
AN

APOLOGY

FOR

CALVINISM.

BY R. H. BISHOP,
OF THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED CHURCH

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord
shall lift up a standard against him.” Isa. li. 19.

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TO ALL WHO LOVE THE LORD JESUS, IN
SINCERITY AND TRUTH.

DEARLY BELOVED,

WHEN we give all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it is needful also to exhort you, that ye should contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. While we teach you in all things to have a conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ, it is necessary that we also follow the example of the Apostle; and add, that in having such a conversation you must stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

In contending for the faith of the Gospel, there are two things to be chiefly guarded against, wavering and bigotry. In wavering, we come under those characters described by the Apostle unstable souls—children in knowledge—ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth—tossed about with every wind of doctrine, and cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive. In bigotry we indeed stand unmoved—We indeed hold fast that which we have attained, but we know neither what we say, nor whereof we affirm. Those, then, who would stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, must steer a middle course. They must in the first place have a well informed judgment. They must have their religious principles deeply laid. They must know the principles which they hold, and the foundation upon which they hold them. They must be ready to give unto every one who asketh, a reason of the hope which is in them. Thus rooted and grounded in the truth, they are completely fortified against unsteadiness or wavering. They at the very first instance, see thro' every device which is laid to lead them into error. They look to the good old way and hold fast their profession.

To assist you, brethren, in this duty, is the design of the following sheets. They are intended to expose the

fallacy of some doctrines lately published in a pamphlet, entitled, A Compendious View of the Gospel. That the subjects discussed in the following sheets are of very great importance to the faith and the practice of a Christian, all will allow. How far what is here offered to the public, has a tendency to establish truth and to refute error, the intelligent and candid can judge. The reader will also observe, that in the present publication, there is no notice taken of the narrative prefixed to the above mentioned View—nor to any thing which respects the dispute concerning order and government, which at present exists betwixt the Presbytery of Springfield, and those judicatories to which that Presbytery formerly belonged. To take notice of these things does not fall within my province. To say who is right, or who is wrong in these matters does not belong to any who are not members of the churches concerned.—Not so concerning the doctrines of election; human depravity, regeneration, and the use of creeds and confessions. The errors which the Presbytery of Springfield has published, respecting these matters, are as much directed against the adherents to the Associate Reformed Synod, as they are directed against the members of the Presbyterian Church. To stand upon the defence, then, in this case, is to engage in a common cause. To warn and fortify their people against these errors, is the incumbent duty of those who serve in the sacred office, in both churches. In this persuasion the following sheets were composed—in this persuasion they are now made public. And that the head of the church may abundantly bless them for the good of his body at large,

Is the sincere desire

Of Brethren,

Your servant in

The Gospel of

God's Son,

R. H. BISHOP.

LEXINGTON, May 1804.

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CHAPTER I.
ELECTION.

IN considering any doctrine of revelation, it is of vast importance to attend to the distinction which is betwixt the doctrine itself, and the particular use for which it is revealed. By not attending unto this distinction, some of the most sublime, the most important doctrines of our holy religion have been grossly abused. Men have thus turned into a rule of duty, that which was intended merely as an object of faith. They have reasoned where it was only proper for them to believe.

The doctrine of particular, absolute, unconditional election, as held by Calvinists, is held as a doctrine of pure faith. They believe it just, because it is founded upon a "thus saith the Lord." All the whys and hows, which have at different times been asked about this doctrine, they lay aside as impertinent. The foundation upon which their faith rests, is contained in such passages as these. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and*

whom he justified, them he also glorified. Rom. viii. 29, 30. These words spake Jesus; and lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. John xvii. 1, 2. For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth. It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.—For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Romans ix. 11—18. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will—Eph. i. 4, 5. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will—verse 11. Any person wishing to see more passages of the same import, may find them quoted at large in the West. Con. under the article, Decree. “Many glosses have been put upon these and similar passages of scripture; yet the light will beam forth. “Many veils have been drawn over them, yet candor will strip them off.”

It has been frequently said, that the doctrine of particular election is inconsistent with those passages, in which God is said to love the world—to have sent his

Son to save the world, &c. &c. John iii. 17. xii. 47. i Tim. iv. 10. i John, iv. 14. This doctrine has also been pronounced directly contrary to those passages, in which, Christ is said *to have died for all—to have given himself a ransom for all—to have tasted death for every man, &c. &c.* 2 Cor. v. 14 & 15. i Tim. ii. 6. Heb. ii. 9. 2 Pet. ii. 1. John i. 29. i John ii. 2.—The three following observations, it is hoped, may serve as a sufficient answer to all the objections which are brought from these and similar passages.

1. Common use is the rule by which all language is to be understood. Can the advocates for a universal purchase prove, that these general expressions are in any other case taken to include under them every individual of the human race? is it not a common saying among philosophers “that the discoveries of Bacon, Newton, and Franklin are known in all the world? Do not military men speak in the same general terms concerning Charles XII. of Sweden—concerning Marlborough, Bonaparte, and such characters? Is not the same language used by moralists and divines, when they speak of Hucheson, Reid and Beattie, of Luther and Calvin, of Armenius and Tillotson, of Harvey and Wesley? Every body who is the least acquainted with the use of language, knows at the very first, the extent of these general expressions, when used in the cases now mentioned. No body but a fool will imagine that they include under them every individual of the human race. They simply mean that those persons are well known among all those of the same description. The world, who are well acquainted with the exploits of Marlborough and Bonaparte, know very little of Harvey or Wesley—and the world who are acquainted with Harvey and Wesley, usually know very little of Bacon or Newton.

With this common use of language, the language of scripture exactly coincides. We are told *that Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan, went out to John's baptism—*Mat. iii. 5. We are told *that there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus thus*

all the world should be taxed—Luke ii. 1. The Apostle speaks of some who were *contrary to all men*—1 Thel. ii. 15. John says that he heard *every creature which is in Heaven and in the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, ascribing praises to the Lamb*—Rev. v. 13.

2. These general expressions as used in the New Testament, are frequently set in opposition to the narrow contracted views which the Jews had of the kingdom of Messiah. It is well known that the Jews were long considered by both God and themselves as a peculiar people. A people secluded from all the rest of the world. Hence in both the Old and the New Testament the words *Gentiles, nations and world*, are frequently used to signify all the rest of mankind as distinguished from the Jews—See Num. xxiii. 9.—Deut. xxvii. 8. Is. xlix. 6.—Rom. iii. 29.—1 Cor. i. 20—33. It is also well known that the majority of the Jewish nation, even those who were pious and sincere believers in Jesus, were very much prejudiced against the gospel being preached to the rest of the world. They imagined that the blessings of Messiah's kingdom were to be confined to the land of Judea, in the same manner in which was the Mosaic dispensation. This being the case, it behoved the Apostles to abound in strong expressions concerning the extent of Messiah's kingdom. It was necessary for them to declare again and again that Jesus was to be a common Saviour—the Saviour of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews—that his gospel was to be preached throughout the whole world, as well as through the land of Judea.

3. Many of these general expressions are evidently restricted in the passages where they are used. Thus, 2. Cor. v. 14.—*One died for all.* For every individual of the human race? The passage says no such thing. The Apostle is here speaking only of believers. The *all* for whom the *one died* are those who are *constrained by the love of Christ.* They are those who *live not unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.* They are those who are *new creatures—who are reconciled to*

God, by Jesus Christ. Read the whole passage as it stands, verse 14.—And the same remarks will apply to Heb. ii. 9. Any body who can read the Greek Testament knows, that in this verse, the word *man* is not in the original; that in the original there is only the adjective *every* in the masculine gender. Any body who is the least acquainted with criticism will, in this case read the whole paragraph, and if he is for retaining the word as it stands in our translation, he will, agreeably to the 11th verse understand a *sanctified man*, or if he wishes to make an alteration, he will take the supplement from the 10th verse and read *every son*. Similar remarks will apply to 1 John ii. 2.—to v. chap. Rom.—to xv. chap. 1 Cor.—and to all parallel passages. Hence it follows that though some late writers of a *View of the Gospel* know nothing of *all men*, meaning *all the elect*, and the *whole world*, meaning the *whole elect world*; yet the apostles in writing their epistles and gospels, knew nothing of using phrases in this restrictive sense.

Besides being restricted to the elect, as elected or sanctified persons, those general expressions are sometimes restricted to *classes*, and then instead of meaning every individual as is contended, they only mean individuals of every class. This remark applies to 1 Tim. ii. 6—read from the beginning of the chapter. It also applies to Tit. ii. 11. and to similar passages.

It has also been urged, that the doctrine of election, as held by Calvinists, is incompatible with the full and the free offer of the gospel. To produce scripture, as proof of the gospel being freely offered to every individual who hears it, is unnecessary. In this doctrine, Calvinists and Armenians agree. It is however, alleged by the Armenians, that to offer Christ to every individual, while he did not die for every individual, is absurd—is nothing else but solemn mockery. Some late writers have said, “now how can we account for these invitations and offers made to *all*, if Christ be not *given to all*? How could we reconcile the conduct of a prince, or sovereign, who should propose

“ terms of pardon and peace to his rebellious subjects ;
 “ when at the same time substantial reasons existed,
 “ why he could not accede to his own proposals ?

“ If Christ be not given to *the whole world*, then that
 “ *part* to whom he is not given, have no right to any
 “ thing in him more than the fallen angels ; and can-
 “ not be invited to receive Christ, or his benefits, in
 “ truth and sincerity. Besides, how can their punish-
 “ ment be aggravated for rejecting Christ, when he ne-
 “ ver was, nor can be offered to them in sincerity and
 “ truth.” Passages which bring forward the same ob-
 jection, in almost the very same words are to be met
 with in almost every page of these men's publication.—

See pages 70, 71, 100, 110, 111, 129 & 130. They
 were certainly scarce of matter to fill up a little pam-
 phlet, when they harped so much upon one thing.

In answering this objection, it is necessary to attend
 to our introductory remark. In this objection, two
 things are confounded, which are quite distinct. The
 doctrine itself, and the use which men are to make of
 this doctrine. Election is no where in scripture menti-
 oned as a rule of duty. It is uniformly handled as an
 article of faith. The offers of the gospel are made to
 men as sinners—as sons of Adam—as scorners—as
 stout hearted, &c. &c. but no where to men as elected.
 When, however, the apostles are speaking comfort, and
 giving directions to those who are actually called, who
 by a good conversation, give evidence that they have
 felt the efficacy of Christ's death, then they never fail
 to lead them, by the streams to the fountain—to trace
 all their present blessings to the election of grace—See
 Rom. viii. 29—and Eph. i. 3—14. 1 Peter i. 2—8.
 Hence we are taught the use which we are to make of
 election. Election can be no warrant for us to close
 with the offers of salvation. For such admirable wis-
 dom is manifested in the administration of the new co-
 venant, that it is only after we are partakers of the
 blessings of salvation, that we can know that we are
 elected. Now since our election can be no warrant for
 our receiving the blessings of salvation, so it can be no

just cause for our refusal. While we have no certain evidence, that we are of the favoured number, we have as little evidence that we are among the excluded. Salvation is offered to us as *sinner*s—as *scorners*—as *fools*—as *haters of God*—as *sons of men*—and since it is offered to us as bearing those characters, which both ourselves, and all the world know belong to us, it is without all doubt our duty to receive what is offered.

It is also necessary in this case to remember, that the most absolute, the most irreversible decree of heaven, has no influence upon the human will—The human will is left to act in every case, as freely as if there were no decree. We have some remarkable instances of this, with respect to the wicked actions of men. *O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few—*Isa. x. 5—7. *Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*—Acts ii. 23. Hence it follows, that in refusing the offers of salvation, men just act according to their own wicked inclination. They in every case do nothing but what their own evil heart of unbelief, their own free will disposed them to do. This consideration furnishes us with a sufficient reason why gospel despisers shall be exposed to a more highly aggravated punishment. The remark also shews us, how grossly some late writers are mistaken, when they tell the world, “That upon the principles of Calvinists, there can be no proper judgment at the last day; that it will be only a pompous shew”

But, how can God be sincere in offering salvation to those for whom he never provided any salvation? Answer—We deny the fact. God, through the word preached, offers salvation to men in general, under cha-

characters which apply to every individual. While the word is thus preached among men, the spirit applies it to such particular individuals, for whom it is prepared. God is sincere in offering salvation to *stout-hearted sinners---to scorers---to fools*—He is sincere in applying it efficaciously to the hearts of such and such individuals; those who are left, as has been observed, act with the full liberty of their will, and are equally sincere in rejecting the offers of salvation. Through the whole, there is displayed on the part of God, admirable wisdom and infinite goodness. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen—Rom. xi. 33, to the end.*

Some late writers have said, “We believe God has an *elect*, a chosen people on the earth; and by examining their character in scripture, we find they are the same with *believers*, who have the spirit of Christ. But others speak of an *elect number*, who are yet strangers to Christ; dead in sin, and servants of the devil. Now we are wholly ignorant of this *elect* people. We believe the word, when it says, *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his—Rom. viii. 9.* And if Jesus Christ be not in us, we are reprobates. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. As we believe that election is obtained through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth, so we call upon all to come to Christ, obtain his spirit, and make their calling and election sure.” More to the same purpose may be seen in pages, 98 and 99, of a View of the Gospel.

Men who speak thus, to say the best of them, show only their ignorance of the scriptures. Let any person of common sense read Rom. viii. 29, and say if the apostle teaches us, that the persons of whom he there speaks, were not *predestinated*, till once they were con-

formed to the image of God's Son. Do we not read of men who were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world—*Ep. 1. 4.* Does not the Saviour affirm, that he had received power over all flesh; not that he might give eternal life to all flesh, nor that he might give eternal life to as many as should believe—but *that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him?* John xvii. 2.—Read Rom. ix. 11—18. And let such barefaced sophistry perish forever.

Much has been frequently objected against the doctrine of a particular unconditional election, on account of the distinguished preference which this doctrine gives to a part of mankind, to the exclusion of the rest. Calvinists have usually answered this objection, by resolving it into God's sovereignty. Some late writers have fallen very foul upon this word, and have attempted in almost every page, to make themselves and their readers merry at the expence of those who use it—See in particular, pages 112 and 113, and 132 and 133 of remarks upon the Confession. Though we consider a great many things which these writers have said about this word as falsehood, and misrepresentations; are by no means ashamed of acknowledging the sovereignty of God to be a sufficient reason for his passing by one man and fixing upon another. Our Lord has taught us thus to reason: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast bid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight—Luke x. 21.—* The Apostle has also repelled the very same objection in the very same manner: *Thou wilt say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour. What, if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath*

fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?—Rom, ix. 19—23.

Nor is it solely in the election of particular men that God's sovereignty is displayed. What other reason can be given for his passing by Angels, and fixing upon the human race? What other reason can be given for his choosing Israel as his peculiar people, and allowing all the rest of the nations to wander so long in ignorance and superstition? Nay, what other reason can be given for the gospel at the present day, being continued among some people, while others at no great distance, and by nature equally worthy, are still sitting in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death? "Even so farther, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Those who wish to see the subject of this chapter farther handled may consult,

Booth's *Reign of Grace*, chap.—Election.

Tanchy on *Predestination*.—Translated by Toplady.

Cole's *Discourses on God's Sovereignty*, and

Dr. Owen on the *Death of Christ*.

In this last treatise the subject is fully discussed, and every thing which has as yet been said against the Calvinistic doctrine, particularly answered.

There is also a small tract in the hands of a good many in this country, by the Rev. R. Finley, late of Cane-Ridge, which may afford considerable satisfaction.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE AND THE EXTENT OF THE
CURSE OF THE FIRST COVENANT.

THAT a true and proper covenant was made with man in a state of innocence, is a doctrine supported by the most incontrovertible evidence. The parties in this covenant, were God and Adam. The condition required, was perfect obedience, to all which the moral required. The reward promised in case of obedience, was life. And the penalty threatened in case of disobedience, was death. That this covenant was broken, is a truth equally confirmed. The covenant being broken, justice required that the penalty should be inflicted. What this penalty was, and how far it extends, is the subject of our present enquiry. (a)

The penalty, or punishment which the first covenant inflicts upon its transgressors, is death. *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*--Gen. ii. 17. *The wages of sin is death*--Rom. ii. 23. It is a gross mistake to imagine, that by death we are only to understand that which we usually understand by it in common conversation--The mere separation of the soul from the body. The word death, as used in the doctrinal part of scripture, uniformly includes under it, all the ills, which either in this, or in a future state of existence, come upon man in consequence of sin. See Ez. x. 17. 2 Kings iv. 40. Prov. vii. 17, & viii. 36. Ezek. xxxiii. 7--16. Eph. ii. 1. 2 Cor. xi. 23--27. Rev. xx. 14.-- Agreeably to this scriptural use of the word, the threatening annexed to the breach of the first covenant, has usually been said to include under it, death spiritual, death temporal, and death eternal. By death spiritual is meant, that punishment which is immediately inflicted upon the soul. By death temporal, is meant that punishment which is inflicted upon the body --and by death eternal is meant, that which shall be inflicted upon both

soul and body in the other world. It may be necessary, also, here to remark, that the scriptures and Calvinists, use the word *curse*, as of the same import with *penalty* or *punishment*.

1. The covenant which was made with man, in innocence, inflicts upon all its transgressors, death spiritual.

By the introduction of sin into the soul, the moral image of God was defaced. The understanding became darkened, wise to do evil, but having of good no knowledge. The affections became earthly, sensual, devilish. Love and such like affections, as in a state of purity, were wholly directed towards God; were now set upon the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Hatred and such like passions as were originally intended as a rampart against all evil, were now turned against God and goodness. The will of man now became enmity against God, and was not subject to his law, neither indeed could be. Hence it came to pass, that that communion with God, which in a state of innocence, our first parents accounted their chief, their only enjoyment, was now shunned as a snare. — *They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam, and his wife, hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden—Gen. iii. 8.*

The soul having thus lost the image of God, it is also deprived of his favour. Evil shall not dwell with God; nor shall fools stand in his sight. What communion hath light with darkness, or what concord hath Christ with Belial? God is angry with the wicked every day. No favourable intercourse, can consequently subsist betwixt God and the soul, in this state. The curse of the broken covenant forbids, that any sanctifying grace, shall be communicated. The evil heart of unbelief—the will which is enmity against God, forbid that the soul should of its own accord, return to repentance. This being the case, the soul goes on from evil to worse, becomes daily more hardened in its crimes. Out of the heart, in this state, proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,

fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies. The soul is dead in trespasses and sins—A cage of every unclean and hateful lust.

2. The first covenant inflicts upon all its transgressors, death temporal.

Sin had no sooner entered into the soul, than the seeds of diseases and death entered into the body. The ground became cursed for the sake of man. The air became infected with pestilential vapours. The inferior animals rose up in rebellion against their lord, and the most of them have ever since continued to plague and torment him. Upon this sad occasion, the offended lawgiver, thus spoke:—*And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return—Gen. iii. 17—19.* Thus the sentence of death was passed upon the transgressor. From this moment, he was a condemned criminal. The sentence began immediately to take effect, though for holy and wise purposes the complete execution, was for a time deferred.

Under this sentence, the natural life of man is dragged out in sorrow. His prayer is an abomination. His plowing is sin. The good things of this life which he may enjoy, are only fattening him for the slaughter.—Under this sentence, the man is cursed in the city, and cursed in the field—cursed in his basket, and cursed in his store—cursed in the fruit of his body, and in the fruit of his land—in the increase of his kine, in his flocks, and his sheep. He is cursed when he cometh in, and when he goeth out. Vanity and vexation, sorrow and disappointment, are marked upon all his enjoyments.

3. The first covenant inflicts upon all its transgres-

fors, death eternal. Transgressors who know not God, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. We have already seen, that till the curse is removed, the soul is deprived of all comfortable intercourse with God. No quickening sanctifying influences can be communicated, and without these, the soul becomes daily more hardened in its crimes. We have also seen, that the body while lying under this curse, is exposed to all the ills of this life. Both soul and body thus passing out of this world, in this situation they shall henceforth be fixed in an unchangeable state, in a state under the full execution of God's wrath.

How dreadful is this curse! It affects, and affects in the most alarming manner, the soul and the body, the character and the substance. It sticks fast to men, in both time and eternity. It deprives men of every good, and loads them with every evil. How terrible, then, must the situation of those be who are lying under this curse! yet in this terrible situation, the scripture and Calvinists, maintain every individual of the human race naturally lies. Shudder not, reader, at the doctrine.—Till you know your danger, you will never flee from the wrath to come---till you are acquainted with your disease, you will never prize the remedy. We request your attention a few minutes longer. We again repeat that, under the curse of this broken covenant, every individual of the human race, naturally lies. And to prove this point, is the second part of our present enquiry.

1. The natural dispositions of every one, make it evident, that while he is in a state of nature, he is of the works of the law; and the apostle expressly tells us, *that as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse*—Gal. iii. 10. (b)

According to the doctrine of the apostle, grace and works are directly opposites---*And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace & otherwise work is no more work*—Rom. xi. 6. Now to him

that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness—Chapter iv. 4, 5. From these and similar declarations, it clearly follows, that there is no possibility for any man to be half one way and half another. If he wishes to be saved in any degree by works, he must be saved wholly by works; or, if he wishes to be saved in any degree by grace, he must depend wholly upon grace. Now let the heart of every individual say to which of these methods of salvation, his natural dispositions incline? By the prejudice of education, it has become a common saying, that we depend for our salvation wholly upon the grace of God. But, let every upright conscience say, if from the very beginning he said so in sincerity and truth? With the young man in the gospel, with the convicted jailor, the natural disposition of every human heart is—*What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Every man's heart tells him, that a salvation wholly of grace, was not the first thing to which he applied for relief. His prayers and resolutions, and sincere endeavours after new obedience, were things to which he in the first instance, and for some time trusted. In all this he was seeking to be saved wholly, or in part by works. He was consequently in his natural state, of the works of the law. His natural dispositions made it evident, to what class he belonged. Since, then, the apostle plainly tells us, that as many as are of the works of the law, are under the *curse*. Since then, every man proves himself by his natural dispositions, to be of the works of the law—the consequence is unavoidable, that every man, every individual while in a state of nature, is under the *curse*.

2. Express declarations of scripture assure us, that men in their natural state, stand connected with the first man as a covenant head. Read Rom. v. 12—19. Similar reasoning is to be found in 1 Cor. xv. 20, 21, and 45—49. (c)

Here it is necessary to remark, that in these passages,

Adam and Christ, are represented as standing in a peculiar relation to the human race. They are described also, as being parallel in this relation. The relation in which Christ stands to his people, as here described, can be no other than that of a covenant head. It is also generally allowed, that Christ is here represented as a covenant head---Since then Christ is described and allowed to be a covenant head, and since Adam and Christ, are in this case contrasted as parallels, it follows, that Adam also was a covenant head. In consequence of this federal representation of the first man, *sin is said to have entered into the world by one man: death, is said to have passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*—It is said, that *by the offence of one, death reigned*—And again, that *by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.* These expressions make it as plain as words can make it, that the first sin of the first man, is charged upon all his posterity, and that the sins being charged, the punishment also is inflicted. In the former part of this chapter, we have considered the nature of that punishment. Since, then, every individual of the human race, in his natural situation, stands connected with the first man as a covenant head, and as a covenant transgressor, it follows of course, that every individual, while in this natural state, is under that punishment which this covenant inflicts upon its transgressors.

3. Daily experience sufficiently confirms the doctrine of Calvinists upon this head. The curse of the broken covenant is visible upon every individual while in a natural state. Here it is just necessary to look back to what we have said above, in explaining the nature of this curse.

Daily experience proves, that man came into this world under the sentence of spiritual death. In a state of alienation from God. Does not every man feel that his understanding is naturally darkened in the things of God? Is not his will naturally averse to that which is good, and inclined only to that which is evil? Do not his affections love and take pleasure in any thing

more than in God? If we do not feel those things within ourselves, let us only hear what the apostle says of men in their natural state.—*And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world; according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*—Eph. ii. 1—3. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another—*Tit. iii. 3.* Now the works of the flesh, or in other words, the works of those in a natural state—are manifest, which are these—*adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness—idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like*—Gal. v. 19—21. (d)

The same experience makes it as plain as a demonstration, that every individual of our race is naturally under a sentence of temporal death. Do we not come into the world with the seeds of diseases and death in our bodies? scarcely do we breathe the air of this world, till we feel sorrow and pain. Often the infant only breathes and dies. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to this present day, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Are not wars, and famines, and pestilences, and losses, and disappointments about as common as bread and water? Do we not daily earn our bread by the sweat of our brow?

That every individual is naturally exposed to eternal death is equally certain. From what other source proceed those awful apprehensions of a future state? How can we otherwise account for that bitter remorse, which a sense of guilt never fails to excite? The plain

language of these apprehensions of that remorse is; we stand condemned. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hear also the words of our Lord, to this point. *He that believeth not is condemned already*—He that *believeth not hath the wrath of God abiding on him*—John iii. 28 and 36. He does not say that such a one *shall be condemned*, or that he *shall* have the wrath of God abiding on him; but, he expressly asserts that he is condemned *already*—that he *hath* the wrath of God abiding on him. The apostle also tells us, that there is *no condemnation* to them who are in Christ Jesus—Rom. viii. 1. Plainly intimating that to all those who are not in Christ Jesus there is condemnation. If, then, every individual of the human race is by nature an unbeliever—if every man while in a natural state, is unconnected with Jesus, the consequence is unavoidable, that every individual, that every man in a state of nature, is under a sentence of eternal death.

Those who have read page 68, of *A late View of the Gospel*, will easily perceive the design of this chapter. These writers having adopted the Arminian scheme of a universal purchase, necessarily maintain, that the curse of the first covenant is now completely removed. Their reasoning and proof upon this matter, is very confused. It appears, however, to rest solely upon three false principles. 1. That the sole object of the Mediator's government of this world, is to give unto every individual of the human race, eternal life.— 2. That the purchase of Christ was as extensive as the effects of the first transgression.— For this purpose they quote Rom. v. 18, and vii. 6.— And, 3. that the threatening annexed to the first covenant, was nothing more than temporal death. Hence they say, “For if mankind are under the first covenant, we cannot see how the truth of God is secured in that threatening—in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”— The reader may look back to a remark which we have made upon John xvii. 2, in page 13, chapter 1, and he will see the falacy of this first principle. The remarks

which we have made in note c of this chapter, may serve to shew the falacy of their proof from Rom. v. 18. Similar remarks will apply to Rom. vii. 6. The apostle is not in that passage, saying one word of mankind in general. The remarks which we have made in explaining the nature of the curse of the first covenant, may serve to shew how grossly they are mistaken in their third principle. Besides, the principles upon which the doctrine of these men rests, being false in themselves, they also in applying them, reason in a circle.--They first prove a universal purchase from the consideration, that mankind are delivered from the law, as a covenant, and then in the next paragraph, they prove that mankind are delivered from the law as a covenant, from the consideration, that a universal purchase is made. This was the manner in which the papists of old proved the infallibility of the Pope. Tradition attested, that the Pope was the legitimate successor of Peter, and therefore infallible; and then the infallible head of the church attested, that tradition was pure and uncorrupted. The title of his holiness, was thus secured beyond the possibility of a contradiction.

To have clear and accurate views of the natural situation of men, is of vast importance to both faith and practice. If our notions on this point be either false in themselves, or confused and imperfect, they will contaminate and mislead us in every other article of the Christian faith. According to the grace given unto us, we have endeavoured at this time to set in as clear a light as possible, what the scripture teaches on this subject. We trust, that upon due consideration, our thoughts will be found to accord with that perfect standard. If any are now disposed to ask, when, and how men are delivered from the curse of the broken covenant, to this we reply--that they are delivered from this curse when in regeneration, they are renewed in the spirit of their minds and become connected with Jesus, the head of the second covenant; and how this is effected, the reader may be informed in the following chapter.

NOTES ON CHAPTER II.

(a) Page 17. To enter into the proof and the illustration of what is asserted in this paragraph, is unnecessary for the present publication, as the writers of a View of the Gospel acknowledge that a covenant was made and broken.

(b) Page 18. Two considerations make it evident that the apostle, in Gal. iii. 10. is speaking of the moral law in the form of a covenant.

1. The law of which he there speaks is set in opposition to the gospel, which was preached to Abraham---See verses 8 and 9. And

2. It is expressly said, that as many as are of the works of this law *are under the curse*. This cannot apply to the ceremonial law, nor to the law as a rule of life, nor to the law in any other form; seeing men have been blessed and saved, while under the law in all these forms.

There is no term in divinity used in such a variety of significations as the word *law*, and by confounding these different significations, some of the most dangerous errors have arisen. The writers of a View of the Gospel stumble also upon this rock. In page 68, they evidently confound what the apostle says respecting the Mosaic dispensation, with the covenant which was made with Adam.

It is foreign to our present purpose to take notice of all the senses in which this word is used, but in order that the reader may better understand the reasoning in this chapter, it may be necessary to mention, the difference there is betwixt the *moral law* considered simply as a law, and considered in the form of a covenant.

Considered simply as a law, the moral law is that under which every rational creature is originally formed. To this law every intelligent creature whether in Heaven, in earth, or in hell, is by his very creation bound to yield implicit and perfect obedience. When this law is considered simply as a law, those who are under it, are only viewed as subjects or servants; but no sooner is it held forth unto us in the form of a covenant, than the subjects & the servants, become the *allies* & the *friends* of the great Law-giver. When considered simply as a law, it requires, in every case the most perfect obedience, and threatens death for the least transgression; but in no case does it promise any reward. Bring it forth, however, in the form of a covenant, and our obedience receives a reward; and a reward not of grace, but of debt.

(c) Page 19 These passages have been considered by Arminians, as containing the most decisive proof that the purchase of Christ, is as extensive as the effects of the first transgression. They, however, greatly mistake the matter, and this proof is like all their other proofs, mere sophistry. Let any person of an unbiassed mind read both passages as they stand, and say, if the apostle says one word respecting the purchase of Christ, which applies to mankind in general. In v. Rom. the persons of whom he speaks, are persons who are in a justified state, v. 1. They are persons who are reconciled to God, by the death of his Son v. 10. They are persons who have received the atonement, v. 11. In xv. 1. Cor. he is speaking through the whole chapter, of the happiness which believers shall enjoy at the general resurrection. The persons of whom he there speaks, are persons who, in virtue of their union to Jesus, shall, at the great day, have their bodies raised in, in corruption, in glory, in power; bearing the image of the heavenly Adam, that is, made all glorious like unto Christ's glorious body. They are persons who at the great day, shall join in saying, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Those who plead for a universal salvation, may, with some regard to the connection, urge these passages; but those who only plead for a universal purchase cannot urge them, without breaking the connection in almost every sentence.

This view of the matter rather strengthens, than weakens the argument for which those passages are quoted in the text.--- No reason, nor any scripture can be produced, why Adam can be considered as a covenant head to only part of his posterity. On the contrary, both scripture and experience unite in assuring us, that the effects of his first transgression are felt upon every individual of the human race. If then, in these passages where Adam and Christ are contrasted, it appears, that Adam in the first covenant, stood in the same relation to the elect, in which Christ stands to them in the second covenant, and if scripture and experience unite in telling us that the elect while unconnected with Christ, are in the same situation with the rest of mankind, it follows beyond the possibility of a contradiction, that Adam was a covenant head to every individual of his natural posterity.

(d) Page 21 Some of the champions in the cause of Arminianism have endeavoured to destroy the proof for the universal corruption of nature, which is brought from these and similar passages, by saying that they are only applicable to the Gentiles, or those who had been lately turned from the abominations of the Heathens. Let any person, however, read a

Two of them, and he will be convinced that the apostle had no notion of such a restricted application. It is true, that in the epistle to the Ephesians, he is writing to men who had been lately turned from great abominations, but he, in that epistle, extends the corruption of nature to all men--to Jews as well as to Gentiles--to himself who had been brought up after the strictest sect, as well as to those who in youth had been the most abandoned--Read chap. ii. 1 and 2. This indeed, applies to Gentiles, but observe how, in the next verse, alters the language.

We have no reason to believe that ever Titus was any way remarkable for profligacy. The epistle which Paul directs to him is wholly about the duties of the ministerial office. In these circumstances we have every reason to believe that while he was writing it, his thoughts would be wholly directed to those who had always sustained a good moral character--who, according to his own account of candidates for the sacred office, had had a good report of those who were without. Yet observe how, in this epistle, he speaks of the actions of men while unrenewed, and the actions too of men, among whom he includes himself--See chap. iii. 2--quoted in the text.

CHAPTER III.

REGENERATION.

THAT a considerable change of nature takes place upon a sinner being turned from the evil of his ways, is generally allowed; but how that change is effected, is matter of dispute. Calvinists and Arminians agree in ascribing the work to the energy of the Spirit, but they widely differ about the manner in which this energy is exerted. Arminians maintain, that all which the Spirit does, is only to present motives or persuasives to the mind, and that as much is done for those who sit under the gospel, and continue unregenerated, as is done for those who are made partakers of a new nature.— Calvinists on the other hand maintain, that in regeneration, the spirit exerts a creative power upon the mind itself, and that wherever this power is exerted, the man is without fail, made a new creature.

To explain the particular manner in which this creative power is exerted, Calvinists never pretend. They hold to the *fact*, because they believe that it is supported by sufficient evidence; but they remember the words of our Lord, and place it among those mysteries, which in our present embodied state, we cannot fully comprehend. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit*—John iii. 8. The three following observations, will, it is hoped, sufficiently explain and substantiate the doctrine of Calvinists, upon this head.

1. The power which the spirit exerts on this occasion, is supernatural and invincible. By a *supernatural* power is meant, a power wholly beyond the reach of the creature---a power which nothing else than omnipotence can produce. By an *invincible* power is meant, a power which none can withstand---a power before which every obstacle falls. Now that such a power is exerted in regeneration, is evident:

1. From the names which are in scripture ascribed to regeneration, or conversion. It is stiled a *new birth*—John iii. 3—7. 1 Pet. i. 23. It is stiled a *creation*—Eph. ii. 10. 2 Cor. v. 17. It is described as a *resurrection*—John v. 25. Eph. ii. 1—6. It is expressly said, that in the renewing of the mind, there is a power exerted similar to that which was wrought upon Christ when he was raised from the dead. Read Eph. i. 17—20. What else, but a divine supernatural power could first form the body of man out of the dust of the ground?—What else but the same power, can daily produce one generation after another? What else but a divine irresistible power, can again raise these our bodies to new glory and beauty, after they have been for ages mouldering into atoms? If then the disposing of the soul to holiness, is expressed in the very same language which expresses these supernatural irresistible actions, there is certainly thereby intimated unto us, that a similar power is exerted.

2. A careful attention to the different effects which the same external means have upon persons in the same or similar circumstances, will also unavoidably lead us to the same conclusion. It is evident to every one of the least observation, that the very same means of grace produce very different, nay opposite effects, upon persons who were originally in one situation. We have no reason to believe, that there was originally any difference in the heart of Moses, from the heart of Pharaoh. While under the power of sin, both hearts were equally hardened; yet the one heart was softened to obedience through means of the word—the other heart had the word repeated again and again, accompanied with circumstances the most affecting, and became only more stubborn and rebellious. We have no reason to believe, that the body of the people who lived in the days of Isaiah, and heard him preach, were originally any worse than the body of the people who live in New Testament days and read his prophecies; yet to those of the former period, these prophecies were in awful judgment, the means of making the heart fat, of

closing the eyes and the ears. To multitudes of the latter period, these prophecies are the means of changing the heart, and of opening the eyes and the ears.— To name no more.— We have no reason to believe, that there was any difference betwixt Peter preaching in the temple, and his preaching the very same sermon the next day before the Sanhedrim. Nor have we any reason to believe, that there was any original difference in the dispositions of these two audiences; yet, any body who reads iii. & iv. chapters Acts, will see a wonderful difference in the effects which those two sermons, in matter only one produced. To the one company, the sermon was the favour of life unto life, and to the other it was the favour of death unto death. The unavoidable conclusion from the consideration of these and similar cases is, that in one case a supernatural invincible power was exerted, which in awful sovereignty was withheld in the other. This is reasoning from the evidence of fact, and is therefore conclusive. Were we to see the same external means applied to two pieces of matter which we were assured were originally the same, but which are by the means used turned into substances quite opposite, we would naturally conclude, that there was some unseen power exerted in the one case, which was not exerted in the other.

The reasoning in the above paragraph acquires additional force, when we consider cases where persons, who upon the principles of Arminians, were best fitted for improving the gospel, were notwithstanding left, and others in not such a good situation called. Under the very same means of grace, men of strong natural parts, and well informed minds, have remained unregenerated, while others of inferior talents have been renewed. The apostle gives us a beautiful specimen of reasoning in this manner. See 1 Cor. ii. 19, to the end.

3. The doctrine of Calvinists in this matter, is supported by a great many express declarations of scripture. These are so numerous, that the bare mentioning of them would fill a whole sheet. The Spirit is said to descend and work upon men as the wind.—John iii. &

As the dew—Hos. xiv. 5. As the rain—Isa. lv. 10 11. All which expressions certainly intimate, that his influences are as irresistible as the wind, the dew, or the rain. God declares, that he will *take the stony hearts out of our flesh, and give us an heart of flesh*—Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. He declares that he will *put his fear into our hearts, that we shall not depart from him*—Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. He declares that he *has formed his people for himself*—Isa. xliii. 21. It is declared that he *shall have a willing people in the day of his power*—Psalms cx. 3. All which expressions make it just as plain as words can make it, that in renewing the mind, Jehovah has an agency which is peculiar to himself—an agency quite different from the use of any external means. And such an agency, must necessarily be *supernatural and invincible*.

II. The power exerted in regeneration is exerted through means of the word, read or preached. Here it is just necessary to remember, that in dealing with sinners, God deals with them as rational creatures—as beings endowed with the faculties of considering, judging and willing. In the word read or preached, he sets before them in a convincing manner their duty. He shews them wherein they have done amiss. He reasons the matter with them. He sets before them the grace and the fulness of the new covenant. He prays and beseeches them to be reconciled to God. Along with the word thus read or preached, the spirit in his enlightening or regenerating influences enters into the soul. The entrance of the word in this manner gives light, and makes wise those who are simple. Through the word thus read or preached, the spirit in a manner peculiar to himself enlightens the understanding in the knowledge of every necessary truth—He subdues the will to the obedience of the gospel—He forms in the heart that faith which receives the Lord as our righteousness, and which in return devotes all which we possess to his service.

To describe the exact manner in which all this is done, we do not pretend. Any attempt of this kind, is

only an attempt to be wise above that which is written—an attempt to sound beyond our depth. Till we can tell the exact manner in which the Spirit in the beginning moved upon the face of the waters, and produced light—Till we can tell how the sea shall at the command of Jehovah give up its dead—Till we can tell these and a great many other mysteries, we cannot tell how, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, the soul is formed anew, after the image of him who first created it.

III. The power exerted in regeneration, is such as to effect a complete change in the whole temper and frame of the soul. The whole man is renewed after the image of God. The understanding is so enlightened as to see a beauty and propriety in those things in which it formerly could discover nothing but deformity. The will and the affections are disposed to follow after quite different objects. The man now hates that which he formerly loved—He seeks after those things which he formerly shunned. Those things in which he formerly rejoiced, are now the sources of bitter remorse—and those things of which he was formerly ashamed, are now the joy and the rejoicing of his heart. A principle of grace, or holiness, is infused into every faculty, and so far as grace is in exercise, his every faculty is henceforth employed in holy services.

It has been frequently objected, that the doctrine of a supernatural, invincible power being exerted in regeneration, is inconsistent with those passages, in which sinners are required to *wash and be clean, to make unto themselves a new heart, &c. &c.*—Isa. i. 16. Jer. iv. 4. &c. &c. &c. To this it has as often been replied,

1. That the creature having lost his power to obey, can be no reason why the creator should give up his authority to command. Were this to be the case, the farther a man could advance in wickedness, the farther removed he would be from punishment—But

2. The design of these peremptory commands is not to teach sinners, that they can change themselves, but the very contrary—It is to convince them of their

to work, and try what they can do. This was the manner in which our Lord dealt with the young man in the gospel. See Mat. xix. 16—22. And

3. Being thus convinced of both their duty and their inability, they are in a situation for making a proper use of, what is conveyed unto them in absolutely free promises. Look through the bible, and you will find that what is peremptorily commanded in one place, is freely promised in another. Thus what is required of us as a duty in Isa. i. 16, and in Jer. iv. 4, is promised as a privilege in Ezek. xxxvi. 25—32.

The intelligent reader can judge for himself, how far the above observations tend to explode the notions of some late writers of a View of the Gospel. If, in regeneration, there is an energy of the spirit quite distinct from any external means, or from any thing which those who are not regenerated ever feel; then it follows of course, that saving faith is no natural production of the human heart. Nor can this grace ever exist till the whole man is created anew. The dispute whether faith or regeneration precedes, is in one point of view, a dispute of very little importance, since both parties agree, that neither of them can exist any time without the other. The dispute, however, as it is brought forward in the above mentioned publication, involves in it an important, fundamental principle. If faith precedes in the sense in which these writers maintain; then the first actings of the soul in returning to God begin on the part of the sinner. If regeneration precedes, in the sense for which the Calvinists contend, then it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do.

Any thing like railing never comes with a worse grace, than from a theological writer; but we cannot help affirming that the whole of these men's system of faith and regeneration, is nothing else but a medley of confusion and absurdity. Thus they ask in triumph, "What produces moral ability but evidence, or motives presented to the mind?" It is astonishing that men who pretend to have some little sense, should ask such a question. That which is in this question as-

sumed as true, is true in no case whatever.—Yet this very thing is the principle which lies at the foundation of their whole system. Evidence or motives, and moral ability to feel the force of evidence or motives, are two things quite distinct, and things which are in no case depending for their existence, upon one another.

Mathematical evidence is usually reckoned the most convincing—But every teacher of mathematics knows, that in almost every class of 16 or 20 boys, there are one or two who remain totally incapable of understanding the science, and that too in spite of all his demonstrations, as accurately delivered as ingenuity can invent; and as frequently repeated as the warmest zeal for their improvement can inspire. What is strictly called moral evidence, is equally destitute of any power to produce moral ability. Let any person that pleases, step in upon some court days, into Lexington court house, and he will see some of the best attorneys in the state, bringing forth their evidence, with all the precision and accuracy which the importance of the cause requires. Yet the trifling and sometimes drunken jury, continues incapable of feeling the force of a single argument.

The writers of a View of the Gospel, conclude that part of their work, with a great parade of answering objections. It is hard to say whether it was through ignorance or design, but so it has happened that the most of the objections of which they take notice, are such as no Calvinist, who knows his principles would urge.—The most of them are consequently very easily answered. The remarks which we have made, in the two preceding paragraphs, may serve to shew their false reasoning in answering the objection from John vi. 44 and 65—their answer to that drawn from Rom. viii. 7, rests wholly upon the false doctrine, that faith precedes regeneration. Their answer to that drawn from Eph. ii. 8, is a master-piece of criticism. It was certainly a mind of no ordinary cast who first formed that answer. Whitby and Tyler, and Macknight, are mere idiots at twisting scripture, in comparison of this critic. If the word

faith, in Eph. ii. 8, does not express the grace of faith, or the act of believing, it will be very hard to find a text in the bible where the word is used in that sense.—
Wonderful are the shifts which some men must contrive in order to maintain a favorite imagination.

THE USE OF CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS.

PUBLIC creeds and confessions have been in use from the earliest ages, nor is it very easy to conceive how any society, whether civil or religious, can exist without them. The fact is, no such society has ever as yet made its appearance in the world. In every society, there are some articles of association---some declared principles which distinguish that society from all others. They may call these articles of association, these declaration of principles, by any name they please, but they are the very thing which we express by the words, Creeds and Confessions. There never were any Protestant churches which maintained that these creeds & confessions, were of equal authority with the scriptures. Protestant churches have been uniform in maintaining that these public instruments were only their authorised, approved sense of the scriptures. Thus a Protestant Socinian, in his creed or confession, declares that in the i. chap. of John's gospel, there is no proof of the Supreme Deity of the Saviour---A Calvinist or an Arminian, on the other hand in his creed or confession, declares that in that chapter, and in other parallel passages, the doctrine is as clearly maintained as words can express.

There are indeed some sects who are very bitter against the use of creeds and confessions. But, in them, the old proverb is verified, "the legs of the lame are not equal." These sects hold it as a leading article in their creed, that they shall have no creeds, nor confessions---And few are ever at any time admitted into their communion, till they are pretty well scrutinized respecting their belief in this important, fundamental article. Not satisfied with this inconsistency, the most of them manifest unto the world, the folly and the absurdity of their system still farther. They require of every one who is to be admitted into their communion, an

open declaration of his principles. He must at least, give them satisfaction, that he shall conform to the rules of their society. They may call this declaration, an experience or an examination, or by whatever name they please; but it is to all intents and purposes, a creed or confession. The candidate, in giving the satisfaction required, makes known to the society his articles of belief, and the society having heard his declaration, proceed to judge whether he is worthy of being received. The question then, betwixt these sects, and those churches which acknowledge the use of creeds and confessions, is not "Whether creeds and confessions be necessary?" The necessity of creeds and confessions is, by the practice of both parties acknowledged. The real state of the question, is "whether the church ought to have a *written* or merely a *verbal* creed? Whether ought this creed to be *fixed*, or may it be *changed* with every meeting of the church?" One would think that it does not require much common sense, or experience to determine which side of this question is the most consistent and rational. Public creeds and confessions are, in fact, absolutely necessary in the present state of society. And they will continue to be so till christians shall all have as much charity as to make it a matter of indifference, whether the Savior is the Mighty God, or a mere man—whether his satisfaction for sin was complete, or only partial—whether the punishment of sin shall be eternal, or only for a time. Till the professors of christianity shall have arrived to this perfection, every sect will find it necessary to have some sort of a creed or confession. In these public instruments, every church must hold up unto the world her particular views of all the doctrines of revelation. Without these public instruments, it is in the nature of things utterly impossible for any one to tell how far any church as a body collective, is holding the doctrines of the gospel, in their fulness, their purity and divine authority.

How far the above remarks apply to the principles, and practice of the Presbytery of Springfield, those who

are best acquainted with them can judge. They have lifted up their voice in a loud and bitter cry against creeds and confessions—and at the same time they publish unto the world a book, which they call a View of the Gospel. They bring one in mind of an old Monk, who published a book proving that no book ought either to be published or read. He was also fool enough to imagine that this was to be the last book of the kind which ever would be published—that all other books would immediately be given to the moles, and to the bats. The writers of a View of the Gospel will not indeed allow it to be called a creed or confession, yet it is the only thing by which the world can judge of the articles of their faith. They indeed tell us, that they take the Bible as their only standard, but from the View of the Gospel which they have given us, it is evident that they understand a great many passages of the bible in a sense quite different from the sense in which they are understood by other bodies of Christians. This their View of the Gospel, then, is their public instrument, which distinguishes the Presbytery of Springfield from other bodies. They indeed tell us, that they do not make their particular View of the Gospel, a term of Christian communion—that on the contrary they are clear to hold communion with all who are Christians, and who adhere to the bible. But this does not in the least alter the case. The doctrine of mixed communion, is just as much an article of their creed, as any dogma of the most bigotted Separatists, is an article of their creed. They are in their practice as fierce for this kind of moderation—for this universal charity, as any other body of people are for the most restricted communion. Nor in their internal regulations, do they differ any thing in kind from those bodies who openly acknowledge the use of creeds and confessions. Whenever it was known that a separation had taken place, betwixt them and the judicatories, to which they formerly belonged, it was necessary for every one of their congregations to have a meeting, and know by what principles they were

henceforth to be taught and governed. In some of their congregations, they even went so far, as at the request, and with the assistance of their pastor, to draw out and subscribe articles of association. It makes no matter, for the present purpose, what these articles were. The very action of drawing them out and subscribing them, declared that they reckoned something of the same nature, with a creed or confession necessary, as a bond of union.

The View of the Gospel which they have published, carries also in it some of those internal marks, which, by their own account, belong to creeds and confessions. Thus for instance, it is an *imperfect standard*. They have told us that they take the Bible as their standard, and as the word of God. But they have no where told us in what manner they have received the Bible as the word of God—Whether all the Bible is of equal authority and equally inspired. For any thing, then, which we know from their present View of the Gospel, they may be half deists. They have told us a great deal about Jesus Christ—but they have no where told us whether he is God, equal with the Father—or a creature of a superior order—or nothing but a mere man. They may therefore, for any thing which they have told us to the contrary, be Arians, Semi-Arians, or even Socinians. They have given us some confused notions about the old covenant, original sin, and the satisfaction of Christ; but what are their real sentiments respecting these important articles, we are left still in the dark. We are equally at a loss to know from them whether there is any such a thing as a Holy Ghost. It is, perhaps, sound policy in these men, not to publish their sentiments on every article at once—that as some of them have already changed from rigid Calvinists to Arminians—they may change when they find it convenient in other articles, with greater safety. They have also by this plan an opportunity of amusing the world every now and then with something new.—May the Lord pity the poor people who follow such uncertain, such wandering guides!

From the specimen which these men have given, we have also a good reason to believe that were they to publish their sentiments fully upon every article of the Christian faith, it would have another internal mark of creeds and confessions—it would abound in *borrid jargon* and *contradictions*. Thus, in the work which they have published, speaking of the decrees, they say “ He fore-
 “ foresaw one thing, and decreed another. He fore-
 “ saw the fall, and decreed to send his Son to die for
 “ man, *that whosoever believeth on him should not pe-
 “ rish; but have everlasting life.* He foresaw that
 “ many would reject Christ, through unbelief, and he
 “ decreed to send them to hell: *he that believeth not
 “ shall be damned.*”—Page 128.

If they do not in this paragraph adopt the contradictory doctrine of the Calvinists, respecting every thing which comes to pass being decreed, they run into some greater absurdities. Either God’s foreknowledge is imperfect—he did not from all eternity foresee who would believe, and who would continue in unbelief—or, if he did foresee them, he did not know what particular persons they were. He knew that they would be men and women, but how many of each sort there would be, and what would be their particular names, were all dark as chaos.

Their doctrine respecting the manner in which sin came into the world, is equally absurd and contradictory. “ God,” say they “ never did permit, but he expressly prohibited sin.” Pray then, how did it come into the world? Did the Devil get the better of Omnipotence? They may reply that God shall at last get the victory over the Devil. But this does not better the matter. If sin came into the world, and is still continued in the world without the divine permission, and in direct opposition to both his secret and revealed will, the consequence is unavoidable, that Omnipotence is all that time worsted.

To conclude—The wise man has said, that there is nothing new under the sun. The remark may be applied to the occasion of the present publication. Truth and

error, have, in every age been the same—The errors which the Presbytery of Springfield have imbibed, and which they are now propagating, have already appeared in the world, in a great variety of forms. The objections which they have urged against the truth as it is in Jesus, have again and again been urged, and have as often been repelled.

May that Spirit which the departing Saviour promised to the churches, descend in plentiful effusions, and teach the professors of Christianity all things, and bring all things to their remembrance. Under his influences, may many have their eyes opened, and be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Under the teaching of this spirit, we may expect to keep the unity of the faith in the bond of peace. Under his teaching, the watchmen upon Zion's walls shall see eye to eye in matters of truth. Under his teaching, Christians shall no longer need to say every man to his brother, know ye the Lord, for they all shall know him from the least even to the greatest.—*Amen.*