

# An Essay on The Kingdom of Christ



by

Abraham Booth

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AN  
ESSAY  
ON THE  
*KINGDOM OF CHRIST.*

BY ABRAHAM BOOTH.

They shall speak of the glory of thy Kingdom. Psal. cxiv. II  
The Kingdom of Christ is totally different from the kingdom of this world.

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## PREFACE.

THE Kingdom of Christ is a subject of great importance: for, according to the views we have of that Kingdom, will our conclusions be respecting various branches of religious conduct. If those views be imaginary, these conclusions must be false. By the former, the glory of Messiah's regal character will be obscured: by the latter, his worship will be corrupted: whereas the true doctrine concerning this holy empire may not only be the mean of preserving from those evils, but of presenting us with *data* for the decision of many disputes among the professors of Christianity. A competent acquaintance, therefore, with its nature and laws, its emoluments and honours, re closely connected with our duty and our happiness: which acquaintance must be derived from Divine Revelation.

Important, however, as the subject manifestly is; it has been but seldom professedly discussed. This consideration was a leading motive to the present attempt. To illustrate the nature of our Lord's Kingdom, and to infer the conclusions stowing from it, constitute the design of this Essay.

The Author has expressed his thoughts with great freedom; yet without intending the least offence to any party of Christians, or to any person, from whose notions and practices he conscientiously differs. In the course of discussion he animadverts, indeed, on some particulars, with a degree of severity; but then they appear to him in the light of *political artifices*, which either impeach the dominion of Christ in his own kingdom; or degrade and corrupt that worship which he requires. Now, in cases of this kind, the writer is of opinion, that allegiance to the King Messiah, and true benevolence to man, demand the language of marked opposition.

Such is the nature of our Lord's empire, that few of his loyal subjects can seriously reflect upon it, without feeling themselves both delighted and reprov'd. *Delighted*: because it is for the honour of their Mediator, to be the Sovereign of a spiritual monarchy. A character of this kind apparently suits the dignity of his Person, the design of his mediation, and the riches of his grace. – *Reprov'd*: because they daily find a want of that spirituality in their affections, and of that heavenly-mindedness, which become the professed subjects of such a kingdom. When meditating on the characteristics of this holy empire, they stand convicted before its divine Sovereign of much carnality and worldly-mindedness, over which they sincerely mourn: while merely nominal subjects of the King Messiah, or superficial professors of the gracious gospel, are but little concerned about the state of their hearts, in reference to heaven; or with regard to the spirituality of their worship.

This being the case with multitudes, the author would not be much surpris'd were various particulars in the following pages to prove disgusting to the taste of numbers professing godliness. But facts are stubborn things; and the sayings of Jesus Christ must not be explained away, that conscience may rest in a false, peace, or that the public taste may be gratified. For, when thinking of our sublime Sovereign, Thy Kingdom Come, is the language of every upright heart, let carnal professors and the profligate world say what they please.

A. BOOTH.

*Goodman's Fields,*  
*July 30, 1788.*

## **AN ESSAY ON THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.**

It having been revealed by ancient Prophets, that the Lord Messiah should be a King, and have universal empire, the chosen tribes in every age expected his appearance under the regal character. While, however, the general idea of that expectation was fully warranted by the Spirit of prophecy, the bulk of Abraham's natural posterity were under a gross mistake respecting the true design of Messiah's appearance, and the real nature of his kingdom: which mistake had the most pernicious influence upon their temper and conduct, when the gracious promise of his coming was fulfilled.

The sense which they affixed to prophecies respecting the great Redeemer, was manifestly such as flattered their pride and fostered their carnality. This gave it a decided advantage, in their estimation, over that for which our Lord and his Apostles contended; and led them to overlook whatever, in the ancient Oracles, opposed their secular views. Ignorant of their spiritual wants, and flushed with a false persuasion of interest in Jehovah's peculiar favour, on the ground of carnal descent from Abraham, and of the covenant made at Horeb; the doctrine, example, and claims of Jesus were extremely offensive. Not appearing as a temporal prince, discovering no disposition to free them from the Roman yoke, and frequently addressing their consciences with keen reproof, on account of their pride and hypocrisy, superstition and covetousness; they rejected, with determined opposition, all the evidences of his divine mission, treated him as an impostor, and procured his crucifixion. After he was risen from the dead, and ascended to heaven, multitudes of them indeed believed, and professed the Christian faith: but a great majority of the nation continued in hardened impenitence, and

persecuted the Apostles with unrelenting malevolence. Thus they proceeded, till, divine forbearance being exhausted, "wrath came upon them to the uttermost," in the total subversion of their civil and ecclesiastical polity.

This mistake of the Jews, respecting the kingdom of the Messiah, lying at the foundation of all the opposition with which they treated him, and of their own ruin; it behooves us to guard with diligence against every thing which tends to secularize the dominion of Christ: lest, by corrupting the Gospel Economy, we dishonour the Lord Redeemer, and be finally punished as the enemies of his government. Our danger of contracting guilt, and of incurring divine resentment in this way, is far from being small. For we are so conversant with sensible objects, and so delighted with exterior show, that we are naturally inclined to wish for something in religion to gratify our carnality. Under the influence of that master prejudice, The Expectation Of A Temporal Kingdom, Jewish depravity rejected Christ; and our corruption, if we be not watchful, may so misrepresent his empire, and oppose his royal prerogatives, as implicitly to say, "We will not have him to reign over us."<sup>1</sup>

Among the numerous admirable sayings of Jesus Christ, and of his Apostles, that stand recorded in the New Testament and are adapted to instruct us in this important subject, there is one which deserves peculiar notice, The saying to which I advert, is part of that "good confession" which our Lord "witnessed before Pontius Pilate My Kingdom Is Not Of This World." A concise, but comprehensive declaration, and worthy of him that made it. This capital saying may be considered as the grand maxim on which he formed his conduct, when among men; and it is pregnant with heedful instruction to all

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<sup>1</sup> "As the great source of the infidelity of the Jews was a notion of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, we may justly say, that the great source of the corruption of Christians,, and of their general defection, foretold by the inspired writers, has been an attempt to render it, in effect, *a temporal kingdom, and to support and extend it by earthly means*. This is that spirit of Antichrist;, which was so early at work, as to be discoverable in the days of the Apostles." Dr. George Campbell's *Four Gospels*, Preface, p. lviii, Second edit.

his disciples, respecting the New Economy and the Christian Church, Relative to these, there is not, perhaps, a more interesting passage in all the New Testament; nor one which is better adapted to rebuke the pride and carnality of millions who bear the Christian character. To approve of Christ: as a spiritual monarch, agreeably to the meaning and tendency of this emphatical text, requires a degree of heavenly-mindedness which comparatively few possess.

My KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD, says Messiah the Prince, when standing before the Roman governor, and questioned about his claim of dignity. He boldly avows himself a King; yet, while advancing his title to the honours of royalty, he tacitly informs Pilate, that the civil rights of Cesar had nothing to fear from him; and that his own disciples had no advantages to expect, of a secular kind, as the result of embarking in his cause. Our Lord, a little while before, had implicitly conveyed the general idea of this declaration, by receiving from a surrounding multitude the acclamations due to his regal character, when riding *upon* an ass; for while he accepted the honours of royalty, the poverty and meanness of his appearance plainly implied that his kingdom was not of a temporal kind. Zechariah had foretold that the children of Zion should loudly rejoice in this humble manifestation of the King Messiah, and that their joy should kindle into rapture. An incontrovertible evidence that he predicted the public inauguration of a Sovereign, whose "kingdom is not of this world." For the loyal and affectionate subjects of a political monarch never thought it matter of exultation, that he appeared among them, When proclaimed king, with all the marks of meanness and of poverty. Yet so it was in respect of the King Messiah.

It is generally allowed, if I mistake not, that the kingdom of Christ is no other than the Gospel Church; which is both distinguished from the world, and opposed to it. Relative to this kingdom and its divine Sovereign, Jehovah says, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." This prophetic oracle was fulfilled when our Lord, "leading captivity captive," ascended on high and

sat down on the right hand of the Eternal Father. Then was he most solemnly inaugurated and proclaimed King of the New Testament Church, amidst adoring myriads of attendant angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect." In pursuance of which most grand investiture with his regal office, he distributed royal donatives (donations, *Pub.*), at the feast of Pentecost, among his devoted subjects—such donatives, as perfectly suited the majesty of his person, and the nature of his kingdom. Yes, that wonderful assemblage of spiritual gifts and heavenly graces, which he bestowed upon his disciples at the Jewish festival, was a glorious first fruit of his ascension, and of his being "a priest upon his throne." The Gospel Church, which is the subject of his laws, the seat of his government, and the object of his care, being surrounded with powerful opposers, he is represented as ruling "in the midst of his enemies." Nor shall his mediatorial kingdom and administration cease, till all those enemies become his footstool.

The empire of Christ, indeed, extends to every creature: for "all authority in heaven and on earth" is in his hands, and he "is Head over all things to the Church." But the kingdom of which we treat, stands distinguished from that of general Providence, as well as from every political state. It must be considered, therefore, as consisting of those persons whom he bought with his blood, whom he calls by his grace, and over whom he reigns as a spiritual monarch. These constitute what is frequently called, the Catholic Church, wherever the favoured individuals may reside. Of such also, or of those who make a credible profession of being such, all those particular churches consist, which constitute our Lord's visible kingdom—that kingdom of which we speak. Into the principal characteristics of this holy empire, and into the genuine consequences of those criteria, we shall now inquire.

**The Gospel Church is a kingdom not of this world, with regard to its ORIGIN.**

From the time of Nimrod, to the present age, secular empires have generally originated in the vicious passions of their first founders; for, in almost every instance, avarice and pride, ambition and a lust of dominion, have been conspicuous. But not so with reference to the kingdom of Jesus Christ. By all-comprehending wisdom and infinite goodness, for the glory of God and the benefit of man, the remote foundation of his dominion was laid in the counsels of Heaven, before time commenced; and the immediate basis on which it stands, is his own vicarious obedience to divine law; both as to its precepts, and as to its penalty. Justice and goodness, therefore, are the foundation of his throne. Mercy and truth attend the whole of his administration.

**The kingdom of Christ is not of this world, respecting the SUBJECTS of his righteous GOVERNMENT.**

The generality of people in all countries, were *born* subjects of those governments under which they live. No sooner, for instance, were we capable of reflecting upon our civil connections, than we found ourselves free-born subjects of the British crown; and thus it commonly is in the sovereignties of secular princes. Their dominion being confined to the exterior of human conduct, and not reaching the heart; natural birth and local circumstances constitute subjects of the state, put them under the protection of law, and invest them with civil rights. Such subject's are perfectly well suited to the kingdoms of this world, and to the character of their sovereigns. For, considered as men, kings and subjects are on a level; and, as distinguished by political characters, their obligations are mutual; allegiance on the one part, and protection on the other. Besides, temporal kingdoms respect the present world. The mutual duties of sovereigns and of subjects, as such, regard the happiness of civil society, and of that only, As an investiture with political sovereignty

does not constitute a lord of conscience, it gives no claim to authority in spiritual things, but is entirely confined to the concerns of this world. It is, indeed, the indispensable duty of secular princes, and of their people, to love and adore God; yet that obligation arises, not from any political relation subsisting between them, but from their being reasonable creatures. It is also their happiness to be the subjects of Jesus Christ: but that felicity does not result from any thing short of divine mercy exercised upon them, as depraved and guilty creatures.

The kingdom and claims of Christ; being very different from those of Cesar, the qualifications and the obedience of his real subjects must also differ. For persons may be good subjects of a temporal sovereign, and enjoy the rights of such a character, while they are so far from bearing true allegiance to Jesus Christ, as to be quite inimical to his dominion, and entire strangers to the privileges of his kingdom. The empire of Christ "is not of this world it is not a temporal, but a spiritual kingdom. Our Lord, therefore, is a spiritual Sovereign; whose dominion extends to the mind, the conscience, and the heart, no less than to the external behaviour. Consequently, all the subjects of his government must have spiritual dispositions, and yield spiritual obedience—obedience proceeding from an enlightened understanding, an awakened conscience, and a renewed heart. For, as is the sovereign, such are the subjects, and such the allegiance required. A spiritual Sovereign, and subjects yielding an obedience merely external, are manifestly inconsistent.

As all mankind are born in a state of apostasy from God; as the natural turn of the heart, or "the carnal mind, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be we must be born again—"born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," before we are permitted to consider ourselves, or to be considered by others, as the subjects of Him whose kingdom is of a spiritual kind. Remarkable are the words of our Lord, when speaking of his loyal subjects: "They are not of the world, even as I

am not of the world." No: they are described by the Apostles, as being "of the truth; of faith; and of God."<sup>2</sup> *Of the truth*: enlightened, "converted, and sanctified by the gospel. *Of faith*; living by it; deriving peace and holiness from Jesus Christ, through believing in him. *Of God*: born of him or "begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Such are the subjects of our Lord's kingdom: in opposition to whom, the New Testament represents the rest of our apostate race, as being "of the works of the law; of the world; of darkness;" and "of the devil."<sup>3</sup> *Of the works of the law*: seeking acceptance with God by their own imperfect obedience, which leaves them under a curse. *Of the world*: carnally minded, and in a state of enmity to God. *Of darkness*: ignorant of their perishing state, and unacquainted with Jesus Christ. *Of the devil*: partakers of his image, subjects of his dominion, and performers of his wills.<sup>4</sup> So great is the contrast formed by Scripture, between those who are under our Lord's government, and the rest of mankind! Agreeably to which, real Christians are further described, as "delivered from the power of darkness,' or the tyranny of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son: and as being "of God," while all the rest of the "world lies in wickedness." None, therefore, but those who are born from above, are the subjects of Jesus Christ; or, except the heart be under his dominion, he does not reign as a spiritual monarch.

That none but real Christians are subjects of our Lord's kingdom, is yet further apparent from the descriptive characters of those that were members of the apostolic churches. We find them described in the New-Testament, as "gladly receiving the word" of grace, as "the called of Jesus Christ," and as "called to be saints." The Apostles denominate them *Brethren, faithful brethren, holy brethren, saints,*

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<sup>2</sup> John xviii. 17. Gal, iii. 7, 9. 1 John iv. 4, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Gal, iii. 10. John viii. 23. 1 John iv. 5. 1 Thess. v. 5. John viii. 38, 41, 44. 1 John iii. 8, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii. 6, 7, 8, Eph, v. 8. John viii, 44. Eph, ii, 2.

and *lively stones* in the spiritual temple.<sup>5</sup> These and similar characters are frequently applied to members of the primitive churches in general; and of those churches the visible kingdom of Christ then consisted. We may therefore say, with VITRINGA; ‘The kingdom of grace, in which Christ is king upon mount Zion, is properly and emphatically The Kingdom Of Christ; of which none are subjects, except those who are chosen, called, faithful, peaceable, and humble in whom Jesus Christ lives by his Spirit as in the members of a mystical and spiritual body, of which he is the head.’

This view of our Lord's subjects is perfectly agreeable to the nature and genius of the New Covenant, with which the Messiah's kingdom is closely connected: because it appears, that subjects of any other description, have no reason to consider themselves as covenantees; and it is plain that a divine Covenant must suit the Kingdom to which it belongs, whether Jewish or Christian. When “in the fulness of time,” God performed his gracious and comprehensive promise of blessing all nations, it was by the intervention of a New and better Covenant than that which was made at Sinai. For thus it is written: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not According TO THE COVENANT THAT I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS IN THE DAY THAT I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO BRING THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; which my Covenant they brake, although I was m husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me. From

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<sup>5</sup> Acts ii. 4. Rom. i. 6. I Cor. i. 2. Eph. i. 1. Philip. i. 1. Col. i. 2. 2 Thess. i. 3. Heb. ii. 1. Pet. i. 2, 3. and ii. 5. 2 Pet. i. 1.

the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."<sup>6</sup>

This admirably gracious Covenant is completely suited to a spiritual kingdom, and to the subjects we have been describing: for it announces no designs, makes no provisions, confers no blessings, but those that are spiritual and internal. The true knowledge of Jehovah, writing his law in the heart, forgiveness of all sin, and perpetual relation to God, are the blessings for which it engages; but there is not a word respecting temporal blessings, nor concerning any merely external relation to the Supreme, though these were the grand articles in the Covenant made at Horeb. Covenantees, therefore under the Christian Economy, can be no other than the spiritual seed of Abraham: and such are the subjects of this kingdom. Hence the Gospel Covenant is called *new* and is expressly opposed to the Sinai Confederation, It is also pronounced *a better* Covenant than that which Jehovah made with the ancient Israel: and so it will appear, whether we consider its objects, its blessings, its confirmation, or its continuance. Its *objects* for they are the spiritual seed of Abraham, gathered out of all nations. Its *blessings*: for they are all spiritual and internal. Its *confirmation*: for it was ratified by the death of Christ. Its *confirmation*: for it is "an everlasting Covenant; ordered in all things and sure." Yes it is as much better than the Covenant made at Sinai, as being the children of God by regeneration is preferable to carnal descent from Abraham—as the number of God's elect in all nations, exceed that of the chosen tribes—as blessings entirely spiritual and immortal, are more excellent than those of an earthly king and of short duration—as redemption from spiritual bondage and eternal ruin is greater and nobler than deliverance from temporal slavery—as the ratification of this Covenant, by the blood of Immanuel, is more sacred than that which the Old Covenant received by the slaughter of brute animals—as the Son of God, the mediator of it, is greater than Moses, who appeared under that character at Horeb—and as a Covenant of

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<sup>6</sup> Jer. xxxi. 31-34. Heb. viii. 8,9.

everlasting efficacy, that secures the final happiness of all to whom it relates, is better than one of a temporary nature, which was violated by the covenantees, and is become forever obsolete. Hence we read, not only of a better *testament*, but also of better *promises*, on which the New Covenant is established; of a better *hope*, introduced by it; of better *sacrifice*, by which guilt is expiated; of better *things* provided for the Christian, than were enjoyed by the Jewish church; and of a better *country* for an inheritance,<sup>7</sup> than the earthly Canaan. Nay, we are assured by an inspired writer, that the Sinai Covenant and the Mosaic Dispensation had no glory attending them, compared with that of the New Covenant and of the Messiah's Economy.<sup>8</sup> Now, to this more glorious Covenant, the Kingdom of Christ, and the subjects of it, must agree. As, therefore, none but spiritual blessings are contained in that Covenant; so none but real saints are the subjects of our Lord's dominion.

Very different then, is the kingdom, of Christ from the ancient Israelitish Theocracy. For, of that Theocracy, all Abraham's natural descendants were true subjects, and properly qualified members of the Jewish church; such only excepted, as had not been circumcised according to the order of God, or were guilty of some capital crime. To be an obedient subject of their civil government, and a complete member in their ecclesiastical state, were manifestly the same thing: because, by treating Jehovah as their political sovereign, they avowed him as the true God, and were entitled to all the emoluments of their National Covenant. Under that Economy, Jehovah acknowledged all those for *his people*, and himself as *their God*, who performed an external obedience to his commands, even though in their hearts disaffected to him.<sup>9</sup> These prerogatives were enjoyed, independent of sanctifying grace, and of any pretension to it, either in themselves? or in their parents,

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<sup>7</sup> \* Heb. viii. 6. vii. 19, ix. 23. xi. 16, 40,

<sup>8</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 7—11.

<sup>9</sup> \* Judges viii. §3. I Sam. viii 6, 7, and xii. 12. 1 Chron. xxviii. 5. xxix. 23. 2 Chron. ix. 8.

The state of things, however, under the New Economy, is extremely different. For the great Proprietor and Lord of the Christian church having absolutely disclaimed a kingdom that is "of this world." cannot acknowledge any as the subjects of his government, who do not know and revere him—who do not confide in him, and sincerely love him. Having entirely laid aside those ensigns of political sovereignty, and those marks of external grandeur, which made such a splendid appearance in the Jewish Theocracy; he disdains to be called *the King* or *the God*, of any person who does not obey and "worship him in spirit and in truth." Appearing as the head of his church, merely under the character of a spiritual monarch, over whomsoever he reigns, it is in the understanding, by the light of his truth; in the conscience, by the force of his authority; and in the heart, by the influence of his love: for as to all others, his dominion is that of *Providence*, not that of *Grace*. The New Testament affords no more ground for concluding, that our being descended from parents of a certain description, constitutes us the subjects of our Lord's kingdom; than it does to suppose, that carnal descent, in a particular line of ancestry, confers a claim to the character and work of ministers in the same kingdom.

It is of great importance to the right interpretation of many passages in the Old Testament, that this particular be well understood and kept in view. Jehovah is very frequently represented as the Lord and God of all the ancient Israelites; even where it is manifest that the generality of them were considered as destitute of internal piety, and many of them as enormously wicked. How then could he be called *their* Lord, and *their* God, in distinction from his relation to Gentiles, (whose creator, benefactor, and sovereign he was) except on the ground of the Sinai Covenant? He was *THEIR Lord*, as being the sovereign whom, by a federal transaction, they were bound to obey, in opposition to every political monarch, who should at any time presume to govern them by laws of his own. He was *Their God*, as the only object of holy worship; and whom, by the same National Covenant, they had solemnly engaged to serve

according to his own rule, in opposition to every Pagan idol. But that National relation between Jehovah and Israel being long since dissolved, and the Jew having no prerogative above the Gentile; the nature of the Gospel Economy, and of the Messiah's kingdom, absolutely forbids our supposing, that either Jews or Gentiles are warranted to call the Universal Sovereign *THEIR Lord*, or *THEIR God*, if they do not yield willing obedience to him, and perform spiritual worship. It is, therefore, either for want of understanding, or of considering the nature, aspect, and influence of the Sinai Constitution, that many persons dream of the New Covenant, in great numbers of places where Moses and the Prophets had no thought of it, but had the Convention at Horeb directly in view. It is owing to the same ignorance, or inadvertency, that others argue from various passages in the Old Testament, for justification before God by their own obedience, and against the final perseverance of real saints. Because, to be entitled to national happiness, by performing the conditions of the Sinai Covenant, and to lose that right by backsliding into profligacy of manners, are very different things, from obtaining justification before God, and forfeiting an interest in the great Redeemer—so different, that there is no arguing from the one to the Other.

Again: As none but real Christians are the subjects of our Lord's kingdom, neither adults nor infants can be members of the gospel Church, in virtue of an *external* covenant, or of a *relative* holiness. A striking disparity this, between the Jewish and the Christian Church. Of this difference we may be assured by considering, That a barely relative sanctity, supposes its possessors to be the people of God in a merely external sense; that such an external people, supposes an external covenant, or one that relates to exterior conduct and temporal blessings: and an external covenant supposes an external king. Now an external king, is a political sovereign: but such is not our Lord Jesus Christ, nor yet the divine Father. Once, indeed, it was otherwise: for, concerning the Israelitish nation, it is written: "I," Jehovah, "will be thy king. Gideon said unto them, I

will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: Jehovah shall rule over you. Jehovah your God, was your king."<sup>10</sup> It was the peculiar honour and happiness of Israel, to have a sovereign who was the only object of their worship. For thus the Psalmist sings; "Blessed is the nation, whose (King) "Jehovah is their God!"<sup>11</sup> Hence Jehovah's complaint; "They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."<sup>12</sup> Yes, Jehovah, as a temporal monarch, stood related to the ancient Israelites, and entered into a federal transaction with them at Sinai, not only as the Object of their worship, but as their King. Their judicial and civil institutes, their laws of war and of peace, various orders respecting the land they occupied, and the annual acknowledgments to the great Proprietor of it, were all from God, as their political sovereign. Hence all the natural posterity of Jacob were Jehovah's people, on the ground of an external covenant made with the whole nation.

The children of Israel being distinguished from the Gentile world by a system of ceremonial precepts, and their divine Sovereign residing among them, were denominated *a holy nation*: for that external sanctity which they possessed, seems to have arisen, partly from their National Covenant, and partly from their having the Divine Presence among them. By the former, they renounced idolatry in all its forms, and gave up themselves to Jehovah, in opposition to the false objects of Pagan worship; which separation to the service of God, is denominated *holiness*. By the latter, they had a kind of local nearness to God, which conferred a relative sanctity; as appears by various instances. When, for example, Moses with astonishment, beheld the burning bush, the ground on which he stood was pronounced *holy*, because of Jehovah's *peculiar* presence there. Thus it was in the case of Joshua: and so in regard to the place of our Lord's transfiguration; for Peter

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<sup>10</sup> Hosea xiii. 10. Judges viii, 23. 1 Sam. xii. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. xxxiii. 12. and cxliv, 15.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Sam. viii. 7.

calls it "the Holy mount."<sup>13</sup> And why was part of the ancient sanctuary called "the Most Holy place," but because Jehovah, in a singular manner, and under a visible emblem, dwelt there? Hence it is manifest, that the Divine Preference, whether under the form of an *august personage*, as in the case of Joshua; or under the emblem of *devouring fire*, as in the bush, and upon mount Sinai; or under the milder appearance of a *luminous cloud*, as over the mercy-seat, and at our Lord's transfiguration, confers a relative holiness. It is also equally plain, that this miraculous presence of God being withdrawn, from the several places to which we have just adverted, they have now no more holiness than any other part of the earth.

So the Israelites, being separated from all other nations for the worship of Jehovah as their God, to the exclusion of all idolatry; avowing subjection to him as their King, in contradistinction to all other sovereigns; and he residing among them in the sanctuary, as in his royal palace; there was a relative holiness attending their persons, and almost every thing pertaining to them. For not only Jehovah's royal pavilion, with all its utensils and services; the ministers of that sanctuary, and their several vestments; but the people in general, the metropolis of their country, the houses of individuals, the land cultivated by them, and the produce of that land, were all styled *holy*,<sup>14</sup> The Divine Presence residing among them, appears to have had an extensive influence upon the people, with regard to relative sanctity and external purity. For in cases of corporal pollution by disease, the patients were to be excluded from the common intercourses of society, that they might not defile the camp, in the midst of which their sublime Sovereign dwelt.<sup>15</sup> Nay, divine law expressly required, that even the surface of the ground on which they trod should be preserved from defilement by human ordure (excrement, *Pub.*); and the injunction is enforced by this

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<sup>13</sup> Exod. iii. 5. Josh. v. 15. 2 Pet. i. 18. Compare Acts ix, 3, 4.

<sup>14</sup> See Exod. xxviii. 2, 4. xxix. 1. Lev. xix. 23, 24. xx. 26. xxv. 2, 4. xxvii. 14, 30. Numb. xvi. 3, 28, xxxv. 34. Deut. vii. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Numb. v. 2, 3. and xxxv. 34.

consideration, "For Jehovah thy God walketh in the midst of the camp."<sup>16</sup>

Remarkably to our purpose is the declaration of God, when speaking of the ancient sanctuary; "There I will meet with the children of Israel, and" Israel (not the *tabernacle*) "shall be sanctified by my glory."<sup>17</sup> For, as VENEMA observes, "neither the *tabernacle* nor the *altar* is to be understood; but the *Israelites themselves*, as appears by the connection and series of the discourse. Because, in the immediately following verse, the sanctification of the tabernacle, and of *the* altar is expressly mentioned. Besides, it is plain that the external symbol of Jehovah's presence was a sufficient indication of God's *glory* in the tabernacle. Thus the holiness of the people, equally as that of places, was derived from the external presence of God." Now, as the Divine Presence had a local, visible residence over the mercy-seat, which was the throne of Jehovah; as that Presence among the Israelites had such an extensive operation upon their state, both in respect of privilege and of duty; as the whole nation was a typical people, and a great part of their worship of a shadowy nature; we need not wonder, that in such an ecclesiastico-political kingdom almost every thing should be esteemed, in a relative sense, holy.

Under the Gospel Dispensation, however, these peculiarities have no existence. For Christ has not made an external covenant with any people. He is not the king of any particular nation. He dwells not in a palace made with hands. His throne is in the heavenly sanctuary; nor does he afford his visible Presence in any place upon earth. The partition wall between Jews and Gentiles has long been demolished; and, consequently, our divine Sovereign does not stand related to any people, or to any person, so as to confer a relative sanctity, or to produce an external holiness.

While the Sinai Covenant continued in force, the Son of God was the King of the Jews: for though, by Saul and others bearing the

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<sup>16</sup> Deut. xxiii. 12, 13, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Exod. xxix. 43.

regal character, the Divine government was obscured, yet it was not abolished. The kingdom of Israel, "in the hands of the sons of David," being denominated "the kingdom of Jehovah;" the throne on which Solomon sat being called "the throne of Jehovah;"<sup>18</sup> and the laws of the slate being still divine, we are led to view the Jewish kings as the *vicegerents* of Jehovah. In this light the queen of Sheba considered Solomon when she said, "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on His , to be king FOR THE LORD THY GOD."<sup>19</sup> Of the Jewish magistrates it is also written, "Ye judge not for man, but for Jehovah."<sup>20</sup> Now, so long as a political relation subsisted between the Son of God and the seed of Abraham, an External holiness continued, as resulting from that relation. But though this foundation of relative sanctity was not removed till the death of Christ, there is no intimation in the evangelical history of any one being entitled to a New Testament rite, or to the character of a subject in the Messiah's kingdom, in virtue of that holiness. Nay, the reverse appears in the conduct of John towards the Jews.<sup>21</sup>

The Covenant made at Horeb having long been obsolete, all its peculiarities are vanished away; among which, relative sanctity made a conspicuous figure. That National Constitution being abolished, Jehovah's political sovereignty is at an end. The Covenant therefore now in force, and the royal relation of our Lord to the church, are entirely spiritual. All that external holiness of persons, of places; and of things, which existed under the Old Economy, is gone forever: so that if the professors of Christianity do not possess a real, internal sanctity, they have none at all. The National Confederation at Sinai is expressly contrasted, in holy Scripture, with the New Covenant:<sup>22</sup> *if* and though the latter manifestly provides for internal holiness, respecting all the covenantees, yet it says not a word about relative sanctity. And, indeed, how should it? since, by its

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<sup>18</sup> 2 Chron. xiii. 8. 1 Chron. xxviii. 5. & xxix. 23

<sup>19</sup> 2 Chron. ix. 8.

<sup>20</sup> 2 Chron. xix. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Matt. iii. 7—13

<sup>22</sup> Jer. xxxi. 31—34. Heb. viii. 7—12

commencement, the whole Sinai Constitution became obsolete; the partition wall was broken down; the special relation between God and Abraham's natural seed ceased, and left no difference of a religious kind between Jews and Gentiles—no difference, in respect of nearness to God and communion with him, except that which regeneration and faith in Christ produce. For, under the present Dispensation, "Christ is all and in all." We may therefore safely conclude, that were the Jews converted and re-settled in Palestine, both they and their infant offspring would be as entirely destitute of the ancient relative holiness, as those Mohammedans are who now reside in that country.

But did an external holiness now exist, we should be obliged to consider it as very different from that of the ancient Israelites: for it appears, by what has been said, that the grounds of their exterior sanctity make no part of the Christian Economy. Besides, their holiness extended to the whole nation: but in what Utopia shall we find all the inhabitants possessed of this relative purity? Theirs continued as long as they lived; except they committed some enormous crime, by which they forfeited their lives, or were cast out of the congregation; for it did not wear out by age, nor was it lost merely by continuing in a state of unregeneracy. Whereas, that external holiness for which so many plead, is not generally considered by them as extending beyond the time of infancy. But why should any contend for the relative holiness of infants, who deny a sanctity of that kind, to places of worship, to clerical habits, and to various other things? for it is plain that the Jewish external purity, whether of persons, of places, or of things, originated in the same National Covenant, and in the same relation of God to Israel; and, consequently, must have the same duration in one case, as in another. We may therefore justly conclude, that the federal and relative holiness of which so many speak, agrees neither with the laws of Judaism, nor with the nature of Christianity; and if so, it cannot belong to the kingdom of Christ.

Further: If all the subjects of Christ be real saints, it may be justly queried, whether any *National religious establishment* can be a part of his kingdom. That multitudes of individuals belonging to such establishments are subjects of the King Messiah, is cheerfully granted, and the thought gives us much pleasure: but is it not plain, that a National church is inimical (unfriendly, hostile, *Pub.*) to the spirit of our Lord's declaration, "My kingdom is not of this world?" Does not that comprehensive and important saying compel us to view the church and the world in a contrasted point of light? And does not the idea of a National church lead us to confound them? Does it not manifestly confound "the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven;" with "the world, that lies in wickedness," whose names are entered in parish registers?<sup>23</sup> The subjects of our Lord's kingdom are born of God, are called out of the world; but natural birth, and local circumstances are considered, either as giving membership, or as entitling to a positive rite which confers membership, in a National church. The church of England, for instance, includes all English subjects of the British crown, whether they be moral or profligate, pious or profane: such only excepted, as have not been baptized, or as lie under a sentence of excommunication. Nay, so tenacious is the English Church of this idea, as to consider numbers within its pale, who never considered themselves in that light. For, in certain cases, well known to the doctors in Canon Law, Protestant Dissenters, and even Popish Recusants, are cast out of its communion—CAST OUT, with dreadful

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<sup>23</sup> It has been well observed by a sensible writer, that when Jesus told Pilate "the sole end of his kingdom, and of his coming into the world, was *truth*, and the propagation of it; Pilate says, "What is truth?" He knew very well that *truth* had little or nothing to do with the maxims of worldly policy; that he, i.e. Jesus, was not at all likely to be a competitor with Cesar: that a *kingdom of truth* could not interfere with the claims of his master: that it was trifling to accuse him as an enemy to Cesar. But then, had Jesus said that he was setting up a kingdom that claimed *an alliance with the state*, and which pretended to a supremacy, Pilate would have had whereof to accuse him." *Comment on Bp. WARBURTON'S Alliance between Church and State*, p. 9.

penalties annexed, though they never acknowledged themselves to be IN!

The Church of England, indeed, is manifestly a secular kingdom. For it is established by human laws, and acknowledges a political head: nor is it esteemed material whether that head be male or female. It is a creature of the state, supported by the state, incorporated with the state, and governed by a code of laws confirmed by the state—a code, very different from the sacred canons of the New Testament; those being quite foreign to its constitution.<sup>24</sup> Its principal officers are appointed by the crown; and, in virtue of ecclesiastical station, are lords of Parliament.<sup>25</sup> Nay,

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<sup>24</sup> The ecclesiastical law of England," fays Dr. Burn, "is compounded of these four main ingredients; the *Civil* law, the *Canon* law, the *Common* law, and the *Statute* law." *Ecclesiast Law*, Pref. p. i. 5th edit.

<sup>25</sup> That our first Reformers did not approve of secular grandeur, power and employments, being annexed to the character of bishops, is very apparent. Thus MR. TYNDAL, for instance: "Is it not a shame above all shames, and a monstrous thing, that no man should be found able to govern a worldly kingdom, save bishops and prelates, that are taken out of the world, and appointed to preach the kingdom of God? To preach God's word is too much for half a man; and to minister a temporal kingdom is too much for half a man also. Either other requires a whole man. One therefore cannot well do both. Wherefore, if Christ's kingdom be, "not of this world," nor any of his disciples may be otherwise than he was; then Christ's vicars, which minister his kingdom in his bodily absence, and have the oversight of his flock may be none emperors, kings, dukes, lords, knights, temporal judges, or any temporal officer; or, under any false names, have any such dominion, or minister any such office as requireth violence." Thus Bp. LATIMER, in his Sermon of the *Plough*: "Thus much I dare fay, that since *lording* and loitering hath come up, preaching hath come down, contrary to the Apostles' times. For they preached, and *lorded* not : and now they *lord*, and preach not—Ever since the prelates were made lords and nobles, the plough standeth, there is no work done; the people starve—They are otherwise occupied [than in preaching:] some, in king's matters; some are ambassadors; some, of the privy council; some, to furnish the court; some, are *lords of the parliament*; some are presidents, and comptrollers of mints. Well, well. Is this their duty? Is this their office? Is this their calling? Should we have ministers of the church comptrollers of the mints? Is this a meet office for a priest, that hath cure of souls? Is this his charge? I would here ask one question. I would fain know who comptrolls the devil at home in his parish, while he comptrolls the mint? If the Apostles might not leave the office of preaching to be deacons, shall we leave it for minting?" Thus Bp. HOOPER: "Our bishops have so much wit, they can rule and serve, as

even the doctrines professed, and the worship performed in that Establishment, are all secularized. Its creeds and forms of prayer, its numerous rubrics, and various rites, are adopted and used under the sanction of civil authority. Its Liturgy, therefore, may be justly considered as an *Act of Parliament* respecting religious affairs.<sup>26</sup> It must therefore be considered as a kingdom "of this world."

The tenor of the New Testament, however, agreeably to our Lord's maxim, leads us to consider particular churches as Congregational; and as consisting of those who make a credible profession of repentance and faith. Such congregations, wherever they be, constitute the visible kingdom of Christ.—That the apostolic churches were Congregational, is clear from the sacred Records; and that there was no National church for the first three hundred years, is equally evident. Because there could not be any such establishment, till the civil government of some nation or other professed Christianity; which was not the case before CONSTANTINE ascended the imperial throne. Then, indeed, a kind of political Christianity came into fashion, which has continued ever since, and is yet in great repute. Nor are National churches likely to fail, while the policy of sovereign princes, and the pride of aspiring prelates, can support them. But, being established by human laws, and each of them acknowledging a visible head, either civil or ecclesiastical, either prince or pontiff; they ate secular kingdoms, and unworthy the name of Christian churches.

Once more: As none but regenerate persons belong to the kingdom of Christ, no one is a better subject of his dominion, or a

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they say, in both states: in the church, and also in the civil policy. When one of them is more than any man is able to satisfy, let him do always his best diligence —They know that the primitive church had no such bishops as be now a-days." In Mr. PIERCE'S *Vindicat. of Dissent*. Part 111. chap. 1.

<sup>26</sup> "The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion," says Dr. BURN, "agreed upon in Convocation, in the year 1562; and the *Rubrich* of the Book of Common Prayer, —being both of them established by Act of Parliament, are to be esteemed as *part of the Statute Law*—What is alleged from [the Thirty-nine Articles] in the following book, *is* inserted, not as matter of *doctrine*, but as matter of *LAW*." *Ecclesiastical Law*. Preface, p. xxvi, xxvii

more honourable member of his church, on account of *wealth* or *power*. These things, though useful in their places, of much reputation in a secular empire, and of great consequence to it; neither pertain to the true glory of a Christian church, nor to the sterling worth of a Christian character. For what concern have worldly wealth and civil power, in forming a spiritual character, or in adorning a spiritual kingdom? The greatest affluence and the highest authority that mortals can enjoy, add nothing to any one's moral worth. No one is a better man, because he is rich and powerful; nor the worse, because he is poor and in a low station. These things are all exterior to moral character. For the most licentious are often exalted and wealthy, while the most upright and amiable are lost in obscurity, and oppressed with want. Besides, when wealth or power is possessed by a true subject of our Lord's kingdom, the honour attending his character does not arise from his riches, or his authority; but from the holiness of his life, or his likeness to Jesus Christ.

As our British Sovereign is the fountain of honour to all his subjects, even so is the King Messiah to all that are under his dominion. The only way, however, to be great and honourable in his kingdom, is to be humble, diligent, and useful, in promoting the happiness of our fellow Christians and fellow creatures. For, among the fundamental laws of Messiah's empire, the following is one, and it relates to comparative honour: "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your MINISTER, δια δούλου ; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be SERVANT (δου λου) of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."<sup>27</sup> This being the law of honour, and the rule of promotion, in the kingdom of Christ, we may safely conclude, that the meanest domestic may be a dignified character in a gospel church, and "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour while his wealthy and powerful master, professing the same faith, may disgrace the name of a Christian, and bring reproach on the

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<sup>27</sup> Mark x. 42—45. Matt. xx. 26—27.

congregation to which he belongs. If the former be diligent and faithful in his menial station; if he be "found in the faith," zealous for God, and heavenly-minded; he is an honourable subject of Jesus Christ, and high in the estimation of Heaven. If, on the contrary, the latter be formal in his religious profession; if he be unjust or haughty, voluptuous or covetous; he does not belong to the kingdom of Christ, but is manifestly a subject of Satan,

Nor do the most shining *mental accomplishments*, or *literary acquisitions*, enter into the true glory of this kingdom. Genius and learning, like wealth and power, are frequently possessed by the worst of moral characters. They cannot, therefore, make any part of that excellence by which the subjects of Jesus Christ are distinguished from those of secular princes. It is not by the gifts of common Providence, among which parts and learning make a conspicuous figure; but by the graces of the Holy Spirit, that any person, as a Christian, is worthy of regard. Yes, it is faith in Christ, and obedience to him; love to God, and benevolence to man; humility, patience and resignation; spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, which adorn the subjects of our Lord's kingdom—which distinguish them from the children of this world. These, and similar things, respect the state of the conscience, and of the heart. They form a character for eternity, and savour of the heavenly world. Whereas learning and parts, equally as wealth and power, are quite of a different nature. The distinction they make between one and another is entirely superficial, and often disgraced by a profligate heart—belongs only to this world, and has no connection with heaven. But, as will appear in its proper place, the kingdom of Christ is nearly allied to heaven—is a state of preparation for its everlasting blessedness, an introduction to its employments, and gives an earnest of its fruitions. Consequently, the true glory of that kingdom cannot but consist: in the lively exercise of holy tempers and heavenly affections. The more there is of a likeness to heaven in the heart and life of any Christian; the more there is of that honour which comes from God," and the more is the cause of Christ:

adorned. To be a real subject of this kingdom, is a much greater honour than merely to be a Prophet, or an Apostle. For Balaam was the former, and Judas was the latter; yet both of them were base and wretched. "Rejoice not that the devils are subject to you; but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels,—and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am "nothing," in the estimate of a spiritual Sovereign, or in reference to the heavenly state.

No minister of the word, therefore, when performing his public work, should ever think of exalting himself as an officer in this kingdom, by displaying his learning, his genius or his eloquence; for that would be to "preach himself," not "Christ Jesus the Lord;" but, as "in the sight of God," he should honestly aim at commending himself to every man's conscience, by manifestation of the truth. Then will he imitate a first-rate minister in the Messiah's kingdom, and obtain the approbation of his divine Sovereign. Besides, in the displays of profound learning, by critical disquisitions; of great acumen, by metaphysical speculations; or of a sparkling genius, by sprightly turns of wit, Christ and conscience feel their interests but little concerned. For Christ is too observant of the preacher's motives, and too jealous of his own honour, to be pleased with such a procedure: and conscience is either too sleepy to be aroused, or too much pained to receive relief, by those means. If our Lord consider himself as honoured by the preacher's labours, and if the minister have any reason to expect success, it must be by a faithful and simple promulgation of revealed truths—those truths which regard supreme authority in the divine law, and saving grace in the glorious gospel—those truths, I will add, which lie open to common capacities. If the conscience receive advantage, it is by the operation of the same truths; either as convincing of sin and enforcing duty, or as revealing pardon and affording peace. But the honour of Christ and the tranquillity of conscience are seldom promoted, in a public

ministry, by the researches of learning, or the refinements of genius: for they are too sacred, and too spiritual, to acknowledge their obligations to such things.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world, with regard to THE MEANS he employed in its first establishment, and those he appointed for its enlargement and support. Craft and violence, injustice and cruelty, have been commonly used in the founding, supporting, and extending of secular kingdoms. The Roman empire was founded, and grew to its height, in blood. Even the Jewish republic was established, enlarged, and defended by force of arms. The Canaanitish nations, on account of their enormous wickedness, were exterminated by the sword of Israel; or, if spared by the chosen tribes, became tributary to them. This, though according to Jehovah's appointment, as the great Proprietor of the whole earth; and though a righteous execution of punishment for acts of rebellion against the Eternal sovereign; was a plain indication that, in various respects, the Israelitish church was a kingdom of this world. Such also was that kingdom of the Messiah which the carnal Jews in our Lord's time vainly expected, whenever the great promise made to their fathers should be fulfilled: for they dreamed of being exalted to the highest pitch of political grandeur, and of having all other nations under their control. The principal instruments employed by princes, to establish, maintain, and extend their dominions, are—not persons the most remarkable for integrity and benevolence, for piety and philanthropy; but those who are most eminent for political prudence, or martial bravery; for secret intrigue, or open hostility—those who are best qualified to persuade by eloquence, to circumvent by cunning, or to subdue by force.

But the most illustrious instruments employed by our Anointed Prince, in the erecting of his monarchy, were of a character quite the reverse. They were chiefly selected from the lower orders of life, and called from occupations esteemed mean. Uneducated in the courts of royalty, in the schools of learning, and in the field of war; they were entire strangers to the finesse of politicians, little

acquainted with Gentile, philosophy, and unpracticed in the art of eloquence. It may be justly presumed, therefore, that a strong degree of rusticity appeared in their dress, their aspect, and their accent: for they were apparently *unlearned and unpolished men*. So ignorant were they of sciences called liberal, so impolite in their address, and so uncanonical in their garb, that multitudes called Christians, it is highly probable, would be ashamed to give them a hearing, were they now present among us, unless the public attention were first excited by the exercise of miraculous powers. Yes, by the instrumentality of those unlettered and plain men did our Lord erect his kingdom, or establish the Gospel Church. In making war upon Satan's empire, evangelical truth and spiritual gifts, laborious preaching and ardent prayer, fortitude, patience, and a holy example, were the arms they used. Such were the militia, and such the armour, employed by our divine Sovereign; yet perfectly suited to the nature of his kingdom: for it is an empire, not of secular power and external pomp; but of truth and righteousness, of love and peace.

Were the Messiah's kingdom "of this world," his loyal subjects might lawfully take the sword, to repel assailants and guard against his enemies: for, without the liberty of such defence, no secular state can long subsist. This, however, he absolutely prohibited; which prohibition is founded in the peculiar nature of his kingdom. For thus he speaks, to one who thought of defending his person and cause by force; "Put up thy sword into the sheath." Soon after, on another occasion, he said, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." As by the particle *now* our spiritual Sovereign apparently refers to his kingdom among the Jews; so he seems to distinguish his dominion in the Gospel Church, from that over the Israelitish nation.

The Holy Spirit, in former times, frequently came upon the subjects of Jehovah's government, to inspire them with martial courage for the defence of his kingdom, and to destroy his enemies.

Hence, among the ancient worthies, we read of those who "subdued kingdoms, waxed valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens." But the disciples of Christ being called to a different kind of conflict, divine energy is granted for a different purpose. The military service of a Christian, as such, is entirely of a spiritual nature. It is a "good fight of faith:" a "striving against sin," in himself, and in the world around him: a "holding fast the profession of his faith," in spite of all opposition. The Christian hero is conformed to the Captain of salvation, in maintaining the truth, and in bearing the cross; in enduring the contradiction of sinners, and in despising the shame that is cast upon him. His accouterments are, as Paul informs us, "the girdle of truth," and "the breast-plate of righteousness; the shield of faith, the helmet of hope," and "the sword of the Spirit"<sup>28</sup> Such is the armour provided by the King Messiah for his devoted subjects; by which they are enabled to defend themselves, and to promote the general interests of his kingdom. This holy empire depends not, either for ornament or support, upon power, wealth, or learning. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, faith Jehovah."

Neither the force of *secular power*, nor the arts of *carnal policy*, ought therefore to be used in promoting the cause of Christ: such things being quite abhorrent from his intention, and from the nature of his kingdom. The great design of our Lord in founding a spiritual empire was, to display the perfections of God in the holiness and happiness of his chosen people. The kingdom of Christ, as before observed, is a dominion of truth and of rectitude, of love and of peace. Now the interests of such a monarchy, and the end proposed by it, cannot be promoted by any other than spiritual means, and those of divine appointment. It is only so far as the minds of men are enlightened by heavenly truth, their consciences impressed with God's authority, and their hearts engaged on spiritual things, that the cause of Christ is advanced. But in what way shall persecuting force be applied, to irradiate the dark understanding, to arouse the stupid

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<sup>28</sup> Ephes. vi. 10—18. 1 Thess. v. 8. 2 Cor. x. 3, 4, 5.

conscience, and to sanctify the depraved heart? It is only by the fruits of an adoring affection for God, of sincere love to the brethren, and of cordial good will to all mankind, that our Lord is honoured, or his end answered, by the subjects of his dominion. How, then, shall coercive measures increase those fruits of holiness? Or, how shall malevolence, in any of its infernal forms, be employed to support a kingdom of love and of peace?

Nor are the contrivances of *carnal policy* less foreign from the nature of this kingdom, than the exertions of secular power. For what has the policy of princes, or of prelates, to do in maintaining, or in extending an empire of truth and of rectitude? Truth seeks no subterfuge, and rectitude sears no examination: but the operations of policy are subtle, and its first designs are latent (hidden, concealed, *Ed*). The policy of great men may form civil establishments of Christianity, and adorn the exterior of public worship. It may dignify ministers of the word with pompous titles, unknown to the New Testament, and invest them with temporal power, till their claim of succeeding to the Apostles becomes an insult upon common sense. These and similar things may be effected by it, under the fair pretext of rendering religion respectable, and of making it more general: but the empire of Jesus Christ disdains them all, because they belong to the kingdoms of this world.

But though our Lord neither needs, nor accepts the puny arts of men, to advance his cause and support his interests; yet various methods have been devised by ecclesiastics, to obviate "the offence of the cross" to render themselves respectable, and to promote something called *Christianity*. That they might not be thought, like the Fishermen of Galilee, "unlearned and ignorant" persons, they have eagerly sought literary titles, and to be called *Rabbi*.<sup>29</sup> To adorn

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<sup>29</sup> I will here subjoin an anecdote from the pen of Dr. JOHN OWEN, respecting himself. Thus he speaks:—"For the title *Reverend*, I do give [Mr. CAWDREY] notice, that I very little value it, ever since I have considered the saying of LUTHER: So that he may, as to me, forbear it for the future, and call me as the Quakers do, and it shall suffice. And, for that of *Doctor* it was conferred on me by the University in my *absence* and *against my consents* as they have expressed it

the ministerial office, and to sanction their administrations, they have been as careful as Jewish priests to appear in canonicals. To prevent the pride of their hearers being disgusted, certain humiliating truths have been kept out of fight; and, that the consciences of others might not be pained, softening interpretations of divine precepts have been given. To stand free from a suspicion of bigotry, the importance of capital truths has been surrendered; and to keep fair with something called *charity*, it has been agreed that human inventions should hold the place of divine institutions. Many of the clerical character, in our National Establishment, have deliberately subscribed what they did not believe;<sup>30</sup> solemnly professed their consent to what they could not approve; and frequently practised, as part of their public devotions, what they were constrained to wish had never existed.<sup>31</sup> Nay, as if the ministers of that establishment possessed a righteous monopoly of publishing evangelical truth, and of administering divine institutions, numbers of them have sworn to persecute their Protestant Dissenting neighbours for daring to hold separate assemblies.<sup>32</sup> Thus multitudes

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under their public seal: nor doth any thing but *gratitude* and *respect* unto them, make me once own it; and freed from that obligation, I should never use it more: nor did use it, until some were offended with me, and blamed me for my neglect of them." *Defence of Review of Schism*, prefixed to Mr. COTTON'S *Defence against Mr. CAWDREY*, p. 97, 98, Oxford, 1658.

<sup>30</sup> Thus Dr. JORTIN: "There are propositions contained in our Liturgy and Articles, which no man of common Cense amongst us believes," In *Monthly Review enlarged*, Vol. VII. p. 59,

<sup>31</sup> For can any man upon earth really believe *all* that is contained in the *Thirty-nine Articles*, and cordially approve of *every thing* contained in the *Book of Common Prayer*? Yet an unfeigned assent, an assent absolute and without condition, is required. See *Canon xxxvi.* and Dr. Burn's *Ecclesiastical Law* Vol. I. p. 162. Edition 5th.

<sup>32</sup> Thus runs part of an oath which is taken *by* Graduates in the University of Oxford. That is, "*You shall in a particular manner swear that you will not obstruct peace, harmony and love, among any communities, or persons, of this University. And if any difference arise among any communities or persons, you shall not in any way cherish or inflame it; nor ought you to be present in Conventicles, nor either expressly or tacitly consent to them; BUT RATHER HINDER THEM BY ANY MEANS IN YOUR POWER.*" How any man, at all acquainted with the rights of conscience, can take this Oath; or, having taken it, can treat Dissenters as

have subscribed and consented, trimmed and sworn, to promote the interests of a spiritual kingdom—a kingdom of truth, of love, and of peace!

Some, of different communions, have deliberately acted as if the preacher's work were a mere trial of his skill, and as if a pulpit were the stage of a harlequin. To display the fertility of their invention, they have selected for texts mere scraps of scripture language; which, so far from containing complete propositions, have not, in their dislocated state, conveyed a single idea. Upon these they have harangued; while the ignorant multitude have been greatly surprised that the preacher could find so much, where common capacities perceived nothing.— Sometimes these men of genius will choose passages of Scripture expressive of plain historical facts, which have no connection with the great work of salvation by Jesus Christ; and handle them (not professedly by way of accommodation, for then it might occasionally be admitted) but as if they were *sacred allegories*. Such historical facts being *spiritualized* as they love to call it, doctrines, privileges, duties in abundance, are easily derived

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Christian brethren, without renouncing his own conformity, I cannot imagine. A more shocking dilemma can scarcely be conceived: for it is *persecution* on the one hand, and *perjury* on the other! Of a similar complexion is the eleventh Canon of the Church of England, which is entitled, *Maintainers of Conventicles censured*, and it reads thus: "Whosoever hereafter affirm or maintain, that there are within this realm other meetings, assemblies, or congregations of the king's born subjects, than such as by the laws of this land are held and allowed, which may rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful churches: Let him be excommunicated, and not restored, hut by the archbishop, after his repentance, and public revocation of such his wicked errors," I will here subjoin the following remark of Dr. OWEN; "There is in this [ecclesiastical] Conformity required a renunciation of all other ways of public worship, or means of edification, that may be made use of. For they are all expressly forbidden in the rule of that conformity. No man, therefore, can comply with that rule, but that a renunciation of all other public ways of edification as *unlawful*, is part of the visible profession which they make. *Video meliora proboque deteriora sequor*, is no good plea in religion. It is uprightness and integrity that will preserve men, and nothing else. He that shall endeavour to cheat his conscience by distinctions, and mental reservations, in any concernments of religious worship, I fear he hath little of it, if any at ail, that is good for aught." *Enquiry into the Orig. Nature, institut. and Commun. of Evan, Churches*, p. 228, 229.

from them. Nay, so ingenious are preachers of this turn, that it is no hard matter for them to find a great part of their creed in almost any text they take. Thus they allegorize common sense into pious absurdity. It might, perhaps, be too barefaced, though it would certainly suit the vanity of such preachers, were they frequently to address their hearers on the pronominal monosyllable *I*; and there are two passages of sacred Writ where it occurs in the most apt manner. The former would make an admirable text; the latter a noble conclusion: and they are as follow: "Such a man as *I*—Is not this great Babylon that *I* have built?"<sup>33</sup>

Others, and often the fame persons, frequently use the gestures of the theatre, and the language of a mountebank: as if their business were to amuse, to entertain, and to make their hearers laugh. Extravagant attitudes and quaint expressions, idle stories and similes quite ludicrous, appear in abundance, and constitute no small part of the entertainment furnished by such persons. But in what a state must the consciences of those preachers be, who can deliberately and with premeditation act in this manner! Or, what must we think of their petitions for divine assistance, in add re sting the people, when they intend thus to treat them !—I called it *entertainment*; and, surely, they themselves do not consider it in a religious point of light. For, can any man, who is not insane, deliberately adopt measures of this kind, when really aiming, either to produce, or to promote, a devotional and heavenly temper in the hearts of his

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<sup>33</sup> Mr. G. GREGORY, when animadverting (passing criticism or censure, *Pub.*) on the conduct which is here censured, says; "It is dangerous on any occasion to depart from the plain track of common sense; and there is no attempt at ingenuity so easy as that which borders upon nonsense: it is one of the mean artifices of barren genius, to surprise the audience with a text consisting of one or two words. I have heard of a person of this description, who preached from *Jehovah Jireh.*; and another, from the monosyllable, *But.* These are contemptible devices, more adapted to the moving theatre of the mountebank than to the pulpit, and can only serve to captivate the meanest and most ignorant of the vulgar." *Sermons*, Introd. p 14, 15, 18. Mr. CLAUDE says, "Never choose such texts as have not a complete sense; for only impertinent and foolish people will attempt to preach from one or two words, which signify nothing," *Essay on Composit. of a Serm.* Vol. I. p. 3.

hearers? Yet that is the general end of preaching. Or, can the preacher have any devotion, while showing the airs of a mountebank (person who deceives in order to trick, *Pub.*); and when, if the bulk of his auditory had no more decency than himself, there would be a burst of laughter throughout the assembly? Whatever such declaimers may think, where there is no solemnity, there is no devotion; and we may venture to add, that a person habitually destitute of devotion in his own heart, while pretending to teach others the doctrine of Christ, is a wretched character in the fight of God, and has reason to tremble. Such a man serves not our Lord Jesus Christ, but in some form or other, his own interests. He may wish for popularity, and perhaps may obtain it from the ignorant multitude; but people of sense and of piety will consider him as disgracing his office, as affronting their understandings, and as insulting the majesty of that Divine Presence in which he stands. For where or when upon earth are we to expect solemnity, if not in a worshipping assembly, and in him that leads the public devotion? In such a situation, a man should be solemn as death.

It may perhaps be said; "This kind of trifling has its use. It is a mean of exciting curiosity, and of drawing many to hear the gospel, who might not otherwise have the least inclination so to do." Such, I presume, is the chief reason by which preachers of this cast endeavour to justify themselves at the bar of their own consciences. In answer to which, a repetition of that capital saying, "My kingdom is not of this world," might be sufficient: for that must be a wretched cause, even of a secular kind, which needs buffoonery to support it. To trifle in the service of God, is to be profane. It is, therefore, an impious kind of trifling; and "shall we do evil that good may come?" Through the interference of Providence, and the sovereign grace of God, various instances of enormous wickedness have issued in the highest good to mankind. Of this we have undoubted evidence in the selling of Joseph by his envious brethren. We have a still more striking instance in the death of Christ, through the treachery of

Judas and malice of the Jews. Nay, persecution has frequently been an occasion of spreading the gospel; yet few, I take it for granted, have persecuted for that end, or attempted to justify the practice upon that principle. Were this farcical conduct lawful, there would be reason to think that the cause of Christ, and the interests of harlequin, are nearly allied; because, the same kind of means is adapted to promote them.

The Seraphim, however, in Isaiah's vision, and the Apostles of Christ, appear to have had a very different view of the case. The *former* who seem to be an emblem of apostolic ministers, are presented to notice, as performing the service of their Sublime Sovereign with profoundest awe. Struck with the majesty of his appearance, and penetrated by the authority of his commands, they adore and obey with all humility, and with all solemnity. Agreeably to which, the *latter* give it as divine law, that those who would perform acceptable worship, must do it "with reverence and godly fear." This law of devotion, they further inform us, is founded in the nature of things; as appears by the reason assigned to enforce the precept, "For our God is a Consuming Fire." Such is the Christian's God, with regard to his purity, his jealousy, and his justice.<sup>34</sup>

Conformable to this idea of that Sublime Being whom every preacher professes to serve, was the conduct of Paul, when dispensing the gospel. For, in opposition to some who "handled the word of God deceitfully," to amuse the carnally minded, and win their affections; he laboured, "by manifestation of the truth, to commend himself to every man's conscience," as in the fight of God." Truth, conscience, and God! What sacred and solemn ideas! Yet Paul, as a preacher, habitually acted under their influence. That evangelical truth might be displayed, that the human conscience might, be impressed, and that the will of God might be performed, were all included in his design. How foreign are these particulars from every thing of a farcical nature! Nor can any person who considers himself, when preaching the word, as having eternal truth

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<sup>34</sup> Heb xii. 28, 29. Exod. xxiv. 17. Deut. iv. 24, ix. 3.

for the subject of his discourse, the consciences of men for the objects of his regard, and the omniscient God for a witness of his conduct, be otherwise than solemn: for such a one will speak, as knowing that he "must give an account." When hearing a minister who acts in character, and copies the example of Paul, we are led to reflect on that ancient oracle; "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me," to perform sacred service. But when sitting under the effusions of a pulpit buffoon, the language of an Egyptian tyrant occurs to remembrance; "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey him?" or what is his worship, that I should treat it with reverence?

When a sermon was expected from Peter, by Cornelius and his friends, the Centurion expressed himself thus: "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." These Gentiles, it is manifest, were penetrated with devout solemnity, and filled with holy expectation. Not being assembled for carnal amusement, but in order to know and perform the will of God, they considered themselves as in the Divine Presence; and so did their inspired teacher. A worthy example for us to follow, when convened to preach and to hear the word of truth. But how contrary to this is that pulpit drollery (amusement of a buffoon, *Pub.*), which is the object of our censure! For it converts the solemn service of God (shocking metamorphosis!) into carnal amusement: upon which numbers indeed attend with pleasure, but with no more devotion than if they were in a play-house.

Is there any reason to be surprised that men of sense, who are already prejudiced against the genuine gospel, should have their disaffection to evangelical truths increased, when they find those truths avowed, and their importance loudly urged, by merry-andrews? If, instead of "sound speech which cannot be condemned," they meet with extravagance and nonsense, what will they say? Is there any reason to wonder, that Infidels should thence take occasion to ridicule the Scripture, as calculated to serve the meanest purposes; or that they should contemptuously call preaching *priestcraft*? If

those who profess to love revealed truths dress them up in a fool's coat, for the entertainment of their hearers, will Deists forbear to laugh? If, where the "man of God" should be heard, with all solemnity warning sinners "to flee from the wrath to come," and entreating them "to be reconciled to God;" a farcical droll appear, spouting low wit, and provoking risibility (laughter, *Pub.*), will not the Infidel say; "The preacher himself does not believe the Christian ministry to be a divine appointment, nor the exercise of it a devotional service; but he finds it convenient for secular purposes to make pretenses of that kind?"

Among all the devices of carnal policy for the support and enlargement of our Lord's kingdom, there are none more contemptible, and few more detestable, than that of converting the pulpit into a stage of entertainment. Of this mind was an old Nonconformist minister, when he said; Of all preaching in the world I hate that most, which has a tendency to make the hearers laugh; or to affect their minds with such levity as stage-plays do, instead of affecting them with an holy reverence for the name of God. We should suppose, as it were, when we draw near him in holy things, that we saw the throne of God, and the millions of glorious angels attending him; that we may be awed with his majesty, lest we profane his service, and take his name in vain." To the pulpit harlequin we may therefore apply the following lines;

"If angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight:

More struck with grief, or wonder, who can tell?"

### **The kingdom of Christ Is not of this world, in regard to the LAWS by which it Is governed.**

Secular kingdoms are under the direction of human laws, which are frequently weak, partial, and unjust—of laws which, when least imperfect, extend their coercive power no farther than the exterior behaviour; for it would be vain and ridiculous in a temporal sovereign to think of giving law to the thoughts or desires of any

subject. Civil penalties are the sanction of human laws, and external force gives them their energy. Not so the laws of this holy empire. For, proceeding from Him, in whom are "all the treasures of knowledge," they must be consummately wise: being enacted by Him who is inflexibly just and supremely kind, they cannot but be perfectly good: being given by Him, who searches the heart and is Lord of conscience, their obligation extends to the latent desire, and the rising conception. The motives enforcing obedience to them, are the smiles and the frowns of Him who has our everlasting all at his disposal.

As is the kingdom, such is the sovereign; and as is the sovereign, such are his laws. If the kingdom be "of this world," it must have a political sovereign; whose laws must be coercive, and confined to exterior behaviour. But if the kingdom be of a spiritual kind, the sovereign must be so too. His laws must extend no less to the conscience than to the conversation, and be enforced by sanctions of a spiritual nature. Such is the King Messiah, and such are the laws of his kingdom.

The subjects of our divine Sovereign may be considered, either as detached individuals, or as united in distinct societies, and visibly professing their subjection to his authority. Hence the execution of those laws by which they are governed, comes under a twofold consideration. *As detached individuals*, the application of his laws to particular cases, is entirely with him, and with the conscience of each individual. *As united in distinct societies*, which are called particular churches, his laws of admission, of worship, and of exclusion, are to be applied by the community—applied, not under the influence of secular motives, but under the operation of his authority, and for purposes entirely spiritual.

By the laws of this kingdom, a credible profession of repentance and faith is required of all, previous to baptism. Such profession being considered as an evidence of their "fellowship in the gospel" and of willing subjection to the authority of Christ; they are entitled

to membership in a particular church. On this ground they are admitted; nor do they forfeit their membership, except by some capital departure from *that* gospel, or some flagrant offence against *this* authority. But as, by the laws of our heavenly Sovereign, their admission to visible fellowship was entirely for spiritual purposes, their exclusion from it does not include any temporal disadvantages. Their situation as men, and as the subjects of a political state, not being altered by their church relation commencing; they should not be affected, in those respects, by the dissolution of that relation. For as the laws of Christ say nothing about the admission of one or another, on account of his domestic or civil connections; nor yet for his wealth or influence, his parts or learning; so they are equally silent about pecuniary fines and satisfactory penances, about civil disabilities and corporal punishments, attending the exclusion of any offender. The former being quite foreign from qualifications for a spiritual kingdom, the latter must be utterly abhorrent from the laws by which it is governed; being manifestly the inventions of Antichrist, and the supporters of his cruel throne. For civil penalties, in this case, are adapted to generate fear, and promote hypocrisy; to suppress truth, and render Christianity itself suspicious.

Here we perceive another disparity between the Jewish and the Christian church. Under the Old Economy, the laws of religion were sanctioned by *temporal penalties*, and frequently those of the severest kind.<sup>35</sup> To be cast out of the congregation, or to be forbidden access to the sanctuary worship, (except for ceremonial pollution) was to be deprived, not only of ecclesiastical privileges, but also of civil rights. The church and the state being co-extended, and including the same persons, an exclusion from the former was an expulsion from the latter; whether it was by a sentence of capital punishment, or in some other way. But this, like many other things, was peculiar to that Dispensation. It was founded in the National form of their church state, and in their Theocracy. Thence it was that

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<sup>35</sup> See Exod. xii. 15, 19. xxx. 33, 38. xxxi. 14. Lev. vii. 20—27. xvii 3—9. xix. 8. xxiii. 27, 29. Numb. ix. 13. xv. 30, 31. xix. 13. with many other similar places.

blasphemy and idolatry were punished with death, as being high treason against their divine Sovereign. That Economy being abolished, the church of God has taken a new form, "The priesthood being changed, there is of necessity a change also of the law," relating to the constitution, members, worship, and government of the church. The laws of admission, and of exclusion, must therefore be very different; as well as those pertaining to public worship. Now, to understand these laws, we must study—not the Pentateuch of Moses; much less the *Provinciale* of LYNDWOOD, the *Codex* of GIBSON, or the *Jus Ecclesiasticum* of BOEHMER, but —the New Testament of Jesus Christ. To reason from the constitution and form, the laws and government, the privileges and rites of the Jewish, to those of the Christian church; is to adopt a capital principle of Papal depravity, and grossly to corrupt our holy religion.

Our divine Sovereign has also provided for the edification of his loyal subjects, by ordinances and rites of worship, no less than for the government of his kingdom. As King of the Christian church, it constitutes a distinguished part of his royal prerogative, to prescribe the whole of that spiritual service which is to be performed. Of this prerogative Jehovah was always jealous; nor, under the former Economy, did he ever more instantly or more severely punish, than when his orders about the affairs of religion were disregarded; even though, as in the case of Uzzah, the motive appeared laudable. What is religion, in its various branches, but that obedience which is due to God? And what is obedience, but submission to his authority? Now, as authority exerts itself in commands, there cannot be obedience, there cannot be holy worship, where there is no divine command, either explicit or implied. "Who hath required this at your hands? In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"—exclude and condemn a great number of things, which millions esteem ornamental and useful in the worship of God.

Strange, that any Protestant church should avowedly claim a "power to decree rites or ceremonies" in the solemn service of our

divine Lord! As if he were not the legislator in his own kingdom! Or as if, though possessed of authority, he had not wisdom enough to provide for his own honour; or were defective in goodness, respecting his faithful subjects! But whatever the compilers and the subscribers of a National Creed may think, to perform rites which Christ; did not appoint, and to alter those which he enjoined, are vile impeachments of his royal character, and must expose to his resentment. The former usurps his throne; the latter annuls his laws. —*Strange*, did I say? the expression must be recalled. For there is no reason to wonder that a National religious establishment, with a political sovereign for its head, should make the claim I have just mentioned. Who can doubt whether the same authority which constitutes, governs and supports a community for any particular purpose, may not prescribe to that community with a view to the end intended by it. But things should not be called by wrong names; and to denominate such an establishment *a church of Christ*, is a gross misnomer.

**The kingdom of Christ is not like the empires of this worlds in regard to EXTERNAL SPLENDOR.**

The grandeur of a temporal kingdom chiefly consists in the number and affluence of its nobility, the titles and pompous appearance of its various magistrates, the flourishing state of its trade and commerce, the wealth of its yeomanry (volunteer cavalry force, *Pub.*), and the elegance of its public buildings. Magnificent palaces and royal robes are quite in character for secular princes. Ensigns of honour, splendid equipages, and stately mansions, are suitable to the nobles; while a more solemn kind of exterior pomp is very becoming the ministers of public justice. These and similar things give an air of dignity and of importance to political sovereignties; but they are all foreign to the kingdom of Christ, the glory of which is entirely spiritual. The Christian Church is dignified and adorned, by being the depositary of divine truth in its unadulterated state, and

by practicing divine appointments in their primitive purity; by possessing the beauties of holiness, and by enjoying the presence of God. Such is the true glory of our Lord's kingdom, which renders it incomparably superior to every temporal monarchy.

It must therefore be very absurd to think of doing honour to Christianity, by erecting *pompous places* of worship, by *consecrating* those places, and by adorning ministers with *showy vestments*, in the performance of public worship. Let the palaces of princes, and the mansions of the mighty, be magnificent and richly ornamented; let the nobles and judges of the land, when acting agreeably to their different characters, appear in robes of state and in robes of magistracy; as those things belong to the kingdoms of this world, nor pretend to any thing more, there is nothing amiss, nothing inconsistent with station or profession. But confine them there, and by no means think of decorating the kingdom, or of prompting the cause of Christ, by any thing similar. Were any man to lacquer gold, and paint the diamond, to increase their luster, he would certainly be considered as insane. Yet the conduct of those persons is more absurd, who borrow the trappings of secular kingdoms, to adorn the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ.

As to *places of worship*, convenience is all that is wanted, and all that becomes the simplicity of Christianity. To lay the first stone of such an edifice with solemn formalities, is Jewish:<sup>36</sup> to dedicate it, when completed, to any particular saint, is manifestly superstitious: to consecrate it by any solemn form, looks as if it succeeded to the honours of Solomon's temple; as if the Deity were expected to reside in it, rather than grant his presence to the Congregation worshipping there; and as if it were to possess a relative holiness, like that of the ancient sanctuary, I may venture to add, that any religious parade at the first, opening of such a place, is apparently inconsistent with the idea of all distinction of places, in regard to worship, being

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<sup>36</sup> Ezra iii. 10, 11.

abolished, and too much resembles a Jewish, or a Popish consecration.<sup>37</sup>

With regard to *ministers*, when attending to any branch of their holy function, let them not think of heightening their own importance, or of promoting the cause of Christ, by imitating Jewish or Pagan priests, adorned with peculiar habits, when performing their different rites. If Christian ministers be decently clothed, when in their own families, when visiting their friends, or when walking the streets, why should they not be considered as properly habited for the performance of their sacred office? What reason can be assigned for the use of any particular dress, when engaged in public service, that would not militate against the spirituality of our Lord's kingdom, and the simplicity of his worship? But, alas, too many of them, like the ancient Scribes, "desire to walk in Long Robes," and love to be called Rabbi.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>I will *here* subjoin a few particulars mentioned by Mr. James Owen, relative to Consecrations. He shows that the Israelites dedicated not only the tabernacle and temple, but also their private houses, and their cities (Deut. xx. 5. Psalm xxx. *title*. Nehem. xii. 27.)—That the Jewish synagogues were not consecrated, nor esteemed holy, as the temple was—That the consecration of places for Christian worship was invented in the time of CONSTANTINE—That Christians had not long been in possession of consecrated temples, before they thought it expedient to furnish them with altars; and being provided with altars, they afterwards invented the sacrifice of the mass—That the Papists, like the old Pagan Romans, first consecrate the ground, and then the edifice erected upon it—That DURANDUS argues for the consecration of churches, from the example of Nebuchadnezzar dedicating his golden image—That Roman Catholics consecrate, with various and solemn formalities, the first foundation-stone of a building intended for public worship—That they consecrate bells, priests' garments, and almost every thing belonging to their corrupted worship—That though in England, since the Reformation, it does not appear that any Form for the consecrating of churches, and of burying-grounds, has received the sanction of public authority; yet various Forms for those purposes have been published and used—That the consecrating bishop *blesse*s the church or chapel, and prays "that the blessed Spirit would send down on the *place, his sanctifying power and grace*:"— That he consecrates "the font, the pulpit, the reading-desk, the communion table, the paten, the chalice, and so on. *Hist. of Consecrat. of Altars, Temples, and Churches, passim*—See a *Form for the Consecration of Churches and Church-yards*, in DR. BURN'S *Ecclesiastical Law*. Article CHURCH, Vol. i. p. 301—308. Edition 5<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Luke xx. 46. Matt. xxiii. 7.

It may, perhaps, be said; "Clerical habits are indifferent and harmless things, except when they are imposed." But *if* so, the idea of imposition being excluded, the canonical dress of a Popish priest, the red hat of a cardinal, and the triple crown of a pontiff, may all be justified; for, in themselves, they are equally harmless as the gown, the surplice, or the band. Innocent, however, as all these peculiarities are, detached from the ministerial character, and from holy worship, the *reason or motive* of wearing them in sacred service, may be carnal, base, and sinful. In some, there is too much ground of suspicion, a desire of being esteemed by the vulgar, either as persons of learning, or as episcopally ordained, when they are not so; and, in others, a lust of increasing their learned and priestly importance, are the latent reasons of wearing those idle badges of clerical distinction. But when illiterate men assume the garb of learning, their vanity is contemptible: when they intend, by so doing, to obtain that respect from the ignorant, of which they know themselves unworthy, their practical falsehood is detestable; and when any minister thinks of magnifying his office, by pomposity in the pulpit, he betrays his ignorance respecting the nature of that kingdom in which he professes to be an officer. Do the laws of this holy empire forbid the subjects to affect shining and costly apparel, as not becoming those who "profess godliness"<sup>39</sup> and will not the principle of that prohibition apply with increasing force to the case before us? Is it inconsistent with that spiritual-mindedness, of which every avowed disciple of Christ makes an implicit profession, to be fond of a showy dress in the intercourses of common life; and can it be suitable to the simplicity of Christian worship, to the character of its Lord, or to the example of his Apostles, for ministers to make a more grand appearance, and take more state upon them, when performing their solemn service, than at any other time? Let those who understand the Christian system, and are heavenly minded, form the determination.

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<sup>39</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

It must indeed be acknowledged, that the ancient people of God had a splendid sanctuary, and a sumptuous temple; that the Jewish priests, when performing sacred service, appeared in holy garments; and that the high-priest, on certain occasions, was richly adorned, in a manner peculiar to his office. But then, it is plain, that those things were expressly appointed by Jehovah; that the Dispensation to which they belonged was of a typical nature; that they were suited to the church while in a state of minority; that the whole Jewish nation was then the visible church; that Jehovah was not only the God, but also the King of that nation; that the ancient sanctuary was a palace, where political royalty resided,<sup>40</sup> as well as a temple, where the Deity was adored; and that the priests were officers in the state, as well as ministers of religion. To such a politico-ecclesiastical kingdom, the splendor of the sanctuary, and the dress of the priests, were manifestly adapted. Hence the tabernacle is called "a Worldly sanctuary;" and the rites performed there, "elements of the world."<sup>41</sup> To these, the heavenly sanctuary, into which our Great High Priest is entered, and the spiritual worship of the Christian church, stand opposed. It should not be forgotten, that though the Son of God, when displaying his glory as King of the Jewish state, took up his abode in the sanctuary, as In a royal palace; yet, when "he came into his own land,"<sup>42</sup> as King of the Gospel Church, he had not "where to lay his head."

What, then, have the splendor, the laws, or the rites of Judaism, to do in the New Economy; except we mean to convert the Christian church into the Jewish temple? Grandeur and show, whether as pertaining to places of worship, or to ministers of the word, are abhorrent from the Gospel Dispensation; nor, under the present Economy, have they any other tendency, than to gratify that pride from which they originate, and to give the kingdom of Christ a secular appearance. The New Economy being intended for all

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<sup>40</sup> Matt. v. 35.

<sup>41</sup> Heb. ix. 1. Gal. iv. 3, 9. Col. ii. 8, 20.

<sup>42</sup> John i. 11.

nations and all succeeding ages, is equally fitted for the rich and the poor; nor does it make any distinction, in regard to places where its worship should be performed. That God be adored "in spirit and in truth," according to his own rule, is all it requires of one congregation or of another. It disdains, therefore, to borrow any part of its glory, from the grandeur of an edifice, or the garb of a minister. Though far from supposing rusticity, illiteracy, and meanness, to be characteristics of a Christian church ; yet I may venture to assert, that an assembly of princes in a splendid cathedral, with an arch-bishop appearing in canonical pomp, may insult the Divine Majesty, and be utterly unworthy the name of a church; while a congregation of day-labourers, with an illiterate minister in the meanest habit, convened in a barn, may be a spiritual temple, enjoy the, Divine Presence, and perform the Christian worship in all its glory. It has been well observed, by a certain author, that "the presence of God confers dignity and importance:" but that "he can receive none from created, much less from artificial pomp and magnificence." To which I will add, in the words of Dr. OWEN, "If the whole structure of the temple, and all its beautiful services, were now in being on the earth, no glory would redound unto God thereby: he would receive none from it. To expect the glory of God in them, would be an high dishonour unto him."<sup>43</sup>

If secular grandeur, however, must needs attend the religion of Him who was born in a stable, and lived in poverty; who received the acclamations of royalty, when riding upon an ass, and quickly after expired on a gibbet; is, I say, it *must* appear in the worship of any who pretend to follow the Fishermen of Galilee, those prime ministers in the Messiah's kingdom, let it be confined to such as avow themselves members of a National Establishment. For, with regard to those who maintain that particular churches are Congregational, consisting of such as make a credible profession of repentance and faith; pomp and show in the worship of God are quite unbecoming their principles. Yes, let those monopolize the

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<sup>43</sup> *On the Person of Christ*, p. 354, 355.

splendor in question, who consider the church and the state as of equal dimensions; who acknowledge a visible head of political royalty; and who must search, not the New Testament, but a code of Canons and Constitutions larger than the whole Bible,<sup>44</sup> if they would know on what foundation their ecclesiastical fabric stands, and by what laws it is governed. The National form of the Jewish church being their model, and a temporal monarch being their head, why should not they have magnificent cathedrals, and consecrate them like Jewish temples? Why should not ancient Judaism be imitated in these particulars, as well as in other things? As the head of the English Church is adorned with royal robes; as the principal officers in it are appointed by him, and are lords in the legislature; and as it is established by laws of the state; who shall forbid the various orders of its ministers being adorned with sounding titles, and with pompous canonicals? There is no reason to wonder that, in such a constitution and such a polity, almost every thing should wear a secular appearance. For, political authority pervading the whole ecclesiastical frame, it would be inconsistent with itself if its various parts had not an air of external grandeur. As a kingdom of this world, it is respectable: nor should it pretend to any thing more.

But, however it may be with a National Establishment, let not Protestant Dissenters behave as if they envied either its magnificence or its emoluments. No: let not those who consider the Church and the World as opposite ideas; who maintain that Christ only is the head of Christian communities; and that the New Testament contains the whole of their ecclesiastical polity, be desirous of external grandeur in any thing pertaining to public worship: lest they practically deny their own principles, and implicitly reproach primitive Christianity for being too simple and too spiritual. It is frequently much easier for people, and much more

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<sup>44</sup> Referring to GIBSON'S *Codex*, "When," says Sir MICHAEL FORSTER, "Christianity became the established religion of the empire, and church and state became one body, considered only in different views and under different relations; the ecclesiastical and civil laws of the empire flowed from one and the same source, IMPERIAL RESCRIPTS." *Examinat. of Bp. GIBSON'S Codex*, p. 122. Edit. 3d.

desired by them, to assemble in an elegant edifice, and for their ministers to appear in canonical fashion; than to perform a spiritual worship, and to shine in the beauties of holiness. The splendor of a place for assembling, and the pageantry of clerical dress, may at any time be procured by money; but the graces of real sanctity, and internal devotion, are of heavenly origin: nor is the exercise of them to be expected, unless by those who are habitually aiming at it. I will add, whatever kind of succession to the Apostles may be claimed by diocesan bishops,<sup>45</sup> yet let not Protestant Dissenting ministers implicitly arrogate an apostolic mission, powers, and authority, by calling themselves "Ambassadors of Christ." For that character seems to have been peculiar to the first-rate messengers of our divine Sovereign. Or, if any of those who publish the gospel of peace consider a title of that high importance as quite suitable to the dignity of their station, they might with propriety be requested to show their credentials.

By this characteristic of our Lord's kingdom, and by the general nature of it, we are further taught, That *simplicity* and *spirituality* must constitute the chief glory of that worship which he requires. This forms another striking disparity between the Messiah's government and the ancient Theocracy. It has been observed, by Dr. ERSKINE, that "the respect paid to God, under the Old Testament Dispensation, corresponded to his character as a temporal monarch; and in a great measure consisted in external pomp and gaiety, dancing, instrumental music, and other expressions of joy, usual at coronations or triumphs. But the hour is now come, in which the true worshippers must worship the Father in Spirit and in truth; not with external show and pageantry."<sup>46</sup>

Yes, numerous rites, and ceremonious pomp, were appointed by Jehovah in the first establishment of the Jewish church: to which various additions were made, by divine order, in the time of David.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See Dr. OWEN'S *Nature of a Gospel Church and its government*, p. 33

<sup>46</sup> *Theological dissertations*, p. 69.

<sup>47</sup> 1 Chron. xvi. 4, 5, 6. xxv. 1—8. 2 Chron. xxix. 25.

These things were undoubtedly suited to the nature of that Dispensation, and to the church of God, while in a state of minority.<sup>48</sup> On worship so various in its branches, and so splendid in its appearance, multitudes attended, and found amusement in it, who were in their hearts disaffected to God. In hearing the temple music, vocal and instrumental, there is no doubt but numbers of ungodly people were much delighted. Such a concert, by persons trained to the employment, and under the direction of skilful masters, must produce very pleasing emotions in the attending multitude: a great majority of whom, it is highly probable, considered their system of worship as the best that could be appointed, it being so grand and so delightful.

But though that system was fitted to both the people, and the times; though it was of great utility, and answered the purpose of Jehovah, under a shadowy Dispensation; yet the New Testament informs us, that its numerous rites were the mere *elements* of spiritual knowledge, and of holy worship. Nay, compared with appointments and services of the Christian church, that they were *beggarly elements* and *carnal ordinances*.<sup>49</sup> Why, then, should any professors of Christianity be so fond of ceremonious pomp in the worship of God? Why so attached to the language and forms of Judaism, or practise a ritual nearly akin to the rubrics (law and order, *Pub.*) of Moses? Why call the holy supper a *sacrifice*, the Lord's table an *altar*, and the administrator a *priest*? Why have recourse to the temple worship for musical instruments, and for a set of singers distinct from the congregation at large? Why should responsive singing, and tunes more fit for a theatre than for the worship of God, be heard in religious assemblies? Why, without an appointment for alternate singing, would one part of a congregation suspend an act of social worship, while the other carries it on? To these and similar queries the answer must be—Because things of this nature amuse the carnal mind—Because the simplicity and

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<sup>48</sup> Gal. iv. 1—7.

<sup>49</sup> Gal. iv. 9. Heb. ix. 10

spirituality of New Testament worship have no charms for the multitude—And because the generality love to perform something called *religious worship*, in a way of their own devising. To save appearances, however, as many things in the Jewish ritual were pretty well adapted to please unrenewed hearts, they will be contented with having the Christian worship reformed, in various particulars, according to the ancient model, as completed in the time of David. Who, that enters a splendid edifice, where he beholds a minister in his canonicals, and meets with such entertaining worship, can forbear to think of the Temple Service? Such, through a course of ages, has been the predilection of multitudes for ancient Judaism, that a number of its peculiarities, which were either honourable and profitable to the priests, or amusing and pleasing to the people, have been incorporated with Christianity, notwithstanding the mischiefs produced by similar conduct in the apostolic churches.

I said, *Honourable and profitable* to the priests—*Amusing and pleasing* to the people. But here they stop: for those branches of Judaism that were of a different kind, are treated as entirely obsolete. So, for instance, though numbers of Christian ministers are fond enough of priestly vestments, and of tithes, *jure divino*; yet they are not inclined always to *wash their feet* before they perform sacred service;<sup>50</sup> much less to perform it *barefoot*.<sup>51</sup> As to the people, though multitudes of them are greatly delighted with pompous appearances and musical sounds, they are far from being in raptures with *circumcision*. For, notwithstanding that Abrahamic rite retained its obligation and utility, as long as any of the Jewish ceremonies

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<sup>50</sup> Exod. xxx. 17—21.

<sup>51</sup> See Dr. Lightfoot's *Temple Service*, Chap. I. and X. and Dr. GILL, on Exod. iii. 5. Mr. BRUCE, when describing the religious customs in Abyssinia, says: "You are *bare-footed* whenever you enter the church; and if *barefooted*, you may go through every part of it, if you have any such curiosity, provided you are pure;" i.e. free from the ancient ceremonial impurities. For otherwise, "you are not to go within the precincts, or outward circumference of the church, but stand and say your prayers at an awful distance—All persons of both sexes, under Jewish disqualifications, are obliged to observe this distance." *Travels*, Vol. III. p. 314, 315. Edit, 1st.

did; and though; in apostolic times, judaizing Christians had the highest opinion of its importance; yet, like the ancient baptismal immersion, it is now considered as too painful and too indelicate for polished persons to regard. Thus the worship of the New Economy is become a compound, unknown to the Bible, of Judaism and Christianity; and it is treated by too many ministers, as a trade, not a divine service; by numbers of people, as an article of decent amusement suitable to the Lord's day, not as duty to God, and as a mean of preparing for heaven. "Men run to church, says Erasmus, as to a theatre, to have their ears tickled."<sup>52</sup> "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"<sup>53</sup>

But though the magnificence of places intended for public worship, the consecration of those places, canonical habits, and various amusing ceremonies, are *now* defended (if defended at all by Scripture) on the ground of Old Testament facts, and customs; yet we are taught by the most respectable ecclesiastical historians, that they originated, partly, in a perverse imitation of Paganism. Christians being surrounded with heathens, of whose conversion they were desirous; and the latter having been accustomed, in performing their idolatrous worship, to the external pomp of sumptuous temples, costly sacerdotal vestments, and a great variety of ceremonies;<sup>54</sup> CONSTANTINE had no sooner abolished the

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<sup>52</sup> In 1 Cor. xiv. 19.

<sup>53</sup> Jer. v. 31.

<sup>54</sup> "Temples were built and adorned," by the Pagan Greeks, "with all possible splendor and magnificence, no pains, no charge was spared upon them, or any part of divine worship—The ornaments used in the time of sacrifice were as follow: The priests, as at other times, were richly attired; their garments being usually the same, at least not much differing from royal robes—Various habits were used, according to the diversity of the gods in whose honour the solemnities were celebrated." Sometimes the priests appeared in *purple*, sometimes in *blacks* and sometimes in *white* garments. POTTER'S *Antiquities of Greece*, Book II. Chap. i. iv. Oxford, 1697. KENNETT, when speaking of Pagan temples among the Romans, tells us; That "some curious persons have observed this similitude between the shape of these old temples and our modern churches: That they had one apartment more holy than the rest, which they termed *Cella*, answering to our chancel or

superstitions of his ancestors, than magnificent places of worship were erected, and consecrated with great parade: it being considered as unlawful, except in extraordinary cases, to perform any part of public worship in them, previous to their consecration. Heathens having often reproached Christianity, for the poverty and simplicity of its appearance, the Christians of the fourth century adopted many of the Pagan customs. Ministers of the word, for example, and also deacons, when performing their offices, appeared in canonical habits, and with priestly pomp.<sup>55</sup> Their newly erected temples were consecrated, by singing of such hymns as were thought suitable to the occasion, by prayers, and by thanksgivings. Then, in the Eastern churches, the responsive singing of David's Psalms was introduced; preceptors were appointed, and laws were framed by different Councils to direct the fingers in the performance of their services

Such was the origin of those gaudy appearances which, to amuse the carnal mind, have so long corrupted the worship of God, and secularized the kingdom of Christ! "Vain man would be wise;" and, in his great wisdom, thinks it necessary to add a few ornaments and supports to this heavenly empire, of which it was entirely destitute when the Apostles left the earth. This was thought expedient, in order to render the religion of Jesus a little more pleasing, respectable and edifying than it was in its native state. But well may he demand, with the aspect of incensed majesty, "Who hath required this at your hands?"

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choir: That the porticos in the sides, were in all respects like to our aisles; and that our *Navis*, or body of the church, is an imitation of their *Basilica*" *Antiquities of Rome*, Part II. B. I. Chap. III. p. 41, London, 1721.

<sup>55</sup> Constantine is reported to have given a rich vestment, embroidered with gold, to MACARIUS, bishop of Jerusalem, to be worn by him when he celebrated the ordinance of baptism: and the Arians, afterwards, accused CYRIL of having sold it. The deacons, when performing their public service, appeared in white and shining garments: and ATHANASIUS was accused by his enemies, for laying a tax upon the Egyptians, to raise a fund for the linen vestments of the Church. See BINGHAM'S *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, B, XIII. Chap. viii. 1, 2.

**The kingdom of Christ is not of this world, relative to its IMMUNITIES, its RICHES, and its HONOURS.**

Wealth, titles and authority are frequently conferred by secular princes; but they are all external things. A patent of peerage, or a lucrative office, gives no wisdom to the mind, no peace to the conscience, no holiness to the heart. The possessor, notwithstanding his plentiful income and splendid title, may be a fool, a wretch, and a disgrace to the human species. The highest honours and the greatest emoluments which the subjects of an earthly sovereign can enjoy, are all of them unsatisfactory; and, therefore, the first favorites of temporal princes are sometimes the most unhappy. Of this we have a remarkable instance in Haman, the prime favorite of, Ahasuerus. Great privileges and exalted honours are enjoyed by comparatively very few subjects of any temporal monarch; the nature of the case forbidding them to become general among the inhabitants of any country. Dukedoms, marquises (territorial lordship, *Pub.*), and grants from the crown, are but seldom bestowed, how loyal soever the subjects may be. Besides, those distinguished favors are of short duration, and quite uncertain.

Whereas, the immunities, emoluments and honours of our Lord's kingdom are all of them spiritual and internal. They are suited to the state of an enlightened mind, to the feelings of an awakened conscience, and to the desires of a renewed heart. Pardon of all sin, and complete acceptance with God; adoption into the heavenly family, and a title to future glory, are some of the privileges and honours enjoyed by the subjects of this kingdom. Blessings, these, of infinite worth, because of their spiritual nature and immortal duration. Nor are they confined to a few distinguished favorites of our celestial Sovereign; for they are common to all his real subjects. Yes, they are all enriched and all ennobled with "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Now, as the immunities, grants, and honours, bestowed by the King Messiah, are all of a spiritual nature, his faithful subjects have

no reason to wonder, or to be discouraged, at any persecutions, afflictions, or poverty which may befall them. Were his empire "of this world" then indeed it might be expected, from the goodness of his heart and the power of his arm, that those who are submissive to his authority, zealous for his honour, and conformed to his image, would commonly find themselves easy and prosperous in their temporal circumstances. Yes, were his dominion of a secular kind, it might be supposed that an habitually conscientious regard to his laws would secure from the oppression of ungodly men, and from the distresses of temporal want. Thus it was with Israel under their Theocracy. When the rulers and the people in general were punctual in observing Jehovah's appointments, the stipulations of the Sinai Covenant secured them from being oppressed by their enemies, and from any remarkable affliction by the immediate hand of God. Performing the conditions of their National Confederation, they were, as a people, warranted to expect every species of temporal prosperity. Health and long life, riches, honours, and victory over their enemies, were promised by Jehovah to their external obedience.<sup>56</sup> The punishments also, that were denounced against flagrant breaches of the Covenant made at Horeb, were of a temporal kind.<sup>57</sup>

In this respect, however, as well as in other things, there is a vast difference between the Jewish and the Christian Economy. This disparity was plainly intimated, if I mistake not, by the opposite modes of divine proceeding, in establishing Jehovah's kingdom among the Jews, and in founding the empire of Jesus Christ. To

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<sup>56</sup> See Exod. xv. 25, 26. xxiii. 25—28. Lev. xxvi. 3—14. Deut. vii. 12—24. viii. 7, 8, 9. xi. 13—17. xxviii. 3—13.

<sup>57</sup> Lev. xxvi. 14—39. Deut. iv. 25, 26, 27\* xi. 9.7. xxviii. 15—68. xxix. 22—28, See Dr. ERSKINE'S *Theological Dissertat.* p. 22—29. *External* obedience.—Punishments of a *temporal* kind. These and similar expressions in this Essay are to be understood, as referring to the Sinai Covenant *strictly* considered, and to Jehovah's requisitions as the *king* of Israel. They are quite confident, therefore, with its being the duty of Abraham's natural feed to perform *internal* obedience to that sublime Sovereign, considered as the God of the whole earth; and with everlasting punishment being inflicted by him, as the righteous dessert of sin.

settle the Israelitish church, to exalt the chosen tribes above surrounding nations, and to render the ancient Theocracy supremely venerable, the divine Sovereign appeared in terrible majesty. Wasting plagues and awful deaths were often inflicted by eternal justice, on those who dared to oppose or to oppress the people of God. An angel was commissioned to destroy the Egyptian first-born. Pharaoh, with his mighty host, were drowned in the Red Sea; and the Canaanitish nations were put to the sword, that the subjects of Jehovah might possess their fertile country. Manifest indications these, in connection with express promises, that the special providence of God would exalt and bless the natural seed of Abraham with temporal felicity; provided they did not violate the Sinai Covenant.

But when the prince Messiah founded his kingdom, all things were otherwise. No marks of external grandeur attended his personal appearance: and, instead of executing righteous vengeance on those who opposed him, his language was; "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them—Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" After a life of labour and of beneficence, of poverty and of reproach, he fell a victim to persecution, and a martyr to truth. Such was the plan of divine Providence, respecting Christ our King, and such was the treatment with which he met from the world! Striking intimations, these, that his most faithful subjects would have no ground of discouragement, in any sufferings which might await them; and that, considered as his dependents, spiritual blessings were all they should have to expect.

It mud indeed be acknowledged, that, as vicious tempers and immoral practices have a natural tendency to impair health, distress the mind, and waste the property; so the exercise of holy affections, and the practice of true godliness, have the most friendly aspect on a Christian's own temporal happiness, (except so far as persecution intervenes) and on the welfare of society. But then it is evident that this arises from the nature of things, and from the superintendency

of common Providence, rather than from the dominion of Christ as a spiritual monarch; for, so considered, spiritual blessings are all they have to expect from his royal hand.

By the prophetic declarations of our Lord himself, and by the history of this kingdom, it plainly appears, that among all the subjects of his government, none have been more exposed to persecutions affliction and poverty, than those who were most eminent for obedience to his laws, and most useful in his empire. The most uniform subjection to his authors, and the warmest zeal for his honour, that ever appeared upon earth, were no security from bitter persecution, from pinching poverty, or from complicated affliction. Our divine Lord, considered as a spiritual sovereign, is concerned for the spiritual interests of those that are under his government. His personal perfections and royal prerogatives, his power and wisdom, his love and care, are therefore to be regarded as engaged, by both office and promise,— not to make his dependents easy and prosperous in their temporal concerns; but—to strengthen them for their spiritual warfare; to preserve them from finally failing by their invisible enemies; to make all afflictions "work together for their good;" to render them, in the final issue, "more than conquerors," over every opposer; and to crown them with everlasting life.

Our Lord has promised, indeed, that their obedience to his royal pleasure shall meet with his gracious regards in the present life. Not by indulging them with temporal riches, or by granting them external honour and ease; but by admitting them into more intimate communion with himself, and by rejoicing their hearts with his favour.<sup>58</sup> Yes, to deliver from spiritual enemies, and to provide for spiritual wants; to indulge with spiritual riches, and to ennoble with spiritual honours, are those royal acts which belong to Him whose "kingdom is not of this world." In the bestowment of these blessings, the glory of his regal character is much concerned. But millions of his devoted subjects may fall by the iron hand of

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<sup>58</sup> John xii. 26. and xiv. 21, 23.

oppression, starve in obscurity, or suffer accumulated affliction in other ways; without the least impeachment of his power, his goodness, or his care, as the Sovereign of a spiritual kingdom.

**The kingdom, of Christ is not like the dominions of secular princes, with regard to its LIMITS and its DURATION.**

The widely extended monarchies of antiquity were confined to certain parts of the habitable globe, and in the course of a few centuries they came to an end. Not so, the empire of Jesus Christ: for thus run the prophetic oracles, respecting him and his kingdom. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him—There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed—He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."<sup>59</sup> Concerning the gradual enlargement and universal extent of this kingdom, our Lord speaks in his parable of a grain of mustard seed; and in that of leaven, pervading the whole mass of meal.

This holy empire shall issue in the ultimate glory; and, though the present form of its administration will cease, when "God shall be all in all," yet the glorified subjects of it shall never die, never be disunited, nor ever withdraw their allegiance from Jesus Christ. Such are the foundations of his dominion, and such the excellence of his government, that each of his real subjects will from the heart say; LET THE KING LIVE! AND LET HIM "REIGN, TILL ALL HIS ENEMIES BECOME HIS FOOTSTOOL!"<sup>60</sup>

Once more; *The empire of Christ, or the Gospel Church, is called THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.*<sup>61</sup> As our Lord, in the most emphatic manner, is denominated, The KING OF KINGS; we may

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<sup>59</sup> Ps. lxxii. 8. 11. Dan. vii. 14. Luke 1. 33.

<sup>60</sup> Ps. lxxii. 15. and c. 1. 1 Cor. xv. 25.

with propriety consider his holy monarchy, as THE KINGDOM OF KINGDOMS. This appellation, *the kingdom of heaven*, manifestly sets the New Testament church at the greatest distance from every secular monarchy, and teaches us to consider it as nearly allied to the heavenly state. The subjects of it are described, as born from above; as the heirs of glory. They are governed by laws, indulged with privileges, and invested with honours, which are entirely spiritual, and all from heaven. The truths they believe, the blessings they enjoy, the obedience they perform, and the expectations they entertain, have all of them a regard to heaven. It is the authority of a divine Sovereign under "which they live, and his approbation at which they aim. The pleasures which they enjoy, considered as the subjects of Jesus Christ, are all of a spiritual nature, and all savour of the heavenly world.

As Christ is a spiritual monarch, his dominion respects the understandings, the consciences, the hearts of men; and is a preparation for that sublime state, where knowledge and rectitude, where obedience and love, where harmony and joy, are all in their full glory. The commencement of this government, as it respects individuals, is laid in regeneration. There the preparation for heaven begins: and all the genuine fruits of that important change, which is made by divine influence in the mind, the conscience, and the heart of a sinner, have a tendency toward heaven; and many of them are anticipations of it. That worship which is performed by the subjects of Christ, is no further spiritual and agreeable to the New Economy, than it is animated with such affections as abound in heaven. For the time is come, when those who worship the Father, "must worship

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<sup>61</sup> The New Testament Church being so frequently denominated, *the Kingdom of Heaven*, and *The Kingdom of God*, very plainly indicates, that the Messiah is a Divine Person, and truly God: for by these high appellations we are naturally led to consider it as a kingdom in which GOD HIMSELF REIGNS. Thus OROBIO, a learned Jew, when disputing with LIMBORCH about the Messiah, under the notion of a Celestial King, says; "Messiah cannot be a Heavenly King, whatever the Socinians may dream to the contrary, unless he be God Himself: because no. mere creature can be every where to superintend and assist." LIMBORCH *de Veritat. Relig. Christ.* P. 69.

him in spirit and in truth." Knowledge and reverence of God, as revealed by the Mediator; confidence in him, and love to him; self-abasement in his presence, and acquiescence in his dominion; are the principal ideas included in spiritual worship, whether as performed by the subjects of Christ here, or by the saints made perfect in glory.

It is manifest from this characteristic of our Lord's kingdom, that a profession of allegiance to him is entirely vain, if not attended with spiritual-mindedness: because it is natural for good subjects to seek the prosperity of that kingdom to which they belong. Now, the interests of Messiah's empire are all of a spiritual nature. In the spread of evangelical truth, and the purity of divine worship; in the exercise of love, and the practice of holiness, the interests and honour of this kingdom chiefly consist. Indifference about these, is, therefore an evidence of the heart being disaffected to our divine Sovereign; but allegiance to him, will manifest itself by an habitual regard to them. In whomsoever this holy Monarch reigns, there is a relish for spiritual riches, honours, pleasures. To enjoy his favour, and bear his image; to perform his will, and behold his glory, are things of the highest importance in the esteem of real saints. Nor is it a mere dictate of the understanding and conscience, that it should be so. It is matter of choice; for their hearts are engaged on those objects.

It is common for subjects to imitate a sovereign whom they love and revere; especially, if they have derived signal benefits from his administration. Now, such is the nature of our Lord's government, that it is impossible for any one to be under it, without sincerely loving and profoundly revering him—without seeing an excellence in his example, which commands esteem and excites imitation. But, if we be fond of wealth, or emulous of grandeur and show; if we pursue pre-eminence, and grasp at power; we imitate the children of this world; not Jesus Christ. Those things are eagerly sought, and highly prized, by the subjects of Satan, because they are carnally minded; but he is unworthy to be called a disciple of Christ, who is

not habitually striving to copy his example. Nor can any pretend, that he ever encouraged, by word or deed, the pursuit of secular distinctions, the acquisition of wealth, or the pleasures of sensuality, but quite the reverse. Far from seeking "the honour which comes from men," he neither courted the smiles of the rich, nor the patronage of the mighty: for "the friendship of this world is enmity with God." So our Lord esteemed it; and so must his disciples. To be the subjects of a spiritual kingdom, and to have our hearts on temporal enjoyments, are inconsistent. "To be carnally minded, is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace."

As Christ is a spiritual Sovereign, and his church a spiritual kingdom, all the subjects of his government must be considered, as in a state of preparation for heaven. The prevailing dispositions of their hearts are in favour of heavenly things: and to promote the exercise of spiritual affections, the New Economy, in all its branches, is much better adapted than was the Mosaic system. For as it is the most perfect Dispensation of divine grace, that ever was, or ever will be enjoyed on earth, so it makes the nearest approaches to heaven.

It has been justly remarked by a certain author, "That the Legal Economy introduced that of Grace, by the gospel, and then vanished away. The Dispensation of Grace, in like manner, is now performing its work, fulfilling its day, announcing, unfolding, introducing the kingdom of glory: and "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away," Yes, the Old Economy, and the Jewish Theocracy, were manifestly introductory to the Christian Dispensation, and the Messiah's kingdom. Those, being typical and shadowy, led to these, and in them received their final completion. But the New Dispensation, and the kingdom of Christ, have no completion short of heaven. Thither they lead; and there they terminate. No worship is agreeable to the Messiah's kingdom, which is not animated by heavenly affections. All the external services of religion are so many means of exciting those holy affections, of promoting communion with God, and of cultivating a heavenly

temper. Consequently, the worship of those who rest in exterior services, is quite superficial, and has nothing spiritual, nothing heavenly in it.

Jehovah, under the former Dispensation, having chosen the Holy of holies for the place of his residence, the Jews were directed to address him in prayer, considered as on his throne "between the Cherubim."<sup>62</sup> They knew, indeed, that he inhabited celestial mansions; and, therefore, when bending the knee before him, their hands were extended toward heaven,<sup>63</sup> but yet he was more immediately regarded by them, as residing in the earthly sanctuary. For, notwithstanding their desire to be heard in *heaven*, "the cry of their prayer, and the eye of their faith, were directed first to the *mercy-seat*." The most eminent saints, under that Economy, looked to God in both; did homage to him in both; nor could they have neglected him in respect of either, without being culpable. Whereas, when Christians pray, they look directly to their "Father who is in heaven," and as on a throne of grace in the celestial temple; without the least regard to any place upon earth, or to any visible objects

"God," says Dr. ERSKINE, "as husband of the Gospel church, claims from his people inward affection and love, and accepts them only who worship him in spirit and in truth. In the Mosaic Covenant it was otherwise. There he appeared chiefly as a temporal prince, and therefore gave laws intended rather to direct the outward conduct, than to regulate the actings of the heart. Hence every thing in that Dispensation was adapted to strike his subjects with awe and reverence. The magnificence of his palace, and all its utensils; his numerous train of attendants; the splendid robes of the high priest, who though his prime minister, was not allowed to enter the Holy of holies, save once a year, and in all his ministrations, was obliged to discover the most humble veneration for Israel's King; the solemn rites with which the priests were consecrated: the strictness with

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<sup>62</sup> 1 Kings viii. 27—30, 38, 42, 44, 48. 2 Kings xix. 15. Psalm xxviii. 2. lxxx. 1. Dan. vi. 10.

<sup>63</sup> 1 Kings viii. 22.

which all impurities and indecencies were forbidden, as things which, though tolerable mothers, were unbecoming the dignity of the people of God, especially when approaching to him: all these tended to promote and secure the respect due to their glorious Sovereign" It was, however, foretold by one of the minor Prophets, "that in Gospel times men should not call God, *Baali* i.e. *my Master*, but *ishi*, i.e. *my Husband*—The passage imports at least thus much, that God, who in the Jewish Dispensation had chiefly displayed the grandeur, distance, and severity of a master, would, in the Christian Dispensation, chiefly display the affection and familiarity of a Husband and Friend."

Yes, under the Mosaic system, the high priest only, nor he except on the great day of atonement, was admitted to the mercy-seat, or throne of Jehovah, in "a worldly sanctuary." That appearance of the Jewish pontiff before the Lord, though grand and solemn, was a mere emblem of spiritual things, and of that holy intercourse which all the subjects of this kingdom have with God, in the performance of spiritual worship. For as Jesus is entered into the heavenly sanctuary, "with his own blood:" as he is there "a priest upon his throne," uniting the sacerdotal censer with the regal sceptre; he ever lives, not only to govern his widely-extended empire, but likewise to intercede for all his followers, and to be the medium of their access to the divine Father. In virtue of his atonement made on the cross, and of his appearance in the heavenly world, the meanest subjects of his dominion, when performing sacred service, "have boldness to enter into the holiest." Each of them, in the exercise of faith, of hope, and of love, has access to the Divine Majesty on a throne of grace; and each has reason to expect a condescending audience from the King Eternal. Hence we find, that New Testament saints are called "the domestics of God;" which "may have some relation to that peculiar nearness to God, in which the Jewish priests were; and refer to that great intimacy of unrestrained converse to which we, as Christians, are admitted. In which respect our privileges seem to resemble, not only those of the

people praying in the *common court* of Israel; but of the priests, worshipping in the *house itself*."<sup>64</sup>

The superior advantages of believers under the Christian Economy, in regard to communion with God, and the sanctifying influence which that holy intercourse has on their minds, are strongly expressed in the following remarkable words; "But we all, In an unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."<sup>65</sup> The Apostle here plainly alludes to that glory which appeared in the face of Moses, after his intimate converse with Jehovah on the mount. So dazzling was the luster of his countenance, that the children of Israel "were afraid to come nigh him." He therefore put a veil upon his face, that they might have familiar intercourse with him: which veil was an emblem, not only of Jewish blindness, but also of the darkness of that Dispensation.— Now, in contrast with these things, Paul informs us, that the glory of the divine perfections appears and shines in the *unveiled* face of Jesus Christ; that this glory is *beheld* by New Testament believers; and that, by beholding it, they are gradually *transformed into the glorious image of God*. What an illustrious view does the Apostle here give us of the New Economy! He represents the state and privileges of the Christian Church, not only as much superior to those of the Jewish people; but as nearly approaching to the employments, and the fruitions of the celestial world. For we cannot easily form a more exalted idea of the business and blessedness of heaven, than that of contemplating the glory of God, and of making continual advances in likeness to him.

As, in the person of our Mediator, the nature of God and the nature of man were not united, till just before the commencement of this kingdom; as God was not "manifested in the flesh," but with an immediate view to this holy and spiritual empire; so there is no reason to wonder that the favoured subjects of Messiah's

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<sup>64</sup> Dr. DODDRIDGE on Ephes. ii. 19.

<sup>65</sup> Exod. xxxiv. 29-35.

government have a more intimate communion with Jehovah, than was ever enjoyed by the Jewish church. Under the Old Covenant, Israel in general had a kind of local nearness to God, in the performance of sanctuary worship; and real saints had spiritual communion with him. But then it was by means of priests who had infirmities; of sacrifices, that were imperfect; and of services, that were mere shadows of heavenly things; all which were confined to a local system, and an earthly sanctuary. Whereas the subjects of Jesus Christ have access to the Father of mercies, without any distinction of places; and without regarding any priest, besides their Sovereign; any sacrifice, besides his death; any incense, besides his intercession. All these they regard as appearing, as operating, as efficacious on their behalf, in the heavenly sanctuary. Yes, their High Priest who is of infinite dignity; their sacrifice, which is of boundless worth; and their incense, which is consummately fragrant, are forever in the immediate presence of God—forever deserving, and forever obtaining, the divine approbation. On these, therefore, in all their approaches to Eternal Majesty, their dependence fixes. Hence their worship is performed, through the aids of grace, with reverence and with confidence; with love and with delight. “We have access with confidence, by the faith of Christ.”

Now, to worship God with profound reverence, yet without slavish fear; with steady confidence, connected with deep humility; with submission to his will, as the most high Lord; with love to his excellence, as the Infinite Beauty; and with joy in his all-sufficiency, as the Chief Good; is to perform a spiritual service, and to adore in a heavenly manner. In the performance of such worship, we have communion with “the spirits of just men made perfect”—we enter within the veil—we have fellowship with God—we anticipate the business of heaven, and taste its refined pleasures. In these holy exercises of the mind, the conscience, and the heart, we feel ourselves near to God, as the fountain of all blessedness, and are trained for the heavenly world. Thus we are habituated to a kind of celestial service, by which our likeness to Christ is promoted, and

our desires after heaven increased. In these things the very life of spiritual worship and of real religion consists. He therefore is not worthy to be called a subject of our Lord's kingdom, who is not habitually aiming, in his devotional services, at this delightful and solemn intercourse with God. Nor is he deserving of that exalted character, whose thoughts and cares, whose hopes and fears, whose joys and sorrows are not principally concerned about the government and grace of Christ, considered in their connection with the heavenly state.

It must, indeed, be admitted, that this communion with heaven is extremely imperfect in the present life. Because, though every true subject of the King Messiah be in a state very different from that of a merely nominal Christian, and though he be thankful for that difference; yet he is not, he cannot be satisfied, either with what he knows, or with what he enjoys; with what he is, or with what he does. Not with what he *knows*: for he knows but "in part" and he feels the deficiency. His acquaintance with the Greatest and Best of beings—with the character and perfections, with the works and ways of God, is extremely small. His knowledge of the adorable Jesus—of his Person and offices, of his grace and work, of his kingdom and glory, is very contracted. Nay, the knowledge he has of himself, and of his final destination in the heavenly world, is exceedingly scanty: for "the heart is deceitful above all things;" and "it does not yet appear what we shall be." He cannot therefore be contented with such a pittance of spiritual knowledge.

Not with what he *enjoys*: for his enjoyment of spiritual pleasure is, at the highest, comparatively low. Besides, it is frequently interrupted by the insurrections of indwelling sin, and by the incursions of outward temptation. Though he sometimes exult in the light of God's countenance, partaking of joy that is "unspeakable and full of glory:" yet he not only often laments the want of that exalted pleasure, but "groans, being burdened."

Not with what he *is*; for he feels much depravity, and mourns over it, as affecting his mind with darkness; his conscience with

guilt, or with stupidity; and his passions with carnality. So far from perfectly bearing the image of Christ, that his language frequently is; “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Nor with what he *does*: for though he sincerely desire to perform the will of God, as revealed in divine precepts, and illustrated by the example of Christ; yet he perceives that his obedience is very imperfect. Does he for instance, address himself to God in prayer? in that devout exercise his whole soul should be engaged. Reverence of the divine Majesty, and an abasing sense of his own guile; faith in the great atonement, and confidence in pardoning mercy; the ardour of petition, and the comfort of expectation, should all be united. But frequently, alas! his thought wander, and his pious affections are dull, if not dormant. His prayer seems little besides a conflict with his own corruption. He rises from his knees with sorrow and with sighs. Ashamed of the manner in which he has treated the omniscient Object of his worship, he cannot forbear exclaiming, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” and this, perhaps is the only petition over which he does not mourn, as entirely destitute of holy animation.

Or if he enjoy liberty in his converse with the Father of all mercies, how often does he find secret pride and self-gratulation arise in his heart? As if the Most Holy would regard his confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings for the Sake of their own excellence! Aware of the latent poison, he is almost confounded. For well he knows, that Christianity is the religion of sinners—of depraved, of guilty, of unworthy creatures; and that nothing is more inconsistent with evangelical truth, or more detestable in the sight of God, than self applause, respecting acceptance with him. Knowing himself to be a polluted worm who deserves to perish, he trembles to think of ever supposing that the majesty of the Most High, and the purity of the Most Holy, will accept his imperfect services for their own sake. In the most emphatical manner he, therefore, with Job exclaims; *Behold, I am vile!—I abhor myself!* So various and so

great are the defects in our devotional services, that we might well despair, were it not for a High Priest who bears the iniquity of our "holy things." For we "find a law, that when we would do good, evil is present with us."

To such imperfections and such complaints, is a real subject of our Lord's dominion liable in the present life! But, looking forward to the separate state, when he shall "be with Christ, which is far better," and to the resurrection of the righteous; with joy he adopts the language of David and says, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Yes, when that ultimate and everlasting Economy commences, his mind being all irradiated with divine truth, he shall be satisfied with what he *knows*: perfectly possessing the Chief Good, he shall be satisfied with what he *enjoys*: conscious of complete rectitude, he shall be satisfied with what he *is*: and knowing his obedience to be consummate, he shall be satisfied with what he *does*.

Delightful, ravishing thought! To have all our immortal powers expanded and filled with knowledge of the Supreme Truth, and with love to the Supreme Beauty; with reverence of the Supreme Lord, and with delight in the Supreme Good, must constitute complete happiness. Yet, such is the grand result of our Lord's dominion in the hearts of men! To this, therefore, we must look, upon this our affections must be placed, if we would behave as the subjects of Jesus Christ, and finish our course with honour. For as this life is the seedtime of an eternal harvest; as no one "gathers grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles;" and as "whatever a man sows, that, shall he also reap;" so we have no reason to expect heaven as our final residence, if we be not habitually desirous of communion with God in all our worship, and of making it our business to perform his will.

It is one of the noblest and most delightful employments of the human mind, to contemplate the gradual revelation of Jehovah's will, and the growing display of his eternal favour, from the fall of our first parents, to the consummation of the Divine Economy. It is both pleasing and improving to reflect on the Patriarchal

Dispensation introducing the Mosaic System; on the Sinai Confederation making way for the New Covenant; on the Jewish Theocracy leading to the Kingdom of Christ; on the government of that kingdom as a preparation for celestial mansions; on the performance of holy worship, by the subjects of Christ here, as the mean of communion with "saints in light;" and on the present state of worship and of blessedness in the heavenly sanctuary, as preparing for the ultimate glory.

In reference to the communion of believers with "the spirits of just men made perfect," in the performance of spiritual worship; and respecting the consummation of all things, Dr. OWEN speaks as follows, with whose words I shall conclude; "Were all that die in the Lord immediately received into that state wherein 'God shall be all in all,' without any use of the mediation of Christ, or the worship of praise and honour unto God by him, without being exercised in the ascription of honour, glory, power, and dominion unto [Christ,] on the account of the past and present discharge of his office; there could be no communion between them and us. But whilst they are in the *sanctuary*, in *the temple of God*, in the holy worship of Christ, and of God in him, and we are not only employed in the same work in sacred ordinances suited to our state and condition, but in the performance of our duties do by faith 'enter in within the veil,' and approach unto the same throne of grace in the most holy place; there is a spiritual communion between them and us. So the apostle expresses it in the twelfth of Hebrews—As we are here, in and by the word and other ordinances, prepared and made meet for the present state of things in glory; so are they, [the spirits of the just made perfect] by the temple worship of heaven, fitted for that state of things when Christ shall GIVE UP THE KINGDOM UNTO THE FATHER, THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL."

THE END