followers, we do not find that they supplied the want of a pure dispensation

The objection also supposes capacity sufficient to distinguish between right and wrong. These are sometimes brought to view in a light not sufficiently clear to render

of ordinances, by attending the ministrations of others, whose fidelity to the cause of truth they had reason to call in question. It is said of them, "a stranger will they not follow." With relation to our reforming ancestors, it is said, "As true to the principles of the presbyterian order, they would not call to the exercise of a part of the ministerial work, any whom they could not invite to the discharge of the whole of its duties. They would not call any one to preach the word to them, whom they could not admit to dispense the sacraments. Neither would they attend any where to the ministry of the word, except where they could conscientiously join in visible communion. As public teaching is, equally with the administration of the sacraments, exclusively the province of the ministry, they attended to the more private ordinances of the gospel, in hopes that God would visit them in time, with faithful pastors. They lived as brethren; they worshipped socially in praying societies: they conversed freely about the whole of salvation by Christ: they read many valuable authors; and were uniformly considered as more pious and intelligent, than those who had an opportunity of hearing sermons every Sabbath."—*Sketches of Eccl. Hist.* p. 89. See also *Christ. Mag.* for 1800, p. 358. And *Anderson's Ser.* pp. 40—42.

Their example in these respects, with that of their successors in the same cause, is no doubt one of those footsteps of the flock, which in going forth we are called to observe; and which says to us when similarly situated, "Go ye and do likewise:" while, at the same time, it cannot be denied, that those destitute of regular supply from stated overseers have a claim upon those of others, who ought cheerfully to forego a part of ministerial enjoyment to diminish the inconveniencies that arise from a state of vacancy.

To this note the following quotation may be subjoined: "The Committee recommend a patient continuance in a wise, bold, and stedfast maintenance of the covenanted testimony of the church of Britain and Ireland in her purest times; a testimony that hath been marked with signal tokens of the Divine approbation; stood the test of ages; and has been sealed with the best blood of faithful martyrs. As you have withstood the force of the artifices laid to insnare you into the common apostacy, in the day of coalition, endeavour, in dependence upon grace, still to exercise a continued vigilance, lest any avail themselves of philosophy and vain deceit to spoil you of your crown of glory. You have kept the ground whilst others have fallen; let it never be said in any after period, that ye also have gone away. Remember that perseverance to the end is the criterion of Christ's faithful witnesses. It would be inconsistent with a proper testimony against backsliding spiritual guides to

distinction readily manifest. Extremes are easily distinguished, while affinities require considerable discernment. Persons duly qualified for discrimination must be grated at hearing truth perverted: even this itself disqualifies them for giving a cordial reception to what is really good. Such persons can have very little inducement to turn aside after them; for the case supposes them to be placed in those very circumstances, in which something offensive must necessarily be expected.

Again, with relation to persons incapable of accurate discrimination, it can scarcely be refused, that they are equally, if not more ready to receive the evil than the good; and that without the least design of doing so. Sentiments congenial to their own views are readily received, however remote from truth.

Incapacity for accurate discrimination is the situation of by far the greater part of public assemblies. They believe, or rather take it for granted, that what they hear is right, and from no higher authority than that of some favourite speaker, without ever having searched whether these things be so, which is the only foundation of many a catholic's faith, when he believes the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the infallibility of the pope.

The above view is supported, and farther amplified, by the following quotations:

“*Obj.* But may we not hear and take the good and let the bad alone? *Ans.* We would not be willing to try the experiment in our natural food, to eat where there may be poison mixed with it. Our hearts are naturally dispos-

go after them, and to attend upon their official ministrations. You will at once evidence the truest love for their good, and exhibit the fairest testimony against their evils, by a continued declining of their public ministry. And though in your forlorn state, you may not enjoy the sweet voice of the gospel from the mouth of men, as formerly, yet remember, that the Master of assemblies can feed your souls, manifest himself to your consolation, and advance your eternal salvation, in the believing and diligent use of the private means of grace, to which the faithful have had recourse in similar circumstances, and which in their joyful experience, have been found to their disconsolate souls refreshing wells of salvation.”—*Ref. Pres. Confu. of the Asso. Ref. Syn.*

ed to err from the right ways of the Lord. Mankind in general are disposed to think lightly of erroneous doctrine, as if it was of small consequence. Such is the corruption of our hearts, that we are in danger of taking the bad and letting the good alone."*—“ Though the sermons which I hear be not, in respect of orthodoxy, unexceptionable, I can refuse the evil and choose the good. And would you run the same risk with your natural food? were you told that there is death in the pot, would you eat on? what horror would seize you, lest the whole mass were infected? and are we to feel no alarm, lest poison be served up with our spiritual food.”†—“ Many do not scruple to attend on the ministrations of false teachers, as apprehensive of no danger; for, say they, we are not so ignorant as not to know what is to be received as true, and what is to be rejected as false. To such we say, the Lord forbids you not only to *believe* the instruction that causeth to err, but even to *hear* it: he commands you to cease from giving even an outward attention to it: and therefore in your attendance thereon, you are manifestly going out of the Lord’s way; you are trampling on his authority. And while you are doing so, your confidence that you will not be seduced, is but a vain and presumptuous leaning on your own understanding, and running a greater risk than eating food mixed with poison. Whilst you are thus venturing out of the plain road of duty, you are in great hazard of being left to follow the bent of your corrupted nature, and to embrace error instead of truth. You should consider that there is a hellish energy attending error, as well as a heavenly energy attending divine truth.”‡

V. *There are, we have reason to believe, many good among them, both ministers and people; and what harm can their be in countenancing those who obtain the divine favour?*

Without saying who do, or who do not, enjoy the Di-

* Act of the Asso. Presb. of Pennsylv. p. 20. † Christ. Mag. for 1800, p. 357. ‡ Anderson’s Ser. p. 31.

vine favour, it is readily granted, that pious persons may be found among very corrupt communities, while the purest churches are not without corrupt members. "In a church very corrupt, and as such rejected by God, there may be some of his own people, if they have not gone along with her in all her defections."* There will be tares among the wheat, and goats among the sheep, till the end of the world. There may also be among the flocks of the companions persons much more worthy of membership, than some that make a more open profession of following the footsteps of the flock. While the one consideration can be no argument against the flock, the other cannot be sufficient reason for turning aside after the companions. The best see but in part; and there are points in which some are more deficient than in others. However much pious persons are entitled to our regard, yet we have the authority of an apostle injoining us to be followers of them only *as* they also are of Christ. It is perfectly supposable, that there may be in a church evils of very considerable enormity, but to which the persons in view pay not the slightest attention. A religious presbyterian must be shocked at the unmeaning superstitious observances in the prelatie and popish communities; while persons of these connexions never thought that there was or could be a more acceptable mode of worship. In like manner, a Christian, impressed with the importance of Christ's alone headship over the church, must be equally shocked at the indignity done him by the usurpation of his prerogatives; while members of patronised churches never thought that supremacy in the church included an invasion of his unalienable right. So their being members of corrupt communities can be no reason that we should countenance these on their account. This inference admits the supposition that these persons are not nominally but in truth religious. It may also be presumed that, were they as sensible as we are of the corruption of such communities, they would do as we have done; they would come out from among them, and be separate,

* Thom, Dis. vol. ii. p. 575.

according to the Divine command. It was upon this principle that Luther and Calvin and many other eminent reformers acted, when they left the Romish church. When they found reformation of her corruptions impracticable, they had no hesitation in leaving her communion. Had they not acted upon this principle, where had been either our first or second reformation? It is not unreasonable to suppose that they left others sensible of her corruptions; who, however, were not under convictions sufficiently strong to induce separation. Upon the principle alleged, Luther and Calvin might have associated occasionally with the Romish church, because good persons were to be found in her communion. But in so doing few, I apprehend, would argue in their defence. This is precisely agreeable to the case in hand, and will apply to every other of a similar nature.

Farther; it has been justly observed, that visible saintship cannot be a proper ground of church fellowship. It is not enough to believe one is a Christian as to his state, he must also be visibly walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. Those, however, are not doing so, who are not obeying the commandment of going forth by the footsteps of the flock, but are chargeable with the error of turning aside after the companions. In this case, however safe they may be as to their state, though brethren in reality, by a participation of divine grace, it is acting according to the commandment to withdraw from them as persons walking disorderly, and pursuing divisive courses in the church. To show farther the futility of this popular argument, I shall insert the following appropriate quotations, from respectable writers on the subject.

“ We are bound to think charitably of all who are owning the doctrine of salvation by grace through the righteousness of our Lord Jesus, and whose practice is in the general tenor of it agreeable to the commandments of Christ. But no favourable opinion we may justly entertain of particular men in a corrupt or backsliding church, supersedes the necessity of a testimony which ought to be

maintained against it, or the necessity of a steadfast and uniform adherence to that testimony.”*

“*Obj.* May we not occasionally hear where we have ground to believe the Lord is graciously present, and his people holding communion with him? *Ans.* The Lord’s presence, communicating his grace along with his truths dispensed with many corruptions cannot be the rule of our duty,—and of this we are very imperfect judges. If this has any weight it condemns all who hold any separate communion from any, where we may charitably believe the Lord has any of his people. It would lead us into communion with Baptists, Independents, Episcopalians, and perhaps into the church of Rome. I should think it a very uncharitable sentiment, that there were none of the Lord’s people among these, or that the Lord does not bless his word and ordinances when they are dispensed with manifold corruptions.

Communion with Christ is one of the distinguishing privileges of the church invisible, and is neither the standard nor rule of external fellowship in the church of Christ. If this is the case, all confessions of faith should be laid aside; and then a new controversy will ensue.—Some will be extending their fellowship to Independents; some to Anabaptists; some to Episcopalians; some to Unitarians; some to Papists. It is a fact, that those who plead for occasional communion are by no means agreed about the extent of it.” “We have always declared that our separation is not from persons, but on account of the public state of matters in the churches. Our great objection against some orthodox ministers is, that they remain in communion with others that are erroneous, and active in carrying on a progressive defection from the reformation attained to.”†

* Act of the Asso. Presby. of Pennsylv. p. 8.
22, 23. Note T.

† Idem, pp.

VI. *Again, refuge is taken for the practice under the consideration that attendance may be necessary to contribute for some benevolent purpose.*

That we ought to do good according to our circumstances no doubt can be entertained; but the most laudable end will not always sanction the means of its accomplishment; neither are we to do evil that good may come: and that evil attends the practice there can be no doubt, if the truth of the foregoing observations in this tract be admitted. But as there is a well written paper on this point in the *Christ. Mag.* for 1809, p. 93, the object of which is to vindicate non-attendance on these occasions, I shall allow a quotation from it to supply the place of farther illustration. The writer most cordially admits the propriety of such collections, for their professed design, the circulation of the Scriptures; but shows this is no reason that we should attend the ministrations of all indiscriminately who may be employed on such occasions, especially as the contribution can be made without personal attendance. He goes on to observe;—"But surely, in this enlightened age, it is needless to remark, that, in order to right acting, especially about religion, more is necessary than having a good end in view. That the end will sanctify the means, is a position that will eternally disgrace any understanding, and it is totally unworthy of refutation. But in this affair that absurd principle is recognized and acted upon.

There were some absent, therefore, on the day above referred to, because the preacher was not a member, much less a minister, of the church to which they belong. After all their thinking on the subject, they could find no good reason to give countenance to a baptist preacher, on that day more than on any other occasion. If, on such occasions, presbyterians acknowledge the ministerial character of an episcopalian, or an independent, may they not do so at any other time? And if so, why do they belong to different and opposite societies? If a devout presbyterian minister can gravely exhort his people to attend the ministrations of such persons, on occasions for

collecting in behalf of the poor Indians, why not do the same, if they have an opportunity, when they are collecting for the poor of the parish at home? Does our *right* and obligation to acknowledge the religious character, and ecclesiastical relation of such persons, depend on the mere circumstance of the purpose to which the collection is to be applied? It is absurd. But, absurd as it is, this is certainly supposed and acted upon, when such persons are countenanced on these occasions, and not on others. For the minister to have exhorted his people to contribute liberally for such a purpose is certainly very proper: But cannot this be done, without the inconsistency of exhorting people to countenance a ministry which, by their profession, they have condemned as unscriptural?—It should be remembered, that when persons come to hear sermon, they come to worship God, with him therefore and their own conscience, they have to do. Persons ought therefore to take heed not only *how*, but *whom*, they hear. Is there any necessary connexion between submitting, even for a day or an hour, to the ministration of one whose distinguishing religious creed we have condemned, and still continue to do so, and our contributing to purchase the Bible to the Indians? Can the one not be done without the other? None will be so stupid as to say so. Why, therefore, adopt a method of collecting for this valuable purpose, so injurious to truth, honesty, and a good conscience? God certainly does not require us to commit sin, in order to convert any one, whether he be in India, or in Britain.”

VII. *Where there is an agreement about fundamental doctrines, peculiarities ought to be laid aside, and not maintained as grounds of difference.*

This objection has already been partly considered in attending to the difference between essential and circumstantial doctrines. By peculiarities I understand the respec-

tive principles of different denominations; chiefly those by which they are distinguished from one another.*

These peculiarities are agreeable to Scripture, or otherwise. In the one case, to lay them aside is, in other words, to lay aside those portions of Scripture by which they are supported: for a religious principle is just what one believes to be agreeable to Scripture. According to this, it is a peculiarity or principle with some, that national covenanting is a duty in New Testament times; and that such deeds implicate succeeding generations: because they believe it to be agreeable to the moral law, and approved practice of the church in former times: while others believe it to be only a Jewish peculiarity. It is a principle with some, that Christ is the *alone* Head of the church, while others allow a creature, as the king or pope, a share of the honour. With some it is a peculiarity or principle, that all things both in and out of the church are under Christ as mediator; because they believe it is only in that character, that a transference of all things can be made to him: according to Mat. xi. 27; xxviii. 18; John iii. 35; v. 22; 1 Cor. xv. 27; Eph. i. 22; Phil. ii. 9, 11; Heb. ii. 8. With others it is a principle, that his mediatory power extends only to the church. With some it is a principle, that civil rulers rank among the all things over which Christ is given to be Head to the church; and that they ought to possess Scripture qualifications, and act for the good of the church: according to 2 Sam. xxiii. 3; Isa. xlix. 23. With others these are not principles, because they believe the whole duty of

* "It is manifest that each particular church exists for the sake of the principles for which it is distinguished from other churches: for it is plain that there is no occasion for its existence in order to the maintaining of what it holds in common with other churches." — *Anderson's Ser.* p. 21. "General principles carefully deduced from the word of God, and well digested in the judgment, ready to apply on every emergency, are of great use to the Christian, to enable him to stand fast in the faith. The want of these makes the Christian weak in the faith, easily staggered, hesitating in his determinations, and even ready to be imposed upon." — *Thom. Ser. of Steadfastness*, p. 25.

civil rulers is to defend their subjects in the possession of their property, &c.

These instances may serve as an illustration of the remark, that the rejection of peculiarities (as they are called) is unavoidably a rejection of those Scriptures by which they are supported; for the peculiarity (rather principle) is nothing other than the belief of such doctrines as these passages contain. If principles be wrong, let their erroneous nature and tendency be pointed out, and confuted upon principles of Scripture and reason; but under the conviction of their coinciding with these, none can be blamed for maintaining them, and acting in the closest conformity to them, to the exclusion of every other.

Peculiarities, or grounds of difference, are generally viewed as matters of small importance, and so may readily be laid aside. Tenaciously to hold and defend truths against those who oppose them, or treat them with indifference, is represented as arising from a disputative mind and inclination to maintain animosities and divisions, than which, it is judged better to allow matters of small importance to drop. This, I am afraid, will be found selling the truth instead of buying it. Though the practice obtains the sanction of general custom in an age when truth is made to symbolize with the times, and grounds of difference accounted "harmless disagreements about minute matters, which have not the least influence upon faith and practice."* "How contrary is this to the principles and practice of our renowned reformers and martyrs, though quite agreeable to the wisdom of this world, which has too much influence with many professors of religion? These sentiments do indeed make the gate of religion wide, and its way broad: I know not but it might admit polygamy or popery."

"It is not my design at present to examine and prove the divine authority of our principles. This has been done many times, and by a great variety of eminent persons, not only in the kingdom, but likewise in all the reformed churches. They were constantly embraced,

* Dick's Synod Sermon, p. 29.

warmly maintained, and zealously defended by the church of Scotland, in her purest times. They were maintained by a numerous train of martyrs, both in Scotland and England. They were embraced by our fathers in the Secession, as their constitutional and distinguishing character; and thus continued, till of late, that innovating upstarts have arisen among ourselves, and have exerted all their powers, in opposing and controverting these principles, and that by means unmanly, unchristian, and unministerial. They have never evidenced either honesty or courage, by bringing their new principles and plan to open view, and a fair trial, nor attempted a defence of them by Scripture or reason, even by a single argument. Their only defence, as far as I have heard, is a denial of the authority of the Old Testament in these matters, and that declaration of our blessed Lord, *My kingdom is not of this world*; in both which they follow the tract of heretics, exploded by all the reformed churches; and, to conclude their ministerial system of defence, they allege, that these are only minute matters, and of no importance.”*

“ And although a great many, who even bear the character of Seceders, esteem our differences to be only minute matters, and are indeed taught so by their ministers, I yet think that those who are Seceders in principle, have a just claim to indulgence: (1.) Because we believe them to be sealed, by divine authority, in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. (2.) Because they were maintained, defended, and handed down to us, by the church of Scotland, in her purest period of reformation. (3.) Because they have been preserved to us by the testimony, sufferings, and blood, of as eminent martyrs as ever suffered for the cause of Christ. (4.) Because we have not only made the most public acknowledgments of their divine authority, and indeed were required to do so by our ministers, but have likewise taken upon ourselves the most solemn obligations, by vows, to maintain and de-

* Thomson's (Associate Burgher Minister) Apology for Seceders, pp. 9, 10

send them. (5.) Because they were espoused as the constitutional principles of the Secession, and as such, have ever since been assented to.”*

“Those who, according to their solemn engagements at license and ordination, contend for the whole doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession, Catechisms, and Covenants, are represented as blind and ignorant; as not going forward in reformation; as having an undue veneration for the principles of their fathers; as persons of narrow views and illiberal principles; as contending about abstract questions, which fall not within the province of the church; as devoid of charity, moderation and forbearance; as guilty of an unwarantable separation; as disturbing the peace of the church; as causing unnecessary divisions; as contending for that which is not of sufficient importance to be maintained in the profession of a church, &c.: and the reason of all these representations is, because they will not go along with them, nor approve of their new deeds.”†

Those whose peculiar sentiments want Scripture support, are chiefly desirous of having grounds of difference entirely laid aside. In this way, they endeavour to conceal their errors, and to obtain reception. Those who are so fond of laying aside peculiarities, are themselves chargeable with unnecessary schism in the church, in the erection of separate associations; the professed grounds of which are in general, orthodoxy, and admission to office on the footing of popular election: but provision is made for both these, in connexion with the established church, by the erection of *chapels of ease*. So that in acting upon the principle pleaded for, separate associations are not only inconsistent and unnecessary, but highly criminal.

Those who can readily drop their principles, indicate that they have little concern about them; and that they are as ready to adopt others, if more fashionable and convenient. In this respect such are distinguished from the faithful followers of the Lamb; who profess nothing, ac-

* Thomson's (Associate Burgher Minister) Apology for Seceders, p. 19.

† Hill's Synod Sermon from Isa. xlix. 23. p. 4.

according to their judgment, but the truth, and endeavour, by every possible mean, to hold fast what they have already attained.

Another method is employed to heal, it is pretended, the breach, which is occasioned by a maintenance of peculiarities, *viz.* that if they may not entirely be laid aside, their influence may be suspended upon principles of forbearance. According to this principle, every disputed truth must be given up. In this way, peace is gained at the expence of truth. This bond of peace cannot, certainly, be said to be in the unity of the Spirit. It ought to be remembered that "*Truth is no enemy to Peace;*" and we are to buy the truth, and not to sell it; to contend for the faith; and to hold fast what we have already attained.*

VIII. *The practice is very common, and are all to be condemned that do so?*

We are not to follow the multitude to do evil. Many things are highly esteemed among men, which are abomination in the sight of God. The flocks of the companions are much more numerous, than that of Christ. *All* the world is said to wonder after the beast. General practice, though a very common principle of action, is of most injurious tendency. It regards neither the divine law, nor the footsteps of the flock, as the rule of conduct, in matters of religion. Many, it is to be feared, in the choice of their religion, regard no higher recommendation than its general reception. If it be the place of the most populous and fashionable attendance, this is to them sufficient reason for giving it the preference. Than which, however, scarce can any consideration be more remote from the dictates of religion and reason. It is equally so in occasional hearing, as in making a religious profession. When we consider the general character of those, who

* Note U.

* The baneful consequences of this idol principle of *forbearance*, is shown in a Testimony to the original principles of the Secession, by a Society of Seceders in Glasgow, p. 7.

are least scrupulous in the practice, we cannot, even from the claims of charity itself, say it is either in obedience to a divine command, or for the real benefit of their own soul. The very consideration, that persons least under the influence of religion are most forward in the practice, at least ought to excite others to think more seriously, whether they are not running with the multitude to do evil; and acting in a matter of such high importance from the low motive of novelty or custom. Such are designed by an apostle, persons "having itching ears;" because from an undue fondness of variety and novelty, they are said to *heap*, that is, to multiply or increase, to themselves, teachers in great abundance.

"Another extreme," saith one, "is affectation of novelty, a rage for innovation, which prevails so much among professors of religion in the present day.—New men and new things; we are for a new form of church-government, a new mode of preaching, new expressions and new ideas; nothing pleases unless it be new. We love the praise of originality, and so will open to ourselves a new path, though no better than the old one, perhaps it is not so good. We scorn to be in leading-strings all our days, and will follow our forefathers no longer; we ourselves are wiser than they."*

Instances of indulging this vain curiosity have recently occurred in attending the consecration of Romish bishops and chapels. Will any pretend that the attainment of good was, in the smallest degree, their design on such occasions? If not, into what then was their conduct resolvable, but the gratification of a vain curiosity? Even some who have *seceded* from the national church, on account of error, cannot plead exemption from mingling with the heedless crowds on such occasions. And is there no criminality attaching to such gratification of a vain curiosity? Is it not encouraging them in their superstitious and idolatrous religion, to the dishonour of God, and the obstruction of the gospel in an enlightened land? Is it not encouraging a scheme, believed till of late by the protestant world

* Christ. Mag. for 1809, p. 261.

to be delusive in itself, and ruining to its deluded votaries? Obtaining the countenance of so many of opposite profession, does it not embolden them to push for unrestricted liberty? which, when obtained, has ever been, as it still is, improved to the effusion of protestant blood. Is not such an attendance, an attempt to oppose, as much as possible, the complete overthrow of the devoted system, and to support what God has declared in his word shall be destroyed? This is especially done by the pecuniary contributions, which on some of the occasions mentioned, were so lavishly great, as almost to exceed credibility itself. This, I apprehend, can be ascribed to no other cause, than a participation of the intoxicating cup, by which the nations of Europe are so infatuated, as to be madly devoted to the support, even at any expence, of the abominable system. But when the time of the end comes, the helpers and the holpen shall both fall together; and the splendid edifices, which seem to promise long continuance, will only render the overthrow the more distinguished. Farther; is not your attendance, on such occasions, inconsistent with your own profession as protestants? And are you not in effect making a bold effort to counteract the national reformation from popery, and in the violation of the most solemn engagements, again to overwhelm the land in the ignorance, superstition and bloody cruelty of former times? But perhaps these considerations are entirely out of view.

If so, is not your conduct, then, on such occasions, the more evidently resolvable into the indulgence of a vain curiosity? But will the circumstance of your having no such designs in view, prevent, in the smallest degree, these dismal consequences of your unprincipled attendance? But you will perhaps vindicate your conduct with the common cant, that they are now greatly reformed, and that the objects of abhorrence, characteristic of former times, now no longer exist. Incontrovertible facts, however, evince the futility of every such sentiment. For instance, the reformed Lewis, (according to vulgar charity) after the protestant powers of Britain had sheltered and protected him during a period of twenty years' exilement,

and then replaced him on the throne of his ancestors, at the expence of immense blood and capital, repaid the kindness by the most barbarous persecution of his protestant subjects.*

Although novelty be the principal incitement in such cases, this is rarely admitted: it is too low to be admitted by almost any. Yet its truth is evidenced by the practice being discontinued, when this principle ceases to operate. The instance of Zaccheus is sometimes adduced, but with as much propriety might persecution be defend-

* That the catholic system is nothing reformed, appears farther from the following occurrence, which, as it is perfectly descriptive of the true spirit of catholicism, is here worthy of insertion: and if its truth be called in question, I am prepared, if needful, to prove it.

A gentleman of my acquaintance engaged a female servant, who, unknown to him, was of the catholic persuasion. Instead of joining with the family in worship, she romped through the house, and occasioned as much disturbance as possible; when prohibited such outrages, she went to bed during acts of worship, to attend which she could be prevailed upon by no circumstances of entreaty. To know whether this was from malignancy of disposition, or from principles of profession, the gentleman, very judiciously, called upon her priest, and acquainted him with the circumstances of the case. He very frankly confessed, that to attend the exercise of family worship was not allowable in their community, unless performed according to the rules of the church;—the prayer in Latin, and the Scriptures their own version.

This same priest was lately extolled in a public news-paper for his liberality of sentiment, his friendly disposition towards Bible Associations, and his ready attendance upon them: yet in the course of this conversation he said, he would prevent with all his might any other version, than that mentioned, from being put into the possession of any.

To the question,—did he think the Romish religion would ever be reformed? he answered in the negative, assigning as reasons for the impossibility of this, its perfection and infallibility, &c. These facts go very far to show that the religion of Rome still is what it has been for hundreds of years past; that it is really antichristian, being hostile to true and vital religion, however much defended and patronized, to the disgrace of the protestant name in our own land, and to the violation of the most solemn engagements entirely to reject it, and to prevent its recurrence. In these cases, attendance, though but to gratify a vain curiosity, can by no means be a matter of indifference.

ed, from the circumstance of Paul being converted, when breathing out blood and slaughter.

Others are induced to turn aside from a different consideration than the gratification of curiosity, *viz.* to avoid the vilification of bigotry and contraction of mind, and the charge of being *bound* up by their clergy to hear none but themselves.* This, for such unworthy reasons, is certainly very inconsiderate and unjustifiable conduct; for if acting according to principles of religion and reason, you ought to do so, however much your conduct may be reproached as austere and illiberal. In the one case you endure as suffering wrongfully; in the other you sin, by improper concession to avoid suffering. As the religion of Jesus possesses much singularity, compared with the popular professions of mankind, it can then be no ground of surprise though vilification attend the observance of its peculiarities.†

Encouragement is taken, by many, from the example and permission of their teachers. To impose restraint is difficult, and attended with felt inconvenience: so unlimited permission is granted, and has the beneficial effect of gaining accession. As in the state, unlimited toleration is employed as a political engine to concentrate national attachment, this has a similar effect in the religious world. The sentiment, "lest we offend," has a powerful effect. The following expression is worthy the attention of those whose conduct is influenced by the example of others: "You never, surely, thought seriously of making the conduct of poor fallible men your rule; though you may eagerly lay hold on their example as part of your apology." Appropriate also to the case in hand are the following quotations.‡

IX. *Christian association is allowed, and why not ministerial?*

Christian association or communion, is that intercourse which men, as Christians, are allowed in private with one

* Note V.

† Note W.

‡ Note X.

another. This does not in the least recognize the peculiarities of the churches to which they respectively belong: which ministerial communion must necessarily do. "In order to Christian communion, nothing farther is requisite, than that the persons who join in it do, in the judgment of charity, consider one another as the friends of Christ. The peculiar principles of neither party enter into this fellowship. But in church-communion it is very different. Here there is an open avowal of attachment to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of that church; for in all her public assemblies the church avows the public profession which she has espoused. We cannot, therefore, join in the communion of any church, whose public profession contradicts our own, without contradicting it also. But no such evils can flow from private Christian communion."*

"They cheerfully appreciate the talents and piety of their acquaintances, and, as opportunity may offer, commune with them as friends and as Christians; but they cannot extend to any one the right hand of fellowship in the visible church, upon any other principles, than those contained in the Declaration and Testimony, nor can they consistently join, either statedly or occasionally, in the communion of any other church, by waiting upon its ministry, either in word or sacraments, while they continue opposed to these declared sentiments."†

"There is a joining among Christians, considered as such, which for distinction's sake we may call *catholic*; it is founded upon the communion of saints, obliging all the members of the same mystical body, to join in all things that may evidence that communion."—"And there is a joining, which we call *ecclesiastical*, among the members of the organical church, considered as church-members; concerted together in the same cause, and engaged in the same covenant, for promoting the same covenanted reformation: and also owning a unanimous subjection to the same reformed doctrine, worship, discipline and government; enjoying the same pure or-

* Culb. p. 57.

† Sketches of Ecclesiastical History, p. 128.

dinances of Christ, dispensed according to his own institution, by his own appointed officers and ministers, approved and chosen, or submitted unto, by all the fellow-members of that society or church: and this is a nearer joining, and requires more strict conditions, and more certain qualifications than the other.”*

From the distinction between Christian and ministerial communion, brought to view in the above quotations, it is manifest, that occasional hearing belongs to the latter and not to the former, as it is sometimes grossly misstated.

X. Christ attended the Jewish synagogue, though the worship there was much corrupted.

The Jewish religion was the only one at that time of divine authority; though it was now become old, and ready to vanish away. As all the parts of that religion respected Christ himself, he behoved to observe its institutions, even though now greatly corrupted, that he might honour it as a system of divine appointment; and also show that the whole had its completion in himself. He must fulfil all righteousness; and as he is the end of the law, both moral and typical, he must obey both, that he might magnify them and make them honourable.

As he was born King of the Jews, he was born a member of the Jewish church, was *regular* in his attending sanctuary service, and was never found joining occasionally with others in their respective forms of worship. Besides, to attend the temple-worship afforded him a convenient opportunity of preaching the gospel, and of making himself known in the character of a Saviour, to multitudes of his countrymen, to whom he was sent, who might not otherwise have an opportunity of attending his personal ministry. From the whole of these considerations it is manifest that no argument for occasional hearing can be taken from Christ's practice in attending the Jewish worship.

* Renwick's Letters, pp. 269, 274. See also the Presbytery's Confutation of the Associate Reformed Synod in America, p. 14, &c.

See the subject elucidated by Mr Culb. pp. 40, 41; and Act of the Asso. P. of Pen. p. 16, the conclusion of which runs thus: "If this objection has any weight it would lead persons to attend on the ministry of the grossly erroneous and profane, which is not pled for; and ~~if~~ those who deny the doctrine of grace, and place their salvation in the works of the law, and in the observance of things not required of the Lord, which doctrines were taught in the Jewish church, yea, some denied the resurrection, and the existence of angels. An argument that proves too much proves nothing at all."

XI. *The apostles did not require separation from corrupt churches in their times.*

This is contradicted by express declaration; for when persons could not reclaim the corrupt churches of which they were members, they were enjoined to come out from among them and be separate, and to touch no unclean thing.* I shall allow a quotation from the last mentioned publication to serve as an answer to the objection. "The corruptions which prevailed in the apostolic churches, are reproved by the apostles. Christ sharply reproves the churches of Asia for what was amiss in them; and if they did not reform it was certainly the duty of such as would be found faithful to separate, and then to withdraw from public administrations in them. The eyes of the Lord Jesus are as a flame of fire, and are certainly upon his church, and the corruptions which prevail in our day are as offensive to him as in the Corinthian and Asiatic churches; and when churches are obstinate in their back-sliding courses, we are commanded to come out from among them and be separate. If it was otherwise, why are we commanded to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Says an apostle, "If any man obey not our word, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."† If we are thus to

* 2 Cor. vi. 17. † Pp. 16, 17. See also the subject discussed in Culb. Vind. pp. 42—45.

have no fellowship with a disobedient and refractory individual, that he may be ashamed and reclaimed, much more, certainly, are we to decline communion with a church for the same reasons.

XII. *The advocates for occasional hearing have made great use of the xxvi. chapter of the Confession of Faith in support of their opinion.*

This is done chiefly by the members of the Relief Church. Mr James Smith, (a quondam member of that community) in his Sketches of the Relief Church, p. 33, quotes the first section, from which he supports the doctrine here opposed.* But it need not be matter of wonder that the subordinate standards are perverted to support a favourite topic, since the Scriptures themselves are often so treated. Taken in a disconnected state, and by attending only to the bare sound of words without regarding parallel Scripture, they may, no doubt, be wrested to support sentiments of the most erroneous nature: but this chapter of the Confession has not even the appearance of ambiguity, in this respect, attaching unto it; so that nothing but the grossest inattention could induce any to drag in this passage in support of such a sentiment. It is expressed with the greatest perspicuity, and with every necessary precaution. "All saints—are obliged to the performance of such public and private duties as conduce to their mutual good." On this passage I would make the following remarks:

1. Can it be to mutual good to attend the administration of ordinances, where, on account of an unscriptural constitution, not to speak of other disqualifications, we have no reason to expect the divine blessing? nay more, where, from the circumstances of the case, error of one kind or other must be expected? Again; since no other term of communion is required than visible saintship, this admits persons of upright appearance out of almost every denomination. It removes all differences among

* Note Y.

Presbyterians, Independents, Episcopalians, and Catholics; as, who dare venture to say that there are no saints among these, and others of worse name than they? But can there be any thing like concord or order in such associations? How can two walk together except they be agreed?

2. It is said, they are "united to one another in love." We are to love our neighbour as ourselves; and to love what is good even among the worst. This, however, never can include such a unity of love, as to look over all Scripture grounds of difference, and to associate indiscriminately with all. The love of unity, which is designed in the passage, includes an approbation of their public profession, as well as of their personal character. But, as already observed, it is not love to countenance and encourage any in the maintenance of unscriptural associations. We are enjoined to withdraw from brethren walking disorderly, whether the charge apply to personal conduct or mode of worship.

3. In section second, they are said to be "saints by profession." Certainly this includes the idea that their profession be Scriptural. But this cannot be the case where error is maintained; and all separate communion supposes error, on account of which church fellowship cannot be continued. Or if error, properly so called, do not exist, there may be evils equally exceptionable; as the omission of truths, arbitrary and unscriptural administration and government, Erastian headship over the church, &c. It is not denied, or even doubted, that there may be gracious persons in communities chargeable with such evils; but even in the judgment of charity itself, which thinketh no evil, these persons must be viewed as brethren walking disorderly, so must be separated from as such; otherwise we cannot be free of encouraging them in their evil ways, and partaking of their sins.

Farther; the Compilers of the Confession cannot be understood in the sense of modern latitudinarians, without the charge of gross inconsistency; which, however, must be the case, if, after having established the presbyterian mode of administration, as their declared belief of its con-

formity to Scripture, in its opposition both to independency and episcopacy, they were indefinite in extending their fellowship to persons of these communities. The very expressions, "saints by profession," indicates that they design only the profession, which in all its parts is founded upon, and agreeable to the word of God; which is the only profession that saints ought to maintain. And if we at all allow them to be consistent with themselves, we can be at no loss to understand what they meant by the profession of saints. It can be no other than what is contained in their own compilation, the Confession of Faith: and that in all its parts, including the thirty-three chapters, so denominated;—the Catechisms, Sum of Saving Knowledge, and Practical Use thereof, Covenants, National and Solemn League, Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagements to Duties, Directory for Public and Family Worship, and the Prebyterian Form of Church Government. Since they explicitly reject Episcopacy, Popery, Independency,* and all Sectarianism, if the least consistency be allowed them, they never can design unrestricted association with the members of these different communities. How very inconsistent and blameable, then, to adduce their authority in support of sentiments, the very reverse of which they strenuously maintained. It is charging them with all the disorder and inconsistency, which the scheme involves.

4. The following words, it must be confessed, have more the appearance of favouring the practice here opposed, and are actually employed for that purpose: "Which communion, as God affordeth opportunity, is to be extended to all those who, in every place, call upon

* Though Independents be, in many respects, greatly superior to Episcopalians, with whom they are sometimes ranked, yet their denying the eternity of Christ's Sonship, (as many if not all of them do) their opposition to national churches, and national covenanting; their rejection of creeds and confessions; their refusing magistratic interference about matters of religion, so robbing the church of the benefit of kings becoming nursing fathers unto her; and their peculiar mode of church-government, are matters of such importance as entirely to prevent unity, and their being received into church fellowship.

the name of the Lord Jesus." As already observed, it is nothing uncommon to pervert both Scripture and other writings in support of erroneous sentiments. But no responsibility attaches unto them for the errors which they are perverted to support. The words themselves are taken almost verbally from 1 Cor. i. 2. It is worthy of remark that our venerable reformers, in their admirable compilation, have evidently as much as possible expressed their sentiment with brevity, and in Scripture language; which was exceedingly proper, since it was to be received as a subordinate standard of orthodoxy in the church. Let us see the consequence of taking the words according to their bare sound. This communion is said to "extend to all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." Now, will not this include the whole Christian world, without the exception of Catholics, Arminians, Unitarians, &c.? None can be excluded but Jews, Mahometans and Pagans, who make no profession of acknowledging Christ. This evidently is the native consequence of taking the words merely according to their sound; which must be the sense in which they are understood, when employed to support a sentiment so much at variance with the scope of Scripture, and the compilation itself, of which they are a part.

As it is the *sense*, and not the *sound*, to which we are to attend in the explanation of Scripture; and as Scripture is the best interpreter of itself, I shall refer for their true sense to 2 Tim. ii. 22, where they are said to "call on the Lord out of a pure heart." It will be found, however, that thousands and ten thousands of those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, want the qualification "of a pure heart." The expression may be taken for the whole of gospel worship, which must be in spirit and in truth. In this limited sense of the words, which cannot well be refused, it is evident that communion can be considered as extending only to those whose profession is according to Scripture, and a pure and upright heart. Or to express it in their own words, "all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and their chil-

dren."* The unity of sentiment in religion, for which they so much contended, shows, beyond the possibility of doubt, that the communion of which they speak can be considered as extending only to those engaged in the same cause and testimony of Jesus, and united together by the same bonds of faith and church-fellowship.†

XIII. *I have only farther to attend to some passages of Scripture, that are adduced in support of occasional hearing.*

“Sow beside all waters.”‡ This, without affecting the question in the least, can but design a diligent use of ordinances according to divine appointment, as Phil. ii. 12.

An apostle rejoiced that Christ was preached though of envy.|| Though these persons were actuated by the base motive of envying the apostle’s reputation, he nevertheless without any emotions of resentment, rejoiced that Christ’s gospel was preached. The gospel might be blessed, and be a mean of doing good, though the persons themselves were influenced by wrong ends. But the circumstance of good being done in this way, is no more encouragement to attend the administration of unqualified persons, than that of a thief’s obtaining pardon encourages to steal in the hope of impunity.

Christ reproved his disciples for being offended at one who cast out devils, but did not follow him.§ “This man was engaged in the same cause, and prosecuting the same end, as the apostles, and had Christ’s approbation by casting out devils. He was probably one of John’s disciples who did believe in Christ; though not one of the twelve, or of the seventy, he held the same faith. Un-

* Chap. xxv. and Larger Catechism, Quest. 62. And, saith one, “this communion can properly be enjoyed only with such as are of one heart, and of one mind, in receiving and observing; in keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word; and who walk by the same rule, and who mind the same things.—Taylor, p. 48.

† Note Z. ‡ Isa. xxxii. 20.

|| Phil. i. 18.

§ Mark ix. 38, &c.

less it be argued that this man held some different articles of faith, or order of worship, this quotation does not give any support to the cause it is intended to serve. In this way the word of God is perverted by many to their destruction”*

“All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.”† “Our Lord’s words bear no command to the people to hear them at all, but only not to reject sound doctrine because it came from them: surely he would not bid them hear such as he calls plants that his Father had never planted; whom he bids let alone, and who were thieves and robbers, whom his sheep should not hear.”‡ Since these Pharisees rejected the gospel scheme, and taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and the observance of circumcision; yea, to keep the whole law of Moses; and the apostles were enjoined to teach the observance of all things that were commanded them, it is not reasonable to suppose that they would be required to attend the place of instructions so entirely opposite: nevertheless the words, without affecting the case in hand, require that those who did there regularly attend, should carefully observe and practise whatever good was there taught; as much good may attend very unwarrantable administrations. These very persons, notwithstanding, were under strict command to come out from among them, and be separate: and not to hear the instruction which causeth to err.||

“Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.”§ This is most proper, but how is it to be done? not surely by simple hearing. We may suppose a person goes in at random to a Unitarian chapel, or to a Romish cathedral. In the former he may hear a discourse on the Unity of the Divine nature; in the latter, he may hear one on the Trinity; and both unexceptionable. Then, if one is to judge of a party from simple hearing, he may become a Unitarian, a Papist, or a member of any other community, according as he happens to hear an eloquent preacher. To

* Act of, &c. Penn. p. 21.
Let Loose, p. 292.

† Mat. xxiii. 3.
|| Note AA.

‡ Hind
§ 1 Thes. v. 21.

choose a profession from simple hearing is rearing a superstructure without searching for a foundation. Although it be the exclusive prerogative of God to search the heart, yet we are not always to judge according to the outward appearance. Neither the preacher nor the party with which he is connected, is to be judged of exclusively by simple hearing. The principles of the party ought primarily to be examined. This, indeed, is in some cases extremely difficult, even impossible, because none are exhibited to public view. And why?—perhaps because they will not bear examination.* The practice of forming a religious connexion, merely from the acceptability of a preacher, though common, is very erroneous. He may be wholly unexceptionable in his character, and doctrine which he delivers, while the principles of the party with which he is connected are highly erroneous. These are to be compared with the Law and the Testimony; if they are not according to these, then we know there is a want of truth in them.

The respective principles of parties are, to many, matters of little concern: and to examine these is a labour to which few are willing to submit. Nor is this deficiency supplied by the preacher; for rarely is any thing of principle brought to view in pulpit discussion: so that by simple hearing, even of long continuance, you may be incapable of distinguishing between one party and another in respect of principle.† Hence it must appear that the popular mode of trial by simple hearing is very false and insnaring to the individual, but very advantageous for gaining proselytes to popular parties. Engaging address on the part of the speaker, and want of discernment in the auditory, are a combination of circumstances most likely to secure success. In this way multitudes are cozened into a profession without the least inquiry into principle, so can assign no satisfactory reason for the preference in the present association. If evils, even of a fundamental nature, be pointed out as attaching to the party, you will be plainly told, these are things about which they are

* Note BB.

† Note CC.

at no trouble to make inquiry. But is it too much to inquire what profession is most glorifying to God? what most calculated to bring comfort and salvation to their own souls? Is a profession in which we design to live and die; and in the faith of which we risk our eternal all, a matter so unimportant as to be taken up upon such trivial grounds, as the eloquence of a speaker, the popularity of a party, or because others do so, a friend or companion in life, or merely from circumstances of local convenience? “The love of ease, of convenience, of interest, of reputation, &c. has a powerful influence upon many, even of the professed witnesses for Christ and his cause, in these shaking times, wherein our lot is cast. Spare thyself, is deemed, by many, a maxim of wisdom, which they wish to keep in view in matters of religion. They resolve to go on in the beaten and easy track, to follow the multitude, or the mere voice of human leaders. Hence the indifference, neutrality, and lukewarmness, which in the present times appear among the professors of religion.”*

But these are considerations that will have little weight at the judgment of the great day: yes, but we are told by some, who even rank high in profession, “that it never will be asked in the great day of what profession they were!”—And shall every work be brought into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil, and yet a work the greatest and most important of all entirely overlooked? Does a profession of religion, which involves so important consequences rank neither among the good, nor evil, nor secret things which shall be brought into judgment?† A sentiment this, the most inglorious to come from the mouth of a Christian teacher! Shall God be particular in giving us a rule how we may glorify and enjoy him, and yet leave us at pleasure, without the prospect of responsibility, to make choice of any profession that may suit our inclination or convenience, without the grand inquiry, does such a profession bear the stamp of Divine authority? Who can inculcate this delusive senti-

* Hill's Synod Sermon, p. 5. Note DD.

† See suitable remarks on this subject in Mr Henderson's Preface to the Divine Right of Church Government, p. 1.

ment, will not find much difficulty in persuading themselves, that they may teach what they will, without the apprehension of future inquiry. Such sentiment makes way for the perpetration of the highest enormities; and is even a covert for false teachers to bring in the most damnable heresies. Such mercenary companions may have, as the fruit of their unscriptural doctrine, the momentary satisfaction of increasing their number, but never can be free from the charge of causing them to err.

We have above attached blame to persons making a profession without due trial by the investigation of principles: but no less degree of blame attaches also to another quarter; *viz.* to those communities who readily admit without due inquiry into the knowledge and principles of those who make application.* The baneful consequences of such unprincipled admission seldom fail to castigate those who act so disorderly a part. As the individuals themselves are actuated by no principle in their admission, they will as readily relinquish their profession upon the same trivial grounds on which it was taken up. The presence of a more eloquent speaker, the occurrence of a slight offence, or some other circumstance of external inconvenience, will readily occasion a change as the native effect of unprincipled admission. But this is not the worst; incalculable evil is done to the applicant himself. He is admitted to every external privilege of the church, even to sealing ordinances, without the least evidence of Scripture qualification. This must tend to harden in sin and retain in a state of impenitency. "Thus God's honour is insulted; his sacred ordinances are profaned; sinners are ensnared, hardened and emboldened in iniquity; and by departing from the rule in his word, and violating the comely order of his church, you are the cause."† Such administrators of ordinances contribute to their eating and drinking judgment to themselves. People are to examine

* As those least reserved in the practice are not in general otherwise the most exemplary; so there is reason to dread, that those communities that are most liberal, as they call it, are not the most pure and progressive in reformation.

† Taylor's Letters on Liberty, &c.

themselves and so to eat: but this is not enough; administrators are also to examine, and to act according to evidence. There is oftentimes an undue delicacy shown on such occasions; the judgment of charity is stretched beyond due bounds. Although we are not to quench the smoking flax, lenity is not to be shown to the abuse of the ordinance, the scandal of religion, and the injury of the individual, by an indiscriminate admission of unworthy applicants.

From a writer on the passage, "Prove all things," the following quotations are taken: "In order to prove all things, it is not necessary that men should become sceptics in every thing.—The public administrations of individuals can be no criterion of the doctrines held by the body collective. If we would know these, we must look into the standards of that church; we must compare these standards with the public management of the body, and both of them with the word of God. And this can be done with far more propriety at home, than in a worshipping assembly. To prove all things, in the sense of the apostle, is to bring every doctrine and line of conduct to the infallible standard of the Scriptures, and to receive or reject as they are consonant or repugnant thereunto. Again, they are to try the spirits, &c. They are to receive no doctrine upon the authority of him that delivers it. They are endowed with the right of private judgment, which they are bound to exercise in all matters of God; but what countenance does this text give to the scheme of running into other communions, and seeing whether their teachers deliver sound doctrine or not. It is not with their ministry we have to do, but the ministry of those belonging to the same church with ourselves. And while we are enjoined by the highest authority to try those with whom we are connected, we have no charge given us to hear or judge of others. Neither does the reason which the apostle gives to enforce this exercise of private judgment, favour in the smallest degree the cause of occasional hearing."*

* Culb. pp. 53—56.

“ Occasional hearing is not a proper way of coming at the knowledge of the peculiar principles of a particular church: for you may frequently hear the public discourses of its preachers, without ever getting any proper or satisfactory account of these principles. It would be unjust to lay every unguarded expression to the charge of a church which may fall from one of its public speakers; and on the other hand it would be rash to conclude that a church, as such, holds every article of divine truth that the public speakers of it may happen to utter.”*

“ We are required to try the spirits, whether they be of God—Now the best way is to find out what are there declared principles, and distinguishing practice, and try these by the rule of God’s word. By going to hear we may be led to think better or worse than they deserve, by the talents of him whom we hear; we may hear a point of truth handled very orthodoxly, and be deceived; or we may hear truth attacked in an artful manner and be misled. Error is often so artfully wrapt up in phrases that it is not easily seen through. But supposing the word was purely taught, when the worship of God is mixed with human inventions, and the ministry of it is in stated opposition to a pointed testimony for present truth, how can we in that case attend upon it without giving up with that, since we are called to hold fast that which is good? Nebuchadnezzar’s image consisted of different materials; clay, iron, brass, silver, and gold: now you would form a false opinion of the image, if you examined one of these and deemed it consisted altogether of this.”†

Thus, I have finished my design in opposing the practice of occasional hearing, and obviating the arguments employed in its defence. And though the foregoing observations may want the sanction of personal authority, they will, I hope, be allowed to have what is superior; *viz.* the high authority of Scripture, of right reason, and of respectable writers.

* Anderson’s Sermon, p. 43.

† Act of, &c. Penn. p. 19.

The whole may be summed up in a few questions, to which, it is hoped, persons, to whom they apply, will either give satisfactory answers, or give up a practice which is incapable of defence.

1. Ought not all Christians to be fully satisfied that the worship in which they engage is strictly according to the law of the God of heaven, and that all other ought to be separated from, whether for want of Scripture authority or unfaithfulness in the administrators?

2. Has not your conduct a tendency to destroy the unity of the church, and to encourage sectarianism?

3. Whether does your conduct in countenancing administrators, whom you have already professionally declared to be wrong, tend more to reclaim or to encourage their perseverance in evil courses? And by your presence are you not, at least for the time, professedly saying amen to the errors with which they are chargeable?

4. In attending their administrations you behove to pray for them *as the ministers of Christ*: but is it not inconsistent to pray for the Divine countenance to those whose constitutional principles you have declared are wrong, and who are otherwise liable to the charge of walking disorderly?

5. While they rank among the companions, can the Divine blessing be expected to attend their administrations? If not, what important purposes call for your attendance? Is it in obedience to a Divine command? Is it in love to Christ? But does he require the violation of Scripture order for the sake of edification? Or is this to be expected where you have no reason to expect the Divine blessing?

6. Is your conduct, in turning aside after the companions, consistent with the injunction, "Go forth by the footsteps of the flock?"

7. Do not the words, "Why should I be as one that turneth aside after the companions," imply the utmost impropriety in turning aside after any other than the flock of Christ? But are those after whom you turn aside going forth in the observance of reformation attainments? or are they not rather in a state of backsliding therefrom,

either by a total neglect of them, or by approving a system founded on their entire overthrow?

8. Is the practice of turning aside consistent with that stedfastness which is required in a religious profession, and such expressions as these; "Be stedfast and immovable—hold fast your profession without wavering," &c.? And must not fluctuation be equally injurious in religion as in the affairs of common life?

9. Is the practice of turning aside after the companions not at variance with the public testimony which the church has emitted against them; to which testimony you have already declared your adherence? And "Is not your adherence to that testimony rendered doubtful and uncertain, by your occasional attendance upon the administrations of those who maintain a stated opposition unto it? Is not a steady and consistent adherence to that testimony the way to obtain the enjoyment of public ordinances under the banner of it?"*

10. Did you believe your profession to have the sanction of Divine authority? If so, are you not liable to the charge of inconsistency in countenancing those who are in opposition to it, and of counteracting a Scriptural separation from them? "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them." Is it not inconsistent to return while former grounds of separation still continue?

11. Did you design, on actually becoming a church-member, again to associate with those from whom you separated? If you and others, even in your own time, were not in the practice of doing so, what circumstances of inducement are there now that did not formerly exist? Have they come nearer to your principles, or is it that you are less scrupulous in yielding to them?

12. Is the practice of turning aside consistent with the command, "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints?" Are there not articles of faith omitted by them for which you are to contend? Or, are there not with them articles of faith, or modes of administration, against which you ought to testify? If so, is not your

* Anderson, p. 42.

conduct inconsistent with your character as a public witness for the whole truth?

13. Ought not the circumstance, that the practice is offensive to your brethren, to stand in the way of your doing so? Do not the injunctions of Christ, and of Paul, explicitly forbid all unnecessary offence?

14. Is it found that the practice here opposed is calculated to promote practical and experimental religion? Or is this to be expected from the different views that are given in different places of the same subjects? And will not this have a strong tendency in leading to consider disputed points in religion as matters of indifference?

15. Does the circumstance that the practice is common, warrant your attendance? Is there no reason to apprehend that this, which is so much the idol of the present age, especially of nominal Christians, is one of those things which, though highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God? Is not a Scriptural singularity to be preferred to an unscriptural conformity?

16. Does the circumstance that good men are to be found among the companions, warrant your attending them? Are you not to withdraw even from a *brother* that walketh disorderly; and equally so from a church upon the same principles?

17. Does the circumstance that a good sermon may be had, warrant your attendance, while moral disqualifications otherwise attend it? Is the Divine countenance to be expected to succeed even unexceptionable discourses in corrupt communities?

18. Ought we not to be satisfied that constitutional principles are according to Scripture as well as public administrations? Must not the foundation be good that the superstructure may be safe?

19. Can an ecclesiastical constitution be good, which is incorporated with one of a civil nature, that includes supremacy in the church as an essential prerogative of the crown? Does the acknowledgment of such a constitution as good, merely because agreeable to the inclinations of the people, notwithstanding its hostility to the coming

of Christ's kingdom, characterize the followers of Christ, or his companions?

20. Can loyalty to such as exercise supremacy in the church, and promote the interest of antichrist, be "good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour?"* Is there a possibility of praying, or joining in prayer, for success to the administrations of such as are expressly said to make war with the Lamb, without, at least professionally, saying amen to the horrid warfare?

21. Do not such circumstances of conformity indicate much unfaithfulness to the cause of truth—that the persons themselves rank among the companions, after whom the true church is careful not to turn aside, and against whom she has lifted up a public testimony? To support evils of such enormity, is it not to build again what was by both church and state formerly destroyed?

22. Is your practice not at variance with the different passages of Scripture brought to view against it, especially that under consideration? If not, what is its import? And if the considerations here suggested are not sufficient to influence your conduct, do they not forcibly call upon you, at least, to pause and reflect, whether you are turning aside after the companions, or are going forth by the footsteps of the flock?

The following extracts may be subjoined as forming an appropriate

CONCLUSION.

"THERE are some who are of one mind in religion, because they have never searched, they have never examined, they have never thought for themselves; they take every thing upon trust, and implicitly follow their guides; they have put out their eyes, or rather they never had any, and in the dark all colours are alike. They adopt the religion which had been transmitted to them from their progenitors, or that which happens to be ge-

* Christian Repository, p. 347.

nerally professed in the country where they dwell, and they give themselves no farther trouble. All controversies about religion are to them a matter of words and names, and, like Gallio, they care for none of these things.

Thus some persons are of one mind in religion, because they have never thought on the subject at all; while others are of one mind, or rather they are of no mind, because they have thought too much. A kind of rational inquirers, they would scorn to take any thing on the testimony of others. They have thought, they have read, they have examined, they have disputed a great deal; but all the time, it may be, they never came to the throne of grace for light. They have been long learning without being able to come to the knowledge of the truth. So many controversies about religion in their heads, and no life of religion in their hearts, they fall into a conceit that all is but juggling together. They know not what to believe, and therefore resolve to believe nothing. One says, Lo, Christ is here! another says, Lo, he is there! from which they are tempted to think he is no where, and therefore are determined they will seek no more after him. A most dangerous extreme this, O my brethren! beware of it. It is the way to become infidels and sceptics; and if you make shipwreck of the faith altogether, how can you escape the damnation of hell!''*

“*Occasional* fellowship is equally incompatible with the grounds of a warrantable separation. Where full and stated fellowship would not be consistent with our duty to God, to the church, or to ourselves, occasional fellowship could as little be consistent therewith. The difference betwixt stated and occasional communion, is merely a circumstantial thing. In their nature, these kinds of fellowship are the same. In both, the communicants say, that they are one body and one bread; and accordingly where the first is unlawful, the second must be unlawful. The rule of duty is invariable: “Where many actions of a particular kind are sinful, every action

* Christ. Mag. for 1809, p. 262.

of that kind must be sinful." The repetition of a sinful action is an aggravation of the offence, but the nature or quality of that action is not affected by the repetition thereof. Upon this principle, the practice of occasional communion must be condemned, where full and stated fellowship would be unlawful. For, as occasional church-fellowship is the same in its nature with stated, where the last is condemned, the other must be condemned. The grounds of our separation from other churches have been shown to be valid; and while we cannot, in a consistency with these grounds, have full or stated fellowship with them, we can as little have any of that fellowship which has been termed occasional."*

"Latitudinarianism, an idol to which this generation seems to be so absolutely attached, that there is reason to apprehend that such a severe calamity will be necessary to wean them from it, as was necessary to wean the Jews from their idolatry. Let us hope and pray that the blessed work which was begun in the reformation from popery, which was advanced in the reformation from prelacy, and which is still carried on amidst great and manifold opposition, may speedily issue in the more eminent glory of the latter day.

We conclude with an exhortation to those that are engaged in a professed adherence to a testimony for the principles of the first and second reformation, against the various defections therefrom, in the present state of the visible church. We call upon you in the Lord's name, to study a firm and consistent adherence to that testimony in profession and practice. The charge which the adversaries of Paul brought against him and from which he vindicated himself, that his word towards the Corinthians was *yea and nay*, an affirmation and denial of the same thing, holds lamentably true against many professors at this day. One part of their conduct says, *yea*, they are adhering to a testimony for truth; another part of it says, *nay*, they are making light of it. Be concerned that your adherence to the present truth may, through the grace of our Lord

* Culbertson, p. 11.

Jesus Christ, be *yea*, that is, steady and consistent. Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering.”*

“ There are three questions about the duty of hearing the word, concerning which the Lord Jesus gives us very weighty cautions, *viz.* *what* we should hear, *how* we should hear, and *whom* we should hear—And certainly if there had been more advertancy in this point, there had not been such inconsideration and licentiousness in the matter and manner of hearing. Nor would that itching humour and luxuriancy of lust, in heaping up teachers to please the fancy, have been so much encouraged, to the great detriment of the church, disgrace of the gospel, and destruction of many poor souls. But through the ignorance and neglect of this duty of trying *whom* we should hear, by seeking some satisfying evidence of their being clothed with authority from Christ, the world hath been left loose in a license to hear what they pleased, and so have received the poison of error, instead of the true and wholesome food of Christ’s precepts from those that had power and skill to administer them. Hence the many sects, and schisms, and errors that have pestered the church in all ages, have in a great measure proceeded from this latitude and laxness of promiscuous hearing of all whom they pleased ; whom either the world’s authority impowered, or by other means were possessed of the place of preaching, without taking any cognizance whether they had the characters of Christ’s ambassadors or not. If this had been observed, and people had scrupled and refused to hear those whom they might know *should not have preached* ; neither the great antichrist nor the many lesser antichrists, would have had such footing in the world as they have this day. It is then of no small consequence to have this question cleared ; what characters to fix for a discovery of Christ’s true ministers ; whom we should submit to and obey in the Lord, and love and esteem them for their work’s sake, and for their qualities’ sake ; as standing in Christ’s stead, having the

* Anderson’s Sermon, p. 44.

dispensation of the word of reconciliation committed unto them.”*

“ Our principles have had many enemies, but those whom we now contend with, entered our society under the mask of friendship, and gave us all the security possible for their attachment to our principles, even solemn vows and oaths. In open violation of all which, they have perfidiously attempted to undermine and overturn them. And is it possible for any, who conscientiously espouse these principles, not to be fired with indignation? The author could enlarge upon these, but he desists, and shall close this apology with a short extract from the eminent Mr Brown’s Dying Advice to his Children: “ Adhere constantly, cordially, and honestly, to the covenanted principles of the church of Scotland, and to that testimony which hath been lifted up for them. I fear a generation is rising up, which will endeavour silently to let slip these matters, as if they were ashamed to hold them fast, or even to speak of them. May the Lord forbid that any of you should ever enter into this confederacy against Jesus Christ and his cause! This from a dying father and minister, and a witness for Christ, JOHN BROWN.”†

“ I would only add, act the manly, the Christian, the self-consistent part: bring not a reproach upon yourselves, by contradicting or counteracting your own profession; beware of indulging a giddy curiosity, or criminal levity, though clothed with the specious name of liberty, at the expence of your own profession, as witnesses for, and defenders of the presbyterian system, or covenanted reformation. See that the whole of your conduct be consistent with this character; beware of imagining, that occasional church communion can be lawful, where conscience could not allow of stated and ordinary communion. If there is not sufficient ground for secession, defensible by the word of God, renounce it as a schism; but halt not ever between two opinions. Let not secession be wounded in the house of its friends. Hold that fast which you have that no man take your crown.—Adorn the doctrine

* Hind Let Loose, p. 258.

† Thomson’s Apology, p. 24.

of God our Saviour, by a conversation in all things becoming the gospel; and let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*

“ Thus the Reformed Presbytery may justly be considered as a remnant of the true Presbyterian Church of Christ in these Isles, who have been labouring both in Scotland and Ireland (though in much weakness and manifold failings) to cleave close to the reformation-principles, attained to between the years 1638 and 1649 inclusive; cordially concurring, in their places and stations, with such of the ministers and professors that have gone before them, and with them faithfully witnessing, both against defection and apostacy, in church and state. Let me refer you to their religious principles published to the world, which are to be seen at large in the *Informatory Vindication, the Judicial Testimony,*” &c.†

Only a word or two to those who ridicule the opposition made to occasional hearing, and I have done. I would, then, call upon you seriously to consider the arguments that have been used, and the authorities that have been adduced both from Scripture and human writings. If the considerations suggested have no tendency to influence your conduct, you will, it is hoped, have the generosity to allow them to apologize for those, who not only feel disposed, but consider themselves *obliged*, to regard in their religious conduct, considerations of such high importance. If you allow importance at all to attach to these, you may see that their conduct is not to be ascribed to a capricious fondness of singularity, or love of separation; but to important reasons, which originate with yourselves, and others who rank among the companions. The blame, then, if any, of not associating with you in acts of worship, attaches to you and not to us. Are we not enjoined to “ go forth by the footsteps of the flock?” Are you doing so? Are you holding fast the attainments

* Thom. Ser. on Stedfastness, p. 38.
Holmes, p. 14.

† James' Letter to

of the church in her purest times? Or are you engaged in support of a constitution and administration in direct opposition to these? Then, certainly, we are entitled to excuse in giving the preference to the former: for in the nature of things we cannot approve of both. If nothing can free us from your reproach but the giving up of our principles, and associating, though but occasionally, with you in the present state of matters; we must say, "Mock on, we will maintain our own way before him." But beware lest by your deriding a profession, which, from the paucity of its adherents, or the peculiarity of its principles, you disapprove of, you lead to apostacy from the ways of righteousness: and remember that mockers' bands are made strong. But if you are disposed to attend to the injunction, "Go forth by the footsteps of the flock," we shall cordially associate with you, not only occasionally but constantly. In this we ask no more than what the Scriptures require; and if you will not comply with Scripture-order, we must be excused in observing a Scriptural separation, lest we be found turning aside after the flocks of the companions, and not going forth by the footsteps of the flock.

APPENDIX I.

CONTAINING ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS FROM RESPECTABLE WRITERS,
WITH SOME NOTES, FARTHER ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE DOCTRINE
TAUGHT IN THE PRECEDING PAGES.

NOTE A. from page 7.—There is one class of public teachers explicitly condemned by the above considerations; *viz.* lay-preachers, whose want of qualifications is often supplied by confidence, vociferation, and bold pretensions to apostolic example. Being ignorant of the original languages, the philosophy of nature, and ancient customs, to both of which allusions are often made, the cause of truth, when attacked, and made a subject of controversy, must necessarily suffer in the hands of such illiterate declaimers. Although they want recommendation to entitle them, even to the rank of companions, few have been more successful in gaining herds of attendants; and none more so, than those who have scarcely intelligence enough to know their own ignorance. The most, indeed, of this self-authorised class consists of persons actuated by a principle of self-conceit, if not, of a deluded mind; for few under the influence of modest humility and a sense of disqualification, have had the temerity to violate the laws of decency and order, by the invasion of an office of such high responsibility, and for which the greatest preparation possible is requisite. This unguarded scheme of lay-preaching makes way for the public appearance of every enthusiast, whose deluded imagination leads him to seek popularity at the expence of truth, qualification, and orderly introduction to pulic office. Or if actuated by the more laudable motive of doing good, their misguided zeal, it is to be feared, is such as wants the direction of knowledge. It is no wonder that by such self-created preachers, literature, judicative courts, and doctrinal bonds of association, should be treated with contempt, since they are insurmountable barriers in the way of their ecclesiastical preferment. Without, however, litigating the point with them, I would only ask what satisfactory solution they would give to these interrogatories: Who hath required these things at your hand? Does the Divine commission, “Go ye, preach, and baptize,” extend to all indiscriminately? If so, then, what constitutes the difference between teachers and taught? Is not a regular call from those to be taught necessary? Is not judicative appointment, by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, a part of Scripture qualification? Are not the spirits of the prophets to be subject to the prophets? But how can this be, if any, who considers himself capable of public speaking, may at pleasure assume this office without the trial and appointment of judicative authority? In vain shall the irregularity of patronized appointment, and that often of very unworthy cha-

racters, be pleaded as an excuse, except one evil may be pleaded as an apology for another.

The following passage, as it shows well the hateful nature of patronage, is worthy of being here quoted.—“ The remains of Scottish pride are frequently roused, by that disagreeable, and indeed destructive engine, *patronage*. Nor can I help saying, *it is a decent pride*: though I could wish it were accompanied with a superior principle! How abject the state of the poor people, who are subjected to it! How abject their spirit, who can submit to it! How melancholy the state of the church of Scotland, when an irreligious patron has it in his power, to sell the spiritual interests of a Christian congregation, to a candidate, whose best qualification, perhaps, is, that he, or a friend for him, can advance £200 or £300, as the price, or where this is not the case, what better are the other qualifications, which usually recommend to a patron? What a prostitution of the wise and prudent forms, devised by our pious and zealous forefathers, in the church of Scotland; if not a prostitution of the holy ministry, and of common honesty, in patching up something to supply the place, and assume the name of a gospel call! I am at a loss to conceive, how a court of Christ can, in his name, and by his authority, sustain such a deceitful shadow, as a gospel call; as the call of a Christian congregation, to one to take the charge of their souls, as a minister of Christ; and how they can in his name, and by his authority, ordain the candidate, not only to the holy ministry, but to that particular charge or congregation. How incongruous is it in an honest presbyterian minister, to give the right hand of fellowship to such, and to clothe him with the title of, *Reverend Brother*: and what pitiful shifts must be submitted to, to support the candidate's new character, in the congregation, and neighbourhood, to prevent a schism. Yet these things not only are, but are terms of ministerial and church communion. How weighty to a sensible and honest mind! How chimerical the project of the well-meaning, though mistaken few, whom I cannot help revering, who vainly entertain hopes, of stemming the torrent of perverted church power.”—*Thomson's (of Kirkintilloch) Sermon on Stedfastness*, p. 29.

Note B. from p. 9.—“ It is necessary, also, that all with whom we own communion as ministers, should be Christ's ambassadors, holding their commission from Christ as King, and only Head of his church.”—“ If, then, they take a new holding, and close with a new conveyance of the ministry, from a new usurped power in the church, encroaching on Christ's royal prerogative, we dare not homologate such an affront to Christ, as to give them the respect of his ambassadors, when they become the servants of men, and subject even in ministerial functions to another head than Christ; for then they are the ambassadors of men, and by men, and not by Jesus Christ. Hence those that receive and derive their church power from, and are subordinate in its exercise to, another head than

Christ, should not be received, and subjected to as the ministers of Christ in his church."

"They must be such as we can own communion with, in the ordinances administrated by them, as to the matter of them. Otherwise if they pervert and corrupt their ministry, by preaching and maintaining errors, either in doctrine, worship, discipline, or government, contrary to the Scriptures, our Confessions, and principles of our covenanted reformation, and contradictory to our testimony founded thereupon, and agreeable thereunto, maintaining errors condemned thereby, or condemning truths maintained thereby, we must withdraw from them. For if any seek to turn us away from the Lord our God, we must put away that evil, and not consent nor hearken to them.—We must cease to hear the instruction which causeth us to err from the words of knowledge.—We must have a care of these leaders that will cause us to err, lest we be destroyed with them.—We must mark these who contradict the doctrine that we have learned, and avoid them.—If any man teach otherwise we must withdraw ourselves from such.—If there come any and bring not this doctrine, we must not receive him nor bid him God speed, in that work of his preaching or practising against any of the truths we have received from the word.—Hence we must not hear false teachers, who in preaching and prayer bring forth false doctrine contrary to the principles of our reformation."

"They must not only be such as we can join with in the ordinances as to the *matter* of them, but in the *manner* also they must be such administrators, as we are obliged in charity to think the Lord will approve of them, and their administrations, and of us in our communion with them."—"We find that not only the prophets of Baal, and inticers to idolatry, are threatened, but also many terrible charges and adjurations laid upon ministers, in reference to a faithful diligence in their ministerial function, and a suitable testimony concerning the sin and duty of the time, that they are commanded to cry aloud and show the people their sin, Isa. lviii. 1. And as they would not have the blood of souls upon them, they must be instant in season and out of season, to give faithful warning touching the people's case and hazard, sin and duty, especially in times of great sin and judgment, when God is terribly pleading his controversy with them," &c.—*Hind Loose*, pp. 283, 293, 294.

Note C. from p. 15.—The following appropriate quotation happily illustrates the case in hand.—"With churches which are less pure than the great majority of these are, they could hold communion in teaching and in sealing ordinances too, provided they were going forward in reformation, and manifested a disposition to have every thing done in them according to the law of the God of the house. But they do not perceive a disposition of this nature, either in the Church of Scotland, or in any of those who have separated from her. They have long had occasion to remark the tendency of a disposition, which is directly the reverse of this. They see a

variety of evils in the public profession, or ordinary course of management in all these bodies, which are contrary to the rule of the word of God. They see that each of these bodies refuses to let go what is amiss in them: and while the testimony of the" Reformation "church is laid in opposition to the errors and corruptions of the whole, the friends of that testimony must decline church-communion with every one of them."—*Culbertson*, p. 8.

Note D. from p. 15.—Very suitable to the same purpose are the following quotations.—“It is supposed, as yet, that *full communion* is unlawful; if it is not, why state a separation at all? It will readily be granted, that we ought to be sure of a Scripture foundation, for every *distinction* we make about religious matters. I would therefore recommend it to these, who view *full communion* as unlawful, but *occasional hearing* as a duty, to consider where they will find a warrant for such a *distinction* in the word of God. If they cannot, they are certainly substituting their own humour, in the room of the unerring rule.”—*Walker's Animadversions*, p. 157.

“When we go to hear, we should then have reasonable grounds to satisfy our minds that the pastor we are going to hear is one according to God's own heart, and that what he will deliver will be agreeable to the Divine will. We never can be said to hear in faith, while we are in doubt about these two points; and the word will not profit unless it be mingled with faith in the hearing. Men in all ages, from itching ears, have heaped to themselves teachers, and they have been fonder of their own inventions in religion, than the appointments of God.”—*Christ. Mag. for 1809*, p. 334.

“If I hear a minister with any degree of reverence, I expressly hold communion with him in my doing so. I declare by this act, that he is a sent servant of Christ; that he is acting a consistent part at the present moment, and that I am to receive the law at his mouth. I hold also communion with that congregation that steadily adheres to him, for I declare to them, by my presence among them, and by joining in the same prayer and praises along with them, that I consider them Christian brethren, who are walking orderly.”

While I consider hearing as a public approbation of the pastor and congregation with whom I worship, at the same time I look on it as a very solemn act of homage which I offer to Jehovah. I endeavour to consider myself, when worshipping, as in his immediate presence, as a guilty, helpless creature, owning my relation to my Creator, my Preserver, my God, and my Redeemer; and that I come at the time, humbly, thankfully, and sincerely, to receive in faith what is spoken by a sent servant of Christ, and that I will, in the strength of grace, practise what I am directed unto.

Now, if my view of the duty of hearing the word be Scriptural, it is a very solemn act of communion with the minister I hear, with the congregation that steadily adheres to him, and with the Great God. If I receive the word at the minister's mouth, why should I

not receive the sacrament also from his hands? If I join with him once, why not always? My continuing in another communion is a piece of mere humour, or it is an unscriptural schism."—*Christ. Mag.* for 1809, p. 257.

“*Objection*; It is not intended that occasional communion should be carried all the length of sealing ordinances: pray what harm can there be in hearing a good sermon any where? *Answer*; And what harm can there be in taking a seat at a communion table, likewise? If we may warrantably hear a good sermon any where, we may also sit down at a communion table wherever it is covered. There is a fellowship in the apostles’ doctrine, as well as in breaking of bread and in prayers. In public prayer, and praising, and in all other acts of public worship, the worshippers say that they are one body, and one bread. If they can make such declarations as these before God, and before one another, in one ordinance, why not in another? Why not at a communion table? Upon what principle can they decline this? The dispensation of the word and the dispensation of the seals of the covenant are so closely connected, that where it is a person’s duty to join in the one, it must be his duty to join in the other. The primitive Christians continued in the apostles’ doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread. And how these things come to be separated *now*, ought to be accounted for by those who are guilty of this irregularity. I can find no warrant in Scripture to communicate with a church in teaching, but not in sealing ordinances. Wherever it is a person’s duty to do the first, there it appears to be his duty to do the last. The Scriptures uniformly injoin a diligent attendance upon all Divine ordinances, and warn us in the most solemn manner, against parting asunder what God has joined together. Not to communicate therefore in sealing ordinances, where communicating in the hearing of the word is vindicated, instead of being any apology, is an additional aggravation of the offence.”—*Culbertson*, p. 64.

“An occasional attendance on the public administrations in different and often opposite church-communions, is contrary to the right manner of attending on gospel ordinances; which our Lord enjoins upon us, when he says, *Take heed how ye hear*. For, in the first place, this occasional attendance on ordinances is a self-contradictory attendance: for whoever attends on the public ordinances of God in any particular church, must be considered either as a mere spectator of the public exercises there, or as having communion with that church in them. But a mere spectator he cannot be: because the public exercises of praying, praising, and hearing the word, are of such a nature, that for a person to be present at them from choice, is to be under the highest obligation to join in them: a person that deliberately attends on such exercises as a mere spectator, is a profaner of God’s name; and he will find, sooner or later, that there is no such thing as being an unconcerned spectator of God’s ordinances in the visible church. Whoever therefore attends on the public ordinances of any particular church, must be considered as having

public communion with that church. Thus, in the supposed case the person is involved in a contradiction. His attendance on the public ordinances of one particular church, says he approves of the constitution and principles of that church; and that he is *one body, and one bread*, with the other members of it: but all this is contradicted by his attendance on the public ordinances of another church, which is in a state of separation from the former.

Farther; it is a partial attendance; for when persons, in the supposed case, attend on the public administrations of a church, from which they are in a state of separation, they are chargeable with putting asunder what God hath joined together; namely, the preaching of the word and the dispensation of the sacraments: Where will they find a Divine warrant to receive one as authorised to preach the word to them, from whom it is unwarrantable to receive the sacraments; or to join in communion with a particular church in such public exercises of Divine worship, as prayer, praise and hearing the word preached, while it is unwarrantable to join with the same church in baptism and the Lord's supper? Paul appears to represent the public and authoritative dispensation of the word as the principal part of the trust that was committed to him as a minister of Christ: *Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel*, 1 Cor. i. 17. Eph. iii. 8. It seems unwarrantable, therefore, to consider the preaching of the word as a less sacred or important part of the ministerial office than the dispensation of the sacraments."—*Anderson*, pp. 36—39.

It may reasonably be supposed, that the considerations suggested and supported by these respectable authorities, are sufficient to show that the distinction, which is usually made between these two classes of divinely instituted ordinances, is entirely without the foundation either of Scripture or right reason.

Note E. from p. 17.—“ A Confession of Faith is a declaration made by a church, of the sense in which she understands the Scriptures, on those subjects, the belief of which she judges to be necessary, as the condition of ministerial and Christian communion.”—“ That a Confession, or Formulary of doctrine, may answer this most important end, it must be expressed in human words. A subscription of the Bible, for which some earnestly plead, would be perfectly nugatory; and it cannot be proposed by any man who understands his own proposal, but with a design to deceive. Papists and Protestants, Calvinists and Arminians, Arians and Socinians, profess to believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, and are ready to subscribe them as often as you please. What then would be the consequence of making the Bible the only test? The church would be immediately filled with teachers of discordant principles, by whose contradictory instructions the minds of the people would be distracted and unsettled; many would be poisoned with damnable doctrines, and some perhaps would be driven to infidelity and atheism.”—“ A Confession of Faith is necessary to preserve the purity

of truth; and this, indeed, is the chief purpose which it is intended to serve. It is a standard, with which the opinions of those who ask admission into the church, and particularly of candidates for the ministry, are compared, that as they agree or disagree with it, they may be received or rejected. It is a test, by the application of which the real sentiments of the candidate are ascertained."—
 "What purpose, for instance, would it serve to accept from a Socinian an assent to these inspired declarations, when we know that he holds the very doctrines which they expressly condemn? What purpose would it serve, but to deceive ourselves with our eyes open, and to ruin the church, while we are fully apprised of the danger? It is evident, therefore, that to preserve the purity of the truth, a subscription of the Bible will not suffice. Its doctrines must be expressed in human words, which are precise and determinate, and these must be applied as a test, of which nothing but down-right dishonesty can defeat the design, that no *wolf in sheep's clothing* may be admitted into the fold to devour the flock; that *false brethren may not creep in unawares to deceive the souls of the simple*; and that the ministers of religion may receive none into their order who will not walk with them in the unity of the faith."—*Mr Dick's Synod Sermon upon 2 Tim. i. 13: Hold fast the form of sound words*, p. 5. See also an excellent paper on this subject in the *Christian Selector*, vol. ii. p. 260. And *Mr Ramsay's Sermon on Rom. x. 10.* p. 12.

Note F. from p. 19.—“Have they not reason to be offended with those ministers, who, under the mask of Secession, are attempting to overturn its original constitutions and distinguishing principles? Have they not reason to be offended with those, who are slanderously impeaching the reformed Church of Scotland, and our covenanting fathers, with principles which they detested; impeaching our Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and Covenants, with unscriptural, antichristian principles, yea, with tyrannical principles? Have we not the utmost reason to be offended with those, who again pass sentence of condemnation upon our martyrs, and covenants, and yet retain the name *Seceders*? Can *Seceders* countenance their ministry, or continue in union with them, without being partakers of these evils, and bringing the blood of Christ's faithful witnesses upon their heads? Or can they suppose to receive edification by the ministry of such?”—*Mr Thomson, late Burgher Min. of Kirkin-tilloch*, in his “*Apology for Seceders withdrawing from the ministry of their backsliding Leaders*,” p. 22. And can such be considered as more entitled to occasional attendance, than others, who never professed respect to their memory, so never could so effectually betray the reformation cause, in defence of which they suffered unto bonds and imprisonment, even unto death itself?

Note G. from p. 19.—“Our innovators indeed foolishly pretend to go forward in reformation, which is retrograde or going backward: our fathers might have saved much trouble and evaded suffer-

ing, could they have been satisfied with such a backward reformation, as that now carrying on. It was for our principles that our fathers fought, and martyrs suffered; and it must be a strange progress in reformation to join their enemies in putting a grave stone upon their principles and throwing dust on their character; it is for their principles we contend; not because they are their's, but because they are sanctioned by the authority of God in his word, and yet we rejoice in being their followers, and in being found in such company: and as for those who attempt to degrade them, not only by rejecting their principles, but also by aspersing their character, we adopt the expression of the Patriarch: "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!"—*Test. for the original principles of the Secession*, p. 10.

Note H. from p. 19.—In appealing to these standards for a view of the church's former attainments, the following summary may be extracted from them: The Divinity of Christ;—his eternal Sonship;—his Headship over the church;—and over all things to the church;—that his righteousness is the alone ground of a sinner's justification, in opposition to the popish and legal doctrine of creature-merit;—that national covenanting is founded in the moral law, and so no less becoming Christians in the present than in the former period of the church, and that such public transactions are binding on posterity;—that it belongs to the office of civil rulers, now as formerly, to promote the interests of the church, and be guardians of the first, as well as of the second table of the law;—that the superstitious religions of popery and prelacy, as well as all other erroneous systems, are to be discarded as human inventions, of most injurious tendency to the interests of real religion;—that the presbyterian plan of ecclesiastical administration obtains the sanction of Scripture precept and example, in opposition to independent and hierarchical schemes;—that the church judicative, as public witnesses for Christ, ought to maintain and transmit a testimony for present truth, and against prevailing evils both of doctrine and practice;—that genuine Christians are no less distinguished by the observance of personal and family religion, than by attendance upon the public administrations of the sanctuary, &c.

Note I. from p. 20.—The different classes of independents reject all written articles of association, as things which "they deem both improper and useless:" creeds and confessions they view with as much jealousy as a protestant would the articles of Trent. Their aversion, then, to the subordinate standards of the Reformation church cannot to any be a matter of surprise. But it is difficult to account for the conduct of those, who give out to the world that they, and they only, are the genuine successors of the venerable Reformers, while they avowedly reject one part of their principles, and impose a total silence upon others. The Westminster league, which united the three nations in a reli-

gious uniformity, rejects every part of the popish and prelatical hierarchies, and pledges fidelity to rulers in the defence of the true religion; then is it not an inconsistency of the most palpable nature to approve of a constitution in support of these hierarchies, and at the same time require an acknowledgment of the covenants, one object of which is a total rejection of both. The *inconsistency* of such procedure must remain till a discovery be made of reconciling contradictions. Farther; if they profess to follow the footsteps of the flock, why do they not bring to view their example as a pattern of imitation? which certainly they ought if agreeable to Scripture; if not, its variance therewith ought to be shown, and the whole system avowedly given up. This would be consistent, and a much more ready way of reclaiming those that they think are wrong, than, in the first instance, to attack them with violence as the perverters of truth, while yet they believe their conduct is Scriptural and worthy of imitation. Sheltered by the bulwarks of Scripture, subordinate standards, and example of the flock, they will ever consider themselves safe from abusive attack, until by some battering-ram of infidelity these be thrown down; and then indeed they must stand in their own defence.

These companions are no doubt aware of the difficulty in which they are involved; for avowedly to abandon the example of predecessors might offend and remove the generation of the righteous among them, who are still disposed to revere them: and to hold up to view their example as worthy of imitation, would be at variance with their own views; and might be a considerable barrier in the way of accession; for it must be confessed these principles are far from being popular in this day of new light and mutation in religion. Then, to avoid offence on either side, a dexterous scheme is employed to accommodate both, *viz.* a total silence is imposed upon ~~the name of~~ every thing that bears the name of reformation principles. There is one case, especially, in which this silence is very culpable, that is, in the case of new erections. It is usual with some to make a bold push for an establishment in almost every village, if sufficiently remote so as not to encroach upon the boundaries of one of the same connexion. In this case it might naturally be expected that the peculiar principles of the party were explicitly maintained; their difference from others, their closer connexion with Scripture, and their more salutary tendency clearly pointed out; for as the last quoted writer well observes, "the ministers of the church of Christ ought to be open and explicit in their profession and principles." This certainly is necessary, that people may know the grounds on which they go: this also would afford a suitable answer to that question, *What do ye more than others?* And without this those designing to become members cannot be considered as acting from faith or knowledge. "It is no more," saith one, "than fair dealing, and what any inquiring mind must desire, before he can make a judicious choice of any denomination." And if such important differences do not exist, why occasion schism in

the church, by the formation of separate parties without reasons sanctioned by Scripture?

Note J. from p. 22.—With relation to a profession in which persons are baptized and educated, although it is highly improper to continue it merely because it was the religion of their father; it is equally improper, if not worse, to abandon, without sufficient reason, the particular profession, in the principles of which, they have been taught. It is an erroneous sentiment acted upon by some, that they have nothing to do with their father's religion, in which they have been brought up. Religion, however, as such, has to do with them as moral and responsible creatures, and not to be abandoned, but upon discovery of its being unsupported by Scripture authority; otherwise the desertion can be viewed in no other light than that of apostasy.

It may not be improper here to observe, that much blame often attaches to parents, in respect of their children, whose minds are not duly impressed with the knowledge and importance of religious principles. The injunction in the following verse is little attended to:—“*Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*” It is no forced interpretation, surely, to understand this of children, (as well as of young converts in religion) and that they be induced, even in this early period of life, to attend the dispensation of ordinances by the faithful shepherds of Jesus, and not be allowed to turn aside after the flocks of the companions. But instead of this nurture and dutiful training up of children in the way that they should go, are they not often allowed unrestrained liberty to wander wherever their inclination or companions may lead them? Thus a practice at first allowed to gratify a vain curiosity, or in compliance with the solicitations of a friend, a practice so congenial to inclination, and sanctioned by the unprincipled crowds around, is readily continued even in advanced life, when the understanding may be supposed capable of distinguishing between the principles of the flock, and the loose views of divine truth held by the companions. Since the exercise of acquiring fixed principles in religion is in early life so culpably neglected, it cannot be matter of wonder if the practice here opposed be afterwards rarely or with difficulty restrained. The neglect of this important duty, and the violation of solemn engagements on the part of parents, is afterwards punished by the mortification, (not to say worse of it) of not seeing their children “walking in the same steps,” but pursuing courses, even in matters of religion, of the evil of which they themselves have been fully convinced; courses in which they consider it unsafe to live and die. It must be painful to parental feeling, to see those to whom they are so closely related, and in whose welfare they are so deeply interested, neglecting the religion of their sincerest faith; a religion, which has often been to themselves a source of present joy and of future hope. But their advanced life is burdened with vexation, from those who might otherwise comfort their declining years, by walking in the truth,

and serving God in their generation, and transmitting to posterity that religion, which is their greatest glory and only hope. The consideration that their unprincipled conduct is chiefly owing to the neglect of their own solemn engagements, cannot fail to imbitter those otherwise painful reflections, principally occasioned, as in the case of Eli of old, by their own undue indulgence.—I may add, “the low insinuations of pretended, yet carnal and treacherous, friends; the disagreeable imputation of foolish preciseness, and unfashionable singularity, combining with the pride of the human heart; the head-strong vanity of a young generation, who have not known the works of the Lord; and the fond, blind indulgence of declining parents, supported by that all-prevailing fatal seduction, *the example of good men, men of high character and esteem*,—are at present gradually undermining our faith, and stealing it away by piecemeal with our own consent.”—*A Sermon on Stedfastness in the Faith*, p. 20. by the author of the *Apology*, &c. quoted p. 97. Upon the subject, *Brown's Discourse on training up spiritual children to Christ*, may be perused with much advantage.

Note K. from p. 22.—The following passages from approved authors show the consequences of a profession without a knowledge of its principles: “So lightly is the important matter of separation now considered, that the personal grudges of one member against another will break up their fellowship in the same church-communion. The influence, conveniency of situation, a spirit of retaliation for any petty affront, and a thousand other insignificant whims, produce the same effect in the present day, becoming causes of separation from a church, and of adherence to another communion.”—*Robertson*, p. 15.

“Those who can fly off from the communion of one church, and run into that of another, when they have nothing but their own whim and humour for doing so, are chargeable with much guilt; they rend and divide the body of Christ from a sinful cause, and give great occasion to the adversary to blaspheme. They are unworthy of the privileges of any Christian society, and seldom or never prove an ornament to any cause which they espouse. These unstable souls do not desert the assemblies of their old friends, in obedience to any call, which a well informed conscience told them was addressed unto them, to come out from among them, and to be separate. They are as little influenced by a regard to the rule of the word, in espousing the public profession of another society: and as they can clothe themselves with such indifference in the garb of a new profession, they are in danger, from every silly temptation which comes in their way, of putting it off, and casting it aside.”—*Culbertson*, p. 8.

Note L. from p. 23.—The following quotation is in relation to this exceedingly appropriate, and, though long, worthy of insertion: “Seceders refuse to join in communion with churches from which

they are in a state of separation, because it would be inconsistent with stedfastness in the maintenance of a Christian profession.

Having once espoused a religious profession; founded upon and agreeable to the word of God, we are never to reckon ourselves at liberty to throw it aside; though the maintenance of this profession should cost us the loss of all things, we are still to adhere to it. Stedfastness is one great ornament of a Christian profession. We are commanded "to be stedfast, and immoveable; to hold fast that which we have received, and to be faithful unto death." But communion* with churches, from which we are in a state of separation, is utterly inconsistent with stedfastness. In so far as the public profession of these churches is opposed to that of our own, joining in communion with them is a material dereliction of our former profession. It is impossible that a person can be in a state of fellowship with two churches at one and the same time, where the public profession of the one, in any of its parts, contradicts that of the other. His cleaving to the one, must be at the expense of renouncing fellowship, at least for the time, with the other. Were a Seceder, therefore, to join in the communion of any of those churches, against which the Secession testimony is lifted up, he would inevitably pull down every thing peculiar to his old profession, and which he had solemnly engaged to build up.

It will not make any alteration in the nature of the case here, that it is not intended persons should remain in the communion of any church, but the one with which they are already connected; and which they are persuaded is most agreeable to the word of God. All that the friends of lax communion plead for, is only an occasional visit to the places of public worship belonging to other churches; and that as soon as the public services of the day are over, these occasional communicants should return to the bosom of that church with which they have stated and ordinary fellowship.— But this also is inconsistent with stedfastness. Going into these communions without any intention of abiding there, is of itself, a sufficient proof of the person's dissatisfaction with these churches, so that he could not have stated fellowship with them. And where a person cannot have full and stated fellowship, it has been shown already, that he ought not to have occasional. If the first would be sinful the last would be sinful likewise.

But this conduct is also inconsistent with the duty of holding fast that which we have already received. Were a Seceder to give up with a pointed testimony for truth altogether, and join the communion of those churches where no such testimony is displayed, he would certainly be considered as an apostate from his old profession. For if deserting the communion of a pure church, and joining steadily with one which is corrupt, would justly fix upon him the charge of apostacy; the deserting of her communion, were it but for a

* As it is occasional hearing of which the author is treating in the passage, it is this, and not sacramental communion, that is to be understood by the expression,

single day, must likewise fix upon him the same charge while that day is continued.

If a man is not chargeable with apostacy, who has deserted his profession, and communicated with a corrupt church for one day, I cannot see how he can be chargeable with this evil, though he had continued with her twenty or a thousand days in succession. Mere length of time makes no change in the nature of the acts themselves; neither does it establish or refute the charge of apostacy. That man is as really guilty of theft who has pilfered his neighbour's property in the space of a few minutes, as another who has spent a whole night in rummaging his coffers, and carrying off the prey. And that person is as really chargeable with apostacy, who deserts a pure profession for a single day, as another who deserts it for the space of twenty years. What is apostacy but the falling from former attainments in religion? and can any man be said to hold fast these attainments when he joins in the communion of a church, where her public profession, or ordinary course of public managements, are in the most direct opposition to those things wherunto he had attained?"—*Culbertson*, pp. 12—16.

Note M. from p. 26.—“ That such a separation once made, should be faithfully maintained. If separation be necessary for exhibiting a testimony against a corrupt church; to persevere in that separation, while she persists in her corrupt courses, must be requisite, in order to the due maintenance of that testimony. For a person to separate from a church to-day, and return to her communion to-morrow, is a manifest inconsistency, and tends to defeat the end of all warrantable separation, as far as it is intended as a testimony against the corruptions of that church.” “ None can continue in the communion of a corrupt church, without strengthening her hands in her sinful courses, and discouraging them who are contending for truth and duty.”

“ The conduct of those who have separated from a corrupt church, and yet practise or plead for occasional communion with her, is to act inconsistently with themselves; and virtually to deny, that they had any just grounds of separation.”—*Associate (Antiburgher) Testimony*, pp. 181—183.

Note N. from p. 27.—“ As we would endeavour to avoid sin in ourselves, so we must have a care to give no occasion to others in sinning; by our taking liberty in a promiscuous joining in church-communion, whereby we may offend and stumble the conscience of others. They that sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, sin also against Christ, 1 Cor. viii. 12: we must forbear some things for conscience' sake, not our own, but of others, giving none offence neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God, &c. These commands discharge whatever practice gives occasion of our brother's sinning, of calling truth in question, of acting with a doubting conscience; and neither the

lawfulness nor indifferency of the thing itself, nor men's authority commanding it, nor the weakness, yea, or wickedness of those in hazard to be stumbled, will warrant the doing of that, out of which offence arises."—*Hind Let Loose*, pp. 303, 304.

Note O. from p. 30.—“Occasional communion with these churches,” saith one, “can do them no good, and is calculated in its nature to do the occasional communicant a great deal of harm.”—“Occasional communion throws persons in the way of that instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge. A regard to our own interest certainly requires that all communion of this kind ought to be shunned.”—“Admitting that the administrator advances nothing in his pulpit discourse in opposition to any article contained in the testimony of the Secession Church, but confines himself solely to those doctrines of Christianity upon which all good men are agreed; yet in all his ministrations he is bearing a practical testimony against our separation, and against the necessity of any judicial vindication of those truths, in behalf of which our testimony has been lifted up. By dispensing ordinances under the banner of the profession of that church with which he is connected in ministerial and Christian communion, he is saying, in a much more forcible manner than by any sermon he can deliver, that it is the duty of all others to join stately in her communion, as he does, and that the conduct of those who have separated themselves from her is unwarrantable.”—*Culbertson*, pp. 24, 27, 23.

“And though the Spirit should work very powerfully in the hearts of many belonging to that church from which we have separated ourselves, while the grounds of our separation are valid, we can have no warrant to return; nor can we have the smallest encouragement to expect that the dispensation of ordinances in her would be blessed as to us.—I never yet knew of an individual who deserted a pure church and connected himself with one that was corrupt, and prospered. These persons generally become leaner from day to day. Others around them may be basking in the sunshine of spiritual prosperity, but they are starving for want. Callousness and indifference in the things of God usually mark the character of these men; many of them throw off the mask of godliness altogether, and become openly immoral.

There is a wide difference betwixt the case of one who has not seen it warrantable to separate from the communion of a corrupt church, and another who has both seen this, and has actually separated from her. While the first attends upon ordinances dispensed there, he is walking according to his light: and though error and corruptions will never be advantageous unto any, yet the Lord often renders these things, which a backsliding church still retains, of the most essential benefit to those in her communion, who are endeavouring to be faithful according to the measure of light which they enjoy. But when others, who are better informed with respect to the warrantable grounds of separation, return to her communion,

they are not walking according to that light, which they have received; and instead of being enriched by the dispensation of ordinances there, they have too good reason to fear, lest that saying of our Lord should be fulfilled upon them, John ix. 39: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see might be made blind."—We may safely conclude, that it is our duty and our interest to go wherever the revealed will of God has pointed out the way: but till once we can adduce a Divine authority, for this or the other religious exercise we intend to be engaged in, we have no ground whatever to conclude that our observation of it would profit either ourselves or others. If it cannot be shown from the word of God, that we may warrantably have occasional fellowship with churches which are obstinate in their backsliding courses, there cannot be a single grain of encouragement held forth unto us to join these communions, though in different parts of that Church the ministration of the Spirit should be most abundant."—*Culbertson*, pp. 49, 51. See also *Durham on the Rev.* vol. i. p. 159. There is on this very subject a well written paper in the *Christ. Mag.* for 1809, p. 462.

Note P. from p. 34.—"The expression, *the faith*, is comprehensive of the whole system of Divine revelation, as contained in the sacred Bible. Some persons, indeed, would foolishly confine such expressions unto what they call, the essential doctrines of Christianity; doctrines essentially necessary to our own salvation; which they profess a high regard to; while they make light of other revealed truths, as of small value and importance; because we may be saved without them.—Faith is an act of obedience to Divine authority; and the smaller the matter be, on which this authority is stamped, the more pure is that obedience, by which it is received. This authority is the supreme reason of faith, considered as the obedience of the reasonable creature; and those who can dispense with Divine authority, in the smallest matters, undermine that solid rock, which alone sustains the greatest; he materially gives up with the whole of *the faith* and destroys its very essence.—The small stones, which pin a building, are of as real importance to the building as the foundation and corner-stone; and the man who would make light of these, who should not reckon them worthy to be contended for, and should suffer an enemy to pick them out one after another, would as certainly, as effectually, though perhaps more slowly ruin the fabric, as if he should suffer the enemy to sap the foundation, or pull down the corner-stones."—*Thom. Ser.* on 1 Cor. xvi. 13, pp. 6, 8.

On the futility of the hacknied distinction between essential and circumstantial doctrines, *Letters on Bigotry*, in the *Christ. Mag.* for 1798, p. 541, may be perused with considerable advantage.

"The question here is not what is essentially necessary to salvation, or to the being of a Christian, but what is the duty which our God and Saviour requires of us, as his redeemed people?"—*Thom. Apol.* p. 10.

We are told not to go after *every one* that says, *Lo, here is Christ, or lo, there*. We are not to judge of persons or parties, whether they are the followers of Christ, or of his companions, from their holding a variety of leading doctrines. The Scriptures contain a system of revealed truth which must be taken in connexion. It is like a chain the breaking of one link destroys the whole. The concealing of truth is equally a violation as the promulgation of error. To turn aside after those chargeable with either is encouraging them in perverting the truth.

“Many commend zeal for the doctrines of the church, who think that this should be laid aside as to forms. But forms are the subject of Divine doctrines. They concern not practice only, but also faith. We are as much bound to believe a Scriptural doctrine which respects a form, as if it respected something essential to salvation. The faith once delivered to the saints, certainly includes all those instructions which our Lord gave to his apostles in things pertaining to the kingdom of God; for these things we are to contend earnestly, not merely as individuals, but collectively as a church. And how can we do so, if we hold communion with those who adhere to a system directly the reverse of that which we consider as revealed.”—*Christ. Mag.* for 1798, p. 543.

“Now, were I to mingle with those persons in their religious assemblies, who either neglect or oppose the truths which I stand up for, I for the time would cease to be a consistent witness. I would be unsteady in my own confession. I would show a want of zeal for the truths that need presently to be stood up for, because these worshipping assemblies are kept up in open contempt of these truths.”

“This Scripture (*viz.* Jude 3.) ever appeared to me to require a courageous appearing for the gospel against all opposers of it. Now, it is opposed, not only by a pretended regard to moral preaching, but also by a love of novelty, and a partial attachment to a few particular truths that are fashionable, to the neglect of others that are revealed in the word. The private individual regularly contends for this faith, by a steady adherence to those public pastors, who are uniform in their defending it, by a steady profession of it, and by improving their talents to confirm the wavering, and oppose the erroneous.”—*Christ. Mag.* for 1809, pp. 292, 293.

“The question ought not then to be, is such a doctrine essential to our salvation? but is it true or false? is it contained in the Scriptures or not? &c.—These general reasonings tend to show, that the foundation-principles of the latitudinarian scheme of communion are erroneous. But to be more particular, we would notice the following things:—That the plan of ecclesiastical fellowship in question, has a *positive* tendency to *foster* error in the Christian church, by giving it direct and obvious encouragement:—That it has a directly pernicious influence on *morals*, by corrupting the heart, and vitiating the active principles of our nature:—And that, as a natural consequence of the two former, it tends to *cherish* en-

thusiasm, delusion, and spiritual pride, in the religious exercise of its votaries."—*Christ. Mag.* for 1809, p. 467.

"The distinction between essential and circumstantial truths, so much used and acted on in regard to church-communion in our time, is unknown to the word of God. And as it has never been determined what truths are to be considered as essential, and what not, this principle renders the terms of communion quite vague. It has also a native tendency to make persons consider almost all the truths of Christ as of little or no importance; although they are all *more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold.*"

Note Q. from p. 39.—"Next I was led to consider the general character of those persons, who made no scruple to hear a good sermon (as they phrased it) any where; and I must own I became strongly prejudiced against the thing itself, by considering the people that were fondest of this practice. Blame me not for this, for our Saviour has taught us to judge of a tree by its fruits.

Now the first class, that scruple not to hear a sermon any where, is the ignorant and indifferent about Scriptural religion. They have never seriously inquired what the Scriptures have revealed about this subject, or what effects it produces on the heart when it is really believed. All religions are the same to them; they can therefore go to any place of worship, provided it be a fashionable one, or a friend is to be obliged or complimented by their compliance.—Another class is the children of religious parents, who have been brought up in strictness in the country. If these remove in their youth into large cities, where they find the church of God cast into all shapes, when they find themselves from beneath the eyes of their parents; if they want the fear of God in their hearts, they make no scruple of running to the different places of worship, that they may satisfy their curiosity.—A third class, who follow the same practice, is those students of divinity who aim at being orators. They think they would excel when licenced to preach, if they could imitate some famous preacher; and instead of attending to worship God in his house, they are viewing the preacher as the audience in the theatre does some noted actor in one of his favourite characters; and perhaps they practise at their glass in the evening what they saw through the day in the church.—A fourth class are the unsettled and the unstable. Some of these are honest enthusiasts. They judge of religion by the warmth of their passions; and finding their attention roused more by hearing a strange minister occasionally, they consider this a mark of the Lord's presence; and from a misguided zeal, they are to be found in those places of worship where a minister from a distance is preaching to a crowded audience with candle light, and the singing good, because these circumstances have a tendency to raise the animal passions; though the moving of these is no decisive proof of growth in grace. Others of this unsettled tribe are pious professors of some religious knowledge, with little humility and little tenderness of conscience. A strange minister is

a fine subject for them to display their critical talents on; and they make a point to hear him, because they can show a way in the circle in which they wish to shine, by telling his excellencies, and oftener his defects.

I wish not to fall under the imputation of one of these characters, and therefore show my regard to ordinances in a very different way."—*Christ. Mag.* for 1809, on restricted church-communion, p. 256. A very good paper upon the subject may also be seen in the *Christ. Mag.* for 1810, p. 224.

Note R. from p. 41.—“Many things may be borne with in persons or churches, making progress in reformation, or such who are babes, weak in the faith, but endeavouring to advance; which are not to be tolerate in them that have advanced in knowledge and reformation too, but are turning back and declining, as Ephraim, a back-sliding heifer, and to whom it may be said, Ye have gone away from mine ordinances since the days of your fathers, which I think is the case with you and your brethréen.”—*Thomson, of Kilmanie, in his Defence of the Confession and Covenants, &c.* p. 53. See also *Hind Let Loose*, p. 266.

The frequent and unguarded use of the expression, *a good sermon, &c.* will, it is hoped, be admitted as sufficient apology for so many quotations; which, it is also hoped, will, if duly attended to, invalidate the argument, and check the practice, which the expression is employed to defend.

Note S. from p. 48.—Bigotry is applied in general only to those who are actuated by stedfast adherence to, and zeal for truth. Ignorance, party-spirit, superstition, blind and irrational zeal, are charged upon those who study stedfastness to their religion, which, though reproached for singularity, &c. they believe, from the best of evidence, its divine authenticity, to be the cause of truth.

Some who boast most of their liberality, are liberal in nothing so much as in casting out severe aspersions upon those who differ from them; they will also become the umpire of the heart, in charging their conduct with the base motive of party-spirit, &c. Bigotry, &c. are supposed chargeable only upon certain classes of rigid dissenters. None, perhaps, will consider themselves more free from the charge than the community designed the Establishment, while at the same time none are more ready to tax it upon others. But perhaps it will be difficult, if not impossible, to produce a greater instance of bigotry and ungenerous illiberality, in the most rigid class of dissenters, than is expressed in the following statement:

The circumstances of the case was this; Mr Dunlop, minister of the Burgher Associate Congregation, Dumfries, was to preach an evening sermon for a collection in aid of the Bible Society, June 1811. His own place of worship being judged too small for so public an occasion, the ministers and magistrates generously offered the use of the new church. This was advertised in the Dumfries

and Galloway Courier. The advertisement was read at the ensuing meeting of Presbytery; on which the Presbytery express themselves as follows: "The Presbytery, after maturely deliberating the above paragraph, were unanimously of opinion, that the churches of the bounds cannot, without violation of the principles of the Establishment, be given to any other than those that are licentiates, or members of the Established Church of Scotland: and though perfectly satisfied of the purity of the motives of all concerned, yet as guardians of the church, they felt themselves called upon to express their disapprobation of the liberty granted; and in order to prevent the recurrence of similar irregularities, they appointed this Declaration to be published in the two Dumfries news-papers." *Dumf. and Gal. Cour. June 18, 1811.*

After this none of that connexion have any thing to say of illiberality or bigotry in any other; at least they may first wipe their own mouth; and cast the beam out of their own eye, and then shall they see clearly to cast the mote out of their brother's eye. This might have passed unnoticed here, had it not been to show the odious inconsistency of taxing upon others an imaginary evil, which in all the aggravated circumstances of undoubted certainty is chargeable upon themselves.

Those who are disposed to resolve the restricted views of dissenters into bigotry, &c. will certainly be able to trace their conduct to a different source; at least to attach that term with much more propriety to other denominations, who even boast of their liberality, when they contrast the foregoing considerations, (which resolve it into a religious regard to truth, duty, decency and order) with the rigid, not to say irrational conduct of these on the same subject, as is well shown in *Mr Robertson's Letters*, pp. 26—30, in respect of the Church of Scotland, the Church of England, the Scotch Episcopal Church, the Tabernacle people; and with relation to the Burghers, he says, they have published no law upon the subject: they do not hinder their members from hearing where they please.

I shall conclude this particular with the following quotations: "Charity, forbearance and peace, are words that carry in them a very amicable sound; but alas! as they are now used they import something very different from their true meaning, and very opposite to the signification which they bear in the Holy Scriptures. These are indeed no other than different names given to indifference, lukewarmness and unfaithfulness to God and his cause; so odious in his sight, and pernicious to the church's welfare. By a strange perversion of language, those who in our day propagate the most neutral and inactive principles, and adopt the most selfish, partial and ungenerous scheme of religion, assume the character of the only catholic, charitable, and liberal-hearted Christians; while those who are striving for general piety and a revival of public reformation; who are maintaining a testimony which has this for its declared ultimate object, &c. are by the same perversion of language, represented as persons of a contracted party-spirit, and totally devoid of

charity to all the world but themselves."—*Bruce's True Patri.* quoted in the *Act of the Asso. Pres. of Pennsylv.* p. 52.

Mr Thomson in his *Apology*, observing that the aspersions of bigotry, &c. are cast upon all our Scottish and English martyrs, says, "I think, if we are bigots, we are among excellent company, the excellent ones of the earth: and though we will call no man father, with respect to our faith and principles; yet we rejoice in being the followers of those, who through faith and patience do inherit the promises." "From what I have said, I think it will appear evident, that we do not deserve the character of bigots, &c." "I now appeal to every honest and impartial reader, whether our adherence to our principles can be justly reckoned bigotry, in evidencing our displeasure with those who have exerted themselves in opposition to them, or even in discountenancing their ministry, and separating from them."—Pp. 11, 12, 19. See also *Sketches of Eccl. History, Appendix*, pp. 97—99.

Note T. from p. 55.—"The idea of holding communion with all good men is now generally received, and has indeed a very engaging appearance. But when I bring it to the standard of truth, I find that it is their *faith* only that I ought to follow. I must follow them only as far as they are followers of Christ. If those things above are to be terms of communion, in which good men have agreed, the confession of a church must be very narrow, many divine truths and ordinances must be neglected. According to this principle, you must hold communion with the church of Rome; for bigoted as you reckon me, I am persuaded that many within the pale of the church of Rome are good men. According to your principle, you are bound either to hold communion with them, or to deny their claim to saintship, because it is not the former character of the church, but the supposed state of the individual that ought to be your rule. Now if you would not preclude a papist, whom you reckoned a good man, from communion with you, what objection can you have to hold communion with the church of Rome herself, &c?"—*Christ. Mag.* for 1798, p. 548. See also p. 543.

"*Object.* there is no church perfect; there are good and bad in every communion. *Answ.* Though there be no church on earth perfect; are not some nearer to the unerring standard than others? and are we not to try the spirits whether they are of God, since so many false prophets have gone out into the world? and if we find one superior to others, in regard to purity of doctrine and communion, if she approach nearer to perfection than others, however far she may be from it, should we not take part with her? Because some good men may not see their way clear to leave a church though she hath left her first love, are we to reckon it a matter of indifference to which of the two we adhere? We must go higher for our warrant to forsake, or to join a particular church, than to the character of some that may be in her communion. We must ask, Is she organ-

ized according to the Scriptural model?" &c.—*Christ. Mag.* for 1800, p. 356.

"Error is no less dangerous that it is held by those who are in many respects both wise and good. The truth is, this vastly increases its evil, and renders it the more hurtful, because it is thus the more infectious. One thing at any rate is certain, that whatever goodness be about such persons, the doctrine in question is no part of it, and has no tendency to produce it. It is quite the reverse; their holiness and sobriety cannot, in the nature of things, be the effect of any such principle, but must be imputed to the strength of grace in their hearts, in opposition to the errors of their heads, and the weakness of their intellects."—*Christ. Mag.* for 1810, p. 225.

"Take heed, saith the apostle, Acts xx. 28, to yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, &c. Here the apostle joins *feeding* and *oversight* together. But were we to extend our terms of communion to all whom we can judge in charity are truly godly, I am certain we behoved to extend them to many, over whom the Holy Ghost has *not made us overseers*, &c."—*Walker's Animad.* p. 230. See also pp. 238, 239, 241, 242. And *Christ. Mag.* for 1809, p. 430. *Robert.* pp. 32—34. *Culbert.* pp. 45—47. *Test. Bear. Exemp. Preface*, p. 3. *Thom. Ser. on Stedfastness*, p. 33.

Note U. from p. 62.—The following quotations from a respectable writer upon the subject, are happily illustrative of the foregoing observations.

"Various schemes have been proposed and adopted, for uniting the friends of evangelical truth in one society. The most plausible which has yet appeared, is that of laying aside all the lesser points as to which good men are divided, and meeting one another solely on those grounds on which they are all agreed." But, "It was absurd to suppose, that all good men would set so little value on the lesser matters of the law, as to imagine that they were warranted to lay them aside. Many of them were more likely to judge, that if these things belonged to the system of revealed truth, they were not to be parted with on any consideration whatever; and that the external peace and unity of church-members were rated too high, when they were laid in the balance with a single gem of the Redeemer's crown. Such a union is better adapted to the taste of those who have no fixed religious principles at all, than of such as have examined the doctrines and duties of Revelation with care, have embraced a particular creed as the fruit of this investigation, and are determined to stand or fall with it. It may please those children who are tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, but will excite a holy indignation in the bosoms of others, who are persuaded these lesser points belong to the cause of God and of truth, and ought neither to be buried, nor lightly esteemed."—*Culbertson*, pp. 1, 2.

"Seceders refuse to join in the communion of those churches,

from which they have separated themselves, because the great design of their existence as a distinct body would otherwise be lost. A church is not to be viewed merely as a number of Christians associated together for the public worship of God, but also as a society united for the defence of certain truths or principles, which their members hold in common, and which they believe to be agreeable to the word of God. Let any of them throw away the peculiarities of their profession, and then their existence as a separate society could have no meaning or design in it. Ask any of them, why they do not coalesce with some of the other denominations around them? and the only answer they can give will be to this amount: That they do not find their peculiar principles professed and embraced by others; and that they consider these principles to be of such importance, as completely to warrant their existing in a separate capacity, in order to maintain them. The peculiar principles of the body are the immediate ground upon which the whole fabric of their church-state is reared. Remove this, and the building either falls, or becomes like one of the monstrous pyramids of Egypt, of which no man can say what valuable purpose it was meant to serve."—*Culbertson*, p. 29.

"They do not reckon themselves at liberty to throw away a single gem of the Redeemer's crown, because some good men do not perceive any lustre in it, nor because others may be at a loss to perceive that it really belongs to Christ. Did they use such liberties with one article of revealed truth, in order to purchase peace and union with one party, they might soon be called upon to do the same with another; yea, they might hold on till they had left nothing of Christianity but the name. For what doctrine in the system of revealed truth has not been represented as a thing of nought? There is not one article laid down in the Scriptures, which the great Prophet of the church did not consider as worthy of a place there; and no society should reckon these unworthy of a place in that public profession which they make of his name. Whatever a church has attained, according to the word of God, she is not at liberty to throw away. She is under the most sacred obligation to hold it fast; and the more it is despised and undervalued, and accounted as a thing of nought, she is to cleave the more closely unto it."—*Culbertson*, p. 62.

"By what outward means shall this dead and divided state of the church be repaired? Is it by keeping out of view any article of truth, or dropping any part of testimony against prevailing errors and corruptions? None of the prophets ever got any such instructions; and ministers of the gospel have it still in charge to declare the *whole counsel* of God, and to teach men to observe *all things* whatsoever they have been commanded. The unity of the Spirit is a union in truth; without this, a right peace can never be maintained."—*Culbertson*, p. 77.

"If a Seceder is persuaded that the peculiarities of his profession are Scriptural, it is impossible that he can be of one mind with those of an opposite profession. To join with them in church-communion,

is solemnly to declare that he is of one mind with them, while at the same time his heart and conscience bear witness that he is not. To run into their worshipping assemblies, and yet to retain a persuasion that his former principles are well founded, is to go thither with a lie in his right hand."—*Culbertson*, p. 38.

"From these observations it must follow, that communion with churches, from which we are in a state of separation, is destructive of the very end and design of our existence as a separate society. To what purpose do we exist as a body distinct from others, if all may freely communicate with them? Have we no peculiar principles to maintain? or are these principles not worth the contending for? Let, then, our existence as a separate society be for ever blotted out. But if these principles are of such importance as to warrant our existing in a separate capacity for their defence, we must, for the sake of these principles, decline church-communion with all those societies where they are either opposed, or treated as a thing of nought."—*Culbertson*, p. 31. See also *Christ. Mag.* for 1798, p. 543, and for 1809, pp. 97, 374.

"There are articles, which some seem to take a pleasure in hissing out of the churches, under the notion of their being *small* and *indifferent*, *punctilios*, or circumstantial, and so not worth taking into our Confession: but to represent any part of Revelation, be it what it will, in this light,—we can hold for no other than open blasphemy.—Every stone in a building is not a foundation stone, but it is related to it, and every other in the building. In pulling it out, you, in so far, spoil the beauty of the whole edifice and weaken it. Such loose and blasphemous suggestions, so common and fashionable in our times, appear to multitudes perfectly reasonable, and the effect of extraordinary illumination."—*Ramsay's Ser.* on Rom. x. 10. p. 9.

Note V. from p. 66.—This certainly is base and unmerited reproach, as it excludes the idea of principle as the ground of action, and as it attributes the dutiful obedience of not turning aside, to timidity, and blind submission to clerical authority. But before such invidious aspersions be cast out, you ought first to inquire by what they are bound. If you mean that they are so, by any unscriptural restrictions of capricious and bigoted clergy, then, no doubt you have reason to exclaim: but if they are bound up only by a regard to duty, order, and unity in the church,—that they be not accessory to the sin of others, in error and false worship,—that they may continue to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and not turn aside after those of the companions,—that they be steadfast, and hold fast their profession without wavering,—that they may not hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. If these and other considerations previously brought to view, be the things by which they are bound up, why then exclaim? Are these not sufficient to regulate the conduct of those who would act from a regard to Scripture authority? And although they should be deemed insufficient reasons, the

persons in view may have the justice done them, of having their conduct ascribed to its proper causes. This will, on the one hand, free them from the charge of blind submission, and on the other, the clergy from exercising lordly supremacy over them.

The following extract beautifully elucidates the remarks of the preceding note. "I have sometimes heard it objected, that to bind us up from hearing other religious denominations, infringes upon our liberty of conscience. I may shortly reply to this, that the man who sees it his duty to separate from other denominations, is bound by the law of God, to love those with whom he was formerly connected in church communion, and to study their recovery to the truth. The manner in which he is to do this I have already shown. It will, then, be the law of God which binds us from hearing other denominations; and surely liberty of conscience cannot be infringed by an opinion, which is nothing more than what the law of God and our own conscience inform us is truth. What conscience sees to be duty, the sanctions of the church are sometimes necessary to strengthen and confirm; and these sanctions can no more infringe upon liberty of conscience in this case than in any other. Every man who is a true servant of Christ, if the head of a family, is bound by the divine law, to keep up the worship of God in his house morning and evening. But if, at the baptism of one of his children, for instance, the church requires from him a promise of his due attendance to family worship, can the man's conscience be hurt because the church asks from him now an additional proof of what the word binds his conscience to perform? surely not. Can the church, then, be said to infringe upon their liberty of conscience, because she exacts from them what the word of God requires? Christian liberty is then by no means invaded, because the church adds her sanctions to the dictates of conscience. And indeed, in no case whatever, would I wish any church to bind upon her members as a law, what either the word, or their own consciences had not previously induced them to consider as obligatory upon them."—*Robertson's Letters*, p. 31.

Note W. from p. 66.—"But then, I shall be reproached for stiffness or bigotry, and therefore to remove that reproach, I sometimes go. Very compliant indeed! By the same rule you ought to associate with every rake, to avoid similar treatment. Hereby you acknowledge that you are not proof against a little reproach for consistency's sake: but will rather contradict your own understanding, than condemn the slander of fools, and the contumely of ignorance. You take the direct way of convincing such, that there is strength in their objection.

But they come and hear with us: and therefore is it not proper to return the compliment? Most undoubtedly, if ceremony and compliment be the rule of Christian behaviour. If you and others were upon an equal footing, then the case would be very materially altered. If there was as little harm in hearing with them, as they apprehend to receive in hearing with you, there would be a wide difference.

They have stated no such evils against you as grounds of separation, as you have against them; and that because, themselves being judges, they had no such reasons of doing so. They know that they are to receive no harm by hearing; but the truth as it is in Jesus for the food of their souls.

But you are in danger of having unscriptural tenets rendered familiar to your mind; of influencing others to continue well pleased in hearing them; of offending others, whom you are bound by very powerful obligation to please; of being reproached for your inconsistency; or of giving occasion to conclude, either that you have not acted from conviction in forming your present connexions, or have begun to repent what you have done."—*Taylor's Letters on Liberty, &c.* p. 58.

Note X. from p. 66.—“There is nothing which has proved a more insuperable obstacle in the way of joining the Secession church than the principle of restricted communion. Had the Synod only winked at the conduct of those members, who paid an occasional visit to other communions, many, who were otherwise friendly to their cause, might have stepped forward and escaped it; but the idea of being what they call, *bound*, or of joining with one church, at the expence of parting fellowship with every other, struck them with terror, and kept them at a distance. Though very much dissatisfied with the churches to which they belonged, they chose rather to continue, than be admitted into one which they accounted more pure, upon the condition of bidding their former connexions a final farewell, as to church fellowship. Had the Synod aimed at the aggrandisement of a party, or collecting a numerous crowd of followers from the various denominations around them, they had certainly endeavoured to make their cause a little more popular, by striking out of it that article which was most obnoxious. They had thrown the doors of their communion as wide open as those of other societies are; and if this had not been followed by an accession to their numbers, they would at least have escaped the reproach of many ill names by which they have been called. But they are taught to act from nobler principles than that of merely gaining proselytes to their opinions; they are likewise taught to esteem the reproach of Christ better than the treasures of this world.”—*Culb.* pp. 5, 6.

The argument that the practice is common, even with good people, fails “unless it were true that good people never did any thing wrong; their practising occasional hearing is no evidence to us that their is no sin in it. Or must we leave the clear Scriptural rule, to be directed in our notions by the conduct of those whom we conjecture to be saints?”—*Robertson*, p. 34.

Note Y. from p. 70—In his indefinite views of the subject, he affects to ridicule the opposition which is made to the practice, representing it to be “a fatal device of the Secession and Antigovernment Societies, in imitation of the Romish priestcraft,—a device which has

been the unhappy source of much unwarrantable abuse committed upon other churches,—a criminal invention,—an insult upon divine authority,—injurious to fellow Christians, &c.” Such a representation need not be a matter of wonder, when we consider that he and his associates are so much indebted to the scheme for actual existence as a distinct party. He says, p. 11, “The founders of the Relief Church, in a judicative capacity, solemnly and publicly declared their adherence to reformation principles.” At this, when we consider the opposition made to these very principles, by several of their writers, we can scarcely restrain the same derisive smile, which is generally shown by them, when the principles of that cause, as the cause of truth, are brought to view.—Very different indeed were the views of the ancient reformers, from those of their modern admirers on the subject of church communion. The latter maintain, at least did, that fellowship of the closest nature may be held with all upon the principle of visible saintship, even with persons of the Episcopalian and Independent persuasion. But will any person read in the Confession of Faith, their views of church government, and their solemn rejection of Prelacy in the mutual league, and say that the views of the one coincided in the smallest degree with those of the other? So very different are the views of the former from those of the latter, that the conduct of their avowed opposers must be viewed as much more consistent, than that of those who profess to acknowledge them but practically deny them. The futility of such irrational views is well shown, by *Mr Henderson* in his *Preface to Testimony-bearing Exemplified*, p. 8. See also *Ramsay’s Review*, p. 23; and *Taylor’s Letters on Liberty*, &c. p. 45.

Note Z. from p. 74.—In the following quotations it is well shown that this passage of the Confession affords *no* support to the practice which it is employed to defend. “In article seventh the Synod declare their willingness to hold occasional communion with churches of other denominations. The authority under which they would patronize this practice, is the following expression of the Confession of Faith: “to extend communion to all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.” These words are taken out of the Scriptures, and as explained in them, and understood by the compilers of the Confession, they mean all those *only* who call upon, and worship the Lord Jesus, after the manner he has appointed to be done, in his own divine institutions and ordinances; and not those who profess to call upon and worship the Lord Jesus in a way not established by him in his word. All Christian sectaries profess to call upon the Lord Jesus; Papists, Episcopalian, Arminians, do so: but we are commanded to go to the law and testimony, for if any speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them. The Synod’s application of the expression to support the cause of occasional communion, is a gross perversion of its genuine meaning. There is nothing in the practice of our reformers to vindicate their sense of it. The solemn league and covenant, in which

our reformers league and bind themselves together, or state the terms of communion with them by others, is such, as may easily convince any person that the Synod's interpretation of this passage is fallacious. The kind of communion pled for by the Synod here, shifts the ground of church fellowship from an agreement in the faith and practice of true religion to the supposed goodness of persons, a most dangerous maxim in the communion of the church."—*Confut. of the Consti. of the Asso. Ref. Syn. of Penn.* p. 15.

Note AA. from p, 75.—Say some on the words: "The Pharisees and Sadducees were declared enemies to our Lord, and some of them did commit the unpardonable sin; and as our Lord always bore a pointed testimony against them, we cannot understand the place of Scripture, referred to in the objection, as in point. There was no place for the public worship of God but at Jerusalem, and therefore there could not be any separation from the church without giving up with the true God. We are not singular in understanding an attendance on the ministrations of the Scribes and Pharisees to be meant of civil subjection to the laws of Moses, and their sitting in Moses' seat means that they were as the executive of the laws of Moses, &c."—*Act of the Asso. Pres. of Pennsylv. &c.* p. 16.

Saith one on the words, "A mere inadvertancy in the translation, hath misled many commentators, in opening up this passage, having taken that for a command which is truly a reproof, while they translate the words *imperatively*, which are as clearly in the *indicative* mode, and the whole connexion of words and phrases requireth it to be so understood. Thus the sense is plain; viz. The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, (here is the snare and temptation, and hence ye are simply and sinfully imposed upon) so that, whatsoever they bid you observe, that (so great is your stupidity) ye observe and do, (right or wrong) but do not ye according to their works, for they say and do not: Though they imposed upon you, whose simplicity rendereth you an easy prey to them, yet they are not such fools, as at the expence of their own ease to put their necks under the grievous yokes which they wreath for others, as verse 4."—*James' Letter to Holmes*, p. 18.

Note BB. from p. 76.—Since articles formed by mutual agreement are employed in all well regulated societies, those who discard such useful bonds of association, more resemble the gregarious herds, or uncivilized tribes, than societies acting upon principles of decency and social order. Are articles of agreement indispensable for the good government of civil associations, and yet wholly unnecessary in those of a religious kind? The only alternative, in this case, is that the former are more important than the latter!

Note CC. from p. 76.—It is a prevailing opinion, supported by general practice, that nothing but the doctrines of grace ought to be introduced into pulpit discussion. If, however, the Scriptures be

the pattern of imitation, we find the ancient prophets, Christ himself and his apostles, insisted most on those doctrines that were most keenly opposed; and reprov'd those errors and vices that were of most general practice. The language of those most liable to reproof was, as it still is, "prophesy unto us smooth things;" and the fear of offence but too frequently induces compliance. If distinctive principles be as they ought, according to Scripture, and ground sufficient to induce a separate connexion, ought they not the more frequently to be vindicated, (even more than those about which there is no disagreement) as important matters in which the Redeemer's interests are concerned, though neglected or opposed by persons little influenced by the importance of divine truth? "All truth must be avowed, and practically avowed on the greatest hazard: and as this testimony must be full, so must it also be constant, and whatever truth or duty is opposed, that becomes the special object of this testimony."—*Hind Let Loose*, p. 300.

Note DD. from p. 77.—In connexion with the above, it may not be improper here to observe, that much satirical abuse has been cast upon persons, for subjecting themselves to the inconvenience of a few miles' travel, in order to obtain a more pure dispensation of gospel ordinances. Convenience, like the altars of Dan and Bethel, is studied by many, both in the case of new erections, and of personal attendance. The inconvenience of a few miles' travel is regarded reason sufficient against connecting with a community, though otherwise, from every circumstance of superiority, it claims the preference. Attendance merely on account of vicinity, is a principle exceedingly low, and unbecoming a Christian professor. It proceeds upon the supposition that little or no difference exists among the different denominations; if so, then it may be right: but is not the difference between Christ's flock and those of his companions both great and important? On the principle, that no difference exists between divine institutions and human inventions, Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin, persuaded the people that "it was too much for them to go up to Jerusalem;" they might therefore be accommodated with the worship of the *golden calves*,* which he had set up. This is just what is done in making places of convenience serve for a pure dispensation of gospel ordinances. Those, certainly, who observe such a manifest distinction, and subject themselves to the inconvenience of a few miles' travel, to obtain a dispensation of ordinances according to Scripture appointment, may justly avoid the sneer of those who are actuated by such neutrality, as to regard almost all parties alike. Those who are thus reproached for their religious observances may rejoice at the future prospect of being made "glad with exceeding joy," while others may dread the declaration, "inasmuch as ye did evil unto one of these ye did it unto me."

* Very emblematical of those professions where there is more show than substance.

We find that the pleasures of life are prosecuted with the utmost avidity, as those of the huntsman, even in the face of the most formidable dangers, without the prospect of any other reward than the gratification of a momentary pleasure; and all this without the least censure or ridicule; and must the Christian be derided for acting a more worthy part, and in a matter infinitely more important? This is no doubt what the world counts foolishness, though in the Divine estimation, the truest wisdom. Appropriate upon the subject are the following observations:

“The apology, founded on the inconvenience of going a few miles to a places of worship, cannot surely be sustained in a matter of such moment. Mere distance can be no reasonable ground on which to change our religious profession; much less that of two or three miles. This would imply, that he who fixes the bounds of our habitation, permits us to join the nearest congregation, whether it be held by the Koran, embraced by the creed of the Catholic, of the Episcopalian, or of the Presbyterian church. Is it not more reasonable to suppose, that he thus brings our stedfastness to the test? Can he be ranked among the witnesses of Jesus, who in the sunshine cries out, “What a weariness is it?” when he is required to go half the way for his spiritual provision, one day in seven, that would go with the greatest alacrity on each of the other six, for the bread that perishes? How would he face persecution? How would he wander in sheep’s skins, and goats’ skins on the mountains, in dens, and in caves of the earth, destitute, afflicted, tormented? How would he seek his bread, like them that jeopardized their lives in the high places of the field, in the days of our fathers, when they waited on ordinances, in peril of the sword of the wilderness? The argument of advancing years, and growing infirmities, is equally untenable. Who supported you under affliction,” &c?—*Christ. Mag.* for 1800, p. 358.

Though the above quotations are taken mostly from authors who hold sentiments in which they and the writer are not agreed, yet since in this he finds unanimity, he considers himself at liberty to use their authority without being in the least responsible for some of their other opinions, on account of which he must view them as not going forth by the footsteps of the flock, and so must be separated from as brethren walking disorderly. These quotations also show that the doctrine of restricted communion, however unpopular, is not the peculiar notion of an individual or party. It is held by respectable persons and communities otherwise of different sentiments. Notwithstanding, if any are displeased with the publication, it is hoped they will regard the authorities adduced in support of the reasoning employed, viz. scripture and human writings. Judicious objections from these will be attended to, and mistakes acknowledged, but no attention will be paid to burlesque and ridicule,—the hateful resource of prejudiced minds, when arguments more tenable are wanting.

APPENDIX II.

CONTAINING OBSERVATIONS ON PRAYER FOR KINGS.*

PRAYER is a solemn ordinance of divine appointment, and to be engaged in, whether in our own behalf or in that of others, with solemnity and reverence, and according to Scripture rule, and never from formality, nor for sake of advantage to procure esteem or avoid offence. Prayer is to be regulated according to the circumstances of those for whom we pray; that, if really good, accessions of spiritual good, &c. may be their enjoyment; if otherwise, that God may grant such reclaiming means as their present condition requires. So, since kings, like others, are good or bad, our prayers for them must be according as we have reason, from external appearance, to judge of their real state, and according as they promote or oppose the coming of Christ's kingdom.

In attending to the subject of *praying for kings*, it may not be improper to take a short view of their character as delineated in Scripture,—attend to the arguments employed for indiscriminate prayer,—and then show, more immediately, for what things, in relation to them, we are to pray.

1. Then, in respect of Scripture qualifications, we find a primary one is, that they be possessed of genuine piety; such, on account of their regard to morality and religion, as to entitle them to the esteem and confidence of good men. Unless they are men of truth, hating covetousness, they cannot be supposed to rule in the fear of God. See Exod. xviii. 21; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.†

2. Those entitled to an interest in our prayers must come into office according to the plan of Divine appointment, which is by the choice of those over whom they are to preside. “Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee;—thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.” Deut. xvii. 15. This shows that he must be a brother, and that, no doubt, both by nation and profession. The people's privilege of nomination

* As the foregoing Strictures are considerably longer than the prescribed limits of the whole, the following observations, the design of which is to vindicate the omission of what are called loyal prayers, must of consequence be much shorter than what was originally designed.

† This part of the subject is well illustrated in the *Rev. Mr M'Millan's Letter*, pp. 12, 13; *Steven's 1st Letter*, p. 116; *Wylie's Sons of Oil*, pp. 25, 26; and *Magistracy unveiled*, p. 3.

is also clearly pointed out in these words: "Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee," &c. And the expression, "whom the Lord thy God shall choose," denotes a limitation under which they are in their choice, *viz.* to those possessed of Scripture qualifications; as none other can be considered objects of Divine choice. Were no attention to this limitation necessary, there had been no ground for the following complaint; "They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, and I knew it not." Hos. viii. 4.

3. Those in civil office entitled to an interest in our prayers must sustain the character of God's ministers. "He is the minister of God to thee for good;" Rom. xiii. 4: a character which can never possibly apply, without the grossest perversion of common language, to the Neros of former or present times. If the ministers of God, then, they must promote the interest of his church by the most Scriptural and rational means. On this account they are promised to be given as nursing fathers to the church.* In times of reformation an exclusive condition of receiving the crown was the defence of the true religion.† This, however, is wholly at variance with an Erastian supremacy in the church, and the support of false systems of religion. In this way, instead of advancing the interests of the church, the greatest obstructions are laid in the way of her progress. Then, to pray for establishment and success to such, is in effect to pray for the suppression of the true religion. Such prayers cannot fail to meet a treatment similar to that of those in whose behalf they are impiously made.

It must seem strange, that any professing the highest respect for Divine Revelation, should so far overlook its plainest precepts respecting magistratic qualifications, as to maintain that these are no more requisite in that character than in a mere mechanic or any other person. Why, then, are they called gods,—children of the Most High,—ministers of God to thee for good,—nursing fathers to the church, &c. if no more be required of them in relation to the church than others, or what may arise merely from the influence of their example?

The *spiritual nature* of Christ's kingdom can be no apology for such a culpable neglect: for though her interests are not to be promoted by coercive means, yet being a feeble society and exposed to much danger it stands in need of this defence, which God has been pleased to make for her safety. She has no doubt existed long in a wilderness condition, entirely independent of such external protection. This, however, is no apology for those by whom it is withheld. Jesus will at last say to them; "In as much as ye did it not unto these ye did it not unto me."

* See *Mr M'Millan's Letter*, pp. 80--82; *Wylie's Sons of Oil*, pp. 25, 26, 28; *Mr Hill's Synod Ser.* on the words, pp. 16--32.

† See *Confession*, p. 490; and *Solemn League*, p. 3.

According to the restricted view that must be here taken of the subject, I proceed now to consider the arguments made use of for indiscriminate prayer.*

1. A prominent argument is taken from 1 Tim. ii. 2, where prayer for kings, and for all in authority is expressly enjoined. However much this passage may be abused to support the practice of indiscriminate prayer, it is manifest from the words immediately following that it affords no such argument: for these words, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all goodness and honestly," show that it is the good of the godly that is designed, and not that of the tyrant Nero, under whose savage ferocity, they were subjected to the most unrelenting cruelty, and death even in its most heinous forms. In this case it was exceedingly proper to pray, in relation to such a character, that he might be restrained from such ruinous measures against the church. Prayer in this way in all similar cases is perfectly consistent; for while we are to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom, we are to pray "that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed," in which also we pray for the overthrow of all its supporters. And in relation to every enemy we are to pray that the Lord may set restraining bounds to the remainder of his wrath: which seems to be the very import of this controverted passage, which in this view affords not the most distant warrant for indiscriminate prayer.

2. Another argument is taken from Rom. xiii. 1: "The powers that be are ordained of God." The neglect of prayer, it is argued, is a part of that resistance which is threatened with damnation. This will certainly be the case if no distinction is to be made between the good and the bad, between those who are nursing fathers to the church, and oppressors who are given to rule over her; the one in office by the permission of his providence, and the other according to the precepts of his word. By the very absurd view that is generally taken of the passage, the order of things is capable of being reversed; and prayer must be made indiscriminately for those who are a terror to the good, as for those who are for the praise of them that do well. The passage shows that magistracy is an ordinance of Divine appointment, and that the persons in office, qualified according to the character given of them by the apostle, are to be submitted to in the Lord, and prayed for as ministers that are given to us of God for our good. If nothing but the bare sound of words is to be attended to, then the most oppressive tyrant will have the same claims as the good and gentle. Upon the same principle may lay-preachers plead the apostolic commission, "*Go, preach and baptize,*" as a war-

* By indiscriminate prayer, I understand the same addresses to Jehovah's throne in behalf of all rulers, whether they possess the moral qualifications required of them in Scripture or not; whether they profess and protect the true religion, and promote its interests by their example and influence, or act a part entirely the reverse.

rant for the invasion of an office, for which they have neither call nor qualifications: the Universalist also may support his scheme from such expressions as 1 Cor. xv. 22: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;" and all this by attending only to the bare sound of words, without regarding the scope of the passage, and the analogy of Scripture. By such an abstract and partial view of Scripture, almost any error may be supported. So, if by the powers that be we are to understand mere occupancy, then all distinction between virtuous and vicious characters is for ever at an end. It must, however, seem strange how any can defend indiscriminate prayer from this passage, since the apostle so explicitly draws the line of distinction, in describing those powers to whom every soul is required to be subject. They are a terror to evil workers, and give praise to them that do good; they are the ministers of God for good, and revengers to execute wrath upon them that do evil. Now, where these characteristics of Christian magistrates are wanting, the omission of prayer in their behalf is no neglect of duty. But it is objected; If the passage does not relate to the then existing powers, what was the apostle's design in introducing it into his letter? it could have no meaning, it could be of no use. Yes, it could be of as much use to point out the duties of rulers and subjects, even when they had no existence, as the directions of Moses on the same subject were to Israel in the wilderness, while yet they had no king, nor for hundreds of years to come. See Exod. xviii. 21; Deut. xvii. 15; *Mr Reid's Animadversions*, p. 6; *M'Leod on the Revelation*, foot note, p. 330; *Steven's 2d Let.* p. 6.

But another important and immediate purpose was served by the passage: it showed (in opposition to the misconceptions of some) that the gospel dispensation fully recognized magistracy in all its gradations, supreme and subordinate, and that submission must be yielded to those in office, (qualified according to the passage) not from the low principle of favour or interest, but from the high authority of Heaven injoining subjection to a Divine ordinance; and if to these subjection was not yielded, rulers might see that this arose not from any refractoriness in the Christians, but from themselves, as wanting those qualifications which entitle to submission in the Lord.—See this passage excellently illustrated, *Testimony*, p. 125; *Reid's Animad.* p. 59.

3. Another argument is taken from the Confession of Faith, chap. xxiii. sect. 4: "It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, &c.: Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him." This certainly is a sweeping argument; and if taken according to the sense of some modern reformers, as applying indiscriminately to all, it will be found to support the claims of persons unworthy, even of the privileges of social intercourse, and still more unworthy of being placed at the head of affairs in the government of a nation: What character can be considered more unworthy of confidence than an infidel? Such a one is prepared for the per-

petration of any enormity; and obliged by no regard to future responsibility to observe his own declarations or oaths which he may give as pledges of veracity.

But it is evident from a view of the chapter, that it is *Christian*, and not *infidel*, magistrates that are meant. In section second it is said, "It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate," &c. In section third it is said, "He hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire," &c. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that these expressions can in the least consistency apply to an infidel either in a heathenish or Christian country. Besides, it is very unreasonable to suppose that the very learned and judicious authors of so excellent a compilation should be chargeable with so much inconsistency, as to injoin an indiscriminate acknowledgment of characters, contrary to the express declarations of Scripture, to reason, and to their own doctrine upon the subject. See p. 490, "That all kings, &c. shall promise by solemn oath, that, they shall serve the same eternal God to the uttermost of their power, according as he hath required in his most holy word," &c.

The passage, however, is freed from all ambiguity and difficulty, by viewing it as referring to subjects, and not to kings at all. It is in this case manifest and rational, that infidelity in subjects, or difference of sentiment in matters of religion, does not exempt them from the duties, which they owe the authorities which are lawfully constituted over them. From the concluding part of the section, respect seems to be had immediately to papists, who are taught to keep no faith with heretics, and are loosed from their oaths of allegiance by the bulls of popes. The passage in this view of it affords no argument for indiscriminate prayer for all in authority.

4. We support them by the payment of taxes, why then do we not pray for them; and if it be wrong to pray, why support them in this way?

The paying of tribute, whether for the enjoyment of our civil immunities or by oppressive taxation is no acknowledgement of legal authority. This is resolvable into the subject of passive obedience; or as the apostle expresses it, "subject for wrath's sake." Oppressors are often given to rule over a sinning people; and bare submission for sake of personal comfort, or yielding a part for the preservation of the rest, is no more a proof of loyal or conscientious subjection, than doing so to a robber would sanction his unjust demands. Those who thus argue concerning civil tribute cannot refuse that the payment of ecclesiastical assessments is an equal acknowledgement of those characters and constitutions, for the maintenance of which such assessment is made; and, if so, the evil must be much worse, as characters the most erroneous, and systems eversive of genuine religion, are thereby supported. But nothing, certainly, can be more expressive of approbation than solemn addresses to the Hearer of prayer in their behalf, which ought never to be

done, but for such characters as the Scriptures fully warrant.—See on the subjects, *Steven's 2d. Letter*, pp. 7—9, and *Reid's Animadversions*, p. 15.

5. Taking the benefit of them in law-suits is expressive of approbation as well as prayer.

The two cases, however, are, I apprehend, entirely different. As prayer is wholly voluntary, it is expressive of the most hearty approbation; and if evil in the constitution and administration, it is an invocation of the Almighty to countenance them in the maintenance of such evils. But going to law before them, when pressing necessity urges it, is no more than taking the benefit of any external good, of which they are the occasion. Justice may be done, and good enjoyed by them, while yet they cannot be recognized as God's ordinance for want of those qualifications which the Scriptures require in that character. Availing ourselves of their interference, is no more expressive of acknowledgment, than when life is in danger we ask the assistance of the robber to deliver from the hands of the assassin. It was, I presume, upon this principle that Paul appealed to Cesar, and that without the least view of him as the minister or ordinance of God. Nor did the woman do so in respect of the unjust judge, to whom she applied for a redress of a particular grievance. The doing so in similar cases is entirely different from prayer for establishment and success to the throne and administration.—See *Wylie's Sons of Oil*, p. 77; *Reid's Animad.* p. 26; *Testimony*, pp. 167, 168; and *Eccl. Sketches*, pp. 122—125.

The last thing to be attended to is, to mention some things for which, in relation to kings, we are to pray.

1. We are to pray for the enjoyment of them as a promised good: "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers—kings shall minister to thee—thou shalt suck the breast of kings, &c." *Isa. xlix. 23; lx. 10, 16.* As these promises open up happy prospects, it is our bounden duty to pray for their fulfilment.—See *Hill's Ser.* on *Isa. xlix. 23*, pp. 32—38; *Magistracy Unveiled*, chap. xi; and *Wylie's Sons of Oil*, pp. 25, 51.

2. With relation to such as actually exist, if good and acting according to their high character, as promoting the interest of both church and state, both by personal example and in virtue of official power, then we are to pray for their good, spiritual and temporal; for establishment to their throne, wisdom in their designs, and success to their undertakings, as David did; "Give the king thy judgments and his son thy righteousness." To "pray for the stability of the king's throne, and the prosperity of his government," when the constitution involves an Erastian supremacy in the church—the profession of prelacy—and the toleration of popery, with every other error, is, I apprehend, no less than blasphemous in itself; and a supplication to the Almighty to establish the throne of iniquity. It is an inconsistency extremely gross to pray for the overthrow of false systems of worship, and at the same time pray for success to their

avowed supporters. Mention is made of ten kings (who are generally understood to denote European governments) giving their power and strength to the beast and making war with the Lamb: and can any thing more strongly express approbation of the horrid warfare than prayer for success to these enemies of the Lamb? The thing itself is blasphemous and monstrously absurd. How inconsistent to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom and yet pray for prosperity to the supporters of its most noted enemies? Can any consistently pray that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and at the same time pray for stability and success to those who give their strength to the beast, and make war with the Lamb? Rev. xvii. 13, 14. Was not this in effect done by a professed friend of the reformation, who on the Lord's day, in the presence of a numerous congregation, gave thanks to God for the overthrow of the usurper, and the restoration of the legitimate heir to the throne of his ancestors? This is no less than giving thanks to the Almighty for that success, which the wicked are sometimes said to get in sin. This is, with a witness, nullifying all distinction between the good and the bad; between the nursing fathers of the church, and the patrons of impiety.

To pray for success to persons engaged in a bad cause, is in the most direct manner bidding them God speed, and such we are told are unavoidably partakers of their evil deeds.

Till of late years, the declaration, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and shall arise no more at all for ever," was in every protestant congregation turned into fervent prayer for the accomplishment of an event so important and desirable. But, like other modern changes in religion, matters are in this respect materially altered. Whether the change be in the reformation of the system, or in the disposition of people towards it, I shall leave to others to pronounce; only without hesitation it may confidently be affirmed, that between the present and a period not very remote a difference has taken place. Instead of praying, as usual, for the overthrow of the superstitious systems of popery and prelacy, prayer is unreservedly made for the abettors of both.

3. But if they are not good, as is generally the case, then what interest are they to have in our prayers? Since the apostle recommends prayer for all men, and since God will have all men to be saved, they, in their *personal* character, have the same interest in our prayers with other sinners of mankind; viz. that they be made sensible of their sin and misery, that they be brought to repentance, and to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; that they may see the evil of apostatizing from national attainments, whether civil or religious,—the evil of supporting false systems of religion—of exercising an Erastian supremacy in the church, &c. These, and such like evils, as long as they exist, must be regarded as reasons for omitting indiscriminate prayer in their behalf; which, wherever it obtains, tends to continue in security, and to harden them in infidelity. Whereas the ambassadors of heaven ought to testify against

such instances of impiety, and not flatter them in their wickedness, by indiscriminately praying for them as the powers that are ordained of God. It is in the former way, and not in the latter, that they are most likely to be made sensible of their sin and danger, and led to obtain the salvation which is of God through Christ."—See *Sons of Oil*, pp. 46—60.

4. There is a particular promise, Rev. xvii. 16, that the ten kings, which give their power and strength to the antichristian beast shall be instrumental in its final overthrow. This is a most desirable good, and the certainty of its accomplishment rests upon the infallibility of the promise: and as a promised good, it is perfectly Scriptural to pray, that they may be influenced to hate the whore, to eat her flesh, to make her desolate and bare, and to burn her with fire; and to pray for their success in this vengeful work; for the accomplishment of which they are the chosen instruments in the hand of an avenging God.

Upon the same principle, it may be proper to pray for success to such in any enterprise in which the church's good is concerned, or which may lead to the overthrow of her enemies. And this is entirely different from such unqualified prayers, as imply an unqualified approbation of either person, constitution or government.

5. It is also proper to pray, that wicked rulers may be restrained from such measures as are injurious to the church. God is said to make the devices of the people of none effect. Must it not, then, be proper to pray that evil designs may be frustrated, or overruled for the good of the church; as the murderous law for destroying the Israelitish children in Egypt? Moses prayed at the Red sea, which no doubt was that the Egyptians might be disappointed. David often so prayed in relation to Saul, Ahithophel, and Absalom. It was perhaps on this very account that many evil designs of wicked rulers have been entirely frustrated, as in the cases of Balak, Hamañ, Sennacherib, and the king of Babylon, in relation to the three Israelites in the fire, Daniel in the lion's den, and Peter who was delivered out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the Jews, "prayer being made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." Acts xii. 5. 11. Prayer to this effect was shown to be the design of 1 Tim. ii. 2; viz. that Nero and others might be restrained from persecution, &c. that the church might lead a quiet and peaceable life under them in all godliness and honesty. This, with other Scriptures, was written for our learning and imitation, and will apply in all cases, however vicious the lives of the rulers, or immoral the government may be; wherever the church may be found at any time to exist. This view is certainly much more just and reasonable than the one generally given of it, viz. that it designs indiscriminate prayer for royalty; which prayers have often much more the appearance of being designed as tests of loyalty, than for the real good of the persons themselves.

6. If they remain hostile to the interests of the church, and act a tyrannical part towards the nation, or treat the voice of the public

with contempt, prayer ought then to be for deliverance from such unworthy characters. If it be allowable to resist the violence of oppression, the propriety of prayer for its removal cannot be refused. This will particularly apply to those oppressors whom God gives in his displeasure as the punishment of a sinning people. See Neh. ix. 37. Prayer for deliverance in this case has the sanction both of Scripture and reason. See 2 Chron. xxiii. 12—15; Ezek. xxi. 25—27; Ezra vi. 12. On this principle the oppressed Israelites in Egypt cried unto the Lord by reason of their task-masters; they were heard and delivered from their oppressors, who were overthrown as lead in the mighty waters.—Nebuchadnezzar also, for similar haughtiness and oppression, was expelled the throne, and made the associate of the beasts of the field.

This principle was acted upon at the Revolution in the expulsion of the bloody House of Stewart from the British throne; which action has ever been regarded as highly laudable, and worthy of imitation in all similar cases.

It may not be improper here to subjoin, as grounds of expulsion, the Causes of Divine Judgment upon Sinning Kings, delivered at London, in a Sermon commemorative of the Revolution, by Mr Love, now in Anderston, Glasgow, from Psal. lxxvi. 12: "He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth." 1. "When a spirit of tyranny, oppression, and cruelty prevails. 2. When civil government and its blessings are perverted from their proper subserviency to the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ, and are sacrificed to the gratification of worldly lusts. 3. When the favour and encouragement of civil power are prostituted to the support of false and blasphemous religions. 4. When the awful mysteries of true religion are debased, and rendered vile in the eyes of men, by their being used merely as tools for carrying on political schemes; and so the throne of the eternal and dread God of heaven is considered and treated as though it were a kind of footstool for miserable mortals. 5. When the sceptre and sword of civil power are managed in a directly hostile opposition to the truths, the ordinances, and faithful people of God." It may also be added, that if usurpation and tyranny merit expulsion, the usurpation of the prerogatives of Christ in his church is equally, if not more meritorious of the same treatment.

CONCLUSION.

I only farther make a remark or two upon the disrespectful manner in which those are treated who distinguish between qualified and unqualified characters in civil office. The necessity of Scriptural qualifications is reprobated as a cunningly devised fable: and those who maintain this necessity are represented as men of antigovernment principles. This charge will be admitted when those bringing it have eradicated from the sacred page the following passages: Exod. xviii. 21; Deut. xvii. 15; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3; Isa. xlix. 23;

ix. 10, 16; Rom. xiii. 1—4, &c. And as the opposition is made only to government, which is of an immoral nature, it is asked, whether the term *anti-immoral government*, or *anti-scriptural government* be the more offensive? It is an evidence of a bad cause, and that argument is wanting, when recourse must be had to such low defence, as reproachful epithets; epithets for which there is not even a shadow of foundation, but what arises from a total disregard to that distinction in character which the Scripture clearly recognizes. The term, then, is solely the effect of base and malicious reproach. And upon minute examination it will be found perfectly applicable to those who so fondly employ it: for no principle can be more eversive of the best regulated government; than that which makes no distinction in official character. If "the basest of men" can obtain only a majority they are to be recognized as the ministers of God, &c.!

I shall do my publication the honour of concluding it, with two appropriate quotations from the very respectable Letter of the Rev. Mr M^cMillan, Stirling, page 18: "Gentlemen, believe me, I am in no passion, when I aver that your observations are a cluster of mere assertions and suppositions, without reasoning and without proof. Reasoning and proof are employed in some other parts of the work,* but those precious stores appear to be wholly exhausted, for none of them are had when the combat is maintained against the Presbytery. The language of your observations is malicious. A few lines contain all that the Committee have offered, and in these the malicious epithet *antigovernment* is applied no less than four times to the Reformed Presbytery, and to the people under their inspection. The Presbytery are wholly indebted to the Secession for this epithet. It is a sweet morsel rolled under their tongue: and, O how pleasantly do they feed upon it! With what warmth do they talk it over in company! With what vehemence do they breathe it from the pulpit! With what accentuation do they mark it in their books! The term *antigovernment* signifies those who deny the very being of government, and who are enemies to all government, divine and human.—The all-powerful reason, for which Seceders bestow this epithet so liberally upon the Presbytery, is, because the Presbytery differ from them, about the sacred mode of civil magistracy; and, stopping short of their length, refuse to own, as God's moral ordinance, agreeable to his holy word, what they are persuaded has no divine warrant there.

As the Presbytery acknowledge that civil magistracy is an ordinance of the Supreme Jehovah, and wherever they find this erected amongst men, according to his word, they desire to revere it for conscience' sake; so the ill-natured name cannot disquiet the conscientious integrity of their hearts. But there is not, perhaps, an epithet better adapted to render those upon whom it is bestowed obnoxious to the general resentment of mankind, and to irritate reign-

* *The Re-exhibition of the Secession Testimony.*

ing powers against them, than the very epithet *antigovernment*, and with this intention I cannot restrain my mind from thinking that you, Gentlemen, have used it; and by the constant, but jejune repetition thereof, you hope to stain the character of your opponents.—I submit it to the judicious public, whether the principle of the Secession, which makes the right of princes to the throne, to hinge *purely* upon the fluctuating voice of a majority; and which allows a majority, in denying to do so, a lawful power to degrade the prince, without any cause of offence given by him, and to exalt another to the same throne; or, the principle of the Presbytery which pleads the necessity of proper qualifications in the prince, with a just constitution of government; and requires the subjects to yield a conscientious subjection to him, without allowing them a power, at pleasure, wantonly to pluck the prince from his throne, and exalt the basest of men unto it: I say, I submit to the public, whether the first, or the last of these principles, contains in it *most* of the antigovernment system."

The following passage brings clearly to view in few words the Scripture doctrine of the litigated subject. Page 6: "The Reformed Presbytery maintain, that civil magistracy is an ordinance of God, appointed for the purposes of his own glory, the good of mankind, and the external defence of the church, originally founded in the moral law, the law of nature, now put into the hands of the Mediator, as Head of all things, for the sake of the church, clearly revealed to sinners in the sacred oracles of inspiration; that the people, in whom the radical power of vesting magistrates is, when blessed with divine revelation, are sacredly bound to observe the laws, regulations and statutes of divine revelation, both in the formation of their constitutions, and in the investiture of their magistrates, supreme and subordinate; that the persons to be vested with the magistracy, in Christian lands, who, by their office do become God's moral vicegerents, ought to be professors of the true religion; that these attainments in civil reformation, to which different lands have reached, ought to be steadily adhered to in the erection of magistrates; and, that a magistracy thus formed is entitled to subjection, as to God's ordinance from every soul within the territory for conscience' sake."

To prevent a blank, the following extract is given from the *Dictionary of the Rev. Mr Brown*, (under the word *RULE*) who, though not charged with any thing like antigovernmentism, yet whose words fully corroborate the general sentiment of the foregoing observations.

"As the Jews had their rulers civil and sacred, so under the New Testament there is still a civil and ecclesiastical government; the former of which is of God, as to the general plan; but the particular form, whether of kingdom or commonwealth, or mixed of both, as in Britain, is left to the discretion of men; and so is called an *ordi-*

nance or creature of man.—The duty of civil magistrates to their subjects, is to establish good laws, and see to the execution thereof.—As the true religion tends at once to the honour of God and the welfare of nations, they are by their laws and example to exert themselves to the utmost to promote the same. By the exercise of the civil power in favour of the church, they are to prevent or abolish persecution, profaneness, idolatry, superstition, or heresy, and remove all occasions thereof; and to maintain for her, the whole of her spiritual privileges granted her by Christ; and to promote the public administration of, and attendance to every ordinance of Christ; and to punish every gross violation of the Divine law, unto death, banishment, imprisonment, and confiscation of goods, &c.—

Some have pretended that magistrates have no concern with religion at all, and especially with revealed religion, in the execution of their office, but ought to leave every man to profess, teach, or worship what and in what manner he pleaseth, provided he doth not disturb the commonwealth by any civil crimes, and ought to protect them in their full liberty to propagate their blasphemous tenets or idolatrous worship. Some have even pretended that civil establishments of the true religion are calculated to render men irreligious, or at best hypocritical dissemblers. But when we consider that all things ought to be done to the glory of God;—that magistracy is an ordinance of God, and magistrates, ministers, or deputies of God, for good to men, appointed to be a terror to evil-doers, and a praise of them that do well;—that every head of a family hath power to exclude superstition and idolatry from it, and to establish in it the true worship of God, and refuse lodging to heretical seducers;—that magistrates ought to exercise their power as is most conducive to make all their subjects live quietly in all godliness, as well as honesty;—that magistrates are often expressly commanded to punish obstinate idolaters, false prophets, blasphemers, profaners of the Sabbath, &c. as well as thieves, robbers, murderers;—that magistrates, not only Jewish, but heathen, have, with God's approbation, required their subjects to worship the true God, and have suppressed and punished obstinate idolaters or blasphemers;—that the fourth commandment, of which the obligation is perpetual and universal, binds magistrates to provide that the Sabbath be sanctified in all their gates, which cannot be done by the teaching of blasphemy, or practising idolatrous worship;—that the exercise of the magistrate's power in favours of the true religion, and opposition to false religion, is promised as a blessing to the New Testament church;—and that the very law of nature requires that magistrates chiefly care for the honour of God, who is the sovereign head of civil societies, as King over all the earth, and the source and bestower of all their happiness;—and that men should be governed, as having immortal souls, not as mere animals;—that as righteousness exalteth nations, sin, even idolatry and blasphemy, is the reproach and ruin of any people;—that sins are especially hurtful to nations, as they tend to debauch men's manners, and provoke God to wrath against the na-

tion ;—that if God grant men the benefit of any duly attested revelation, it should be readily received as the rule of our conduct, be our station what it will :—It is plain that magistrates can never lawfully exercise their power, which they, as his deputies, received from God, for his honour and the true welfare of mankind, in giving equal establishment and protection to the religion of the devil, as they may to the religion of Jesus Christ, by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice.—

The whole of the objections against what we have just asserted, are rather specious declamation, than solid reasoning. To pretend that civil laws can bind, but in so far as dependent on, and regulated by the authority and law of God ;—to pretend that magistrates ought, or may punish crimes *only* as injurious to men, without any way regarding their offensiveness or injuriousness to God ;—to pretend that conscience, which derives all its authority from God, can warrant men either to do or establish what is sinful, or protect them in it ;—to pretend that men's civil liberty, which is all derived to them from God, as his free gift, can protect them in blasphemy or idolatry, any more than in theft or murder, proceeds plainly upon atheistical principles ;—to pretend, that such as enjoy the benefit of revelation, should not make use of it for regulating the laws of their nation, or the administration of civil offices, is plainly a contempt of revelation, and obstinate drawing back to heathenism. To pretend that the Jewish church and state were not distinct, is false, and hath been repeatedly refuted by Leusden, Gillespy, Apoloni, and others. To pretend that the Jewish magistrates being typical, renders the laws enjoined them, or their example useless to us, is absurd, and infers that we ought to account almost all the Old Testament useless to us as a rule, because it primarily respected persons who were typical. Upon an accurate comparison, it will be found that after the Jews' rejection of the theocracy under Samuel,—their magistrates were in almost all things similar to our own. No difficulties that I know of attend magistrates' civil power about religious matters, but the like, if not greater, attend church rulers' ecclesiastic power about them.

Both magistrates and church rulers, ought carefully to observe the difference between their respective powers, and to act precisely within the limits and according to the nature of their own department. Neglect of this hath been a fertile source of almost all the blendid establishments and manifold disorders in both church and state : The civil and ecclesiastic powers are indeed CO-ORDINATE, which may beautifully subsist together, the one independent of the other, and yet each exercised for the advantage of the other : but they are not COLATERAL, dependent upon one another, and which cannot rightly subsist if separated the one from the other."

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