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DISCOURSES

ON THE

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.



By *WILLIAM LINN, D. D.*

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE REFORMED DUTCH
CHURCH, IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.



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P R E F A C E.

THE following Discourses were begun in the Month of April last. Several Circumstances have concurred to prevent their Appearance before now. They treat of Subjects not usual in the Pulpit, and the Form of Essays would rather have been chosen, had Leisure admitted. They have been corrected in a few Places since they were delivered, and the whole of the Notes have been added.

The Author never despaired of the Success of the French Revolution; and the Events which have taken Place during the Summer, confirm him in the Opinion that civil Liberty will universally prevail, and that God is preparing the Way for the Introduction of a glorious Scene upon Earth. No political Sentiments are ad-

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vanced except those which seemed to be intimately connected with the Prosperity of the Church. Christians, as such, ought not to interfere with civil Government; and civil Government ought not to interfere with them, farther than to afford general Protection. The Church and the State will flourish best when both attend wholly to their peculiar Concerns.

The Author's principal View is to call the Attention of professing Christians in this Country to the Situation in which Providence hath placed them; to urge them to correct former Mistakes, to lay aside old Prejudices, to remove Stumbling-blocks out of the Way of Infidels, and to unite in the Bonds of Love.

NEW-YORK, SEPTEMBER 26, 1794.



DISCOURSE I.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

MATTHEW xvi. 3.

—CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE
TIMES?

THESE were the words of Jesus Christ to the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they asked him for *a sign from Heaven*. We find, that the Jews frequently sought this from him; and they referred either to some particular sign which they expected the Messiah would give, or to some greater miracle than what he had yet performed. Our Lord, instead of gratifying their curi-

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osity, showed them, that they had sufficient evidence of his divine mission, and that if they were as attentive and honest in observing this, as they were in observing the signs in nature, they could not fail of a just conclusion. *When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather ; for the sky is red : And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day ; for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites ! ye can discern the face of the sky ; but can ye not discern the signs of the times ?* If as though he had said, certain signs in the Heaven foretel the state of the weather, and you carefully remark them ; why can you not discern, by the signs which now appear, who I am, and what are the present times ? Does not your negligence betray your unbelief and hypocrisy ? Are not the prophecies fulfilled in me ? Is not my doctrine divine ? Do not my works witness for me, the very works which it was foretold that the Messiah should perform ?

THE request of the Pharisees and Sadducees being unreasonable, and made with an

evil intention, our Lord severely reproved them, and directed them to attend to the signs which were plainly to be seen. I purpose, my brethren, to discuss the words with a peculiar regard to the day in which we now live, and to inquire, what are the signs of these times. The discourse is intended as introductory to some others.

EVERY person who reflects at all, must see, that the most extraordinary events are taking place, and is naturally led to think on their connection and consequence. He who believes in a divine revelation, ponders in his own mind, whether some of the prophecies are not now fulfilling, and the way preparing for the general spread and success of the everlasting gospel. That this is, indeed, the case, he cannot doubt, in however great darkness the time and the manner may be involved. Before I mention the signs, and what they manifest at this day, let me make a few observations concerning the nature and interpretation of the prophecies.

1. THE fulfilment of the prophecies is one of the strongest proofs of a divine revelation. If it can be shown, that events have been foretold, and particularly described in Scripture, many ages before they came to pass, it is an irresistible proof of the truth of the Scripture ; for only God could have foreseen these events, and they must have been predicted by men inspired of him. The friends of revelation cannot more effectually establish its authority, than by giving a history of the prophecies, together with the events in which they have been fulfilled. This has been done by bishop Newton, in his excellent dissertations, So well are infidels aware of this, that it has been alledged, that the prophecies were written after the events ; a supposition discovering ignorance and malice, and which events yet to come will put to eternal shame. The evidence from prophecy is continually increasing, and will at last overpower, with its lustre, all opposition.

2. IT is not necessary that the prophecies be minutely understood until they be fulfilled. It is enough that events have been foretold; and it answers every purpose for confirming revelation, though we be unable, in the mean time, to interpret them so accurately, and apply them so certainly, as to remove every difficulty, and elucidate every circumstance. At the completion, these will appear clearly, and perhaps men will wonder, how they should have so much misapprehended them. There is, indeed, a divine wisdom in concealing part, as the agents thus act freely, and are often found, contrary to their designs, to accomplish the will of God.

WHENEVER, therefore, we are not guided by plain Scripture, we do no more than conjecture. Our business is not to prophecy, but modestly to interpret what is obviously revealed. How many learned and pious men have framed interpretations which time has shown to be entirely erroneous! Some have dated the fall of Anti-

christ so far back, that the period is elapsed; and others carry it so far forward, that none of us shall live to see it. We are sure that the first were mistaken, and time must prove or disprove the opinion of the last.

3: **THOUGH** a prophecy may not be fully understood until the event come, yet the nearer we approach to the event, the more will the prophecy be unfolded. Former mistakes are corrected, new scenes arise, new wheels in the great wheel of Providence are moved; and though we cannot, with certainty, say which will move next, yet we see more than those who lived before us. We profit by their light, and even by their errors, and we gain an additional light. None of them foresaw the revolutions which have been in our day; at least, they could have little notion of the way in which God would effect his glorious designs. This leads me to point out the signs of the present times.

THERE are two remarkable ones, of which I shall take notice, together with their probable signification, and the duties to which they call us as men, and as professing Christians.

I. THE prevalence of a sense of civil Liberty. We have seen one of the most powerful nations in the world, which, a few years ago, was under an absolute government, and loved her slavery, rise, and, with an energy unknown before, break off her inglorious chains. The monarch whom she adored has been humbled in the dust, and she elevates her view to a government free in its principles, and equal in its operation.

It is true, that in this revolution there have been acts shocking to the feelings of human nature, which the enemies of liberty have aggravated, and endeavored to turn to its disadvantage. These were to be expected from the former state of the nation, from the treacherous opposition within, and from

the cruel opposition of tyrants without. They are to be sincerely regretted, but are neither just arguments against the goodness of the cause, nor evidences that order and freedom will not, in time, be established. To rehearse, in mournful accents, the scenes of distress exhibited now in France, and to have no tears to shed for the former misery of the nation, and the rueful deeds of tyranny throughout the world, betrays a mind extremely disingenuous and base. The sky is red and lowering, but the sun will soon look forth, and fair weather succeed the foul. After the concussion of the elements, the air will become more pure, serene, and balmy.

Is not the prevalence of civil Liberty a sign, that this is necessary, in order to the reign of righteousness and peace? Where is the nation which lost its civil, and preserved its religious liberty? Does not the one always rise or fall with the other? Has not the power which kings have enjoyed, occasioned continual jealousies and wars on the earth? Has not their ambition, avarice, or

luxury rendered them oppressive to their subjects, and dangerous to their neighbors? It would seem, then, that the rights of man must be asserted as preparing the way for the pure and peaceful religion of Christ.

HITHERTO Liberty has in general been suppressed by tyrants, and confined to small corners of the earth ; but now the spreading flame baffles their utmost efforts. The revolution in France has produced a combination the most bold, wicked, and foolish, that ever existed in the world ; bold, because it opposes itself to a nation so determined in principle, and so abundant in resource ; wicked, because it intermeddles in another's affairs, and is a war against Liberty ; and foolish, because it must be unsuccessful, disgraceful, and ruinous. The only appearance that France might fail in establishing her Liberty, arose from internal divisions and commotions ; but the combination of foreign powers has given her strength and

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vigour. External pressure has made her internal union the more firm.

WHO shall stop the current of the tide ? Who shall say to the waves of the sea, peace, be still ? And yet they may as soon effect these, as quench the fire of enthusiasm which glows in the breasts of more than twenty millions. Nor is this all. The very attempt will hasten their own downfall, and make it the more terrible. As a huge stone cast into water violently agitates it, and successive circles touch the farthest shore, so the convulsion in France will shake all nations ; revolution will, probably, follow revolution, until all be regenerated ; until all learn, that government was instituted, not for the aggrandizement of a few, but for the general benefit ; and until they know, *that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.*

To advance these sentiments would, in some countries, cost me my liberty, or my

life. Happily, in this country, we can think and act for ourselves. We smile at tyrants, and defy their rage.

You will not, my brethren, judge what is now said to be improper, when you consider the inseparable connection between civil and religious Liberty, and that the prevalence of the one is a sign of the introduction of the other ; a sign which you are called at this day to discern. Behold Liberty first secured in America ! Behold next the mighty struggles of France ! and say, whether these are not signs, that it shall universally prevail ? The sign of which,

II. I shall take notice, is of an extraordinary nature. It is the spread of deism, or infidelity. Though there are, no doubt, many in France who profess the Christian religion in considerable purity, and many who still adhere to the old superstition, yet there appears to be a great and open disavowal of all religion whatever. There is

not to be found in their public transactions any acknowledgment of a superintending Providence. Not only have they discarded revelation, but, by the most certain accounts, run into downright atheism ; and, in this respect, exhibit a spectacle never seen before.* This is not mentioned as an argument against the justness of their original

* Since the above was written, there has been published a decree of the National Convention, May 8, containing the following article—"Article I. The French people acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being, and the immortality of the soul." This shows, that though they deny the Christian religion, yet they are unwilling to be reputed atheists ; and that there is more religion among the people of France than her enemies allow. The sentiments of the people, and the reproaches of enemies, probably led the Convention to make this declaration.—The decree, however, may be considered as a bad precedent ; for if government once begin to interfere with religious belief, there is no end. This the French ought not, on their own principles, to do, and it is hoped, that they will not. All that any government has to do, is to secure and protect its citizens, leaving every one, in matters of religion, to believe and act according to the light of their own minds.

cause, or the probability of its final success. They who would thus construe it, do not consider, that God often accomplishes his purposes by his enemies, and in ways which are incomprehensible by us.

SOME constantly produce this irreligion as a formidable objection, who are little better themselves. If the Sadducees said that *there was neither angel, nor resurrection, nor spirit*; the Pharisees, under the cloak of sanctity, committed the greatest villainies. When we hear of courts saying that their religion is in danger, they mean their hierarchies or ecclesiastical establishments; for, as to the pure spirit of Christianity, it is seldom known among them. The nation which they abuse, are no greater infidels than themselves, save that they wear no mask, but openly appear what they are. It is remarkable that our Saviour pointed his sharpest reproofs, and denounced his most terrible woes against the Scribes and the Pharisees; persons who had corrupted the

word of God by their traditions, and made religion subserve their worldly interests*.

* It is well-known, that some who cry out against the French for their irreligion, are themselves avowed infidels, or scandalously immoral in their lives. In Britain many of the court have been, and now are deists, who comply with rites of religion which they do not believe, and which they ridicule. Perhaps the writings of Chesterfield alone, have done more injury to the morals of mankind, than the writings of Voltaire, and all the French philosophers.

These words of an author, lately banished to Botany Bay, are not more severe than true: "The religion of some men, like the Sodom apple, is fair without, but rotten at the core. The strictest attention to the *cere-monies* of religion is perfectly compatible with the grossest violation of the duties of morality; and examples are not wanting among kings themselves, who chant their morning orisons to the groans of their people, and who, with pious profanation, uplift those hands to the throne of mercy, which are still reeking with the blood of their subjects. In one sense indeed, the war may be truly called a war of religion; for it resembles the Crusades in the madness of the principle, and in the cruelty of the persecution." I know nothing of the character of this man [GERRALD] but from his being sent to Botany Bay I suspect him to be of extraordinary virtue.

AT the same time, my brethren, as we would not justify any political excesses in France, so still less the daring impiety. The vain imaginations of infidels are to be lamented and pitied. The frenzy cannot last long. Soon as the design for which a wise God hath permitted it, is answered, religion will return in primitive purity and power. The old foundation is demolishing, that a better may be laid. When the *wood, hay, and stubble* which composed the monstrous structure is burnt up, there will appear in genuine Christianity what all the furnaces of hell cannot consume, nor all its smoke tarnish.

BUT, what does this prevalence of infidelity denote? Is it any sign to professing Christians? Is it not a sign that the Christian religion is loaded with corruptions and abuses; that these have prejudiced men against it, and that therefore a reformation is necessary? Let me mention briefly a few things which have greatly promoted infidelity, and by the correction of which infidelity will be weakened and fall. They may be discussed more fully hereafter.

1. THE want of union among the followers of Christ. There are so many improper divisions and distinctions as greatly to injure the common cause. Instead of these being healed, they have been encouraged; instead of mutual forbearance and charity, there have been mutual strife and censoriousness.

It has been alledged, that the different denominations are of real advantage, by watching over and exciting one another. God hath no doubt, over-ruled divisions for good, but this cannot justify them. We may not *do evil that good may come*. Union is inculcated frequently and in the strongest terms, by Christ and his Apostles. We are under solemn obligation to seek it; and until we do so, we do not recommend our profession, and remove a great stumbling-block out of the way of infidels.

2. THE additions which have been made to the pure doctrine and worship of Christ, and the insisting upon a compliance with

them under pain of excommunication. This has been peculiarly the case in popish countries, where Christianity has become a more intolerable yoke than the ceremonies of the Jewish law. All churches, indeed, have erred too much in this respect, and it is a natural consequence of their divisions. They must have something to distinguish them, and if they cannot find it in the word of God, they will invent it. When they unite, these things will cease ; for they never can unite on the doctrines of men which are various and discordant ; they must unite by recurring to the lively oracles of God.

3. ANOTHER abuse of Christianity, and a principal source of deism, is ecclesiastical establishments ; unholy alliances between the church and the state. These have occasioned infidels to say, that religion was devised by priests and princes to awe the multitude, and increase their own power. It is certain, that wherever particular modes of worship are established by civil authority,

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they are little better than engines of state, and tend to bring religion into contempt. They make hypocrites, and expose the ordinances of the gospel to the most horrid prostitution. When religion is the road to worldly honours and emoluments, many will be found to assume the profession, and comply with the prescribed rites, who are unprincipled in heart, and profligate in life.

At the reformation, though the authority of the Pope was rejected, yet establishments were continued; and thus a reformation was made only in part. In some instances, it was only transferring the power to another, or giving the church a new visible head.* The church needs nothing from

* “The papal power was at least virtually assumed by the protestant princes. The deadly wound, which the beast had received in Peter’s chair, was healed up in all the protestant thrones.”—“Finding their own crowns consolidated with the mitre, and placed on the head of the Roman pontiff, they pulled both from his brow at once, and, without giving themselves the trouble to se-

the state but protection, and gives, in return, good subjects, *not for wrath, but for conscience sake.*

IN this country there are still a few advocates for establishments of some kind ; but the most rejoice, that there are none, and that the experiment is now making, whether they have not been unnecessary and dangerous. We believe that religion will flourish more than ever, and that the old establishments in Europe are a great impediment to its progress, and a part of the anti-christian system.*

“ ver the unsightly mass, they proceeded to plant it upon
“ their own heads.” Graham’s Review of Ecclesiastical
Establishments.

* This sentiment will be more fully enforced in a following discourse. It is the same which is expressed in these words of the preface to the constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church—“ Whether the church of Christ
“ will not be more effectually patronized in a civil government, where full freedom of conscience and worship is equally protected and insured to all men, and
“ where truth is left to vindicate her own sovereign au-

IF the things which have been mentioned are the means of promoting and strengthening infidelity ; if they give a false view of Christianity, and furnish with arguments against it, then it is the duty of Christians to rectify these abuses ; and the present flood of infidelity is a sign, that they should no longer delay the good work. Reformation is necessary in the church, as well as in the civil governments of the world.

THERE is reason to believe, from prophecy, that when France shall have recovered her Liberty, and peace has returned, that pure and undefiled religion shall prevail ; that when *the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone, the flowers shall appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds*

“ thority and influence, than where men in power promote their favorite denominations by temporal emoluments and partial discriminations, will now, in America, have a fair trial ; and all who know and love the truth, will rejoice in the prospect which such a happy situation affords for the triumph of the gospel, and the reign of peace and love.”

come, and the voice of the turtle be heard in the land. To this purpose have these words been interpreted; *And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.* By the *earthquake* is understood a great commotion or revolution in nations; by the *tenth part of the city*, is understood France, which was the tenth kingdom which gave its power to the beast at Rome; by its *falling*, is understood its withdrawing this power, or ceasing to form a part of the city; *men signify names of men, or men of name*; and by *seven thousand being slain*, is understood the abolition of names or titles, or the destruction of those who bear them. This interpretation, made long since by several learned and pious men,* is now remarka-

* See Goodwin, Moore, Jurieu, Willison, Gill, and others. Whoever reads the exposition of this part of prophecy by Goodwin, written 1639, and that by Jurieu, written 1687, will be surprized to find, notwithstanding

bly verifying ; and why may we not hope, that the latter part of the verse refers to the revival of religion ? *The remnant were af-frighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

THE conjecture is plausible, that the two witnesses, who are to be killed, and *their dead bodies to lie in the street of the great city,* is now fulfilled, by the contempt of all religion in France. It is to happen *the same*

their mistakes in some small circumstances, and the periods which they have fixed, how exactly it is fulfilling at this day. These words of Jurieu, in giving the characters of Christ's reign, are very remarkable, when we consider what has taken place in France, and seem to describe the true *Liberty and-Equality*—" All those *vain titles*, which now serve for ornament and pride, shall then " be vanquished. *Brotherly love* shall make all men *equal* ; " not that all distinction and all dignities among men shall " cease. This *kingdom* is no *anarchy* : there shall be " some to govern, and some to obey. But government " shall then be without pride and insolence, without ty- " ranny, and without violence. Subjects shall obey their " rulers with an humble spirit ; and governors shall rule " their subjects with a spirit of meekness and gentleness."

*hour with the great earthquake. Though by the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit, and which is to overcome and kill the witnesses, has been generally understood the tyrannical power of Rome, yet this power is so much weakened, that it is not easy to see how it should perform such a work. This beast may well signify the spirit of infidelity that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit. The church of Rome may still be said to kill the witnesses; for this infidelity is her natural offspring. The witnesses are to revive after three days and an half, that is, after three years and an half, or a short space of time.**

* It is an opinion which has very generally obtained, that the slaying of the witnesses, from the manner in which it is mentioned, and because it is said to come to pass *when they shall have finished their testimony*, is something distinct from their prophesying in sackcloth, and signifies a more dreadful persecution of the church than has yet been fulfilled. The late President Edwards, in a treatise entitled, "An humble attempt to promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people in extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion, &c." endeavors to show, with his usual strength, that the witnesses were slain pre-

But these, with some other parts of prophecy, may, on some future occasion, be more fully considered. At present, let me conclude with a few reflections.

1. LET us not be discouraged at the delay of the accomplishment of the promises of God, or any unfavorable circumstances which appear. *One day is with the Lord as*

vious to the reformation. It is also said, that the words may be rendered, *While they shall perform their testimony*. The arguments may be seen at large in that valuable treatise.

But if any still think, that the prophecy was not then fulfilled, it is applicable to nothing, which at present appears, so much as to the great and public disrespect shown to the Christian religion in France. The Rev. Mr. David Austin, in his "Downfall of mystical Babylon," gives this likewise as his opinion; with this addition, that the *two witnesses* may signify, "The *spirit* and the *word*, with their usual and outward methods of administration;" and that the present decline of religion in the world is the dark period which has been expected, and the time when the witnesses are slain. At any rate, it is not at all probable, that popery shall ever recover strength enough to do what it once did.

a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. All will come to pass in the best way and time. Out of what we think darkness and confusion, light and order will arise.

AGAIN, Let us, instead of curiously inquiring what are the purposes of God, or seeking to be wise above what is written, diligently attend to what Providence points out to be our duty. Are we not called, at this day, to courage and zeal in professing and defending the truths of the gospel? In proportion as impiety grows bold, ought not the followers of Christ to appear openly in his cause? Ought they not cheerfully to correct abuses, and especially to show, by the simplicity and holiness of their lives, that *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?* We know the utmost strength of the opposers of revelation, and we may confidently challenge them to the field. Their reign is short. We ask no aid from temporal power, superstitious fears, and the

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prejudices of education ; but venture all on the dictates of the best reason, and the result of the most deliberate discussion.

AGAIN, Are we not called at this day to earnest prayer and supplication to God? Is he not the hearer of prayer, the refuge to which his people in all times resort? Let us, then, plead with him, that every obstacle in the way of the general reception of the gospel may be removed; that he would destroy popish superstition, and pagan idolatry; and that *the earth may be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*

LASTLY, Are we not called to acquiesce and rejoice in the divine government? Is it not wise and just? Miserable is the condition of the infidel, but that of the believer is full of consolation. With respect to his private concerns, he knows that *all things shall work together for his good*; and with respect to the affairs of nations, he knows that *the most High doeth according to his will in the*

army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ? With what fervor and assurance may he offer up to his Father in heaven these petitions which our Lord hath taught us ! Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.



DISCOURSE II.

KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

J O H N xviii. 36.

MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD.

THIS is part of that *good confession* which our Lord *witnessed before Pontius Pilate*. Having been falsely accused and condemned for blasphemy, by Caiaphas, the high-priest of the Jews, he was brought to Pilate, at that time governor of Judea, and accused before him of designs injurious to the Roman government. His accusers determined on putting him to death, and not having the power in their own hands, had recourse to the sword of the civil magistrate. They re-

KINGDOM OF CHRIST. 33

presented him as one who was disaffected to the present authority, and who set up pretensions of his own.

OUR Lord, when questioned, acknowledged that he was a king, but declared, that his kingdom was of such a nature as would not interfere with the rights of Cæsar, or give him any just occasion of alarm. *My kingdom is not of this world.* I am not a king in the sense which the Jews alledge. I am not such a king as they expect the Messiah to be. Were this the case, my claim would be asserted by force; *my servants would fight* against those who have now apprehended me, and seek my life. My dominion is wholly separate and different from that exercised by the kings of this world.

HAPPY, my brethren, had it been for mankind, had they attended to this declaration. Christianity would not then have been so vilely adulterated, it would not have assumed so distorted an appearance, and it would not have been made the occasion of

so much confusion and blood-shed. Happy will it be for mankind, if, after long experience, they correct their mistake as to the church of Christ, and no longer attempt to incorporate it with the state. The uniting civil and ecclesiastic power in one person, or the blending the Christian system with civil government, formed the *beast* at Rome; and, in proportion as the effects of this decline in the world, we may hope for the existence of true liberty and undefiled religion. From what we witness in our day, the time cannot be far distant, when rulers will either learn their folly, and cheerfully consent to a reformation, or when they shall be compelled to relinquish their ungodly usurpation over the consciences of men.

NATIONAL establishments of religion were said, in a late discourse, to be a principal source of the infidelity which is abroad, and the abolition of them was represented as an object very desirable. Though in this country we have no establishments to lament, yet we cannot be uninterested in the welfare

of the human race ; and the consideration of this subject will afford us reason, as to ourselves, for gratitude and praise.

SHALL it be said, that, in ascribing infidelity in Europe to a certain cause, a vindication of it is attempted ? Be assured, that infidels will ever sneer until professing Christians act as they ought. They will never be persuaded, that the Christian religion is from heaven, while mixed with the civil constitutions of this world. Shall it be said, that the doctrine tends to kindle the flames of war ? So far from this, that it removes what has been the great causes of war in every age, and leads to universal peace. There can be no reformation without revolutions, and revolutions are frequently, through the corrupt passions of men, managed with great fierceness and heat. Do any mean, that we ought, without resistance, to submit to either civil or ecclesiastical tyranny ? To this the preacher cannot subscribe while he has a breath to draw, or while the blood flows in his veins. His creed he imposes on

no man, let no man impose his creed on him. Entitled to protection from every government to which he demeans himself as a good citizen, he is accountable for his religious faith and practice to Jesus Christ alone, who is the *King of kings, and Lord of lords*. Let us inquire in what respects his kingdom is not of this world.

IT is not of this world in respect to its *nature* ; in respect to its *subjects* ; in respect to its *laws* ; in respect to the *means of its promotion* ; and in respect to its *design, extent, and duration*.

FIRST, It is not of this world in respect to its *nature*. It is wholly spiritual. Jesus is, indeed, a king, but his dominion is over the hearts of men, and he claims none of the external power, splendor, and emoluments of an earthly monarch.

THE Jews, misinterpreting ancient prophecies, expected that the Messiah would come in great temporal glory, deliver the

nation from bondage, and exalt it to a state of prosperity above all others. How general this opinion was, appears from the request of the mother of Zebedee's children to Christ for her two sons ; *Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom.* We find, that his disciples asked him, even after his resurrection, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel ?* Not until after his ascension, and the mission of the Holy Ghost, were they fully instructed in the nature of that kingdom which he had erected. The greater part of the nation were offended at the meanness of his appearance. To them *he had no form nor comeliness ; no beauty that they should desire him ; and Christ crucified,* is, at this day, the great *stumbling-block.*

Not only have the Jews been mistaken, but those who acknowledged Christ, and received his doctrine, have not duly confi-

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dered the spirituality of his kingdom. Why else have they strove to model it like an earthly kingdom? Why have the church and the state been incorporated? Why has there been the same head to both, and obedience enforced by the same laws and sanctions? Why has it been attempted to unite things which cannot be united without destroying their very nature? It was not considered, that the Christian church differs from any political association whatever. It is a society, and, in this general idea, agrees with civil institutions, but it is a society peculiar and distinct. Whenever it is made conformable to a system of civil policy, it is no longer the true church of Christ. You may call it a *national* church, if you will, but it has lost the distinguishing characteristic of the church of Christ, that is not of this world.*

* "The church is a society, wholly distinct in its principles, laws, and end, from any which men have ever instituted for civil purposes." Preface to the Constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church.

SECONDLY, The kingdom of Christ is not of this world in respect to its *subjects*. All who compose a nation, are the subjects of its government, but the church does not embrace all these. Her subjects are only those who make a credible profession of faith in the doctrines, and obedience to the precepts of Christ. The real subjects, indeed, are only those who are united to Christ, and have been purchased by his blood. In the sight of the church, however, all are to be accounted such, whose profession and practice are agreeable to the gospel. Hence comes the distinction of the church visible and invisible. As it is the prerogative of God to search the heart, we must be guided by that which is visible ; and, therefore, we include in the kingdom of Christ all his professed followers. These, in the judgment of the church, are *not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world ; they are chosen, called to be saints.*

HERE, then, is an evident distinction between the church and the state, which an

incorporation of them takes away. In a national church, all who comply with certain rites prescribed by the civil government, are reputed members of the church, and may hold offices in the state ; but if they do not comply, they are cast out of the church, and deemed unworthy of trust, though they should be of exemplary life, and give every evidence of being loyal subjects.*

It is true, that many who are members of an established church, are also members of Christ's kingdom, but this is no fair ar-

* Mr. Booth, in his "Essay on the kingdom of Christ," says, "The church of England, for instance, includes "all English subjects of the British crown, whether they "be moral or profligate, pious or profane : such only ex- "cepted, as have not been baptized, or as lie under a sen- "tence of excommunication. Nay, so tenacious is the "English church of this idea, as to consider members "within its pale, who never considered themselves in that "light. For, in certain cases, well known to the doc- "tors in canon law, protestant dissenters, and even popish "recusants, are cast out of its communion—*cast out*, with "dreadful penalties annexed, though they never acknow- "ledged themselves to be in it."

gument in favor of the mixture. It is confounding two things which are totally different; it is bringing into one inclosure the men of the world, and those chosen out of the world. Who shall tell whether they obey Christ, or conform to an act of legislature? Whether they are moved by love to the Saviour, or by a thirst after worldly honor and profit? How shall the ministers of Christ keep his ordinances from being profaned? What are those to do who cannot conform without violating their consciences? Are they to be reckoned dogs, not meet to take the children's bread, and to be deprived even of the rights of citizenship? There is no end to the absurdities and mischiefs of this plan. What arrogance in mortals to say, that this is the true church, that these are the true members, to the exclusion of all others!

NOR is this the worst. Different creeds and different usages have been established at different times, and all sanctioned by human laws. He who was reckoned a Christi-

an at one time, would not be reckoned a Christian at another.* There is what is still worse. Under the very same constitution of civil government, two different modes of admission to the ministry, and of worship, are established; the Episcopalian and Presbyterian; both of which are lawful, according to the statutes of the realm; and yet the ministers of the south will not receive those of the north; nor can the ministers of the north receive those of the south. Thus the civil government, determining truth and falsehood by a geographical line, has, in one part of the island, declared, that episcopacy is the only scriptural and apostolical form of the church, and that all others are spurious;

* An instance of this occurred immediately after incorporations began. "During the first years of Constantine's reign, it was his sovereign will and pleasure, that the whole Catholic church should believe, that Jesus Christ is God supreme. In the latter part of his reign, it is the sovereign will of the imperial court, that the Catholic church should anathematize her former faith, and curse her former creeds. Councils were successively called to gratify the whim of the day." Graham.

and in another part of the same island, that presbyterianism is the only scriptural and apostolical form, and that all others are spurious. Hence what is a virtue in England, is a crime in Scotland, and what is a virtue in Scotland, is a crime in England ; for the infallibility of government has solemnly pronounced episcopacy and presbyterianism to be *both true*, and *both false*. What a striking evidence, that religion is fashioned by earthly powers merely to suit their own policy, and that their conduct is unjust and tyrannical !*

* “ In England, the national church is built on the
 “ foundation of the lords and commons, assembled in par-
 “ liament ; his majesty the supreme head, being the chief
 “ corner-stone. Why is episcopacy the order of the
 “ church of England ? Is it not because it is thought to
 “ be most conducive to the political designs of govern-
 “ ment, in England ? If any demur, we ask, why the
 “ same British parliament declares it to be their sovereign
 “ will and pleasure, that the national church on the north
 “ side of the Tweed should be of the presbyterian form ?
 “ Why cannot those who are ordained by the *presbytery*
 “ be reputed ministers of the chartered church in *South*
 “ *Britain* ; and why cannot those who are ordained by

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It may be said, that establishments are still proper, provided that toleration is given to all descriptions for the free exercise of their religion. TOLERATION ! For what ? For the exercise of a right which men never surrendered, and which it is impossible to take from them. Dismal must have been the reign of ignorance and superstition, when it was found necessary to introduce this word. To tolerate, implies a power to forbid. Let the word be forever blotted from the vocabulary of Christians. I proceed to say,

THIRDLY, That the kingdom of Christ is not of this world in respect to its *laws*. The laws of men can regulate only the outward conduct, but those of Christ reach to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The laws of men affect only the body or estate,

“ the bishop be esteemed ministers in the religious department of *North Britain* ? Must not their office-powers in their respective churches depend wholly on the political constitution of the countries in which they officiate ? ” Graham,

but those of Christ affect the mind. Besides that civil government is founded on the moral law of God, which is written on the hearts of men, and that the Christian religion reveals new truths and enjoins a number of positive institutions, there is certainly the greatest folly and impiety in forcing by penalties, any system of religious faith and practice. The understanding cannot be compelled to believe, nor the conscience to approve whatever is proposed to it. They must have evidence, the one to yield its assent, and the other its approbation.

THE laws of Christ are no farther compulsory than that they recommend themselves to the conscience of every man in the sight of God. They deter by no bodily pains, and they allure by no worldly greatness. Admonition, suspension from membership, and excommunication are the means appointed for reclaiming the forward. Penal statutes may make conformists and hypocrites, but cannot make true Chris-

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tians, who are *a willing people in a day of divine power*. This leads me to say,

IN the fourth place, That the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, in respect to the *means of its promotion*. The propagation, success, and universal reception of the gospel, do not depend upon any of those methods by which earthly monarchs secure and extend their dominions.

By far different ways was the Christian and the Mahometan religion propagated. Mahomet spread his by victorious armies, and by the same tyranny are its votaries kept in subjection. The Christian religion prevailed by its own excellence and the mighty power of God, though all the kingdoms of the world were combined against it. Who were the first preachers of the gospel? They were poor, most of them illiterate, chosen from the lower occupations in life, and unacquainted with the policy of this world. Instead of receiving temporal dignities, they were persecuted by the powers which then

were ; instead of enjoying large benefices, they were often in hunger and cold ; instead of rolling in splendor and indolence, they travelled from place to place, publishing the glad tidings of salvation. *We preach Christ crucified*, says Paul, *that primitive bishop, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* And again, *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds ; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself, against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* For the first three hundred years did Christianity flourish without the support of civil governments ; yea, when it was opposed and persecuted by them. Not until Constantine succeeded to the Roman Empire, and embraced the Christian faith, did earthly powers appear in its favour.

WHEN Christians in their turn had obtained the sway, it was natural to employ it in a manner which they judged to be for their own advantage. So far as this was done to defend themselves against the encroachments of their enemies, it was proper; but to enforce opinions and modes of worship by the sword, was subjecting others to the same oppression and cruelty of which they had so loudly complained in others toward them. They did not consider that nothing more was necessary than protection in the enjoyment of their rights, and that to arm the Christian religion with the sword, was to degrade and put it on a level with all the false religions on the earth. The Pagan and Mahometan systems needed this, but as to the kingdom of Christ, it was useless, and in the issue proved highly destructive. The pious emperor was, no doubt, fully persuaded, that he was a nursing father to the church, when he enriched and dignified its ministers, undertook to enjoin faith in its doctrines, and conformity to its institutions, and to destroy all its opposers; but, alas,

from his well-meant zeal, sprung afterward the most grievous corruptions. The dark night of popery gradually came on; and though at the Reformation, the day-star visited us, yet we have not since seen the clear shining of the sun.

IN the reign of Constantine and of the succeeding Christian emperors, was matured that mode of government in the church by different orders, after the model of the Roman empire, until one assumed the title of Universal Bishop. Then numerous ceremonies and holydays, and showy garments were introduced into the church, with mitres and croziers; then priests began to be spiritual lords and courtiers, and to share in the offices of the state; then, in short, the beautiful simplicity of the church, that noble republic was lost, and degenerated into a spiritual tyranny.*

* “ It was in the fourth century that Christians first
 “ entertained the idea of allying the profession of Chris-
 “ tianity with the constitution of the Roman empire.

< THE alliance between the church and the state, appears to me, my brethren, to be the very soul of antichrist, and though the *seat* is at Rome, yet the influence has been extended to all Christendom. At the Reformation the *beast* was wounded but not killed.

“ From that moment the church’s greatest woes take date. Those furies which had actuated the dragon, during the heathen persecutions, took full possession of Christians. Athanasians and Arians by turns boast of the alliance.”—
 “ The fourth century is famous for the birth of antichrist, and incorporations ; but the model of both existed before that celebrated æra.”—“ This Catholic church became as unwieldy as the empire with which she was incorporated. It therefore became necessary to divide and subdivide her into parts analagous and adjusted to the artificial divisions of the empire. These partitions according to the extent of the territory, and the quality of the cities in them, were to be governed by patriarchs, metropolitans, bishops, with other orders of subsidiary clergy.—And now Christianity must change her attire, that with dignity she may fill the throne of her discarded rival. Superstition opens all her tinsel treasures. Ignorance erects her ebon throne. The doctrines of Christianity are adulterated. Its institutions are sophisticated. Offices, hitherto unknown in the church are invented.”—*Graham.*

It still lives, and lives in the very places where it was supposed to have been dead. The description of the *man of sin*, that he *opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*, is applicable to every one who usurps the throne of Christ, as well as to his pretended vicar at Rome. *

As we believe then, that antichrist will in due time fall, so national establishments of

* Agreeable to this, are these words of Dr. Hopkins, in his "Treatise on the Millennium:" "There is no reason to consider the antichristian spirit and practices to be confined to that which is now called the church of Rome. The Protestant churches have much of antichrist in them, and are far from being wholly reformed from the corruptions and wickedness in doctrine and practice, which are found in that which is called *Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth*. Her influence in promoting delusion and wickedness, extends, in some degree, to all the inhabitants of the world, and more especially the Christian world. Some churches may be more pure, and may have proceeded farther in a reformation than others; but none are wholly clear of an antichristian spirit, and the fruits of it."

religion, being a part, must cease, before Jesus can take to him his great power and reign. *Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.* Consent to surrender, what you have so long unjustly claimed, and what mankind cannot give you. Protect all in their rights, and recommend religion by your peaceable and holy lives; and then will the prediction be fulfilled, that *kings shall be nursing fathers and their queens nursing mothers to the church.*

ONCE MORE, The kingdom of Christ is not of this world in respect to its *design, extent, and duration.*

THE design of secular kingdoms is to give temporal security and happiness to men. The design of Christ's kingdom is to illustrate the perfections of the eternal God in the salvation of sinners of our race; to re-

cover them from their apostacy, and bring them to complete holiness and happiness in a future state.

THE kingdoms of this world are of limited extent, but the kingdom of Christ is in every place where his gospel is preached. His people are gathered out *of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues*. All of whatever place or nation, who acknowledge Jesus, belong to his society. They are *all baptized into one body, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, whether they be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit. There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all.*

EARTHLY kingdoms are of short duration. They rise and fall. *The fashion of this world passeth away*. But the spiritual kingdom continueth always the same. To the dispensation of the law succeeded the brighter

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dispensation of grace ; and to this again will succeed the infinitely glorious state in heaven, where the saints will reign with Christ for ever and ever. Hear the prophetic oracles concerning the extent of his kingdom on this earth ! *He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. All kings shall fall down before him : all nations shall serve him. There was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him.* “ This holy empire shall issue in the ultimate glory ; and though the present form of its administration will cease when *God shall be all in all*, yet the glorified subjects of it shall never die, never be disunited, nor ever withdraw their allegiance from Jesus Christ.”

SUCH being the design, extent, and duration of Christ's kingdom, it is evidently distinct from any earthly kingdom, and an incorporation of them appears to be impossible. To interweave particular creeds and

modes of worship with the national constitution is to make the church depend on the limited and changeable governments of this world. It is to divide and to diversify it, to make it any thing, and nothing at all.

AFTER what has been said, the arguments in favour of civil establishments of religion, must appear not worthy of a serious consideration. Did not pride and interest powerfully plead, their advocates would be ashamed to mention them. Those who would refer us to the Jewish polity for the plan on which to form the Christian church, have not properly considered the peculiar nature and design of the government instituted by God among the Jews. If it be alleged, that without establishments, the ministers of religion will not obtain a sufficient maintenance, I need only say, that to insure this, there is no necessity of establishments, which are exclusive and unequal. Wherever these are, we find some of the officers of the church enjoying large revenues, while the greater part, and perhaps the most de-

erving, are reduced to live on a scanty pittance. Were this system abolished, salaries might be more equally apportioned, and without partiality to any particular denomination of Christians. Some think that it is the duty of the state to make this general and indiscriminate provision for divine worship; but to me it appears most eligible to leave this matter wholly to be managed by the professors of religion.*

* Whoever desires farther information on this subject, will find it fully handled, and all objections satisfactorily answered by the Rev. Mr. William Graham, of Newcastle, in his "Review of Ecclesiastical Establishments in Europe," a late excellent production.

None, in this country, I believe, contend for any establishment but that which is equal and general. Their arguments are founded chiefly on the support which civil government receives from religion, on the necessity of securing to the ministers of the gospel such a maintenance as will encourage men of talents, and give them independence and respectability, on the danger of the prevalence of infidelity, if the civil power should desert religion, and thus government itself be undermined. These arguments are indeed plausible; but they are all sufficiently answer-

THIS subject, my brethren, is truly serious and important. In this country, as has been said, we have nothing to fear from an improper interference of civil government in matters of religion. Happy Americans! whose forefathers fled from the *dragon* into the *wildernefs*, and *the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after them*, may God preserve you to the latest ages, make your country the dwelling of righteousness and peace, an asylum to the persecuted of all nations! *—But surely we have not di-

ed by saying, that the Christian religion abundantly prospered long before it had any connection with civil government; yea, when all the powers on earth set themselves in opposition to it. It made rapid progress long after miracles ceased, by its own excellence and the zeal of its teachers.

* Every body will see the force and beauty of the following description: “ In America, that country which
 “ God and man have concurred to render the blissful habi-
 “ tation of abundance and of peace, the poor are not
 “ broken down by taxes to support the expensive trappings
 “ of royalty, or to pamper the luxury of an insolent no-

vested ourselves of affection for all the rest of the world. We believe in a Catholic church, the communion of saints, and cannot but ardently wish the prosperity of the whole body. The subject must engage our peculiar attention at this day, when we see the dreadful effects flowing from the abuses of Christianity. Men will not take pains to examine the purity and simplicity of this religion as exhibited in the sacred oracles ; they only consider it in that form which legislatures have given it ; and finding it to be burdened with follies, to be an engine of

“ bility. No lordly peer tramples down the corn of the
 “ husbandman, no proud prelate wrings from him the
 “ tythe of his industry. They have neither chicanery in
 “ ermine, nor hypocrisy in lawn. The community is
 “ not there divided into an oppressed peasantry and an
 “ overgrown aristocracy, the one of whom lives by the
 “ plunder of the state, while the others are compelled to be
 “ the objects of it. Plenty is the lot of all, superfluity of
 “ none. An equal and undistinguishing law is the only
 “ sovereign acknowledged by a free and an united people,
 “ which as all contribute to make, so all are inclined to
 “ support. The peace of millions cannot there be broken
 “ by the bloody disposition of *one* man.”——*Gerrald.*

pride and ambition, and to carry in its bosom the dagger of persecution, they run into open deism. May we not hope, that the shadows are fleeing away before the glorious Sun which is to enlighten all nations! We deplore the unhappy infidelity in France, but cannot help repeating, that it is the natural consequence of a detested system; the offspring of the *great whore that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication*. When her judgment is come, infidelity will perish by the celestial arms of the gospel. Another Luther and another Calvin shall arise, to carry the banner of the cross triumphant round the globe.

LET me conclude, my brethren, with beseeching you all, to become willing subjects of Christ's kingdom. This does not consist in attaching yourselves to a particular denomination in his church, but in yielding him the homage of a pure heart. Receive him by faith, as your prophet, priest,

and king. Let your allegiance be sincere and universal; and then shall he make you more than conquerors over all your enemies, and grant you to sit with him upon his throne.



DISCOURSE III.

CORRUPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8.

BEWARE LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT, AFTER THE TRADITION OF MEN, AFTER THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD, AND NOT AFTER CHRIST.

THE Apostle, in this chapter, faithfully warned the believing Colossians against a corruption of the doctrines of Christ, and a departure from simplicity in his worship. He referred particularly to the Pagan and Jewish systems, by which the church was,

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at that time, greatly endangered. The converts from each, were attached to their peculiar opinions and usages, and endeavoured to incorporate them with the Christian system.

THOUGH the Apostle made all due allowance for the prejudices of education, and insisted that a difference in sentiment and practice, ought to be no cause of breaking communion among professors, yet he constantly vindicated the purity of the gospel; declared that the Jewish rites and ceremonies were abolished, and that those of the Gentiles were improper and prejudicial. Both these are comprehended under the terms *philosophy and vain deceit, the tradition of men, and the rudiments of the world*. He points out particularly in the following verses, some of these things; such as prescribing certain meats and drinks, observing holy-days; and generally, all *the commandments and doctrines of men*; whatever comes under the name of *will-worship*, or, as it is expressed

in the text, was not *after Christ*; that is, had not the sanction of his authority.

IT is to be lamented, that notwithstanding the frequent injunctions of the apostle, many in every age have discovered a disposition to make innovations in the Christian religion, and not only to observe these themselves, but to enforce them upon others. This has had a most pernicious effect, by drawing men off from real piety to external show or bodily service; and by representing Christianity in an unfavourable light. To this as well as to civil establishments of religion, which I lately discussed, are we in part to ascribe the alarming progress of infidelity in the world. If so, my brethren, it is a subject which nearly concerns us. Infidelity is a sign that something is wrong in respect to the professors of Christianity. They cannot successfully combat the giant, until they lay aside their forged and heavy armour, and meet him with the simple weapons of the gospel.

I SHALL, first, give a brief view of the corruptions of the Christian religion, and the occasion of them. Secondly, I shall show what ought to be the only rule for the conduct of Christians, and urge the necessity of their complying with it.

I. As to the corruptions of the Christian religion, they began very early. In the days of the apostles, was the foundation laid of Romish superstition and tyranny. *The mystery of iniquity*, says Paul, *doth already work*. In the first three centuries, which are reckoned the purest, many sects arose, propogating their peculiar tenets, and numerous ceremonies were introduced into public worship. Augustine, who lived in the fourth century, complained, that “the yoke under which the Jews formerly groaned, was more tolerable than that imposed upon Christians in his time.”

THE occasion of these corruptions was, first, the different descriptions of the profes-

fors of Christianity. They were collected, as has been said, from among the Jews and Heathen; and could not be easily persuaded to renounce those sentiments and practices to which they had been long accustomed. Among each of these existed likewise different sects, which made a still greater mixture and confusion. The Jews were divided in their opinions and modes of life; and the Pagan philosophers did not all embrace the same system. Probably, from that celebrated sect among the Jews, called the Essenes, who affected solitude, retired from the duties of social life, were very austere in their manners, did the church of Rome copy the monastic life, and in process of time, found an amazing number of nunneries, convents, and monasteries. With these are naturally connected, celibacy, penance, and a great many superstitious rites. With the Jews were introduced the observance of certain days; and the opinion was soon maintained, that the Christian priesthood was come in the room of the Jewish, and entitled

to the like honours and privileges. This opinion helped toward the form of their ecclesiastical government, and was a source of wealth and power to the clergy.*

On the other hand, the Gentiles contributed their share of innovations. They had their philosophical notions, their feast days, and their ceremonies of worship, which they sought to reconcile with Christianity. By mixing false philosophy with the pure doctrines of the gospel, arose the famous sect of the Gnostics, of which there were various branches, each holding doctrines contrary to reason and the scripture. Hence were

* Mosheim in his ecclesiastical history says, "That in consequence of this opinion, the *bishops* considered themselves as invested with a rank and character similar to those of the *high-priest* among the Jews, while the presbyters represented the *priests*, and the *deacons*, the *Levites*. The errors to which it gave rise were many; and one of its immediate consequences was, the establishing a greater difference between the Christian pastors and their flock, than the genius of the gospel seems to admit."

occasioned warm disputes concerning the person of our Saviour and the Holy Trinity. Not contented with what was revealed, but *intruding into things which they had not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds*, they advanced the most strange and often the most contradictory doctrines.

It is necessary, however, to remark here, that the early corruption of Christianity, the different sects and discordant sentiments of its professors, are arguments of no force against its divine authority. There were a number who zealously asserted the truth ; and even though they differed in many things, yet they were generally united in the great essentials of religion. No more is intended than to show the occasion of this difference ; that customs introduced and tolerated in the church, from the unavoidable circumstances of mankind, were afterwards continued and established when wholly improper, and at last abused to the great injury of true religion.

AGAIN, We are to ascribe corruptions in the church to the pious intentions of men. The desire which they had to gain over the Jews, and to recommend the Christian religion to the Heathen, made them bear with their peculiarities, and submit to a worship agreeable to their taste. Mankind are exceedingly attracted by external appearances, and the worship of Christ was so plain compared with that of the Jews and Heathen, that Christians were induced to conform to these. They saw not what would be the consequence of this conduct; nor reflected that it is infinitely safer and easier to prevent innovations than afterwards to reform them.

To a pious intention are we, no doubt, to ascribe many things in the practice of Christians, which have sunk into the grossest superstition. Whence has proceeded the institution of festivals, and of saints days, but from a desire to perpetuate the memory of certain great events, and from a veneration for the apostles and martyrs? Whence the adoration of the elements in the holy sup-

per? No more, perhaps, was designed at first, than to express their great reverence for the ordinance, by kneeling when they received it. Whence the use of crucifixes, and the sign of the cross? No doubt to keep alive in the mind, the bloody death of our Lord and Saviour. These, with other things which might be mentioned, were soon abused; men annexed them as necessary appendages to their worship, and placed their whole dependance upon them. • How dangerous to make the smallest addition to the institutions of Christ! We may think that we are promoting his cause, while we are doing it a real disservice.

AGAIN, Many of the corruptions in the church are to be ascribed to priests, who were filled with an ambition to increase their own wealth and influence among the people. After the Christian religion received the support of civil government, and its ministers were raised to dignity and honour, it rapidly declined from primitive purity. The

Apostle, when speaking of the mystery of iniquity as working in his day, says, *He who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that wicked be revealed.* It is commonly understood, that what hindered the growth of the wicked one, was pagan Rome. When this came to be ruled by a Christian emperor, was over-run and destroyed by barbarous nations, and again conquered and formed into a new empire, Antichrist became vigorous, and grew up to a monstrous stature. Former errors were then confirmed, new ones were introduced, and ecclesiastics were distinguished chiefly by their pride and licentiousness. They found ceremonies in worship, pageantry in dress, and stateliness in deportment, useful to dazzle and keep in subjection an ignorant multitude. Every thing was splendid and showy. Their churches were superb and decorated with images. The garments in which the priests officiated, were variegated and costly. The service was a strange succession and mixture of ceremonies. No longer was to be discerned the minister of the meek and lowly Jesus; no lon-

ger the divine simplicity of his worship. To increase the revenues of the church, doctrines were invented, such as indulgencies and purgatory, which brought into the coffers at Rome immense treasures. It may not be improper here to enumerate some of the articles which were at last adopted, and are at this day professed by the church of Rome.

THEY maintain the supreme authority and infallibility of the Pope; the doctrine of purgatory or an intermediate state of punishment in the otherworld, out of which souls are to be delivered by masses and prayers; the invocation and worship of the virgin Mary and departed saints; the worship of images; they perform prayers and the service of God in an unknown tongue, and lock up the scriptures from the people; they maintain the doctrine of transubstantiation, withhold the cup from the laity, and assert the repetition of Christ's propitiary sacrifice; they inculcate that the due administration of the sacraments depends on the intention of the minister who officiates; they

superadd to the word of God several apocryphal books, not of divine original, and likewise oral tradition; they hold the doctrines of auricular confessions, of a bank of merit, and of indulgencies; they have fictitious stories of miracles and saints; pilgrimages, penances, processions—But, enough! The blood runs cold at the mention of these things, so opposite to scripture, and insulting to the human understanding. Never could such a system have been embraced, had not men been given up to *strong delusions, that they should believe a lie*. Thou hast permitted it, most high God, and thou art just and righteous in all thy ways! In thine own good time, thou shalt consume that wicked one *with the spirit of thy mouth, and shalt destroy him with the brightness of thy coming!*

NEED we now wonder, my brethren, that infidelity should prevail in popish countries? If they exercise their reason at all, must they not see that absurdities and contradictions cannot come from above? Was it not to be

expected that the philosophers in France, viewing the Christian religion to be the spiritual tyranny which was there established, would, when opportunity offered, break it to pieces and stamp it with their feet? We can easily conceive that men may be well instructed in the arts and sciences, possess much worldly wisdom, and be extremely ignorant as to religious principles. They have never given religion a fair examination. They have never seen her in her native beauty, stripped of paint and false colours. They have seen a fury belch forth imprecations, and carry war and bloodshed round the world, but not a gentle maid clad in simple attire, with attractive smiles, and presenting to the nations the branch of peace. We conclude then, that it is not so much religion which they oppose, as what has been substituted for it; or rather, having always seen this religion in connection with civil power, prescribing articles of faith and modes of worship under severe penalties, draining the purses, and lording it over the consciences of men; and not conceiving that

it admits of a reform, and can exist in another condition, they have totally and desperately rejected it. While this is said, let us remember, that the original rise of infidelity is to be sought in the blindness of the carnal mind, and the depravity of the carnal heart; that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

HOWEVER extensive and powerful the effects of the Reformation were, yet a great part of the world continues to be inflaved

* An anonymous writer, describing the condition of religion in France, says, very justly, “ Inquisitive men
“ had searched for truth, and astonished at the monstrous
“ absurdities of the national religion, their minds starting
“ from the extreme of superstition, vibrated to the extreme
“ of scepticism. Because they found religion, clothed
“ with a garb of fantastical human artifices, they rejected
“ her as a creature of human invention, pronounced her
“ ceremonies a farce, and derided her votaries.” Infidelity is no new thing in France; it has long prevailed; but of late, has had a greater opportunity of showing itself. It prevails in all countries where hierarchies are established.

by the tyranny of Rome; and even in that part which came out from her, and protested against her errors, much remains to be corrected. The improper mixture of civil and religious concerns which exist in European countries, loudly call for amendment, and in too many churches they are far from the original simplicity of the Christian religion.*—I proceed now,

* A chief reason why some churches at the Reformation did not make greater advances towards purity, was the assistance which they received from civil government. Though in those places where kings and princes were the principal promoters of the design, a change was made in religion with the least confusion and irregularity, yet the genius of the court intermixed itself with, and in some instances prevailed over that of the gospel. Both the government and worship of the church were too much adapted to the model of the civil constitutions, and made subservient to the views of princes. This was the case in Sweden, Denmark, and England. In other places, where the civil power was employed in crushing the Reformation, though it was attended with blood and confusion, yet we find more purity of government and simplicity of worship. The Reformers were for making no accommodation with Antichrist; they were for retaining none of her superstition;

II. To show what ought to be the only rule for the conduct of Christians, and to urge the necessity of their complying with it.

THE only rule ought to be the holy scripture. Whatever is clearly contained in this, or can be fairly inferred from it, is the unerring standard of faith and practice. *To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* This was the fundamental principle of the Waldenses in the twelfth century, for which they suffered so much; it is that in which the reformed churches are agreed, and according to which the Reformation was conducted. Though a difference has arisen about the interpretation of scripture, yet it is that to which they pro-

they resolved to believe nothing but what the scripture taught. This was the case in Holland, Switzerland, France, several parts of Germany, and in Scotland. Thus, what seemed a disadvantageous, was a most happy circumstance. The unnatural connection between the church and the state must cease, before religion become entirely pure.

felfs to appeal, and would they be fatisfied with this alone, the moft happy confequences would enfue. What is there befides; on which we can depend? Shall we have recourfe to oral tradition? We fhould remember how feverely our Lord reproved the Pharifees for their traditions, which they held to be of equal authority with the written law, and thus *made void the commandments of God*. We fhould remember that from traditions have fprung the great corruptions in the Romifh church. In the early ages of the world, when the life of man was lengthened out, and the fame man faw many fucceffive generations, truth could be handed down by tradition; but when mankind multiplied, and their age became an handbreadth, the wifdom of God faw meet to infpire holy men to commit to writing the things of our everlafting peace. Tradition now, is not only unneceffary, but it is become unfafe and impure.

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78 CORRUPTIONS

SHALL we have recourse to the comments of the fathers, and the practice of the primitive church? These are likewise unsafe. At no time can we find a perfect model. It has been already shown, that in the apostolic age, errors crept in, and which the apostles re-proved. Valuable as the works of the fathers are, we must follow them no farther than they followed Christ; valuable as they are, we have to admire more the purity of the lives of the fathers than the purity of their doctrine and worship. Would we now adopt some of the opinions of a Tertullian, or an Origen? Why not? Because we believe them to be contrary to the word of God? This is the sure standard by which we must try all things in religion. Of those who make additions, God asks with awful authority, *Who hath required this at your hands?*

If then the written word be acknowledged to be the only rule, where is found the warrant for many things held sacred by some

Protestant churches? To instance, at present, in the single article of holydays, is there any command for the observance of them? May we not infer from the words of the Apostle to the Galatians, that the observance of them is will-worship. *Ye observe*, says he, *days and months, and times, and years.* It is a truth, that the year, to say nothing of the day in which Christ was born, cannot be fixed with certainty, notwithstanding the deep and laborious researches of the learned. Is not this an evidence that it never was designed to be kept as an anniversary?

It may be objected to our own church, that she authorizes the observance of certain days; but whoever reads our constitution lately published, may be convinced of the calumny. In the article concerning them, are these remarkable words; “With
 “ regard to feast days, upon which, besides
 “ the Lord’s day, it has been customary to
 “ abstain from labour, and to assemble in the
 “ church, it is resolved, that we must be

“contented with the Lord’s day *alone*. The
“usual subjects however, of the birth of
“Christ, of his resurrection, and sending of
“the holy spirit *may* be handled, and the
“people be admonished, that these feast days
“are *abolished*.*” These words, taken from a
synod, held at Dordrecht, and incorporated
with our constitution, manifests the pru-
dence and piety of our forefathers; that it
was proper to meet prejudices and prevent
idleness by preaching on these days, while
the people were informed that they were
abolished; and that, when circumstances
would admit, ought to be wholly neglected.

THE impropriety of observing days of this
sort, appears from our having no rule to
guide us. We know not where to stop. If
we observe one day, why not another? Why
not Good Friday, or the day of our Lord’s
crucifixion, as well as the day of his birth
and resurrection? Thus we might go on

* See explanatory article, 67.

multiplying them, until we made every day in the year a holyday. Besides, the observance of such days is attended with real evil. It will be found in experience to lessen a regard for the Lord's day, and to promote superstition. Instead of preventing, it encourages idleness. People are taken off from their daily business, and the time which is not spent in church, is spent in visiting, feasting, and other ways pernicious to the persons themselves, and to the society at large. Were the church once to pay no attention to them, the people would soon forget to distinguish them as days of wandering and dissipation.*

* It may be questioned whether the dress of many of the Clergy, does not call for a reform? Whether it is not an imitation of the Jewish and Pagan priests, and contrary to the simplicity of the worship instituted by Christ? If the ministry of the gospel be committed to men of *like passions* with others, why not to men of like habit? Why should they use a particular dress, when in the performance of their sacred office? "It may perhaps be said," says Mr. Booth, in his Essay on Christ's Kingdom, "*Clerical habits are indifferent and harmless things, except when*

IN this country, my brethren, where there never can be any establishment of particular forms, where every thing is open to free discussion, and no authority will pass current but sacred writ, corruptions will gradually vanish, and truth be triumphant. Those who would encourage divisions and distinctions, will find their trust, a *spider's web*. The various denominations will approach nearer to one another, having no worldly inducements to separate, and finding no support but from the pure oracles of God.. We hail the auspicious day! External pomp and splendor are the stratagems of ambitious

“ they are imposed. But if so, the idea of imposition being excluded, the canonical dress of a Popish priest, the red hat of a cardinal, and the triple crown of a pontiff, may all be justified: for, in themselves, they are equally harmless as the gown, the surplice, or the band.” Again, he says, “ When any minister thinks of magnifying his office, by pomposity in the pulpit, he betrays his ignorance relating to the nature of that kingdom in which he professes to be an officer.” I will not dispute about these things; they are not essential; but a minister would appear more humble, be more dignified, and useful without them.

kings and priests, but not the prosperity of the true church. This, the glorious Head will secure, by qualifying persons eminent for holiness and zeal, and accompanying their labours with his blessing. *The excellency of the power will appear to be of God and not of men.*

THE revolutions abroad will, we hope, prove fatal to every species of tyranny, and diffuse true light into the darkest regions of the earth. The means indeed are dreadful. The news of blood and carnage shock the feelings of our nature; and yet the victims which have been offered up on the altars of tyranny are still more dreadful. In what are called the Crusades, undertaken by Popish princes, to recover the land of Palestine from the Mahometans, it is computed that above two millions of people were destroyed. At the taking of Jerusalem alone, above seventy thousand Musselmens were massacred, and all the Jews were collected into one place, and burnt together. In the war against the Albigenes, on account of

their religious principles, it is computed that no less than one million of them were slain in France alone. At the massacre of Paris, under Charles IX. on Bartholomew's day, 100,000 Protestants were butchered in France, in the space of one week. In what is called the rebellion in Ireland, under Charles I. 150,000 Protestants were murdered. To tell all the deeds of tyranny, would form a tale most frightful and horrid. It has strewed the earth with the bodies, and crimsoned the ocean with the blood of men. Where are the massacres of this day to compare with these which have been mentioned? And these are but a few specimens of that wretched system which is upheld by the tears, and the groans, and the blood of millions of human beings. These were not the works of a lawless mob, the fury of which is sudden and short, but the result of a deliberate and fixed plan, executed by the powers which then were, *spiritual wickednesses in high places*; and God is now

*visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.**

It is incumbent upon us, my brethren, when such are the signs of the times, to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints; to conform ourselves, and to pray that others may be conformed to the pure doctrines of Christ; and that every objection to his holy religion may be removed. Let us especially pray, that God would pour out his spirit to the revival of his people, and the conversion of

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* Who does not discern the hand of Providence in remarkably, avenging the massacre of Bartholomew's day, and the revocation of the edict of Nantz? In bringing fearful destruction on those very places where once blood-thirsty persecutors drank the blood of the saints? "Lyons," says one, "is recorded in early history, as the spot where a company of martyrs glorified God. Lyons is now devoted, and its name erased from the memory of man. Paris once streamed with the blood of the Hugonots: Paris hath since been dyed with the slaughter of that court and clergy, which instigated the unutterable deed."

sinners; that the power of Christianity may be felt by all men; and destructive wars cease unto the ends of the earth. O! when shall mankind learn their true interest! When shall they live together as brethren of the same family, and embrace as expectants of the same salvation! When shall that promise be fulfilled, that *the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them!* Fulfil it, most merciful God, for thy Son Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*



DISCOURSE IV.

ESSENTIALS OF RELIGION.

I. JOHN v. 1.

WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE
CHRIST, IS BORN OF GOD.

IT is evident from sacred history, that the confession required of the first converts to Christianity, was very brief and comprehensive. To profess their belief, that Jesus was the only Redeemer of the world, was reckoned an evidence of their sincerity, and gave them a right to the privileges of the church. Such a profession is declared by the Apostle

John to be the great test of the Christian character. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ*; that is, whosoever acknowledges his unfeigned belief that Jesus is the Messiah, the person ordained and sent to save sinners, *is born of God*; that is, bears his image, and is entitled to his favour. This phrase is used in three other parts of this epistle, and in all of them signifies no less than a spiritual change, and that relation which believers stand in to God. See the 3d chapter and 9th verse; *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. The 4th chapter and 7th verse; *Every one that loveth is born of God*. The 5th chapter and 4th verse; *Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world*. The Apostle mentions in these places, the fruits which flow from a saving change effected by God, and expressed by being born of him; and in the text, faith in Jesus as the Christ, or appointed Saviour, is asserted to be an evidence of the same blessed change. It will be shown, in the proper place, what is implied in this faith.

IF we attend likewise to the declarations of faith which are recorded, we will find that they principally embraced this great truth, that Jesus was commissioned by God for the salvation of men. The words of Nathanael were, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. I believe,* said Martha, *that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* The confession of Peter, which Jesus commended, and upon which he hath built his church was, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Agreeable to this, are these words of the Apostle Paul: *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* Nothing more than a confession of this kind, was required of persons at their admission into the church.*

* “ In the earliest times of the church,” says Mosheim; in his Ecclesiastical History, “ all who professed firmly
 “ to believe that Jesus was the only Redeemer of the world;
 “ and who, in consequence of this profession, promised to
 “ live in a manner conformable to the purity of his holy

ON the remarkable day of Pentecost, when three thousand souls were added, we are informed, that *they that gladly received his word were baptized*. What was his word? His sermon turned on this single point, to prove that Jesus whom they had crucified, was the Messiah foretold by the prophets, and that God had raised him from the dead. This was what he urged them to believe, and upon the profession of which they were baptized. It was on this point that Philip instructed the Ethiopian. He *preached unto him Jesus*; and when the Ethiopian desired to be baptized, *Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*. Upon this he was baptized. What was the answer of Paul and Silas to the anxious question of the jailor, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved? They said,*

“religion, were immediately received among the disciples
 “of Christ. This was all the preparation for baptism
 “then required; and a more accurate instruction in the
 “doctrines of Christianity was to be administered to them
 “after their receiving that sacrament.”

believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. He believed, and was baptized, he and all his straightway.

It appears, my brethren, from these facts, that in the earliest times of the church, the confession of faith was short, and chiefly confined to an acknowledgment that Jesus was a divine person who came from God, to teach and to save sinners. This acknowledgment, was the strongest evidence of sincerity, when we consider the prejudices of both Jews and Gentiles, and the dreadful persecutions to which the followers of Christ were exposed. Afterwards, when Christianity became more general, and its professors enjoyed peace, when different sects arose and errors crept in, the church found it necessary to be more particular and explicit in the confession of her members. For a long time, however, the articles of faith were few. What is called the Apostles creed was once generally considered as a production of the Apostles. It is now thought, upon better examination, to have been com-

posed later, and not all at once; but to have been gradually increased according to the exigencies and circumstances of the church. It is, perhaps, the best creed extant in the world; sufficiently long to comprise the essential truths of religion; and so short as not to introduce subjects of doubtful disputation.

THOUGH the church has a right to declare the sense in which she understands holy scripture, and the most beneficial effects have flowed from human compilations of doctrines, confessions and creeds, yet it is not to be denied that these have been carried to an extreme, and been the means of corruption and abuse. The abuse has been the great reason why it is become fashionable to decry them; and though the abuse of a thing will never be an argument that it is not good in itself, yet certainly, it is a powerful reason for Christians to correct whatever is amiss.

PUBLIC creeds or confessions, having been so much abused, are opposed by some from the purest motives. The arguments which they advance are, indeed, very specious. The two strongest are, that human compositions of this sort, derogate from the sufficiency and plainness of scripture; and that to require an unreserved assent to them is an arbitrary invasion of private judgment. These may be shortly answered by saying, that confessions are not intended as a substitute for scripture, but only as declarations of the sense in which it is to be understood; and that every society has an undoubted right to demand of its members an explicit declaration of their faith. Those who refuse to comply, cannot with reason complain of any imposition, being at liberty to withdraw and connect themselves elsewhere. It is certainly more reasonable that the will of the society prevail, than the will of an individual, or of a few who choose to dissent.*

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* This matter is justly stated in the "Preface to the Constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church."

ONE great design of confessions in the churches, is to give a fair account of the doctrines which they maintain. This was

“ Wherever such explanations constitute a bond
 “ of union wholly voluntary, and unattended with
 “ civil emoluments or penalties, they cannot be considered as an infringement upon the equal liberties of others,
 “ or as fixing boundaries and terms of communion inimical to Christian charity. The unerring word of
 “ God remaining the only standard of the faith and worship of his people, they can never incur the charge of
 “ presumption, in openly declaring what to them appears
 “ to be the mind and will of their divine Lord and
 “ Master.

See farther Mr. Graham, in his “ Review,” &c.
 “ Articles of faith are not intended to give an account of
 “ what the spirit of God *says*. He hath done this himself in the scriptures. But they are designed to *ascertain*
 “ what a society believes to be the *meaning* of what God
 “ hath already said, many ages ago. Some may probably
 “ exclaim—Is any church infallible? Is the creed of any
 “ fallible society to be reckoned a standard of truth? We
 “ answer,—No! The Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants---of Christians! Yet the public confession of any church is the public standard to her own
 “ members, of that *sense* in which she understands the
 “ scriptures.”

especially necessary in the first ages of Christianity, and after the Reformation. It prevented the doctrines from being misrepresented and calumniated. Confessions tend also to show how far all churches are agreed, to strengthen one another, and to promote a profitable correspondence between them. They are, besides, subservient to the maintenance of purity, and are useful compendiums or summaries of the Christian faith, by the means of which the young and the ignorant are the more readily instructed. It is not therefore the use, but the abuse of creeds which needs correction.

THE principal abuses of creeds appear to be these; the arming them with force by incorporations; and the extending them so as to include articles unscriptural, or non-essential. In either of these cases they admit of but a lame defence. In the first, they are miserably perverted, become merely political engines, and infringe the rights of conscience. They are no longer true decla-

rations of the faith of the church.* Again, by extending her articles too far, the church excludes from her communion those whom she ought to receive. This last is an abuse which may exist where there are no incorporations, has not been sufficiently attended to, but which requires our serious consideration.

THE essential doctrines of religion are comparatively few. The only difficulty is

* “Some churches might be named, whose incorporated articles are strictly Calvinian: yet the man who would say, that either the body of the laity, or even the majority of the public teachers are Calvinists, would expose himself to general laughter. Had the apologies and creeds of the ancient churches, or of the reformed churches at the æra of the Reformation, been as far from expressing their real religious principles, they would have been deservedly treated as nests of prevarication and hypocrisy.”——“Should a Christian of Geneva read the doctrinal articles of the church of England, and compare them with the modern sermons of the bishops, and the greater part of ecclesiastics in that church, would he not be tempted to form sentiments very disadvantageous to their honesty and uprightness?”——*Graham.*

to determine what they are; and yet until this be done, Christians cannot have perfect communion together. The additions which have been unwarrantably made to the doctrines and worship of Christ, and which have been supported by civil establishments, hinder Christians from coming to an understanding on this head; and unless these be removed, union and communion in the church are hardly to be expected. Unshackled as we are in this favored clime, it becomes us to return to first principles, and seek direction of the fountain of all wisdom.

By the essentials of religion are to be understood, those things which are necessary to be believed and practised in order to salvation; those things without which a person cannot be saved.—Let me remark here, that a person may believe a number of doctrines, and comply with certain modes of worship, while at the same time, he does not hold them to be the essentials of salvation. If he does, then he must exclude every one

who does not believe and practise exactly as he does. You and I, my brethren, have received a certain system, we are verily convinced, that it is founded upon the unerring word of God, we teach it to our children, and are ready to give a reason of our faith to all men; but this is totally different from maintaining our faith and practice in all their parts, to be the only road to heaven. No man of less pride and arrogance than the Pope himself will pretend to this.*

THERE are only these three ways which occur to me, by which we can judge what are the essentials of religion:

* Every person who is acquainted with the Author, knows that he professes to believe those doctrines called Calvinistic. He was instructed in them when a child; he studied them in riper years, under the most approved masters; he has maintained them in the pulpit, and from the press. But he would reckon himself to be indeed destitute of a Calvinistic spirit, and to have received the grace of God in vain, did he set up his faith as the standard of all others, and rashly condemn those who cannot believe precisely as he does.---Ye who are of a different persuasion, let one whom ye deem of the *strictest sect*, provoke you to charity and liberality.

1. THE selecting those things in which the generality of Christians are agreed. Though they differ in doctrines and modes of worship, yet they hold certain fundamentals, and these are the essentials of religion. The matters concerning which they differ, cannot be essential, unless we will say that the one or the other cannot be saved. Even bigotry itself is found to declare a charitable hope for some of other persuasions; but where is this hope founded, if such do not believe what is necessary to salvation? Luther and Calvin differed in doctrines of considerable importance, the controversy was managed with heat; but none of us can doubt that Luther and Calvin have long since embraced in heaven. None of us will pronounce who of them has the highest seat in glory.

ANOTHER way in which we may be convinced that the essentials of religion are few, and which will help us to determine what they are, is by attending to the prejudices and small degree of knowledge in those

whom we have reason to believe are truly pious. There may be some truths in which they are not well instructed, and to which, from their education and circumstances in life, they may conceive a dislike, while they are actuated by sincere love to God and faith in Christ. These words of the Apostle to the Corinthians, plainly teach us, that grace may consist with great imperfection in knowledge; *I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.* In the Apostolic age, persons were received into the church, and deemed believers on a summary confession of faith in Christ, and were afterwards instructed in the whole counsel of God. What was absolutely necessary was at first required, and other truths were communicated to professors according to their circumstances and strength. As the doctrines concerning which many denominations dispute, cannot be essential, so neither those of which persons apparently pious, are ignorant. We must take into the

account only such in which there is a general agreement, and which constitute the very essence of religion.

A THIRD and principal way by which the church is to be guided as to articles of faith, is a close observance of the precepts and practice of Christ and his Apostles. No other terms of communion ought to be maintained, than those which they clearly authorize. Their declarations ought to be held sacred. The Apostle John assures us, in the words of the text, that *whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*; and if so, Christ the Head of the family acknowledges him, and the stewards of his house may not refuse the provision which he hath made for his children.

LET us inquire a little into the import of this general declaration. It is short, but very comprehensive. Though it be given rather as a mark of the real Christian, yet as such an one must maintain the essentials of

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salvation, it will lead us to the knowledge of these. There is necessarily contained in believing that Jesus is the Christ, a number of truths which lie at the foundation of all true religion.

✓ FIRST, There is contained a belief of the sinful state of mankind, and their inability to recover themselves. If they are not sinners, or if they can by any means make reparation for their offences against God, there is no need of a Saviour. Such persons, therefore, who think that they can, by following the light of nature, obtain the favour of God, do consistently enough, reject all revelation concerning Christ, as an imposition on men. Why should they depend upon another for what they can do for themselves? How can it be reconciled with the wisdom of God, to provide a way of redemption which is wholly unnecessary? It is most evident that a confession of guilt before God, and which unavoidably exposes us to his wrath, is essential to the Christian religion. *The whole have no need of a physician, but*

they that are sick. Christ is come to save that which was lost, or he is not come at all.

SECONDLY, Whosoever believes the sinful and helpless state of mankind, must, in connection, believe, that salvation proceeds merely from the good pleasure of God. He is free and sovereign in the design, and in the execution of the plan. He might, without any impeachment of his justice, have left all to perish in their sins; yea, his justice would have been glorified in their condemnation: *According to his mercy, he saved us. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. By grace are ye saved. The gift of God is eternal life.* This truth is of the utmost importance, as it tends to humble the sinner, enhance his obligations, and give him adoring views of the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

THIRDLY, There is contained in believing that Jesus is the Christ, an acknowledgment, that he was appointed by God to be

a Mediator, and that he hath fully accomplished his work. If there be a Saviour, he had a divine commission, and was adequate to what he undertook. A firm persuasion of this, is absolutely necessary ; for we will not place confidence in one of whose appointment and ability we are doubtful. Those called Deists reckon the gospel a cunningly devised fable, and the Jews, though they believe in a revelation, yet refuse to submit to Jesus of Nazareth whom their fathers crucified. The former trust in their own natural powers, and the latter, while they expect a Deliverer, disown the true one. Both are to be excluded from membership in the church, because they deny what forms the foundation of all.

It is proper to go a little farther here and say, that if Christ hath fully accomplished salvation for sinners, he hath, in their place, satisfied all the demands which the law of God had against them. It puts charity to the rack to believe that any man can be a Christian who denies the necessity and effi-

cacy of the atonement of Christ; who does not receive him as a priest, as well as a prophet and a king. What was the signification of all the sacrifices under the law? Did they not point to the *Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world?* What is the obvious meaning of these passages of scripture? *God made him to be sin for us; and He bare our sin in his own body on the tree.* Can they, without wresting them, mean any thing else, than that Christ was a substitute, that his sufferings were accepted of God for sinners?

WE must go still farther. If Christ made an atonement, it was such as God would accept; it must have been infinite; and this could not be, unless the victim was God. If he was only man, where was the merit of his sufferings? Where the satisfaction proportioned to the offence?—How far darkness and scruples on this subject may consist with a gracious heart, is, perhaps, impossible to tell. With one of this character, I

cannot hold communion; but, I leave him to the judgment of God. Almighty Father! Thou knowest our frame, and rememberest that we are dust! By thy sentence, we must stand or fall!

✓ FOURTHLY, Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, will maintain the necessity of the assistance of the holy Spirit to begin and persevere in the ways of righteousness. This is connected with the belief of our spiritual death; and if we admit the one, we must admit the other. To assert that no supernatural influence is necessary in forming us to a divine temper, is to oppose the method of salvation by Christ.

ONCE MORE, To believe that Jesus is the Christ, is to receive him as our Saviour, to make open confession of him, by an attendance on his worship, and obedience to his precepts. This is not so properly an article of faith, as it is the consequence of the belief of the truths before mentioned. These

truths, indeed, may be professed, when they do not produce obedience. *Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* But then the faith is not of divine operation; it is not accompanied with a change of heart.

WHOSOEVER makes confession of these truths, and evidences his sincerity by a holy conversation, is born of God, and an heir of immortal glory. It will be perceived, that such a confession is the natural and evident consequence of faith in Jesus as *the Christ*. In the present state of the church, the confession is not sufficient, which is limited to an assent to the single and general proposition. Men, by not attending to the difference between early and latter days, may deceive themselves; and they may form explanations which are inadmissible. On the other hand, it is equally improper to insist upon the belief of doctrines which have been long and strenuously contested. Let us take those things in which there is a mutual consent. While this would fix a

ground for union, it is perfectly consistent with every one holding what he thinks right in matters of lesser importance. Christians ought to forbear one another, to pay a deference to the opinions of others, as well as to their own. If every denomination is to contend for all parts of their creed, who is to judge between them? They appeal to scripture, and, differing in their interpretations, who will dare to say, that only his party has found the truth? Surely, in all our strife about orthodoxy, we ought to cultivate humility and charity.

LET it not be said, that the distinguishing those principles in which the generality of Christians are agreed, is incompatible with the necessity of creeds; for they are still useful in preventing doctrines confessedly erroneous; what is blameable, is the enlarging them so as to include things concerning which the best and wisest of men have ever thought differently. Nor ought it to be said, that in forming creeds we may not, if we would avoid disagreement, descend to ex-

planations; for in these, a bond of extensive union will be found. Were we to examine the creeds of the greater part of professing Christians, we would find, that though they differ in words, yet there is a very general agreement in the truths which have been briefly mentioned. Even in the church of Rome, *the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*, much truth is found. She does not err, so much in a denial of essentials, as in her numerous and impure additions.*

WHAT then has made schisms in the church? What has made such a variety in

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* Whoever is at the pains to compare the several confessions, particularly that of the *Protestant churches*, must be convinced of what is here asserted. He will assent to these words of a learned and candid writer; "It will be evident that they agree not only in the essential foundations of religion, but in all the principles of special moment; and that these which any of them differ about, are no wise comparable to the others, either for their number or importance."—Dunlop's Preface to the Westminster Confession.

the faith and worship of Christians? Is it not the prescribing unnecessary articles, and the prescribing them under worldly pains? Here is the great mistake; not the prescribing terms of communion, which every church may do, but the including articles not warranted by scripture, and enforcing these by the loss of civil privileges. If men were left to judge for themselves, and act according to their light, there would be less error and greater uniformity among Christians. The great doctrines of religion will ever support themselves by their own evidence, Truth needs only an equal advantage with error, to gain an eternal victory over it.

To see the fatal effects of forcing men into religious sentiments, read the history of the church. See a doctrine at one time advocated, and at another reprobated! See the author of it at one time carested, and at another, driven into banishment, or put to a cruel death! Hear it demanded of the heretic bound to a stake, "Renounce, or you

“~~must~~ burn!” Turn your view for a moment to Popish countries, and behold men under the necessity either of abandoning reason and common sense, or going into the grossest hypocrisy, or suffering the dire terrors of an inquisition! Behold a strange scene open to you! Infidelity setting its mouth against the heavens! This thou hast done, O spiritual tyranny! Long hast thou usurped the throne of Jesus, and now, thou hast raised a band of infidels, who would banish him for ever! On thy total overthrow shall his kingdom be established!

THE fears of some serious persons, that without the aid of civil establishments, religion will decline, are groundless. The hopes of infidels, that with the destruction of these establishments, Christianity will be abolished, will meet with certain disappointment. They shall know, and O! that they may know it in mercy, that they were instruments in the hand of God, to prepare the way before him. Now they do not believe that Jesus is the Christ; and if they persist in

their infidelity, they will exclaim with the apostate Julian, in the agony of death, "Thou hast conquered me O Galilean!"

IN those places where the church is unhappily incorporated with the state, it is impossible for Christians to do much to reform abuses. The attempt would be called rebellion, and therefore, they must wait the progress of revolutions to wrest from princes their unlawful sceptres. But in our nation much might be done, if God gave a willing mind, to exhibit original Christianity to the world. The reasons which operate abroad for different communions, do not exist here, save the prejudices which have been imported, and the habits of thinking occasioned by former connections.

THERE is every appearance that dreadful calamities await foreign nations, especially those which have been in alliance with Rome, and which still retain a portion of her spirit. If we would escape their plagues, we must not partake of their sins. We must

improve the opportunity which God hath given us, in removing improper distinctions, healing divisions, and preserving entire the body of Christ, which is his Church. Were the several denominations to relax a little as to some of their peculiar tenets, and allow their brethren the same liberty which they claim for themselves, an union would not appear to be impracticable. While, however, the Episcopalian will insist that no ordination is valid, except what is obtained in the mode of his own church; the Presbyterian insist that the use of the Common Prayer Book is unlawful; the Dutch reformed Protestant insist that it is indispensable to lecture once every Lord's day on the Heidelberg Catechism, and sprinkle thrice in baptism: and the Baptist deny the validity of sprinkling, or of any baptism except what is administered to adults; while thus, every denomination will rigorously make their distinguishing sentiments or practices, terms of communion, no junction can take place. When persons who are not willing to break down these partition

walls, lament the divisions among Christians, and talk of union, it is all grimace; or they mean that all the Christian world ought in conscience to embrace their sentiments, which are the best, most scriptural, and certainly infallible.* But union will be the particular subject of another discourse, if it please God that we meet again. Let me conclude, at present, with exhorting in a few words,

1. THOSE who have never believed in Christ, to an immediate, open, and sincere acknowledgment of him as their Lord and Saviour. Unless you voluntarily submit to his sceptre, he will break you with a rod of iron. All enemies shall be put under his feet. Infidels may scoff, but Jesus is ordained to be the judge of the world. *He shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,*

* The Author does not mean by this that any denomination should, contrary to the light of their own minds, renounce their peculiar sentiments; but only, not to stamp them as essentials, or deem them of such importance as to hinder some general bond of union.

in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. O! be alarmed now, and flee from the wrath to come. Come unto Christ, that ye may find rest unto your souls.

AGAIN, Let those who have received Christ, be active in his service. When you see him so greatly dishonored in the world, let your zeal for his glory be inflamed. Be not dismayed at the signs of the times. Jesus reigns. Distrust not his power and grace. In due time, his kingdom will come. *Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* We look for glorious days of the Son of man upon this earth, when the Jews shall be brought in, with the fulness of the Gentiles. These days may be near; but if not seen by us, and if mankind should be involved in general calamity while we live, let us wait upon God, and expect a rest beyond the grave.

DISCOURSE V.

UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

I. CORINTHIANS i. 13.

Is CHRIST DIVIDED?

THIS question contains the strongest denial, and was intended to strike the Corinthians with the great impropriety of the divisions among them. Christ is not divided. There is only one Saviour whose doctrine we receive, and on whose merits we depend. He is the head, believers are the

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members, and this body is one and indivisible.

THE Corinthians, by arranging themselves in parties under different leaders, acted as though there were different Christs, different communions, and different ways of salvation; whereas these were the same to all; and from this consideration, the Apostle most solemnly and affectionately exhorted them to union. *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.*

DIVISIONS began so early, and have continued so long in the church, that many Christians seem not to think them an evil; at least they are considered as unavoidable, and attended with special advantages. It is alledged, that they are consistent with all that unity of the church, and communion of saints which are to be expected in this world. A promise was made, some time

ago, of a discourse on this subject, which appears to me in a very serious and important light, as being one to which our attention is peculiarly called by *the signs of the times*. Let me entreat you, my brethren, to hear with candour, and to help me with your prayers. I shall, first, shew that the union of professing Christians is desirable and attainable; and then, point out some of the hinderances of it, and answer the principal objections which have been raised against it.

THE church must, from the nature of things, be composed of many different societies. The members are not all of the same nation, or language, they cannot all assemble together in the same place. They are obliged, for the sake of convenience and order, to divide themselves into small and particular societies. This is the case of those who are most closely united, and who come under one general denomination; but as this does not break the union of that denomination, so the whole number of Christians throughout the world form only one body.

If we liken the church to a house, it may be said, that numerous as the apartments are, it is but one house; if to an empire, it has several provinces; if to an army, though it consist of many divisions, and various nations, yet it is enlisted under one Captain, and engaged in one cause. Such is the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles. Though we read of churches in particular places, yet they were all collectively considered as one church, and which the Apostle describes by *all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.**

WE are early taught to say, "I believe in a holy Catholic Church." Catholic is *general*

* The unity of the church is well expressed in the liberal Preface to the Constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church. "The various denominations, or descriptions of particular churches, under which, from many unavoidable circumstances of language, nation, or other causes of distinction, believers are classed, do not affect any schism in the body, or destroy the communion of saints."

or *universal*; and this part of the creed is explained in our Catechism to mean, " That
 " the Son of God, from the beginning to
 " the end of the world, gathers, defends, and
 " preserves to himself by his Spirit and word,
 " out of the whole human race, a church
 " chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true
 " faith." And again, it is declared in our
 Confession of Faith, that " This holy church
 " is not confined, bound, or limited, to a
 " certain place, or to certain persons, but is
 " spread and dispersed over the whole
 " world, and yet is joined and united with
 " heart and will, by the power of faith in
 " one and the same spirit."* All Christians,
 therefore, being really united as members of
 the same body, ought to preserve a mutual
 esteem and affection. Particular churches
 ought to extend their care to their sister
 churches, to *seek not their own profit, but the*
profit of many, and to testify by certain acts,
 whenever circumstances will admit, that
 they all belong to the general church. To

* Heidel. cat. quest. 54. Art. 27.

pursue only the religious interest of their own community, is party-spirit, and not that love which the gospel inspires. True love endeavours to promote the common welfare of Christ's kingdom.

How frequently and earnestly does the Apostle Paul enjoin union upon the first churches! Hear his words in the beginning of the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* We find him farther, in the 15th and 16th verses, in order to enforce union, comparing the church to a natural body. *The head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted*

by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love. The same comparison is used in the 12th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. *We being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.* Hear likewise his tender address in the beginning of the 2d chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians. *If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind..* It cannot be said with any justice, that these exhortations of the Apostle apply only to union and harmony in particular churches; for, the same reason why Christians should maintain union in a particular church, is good likewise for maintaining union among all the particular churches, in one general church. Who shall say, how large one denomination of Christians shall be, before they form an entire separation? Who shall draw the line of division, or, say,

in what way the body is to be cut into pieces? If one denomination may consist of numerous particular churches, and it be the duty of these to cultivate a correspondence, and connect themselves by some visible bond of union, will any man pretend to say, that a correspondence and union are not desirable, and cannot take place in a manner still more extensive? If they cannot, then the body is divided contrary to the plain declarations of scripture; for, to say that Christians are united when they have not, and ought not to seek any external intercourse with one another, is to say, that parts which are never joined, constitute a whole, or that love can exist where there is no exchange of kind offices.

THE practice of Christians in separating, and excluding one another from communion, is directly opposed to the unity of the church, and is not founded on the writings of the Apostles. Besides the injunctions already mentioned, we are warned to *mark and avoid those who cause divisions*. Were a

heathen nation to receive the gospel, they would not conclude from any thing in the New Testament, that it was their duty, whenever their religious societies increased, to become totally unconnected; but on the contrary, that though they were obliged to form many congregations, yet they continued to be one body united to the same Saviour, and to one another. They would read of churches being planted in different places, of the Apostle having *the care of all the churches*, of one church receiving the members of another, on recommendation; and they must necessarily think, that all were established in the same doctrine and worship. We must believe then, that the union of the members of the church is desirable and attainable; for, otherwise, it would not be so frequently and earnestly enjoined. Let us inquire now, what are the hinderances of it.

1. ECCLESIASTICAL establishments have been a great hinderance. By these certain ar-

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ticles of faith, and usages in worship are prescribed as absolutely necessary to communion. Those who cannot comply are consequently cast out, and laid under the necessity of erecting a separate communion, and thus a division is produced. The church of Rome would not suffer the Reformers to continue with her. She cruelly enforced her belief and practice by torture and death. The charge of schism rests upon her, and not upon the Protestants. Happy had it been for Protestants, had they pursued a different course, and not established their forms of religion; had they renounced the spirit as well as the superstition of Rome. By not doing this, union and a greater uniformity among them was prevented from taking place. Different forms, all alike established by human laws, could not approach one another. Error once enthroned, withstood the attacks of reason and scripture. To those who could not conscientiously conform, there was no remedy but by a dissent. Much as the worthy Reformers lamented and endeavoured to heal the

differences, yet such was the state of things, and such influence had civil on religious concerns, as to hinder an accommodation. Councils and conferences were held to little purpose, and this must be the case until establishments are overthrown.

ANOTHER hinderance of union is a difference between Christians about matters not essential. They do not consider that union is consistent with a diversity of opinion about many things, provided that they agree in great and leading principles. Who differed more widely than the Jewish and Gentile converts? Does the Apostle advise them to a separation? No: He shows them, that there was no foundation for their contention and uncharitable censures. Seeing both parties acted according to their light, and the dictates of their conscience, there was nothing in either of their sentiments, on subjects so trivial, inconsistent with true religion. He exhorts them, therefore, not to obtrude their opinions on each other, and to continue in communion together. *Him*

that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Though in the church of Corinth, there were philosophers, rhetoricians, and judaizing teachers, each of whom had their peculiar sentiments and customs, and which occasioned the contention among them, yet we find how severely the Apostle reprov'd them, and how authoritatively he warn'd them against a separation.

IF any say, that to inculcate union, while there is a difference in faith and practice, is to avow latitudinarian principles, they may be told that an inspired Apostle is an excellent guide. Surely we may be as liberal as he was; we may teach what he taught; for

what he received of the Lord, he hath delivered unto us.

PERHAPS, a principal mistake on the subject of union, is an opinion that it cannot exist without perfect uniformity. Was the primitive church uniform? Did the Jews and Gentiles perfectly agree in their doctrines and ceremonies? Has the church been uniform at any period since the publication of the gospel? Where is the particular denomination this day upon earth, in which all the members exactly agree in doctrine and mode of conducting public worship? Are not particular congregations of the same denomination found to differ more from one another, than the denomination itself differs from some other denomination? * Does, or ought this difference to

* The two respectable Dutch congregations of New-York and Albany, differ as to their customs in public worship. The difference is of no consequence, and would not be mentioned, did it not prove my assertion. At Albany, the males and females sit in separate seats in the

occasion the necessity of a division? Then the church of Christ must be torn into innumerable parts. It is a mistake, my brethren, which has been ruinous, to think that uniformity is necessary. The church never was uniform, nor can we say that it will be entirely so, even in its most glorious state in this world. National establishments instead of producing uniformity and union, have caused variety and division. What was

church. The clerk begins the service with reading the ten commandments, or the creed ; then a psalm is sung ; after this, he reads the chapter out of which the minister has chosen his text ; when this is ended, another psalm is sung, and the minister rises. The collection for the poor is made, as in many other Dutch churches, in time of the sermon. None of these customs are exactly followed in the congregation at New-York ; for though it is usual with the clerk to read a chapter, and sometimes the ten commandments, yet the same mode and order of introducing the service is not observed. Do not congregations then of the same name, differ more from one another in these small matters, than any of them differ from the Presbyterian congregations? Surely these things are not essential to communion. The persons must be contracted and bigoted in a great degree, who would insist upon, or who would refuse to comply with either of them.

the effect of the act passed in England under the reign of Elizabeth? A considerable body separated from the established church. What evil might have been prevented, had this direction of the Apostle been duly regarded! *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.* Christians will approach much nearer to uniformity, when establishments are abolished, when no compulsive measures are used, and when religion is left to support itself by its own evidence and excellence. But if uniformity should never take place, it ought not, and it will not hinder the union of Christians, when other obstacles are removed. It is evident from these words of the Apostle in the 3d chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, the 15th and 16th verses, that only an agreement in fundamental truths is necessary; *Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.* I am thus particular in quoting the place where these words

are found, that your attention may be fixed upon them, that you may weigh them at your leisure, that you may apply for assistance to what commentators you please; and if, upon full consideration, you judge that they teach what is here asserted, then I beseech you to yield that reverence and obedience which are due to divine inspiration. Let me mention,

ONCE MORE, The prejudices, passions, and interests of men, as being opposed to union. The favorable opinion which a party imbibes of itself, and the unfavorable one which it entertains of others, the pride which is so natural to men, and their attachment to real or imaginary interest, often raise a strong barrier. These are especially nursed under establishments, where one sect receives the exclusive favour of civil government, and is promoted to places of honour and profit. Indeed, there have been always those in the church, who to advance their own interest and reputation, have made and continued schisms. Who is not grieved to find chargeable with this, even

the preachers of the gospel of peace? "Searching the ancient histories," says Jerome, "I can find none that hath more rent the church of God than those that sustain the office of Ministers." These too often begin divisions, and cherish the prejudices of men, merely from selfish views. Though it is much easier to make a breach than to heal it, and men cannot suddenly divest themselves of ways of thinking to which they have been early and long habituated; yet, were their leaders more upright, did they study the glory of God more, and their own less, prejudices would gradually vanish. The influence of the public teachers of religion in directing the minds of their hearers, is great; and the maxim is generally true, That such as is the minister, such is the people.

THESE things which have been mentioned, appear to be the chief hinderances of union among professing Christians. The radical evil is establishments; for, wherever these

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are, the other things will follow; and wherever these are abolished, and the people left to think and choose for themselves, prejudices wear off, and a greater liberality and uniformity are introduced. Let me appeal to the condition of the church in this country. Here are no establishments; and what is the consequence? Union between different denominations has been effected; correspondence between others is maintained; and former jealousies and contentions subside.* Can such a hierarchy as is in England be found here? Is the government of the Episcopal church more than a step distant from Presbyterian equality? Is the exclusive validity of Episcopal ordination any

* The Author refers to the union of the Associate and Reformed Presbyteries under the name of "The Associate Reformed Synod;" to the union of the Presbyterian Churches and the Congregational Churches in Connecticut; and to the brotherly correspondence between the Presbyterian, Scotch Presbyterian, and Reformed Dutch churches; of all which, see more in the Appendix.

more than the dream of a few not thoroughly awaked out of their sleep? *

It is to be confessed, that obstacles in the way of union still remain, principally arising from the mistakes, prejudices, and interests of men; but these will be destroyed by increasing light, and especially by the prevalence of the power of religion, whenever

* We see verified in this country, these words of Mr. Graham, in his "Review," &c. "Take away from the diocesan bishop, all that incorporations give him,—his title, his extravagant revenue, his secular authority, and his consequence as a peer of the realm, none of all which the Christian religion gives him; and he will be left so naked, so like one of his own Presbyters, that even the most snarling advocate for parity will not bark at him. It is civil authority only which bestows upon him all that raises him above the Apostolical Bishop, whom Paul also calls by the less dignified title of Presbyter."—The greatest difficulty as to a connection between Episcopalians and Presbyterians, appears to be a remaining prejudice with a few on one side, about the mode of ordination. The Presbyterians are liberal on this subject; an instance of which they gave, by admitting into their pulpits that extraordinary and eminently useful man, the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield.

it shall please God to pour out his Spirit upon us. It is time now to answer some of the objections which are brought against an union of different descriptions of professing Christians.

1. It is said, that special advantages result from their divisions; such as, that they watch over one another, and provoke one another to greater zeal and fidelity in the propagation and preservation of the truth. This objection proceeds on the supposition that disunion is no sin, and is not forbidden in the word of God; for, if it be a sin, no advantages which Providence is pleased to bring out of it, can justify it. But I have endeavoured to show, that it is destructive of the unity of the church, and forbidden by the divine command. Besides, those who make this objection ought to put in the balance with the pretended good, the evils which ensue. They ought to weigh the triumph which the separations of Christians give infidels, the contracted and uncharitable notions which they beget among professors

themselves, and the bitterness, wrath, envyings, and strife which they occasion. Let it be added, that the advantages which are mentioned, can all be better ensured by a state of union. There will be the same watchful care, and strict attention to truth among the members of the church. There ever will be redress for heresy and immoral practice before the proper judicatories, unless we can suppose that Christ shall be without witnesses in the world. There will be greater certainty for the preservation of purity in the whole body by union; for if the pure separate, what is to become of the impure? They will be as *salt which has lost its savour and is good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.**

* “ Dr. Hopkins, in his Treatise on the Millennium, speaking of the opinion, “ that difference in religious sentiments and modes of worship, is attended with no inconvenience, but is rather desirable, and advantageous; “ and that all the union required, or that can take place, “ is that of kind affection, love and charity,” says, “ Such “ sentiments as these are not agreeable to reason or scrip-

ANOTHER objection to union is, that it is impracticable, because of the variety of opinions and customs among the several denominations. To invalidate this, it has been shown, that uniformity is not necessary. Hardly two persons can be found in the world, who are agreed in every point of religion. There is indeed frequently such a disagreement as to render communion im-

ture." He thinks, that in the Millennium, "there will be a great and general union in the belief and practice of the truth;" that men will "be united in sentiments and practice, so as to form a beautiful, happy union and harmony; which will put an end to the variety and opposition of opinions and practices which now divide professing Christians into so many sects, parties, and denominations." So far as he means that they will be united in great and leading truths, live in harmony and communion together, he is undoubtedly right; but whether there will be entire uniformity, is a question. In my opinion, it is not necessary. There will be different capacities and different degrees of light then as well as now; but, when under the powerful influence of the Spirit, there will be mutual forbearance; they will inquire and be taught; whereunto they have already attained, they will walk by the same rule, they will mind the same thing.

possible; for instance, when persons differ in articles which they suppose to be fundamental or necessary to salvation. There is again such a disagreement in important doctrines and external forms of worship, as to render an union in the same society improper, while there may be some general intercourse established, and occasional communion admitted. But with respect to all those, whose differences are of less moment, though they may be exceedingly various, yet there is nothing to hinder them from becoming full and constant members of the same church. We can conceive likewise of a bond of union, and each denomination remain at the same time distinct. A perfect union even among those most nearly agreed, is what no one would think, in the present state of things, either adviseable, or possible. There is a middle way between a total coalition, and a total separation.—The famous Synod of Dort was composed of divines not only from the United Provinces, but also from England, Scotland, the States of Brandenburg, Switzerland, Geneva, the Pal-

minate, Bremen and Embden. How venerable the council! How beneficial their proceedings! Jesus the head of the church, approved their designs, and succeeded their labours.—Let me repeat, that a perfect union or incorporation, is what no wise man would think either practicable or necessary; but that one might be formed, and the peculiarities of every denomination be preserved inviolate. This is submitted as my opinion; and if condemned by wiser and more experienced men, let it be charitably called an error of the head, and not of the heart. *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.* I plead in my justification the opinion of the good and the wise who have always lamented the divisions of Christians, and at different times used their most strenuous exertions to heal them. Attempts were made at the Reformation, and attempts have been made since, but they were made *against principalities and powers*, and therefore, proved unsuccessful.

It is difficult to say, how far union ought to be extended, or what ought to be the precise form of it; but there can be no hesitation to say, that a much nearer union among several denominations in this country, than now exists, is desirable and attainable; and will, probably, in due time, be effected. We may judge of the form by precedents before us; and it is not vain to think of some bond of union between churches still more unlike to one another.*

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* The correspondence between the Dutch Reformed, the Associate Reformed, and the Presbyterian Synods, began in 1785, and was continued until 1790. The plan was first proposed by some of the ministers of the Dutch church. Delegates from each of these Synods met annually in CONVENTION, which possessed only powers of counsel and advice. Here was a bond of union. The reason of a failure was, perhaps, because the bond was not the most proper; at least, I am unwilling to ascribe it to any other thing. The Reverend Dr. John Mason, than whom few men had a more accurate judgment, and a more honest heart, was desirous of the continuance of the correspondence, and hoped that much good would result from it. I will be excused here, in paying a small respect to the me-

J THERE has been a federal union of the states in civil government, and why not likewise of the churches? The time is expected when nations will learn war no more, and why not a time when all the members of Christ's church throughout the world, shall embrace in love? America has been the first in establishing civil liberty, may we not hope that she shall be the first in disarming

memory of a man, who was my neighbour and my friend, whom I knew too late, and of whose value I was hardly sensible, until I experienced his loss. Tinctured at first with a few European prejudices, they soon vanished in the American clime, and his excellent understanding ripened and mellowed into Christian forbearance and liberality. He had prudence without cunning, cheerfulness without levity, dignity without pride, friendship without ceremony, charity without undue latitude, and religion without ostentation. He rests in peace, far beyond the censure or the applause of mortals. Disappointed in the prospect of an union between the denominations mentioned, he is gone to join the *general assembly and church of the first born*, where all is harmony and love. The congregation which he served have erected a handsome monument to his memory, but the most honorable monument, is the place he holds in their hearts, and the lasting esteem of all who knew him.

infidels, by exhibiting Christianity pure and undefiled to the view of men. Greater opportunities are afforded to us, than to any other nation, and let it be said with the utmost seriousness, that if we improve them; not, God may contend with us. We have suffered already by his judgments, and it becomes us to inquire into the cause of them. To me, it has appeared that one cause of the divine anger, is the want of a disposition to union; and that to this may be ascribed the withholding of divine influences in the administration of ordinances. Our peculiar circumstances call for a peculiar conduct. The arguments for a state of disunion which would be just in another country, are totally inapplicable in this.

It is worthy of our attention, that before the descent of the holy Ghost at Pentecost, the disciples *were all with one accord in one place*. How loving and united were they! All was serene like a summer evening, when the sound came from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where

they were sitting. Is there not reason to believe, that did Christians endeavour more for a spirit of union and love, God would command a blessing? That this would be a token of the near approach of those happy days which we warmly desire, and have long expected?—Suffer me now, my brethren, to turn your attention to some practical improvement of what has been said.

1. WE may learn the great depravity of human nature. This is the bitter root from which contentions spring. Our Saviour, well knowing how mankind would abuse the riches of his goodness, foretold what should happen on this earth; that offences should come; that he should send fire on the earth; that instead of peace there should be rather division; and that those of the same house should be divided. Can there be a stronger proof of a disordered nature, than that the greatest good should be made the occasion of sin, the means of our recovery abused to our own destruction? When we consider the dissensions of even great and

good men, how hard to remove their misunderstandings, and reconcile or bring them to a proper temper ; when we consider how much pride, obstinacy, and selfishness there is in human nature, we must lament, the ruined state of man, and exclaim with the Psalmist, *O that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.*

2. LEARN from the imperfection of which all are partakers, to think charitably of those who differ from us. Various are the capacities and opportunities of men, and various the prejudices to which they are liable. Since the grace of God is not confined to any particular way, who are we that we should arrogate to ourselves the right of determining in matters of religion ? Let the Pope solace himself with his own infallibility, but seek not you to dispute the chair with him. Shall we reject those whom God receives ? Rather let us court their friendship, walk in fellowship, forbearing them, as

we expect forbearance. You, my brethren, are of the same denomination, you are agreed in doctrine and form of church-government, and you should be knit together in love. Christians need frequently to be exhorted to love one another. Our Saviour and his Apostles dwell much upon this; and no wonder, for there is much of heaven in it, and it strongly manifests the power of godliness. The more true love we have to one another as members of the same society, the more will our hearts be enlarged to embrace the whole family of Christ.

3. LET me earnestly urge upon you, the necessity of union to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. This is the only mean of uniting you in heart to one another, and of securing your eternal happiness. There is no other refuge but Christ, from the avenging wrath of God. Be careful and diligent now in your application to him, that so you may live and reign with him hereafter.—When death is near, and you look forward to an awful

and boundless eternity, it is not your having belonged to such a society, it is not your having been called by such a name, will afford you consolation. How much less will the recollection of variance and strife with your brethren, or that you harboured the spirit of party, and pursued contentious measures! Let us often examine our sentiments and practices in the prospect of eternity, and ask ourselves, How they will stand the test? Were we to die this night, would we have the testimony of our own consciences, and meet the approbation of our Judge? Death may be near, even at the door; and the opportunity be lost, either of doing the good which we had intended, or of rectifying the evil which we had done.

LASTLY, How unspeakably pleasant is the heavenly state! There all the redeemed of the Lord shall dwell for ever together, and be made perfect in love. There shall meet those of different persuasions, those who could not join in worship here below, and who perhaps mutually cast each other

out. There they shall no longer doubt each other's sincerity, no longer be filled with prejudices and mistakes, no longer the great adversary excite differences between them; but they shall love as children of the same Father, and be joint heirs with Christ in glory. O glorious church, without spot or wrinkle! O abode of unutterable delight! Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived thy transcendent excellence! Raise your thoughts, ye saints, from this wearisome, quarrellsome world, to yonder place of rest! Behold the blessed inhabitants, without a discordant note, sing the song of Moses and the Lamb! Do you aspire to join them? Remember, that no unclean thing can ever enter; that a divine temper must be cultivated on earth; that if ever we see God we must be like him, and GOD IS LOVE.



DISCOURSE VI.

FALL OF ANTICHRIST.

DANIEL vii. 25.

AND HE SHALL SPEAK GREAT WORDS AGAINST THE MOST HIGH, AND SHALL WEAR OUT THE SAINTS OF THE MOST HIGH, AND THINK TO CHANGE TIMES AND LAWS: AND THEY SHALL BE GIVEN INTO HIS HAND, UNTIL A TIME AND TIMES, AND THE DIVIDING OF TIME.

HAVING begun these discourses with a few remarks on the fulfilment of the prophecies, I shall conclude them with some farther remarks on the same subject.

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It is generally agreed by all Protestant interpreters, that the power described here by Daniel, is the same which the Apostle Paul call's *the man of sin*, and which John in the Revelation calls *the beast* and *the false prophet*. It is likewise generally agreed, that by these is meant Popery, or the idolatrous and tyrannical power of the church of Rome. The description is so drawn as not to admit of a just application to any other.*

* Besides that the description will not suit any other than the church of Rome, *the number of the beast* agrees exactly with her: *His number is six hundred, threescore and six*. If we take the Greek word *Lateinos*, the Latin or Roman, (as the Western church was called) and the Hebrew word *Romiith*, which signifies the Roman kingdom, we will find that each contains the number 666.

Lambda	-	30	Resch	-	200
Alpha	-	1	Vau	-	6
Tau	-	300	Mem	-	40
Epsilon	-	5	Jod	-	10
Iota	-	10	Jod	-	10
Nu	-	50	Thau	-	400
Omicron	-	70			
Sigma	-	200			
		666			666

THE destruction of this power, which has so long opposed the reign of Christ, and worn out the saints, is clearly foretold, and confidently expected. We have seen it gradually rise to an enormous strength; we have seen it as gradually decline; and from *the signs of the times*, the vials of divine wrath will soon be poured out, when it shall be said; *It is done.*

It is likewise remarked as a very singular circumstance, that the title *Vicarius Filii Dei*, which the Pope has assumed, makes the same number,

V	-	-	5
I	-	-	I
C	-	-	100
A	-	-	0
R	-	-	0
I	-	-	I
V	-	-	5
S	-	-	0
F	-	-	0
I	-	-	I
L	-	-	50
I	-	-	I
I	-	-	I
D	-	-	500
E	-	-	0
I	-	-	I
			666

WITH respect to the time of the fall of Antichrist, interpreters have differed very widely. It cannot be fully known until the event has taken place. That God intended it to be in a measure hidden from us, appears from the answer which was returned to the inquiry of Daniel; *And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.* We may not therefore rashly, or curiously inquire into this matter, farther than we are warranted by what God hath been pleased to reveal.* I shall state the opinion which is

* "The folly of interpreters," says Isaac Newton, in his Observations on the Revelation, "has been, to foretell times and things by this prophecy, as if God designed to make them prophets. By this rashness they have not only exposed themselves, but brought the prophecy also into contempt. The design of God was much otherwise. He gave this and the prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify mens curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the event, and his own providence, not the interpreters, be then manifested thereby to the world."

most commonly received, and humbly offer some reasons why the fall of Antichrist, and the glorious days in the church which are to succeed, may be expected, at least in part, much sooner.

THE continuance of Popery is expressed in the text, by *a time and times, and the dividing of time*; and again, in the 12th chapter and 7th verse, by *a time, times, and an half*. In the Revelation, the 11th chapter and 2d verse, it is said, that *the Gentiles shall tread under foot the holy city forty and two months*; and in the 3d verse, that *the two witnesses shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth*. In the 12th chapter and 6th verse, it is said, that the woman who fled into the wilderness should be *fed there a thousand two hundred and threescore days*; and again in the 14th verse, are the very words by which the duration is expressed in Daniel; *a time and times, and half a time*. In the 13th chapter and 5th verse, it is said of the beast, that *power*

was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

ALL these numbers are allowed to be the same, and each of them to signify one thousand two hundred and sixty years; for *a time* is a year, and *a time and times*, and *the dividing of time*, or *half a time*, are three years and a half, and three years and a half are *forty-two months*, and *forty-two months* are *one thousand two hundred and sixty days*, and *one thousand two hundred and sixty days* are, in the prophetic file, *one thousand two hundred and sixty years*. This is the period which is fixed for the continuance of Antichrist. It may be remarked, that we are led to give this interpretation of *times* and *days* from the language in other prophecies which have been fulfilled; and that a month was then reckoned to consist of thirty, and a year of three hundred and sixty days.

THE great difficulty, my brethren, is when to date the commencement of the thousand two hundred and sixty years. Some have

dated it so early, that time has shown their mistake ; some so late as to remove the fulfilment to a great distance ; and some again have chosen a middle path. The opinion which prevails most, is, that these years are to be computed from the year 756, or at least, not earlier than from the year 727. This is the opinion of Bishop Newton, and of several who have written before and since ; and according to which the downfall of Popery is not to be expected until about the two thousandth year of Christ, above two hundred years from this time. Let us examine this opinion. It is founded,

FIRST, On the necessity of the Pope becoming a temporal prince, or uniting in himself the civil and ecclesiastic powers before he could be called *a horn* or kingdom, and before he could answer to the description of *the beast* in the Revelation.

ON this it may be said, that though he might not have been settled in his civil do-

minion until he revolted from the Exarch of Ravenna, and shook off allegiance to the Greek emperor, or even until Pepin king of France, made him prince over a large territory, yet he had long before a great influence in the temporal affairs of the Roman empire. He was declared universal bishop in the year 606. If the 1260 years be reckoned from that time, they will end in the year 1866, which carries us 72 years hence. The Pope had certainly greater power before the days of Pepin, than he has now, and has had for a long time, though he is supposed to be still on the throne. If then his power be now so small and continually declining, what good reason is there for alleging that his reign did not commence when the power was greater? If he now exists, surely he must have existed when his influence was more powerful and extensive. At his first appearance he is called by Daniel, *a little horn*, which is descriptive of him as not having yet enlarged and established his dominion. He is said, afterwards, to *wax exceeding great*, and when he

had arrived at his full growth, we find him called in the Revelation, a beast with *two horns*, and with *ten horns*.

IF we look as far back as the third century, we will find that Popery had made considerable progress. "The Bishops," says an approved historian, "assumed in many places, a princely authority, particularly those who had the greatest number of churches under their inspection, and who presided over the most opulent assemblies. They appropriated to their evangelical function, the splendid ensigns of temporal majesty. A throne surrounded with ministers, exalted above his equals the servants of the meek and humble Jesus, and sumptuous garments dazzled the eyes and the minds of the multitude, into an ignorant veneration for their arrogated authority.*" It was about the middle of this century, that Stephen the bishop of Rome,

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* Mosheim.

aspired to a superiority over all the other bishops. Reckoning from this time until the Reformation, we will find 1260 years. Luther arose in the year 1517, from which if we deduct 1260, it will leave 257, the very year in which Stephen usurped the pre-eminence, and which was in some measure yielded to him.

A LATE writer on the Revelation * says, that the 1260 years must be reckoned to begin some time between the year 500, when the western and eastern churches first separated, and the year 553, when the reign of the Goths ended; when Narfes took Rome and their dominions in Italy from them, and established the exarchate of Ravenna. If to the 500 we add the 1260 years, it will bring us to the year 1760; the time when the Jesuits began to feel the resentment of the kings of Europe, and which soon afterward effected their dissolution. These men who

* Dr. Langdon.

contributed much to the support of the Papal throne, were expelled Portugal, France, Spain, and Sicily, between the years 1759 and 1767, and the order was entirely suppressed in 1773. The suppression of convents, and the seizure of their revenues, the checks which the courts of inquisition have received, and the liberty of conscience which has been given to Protestants, might be mentioned as so many steps, since the foregoing date by which the power of the Romish church has declined.—If to 553 we add the 1260 years, it will bring us to the year 1813, about 19 years from this time; and surely, if we consider what has been transacted in Europe for a few years past, and the present appearances, Antichrist may at that period be almost totally destroyed.

FROM all this, it would appear, that no precise time can be fixed from which to reckon these years; that they may have several beginnings and endings; that, as Antichrist rose by degrees, so he will fall by degrees; that, if we begin at the earliest date,

the end of the period, will bring us to the beginning of his fall; but that if we begin at the latest date, then we will be brought to his complete destruction. Though it is probable that the prophecy will at last be fulfilled in some event more visible and striking than all the preceding ones; that the vestiges of Popery may continue for a long time; and that it may be near the two thousandth year of Christ, before the church enjoys the greatest prosperity; yet there is reason to believe that preparatory events are much nearer, and that even we may see a day of the Son of man. After the destruction of Antichrist, there are other events expected, and which will require time to accomplish before the church *look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.*

THAT the beginning of the reign of Antichrist may have different dates, and his fall be effected at different periods, until his final and dreadful ruin, we are authorised to say from similar prophecies and their ful-

filment.* With regard to the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of the Jews from captivity, which is evidently alluded to in the Revelation, as a type of the oppression of the church of Rome, neither the captivity of the Jews, nor their restoration was done all at once. It was foretold, that the duration of the captivity should be seventy years, and that after seventy years God would destroy Babylon. But this prediction had reference to different beginnings and endings. It was just seventy years from the first captivity, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when Daniel and many other Jews were carried to Babylon, to the decree of Cyrus, giving leave to the Jews to return, and ordering that the temple should be rebuilt; and it was seventy years from the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, to the publishing of the decree of Darius, by which the building of the temple was com-

* The Author is indebted for this and some of the following sentiments, to President Edwards and Dr. Hopkins. In one or two places he has used the same words.

pleted, and the Jews restored to their former state. In like manner were the prophecies concerning Babylon fulfilled; for though they had a principal reference to the destruction by Cyrus at the end of the first seventy years, yet there were other things not fulfilled until the fourth year of Darius, which was at the end of the second seventy years.

HAVE we not then reason to conclude, that the 1260 years of the captivity of the church of Christ in spiritual Babylon, will have different beginnings, and consequently different endings? That as the tyranny of the church of Rome gradually rose, so it will gradually fall; and that from each remarkable advance, there are 1260 years to as remarkable successive events, by which the power of the beast shall decline, until it be utterly destroyed?*

* Mr. Thomas Paine, in his "Age of Reason," alleges, that the prophecies in the Bible, are "so equivocal, as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen

SECONDLY, The opinion that the fall of Antichrist is still at a great distance, is founded on the interpretation of the prophecy respecting the slaying of the two witnesses. This, it is alledged, is some event distinct from their prophesying in sackcloth, is not to take place until the expiration of the 1260 years, and remains yet to be fulfilled.

“ afterwards.” I cannot now follow him on this subject. Whatever may be said of the writings of this Author on politics, he was surely unhappy when he commenced divine. He has discovered, and indeed confessed such ignorance of the sacred Scriptures, as renders him not only unworthy of trust, but subjects him to contempt. There is nothing new in his performance, save the bold and indecent manner. His character gives it a temporary popularity; but it must soon sink into infamy, and carry his own name along with it. It can do no harm except to the young and superficial. In the virtuous mind it will excite sentiments of abhorrence, and the Deist who has read a little, will blush to see his cause so miserably handled. It has already called forth some animadversions and probably will more. Indeed it is provoking to see the Christian religion, after having withstood the roarings of the lion, insulted by the brayings of the ass.

THIS was partly considered in the first discourse. It appears to me probable that this has been already fulfilled, or that it cannot be fulfilled in the way which has been expected, or that it is now fulfilling. The death and the resurrection of the witnesses are applicable to several events which preceded the Reformation; particularly, their death may signify the most cruel persecutions and massacres of Christians about that time, and their resurrection, the Reformation which speedily followed. Perhaps there is no reason to confine this part of the prophecy any more than the other to a precise time. The witnesses were, at several times, remarkably slain, and as remarkably arose.

BUT, if it remain to be fulfilled, in what way shall it be? Is it agreeable to the dealings of Providence, that the church, after her deliverance is begun, shall be brought under a more cruel bondage than ever? Is it probable from the present circumstances of the world, that ignorance and barbarism

shall return, and the arm of Popery be nerved anew to inflict the horrid blow? Then she would kill not *two*, not a small number of witnesses, but a great multitude. The Protestants were thought to be once equal in number to the Papists.

SUCH a persecution can be expected only by the restoration of the old system in France, and the universal prevalence of despotism in the world; an event at which the generous mind recoils, and which is, from all appearances, highly improbable.* The

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* That there is danger from the measures pursued in France, of introducing an age of barbarism, appears to me a groundless apprehension. To judge by what has happened in former ages, we must consider the difference of circumstances; we must see whether the facts which we compare are exactly parallel or not; otherwise we will draw an improper conclusion. Superficial and unphilosophical reasoners, who thought themselves wonderfully wise, used to prate about our contest with Britain, and alledge that we could not succeed, or that if we did, we would soon quarrel among ourselves. But all these have been false prophets. In short, history furnishes no pre-

Pope is only the ghost of what he was. The kings will cover him with finews and flesh no more; yea, the time will come, and now is, when the kings *shall hate* the church of Rome, called the whore, and *shall make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.*

MAY we not rather conjecture, that the present growth of infidelity, the low and general decline of religion throughout the world, together with the awful calamities coming upon those nations which have *the image of the beast*, is that dark and dismal time which good men have expected from the slaying of the witnesses, and their dead bodies lying in the street?—The pious and

cedents of the revolutions in America and France.—Equally absurd is the opinion that the old system can be restored in France. Is it not strange that the British nation should either wish, or attempt it? She who has gloried so much in her liberty, and in being thought the bulwark of the Reformation? One would think, that by this time, she would be at least tired of endeavouring to *bind people in all cases whatever.*

learned Archbishop Usher was deeply affected with a sad persecution which he firmly believed would come upon all the Protestant churches in Europe. The *outward court* he explains to signify the *formal Christian*, the *Gentiles*, who are to tread it under foot, to signify the *Papists*, and he gives it as his opinion, that as this persecution would be the *sharpest*, so it would be the *shortest*; and that there would be this great difference between this last and all the preceding persecutions, that in the preceding the most *eminent and spiritual ministers and Christians* generally suffered, but this last would take away only the *gross hypocrites and formal professors*. His words are indeed remarkable; and, except that he uses the word *persecution*, and seems not to have thought of any other calamity but this, or that it could come from any other quarter than from the *Papists*, may be called prophetic.

THE outward court, that is formal professors, those who maintain ecclesiastical

establishments, and have turned the Christian religion into worldly policy, are treading under foot ; not by the Papists, but by those whom the monstrous structure of Popery has aroused to tear it down. The interpretation seems to be verifying as far as it respects dreadful scenes of distress to befall those nations where civil and spiritual tyranny reigns. No reformation is likely to take place. Pharaoh will not let the children of Israel go. It appears to be the decree of heaven that he should not, until involved in utter destruction. The church and the state are so interwoven in their governments, that they must be melted down, in order to be separated and cast anew.—There is one thing, my brethren, to comfort us, that the calamity will be short. *After three days and an half*, that is, after some short space of time, the witnesses will revive and the church become prosperous. A great part of France was once Protestant. She was early and illustrious in the Reformation. Her walls have been broken down and her glory obscured by Popish tyranny. Now

God in his good pleasure, will build her up, and make her more glorious than ever.

THIRDLY, The opinion that happy days in the church are not near, is founded on the old tradition of both Jews and Christians, that at the end of six thousand years from the beginning, the Millennium will commence ; that as God created the world in six days, and rested on the seventh, so the seventh thousand years from the creation will be the Sabbath or rest to the church. It is said, that as there were 2000 years before the law, and 2000 under the law, so there will be 2000 under the gospel, and then Christ will reign with his saints.

ADMITTING this to have all the weight it ought to have, there may be great prosperity in the church long before that time. It is to be remarked, that the Jews began the celebration of their sabbath on the evening preceding. *From evening to evening shall ye celebrate your sabbath.* If the one be a type of the other, then the Millennium will

begin in the latter part of the six thousand years. There will be the evening, the dawn, and the gradual advance of the day, until the sun ascend the meridian. Though the full splendor will not be until two hundred years hence, yet we may see the evening and the dawn. It is said, that it is always darkest just before the dawn. It is now dark, and it grows darker. Often vapours hover round at the approach of morn, and exclude the rays of light. Thick vapours now hang on the horizon. "The morning lowers, and clouds heavily bring on the day, the great, the important day, big with the fate" of the Pope and Papal Rome.

┐ BESIDES, the destruction of Antichrist is an event which is to precede the Millennium. After civil and religious tyranny has ceased, some time will be necessary to compose the differences between Christians, to preach the gospel to the heathen nations, and to accomplish the restoration of the Jews. All these constitute the highest splendor of the

Millennium, and may not be until two centuries hence. As these events necessarily require time, it is alledged farther, that they will not probably come to pass very soon. This is the

LAST THING which I shall consider. We cannot say with certainty, how rapid the progress of truth will be, or how far one event will contribute to hasten another. Hitherto the progress of truth has been slow; but with every advance its speed may be increased. *The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.* When the Christian religion is maintained in its primitive purity, and the professors of it are united among themselves, it will be recommended to the Jews, and be successful among the heathen nations. The conversion of the Jews will, probably, be very sudden. From these expressions, *blindness in part is happened to Israel, and a vail is*

upon their heart, we believe that this will be the case. Whenever this happens, whether they only acknowledge the true Messiah, or whether besides this, they return as a nation to their own country, who can tell the effect which it will have upon the whole world? We are assured that their return will be *life from the dead*; it will be the means of confirming the faith of the Gentiles, converting those who still remain in darkness, and producing a most happy change in the church. Where is the infidel who after this will dare to lift his head? The separation of the Jews from all other people, has been a long and constant evidence of the truth of revelation; but their conversion to the Christian faith must carry conviction home to every bosom.

THE circumstances of the world at this day might be mentioned as being favourable to the diffusion of true knowledge. Commerce between nations is very extensive. The calamities which will fall upon some nations will bring them at last to se-

rious reflection; and those who escape from these calamities to distant countries will carry with them the principles of religion, and prepare the way for its propagation. In short, all things considered, we have reason to believe that scenes shall soon be disclosed highly interesting to the church, and intimately connected with her most glorious state upon earth.

THIS subject affords ground to Christians for support, for prayer, and for encouragement in their endeavours to advance the interests of religion.

1. IT affords ground for support. In times of public distress, and when iniquity abounds, it keeps the mind from sinking to look forward to what is foretold concerning the prosperity of the church, and which will certainly be fulfilled. The fulfilment may be delayed, we may be mistaken as to the time and manner, but the counsel of God standeth sure. We know that he hath fre-

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quently interposed for the relief of his church at the season of her greatest need. *God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.*

2. IT affords ground for prayer. Whether we immediately expect a night of darkness and affliction, or whether that the day will soon break, we should be much and earnestly engaged in prayer. This is a duty to which we are especially called; and were different denominations to appoint times, and to join in one society for that purpose, it would be a token for good. Why should we be to one another as heathen-men and publicans? All who are sincere, mean the same thing, and they have one common interest. By uniting in prayer, not only at the same time, but in the same assembly, they would offer a sacrifice acceptable to God, and he would pour out a blessing.*

* When this was ready for the press, there was handed me "an invitation to the ministers and churches of every

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Be-

“ Christian denomination throughout the United States,
 “ to unite in an attempt to carry into execution the
 “ *Humble attempt of President Edwards to promote ex-*
 “ *plicit agreement and visible union of God’s people in*
 “ *extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion, and*
 “ *the advancement of Christ’s kingdom on earth,” &c.*
 This invitation came from a number of ministers as-
 sembled at Lebanon; and in the execution of the plan it
 was proposed, “ that the ministers and churches of every
 “ Christian denomination should be invited to maintain
 “ public prayer and praise accompanied with such in-
 “ struction from God’s holy word as might he judged
 “ proper, on every *first Tuesday of the four quarters of*
 “ *the year*: beginning with the first Tuesday of January
 “ 1795, at two o’clock afternoon, if the plan of concert
 “ should then be ripe for a beginning—and so continu-
 “ ing,” &c.

This plan I most heartily approve, and consider it as a
 token for good. It would have happy effects too, if those
 of different denominations, where it is convenient, would
 assemble together, or form themselves into societies for
 prayer.

cause of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.

LASTLY, We are encouraged by this subject in the use of our endeavours to advance the cause of Christ in the world. No Christians have so much in their power as we have. We enjoy peace and religious liberty? For what hath God given us these? Why were we separated from the old world, before it was distracted and torn with the present wars? In our former connection we must have been exposed to great molestation, and what is worse, we must have taken part in a detestable war. Now we see tyranny receive his death-wound, and have nothing to fear except that the monster in his despairing and convulsive throes injure our infant republic.

IF amendments in our national constitution be necessary, experience will point them out, and wisdom will direct to seek them in the mode provided by the constitution itself. If at any time an act deemed

unjust and oppressive be passed by the legislature, the voice of reasonable petition and remonstrance will be heard; or, if not heard, there will be redress in a change of the representation, whenever the majority of the people signify their pleasure. No greater security can be devised than by confiding the power to representatives freely chosen. The laws are thus enacted by the people themselves, and every just ground of complaint is removed. If a small part of the community be permitted to resist the execution of a law, nothing but anarchy and confusion will ensue; for it is an established principle in all free governments, that the will of the majority ought to prevail. May we not hope that America shall still be preserved from foreign invasion as well as the more dreadful evil of internal discord, and exhibited as a pattern to other nations? Is not here the treasure hid in the field? The woman fed in the wilderness? While other nations improve on our form of civil government, may we not indulge the fond hope of drawing the plan and setting the

example of a Catholic church? Who knows but it is to begin with us, and the influence to be extended abroad? Who knows but those corruptions and divisions which have so long disgraced Christians, shall here be buried for ever, and that many of us shall see for ourselves this gleam of light previous to the effulgence of day? God hath put the precious opportunity into our hands, O that he may put it into our hearts! The union of professing Christians here can give civil government no alarm, for they disclaim all interference, and ask nothing but the enjoyment of unalienable rights.— But if, O thou most High, it is thy will that during our abode below, we must weep at the remembrance of Zion, and hang our harps upon the willows, hear our prayers, countenance our endeavours, and when we have fulfilled thy pleasure on earth, bring us to reign with Christ in heaven.



APPENDIX.

THE sentiments contained in the foregoing Discourses would, probably, have been published in the form of essays, had sufficient leisure been allowed from the duties of the pulpit. Nothing, however, which tends to represent Christianity in a just light, and to promote the general welfare of the church, can be deemed unsuitable in a minister to deliver to his people, and for them to hear. While the essential doctrines and precepts of religion are the great themes of a Christian preacher, he ought to give his hearers enlarged views of that spiritual society of which Christ is the Head; and to

teach them the relation which all believers sustain to Him and to one another. Such views will destroy a contracted and uncharitable disposition, increase in estimation the glorious plan of redemption, and advance true morality and happiness.

It has appeared to me that God in his providence is removing in other countries, the obstructions to the purity and success of the gospel; that he has already, in a great measure, removed them in this country; and that, therefore, we are called to improve the opportunity in rectifying whatever is amiss, and in restoring, as far as we can, union among the professors of religion. The necessity has appeared the more urgent from the late prevalence and impudence of infidelity. Some will say, that we ought to contend for every thing held and practised in our churches; but, in my opinion, if we would effectually defeat the adversaries, we must choose only such ground as is tenable. Some will say again, that if we once begin to relax, we know not where we

will stop; that we will be led away far from the truth, and religion will then languish and die; but, of this there can be no danger, if the leading doctrines be preserved, and mutual forbearance exercised. To strive about the peculiarities of denomination, is bigotry and not orthodoxy, it is party spirit and not a holy zeal.

THERE are doctrines, however, which cannot be surrendered without totally overturning the Christian religion. The examination of Mr. Paine's *Age of Reason*, by Gilbert Wakefield of England, I consider as having a more pernicious tendency than the *Age of Reason* itself. If Christianity be what Mr. Wakefield represents it, it is not worth defending, and indeed it is incapable of defence. When I find him asserting, that "to acknowledge Jesus Christ to be God, and the holy Spirit to be God, is a fundamental violation of all theology;" that "the immaculate conception of Jesus by

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“ the holy Spirit constitutes no essential article of his creed ;” that “ the whole fable of the devil and his angels, with all its terrific appendages, has been gratuitously fabricated by the sons of superstition ;” that “ the transactions recorded in the Bible are, in a variety of instances, to be considered in the same light with those of all other histories ; namely as aggravated and disguised in a thousand instances ;” and when I find him joining with Mr. Paine in sneering at the history of Jonah ; I cannot but consider his defence of Christianity weak, if it may not be called insidious. It is in vain to dispute the foregoing points with him, because we know not what parts of scripture he receives, and what he rejects. In short, I have been exceedingly disappointed in this performance, and hold the author, as a divine, in much the same estimation with Mr. Paine himself ; for it appears impossible to draw a line between his plan and downright deism. Christianity ! Thou art safe from all the attacks of open

enemies, and the more dangerous wounds of pretended friends. If ever these lines come to the sight of Mr. Wakefield, they will let him know, that, though with him, I contend for the rights of man, believe that reformation in the church is necessary, and am opposed to all national establishments of religion, yet I would not for ten thousand worlds, in removing the "incrustation" injure the "diamond."—I shall now subjoin a few things on the subject of union which could not be conveniently inserted in the discourses themselves, and which would have too much burdened the notes.

As to union I will be asked, Is it desirable? Is it practicable? And how far ought it to extend? Or, what ought to be the precise form of it? Though these questions are answered in the discourses, yet it may be proper to be a little more explicit.

1. UNION is desirable. This is no singular opinion of mine. It has been received

from the beginning. In the history of the church, we find that the wisest and best men have ever wished and attempted to accomplish union. At the Reformation much pains were taken for this purpose; and in Great Britain, measures have been pursued to accommodate differences between the conformists and non-conformists. The desire of brevity will not allow me to point out the particular instances. The nature of the church, the frequent injunctions of holy writ, and the benefits resulting from union, all conspire to show that it is desirable. The use which infidels have ever made of the divisions of Christians, loudly call upon us to remove this great offence.

2. UNION is practicable. It is not practicable in some circumstances, and the hinderances of it have been mentioned; but these are now removed in this country, excepting our own prejudices and imaginary interests. It is certainly practicable, because

it has been effected between different denominations, and exists at this very day.

3. I SHALL answer the question, How far union ought to extend, or what ought to be the precise form of it, by stating the plans which have been already adopted.

BEFORE I mention what has been done in this country, let me mention the unity which is preserved between the *Dutch and Walloon* churches in Holland. On account of a difference of language, the national synod of Dort determined in Art. 51. "that the *Dutch* and *Walloon* churches shall have their distinct consistories, classical assemblies, and particular synods." Art. 52, runs thus; "It is notwithstanding judged proper that in those cities where the abovementioned *Walloon churches* are, some ministers and elders of both descriptions should assemble together monthly, in order to preserve unity, and mutual good correspondence, and as much as possible, according to circumstances, with counsel to

“assist each other.” Here we see churches having distinct judicatories, maintaining a general bond of union; some from both assembling together at stated times, for the express purpose of “preserving unity,” and “with counsel to assist each other.” The famous synod of Dort thought union desirable, and they have given us, in this case, a wise and practicable plan; have shown us that churches may be connected and enjoy a friendly correspondence, while in other respects they remain entirely distinct. Those who would impress on our minds the idea, that to form an union it is necessary to blend or mix the denominations together, either do not understand the thing, or wish to mislead the unwary.

IN this country, an union of the Associate and Reformed Presbyteries took place in the year 1781. The difference between these denominations was very inconsiderable, and they formed a perfect union under the name of “The Associate Reformed Synod.” Reasonable, as this union was,

there were a few who would not unite, but formed themselves into a separate society, and have since imported an accession from abroad. At the head of this schism, as is frequently the case, were some ministers, I think two, who are industrious in making proselytes, and console themselves with the notion of keeping faith alive on the earth.

THE union between the Associate Reformed, the Dutch Reformed, and the Presbyterian Synods, began in the year 1785. The bond of union, was a convention, consisting of delegates from each of the churches, to meet once every two years. This convention possessed only the power of counsel and advice. Having met once every year until the year 1790, the convention has been from that time discontinued. Here again, we find three denominations judging a brotherly correspondence to be desirable, and adopting a plan for its execution. Though it has been suspended, yet there is no reason to believe that union was impracticable, or that some better plan might not have been devised. The

three churches are so nearly alike in doctrine and form of church-government, that there is nothing external to hinder the best understanding, and the most friendly correspondence between them.

MUCH MORE successful has been the accommodation of a greater difference between the Presbyterian church and the Congregational churches in New England. The clergy of these formerly held an annual convention, which was interrupted by the confusions of the war. It appears by the printed extracts from the minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, that in 1790 they expressed a "peculiar desire to renew and
"strengthen every bond of union between
"brethren so nearly agreed in doctrine and
"forms of worship as the members of the
"congregational and presbyterian churches
"evidently are," and resolved to invite the congregational churches to renew their correspondence. The Assembly farther appointed a committee to take the most effectual measures for obtaining the proposed

object. In 1791, this Committee reported progress, and “ proposed three modes of “ correspondence for consideration, viz. “ 1st. By letter from a committee of this “ body, with a committee of the general association of Connecticut. 2d. By reviving a convention similar to one which “ subsisted between those bodies before the “ late war. 3d. By sending delegates reciprocally from each body, who shall sit in “ their respective meetings.” Another committee was then appointed to consult with ministers from the New England churches, “ and to determine on such plan of correspondence and intercourse as shall appear eligible.” In the mean time, this measure was laid before the General Association of Connecticut, that they might be prepared to meet with the Committee. In 1792, the plan agreed upon in a convention of the two bodies, was reported and adopted, the printed extract of which is as follows;

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“ CONSIDERING the importance of union and harmony, in the Christian church, and the duty incumbent on all its pastors and members to assist each other, in promoting, as far as possible, the general interest of the Redeemer’s kingdom; and considering further, that divine Providence appears to be now opening the door for pursuing these valuable objects, with a happy prospect of success,

“ THIS convention are of opinion, that it will be conducive to these important purposes—

“ THAT a *standing committee of correspondence*, be appointed in each body, whose duty it shall be, by frequent letters, to communicate to each other, whatever may be mutually useful to the churches under their care, and to the general interest of the Redeemer’s kingdom.

“ THAT each body should, from time to time, appoint a committee, consisting of

three members, who shall have a right to sit in the others general meeting, and make such communications as shall be directed by their respective constituents, and deliberate on such matters as shall come before the body; but shall have no right to vote.

“THAT effectual measures be mutually taken to prevent injuries to the respective churches, from irregular and unauthorized preachers.

“To promote this end, the convention judge it expedient, that every preacher, travelling from the limits of one of these churches into those of the other, shall be furnished with *recent testimonials*, of his regular standing and good character as a preacher, signed by the moderator of the Presbytery, or association, in which he received his license, or, if a minister, of his good standing and character as such, from the moderator of the Presbytery, or association where he last resided, and that he shall, previously to his travelling as a

preacher into distant parts, further receive a recommendation, from one member, at least of a standing committee to be hereafter appointed by each body, certifying his good qualifications as a preacher.

“ALSO, that the names of this standing committee shall be mutually communicated, and also that every preacher travelling, and recommended as above, and submitting to the stated rules of the respective churches, shall be received as an authorized preacher of the gospel, and cheerfully taken under the patronage of the presbytery, or association, within whose limits he shall find employment as a preacher : And,

“THAT the proceedings of the respective bodies on this report, be communicated to our brethren of the congregational and presbyterian churches throughout the states.”

THESE two denominations have acted on this plan until the present year, when we find this amendment proposed on the part

of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church : “ On motion, ordered, that the
“ delegates appointed from the General Assembly to the General Association of Connecticut propose to the Association, as an
“ amendment to the articles of intercourse agreed upon between the aforesaid bodies,
“ that the delegates from these bodies, respectively, shall have a right, not only to
“ sit and deliberate, but also to vote, in all
“ questions which shall be determined by either of them.” This amendment, I am informed, has been cheerfully agreed to, on the part of the General Association of Connecticut.

HERE then is another plan of union ; one which appears to have been digested with great care, bears evident marks of wisdom, and is found happy in its operation. During the whole negotiation, no secrecy is observed, but their transactions are published to the people, that they might know and judge. The greatest care is taken to prevent the introduction of irregular preachers,

and the two denominations repose such confidence in each other, that ministers duly recommended, are respectively received into their pulpits. There appears no suspicion, that bane of friendship; no saying, *Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.* They seem to have remembered what the Apostle John has said concerning a certain Diotrephes; *I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words.* The ministers receiving one another respectively into their pulpits, and the delegates having a right respectively to vote in the judicatories, will draw the bands of love close, and the union promises to be beneficial and lasting. It is in vain to say, that we are united in love, when we have no confidence in one another; and no man will be long pleased in attending a judicatory, when he has no share in managing the business.

PERHAPS the above plan is what should have been adopted by the Dutch Reformed, the Associate Reformed, and the Presbyterian Synods. Their union has hitherto failed, because they have not come near enough. Let me repeat, that a blending or mixing of the denominations is not necessary; but surely, if we love one another, if we be agreed, we ought to testify it in some proper manner. A convention was only a previous step, and no other steps being taken, it naturally ceased. Why should Christians come together, unless to promote harmony and fellowship? If they meet only to tell their mutual jealousies, and to contend for matters of separation, they will part worse friends than when they met. Let me say once for all, that the difference between these denominations is so trifling, or rather it is nothing, that they may, and ought to unite in some general bond; while each denomination may remain distinct, and every society enjoy the labours of its own ministers, retain its estate, and whatever privileges and peculiarities belong to it. If

such an union, however, be effected, it must be on a different plan from what has yet been attempted. It must be on the plan last stated; for it is the greatest absurdity to think of union, while men will hold no Christian and ministerial communion with one another. It is but justice to say, that the Presbyterian ministers, whenever opportunity offers, invite the Dutch ministers into their pulpits. The Author has repeatedly preached at the invitation of Presbyterian ministers when abroad, and has been earnestly invited by a minister of the Associate Reformed church; but in no instance has he thought it expedient to return the compliment, though well assured that the ministers of these persuasions are as orthodox and zealous as those of his own. Where is brotherly love? Where is union? Should not some correspondence in this respect be established?

I SHALL produce now an instance of union far more extensive than any which has been mentioned; I mean "The New-

York Society for promoting Christian knowledge and piety." This society consists at present of not less than seven different denominations, viz. Episcopalians, Methodist-Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Dutch Presbyterians, Scotch Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Moravians. According to the constitution, "persons, of all Christian denominations, may be elected members." It may be said, that this is an union of individuals and not of churches. But are not churches composed of individuals? Are not here persons of various sentiments united in one body; and why may not the union be extended? Besides, the society may be called a church. The meeting is opened and closed with prayer. The object of the institution is "to distribute the holy scriptures and other religious books among the poor; to assist missionaries in diffusing gospel knowledge," &c. Wherein does the object of a church differ from this? And if it does, can we say, that persons may form a social union to promote Christian know-

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ledge and piety among others, and not among themselves? ~~Is not here~~ a joint endeavour to “advance the interests of the “blessed Redeemer’s kingdom?”

IT is likewise remarkable, that the members of this society subscribe what is equal to a confession of faith. By the 7th Article of the constitution, they are “to procure
“and disperse such tracts as tend to inculcate the doctrine of the sacred Trinity;
“the depravity and condemnation of mankind by original and actual sin; their recovery by the meritorious life, sufferings,
“and death of the adorable Redeemer; the sanctification of the soul by the operations
“of the holy Ghost; the blessings and efficacy of the sacraments of the Christian
“church; the necessity of holiness of heart and practice; the certainty of a future
“state of eternal happiness or misery,” &c. Here is a good confession, and proves what I have asserted, that the generality of Christians are agreed in all the essential articles of faith; and that were they to confine

themselves to these, and not unwarrantably extend them, a foundation for union would appear.

I WOULD add something more, I would address both clergy and laity on the subject of union, but this Appendix is already too long. As to some denominations which have been particularized, it is my unshaken opinion, that they ought to unite; and I think that even an union of greater extent is desirable and practicable; yea, that it will in process of time take place. A general convention ~~might be proposed~~ and the attempt made. Prejudices and interests may withstand it for a while, but they must at last yield to reason and truth. I have delivered my sentiments with great freedom and sincerity. They may not escape animadversions, and that too from some with whom I should deem it an unhappiness to differ. I have no party purpose, no worldly interest to seek; but having believed, I have therefore spoken. Great as my attachment is to

the denomination to which I belong, and ever studious to promote their spiritual benefit, I consider them as part of the Catholic church, and all the saints as *one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

THE END.

