

SAFETY OF THE CHURCH.

(Continued from page 245.)

II. To consider, more extensively, the evidences which bear testimony to the safety of the church.

The text itself, indeed, is evidence sufficient. Christ's words stand in no need of confirmation. In condescension to our weakness, however, God gives unto us line upon line, and precept upon precept. The evidences of the most important doctrines of Revelation are diffused through the whole volume of the sacred writings. This was necessary to prevent mistakes—to encourage a diligent perusal of the Holy Scriptures—and to confirm the faith of his children, in particular articles, and in the authenticity of the whole system. Had revelation been communicated to us in a regular system, the scriptures would neither have been as safe or as useful as they are in the present form. Did they teach the same doctrine, enforce the same duty, and promise the same comfort once only; however plainly, perspicuously, and accurately it might have been expressed; a corruption of the original text by accident or design, a false translation or an improper criticism, would have unsettled the faith of thousands—would have rendered it difficult if not impossible to ascertain the truth, and heretics and infidels would have had a decided advantage over the friends of religion.—These dangers are happily pre-

vented. The great doctrines of Christianity appear every where in the book of God. They are interspersed through the historical, the preceptive, the promissory part of revelation. Every book, every chapter, is a system of divinity. What is in one place more obscurely intimated, is elsewhere clearly explained. In order to wound religion in any of its principles, the sacred text must be adulterated in every page of our Bibles. What infidels object to revelation, the want of a systematic arrangement, is really an evidence of its authenticity. Infinite wisdom is discoverable through its apparently negligent simplicity; and the wisdom of man is confessed to be folly. It will not, therefore, be deemed improper, that *comparing spiritual things with spiritual*, we endeavor to collect, from the testament of our Lord, additional arguments for the safety of his church.

And,

1. This appears from the light in which she appeared to God in his eternal choice—an object of love.

The Ancient of days had the plan of his works before him, ere time commenced its march. It was fixed; and the church was elected in Christ her head and representative. He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. Eph. i. 4. Believers are by nature destitute of any lovely quality to render them eligible to such privileges as their Father's election includes. They are sinners; but as fallen men,

ought not however to be on any day of humiliation, or on the Lord's day.

6. All relations among Christians are sanctified by the word and prayer. The minister who solemnizes the marriage is to pray for a blessing to accompany the administration of this divine ordinance, "acknowledging our sinfulness and unworthiness of the least of God's mercies—thanking God for the continuance of all his favors and blessings—entreating that the Lord would graciously vouchsafe his blessing to those who are now about to enter into the honorable state of marriage—giving them renewed hearts—fitting them for this new relation, with all needed gifts and graces for Christ's sake.

7. After prayer let the minister explain to the parties, the nature, institution, ends, and duties of marriage, exhorting them to a life and conversation becoming Christians entering into the matrimonial relation, that they be mutual good yoke-fellows, and helps meet for each other, both in the things that relate to this life, and especially in the things that relate to the life that is to come.

8. The minister is then solemnly to charge them, in the great and terrible name of God, the searcher of all hearts, before whose awful tribunal they must one day appear, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, that if either of them know any cause by promise, vow, pre-contract or otherwise, why they may not lawfully be joined together in marriage, that they now discover it. If no impediment be acknowledged, the minister shall

then desire them to join hands and pronounce, or assent to, the following or similar words, 1st. The bridegroom, I promise, vow, and covenant, in the presence of God and these witnesses, that I will be a faithful, loving, and affectionate husband unto this woman whom I now hold by the hand, until God shall separate us by death." Then the bride shall say, "I promise, &c. that I will be a faithful, loving, and obedient wife, until God shall separate us by death." The minister shall then pronounce them a married pair according to God's ordinance, and conclude the action with prayer; acknowledging with thankfulness the goodness of God in continuing this ordinance among the human family, praying that the Lord would follow his own ordinance with his blessing, and abundantly enrich the souls of the married pair with the graces of his holy Spirit, bestowing upon them a competent portion of the good things of this life, the comforts and fruits of marriage, with all necessary blessings for time and eternity.

FREE DISCUSSION.

A LETTER TO THE COLDENHAM CONGREGATION.

My dear friends,

I make no apology for addressing you through a public journal. The near relation which once united us as pastor and people, the unanimous call I received from you, the kindness with which you entreated me, when exercising among you the ministry in early life, and much lack of ex-

perience, I can never forget. The solemnity of my ordination to the sacred office, cotemporaneous and coincident in circumstance with my relation and familiar intercourse with you, calls up to recollection every feeling of solemn friendship. It is true we separated; but it is also true it was with great reluctance on both sides. The argument of the presbytery, predicated upon the public interests of the church in the north, never prevailed upon me, until I saw in God's good providence a prospect that you would be supplied with a better pastor. My late visit to Coldenham was intended as much for my own gratification and edification as for yours. I had heard nothing of the troubles among you, only that your pastor had left you; for your loss in that I sympathized with you, but little did I think that the accuser of the brethren had succeeded so far as to fire the sanctuary, and threaten to burn down to the ground the synagogue of God in Coldenham.

On your memorial lately presented to synod in Philadelphia, August, 1831, little was said directly, still to it, and the subject of it, frequent allusions were made. It is an unhappy fact, that the ministers of our church, the members of the constituted synod, are not entirely agreed on the best method of applying our principles. On the principles themselves there is but one opinion; they all earnestly want Bible reformation; they all agree as upon a matter which admits of no argument, that a Christian cannot consistently hold office when his investiture therewith cannot be

had without first swearing to support *immoral principles* incorporated with *worldly* constitutions. They admit even more, that where the case is doubtful, it is our obvious duty to abstain. In the same manner all agree that we should never sit in judgment unless we can be allowed to judge for the Lord, and speak out our decision by his word. You will agree upon these great principles too. Why not hold with one another holy fellowship on these great principles? I am somewhat afraid that you fail in the discharge of some relative and religious duties you owe to one another, and to God, or the contest would not run so high. Are you uniform and fervent in your closet and family devotions? Attention to these duties, and the enjoyment of fellowship with God therein, will tend very much to spiritualize your minds, and wean you from the world and guard you against its snares. On the other hand, if any of you do sin by any act of sinful conformity, it will dispose the rest to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, if possible, and if that cannot be done, to proceed in a very cautious manner in the administration of discipline. We should always remember that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wisdom is profitable to direct; the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. O friends, cultivate with great care this meekness of wisdom; this charity which vaunteth not itself, and which is not easily provoked.

Has one member of your church

voted at the town election for town officers? has another assumed the character of a jurist? I do not say you should, if these things are so, feel no concern; but you ought, before you publish as faulty such matters abroad, know exactly how the matter stands. There are two ways of telling the same story, and neither of them positively false. In Philadelphia I was told that two of our ministers sat on a jury in the city. I confess it started me a little; but I recovered myself, and on inquiry, I found they only assisted in an inquest. When reports of a brother's irregularity in any respect reaches our ear, we should see himself as soon as possible, or ascertain by a friend how the matter stands.

If such a course is not pursued, you may depend you will be perpetually harassed with mutual animosity, hard feelings, hard language; the enemy will in that case have a cheap and easy triumph. "Speak not evil one of another, dear brethren, lest ye be destroyed one of another." Remember, dear friends, it is not your own character only, and your own comfort that are implicated. The influence of your principles upon surrounding society, the standing of your church, the honor of your Savior; all, all is at stake. Give not way to evil passions. Still I would not have you to relax discipline, and mutual watch for one another—integrity and faithfulness to the common cause which you have jointly taken up, and solemnly sworn to support. But this I have long considered a maxim in the government of the church, that no

process should be instituted until other means, if any such be in our power, be tried in vain. Let it always be with real and manifest reluctance, that a charge is publicly preferred. This should particularly be the case when the scandal is purely in the eyes of the church; if the crime be as the apostle says of the Corinthians' case, not so much as named among the Gentiles. The case is some different. Still we are not to make public opinion the rule of our duty, or of our discipline. No, let the rule of our former attainments be strictly observed, and advances to perfection be made on every occasion offered. For this purpose we should carefully consider and diligently study the history of the faithful contentings of our worthy predecessors; make ourselves familiar with the arguments they used to defend their principles, that we may defend them too. I have often been struck with the arrogance and self-sufficiency of little folks, who would prate against the principles and opinions of ancient venerable men; as if the mere circumstance of these are on the antiquity of their works, or of some words out of one in modern times, their arguments are unworthy of examination; and because I cannot answer some objection that may be framed against them, therefore they cannot be answered. The acts bearing upon the subject of your memorial are explicit, and the arguments accompanying them, I think conclusive, in relation to the cases contemplated; these acts have not been repeated.

(To be concluded.)

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The discussion of them may, as is common, have a little weakened their authority, still they exist, and in so far as the principle of practice, they were intended to establish and enforce, may be denied in theory or impugned in practice *under such circumstances as they evidently contemplated*, it is disorderly, it is sinful.

The legislation of our synod has transferred the powers of administering these laws to the local judicatories, as most competent to judge of matters of existing facts and circumstances of danger. This disposition of these acts, whether judicious or not, affects not at all the moral principle; nor does it diminish, but rather accumulate, the responsibility of their inferior courts. It is satisfactory for me, dear brethren, to state, that in tendering to you all this, I am acting in concurrence with synodical enactment, and I think the tenor of my advice is in union with the sentiments of the members.

I do hope therefore, that you will take the first opportunity which your kind Lord may afford, after having prayerfully laid the whole matter before God in prayer, to humble yourselves before God as a congregation, and keep a day of fasting. No doubt many of the brethren, especially those to whom, from former rela-

tionship, your welfare is so dear, will strive to be present with you in spirit; confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another; humble yourselves beneath the mighty hand of God, he will exalt you in due time. I trust also you will fervently pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers, and specially that he will fulfill to you his faithful promise, to give you a pastor according to his heart, that will feed you with knowledge and right understanding, making you to know, by able discussion, the way of truth and faithfulness and convince the gainsayers.

J. M.

THE PRACTICE IN THE SEVERAL JUDICATORIES OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, 1830.

(Continued from page 264)

Overtures.—It is provided that acts, which are intended to be binding rules and constitutions to the church, must first be proposed as overtures to the general assembly, and being there passed as such, must be transmitted to the consideration of the several presbyteries, that their opinions and consent may be reported to the next general assembly. It is of great importance to the interests of the church, that presbyteries should show diligence in this respect, and not allow overtures to lie from year to year on their tables, as no overture can be passed into a law till the more

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NO. 10.

THE NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT.

Luke xxiv. 26. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?"

This is an inquiry of the Redeemer himself. It was originally addressed to a few of his disciples with whom he met, sad and solitary, traveling to Emmaus, and conversing about the events which had recently transpired at Jerusalem:

Disguised as a stranger, unacquainted with events taking place in his absence, he proposed to them a question, which elicited from them in reply a detailed account of his own sufferings and death.

Their reply to his question respecting the awfully important scenes of which they had been the witness, furnished him with an occasion to expatiate at large upon the nature, and causes, and effects of his own sufferings, as intended to effect an atonement. And of these sufferings as making satisfaction for sin, he, in plain terms, asserts the necessity.

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" Which form of expression, according to the idiom of the original language, conveys a decided affirmation of the fact. It being taken for granted that sin is to be pardoned, and a reconciliation to be effected, it is indispensably necessary that Christ should suffer to make an atonement. In this discussion, it is taken for granted,

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1. That Christ Jesus did really suffer.

2. That he endured these sufferings in his official capacity as the representative of the elect, being a divine person giving subsistence to a human nature.

3. That these sufferings were of a vicarious and substitutionary nature, and did really effect an atonement between an offended God and offending sinners; and all these considerations are involved in the text. It however affirms something more; it asserts the necessity of these sufferings to accomplish an atonement.

From it we then deduce the doctrinal proposition:

Remission of sin and restitution into favor, presupposes an atonement made.

This we will endeavor to illustrate and enforce,

I. By adverting to the nature of sin.

II. To the character of the Being against whom it is committed.

III. To the character of the person rendering the satisfaction.

In affirming the necessity of the atonement, it will, perhaps, be proper to explain what ideas we attach to the term necessity.

In speaking of the necessity of the atonement, we do not mean that the Divine Being was under any obligation of any kind to pardon the violators of his law, on account of any thing which they could do to render a satisfaction; for indeed such was the nature of

DECEMBER.

6. The second session of the twenty-first congress of the United States commenced. The president's message was received; and hon. Andrew Stevenson, re-elected speaker of the house.

10. Died in Bucks county, Pa. Rev. James P. Willson, D. D. for many years pastor of the first Presbyterian church in Philadelphia. His reputation for theological and general knowledge, his talents as displayed originally at the bar, and afterwards in the pulpit, his personal character and usefulness, long rendered him one of the most eminent clergymen in this country.

17. The liberator Bolivar expired at one o'clock, P. M. at San Pedro, in a calm and collected manner. His remains were interred at Caraccas, where he was born, July 24th, 1783. By a series of splendid actions he freed his country from the Spanish yoke; and was named dictator, January 2, 1814.

30. Died at Hartford, Conn. Miss Alice Cogswell, aged 25. The spotted fever left her deaf and dumb, when between the age of two and three years. It was the interest awakened in her case that led to the establishment of the American asylum to the deaf and dumb.

JANUARY, 1831.

19. The annual meeting of the American Colonization Society was held in the hall of the house of representatives at Washington. The income exceeded that of any preceding year by more than \$6000. The plans of the society are regarded with increasing favor through the union.

FREE DISCUSSIONS.

CORRECTIONS BY THE AUTHOR.

In the *Letter to Coldenham*, the last paragraph, p. 320, should be thus, "I have often been struck with the arrogance and self-sufficiency of little folks, who prate against the principles and opinions of ancient venerable men, as if the mere circumstance of the antiquity of their works, or some words out of use in modern times, rendered their arguments unworthy of examination; and became, &c."—the last word in the column, should be "*repealed.*"

NOTICE TO MINISTERS AND OTHER AGENTS.

It is often inconvenient, and sometimes impracticable, to give receipts for moneys transmitted to us by mail. We will, however, acknowledge the sums received in the magazine itself. From *May to August*, 1831, Rev. Dr. Willson, Albany, \$48; Rev. John Cannon, Greensburgh, \$50; Dr. Black, Pittsburgh, \$200. From *August to November*, Mr. James McLean, Cincinnati, \$20; Rev. David Steele, \$10, and since \$5, in all \$15; Mr. Wm. Wylie, Newburgh, \$24; Rev. Hugh Mc-Millan, Xenia, \$50. From *Nov. to Jan.* 1832, Mr. Wm. Cunningham, Schenectady, \$50; John Tullock, Duanesburgh, \$20; David Orr, Kortright, \$6; William Beattie, Coldenham, \$30; John Thompson, Chambersburgh, \$20; G. F. Horton, Terrytown, \$10; Hugh Cathcart, Carolina, \$30. Payment not above \$5 will be noticed.