

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

AND

SERMONS,

OF SOME OF THE

FIRST MINISTERS OF THE ASSOCIATE CHURCH IN AMERICA.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION,

CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE ASSOCIATE CHURCH FOR THE FIRST HALF CENTURY OF HER EXISTENCE IN THIS COUNTRY.

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S E R M O N ,

BY THE REV. JOHN ANDERSON, D. D.*

“Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.” (Prov. xix. 27.)

IN this exhortation, which speaketh to us with peculiar earnestness, as to children, we observe, 1. An evil of which men are in danger, which is, that of erring from the words of knowledge. By the words of knowledge, we are to understand the truths which God hath revealed in his word; which

* This Sermon was published shortly after it was preached, to which was prefixed the following Preface by the Author:—

“The substance of the following discourse was delivered on the Monday after a communion Sabbath. Some, it seems, have represented it as of a schismatical tendency; and others, as having little or no relation to practical religion, and therefore improper for the occasion on which it was delivered. The writer hopes, that the candid and deliberate perusal of it, will with many, be sufficient to remove these objections.

“What is aimed at in this discourse is, to strike at a principal root of the numerous divisions now in the visible church. It teaches that we ought not to be in a state of separation from any church-communion, but upon such grounds as are scriptural; and upon such considerations, as involving the declarative glory of God, are of inconceivable and infinite importance. Were this doctrine embraced, there would be no separate church-communions upon trivial pretences; or for the sake of religious tenets or usages in the worship of God which have no foundation in his word; no separate church-communions on account of local customs, uncertain opinions, or uninstituted ceremonies; no separate church-communions founded on the narrow and interested views of a faction.

“What is here attempted is a seasonable application of the cautions, with which the scriptures abound, against false teachers. To direct church-members to the right use and application of such cautions will be the endeavor of the faithful ministers of Christ; an endeavor which is rendered peculiarly necessary by the corruptions which prevail in the present state of the visible church.

“Those who reckon that practical religion is not concerned in the subject of this discourse, should consider that true believers have it for their distinguishing character, that they abhor false doctrine, and avoid communion with the teachers of it. (John x. 5. Rev. xiv. 4.)

“That he who chooses the weak and despised things of the world to confound the most boasted things of it, may accompany this attempt with his blessing, is, through grace, the desire of the WRITER.

“YORK BOROUGH, May, 7th, 1794.”

the apostle calls *wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*. To err from them is to deny them, or to be obstinately attached to any contrary opinions or practices. 2. The cause of that evil, which goes under the specious name of instruction, but which is to be understood of the schemes or methods that are taken to draw away persons from the faith, love and profession of the words of knowledge. 3. The duty to which we are exhorted with respect to this pretended instruction, which is, that we should cease to hear it; that we should be on our guard not only against erroneous doctrines, but against all the schemes or methods that are taken to propagate them.

It is now proposed, through divine aid,

I. *To consider the evil of erring from the words of knowledge:*

II. *To enquire what is to be understood by that instruction which causeth to err; and*

III. *To explain and enforce the duty of ceasing to hear all such instruction.*

I. *The evil of erring from the words of knowledge appears from such considerations as the following:*

1. Erring from the words of knowledge is direct rebellion against the authority of God, whose law binds us to believe whatever he reveals. The language of obstinate error is, I prefer my own wisdom and my own will in such a particular to the wisdom and will of God himself. Besides, it is a direct breach of an express command frequently repeated, *Do not err—Be not deceived.*

2. Supposing the erroneous not to be so far given up to a desperately wicked and reprobate mind, as openly to deny the authority and majesty of God shining in the holy Scriptures; supposing them to be such as allow the Scriptures to be the word of God, the only rule of faith and practice; yet their sin is exceedingly aggravated in regard that, while they represent their error as contained in the Scriptures, they make the God of truth a liar; nay, they make him the father of a lie. Since there is so much impiety and blasphemy in the perversion of Scripture for the support of falsehood, with what fear and trembling should we guard against that perversion; against *walking in craftiness, or handling the word of God deceitfully?*

3. Error proceeds from the corrupt bias which the human heart received at the fall. The understanding was then involved in darkness, and the will possessed with the love of it. It has ever since been the case with respect to spiritual and

eternal things, that men have loved darkness rather than light. *God made man upright, but they sought out many inventions*; among which none were fraught with more malignity than opinions pertinaciously maintained in opposition to the simplicity of revealed truth.

4. Erring from the words of knowledge is that which chiefly begins and keeps up divisions in the church of God. That it must be so, is evident, if we only consider what is the true unity of the church, namely, *the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God*; a joint or unanimous adherence to the words of knowledge. It is also evident from the history of the church, especially since the New Testament dispensation took place, which is almost wholly taken up with the account of the divisions occasioned by erroneous opinions with respect to the doctrine, the worship or the government of the church. When we lament the divisions of the visible church, we should not forget to lament the numerous errors and corruptions that support those divisions.

5. Error is ruining to the souls of men. Heresies are among *the works of the flesh*; of which the apostle says, "They who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Hence the apostle Peter represents the unlearned and unstable as wresting the scriptures unto their own destruction. Who can tell how much danger there is in making God a liar? But those errors which are manifestly contrary to what has been already known and acknowledged by the church of God, are more dangerous than such as cannot be said to be so; as being errors which imply a peculiar contempt of the charge which our Lord, repeatedly gives to his people, *That which you have hold fast*. To signify the danger of error to men's souls, the teachers or propagators of it are called in scripture, subverters of souls, and ravenous wolves, not sparing the flock.

Such being the evil and danger of error, how much ought professors to watch against it! Many of them have such confidence in their own wisdom and understanding, that they are under no apprehension of being seduced by the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. This glorying is not good. Those whom the Lord graciously keeps from error are made sensible that they cannot keep themselves from it; they dare not lean on their own understanding. They are aware of the unspeakable hazard of resting in mere head-notions of divine truths, that is, in such knowledge as may be attained by our natural understanding.

They are sure that it is another sort of knowledge which is given to some in virtue of such promises as these: "Thus saith the Lord the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God, who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go: I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord: And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free: When he who is the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." Believers have such a spiritual discernment of divine truths in their native beauty and excellence, as makes them cleave thereto with purpose of heart: And according to the measure of this spiritual and saving knowledge of divine truths, the inward frame of their minds and their outward practice are moulded into conformity to the truths thus spiritually and savingly known.

II. We are next to enquire, *what is the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge?*

By this instruction we are to understand, as was hinted before, the various methods that are taken to ensnare church-members, or to seduce them from the faith, love and profession of the truth. These methods are so many and various, that volumes might be filled with an account of them. They are such as the following: Magnifying one truth or duty, and then setting it in opposition to another, from which there is a design of seducing us: representing an error as inseparable from something which is undoubtedly truth or duty: building upon detached expressions of scripture, without regard to the scope or connection of the place in which they stand, or to the current doctrine of the scripture on the same subject: sometimes immoderately extolling, sometimes invidiously disparaging societies or particular persons, in order to gain credit to some favorite error, or to divert attention from some hated truth: first proposing an error as a harmless inoffensive opinion, which it would be uncharitable to suppose a man to be a whit the worse for entertaining; and then representing all endeavors to discover the real nature and tendency of such an opinion as nothing but controversy, which christians are advised not to meddle with; repeating, at the same time, the most groundless misrepresentations of the contrary truth, as if they were arguments.

He must be ignorant indeed of the opposition which has been made to the cause of God and truth in former and in present times, who can be at any loss for examples of such methods as these now mentioned; which have been common

ly employed to cause church-members to err from the words of knowledge.

In general, the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge, is either that of individuals, or that of particular societies or church-communions. The instruction causing to err, of individuals, lies either in the sophistry and color of reasoning, by which they attempt to justify their error, or in the good words and fair speeches, whereby they deceive the hearts of the simple. The instruction that causeth to err includes all the sleight of individuals and *cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*

With regard to a particular church communion, it is chargeable with the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge, so far as some error in doctrine, or some corruption in worship, or in government, serves to distinguish it from other communions, the support of that error being the scope of its peculiar constitution, and, in a great measure, of its public administrations. Thus, when Jeroboam was raised to the throne of the ten tribes, he got a new church-communion constituted for the maintenance of some errors, which seemed to be for the interest of his government; such as, that it was not necessary for the people to go up three times a year to Jerusalem: that persons of the other tribes might officiate as priests, as well as those of the tribe of Levi: that the passover might be kept on the day which Jeroboam devised of his own heart, as well as on the day appointed in the law of Moses. These tenets were employed in the whole of the public worship that was performed at *Dan* and *Bethel*, and in all the public administrations of the priests of that corrupt communion, whether they formally insisted on them in their discourses or not. They never appeared in the character of public teachers, or of priests which Jeroboam had made; but they might be justly considered as teaching and propagating the tenets now mentioned. Hence they were continually a snare in "Mizpeh, and a net spread upon mount Tabor."

In like manner, every particular church-communion, considered as distinct from, and opposite to other church-communions, exists for the sake of some peculiar errors or truths whereby they are distinguished from others.

Thus, the Popish church exists for the purpose of maintaining the universal headship of the Pope over the visible church, the equality, or rather superiority of the church's authority to that of the scriptures, justification by works, the worshipping of saints and angels, and of images; purgatory,

transubstantiation, and other abominations. The Episcopal church exists for the support of a certain order of pastors to whom they appropriate the name of bishops, and who are rulers of other pastors; and also for the maintaining of some superstitious modes of worship, as the use of a liturgy or prescribed forms of prayer in public worship, the keeping of certain holy-days, the posture of kneeling at the Lord's table. The Methodist church exists for the singular purpose of maintaining the inutility of all particular forms of worship or church order; and the utility, notwithstanding that, of their own, which is neither taken from the scriptures, nor agreeable to the practice of any of the Reformed Churches;—for the purpose of maintaining that the officers of the church ought to be travelling preachers, who have no particular charge, class-leaders, stewards, and a number of others lately instituted;—lastly, for the purpose of teaching that there is hardly any religion in holding any set of opinions; but a great deal in holding all the five articles (as they have been commonly called) of the Arminians. Independent churches exist for the purpose of maintaining, that the exercise of church government and discipline belongs to the whole body of church members, and not in any peculiar sense, to the pastors; and that the whole power of governing each particular congregation (that is, each society consisting of such a number as can conveniently join together in the same time and place, in the same acts of public worship) is confined within itself. The Baptist church exists for the purpose of maintaining that adult persons are the only subjects capable of baptism, and that there is no baptism by the application of water in sprinkling, or in any other way than immersion or dipping.

It may be asked, “for what purpose does the communion of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania exist in this country, and what are their distinguishing principles?” We answer, that it exists for the purpose of holding a public and judicial testimony for the doctrine and order of the church of Christ: In which they testify and declare from the word of God, such articles as follow—That the covenant of works was made with Adam as the representative of all his posterity descending from him by ordinary generation—That man is now in a fallen and ruined state, and can not help himself by his doing or suffering therefrom—That the Lord Jesus Christ, as the surety of the elect, has, by his obedience to the law as a covenant, and satisfaction to the justice of God, purchased eternal redemption for all his people, and they only;—as election, redemption, and his intercession, are of equal ex-

tent—That the gospel, strictly taken, only contains precious promises, and all precepts and threatenings belong to the law. That there is a free and unconditional grant or offer of Christ* made in the word to all sinners of mankind, wherever the gospel comes, without any regard to previous qualifications—That the surety righteousness of Christ is the true and proper condition of the covenant of grace, and not faith, repentance or sincerity—That saving faith is a persuasion wrought in the heart of a poor sinner by the Holy Spirit, and grounded on the gospel grant alone of Christ being indeed a Saviour, a Prophet, Priest and King, to him in particular†—That love

* “This is the same with what is called ‘deed of gift.’ The deed of gift is the free and indiscriminate exhibition of the Saviour to mankind sinners, as such, or that which affords them an unexceptionable warrant to receive him by an appropriating faith. The phrase is very consonant to the word of God, as is evident from the following texts: ‘Is it a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel? I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth: My Father gives you the true bread from heaven: This is the record of God, that he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.’ The indiscriminate right which sinners have to Christ, not only signifies their warrant to receive him, but the general interest they have in him, as he is God in their nature, and *the official Saviour of the world*, in opposition to fallen angels, with respect to whom it cannot be said in any sense that he is their Saviour.”—*Ass. Presbytery’s answer to the 7th Question of the Committee of the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, 1770.*

† The different sentiments of the Synod of Philadelphia and New-York, now the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in America, and the Associate Presbytery, may be seen in the New Castle Presbytery’s Warning, published 1755; and Mr. Arnot’s reply, in the second part of the *Detection Detected*; and Mr. Gellatly’s observations: also in the answer of the Committee of the Synod, 1770, to the Associate Presbytery’s second question. It is this: “Faith does not consist in an assent to the doctrines of the gospel exhibiting Christ in the character of a Saviour, as true, but formally, in the hearty approbation and consent of the will, whereby the sinner rolls over his guilty soul upon Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour, and rests upon his righteousness alone for his everlasting salvation.” The Associate Presbytery, in the answer to the Committee’s first question: “We are so far from believing that an assurance or persuasion of our having actually obtained a personal and saving interest in Christ, or of our being already in a state of grace, is essential to saving faith, that we constantly declare to the contrary. But we assert, with all orthodox Protestants, that faith includes an *appropriation* which amounts to a persuasion that he now conveys to us a distinguishing interest in himself, and that we shall be saved through grace, as it reigns through his everlasting righteousness. This persuasion we think is essential to faith considered as justifying, and in the relation it has to our own salvation as its final object: Though we do not affirm that it constantly triumphs in the minds of believers, who, through the prevalence of indwelling sin, and the intrusion of temptations, may want it for a considerable time. The commanding efficacy faith has upon the heart, when it is duly exercised, the joy and peace which spring from it, the expressive designations which are given to it in Scripture, the constitution of the gospel testimony, which is its immediate object, and the gospel call, which lays an obligation on sinners, not only to believe something concerning Christ, but to believe on him for something, even their own salvation, afford demonstrative evidence of the justness of this opinion. We presume this account of faith will be found upon strict trial to be more agreeable to the word of God and the excellent definitions of it in our Catechisms, and the ex-

to God, a principle of gratitude for redemption through Christ, and a regard to the glory of God, are the motives of obedience in the hearts of true believers, and not the hopes of heaven and the fears of hell—That the Lord will never leave nor forsake his Saints, so that they shall totally or finally fall away from a state of grace—That all saints are imperfect in the present state—That the punishment of the wicked will be for ever and ever—That a Confession of Faith is necessary for the well-being of the church, and every article of it should be a term of communion*—That public covenanting, or the public avowal of the truths and ways of God, with the solemnity of an oath, is both warranted by the word, in New Testament times, and seasonable at this time—That the Psalms of David are proper to be sung in worshipping assemblies, and in families, and not psalms or songs of human devising—That Presbyterial church government is the only form of government of divine institution—That the whole church ought to have (what the nature of presbyterial government requires) the same terms of church communion in all its particular congregations—That the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper ought to be both alike publicly administered and accompanied with the preaching of the word—That the revolutions which take place in the kingdoms of this world, or church members living under different civil governments, do not affect the unity of the church of Christ, and therefore there is no such thing as foreign jurisdiction in the church of Christ, of whom he says, "my dove, my undefiled, is but one"—That it is a dangerous principle to give up with these truths that are disputed among men esteemed pious and learned, and that an appearance of saintship alone,

perience of true believers, to that given by the committee, who are pleased to tell us, that 'it formally consists in the hearty approbation and consent of the will;' which, though necessarily connected with faith, can not with propriety be called a believing in the name of the Son of God."

* "As a Confession of Faith exhibits what a church believe not only to be true, but also *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness*, and necessary to *make the man of God perfect, and to furnish him unto all good works*, it is very rational to think an approbation of all the principles therein held forth, should be insisted upon as a term of communion. The design of a Confession is defeated by the admission of persons to communion, upon terms utterly inconsistent with an earnest contending for the whole of the faith therein delivered. If we should dispense with one article in our Confession to show our charity to pious scruplers, we should for the same reason dispense with every article that in our variable opinion is not essential to it as a system, and consequently we may carry a dispensing power so high that our Confession will exhibit what few of us thoroughly believe, and serve only to demonstrate to mankind our inconsistency and insincerity in the matters of God." *Ass. Presbytery's answer to the 9th Question of the Committee of the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, 1770.*

without a sound profession of the faith, and a gospel conversation, is all that is necessary for church-communion.

Thus, it is manifest, that each particular church communion exists for the sake of the tenets or principles for which it is distinguished from other church communions: for it is plain that there is no occasion for its existence in order to the maintaining of what it holds in common with other church-communions. And the maintaining of such distinguishing tenets being the end of any particular church communion, the propagation of them must always be one end of its public administrations.* If these tenets be really errors, or instances of departure from the true faith, then the public administrations of such a church-communion are so far for the maintenance of error, and thus belong to the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge. The precious truths that may be taught in such public administrations will no more hinder the propagation of some particular error from being a principal end of them, than the precious truths advanced in the discourses of Job's three friends hindered the support of their uncharitable judgment concerning him, from being the scope of those discourses.

* Let none from hence conclude that the ministers and people belonging to the Associate Presbytery, judge that the administrations of those that are not of their communion, are invalid. The validity of ordinances is derived from their agreeableness to the word. The Lord will never bless any error or corruption in his church to promote her edification; but where there are many things wrong in churches the Lord has his servants and people, as was the case in the seven churches of Asia: These evils being reproved by the Lord, shows that the Lord is a strict observer of the state of matters in every church. After the reproofs and warnings given to the churches of Thyatira and Pergamos, if they did not reform, it was doubtless the duty of the people of the Lord, desirous to cleave to the Lord's cause, to separate from their communion. The Apostle in like manner reproves the corruptions and laxness that had tarnished the glory of the Corinthian church, but still he supposes persons may build on *the foundation, wood, hay and stubble*; and may be at great pains and expense to promote this building with *wood, hay, and stubble*; for which they shall suffer the loss of their pains in so doing: "but he himself will be saved, yet so as by fire." (1 Cor. iii. 12—16. It is a gross aspersion cast on us, that we think none will get to heaven but ourselves. Whoever will get to heaven it will be by Jesus Christ alone. Some say that the various religious professions are like the different ways to a city; but the fact is, that the way to heaven is one, and the Lord's people among the different denominations all travel one way, have one guide, and have communion with Christ only in the way of his truths. It would be blasphemy to suppose the Lord would bless any thing contrary to his blessed word, as a mean of edification to his church. But how far the Lord may bless the truths of his own word, or the ordinances of his appointment, though dispensed with many corruptions, would be presumption in any to determine. Eminent lights have appeared and shone forth among Independents and Episcopalians, but yet their defences of gospel truths, and their distinguished piety, do not make these different forms of religion any more agreeable to the word, but only show that *we know in part, and prophesy in part*; and that we ought to *call no man master, nor follow any man*, however learned or pious, farther than he *follows Christ*.

III. *We come now to offer some explanation of the duty of ceasing to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.*

This duty implies knowledge and care to distinguish good and wholesome instruction from that which is of dangerous tendency. So Christ says concerning his sheep: "My sheep know my voice; a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers."

As soon as we have sufficient ground to believe that it is the scope of any pretended instruction to cause us to err from the words of knowledge, we are to depart from it. It is not the way of Christ's sheep to countenance such instruction; for they know not the voice of strangers, and will flee from them. With respect to our private deportment, we are to beware of contracting private intimacies, and of frequenting unnecessarily the company of those from whom we expect to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge; for "evil communications corrupt good manners: and the companion of fools shall be destroyed."

With respect to our public deportment, we are to withdraw from those church-communions whose constitutions are founded on error and defection from the truth, and whose public administrations are thereto subservient.

What we chiefly intend on this head, is a particular consideration of the following question or case of conscience, namely, Whether the members of a church, which is in a state of separation from another church, may, without sin, occasionally attend on the administration of public ordinances in that other church?

In this question three things are supposed:

1. That the persons of whom we speak, are upon good grounds, persuaded that the church-communion from which they are in a state of separation, is so far chargeable, in her profession and obstinately continued practice, with the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge, as to render a state of separation from her warrantable, and, according to the circumstances of the case, necessary.

2. That they are in full communion with a church in the state of separation now supposed.

3. That the two churches are in a stated opposition to one another as to some articles of truth or duty, held by the one, and rejected by the other.

These things being supposed, we say, it is unwarrantable for church members to attend upon, or countenance the administration of public ordinances, in any church-communion

from which they are, on solid and scriptural grounds, in a state of separation. This we maintain for such reasons as the following :

1. The attendance of church-members, on public ordinances, in a church-union from which they are in a state of separation, is directly contrary to the divine command in the text, and in other places of scripture. For, in the supposed case, the public administrations of such a church communion always carry in them instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge ; it has been shown that they always proceed upon or imply such instruction. The practice in question is contrary to all those passages of scripture which enjoin us to beware not only of false doctrine, but of the teachers of it : And surely nothing can be more reasonable than to consider every public teacher as a teacher of all that error or corruption of which he is not ashamed to make a public profession ; as he certainly does of whatever error or corruption is professed and justified by the church communion to which he belongs, especially when it is professed and justified in opposition to the truth maintained by another communion. We are enjoined to *mark such as cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and to avoid them*. Nothing is plainer than that they who teach such doctrine, and justify such corruptions, as render a state of separation necessary, are causing divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and are therefore to be avoided ; that is, their public administrations are not to be countenanced by us, lest we be chargeable with countenancing their corrupt schemes, whereby they cause divisions and offences.

2. The attendance of church-members, on the dispensation of public ordinances, in a church-union from which they are in a state of separation, is inconsistent with the weight and importance of a warrantable separation. When a particular church hates to be reformed ; when its obstinacy, in rejecting some of the truths and institutions of our Lord Jesus, is come to such a height, that, in its communion, a suitable exercise of the keys with which Christ hath intrusted his ministers for the joint or judicial maintaining of those truths and institutions, is altogether impracticable ; then separation at last becomes necessary. While any particular church, from which we are in a state of separation, continues obstinate in her defections, our state of separation from it ought to continue. In this case, the Lord says to us, as he said to Jeremiah, " Let them return unto thee, but return not thou

unto them." Hence it is manifest, that when a state of separation is warrantable, the church-communion from which we are separated, and that with which we join, can not be so much alike, that we can be either in the one or in the other indifferently with a safe conscience. On the contrary, the evil of rejecting the truths or institutions of our Lord Jesus, on account of which a just separation is stated, is so great, that we can not countenance those public administrations, which, according to our separation, have the maintaining of that evil for one part of their scope and design, without being chargeable with gross inconsistency and unfaithfulness to our own light. If a separation were warrantable, which is only on account of the greater convenience of attending on ordinances in the church that is in a state of separation, we might, then, notwithstanding such a separation, upon the absence of the ordinary pastor, attend on the ministry of one of another communion, though his gifts were not so agreeable, or his situation so convenient to us. But a separation of that sort would sacrifice the peace and unity of the church to private convenience and humor; would harden persons whose evil character, in Jude, 19. is, that they "separate themselves," and must be abhorred by every man of principle and conscience. But a warrantable separation is a quite different affair; the grounds of it are so weighty, as to render an occasional as well as a stated attendance on the public ordinances of the church-communion from which we are in a state of separation, quite unwarrantable.

3. An occasional attendance on public administrations in a church-communion from which we are in a state of separation, tends to subvert the order and discipline of the church of Christ. It can not be denied, that the errors and offences of those church-communions from which we are justly in a state of separation, are in their own nature, being open violations of God's law obstinately persisted in, sufficient grounds of church-censure: Nay, if the consciences of church-members who are in a state of separation on account of these errors and offences, be not exceedingly stupified, they must acknowledge that the ministers and people from whom a separation is thus justly stated, are, in effect, under the censure of the church by a scriptural testimony against them, and by a necessary separation from them. But how does the holy scripture direct us to behave towards those that are under church-censure? It certainly directs us to behave to them in such a manner as may be expressive of the sense we have of the evil of their ways; in such a manner as may

make them ashamed ; in such a manner as is directly contrary to the countenance given to corrupt church-communions by our attending on their public administrations. "Now we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." (2 Thess. iii. 6, 14.) On the other hand, when we give public countenance to those who are the objects of church-censure, and behave towards them as if they were in full communion, we are attempting to defeat the design of the church's censure. The aim of church-censure is to bring church-members to a humbling sense and hearty renunciation of sin : but this conduct hardens them in it. Church-censure tends to inspire church-members with a sense of the heinousness of the evil for which it is inflicted ; but this conduct leads them to consider it as a light and trivial matter. This conduct, therefore, manifestly tends to destroy all the use of church-censure : for if church-members allow themselves to trample upon it in one case, (in which, as in this, they can not with any consistency dispute the justice of it,) they must be ignorant indeed of human nature as well as of God's word, who can suppose that any due regard to it in other cases will be long maintained.

If it be excepted, that it seems improper for a particular church to censure such as are not in her communion : We answer, there are two ways in which a church may censure even those that are out of her communion. The first is, by a judicial and authoritative condemnation of their errors and corruptions. Thus Zion is to "condemn in judgment every tongue that riseth up against her." The second way is by the contrariety of her pure profession and holy practice to the profession and practice of others.

4. Occasional attendance on the public administrations in a church-communion, from which we are warrantably in a state of separation, does not comport with that watchfulness and jealousy over our own hearts, which are so suitable to our condition in the militant church. For these are ministrations in which, it is acknowledged by the persons we speak of, there is much of the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge ; if not in what is actually delivered in their hearing, at least in the profession of religion which is made in such a church-communion, and to which all the public administrations there are in a designed subservience. Ma-

ny do not scruple to attend on the ministrations of false teachers, as apprehensive of no danger from them; for, say they, we are not so ignorant as not to know what is to be received as true, and what is to be rejected as false. To such we say, the Lord forbids you not only to believe the instruction that causeth to err, but even to hear it: he commands you to cease from giving even an outward attention to it: and therefore in your attendance thereon, you are manifestly going out of the Lord's way; you are trampling on his authority. And while you are doing so, your confidence that you shall not be seduced, is but a vain and presumptuous leaning on your own understanding, and running a greater risk than eating food mixed with poison. Whilst you are thus venturing out of the plain road of duty, you are in a great hazard of being left to follow the bent of your corrupted nature, and to embrace error instead of truth. You should consider that there is a hellish energy attending error, as well as a heavenly energy attending divine truth; for we read of the "working of Satan with all power and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." It is true, that, even when we have the best ground to expect a pure dispensation of word and ordinances, public speakers are not exempted from inadvertent and unguarded expressions. But we are to judge of a dispensation of ordinances in any church-communion by the scope and tendency of it: and of the scope and tendency of it, by the peculiar and distinguishing principles and avowed practice of the church-communion in which it is. And, according to our judgment thus formed, we ought or ought not to attend.

The needless reading of erroneous books, that is, of books which are well known to be intended and calculated for the propagation of gross error, is to be avoided. Yet there is a difference between the private reading of an erroneous book and attending on the ministrations of an erroneous teacher: for, First, as it is more especially by the preaching of the word that church-members are converted and edified; so it is more especially by the preaching of error that they are seduced. Secondly, in the preaching of error there is a prostitution of the sacred office of the ministry, which is not in the mere proposal of opinions in common conversation or in books. Thirdly, it can not be pretended, that in the private reading of a book published by an erroneous teacher, there is any public countenance given to him in the character of a church-officer, or any sort of church-communion with his followers, as there certainly is in a public attendance on his min-

istrations. Fourthly, the private reading of books is of the nature of that private communication of sentiments to one another, which is previously necessary in order to a state of church-communion. Thus, reading is a proper mean of acquiring the information which is needful to determine us whether we ought to join in such a particular church communion or not: or whether we ought to attend on the public administrations thereof or not. If we find, in the use of this and other means, that we ought not to attend on them, we should, according to the opportunities of our place and station in the church, to warn others of the danger of attending on them. Hence the examination of erroneous books, when it is performed with honesty and judgment, is a real service to the church of Christ.

5. An occasional attendance on the public administrations from which we are justly in a state of separation, is contrary to the due exercise of charity towards our fellow church-members: for supposing (what we are far from allowing to be ever the case in fact) that a church-member had attained such a measure of knowledge and establishment in the truth, as to be in no danger of receiving hurt to his own soul, by his attendance on the public administrations of the erroneous; yet he can not but know that the weaker sort of his fellow church-members are in great danger, who may be emboldened to attend on the same administrations by his example. Is he not hereby chargeable with putting a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way? This is properly, in the scripture sense, giving offence to our brethren: for giving them offence, is not, as is commonly imagined, displeasing them, but rather being any way an occasion of their falling into sin. Besides, it is breaking the bonds of church-communion in vexing the hearts of our brethren, who rightly judge occasional hearing to be a sin, and inconsistent with our profession of Christ's name.

6. An occasional attendance on the public administrations in different and opposite church-communions, is contrary to the right manner of attending on gospel ordinances; which our Lord enjoins upon us, when he says, "Take heed how ye hear." For in the first place, this occasional attendance on ordinances is a self-contradictory attendance: for whoever attends on the public ordinances of God in any particular church, must be considered either as a mere spectator of the public exercises there, or as having communion with that church in them. But a mere spectator he can not be: because the public exercises of praying, praising, and hearing

the word, are of such a nature, that for a person to be present at them from choice, is to be under the highest obligation to join in them: a person that deliberately attends on such exercises as a mere spectator, is a profaner of God's name; and will find, sooner or later, that there is no such thing as being an unconcerned spectator of God's ordinances in the visible church. Whoever attends on the public ordinances of any particular church, must, therefore, be considered as having public communion with that church. Thus, in the supposed case, the person is involved in a contradiction. His attendance on the public ordinances of one particular church, says, he approves of the constitution and principles of that church; and that he is "one body, one bread," with the other members of it; but all this is contradicted by his attendance on the public ordinances of another church which is in a state of separation from the former. Nay, in the second place, is not this occasional attendance on the administrations of different churches a blasphemous attendance? In attending on public ordinances we profess to have come to hear what God the Lord shall say to us, by those whom he sends to speak to us in his name. But when we go to hear it declared to us according to the profession of one church, as what the Lord himself speaks to us, That Christ died for the elect only; and that Presbyterian church-government is the only form of it which Christ hath appointed in his word: and afterwards go to hear, as the Lord's message, according to the profession of another church, That Christ died for every individual of mankind; and that Independency or Episcopacy, or no particular form of church-government at all, are appointed in the word; is it not plain, that our attendance on public ordinances, in such opposite communions, is either a piece of solemn mockery, or a charging the Most High with contradictions? If we do not go to hear God speak what we know is to be spoken to us in his ordinances, our attendance is a blasphemous mockery; and if we do go to hear him speak, as is now represented, we blasphemously charge him with contradictions. In the third place, it is a partial attendance on ordinances. When persons, in the supposed case, attend on the public administrations of a church-communion from which they are in a state of separation, they are chargeable with putting asunder what God hath joined together; namely, the preaching of the word and the dispensation of the sacraments. Where will they find a divine warrant to receive one as authorized to preach the word to them, from whom it is unwarrantable to receive the sacraments; or to join in communion with a

particular church, in such public exercises of divine worship as prayer, praise, and hearing the word preached, while it is unwarrantable to join with the same church in baptism and the Lord's Supper? Paul appears to represent the public and authoritative dispensation of the word as the principal part of the trust that was committed to him as a minister of Christ: "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." (1 Cor. i. 17.) "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." (Eph. iii. 8.) It seems unwarrantable, therefore, to consider the preaching of the word as a less sacred or important part of the ministerial office than the dispensation of the sacraments. In the fourth place, this occasional attendance on the public administrations of different church-communions, is, from the nature of it, apt to be prostituted to carnal purposes. This sort of occasional attendance is not necessary to the enjoyment of the gospel and its ordinances in purity and simplicity; for these may be had in a steadfast adherence to one church-communion. But the great inducement to that sort of attendance is, that thereby men's vain curiosity, or fondness for something new in the gifts of a speaker, or in his manner of address, is gratified: on this account, men "heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Nay, persons are often induced to this attendance out of compliment to their friends or neighbors; or because, according to the atheistical temper of the present age, it is accounted a mark of liberality and enlargement of mind. In the fifth place, some give evidence that they make an idol of ordinances, by their attendance on them in church-communions, from which they are in a state of separation. This is the case of those who do not scruple to turn aside from the path of duty to what they can not deny to be sinful, for the sake, as they pretend, of the public ordinances. There are some who allow it to be an important duty to bear testimony, even in a way of separation, for reformation principles, in opposition to the corruptions or backslidings of those called Presbyterians, as well as to those of others. They also allow, (what indeed no considerate person can deny) that attendance on public ordinances, as dispensed by those that are in a stated opposition to that testimony, is inconsistent with a due maintenance of it, and that a practice, which carries in it that inconsistency, is sinful: and yet these very persons will allow themselves and families in this practice, confessedly sinful as it is. Their apology is to this purpose: That they are almost destitute of

ordinances dispensed under a testimony for truth, by reason of their great distance from the place where ministers are settled, and because they have seldom any supply of preaching in the way they desire to have it. To this we answer, by directing to such persons the following enquires:

1. Should it not be our end in attending on public ordinances, that we may not sin against God? But how can we pretend to do what is inconsistent with our holy profession, and therefore sinful, that we may not sin? Shall we dishonor God, that we may honor him? Shall we do evil, that good may come?

2. Can you be said to be destitute of ordinances while you have the Bible in your hands, and Catechisms, and other helps towards the right understanding of it, while you have daily opportunity of family worship, and of meditation and prayer in secret; and also of family catechising, and of family discipline? Is it not owing to negligence, or to formality and deadness in the use of these private means, that your families grow up in ignorance, and also that the Lord is provoked to withhold from you the enjoyment of public ordinances? For it is his ordinary way to grant more means and privileges to those who are diligent in improving those which they have.

3. Have you not had too little regard to the enjoyment of pure ordinances, in your removals from place to place? Have not the situations you have chosen for your families, been rather where they might get large worldly estates, than where they might have a prospect of obtaining the green pastures of public ordinances for their souls?

4. While you continue in the practice of an occasional attendance on the public administrations of church communions that are in a stated opposition to a seasonable testimony for the doctrine and order of the church of Christ, is not your adherence to that testimony thereby rendered doubtful and uncertain? Is not a steady and consistent adherence to that testimony the way to obtain the enjoyment of public ordinances under the banner of it? Without the study of the former, the desire of the latter must be but lukewarm, and the expectation of it groundless. For it is "the longing soul that the Lord will satisfy, and it is the hungry soul that he will fill with good."

It may be proper here to take notice of some other pleas, which are commonly offered for occasional attendance on the public administration of church-communions, from which we are in a state of separation.

1st. It is said, that such occasional attendance is according

to the apostle's exhortation, "Prove all things." (1 Thess. v. 31.)

We answer, 1. The occasional hearing against which we have been arguing, was all along supposed to be that of persons so far convinced of the corrupt state of the church whose administrations they occasionally attend, that they judge it necessary to be in a state of separation from it. This is a thing, therefore, which these persons are supposed to have already proved.

2. Nor is occasional hearing a proper way of coming at the knowledge of the peculiar principles of a particular church: for you may frequently hear the public discourses of its preachers, without ever getting any proper or satisfactory account of those principles. It would be unjust to lay every unguarded thing to the charge of a church which may fall from one of its public speakers: and on the other hand, it would be rash to conclude, that a church, as such, holds every article of divine truth that the public speakers of it may happen to utter.

3. To prove all things, in the sense of the apostle, is to bring every doctrine or practice to the touchstone of the written word. If you are duly exercised in doing so, you will pay a suitable regard to the other part of the exhortation, namely, *Hold fast that which is good*: you will take a decided part against whatever you find conformable to the infallible rule. You will not be ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth.

2dly. It is said, that the ministrations which are occasionally attended, are those of regular ministers of the gospel; those of a true church, in which, we have ground to believe, persons have communion with Jesus Christ the head.

In answer to this it might be sufficient to observe, that if it proved any thing, it would prove too much for the purpose of justifying those who attend on the public administrations of church-communions from which they are in a state of separation; for if we may warrantably attend on the administrations of such ministers occasionally, we may attend on them always, and we may receive the sacraments from them as well as the word, and then separation from them must be unnecessary; and if unnecessary, then unlawful. But as this plea is commonly in the mouths of those that plead for occasional hearing, it may be useful to introduce here a few observations of some valuable writers on this subject. "A secession," says a judicious divine,* "may be warrantably de-

* Wilson's Defence, page 69.

clared from a church on account of her corruptions and backslidings, when yet she is not unchurched. Though the dissenters in England and Ireland have stated a secession from the church of England, on account of her corruption in worship, government and discipline, they do not therefore, unchurch her; they do not refuse her the character and denomination of a Protestant church. Nay, they do not dispute that many have lived and died in communion with the church of England, through ignorance of her corruptions, and the sinfulness thereof, who have had communion with Christ."

To the observation of this divine, we may add, that, in the same manner, a minister of such a corrupt church may be called, in a large sense, a minister of the gospel; though as a minister of such a corrupt church, he be chargeable both with teaching false doctrine himself, and with holding communion with those who do so: and therefore when we withdraw from the communion of a corrupt church, we are of course, to withdraw from the public administrations of its ministers. "The primitive church," says CLAUDE, in his historical defence of the Reformation, "never had any union with such as taught false doctrine; and to shew how necessary and indispensable they judged a separation from them to be, they went so far as to refuse communion with the orthodox themselves, when either by surprize or weakness, or some interest, they had received heretics into their communion, although as to themselves they had kept their faith in purity. Thus the orthodox of the church of Rome refused to hold communion with Felix their bishop, because he held communion with the Arians, although he entirely held the creed of the council of Nice." We may add what DUPIN, in his *Bibliotheca Auctorum Ecclesiasticorum*, relates of HILARY, bishop of Poitiers. That pious man, having come to a synod that met at Selencia, in the year 359, did, at his first entrance into the Synod, make confession of his faith according to the decisions of the council of Nice; upon which he took his seat in the Synod. But soon observing that many of the bishops were Arians, he departed, and would not be any more present with them. It is to be observed, that the Synod admitted of this confession of his faith; yet he would have no church-communion, where Arians were sitting as members. This example is agreeable to the word of God, wherein we are forbidden to receive such as bring corrupt doctrine, or *to say a confederacy with them that say a confederacy*. But it is objected, that they are but small truths or omissions on account of which we are in a state of separation from some churches.

We answer, that the truths concerning Presbyterial church government being an ordinance of the Lord Christ, concerning public covenanting being the duty of the church under the New Testament, and seasonable at present, concerning the use of the scripture songs in our solemn worship, concerning the duty of the church, as such, to bear a suitable testimony against the errors and corruptions of the present times, are such as none will represent as small matters, but those that are ignorant of them. But even with respect to truths comparatively small, says Mr. FLEMING, in the Fulfilling of the Scriptures, "They may be great in their season, when they are the word of Christ's patience. Nay the lesser a truth seems, and of mean value with many, it makes the Christian's adherence to it a greater testimony. It is clear, that so close a concatenation there is among the truths of God held forth in the scripture, that one part thereof cannot be reached without a special prejudice to the whole. Yea, it may be said, every corruption of the truth hath an aim at the very soul of religion, by a direct tendency thereto." With respect to omissions, such as omitting to censure the erroneous, to bear a particular testimony against the errors and corruption of the present times, or to comply with the call now given to set about reformation in the way of covenanting: We answer in the words of another divine; "Omissions," says he, "are so heinous and grievous in the sight of God, that when sentence is passed upon men at the great day, omissions only are mentioned, (Matth. xxv. 41, 42, &c.) *For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat, &c.* Omissions may even turn the purest churches into synagogues of Satan. If the erroneous are not censured, and error is not condemned, a society professing to be a religious society may soon become a herd of blasphemous Arians and Socinians, and of wicked Arminians, and of the like gross perverters of the truth." But it is farther objected, that we refuse to have communion with those with whom the church's Head holds communion. We answer in the words of the same divine: "Though corruption and superstition can never have the approbation and countenance of heaven, it does not therefore follow, that when we depart from communion with a particular visible church on account of her corruptions, our separation is interpretatively a condemning of Christ the head of the church, as if he were to be blamed, if he, in his adorable sovereignty, communicate himself and his grace, even to those who remain in communion with a corrupt and degenerate church. The sovereignty of grace may be glorified a-

mong those whom it is not safe nor warrantable for us to hold communion with as members of the same ecclesiastic body. The hidden and secret communications of the Redeemer, are neither the standard nor rule of our duty."

Lastly, it is objected, that the scheme of putting a stop to the practice of occasional hearing, tends to widen the breaches among the various church-communions of Christians, which we should rather endeavor to heal.

Answ. There will be no genuine healing of breaches, till churches be brought to an humbling sense of their errors and defections, and to a sincere, unanimous, particular acknowledgement of the various articles of divine truth which they have injured, either by denying or refusing to own. In order to this healing, churches and their members must be brought under such deep concern to attain the true knowledge, and to walk in a steadfast adherence to it, as will cure them of the levity of occasional hearing. When the healing Spirit is poured from on high, each church-member will be saying, "Here are two opposite doctrines; they can not both be of God; for there is no inconsistency in him. I now see it to be a matter of infinite importance for me to have a certain knowledge of the truth which is of God. Nor will I rest till through the Lord's blessing on the use of the means, namely, searching the scriptures, communication with fellow church-members, meditation, and ardent prayer for the illumination of the Spirit, I attain a solid knowledge and full satisfaction as to this matter. And when I have thus bought the truth, that is, when the Lord has freely given me the understanding of it, I will make a consistent adherence to it in profession and practice, the study and the business of my life." When such a disposition becomes general among church-members, one might venture to say that the time of the church's healing is not far off; it would be a token of *the set time to favor Zion being come*. With respect to occasional hearers, they contribute no more to true peace between opposite church-communions, than whisperers and tale-bearers do to the reconciliation of two persons at variance. In both cases, they seldom or never fail to imbitter the parties against one another by their anecdotes and misrepresentations. If each church-communion were to declare with precision and particularity, what is unanimously held by them in every article wherein they differ from others; and if their members were required to evidence a steady adherence to every article thus declared, the good consequences would soon appear. For, in the first place, the misrepresentations of tale-bearers, otherwise called

occasional hearers, would no more obtain credit, the means of refuting them being always at hand. In the second place, church-communions would have more real esteem of one another in proportion as they evidenced themselves to be acting from principle. In the third place, seeing one another in earnest in maintaining their respective tenets, each would be led to consider the tenets of another with more seriousness, and to enquire with more diligence what truth or what error is in them: an enquiry which would be much less difficult, were every church-communion honestly and plainly to ascertain their distinguishing tenets by a public and particular declaration.

Since the grand apostacy in the papal church, there have been two most remarkable periods, wherein several churches gave suitable evidence of sincerity and earnestness in endeavoring to attain the knowledge and pure profession of the truth. The first was that of the glorious Reformation from Popery; when the Lord brought so many churches from the bosom of Antichrist with confessions of faith and testimonies to his truth in their hands. The second period was about the middle of the last century, when so resolute and successful a stand was made against superstition in the worship of God, and against the tyrannical government of Episcopacy. But the time of going forward in reformation was short, and was succeeded by a grievous defection from what had been attained. In the course of which defection, the Protestant churches as such, have fallen into great lukewarmness and indifference to the purity of their holy profession: which indifference has been excused and increased by the prevailing opinion of latitudinarianism:—Latitudinarianism, which makes religion consist sometimes in such emotions and passions as are excited by pictures and musical sound, sometimes in such mere outward morality as might be found in heathens, in any thing rather than in a single adherence to the truths revealed in God's word:—Latitudinarianism, which makes an attachment for any gross error or corruption which ever plagued the church of God, pass for great piety:—Latitudinarianism, which, in vast multitudes bearing the Christian denomination, is already ripened into open and avowed profanity, infidelity and atheism:—Latitudinarianism, an idol to which this generation seems to be so absolutely attached, that there is reason to apprehend that such a severe calamity will be necessary to wean them from it, as was necessary to wean the Jews from their idolatry. Let us hope and pray, that the blessed work which was begun in the Reformation from Pope-

ry, which was advanced in the Reformation from Prelacy, and which is still carried on amidst great and manifold opposition, may speedily issue in the more eminent glory of the latter day.

We conclude with an exhortation to those that are engaged in a professed adherence to a testimony for the principles of the first and second Reformation, against the various defections therefrom, in the present state of the visible church. We call you, in the Lord's name, to study a firm and consistent adherence to that testimony in profession and practice. The charge which the adversaries of Paul brought against him, and from which he vindicated himself, that his word towards the Corinthians was *yea and nay*, an affirmation and denial of the same thing, holds lamentably true against many professors at this day. One part of their conduct says, *yea*, they are adhering to a testimony for the truth; another part of it says, *nay*, they are making light of it. Be concerned that your adherence to the present truth may, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be *yea*, that is, steady and consistent. Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering. And that you may do so, we offer you the following advices.

1. Be careful to attain a competent knowledge of the several articles of the present truth and testimony of Jesus. Study to know these, not merely as contained in our subordinate standards, such as, our Judicial Testimony, our Catechisms and Confession of Faith, but also according to what the nature of these subordinate standards require, as contained in the scriptures of truth, which are the supreme standard, and the only foundation of a genuine faith. When adversaries represent our subordinate standards as turning away men's attention from the holy scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice, they are propagating what, if they be acquainted with these standards, their own consciences must allow to be a base calumny, and an open shameless contradiction to the letter, and to the whole nature and design of such standards; they being nothing more than the declared adherence of the church, in the articles specified, to the word of God alone; and there being no other way conceivable in which the church, as such, can make a faithful opposition to the various errors and corruptions, according as they come to prevail. To fall in with the design of these subordinate standards, it is necessary for you to be like the Bereans, "searching the scriptures daily, whether these things be so."

2. Study to have distinct views of the testimony for truth,

to which you adhere, being the cause of God. It is his cause, because every article of revealed truth is a letter of his name; and the denial of it is an open contempt of his authority, and an impeachment of his veracity. It is this persuasion that must animate you to steadfastness in your holy profession, under all the changes of outward appearance; and to activity in the support of it in your several places and stations.

3. Let your attendance on gospel ordinances, while you have them in purity, be regular and exemplary. Carelessness in this respect is rebellion against the Lord's command, and evidences a criminal neglect of his declarative glory, and of the welfare both of the church and of your own precious and immortal souls. Be concerned that your frame of mind, on the calls you have to attend on public ordinances may be like that of David, as represented in the 122d Psalm, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

4. Beware of resting in any knowledge of the truth which is not saving and experimental, and which has not a sanctifying effect on the heart and life. The truth, received into the heart by faith and love, is a root and principle of holy obedience, according to Ephes. iv. 21, 22, 23, 24. "If so be that ye have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

5. Continue in the exercise of faith and of prayer. Remember that ye owe all your steadfastness to the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. The more steadfast your views of him, whose name is the **LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**, you will be the more steadfast in your holy profession. Behold your strength and standing to be not in yourselves, but in Him. **AND** if ye would have faith exercised, evidenced or increased, be much in prayer. "Come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help you in the time of need;" that ye may join with the people of God in all ages, in saying, "A glorious high throne, from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary."