

THE SOUTHERN
PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

VOL. XI.—No. III.

OCTOBER, MDCCCLVIII,

ARTICLE I.

THE SYMMETRY AND BEAUTY OF GOD'S WITNESSING
CHURCH.*

“The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold.”—
Psalm 45: 13.

In the ordinary ministrations of the pulpit, and meditations of God's people, Christ the Saviour holds, and ought to have, the pre-eminent place; and exhibitions of doctrine respecting his person and work constitute the staple of every evangelical discourse, and the characteristic and leading theme of contemplation and faith to every believer. But there are other themes unfolded in the Scriptures besides those which are immediately conversant with the person and work of the Son of God—themes which indeed derive all their interest from Christ, and concentrate all their light to irradiate his glorious and adorable person, but which do not come into the category

* This article was intended for the April number of the Review, but was too late to be inserted. Its publication was promised in the July number, and the appendix written with a view to its appearance then. In the absence of one of the Editors, through some misunderstanding, the publication was again delayed. We make this statement out of regard to the author, and in explanation of our own seeming remissness.

ARTICLE VII.

The Church of God as an Essential Element of the Gospel, and the Idea, Structure and Functions thereof. A Discourse in four parts. By REV. STUART ROBINSON, Professor of Church Government and Pastoral Theology in the Theological Seminary at Danville, Ky. *With an Appendix, containing the more important symbols of Presbyterian Church Government, historically arranged and illustrated.* Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, No. 111 South Tenth street; A Davidson, Louisville, Ky., 1858.

When Mr. Robinson was chosen in 1856, by the General Assembly, to fill the chair of Church Government and Pastoral Theology in the new Seminary at Danville, there were not wanting many who doubted the wisdom of the appointment. Some of his strongest friends and warmest admirers, in the Assembly itself, voted blank when the votes were given; and they so voted because they regarded him as more eminently fitted for the pulpit than for the Professor's chair; and because he had begun a Church enterprise in Baltimore, which was still in its infancy, encumbered with many difficulties, and likely to be seriously endangered, if not totally destroyed, by his removal from it. Mr. Robinson, it was argued, is gifted with a power to attract and move a mixed audience, not surpassed by any that belongs to any minister in the country; he possesses a rare combination of vigorous thought, of brilliant and versatile imagination, of broad and genial human sympathies, by which he is enabled not merely to attract, but to hold large crowds of dying men in attendance upon his ministry. He ought not, therefore, to be taken from the pulpit, which he is so eminently qualified to adorn, and from a commanding position in a large city, to do a work in which he cannot expect a larger measure of success than might fall to the lot of many of his brethren, far inferior to him in the gifts of a popular orator.

We shall not undertake to discuss the comparative merits of our honored brother as a preacher and a professor; but we should be happy to believe, that the Presbyterian Church in the United States has, among its twenty-five hundred ministers, "many" who, after having occupied the chair which he has occupied, for the same period of time, could be the author of "The Church of God as an Essential Element of the Gospel." Perhaps our Church *is* rich to this extent; if so, her riches are carefully hoarded, wrapped in a napkin and buried; and something should be done to disinter the talents, and to give them to the Church both to use and to enjoy. So far as our observation has qualified us to form a judgment in the matter, there is no topic lying within the range and scope of their profession, in regard to which our ministers generally are more at sea than in regard to the Idea, Structure and Functions of the Church of God. Our young men come indifferently prepared upon this class of subjects before the Presbyteries for licensure and ordination; they are superficially examined upon them; they enter upon the discharge of pastoral functions with a very slender knowledge of ecclesiastical principles and ecclesiastical law; they go into our appellate courts and there re-enact the blunders of the courts of original jurisdiction; till, finally, in the highest court of all, confusion becomes worse confounded, and, in utter despair, we look to a revision of the constitution as the only remedy. Now, without denying that the constitution is susceptible of improvement, we need not hesitate to assert, that no constitution, however perfect, can administer itself; that no rules of judicial proceedings can apply themselves; that no principles of evidence will, of themselves, conduct a case to a true and righteous conclusion. We must have competent judges besides—judges that have some adequate knowledge of the constitution and of the rules of process and evidence. If a perfect system were let down to us from heaven, and it were as little studied as the present lame one, we should soon begin again to talk of amendments and revisions.

If any thing became clear in the controversies about elders and ordination in our Church, some years ago, it was that the

Church was in great darkness in regard to its own structure and functions, and in regard to those great principles which constitute its very foundation. Here were worthy brethren, suspected by their own friends, of denying not only the *jus divinum* of Presbyterian government, but of the Church visible itself, and yet holding views of the nature of ordination marvellously resembling the views held by those prelatical communions which make the Church visible all. Here were other brethren, great and good as the first, who held that Presbyterian government was a commonwealth, not a hierarchy; that ordination was not a charm, but an act of government; that the ruling elder was not a figure of speech, but a real entity; and that a *quorum* was not another court, not a substitute for a court, but the court itself, with the fewest elements with which it was allowed to exist and to proceed to business. All manner of wild things, all manner of strange, obscure and false things, were uttered in this controversy, which was *settled*, like Huss's testimony at Constance, by the General Assembly of 1844.

Once more. The neglect of infant baptism in our communion, about which, of late years, so much has been said and written, bears its testimony to the same effect. If our ministers and elders had adequately studied the idea and structure of the Church; if they had had just apprehensions of the true relation of the seed of believers to the covenant of God; if they had clearly perceived the immeasurable difference in degree of importance between the question of the mode of baptism and the right of infants to the ordinance in any mode; that the question of the mode is a trifle, light as air, compared with the question of the constitution of the Church visible, and the membership of infants in it—such a neglect of this seal of God's covenant would not now be a reproach and a shame to us. We rejoice to add, that it is one sign of that "re-awakening" in our Church, of which Mr. Robinson speaks in the opening of his discourse, that so much has been preached and published on the subject of infant membership in the Church visible, within the last twelve months.

Lastly. In reference to that important function of the

Church of God which we call *worship*, how confused and unsatisfactory the views which are afloat among ministers and people in regard to its true nature. Not to mention other things, how hard it is for the Church to understand the doctrine of giving as a part of the stated worship of God! reports, resolutions, speeches, essays, sermons, all manner of expositions of the doctrine, have been given to the Church; and yet, in the month of June, 1858, at head-quarters, in the very focus of Presbyterian light and power, in the city of Philadelphia, at a meeting of the Board of Missions, grave and reverend pastors, men useful and honored in the Church, are reported to have said that they had no faith in the scheme of systematic beneficence! For such a statement, the most charitable reason which can be assigned is, that they have not taken the trouble to ascertain what systematic beneficence means. To make the thing still more glaring, the great weekly organ, commenting upon the doings of the meeting aforesaid, and casting about for something for the Associate Secretary to do,—the Secretary who was, by a tie-vote, not abolished,—recommends that he should go round and get this systematic plan into general operation! which, being interpreted, is, that an agent should be employed to teach the Church, pastors and people; that all agencies, other than the regular officers of the Church, should be abolished; that they have been abolished *de jure*, and will be *de facto*!

One reason, doubtless the chief reason, why the doctrine of the Church has been relegated to a very subordinate position in the curriculum of our theological schools, in the studies of our ministers, and in the teaching of our pulpits, is an inadequate apprehension of its importance. It has not been perceived, as it ought to have been perceived, that the Church, as Mr. Robinson expresses it, is “an essential element of the Gospel,” a necessary part of that grand scheme of restoration, by which sinners are emancipated from the bondage of the curse, renewed in the image of God, adopted into His family, and educated as His sons and daughters, for glory, honor and immortality. In that tremendous re-action against the tyranny of Rome, which took place at the period of the Reformation,

men awoke to the consciousness that they were men; that they possessed an individual importance, a personal responsibility and a personal immortality; that they were not made to be spokes in a great iron wheel, whose remorseless revolutions served only to gratify the lust of power and the insatiable cupidity of a self-appointed hierarchy; that they had a worthier destiny than to fall into the maw of a monster calling itself the Church; that human souls were not to be degraded into articles of merchandize. They began to see that the Church had usurped the prerogatives of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; that the priesthood and the sacraments had effectually barred the kingdom of heaven against all who would enter in; and, in short, that the Church, instead of being the thing which was founded upon the rock, was itself the gates of hell. They discovered that Jesus Christ was the only Priest, that His sacrifice was the only sacrifice, that His intercession was the only intercession, and that the Holy Ghost was the only source of spiritual life. They found, in spite of the Church,—what was recognized as such,—in spite of the deafening roar of the maledictions which thundered from the Vatican, and from every altar, that they had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, being justified by faith. The Church seemed to be, not an essential element of the Gospel, but an unrelenting enemy to it; and a large part of Europe was revolutionized by preaching the Gospel in opposition to the Church.

And this has been, to a greater or less extent, the posture of the parties ever since; Papists making the Church every thing, Protestants tending to the other extreme of making it nothing; one party insisting that out of the Church there is no salvation, the other insisting, with equal pertinacity, that out of Christ there is no salvation; the one urging the necessity of man's believing unto righteousness, the other the necessity of man's confessing with his mouth unto salvation. In our own day, and in our own Church, elaborate essays have been published by men who are honored by all our people, which have created serious doubts whether they hold that the Church exists, *jure divino*, at all. Now, these very statements of the relative importance of faith in Jesus Christ, and of connexion

with the Church, serve to show that the doctrine of the Church is one of immense consequence. It has been made so, if not by the Word of God originally, yet by the errors of the adversary; and the whole question is one which eminently demands attention to the injunction, "to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." Is there no Church visible ordained of God? If there be a Church, what is it? what is its structure, and what are its functions? what is its great design? and what are its relations to the salvation of men, "the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of God's glory?" Of these things we ought to know something, we must know something, if we would be found workmen that need not to be ashamed.

In the introduction to this inaugural discourse, Mr. Robinson has the following paragraph:

"It is the striking observation of a modern German thinker—after arranging the entire cycle of sacred knowledge into the four categories, (1) Theology, the science of God; (2) Anthropology, the science of man as related to God; (3) Soterology, the science of salvation; and (4) Ecclesiology, the science of the Church of God—that the history of the Church since the Apostles seems to have been a development in succession of each of these four in their order. The first of these had its full development during the controversies concerning the nature of the Godhead, which closed with the labors of Athanasius; the second, during the Pelagian controversy, closing with the labors of Augustine. Next, after a thousand years of repose and silence in the Church, was developed the third, (Soterology,) through the labors of Luther and Calvin, proclaiming salvation as by grace through faith; leaving the fourth, Ecclesiology, yet to be developed. Do not the providences of God toward the American Church, in freeing her from the civil domination which, by violence or seduction, silenced the martyr voice of her Scotch mother when she would testify for Christ's crown and covenant, and in placing the Church here in a position (for the first time, perhaps, since the Apostles), to actualize fully and without hinderance her true nature and functions as a spiritual commonwealth—do not all seem to indicate that the time has fully come for the final development of the visible Church as a governmental power on earth, yet a kingdom not of this world, a people not reckoned among the nations?" (P. 27, 28).

This is not only ingenious and plausible, but true; certainly contains so many marks of truth, as to lay upon the Church, in this country, the obligation of considering whether it be not her peculiar commission, or an important part, perhaps the chief part, of her commission, to teach the world what the

Church visible is. The life of the world thus far bears an analogy, as the observation cited by Mr. Robinson suggests, to the life of the individual man. There are certain crises or eras in both, in which great questions are to be settled, right or wrong, upon the settlement of which the future manifestations and development of the life will depend. The principles of liberty, for example, the true principles of liberty, have been a part of the most ancient inheritance of man; the title-deed was given to him in the garden of Eden. But, after the fall, the title-deed was lost, though not cancelled or destroyed; and it was well for man, perhaps, as he had forfeited his ability to use, that he lost also the means of proving his claim to the inheritance. But, from time to time, when groaning under oppression, or when inflamed by the touch of some superior genius, endowed with the magic power of drawing all meaner things within the vortex of its own noble impulses and fiery zeal, the memory of the lost inheritance returns, and he searches again amidst the rubbish of lies and vanities for that title-deed. He looks anxiously, in the darkness of the long and dreary night, for the coming dawn and the rising of the sun, and, in his very haste to greet the true source of light and joy, welcomes every parhelion in its stead. But time rolls on—battle after battle is fought—head after head of martyrs falls upon the scaffold reared by tyranny and falsehood—the cause seems lost, then restored again—the banner now floats gloriously upon the breeze, and now trails ignominiously in the dust, till at last the shout of victory from the ranks of those who are contending for the right—but, alas! that period has not yet arrived.

We say the period of final victory has not yet arrived. But the principles of liberty, of true liberty, have been expounded and illustrated in this country, and have become the possession of the world, and men will no more lose sight of their title-deed. The nations, whose glorious mission it has been to teach mankind these lessons, may, by their fall, afford a melancholy illustration of the fact which has been so often illustrated in the history of our unhappy race, that while truth is mighty, men are weak; England may become the victim of the con-

tinental despotisms, and the United States the victim of the madness and folly of their own people, unworthy any longer to bear aloft the torch of truth before the tribes of earth. But the principles will remain, the torch will pass into worthier hands, or, the long-suffering of God being exhausted, Jesus Christ, His Son, who alone can make us free, will come in vengeance against the mighty hunters and plausible deceivers of mankind, and establish true liberty amid the splendors of the millennial glory.

But now it is very important and striking to observe, that the Church visible has been the chosen repository of the principles of true liberty, the very shrine in which the spirit of liberty has delighted to dwell; and, in her own Divine constitution, in her very organization, and in the modes and forms by which her power is exercised, has been the model of the freest governments of earth. It would appear, therefore, to be the mission of the Church in this country, as it gave the original lessons, so constantly to repeat them in the ears of those whose duty and interest it is to give careful heed; to teach the United States what they are to teach the world, that true liberty is not a thing of external forms merely, but must begin and be maintained from within; that it is not license, not emancipation from the restraints of law, but obedience to law, the law of God, which is "the harmony of the world," and the law of man, which is also the ordinance of God. It is her mission now, when "equality" is the cry, to teach this country, and through this country to teach the world, and to teach, by her own organization and model, that the "equality" for which men are clamoring is a mere dream and delusion, and, if it were a reality, would be a blasting curse; that the true notion of a body politic, as of a body ecclesiastic, is, that while there is but one body, there are many members, and that all members have not the same office; that some are more honorable, others less so; some direct, and others are directed; that the liberty of the members consists in their freedom from all restraint but the law of the whole body, or, in other words, the liberty of doing the thing which the law of the whole body ordained it to do; and that the "equality" of the members

consists in an equal right on the part of all to exercise their own functions under the general law of the body equally binding upon all; that the eye has a right to see equal to the right which the ear has to hear, or the nose to smell; that the "equality" of the eye does not consist in its having the right to hear or smell, as well as see. It is the mission of the Church, now when the cry is "fraternity," to teach the country and the world, that the true brotherhood is to be found in the second Adam, who is a life-giving Spirit, more than in the first Adam, who was only a living soul; that the true "solidarity," or "solidarity" of the peoples is to be found in Him, over whose cross was a superscription written in the three leading types of all the languages of earth; in Him in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, male nor female, bond nor free. Let us hold up before the world a brotherhood, free, yet subject to law; equal, yet occupying different positions and discharging different functions. We hope we shall be pardoned for saying, that the prevailing forms of polity in the Church of God, for the last sixteen or seventeen hundred years, have been adapted rather to conceal than to illustrate these great principles; that in modern times, and in Great Britain and the United States, the Presbyterian Church has done more than any other Church to illustrate them; and that she might have done still more if her principles had been more thoroughly understood by herself. Still further we are presumptuous enough to express our conviction, that in every great effort to amend the social and political condition of this country, which shall be successful, the principles of this Church will be the standard of reform. A true ecclesiology and a sound political philosophy must go hand in hand. No bishop, no king.

The immense practical importance of the doctrine of the Church may be seen in connection with the idea, to which a passing allusion has been already made, but which deserves a more particular notice at our hands; and that is the idea of "fellowship." The true idea of fellowship was the original property of the Church, at least after the fall of man. Recognized in the garden of Eden, though exercised in a narrow

sphere; well nigh extinguished in the blood of Abel; restored in the line of Seth; publicly recognized again in the time of Enos, when men began to call themselves by the name of the Lord; almost lost again when the sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men, and brought upon the earth the devouring curse of God; ambitiously counterfeited and pressed into the service of rebellion by the builders of the Tower of Babel; obscured by the diversities of languages and the divisions into tribes and nations which followed upon the confusion of tongues, the true home of this great idea, the only portion of mankind among whom it was a conscious possession and a cherished jewel, was the Church of God. And when that Church passed into the form ordained for it under the institute of Moses, the idea of fellowship was brought out with great clearness in every part of that wonderful code, albeit very imperfectly realized, it must be acknowledged, in the actual life of an intractable and hard-hearted people. It was expressed so clearly, and incorporated so thoroughly into the very texture of the law moral, ceremonial and political, that no child of Abraham could fail to see it or feel it, without the most wilful blindness, or the most inexcusable malignity of temper. And we are bold to say that, so far as the Levitical law is to be regarded as an instrument for the promotion of the social and political happiness of human beings living together in the same community, no government of man's contrivance can be compared to it, in the wisdom and benevolence of its provisions. Indeed, the most complete political systems of modern times, the glory and the crown of Christian civilization, are founded upon the principles and animated by the spirit of the Mosaic Institute. It is true that, for wise reasons, the Jewish State being designed of God to be temporary and to prepare the way for another, the rules which regulated the intercourse of the people with other nations were apparently out of harmony with the idea of fellowship; but the explanation of this apparent inconsistency would lead us too far from the main point. It is sufficient to say, that the stringency and harshness of these rules was no more inconsistent with the tenderness of brotherly love inculcated every where else in the law, than the

rough and sometimes thorny integument, which closely confines the infant bud, is incompatible with the softness, beauty and fragrance, of the mature and expanded flower.

Now, in the Church under the gospel, we have the flower; and where, in all history, is there a more charming picture of the lovely fruits of true fellowship than the account of the daily life of the Christian Church at Jerusalem? "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers; and fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart; praising God and having favor with all the people."—(Acts 2: 42, etc.) Alas! that this glorious and happy ideal should not be always realized among the followers of Christ! Thanks be unto God! the time shall surely come when the communion of saints will far exceed in glory and perfection any exhibition which has hitherto been made of it on earth, and all the nations will walk in the light of it.

But what are the elements of this fellowship? The fundamental element, as the term itself implies, is *common* possession of, or mutual participation in, some thing or things. Paul describes the fellowship of Christians in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, thus: "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." And elsewhere, frequently, for it is a favorite topic with him. Our relation to God as our Creator constitutes the primary and the widest basis of fellowship. But He is the Creator of irrational and inanimate things, with which we cannot properly be said to have any fellowship. He is also our Father; and this implies that we are made in His image and in the image of one another. Here, then, is a foundation of fellowship with one another, and with all intelligent creatures in the universe, made, like us, in

the likeness of God. We have the same nature, and are members of the same family. We have all fallen together from our high estate of fellowship with one another and with the Father—have lost His favor, His image and His inheritance. But He has devised a way by which His banished may be restored to Him. He has “called” us to “hope;” and we have “one Lord,” our Saviour and our King; our Saviour as our King; our King because our Saviour, and our Saviour because our King; our Brother as well as our King and Saviour; bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; as really one with us in nature as the first Adam, yet without sin; our spirit as well as our bone and our flesh, for He dwells in us and we in Him. But knowledge is indispensable to conscious fellowship; knowledge of the common property and the common participation. Hence it is added, “one *faith*.” Without faith it is impossible to please God; it is impossible to please man; it is impossible to do anything, but sigh over a meaningless existence. We must have a common standard as well as a common object of faith; the word of our common “Lord,” who is the faithful and true Witness, we believe, because it is His word. He is Lord of our understandings, because He is the truth. Once more, if there is to be organized fellowship, there must be “baptism” as well as “faith.” For upon the principle of “*de non existentibus et de non apparentibus eadem est ratio*,” the faith would be nothing for the purposes of fellowship, unless confessed and manifested. There must be some common sign or badge by which we may recognize each other as having “one faith” and “one Lord.”

If this is a just account of the elements of fellowship as exhibited in the constitution of the Church of God, it makes sad havoc of some worldly theories and some Church theories of the same thing. The necessity of organization, indeed, is fully recognized. The great watch-word of the times is “organize,” “organize!” Regalia, insignia, vestments and banners, devices and mottoes of all sorts, sizes and colors, the signs and badges of association, are plentiful as the leaves of autumn. But when we come to look into the principles of fellowship of which these things are designed to be the symbols, we find them to be

wholly defective, and because defective, false and fatal. We have seen, for example, that the relation of man to God is a primary element in true fellowship. But in most human associations this relation has no place. In Free Masonry a great parade is made of liberality and toleration in the matter of religion. Men of all complexions of religious faith and of no religious faith at all, we are told, meet in perfect harmony in the halls of this ancient and venerable order, and love one another as brethren. In a paragraph which has been going the rounds of the newspapers recently, the Church is modestly lectured for not imitating this fraternity in this particular. Now, one of two things is certain. Either religion and the whole affair of man's relations to God have nothing at all to do with the purposes and ends of Free Masonry, or the contrary. If the first, then it is as idle to boast of mutual religious toleration in such an association as it would be in a railway corporation, or in any other body constituted for ends which are of the earth, earthy. It is not an association of men, as men; for the religious nature of man, which is as universal and indestructible as any other part of human nature, has been left out of the plan. It is, therefore, supremely ridiculous for the members of such a body to read lectures to the Church about charity and toleration. If, on the contrary, Free Masonry has for its object the cultivation of man's higher nature, to boast that all complexions of faith are tolerated, is of course to say, that faith is a matter of no consequence in the business of religion; that the man who believes in the God of the Calvinist, and the man who believes in the God of the Unitarian, and the man who believes in the God of the Mormon, all stand an equal chance of promoting the highest interests of their spiritual being—all which is not less absurd than it would be to say that an Atlantic Telegraph Company, composed of men who cannot agree about the properties of copper wire or the laws of magnetic electricity, or the force and direction of ocean currents, is as likely to be successful in establishing and maintaining electric communication between two continents, as a company composed of men who agree upon all these points. It is tantamount to asserting that there is no such thing as truth. It is putting

light for darkness and darkness for light, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. It is turning cosmos into chaos. The toleration, then, which the Church is advised to imitate, is the old Roman toleration of the Augustan age, founded upon a total denial of the *truth* of any religion. All the *simulacra* of the gods may stand together harmoniously in the Pantheon, because they are mere *simulacra*, without any reality to represent.

Similar statements and reasonings would apply to numberless other associations, and particularly to those which are based upon pantheistic and socialistic principles. False views of man's nature, and of his relationship to God, the absence of faith in anything which cannot be weighed by the pound, or measured by the pint, peck or yard, all betray a poor creature which has forgotten its Creator and Portion, and is striving to frame some substitute for Him. Neither God, the Father of all, nor man, His erring child, being understood or believed in, true fellowship is a goal still unreachd.

Again, the Church theories which make the ministry and the sacraments the channel by which grace comes into the soul, and men are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, violate the true principles of fellowship by the absurdity of making the fellowship the cause, or at least the antecedent of that nature, which is the indispensable pre-requisite of fellowship; an absurdity as great as it would be to make a man's connection with civil society the cause or antecedent of his social nature and appetites.

But our readers, doubtless, think it is full time we were saying something about the book we profess to be reviewing. The truth is, it has not been our purpose to review it, but to persuade all who have not read it, to read it. The principles expounded and defended by Mr. Robinson are stated by him with great succinctness, and will not admit of looser discussion and fuller illustration on our part, without making a book bigger than the one we are noticing. We shall attempt to give only a general view of the argument, with occasional examples of the manner in which our author handles some of its topics.

The whole subject is divided by Mr. Robinson into four parts, viz :

I. The relation of the idea of the Church to the plan of redemption ideally in the eternal purpose of God.

II. The relation of the idea of the Church to the mode and structure and the subject-matter of the revelation of the Divine purpose in the Scriptures.

III. The relation to the idea of the Church, thus obtained, of the principles of spiritual government as set forth in the Scriptures.

IV. The relation to the idea of the Church of the ordinances of worship, and the agencies appointed to the Church, according to the Scriptures.

In the first part it is shown, as a matter of fact, that there has always been a correspondence between peculiar views in theology and certain theories of the Church; and that, as a matter of doctrine, such a correspondence is suggested by the general tenor of Scripture. Our author's idea will be readily apprehended by the following extracts :

“ Since the Reformation, four chief theories, and those inclusive of all other theories of revealed theology, have had currency in Christendom—the Papal, the Zuinglian, the Lutheran and the Calvinistic. Of these, the first named is the original error against which the last three may be regarded as successive forms of just protest. All three of these protests are true in their general idea intrinsically, and successful in developing the chief truths of the gospel, but with widely different degrees of success in preserving pure and incorrupt the doctrines of grace. Recurring again to the analogy just employed, these four theories may not unaptly be compared, as to their relative value, with the four different theories of the visible universe which have in different ages had currency in the world. The Papal theory of theology, like the ancient mythological theory of the universe, scarce pretended to have any foundation other than in mere human fancies and its general prevalence among men. And just as the Ptolemaic, the Copernican, and the still more modern theory of the *Mécanique Céleste*, are successive protests against the mere prejudices and dreams of men, yea, just as by each of them the fundamental facts of the *Cosmos* had, in some sort, their explanation, but with different degrees of consistency, clearness and beauty, so with the three Protestant theories of theology. The Zuinglian, taking as the central principle of its structure the truth that the word of God alone can be any authoritative rule to the conscience, developed from that point a true, in opposition to a counterfeit

gospel; yet a gospel too easily perverted by reason of its tendency to exalt the rational man of earth into a centre of the spiritual system, or, at least, from its narrowness of view, to obscure the higher truths of the scheme of redemption. The Lutheran theory, taking as its central principle the justification of the sinner by grace alone through faith, after the fashion of Copernicus, exhibited Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, as the real centre, to whom the rational man of earth, with all that concerns him, is attracted, and around whom he revolves. Calvin, while perceiving that the central truths of both Zuingli and Luther were indeed great truths, yet with the still wider vision of Laplace and the moderns, beheld not only the rational man revolving around the mediatorial Sun of Righteousness as his true centre, but also that man and his central Sun revolving again around a still profounder centre, even the Eternal Purpose of God, fixed in the counsels of eternity before the world began. Such, generally, is the relative position to the others of that remarkable theory of theology, which, however men have cavilled at, they must be constrained to admit both its singular accordance with the very language, and its logical development and elucidation of all the great facts of revelation." (P. 35 et seq.)

Having thus ingeniously and strikingly illustrated the doctrine of the Divine purpose in the Calvinistic theology as not merely one truth in a system of truth, but as a mode of conceiving and setting forth all the doctrines which make up revealed theology, our author proceeds to show how the theory of the Church, corresponding with the Calvinistic theology, is evolved; how the theory of the Church flows from the doctrine of the Divine purpose. We give his own words:

"The fundamental idea of the Church as a separate and distinct portion of the human race, is found in the peculiar *mode* of that purpose itself. It is set forth as a distinguishing feature of the purpose of redemption, that it is to save not merely myriads of men as *individual men*, but myriads of sinners, as composing a mediatorial body, of which the Mediator shall be the head; a mediatorial kingdom whose government shall be upon His shoulder for ever; a Church, the Lamb's Bride, of which He shall be the Husband; a Bride whose beautiful portrait was graven upon the palms of His hands, and whose walls were continually before Him, when in the counsels of eternity He undertook her redemption." (P. 38).

"The mission of Messiah, undertaken in the covenant of eternity, was not merely that of a teaching Prophet and an atoning Priest, but of a ruling King as well. His work was not to enunciate simply a doctrine concerning God, and man's relations to God, as some Socrates, for the founding of a school; nor even merely to atone for sinners as a

ministering Priest at the altar ; it was, as the result of all, and the reward of all, to found a *community*, to organize a *government*, and administer therein as a perpetual *King*." (P. 39).

"The elementary conception of the Church, therefore, and that conception of it which must be pre-supposed, and enter into every definition of the Church, is of that elect body of men which was contemplated in the covenant of redemption, as constituting the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, and for the sake of which body He undertook the work of salvation. Other elements, as we shall see, must necessarily enter into the definition as this *ideal* of the purpose of God becomes *actual* in the external manifestation of the purpose in time ; but this element must obviously be found involved in any and every form which the notion of the Church, as actual and external, can take. In this view of the case is found the reason for the fact, that a Calvinistic theology cannot long retain its integrity and purity save in connection with a Calvinistic ecclesiology, and for the more general fact already referred to, of the intimate connection between a wrong theology and wrong views of the Church." (P. 40.)

From this view of the relation of the idea of the Church to the eternal purpose of redemption, in the first part, Mr. Robinson proceeds in the second part to consider the relation of the idea of the Church to the manifestation of that purpose, as revealed in the Scriptures. And here he shows the importance of the doctrine of the covenants to any true Ecclesiology, especially the pre-eminent importance of the Ecclesiological covenant with Abraham, and insists upon the representative principle as the grand characteristic of these covenants ; the principle that the children of the covenanting people have a birth-right to the privileges of it. The leading ideas of this part of the discourse are, of course, the unity of the Church under all dispensations of religion, and the unity which pervades the structure of Scripture. These points are illustrated with great felicity, and we have been impressed with the immense advantage which our honored brother derives, as a teacher, from the possession of a vigorous imagination. We copy a paragraph or two :

"As a general statement, it may be said that so far as the Scriptures are historic, they are the history of the Church, even of that particular portion of mankind which has been selected out of the race at large, and organized as a body under the Mediator. In so far as the Scriptures are prophetic, it is to foretell the destiny of this community under the administration of its Founder and King. The key-note to which

the harp of prophecy attunes every other strain is, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.' In so far as they are a theology, it is the revelation of a God-man Mediator, administering by His Providence all things with reference to a Church which He hath purchased with His own blood. In so far as the Scripture is a gospel, strictly so called, it is the annunciation of a kingdom of heaven at hand. For this is the grand conception with which the series of Old Testament gospel revelations had its final culmination. With this the New Testament gospel opens, crying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' This was the grand subject of the preaching of Jesus himself during His personal ministry. This was the charge on which He was condemned, and the truth for which, in so far as His death was a martyrdom, He died. And, finally, the truth which, as His distinguishing heresy, His enemies would sarcastically hurl contempt upon, by placarding it upon His cross, was, 'This is the King of the Jews.' And so, too, the gospel of His triumph, after His resurrection and ascension, is, 'Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour;' and the last gospel vision of Him is as the Lamb in the midst of the throne. Now, the great correlative truth to Messiah as a King is that of His people as a kingdom—an organic body; and from these two facts arises that wonderful unity of idea which pervades a Book whose several parts belong to different ages, different civilizations, and different eras of an ever progressive revelation extending through thousands of years. It is the history of the administration of one King—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever—over one community, having essentially one Lord, one faith, one baptism throughout this whole series of ages."

"However the Bible, as a book of theology in general, may lack *system* in the logical sense of the schools, a diligent study of its subject matter will evince that it is none the less remarkable for its rigid *method* throughout. Men construct intellectually by system, as they build their houses and other structures of art. They lay truth by measurement upon truth, and chapter upon chapter, and all incomplete till the last beam is laid and the whole structure jointed together into one. God constructs His revelations as He constructs the oak of the forest or the cedar of Lebanon—by a continual development from a germ which is perfect from the first, and a perfect tree in every stage of its growth. As the oak is in the acorn, so the whole gospel of God is in the first germinal promise imbedded in the very curse of Eden. It springs forth and develops ever in larger and clearer proportions, through each successive revelation, from the paradise of Adam to the paradise revealed anew in the visions of the Apocalypse. So, too, with the development of the Church of God as an element of the first gospel promise; each successive covenant enunciates more and more clearly and largely the same one idea through the entire Old Testament to the fully revealed kingship of Messiah; and so far from being something distinct from the Old Testament, the New Testament glories ever in

being the grand fulfilment of all things spoken in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Christ. The very first voice from heaven which breaks the long silence of four hundred years of suspended revelation, is the annunciation of Gabriel to his mother—even before the angels heralded His birth—of the coming of the Son of the Highest, as the fulfilment of the covenant with David; and His mother, under inspiration of the Spirit, sang of His coming to fulfil the covenant with Abraham and his seed. And, in like manner, at the opening of our present dispensation of the last times under the ministration of the Spirit, the Apostles, so far from claiming for themselves or their crucified Master the honor of now originating a new scheme of salvation and a new Church, rather (with elaborate care on all occasions), aimed to prove that both the doctrine and the Church now manifested to the world, had their origin first in the determinate counsel of God; had been first manifested in a visible Church and a covenant in ages of old, and developed more and more clearly by successive covenants and prophetic revelations afterwards; and that they acted as the agents of Jesus, their Master, who, in fulfilment of the provisions of all ancient covenants, was now reforming the Church of God with a view to carry it forward to an infinitely higher glory.

“Such is uniformly the method of the apostolic argument—they ever look both backward and forward from the stand-point of the dispensation given through them. As after the method of those immense triangulations of the modern trigonometrical surveys which, from some known base line measured upon the plain, take observations forward and backward of the prominent mountain tops at immense distances, from which, again, other observations are extended, till the measuring line of their science is laid, encompassing half the globe, and determining, with marvellous accuracy, even to a single inch, the distance—so these inspired Apostles, assuming as the ground-work of their argument that which they now see and hear under the outpouring of the Spirit, from this direct their vision back to the prominent facts in the past dispensations of God, and onward to the prominent heights of the prophetic views of the dispensations yet to come, and from these in turn they determine new points of the argument. With a logic at once sublime in its reach, and infinite in its comprehension, they determine the measure, the proportions and the relations, of that transcendent problem of man's salvation, which has its primary elements in the depths of eternity past, and its conclusion in the depths of eternity to come.”
Pages 57 *et seqq.*)

We should like to quote, also, if our limits would allow it, Mr. Robinson's glowing and eloquent words touching the uniformity of form, even, in which the doctrine of salvation is presented from the first to the last revelation. Our readers who have never heard him in the pulpit, might then under-

stand, if they do not already understand, the control he is able to exercise over the minds and hearts of his hearers. But we must proceed with our outline.

In the third part, Mr. Robinson discusses the relation of the principles of Church-government set forth in the Scripture to the idea of the Church. By principles of Church-government we mean the principles concerning the origin, nature and distribution of ecclesiastical power. These principles are clearly stated, in opposition to the heresies of Prelacy and Independency; and the line between the sphere of civil and the sphere of ecclesiastical government is drawn with more than usual fulness and distinctness, and the relation of all to the idea of the Church demonstrated.

In the fourth and last part, our author discusses the relation to the idea of the Church of the ordinances of worship appointed in the Scriptures—the word and sacraments, prayer and singing, contributions, etc. It is, in some respects, the ablest and most original portion of the book, and is full of the seeds of thought. The principles of worship, its hidden harmonies with the nature of God and the soul of man, its correspondence with the truths of salvation and with the design and constitution of the Church visible, are not much studied amongst us; and we heartily wish our young brethren in the ministry would avail themselves of the suggestions of Mr. Robinson's discourse. The more hidden harmonies of things we discover, the more is our faith confirmed in the wisdom and goodness of Him who made everything beautiful in its place, and the less readily will we listen to any temptation to accommodate the ordinances of God to the tastes and fashions of ignorant and foolish men. The worship of God is not an arbitrary thing. Its forms are not like algebraic symbols which represent quantities by mere convention, but rational symbols adapted in their own nature to instruct, edify and exalt the worshipper. No stronger evidence of the truth of this proposition can be desired than the fact that corruptions in worship have generally been followed, and that speedily, by apostasies from the faith of God's elect.

But we must stop. We think no man who has an intelligent

love for the Presbyterian Church, can read the book we have been noticing without a feeling of sorrow that the author was compelled, by circumstances beyond his control, to resign his Chair in the Seminary at Danville, when he had not even completed his course of lectures. These first fruits of his studies are enough to show what he is capable of doing; and we cannot help expressing the earnest hope that the harvest time will yet come; that he will pursue these studies still, and, amidst the pressure of his engagements as a pastor, may yet be able to give to the Church a larger and more complete exposition of this great subject, in a book which she will not willingly let die.



ARTICLE VIII.

CRITICAL NOTICES.

Notice of the Rev. John B. Adger's article on the Slave Trade.

Published for the author. Charleston: Steam-Power Press of Walker, Evans & Co. 1858; 28 pp. 8vo.

This pamphlet is in reply to the views put forth by us in the April No. of this work. It has been generally ascribed to Ed. B. Bryan, Esq., Chairman of the Majority of the House Committee, and author of their report, which we reviewed in connection with that of the Minority.

Six months more of reading and reflection (with the arrival in our harbor of the *Echo* or *Putnam*, and her cargo of slaves), have wrought no change in the views we expressed in April. The newspapers generally agree that it will be a cruelty to these Africans to send them back to Africa, and we agree with them. For these poor creatures, no doubt slavery in South Carolina would be better than either slavery or their liberty in Africa. And so of all barbarians the world over. To subjugate and civilize them, might be for all who should survive the process,