

An Essay on the Kingdom of Christ

By Abraham Booth

They shall speak of the Glory of Thy Kingdom. ~Psalm cxlv II.

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An Essay on the Kingdom of Christ

The Gospel Church is a kingdom not of this world, in regard to its origin.

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Foreword

Abraham Booth (1734-1806) was a confessional particular baptist pastor in England. He wrote “An Essay on the Kingdom of Christ” in 1783 as a commentary on the Church of England. His essay builds upon an inherited foundation of baptist covenant theology known today as [1689 Federalism](http://www.1689federalism.com).¹

Covenant theology today has become synonymous with one particular strain of covenant theology: the one articulated in the Westminster Confession. It recognizes only two covenants in all of Scripture: the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. All of the post-fall covenants in the bible are equally part of the covenant of grace. They are each “administrations of the covenant of grace.”

Calvin provided the foundational explanation of this view in Book 2, Chapter 11 of his Institutes.

Here we are to observe how the covenant of the law compares with the covenant of the gospel, the ministry of Christ with that of Moses. For if the comparison had reference to the substance of the promises, then there would be great disagreement between the Testaments. But since the trend of the argument leads us in another direction, we must follow it to find the truth. Let us then set forth the covenant that he once established as eternal and never-perishing. Its fulfillment, by which it is finally confirmed and ratified, is Christ. While such confirmation was awaited, the Lord appointed, through Moses, ceremonies that were, so to speak, solemn symbols of that confirmation. A controversy arose over whether or not the ceremonies that had been ordained in the law ought to give way to Christ. Now these were only the accidental properties of the covenant, or additions and appendages, and in common parlance, accessories of it. Yet because they were means of administering it, they bear the name “covenant,” just as is customary in the case of other sacraments. To sum up then, in this passage [Heb 8 -Editor] “Old Testament” means the solemn manner of confirming the covenant, comprised in ceremonies and sacrifices. Because nothing substantial underlies this unless we go beyond it, the apostle contends that it ought to be terminated and abrogated, to give place to Christ, the Sponsor and Mediator of a better covenant [cf. Heb 7:22]; whereby he imparts eternal sanctifications once and for all to the elect, blotting out their transgressions, which remained under the law. Or, if you prefer, understand it thus: the Old Testament of the Lord was that covenant [the eternal covenant of grace -Editor] wrapped up in the shadowy and ineffectual observance of ceremonies and delivered to the Jews; it was temporary because it remained, as it were, in suspense until it might rest upon a firm and substantial confirmation.

¹ <http://www.1689federalism.com>

It became new and eternal only after it was consecrated and established by the blood of Christ. Hence Christ in the Supper calls the cup that he gives to his disciples “the cup of the New Testament in my blood” [Luke 22:20]. By this he means that the Testament of God attained its truth when sealed by his blood, and thereby becomes new and eternal.²

We find the following summary in his commentary on Hebrews 8.

But what he adds is not without some difficulty, — that the covenant of the Gospel was proclaimed on better promises; for it is certain that the fathers who lived under the Law had the same hope of eternal life set before them as we have, as they had the grace of adoption in common with us, then faith must have rested on the same promises. But the comparison made by the Apostle refers to the form rather than to the substance; for though God promised to them the same salvation which he at this day promises to us, yet neither the manner nor the character of the revelation is the same or equal to what we enjoy.³

This view holds that the Old and the New Covenant are in fact the same covenant, only differing in outward appearance. This found expression in Chapter 7 of the Westminster Confession.

5. This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the Gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.

6. Under the gospel, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed, are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them it is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament. There are not, therefore, two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.

² Calvin, John. “The Institutes of the Christian Religion” [Book 2, Chapter 11, Section 4](#). Henry Beveridge translation.

³ Calvin, John. [COMMENTARIES ON THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE HEBREWS, Hebrews 8:1-6](#). Translated and edited by Rev. John Owen.

Yet not all covenant theologians were satisfied with this explanation of Scripture. For example, John Owen, "The Calvin of England," in his monumental commentary on the book of Hebrews, argues

Suppose, then, that this new covenant of grace was extant and effectual under the old testament, so as the church was saved by virtue thereof, and the mediation of Christ therein, how could it be that there should at the same time be another covenant between God and them, of a different nature from this, accompanied with other promises, and other effects?

On this consideration it is said, that the two covenants mentioned, the new and the old, were not indeed two distinct covenants, as unto their essence and substance, but only different administrations of the same covenant, called two covenants from some different outward solemnities and duties of worship attending of them...

But on the other hand, there is such express mention made, not only in this, but in sundry other places of the Scripture also, of two distinct covenants, or testaments, and such different natures, properties, and effects, ascribed unto them, as seem to constitute two distinct covenants. This, therefore, we must inquire into...

The judgment of most reformed divines is, that the church under the old testament had the same promise of Christ, the same interest in him by faith, remission of sins, reconciliation with God, justification and salvation by the same way and means, that believers have under the new. And whereas the essence and the substance of the covenant consists in these things, they are not to be said to be under another covenant, but only a different administration of it. But this was so different from that which is established in the gospel after the coming of Christ, that it hath the appearance and name of another covenant...

The Lutherans, on the other side, insist on two arguments to prove, that not a twofold administration of the same covenant, but that two covenants substantially distinct, are intended in this discourse of the apostle...

These things being observed, we may consider that the Scripture doth plainly and expressly make mention of two testaments, or covenants, and distinguish between them in such a way, as what is spoken can hardly be accommodated unto a twofold administration of the same covenant. The one is mentioned and described, Exodus 24:3-8, Deuteronomy 5:2-5, — namely, the covenant that God made with the people of Israel in Sinai; and which is commonly called "the covenant," where the people under the old testament are said to keep or break God's covenant; which for the most part is spoken with respect unto that worship which was peculiar thereunto. The other is promised, Jer 31:31-34,

32:40; which is the new or gospel covenant, as before explained, mention Matt 26:28, Mark 14:24. And these two covenants, or testaments, are compared one with the other and opposed one unto another 2 Cor 3:6-9; Gal 4:24-26; Heb 7:22, 9:15-20...

Wherefore we must grant two distinct covenants, rather than a twofold administration of the same covenant merely, to be intended. We must, I say, do so, provided always that the way of reconciliation and salvation was the same under both. But it will be said, —and with great pretense of reason, for it is that which is the sole foundation they all build upon who allow only a twofold administration of the same covenant, —‘That this being the principal end of a divine covenant, if the way of reconciliation and salvation be the same under both, then indeed are they for the substance of them but one.’ And I grant that this would inevitably follow, if it were so equally by virtue of them both. If reconciliation and salvation by Christ were to be obtained not only under the old covenant, but by virtue thereof, then it must be the same for substance with the new. But this is not so; for no reconciliation with God nor salvation could be obtained by virtue of the old covenant, or the administration of it, as our apostle disputes at large, though all believers were reconciled, justified, and saved, by virtue of the promise, whilst they were under the covenant.

As therefore I have showed in what sense the covenant of grace is called “the new covenant,” in this distinction and opposition, so I shall propose sundry things which relate unto the nature of the first covenant, which manifest it to have been a distinct covenant, and not a mere administration of the covenant of grace: ...

This is the nature and substance of that covenant which God made with that people; a particular, temporary covenant it was, and not a mere dispensation of the covenant of grace...

For some, when they hear that the covenant of grace was always one and the same, of the same nature and efficacy under both testaments, —that the way of salvation by Christ was always one and the same, —are ready to think that there was no such great difference between their state and ours as is pretended. But we see that on this supposition, that covenant which God brought the people into at Sinai, and under the yoke whereof they were to abide until the new covenant was established, had all the disadvantages attending it which we have insisted on. And those who understand not how excellent and glorious those privileges are which are added unto the covenant of grace, as to the

administration of it, by the introduction and establishment of the new covenant, are utterly unacquainted with the nature of spiritual and heavenly things.⁴

In rejecting Westminster Federalism, Owen, and those who agreed with him, were not rejecting orthodoxy and introducing novelty. They simply recognized that there are more than two covenants in the bible and they let each covenant define itself. In truth, they were recovering an older, more biblical understanding of covenant theology that pre-dated Calvin and the reformation. In a long list of differences between the Old and New Covenants, Owen notes:

13. They differ in the declaration made in them of the kingdom of God. It is the observation of Augustine, that the very name of “the kingdom of heaven” is peculiar unto the new testament. It is true, God reigned in and over the church under the old testament; but his rule was such, and had such a relation unto secular things, especially with respect unto the land of Canaan, and the flourishing condition of the people therein, as that it had an appearance of a kingdom of this world. And that it was so, and was so to be, consisting in empire, power, victory, wealth, and peace, was so deeply fixed on the minds of the generality of the people, that the disciples of Christ themselves could not free themselves of that apprehension, until the new testament was fully established. But now in the gospel, the nature of the kingdom of God, where it is, and wherein it consists, is plainly and evidently declared, unto the unspeakable consolation of believers. For whereas it is now known and experienced to be internal, spiritual, and heavenly, they have no less assured interest in it and advantage by it, in all the troubles which they may undergo in this world, than they could have in the fullest possession of all earthly enjoyments.⁵

Owen was referring to Augustine’s “A Work on the Proceedings of Pelagius.”

Chapter 13 [V.]—The Fifth Item of the Accusation; And Pelagius’ Answer.

After the judges had accorded their approbation to this answer of Pelagius, another passage which he had written in his book was read aloud: “The kingdom of heaven was promised even in the Old Testament.” Upon this, Pelagius remarked in vindication: “This can be proved by the Scriptures: but heretics, in order to disparage the Old Testament, deny this. I, however, simply followed the authority of the Scriptures when I said this; for in the prophet Daniel it is written: ‘The saints shall receive the kingdom of the Most. High.’” (Dan 7:18) After they

⁴ An Exposition on the Epistle to the Hebrews 8:6
http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf (p. 84-118)

⁵ An Exposition on the Epistle to the Hebrews 8:6
http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/John_Owen/Hebrews_8.1-10.39.pdf (p. 116)

had heard this answer, the synod said: "Neither is this opposed to the Church's faith."

Chapter 14.—Examination of This Point. The Phrase "Old Testament" Used in Two Senses. The Heir of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament There Were Heirs of the New Testament.

Was it therefore without reason that our brethren were moved by his words to include this charge among the others against him? Certainly not. The fact is, that the phrase Old Testament is constantly employed in two different ways,—in one, following the authority of the Holy Scriptures; in the other, following the most common custom of speech. For the Apostle Paul says, in his Epistle to the Galatians: "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free woman. . . .Which things are an allegory: for these are the two testaments; the one which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and is conjoined with the Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children; whereas the Jerusalem which is above is free, and is the mother of us all." (Gal 4:21-26) Now, inasmuch as the Old Testament belongs to bondage, whence it is written, "Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac," (Gal 4:30) but the kingdom of heaven to liberty; what has the kingdom of heaven to do with the Old Testament? Since, however, as I have already remarked, we are accustomed, in our ordinary use of words, to designate all those Scriptures of the law and the prophets which were given previous to the Lord's incarnation, and are embraced together by canonical authority, under the name and title of the Old Testament, what man who is ever so moderately informed in ecclesiastical lore can be ignorant that the kingdom of heaven could be quite as well promised in those early Scriptures as even the New Testament itself, to which the kingdom of heaven belongs? At all events, in those ancient Scriptures it is most distinctly written: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will consummate a new testament with the house of Israel and with the house of Jacob; not according to the testament that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt." (Jer 31:31, 32) This was done on Mount Sinai. But then there had not yet risen the prophet Daniel to say: "The saints shall receive the kingdom of the Most High." (Dan 7:18) For by these words he foretold the merit not of the Old, but of the New Testament. In the same manner did the same prophets foretell that Christ Himself would come, in whose blood the New Testament was consecrated. Of this Testament also the apostles became the ministers, as the most blessed Paul declares: "He hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not in its letter, but in spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (2 Cor 3:6) In that testament, however, which is properly called the Old, and was given on Mount Sinai, only earthly happiness is expressly promised. Accordingly that land,

into which the nation, after being led through the wilderness, was conducted, is called the land of promise, wherein peace and royal power, and the gaining of victories over enemies, and an abundance of children and of fruits of the ground, and gifts of a similar kind are the promises of the Old Testament. And these, indeed, are figures of the spiritual blessings which appertain to the New Testament; but yet the man who lives under God's law with those earthly blessings for his sanction, is precisely the heir of the Old Testament, for just such rewards are promised and given to him, according to the terms of the Old Testament, as are the objects of his desire according to the condition of the old man. But whatever blessings are there figuratively set forth as appertaining to the New Testament require the new man to give them effect. And no doubt the great apostle understood perfectly well what he was saying, when he described the two testaments as capable of the allegorical distinction of the bond-woman and the free,—attributing the children of the flesh to the Old, and to the New the children of the promise: "They," says he, "which are the children of the flesh, are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Rom 9:8) The children of the flesh, then, belong to the earthly Jerusalem, which is in bondage with her children; whereas the children of the promise belong to the Jerusalem above, the free, the mother of us all, eternal in the heavens. (Gal 4:25, 26) Whence we can easily see who they are that appertain to the earthly, and who to the heavenly kingdom. But then the happy persons, who even in that early age were by the grace of God taught to understand the distinction now set forth, were thereby made the children of promise, and were accounted in the secret purpose of God as heirs of the New Testament; although they continued with perfect fitness to administer the Old Testament to the ancient people of God, because it was divinely appropriated to that people in God's distribution of the times and seasons.

Chapter 15.—The Same Continued.

How then should there not be a feeling of just disquietude entertained by the children of promise, children of the free Jerusalem, which is eternal in the heavens, when they see that by the words of Pelagius the distinction which has been drawn by Apostolic and catholic authority is abolished, and Agar is supposed to be by some means on a par with Sarah? He therefore does injury to the scripture of the Old Testament with heretical impiety, who with an impious and sacrilegious face denies that it was inspired by the good, supreme, and very God,—as Marcion does, as Manichæus does, and other pests of similar opinions. On this account (that I may put into as brief a space as I can what my own views are on the subject), as much injury is done to the New Testament, when it is put on the same level with the Old Testament, as is inflicted on the Old itself when men deny it to be the work of the supreme God of goodness. Now, when Pelagius in his answer gave as his reason for saying that even in the Old Testament there was a promise of the kingdom of heaven, the testimony of the

prophet Daniel, who most plainly foretold that the saints should receive the kingdom of the Most High, it was fairly decided that the statement of Pelagius was not opposed to the catholic faith, although not according to the distinction which shows that the earthly promises of Mount Sinai are the proper characteristics of the Old Testament; nor indeed was the decision an improper one, considering that mode of speech which designates all the canonical Scriptures which were given to men before the Lord's coming in the flesh by the title of the "Old Testament." The kingdom of the Most High is of course none other than the kingdom of God; otherwise, anybody might boldly contend that the kingdom of God is one thing, and the kingdom of heaven another.⁶

According to Augustine, in the Old Covenant "only earthly happiness [in the land of Canaan] is expressly promised" which served as "figures of the spiritual blessings which appertain to the New Testament [Covenant]." Members of the Old Covenant were the children of the flesh, while members of the New Covenant were the children of promise. Those with saving faith in the Old Covenant were "heirs of the New Testament." He elsewhere referred to "Moses himself, the minister of the old testament, the heir of the new," noting that "Of this kind were all the righteous men of old"⁷ and

the men of God who at that time understood this according to the ordering of the times, were indeed the stewards and bearers of the old testament [covenant], but are shown to be the heirs of the new. Shall we deny that he belongs to the new testament who says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me"? (Ps 51:10)⁸

He even goes so far as to say that "as much injury is done to the New Testament [Covenant], when it is put on the same level with the Old Testament [Covenant], as is inflicted on the Old itself when men deny it to be the work of the supreme God of goodness."

It is in this tradition that Abraham Booth writes his rebuke of all national churches. The reformers inherited sacralism from the Papacy. At the blast of a trumpet, entire nations were converted from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism. This view of the church as "Christendom" was defended by appeal to the Old Covenant and the covenant theology articulated by Calvin.

⁶ <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf105.xiv.xvii.html> See also, "Augustine: Proto-1689 Federalist" <http://www.1689federalism.com/augustine-proto-1689-federalist/>

⁷ A Treatise Against Two Letters of the Pelagians. Book III Chapter 11.—Distinction Between the Children of the Old and of the New Testaments. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf105.xviii.v.xi.html>

⁸ A Treatise Against Two Letters of the Pelagians. Book III Chapter 6 [IV.]—The Calumny Concerning the Old Testament and the Righteous Men of Old. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf105.xviii.v.vi.html>

When dissenters pleaded that Christ's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), they were met with sharp rebuke. In his commentary on Deuteronomy 13:5, Calvin states

But it is questioned whether the law pertains to the kingdom of Christ, which is spiritual and distinct from all earthly dominion; and there are some men, not otherwise ill-disposed, to whom it appears that our condition under the Gospel is different from that of the ancient people under the law; not only because the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, but because Christ was unwilling that the beginnings of His kingdom should be aided by the sword. But, when human judges consecrate their work to the promotion of Christ's kingdom, I deny that on that account its nature is changed. For, although it was Christ's will that His Gospel should be proclaimed by His disciples in opposition to the power of the whole world, and He exposed them armed with the Word alone like sheep amongst wolves, He did not impose on Himself an eternal law that He should never bring kings under His subjection, nor tame their violence, nor change them from being cruel persecutors into the patrons and guardians of His Church. Magistrates at first exercised tyranny against the Church, because the time had not yet come when they should "kiss the Son" of God, and, laying aside their violence, should become the nursing fathers of the Church, which they had assailed according to Isaiah's prophecy, that undoubtedly refers to the coming of Christ. (Isaiah xlix:6, 23.)⁹

This was representative of how the Westminster divines likewise responded to the same objection. But following the creation of the Westminster Confession, more and more men became dissatisfied with its understanding of Scripture. Over the next century more and more theologians recognized and conceded the differences between the Old and the New Covenants.¹⁰

In 1788 (5 years after Booth wrote his essay), the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America revised the Westminster Standards to accommodate more religious liberty. Of specific interest is the addition of John 18:36 as a proof text for the revision of 23.3 that the magistrate may not "in the least, interfere in matters of faith." Charles Hodge notes that it was not Enlightenment thinking that led to this revision, but rather a change in interpretation of Scripture; specifically that "we are not authorized to argue from the Old Testament economy because that was avowedly temporary and has been abolished."¹¹

⁹ <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom04.ii.x.ii.html>

¹⁰ See "Two Kingdom Theology?" <http://reformedlibertarian.com/primer/two-kingdom-theology/>

¹¹ "The Relation of Church and State" Princeton Review, 1863
<http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=92>

In Booth's essay, the glory of the kingdom of Christ shines brightly as he distinguishes it from every kingdom on earth, including the "Israelitish Theocracy." His was a day in which ideas mattered, and his ideas, shared by others, as representative of a long covenantal tradition, had significant consequences in America, and eventually throughout the world.¹² Today is still a day in which ideas matter, because ideas always matter. Our hope is that Booth's essay will aid you in thinking upon Christ and his kingdom as you sojourn on this earth.

--Brandon Adams. April, 2015

¹² See, for example, Chapter 2, Section 2 and Chapter 3 in Thomas F. Curtis *The progress of Baptist principles in the last hundred years* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1855).

<https://books.google.com/books?id=wcECAAQAQAAJ&dq=progress%20of%20baptist%20ideas%20last%20hundred%20years&pg=PR1#v=onepage&q&f=false>

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 evil, 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 honors, is 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 flowing from it, constitute the design of this Essay.

The author has expressed his thoughts with great freedom; yet without intending the least offense 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 honor 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 surprised, 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.¹³ 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; 1783.

¹³ Luther says, "Potius quam aliequid Regno Christi et Glorise ejus decedat, ruat non solum pax sed coclum et terra. *Loci Commun.* Class iv. p 35."

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 their 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 favor, on the ground of carnal descent from Abraham, and of the Covenant made at Horeb; the doctrine, example, and claims of Christ, 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 their 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 dishonor the Lord Redeemer, and be finally punished as the enemies of his government. Our danger of contracting guilt, and of incurring divine [judgment] in this way, is far from 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 the religion of Jesus, 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 prerogative, as implicitly to say, *We will not have him to rule over us*.

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 maybe considered as the grand maxim on which he formed his conduct when among men; and it is pregnant with needful instruction to all his disciples, respecting the New Economy and the Christian Church. Relative to matters of that kind, 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 honors, 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 royal character, when *riding upon an ass*: for while he accepted the honors 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 Church¹⁴; 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 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 *spirits of just men made perfect*. In pursuance of which most grand investiture with his regal office, he distributed royal donatives, 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

¹⁴ "Regnum Dei in evangelia," says Witsius. "vix alia significatione venit qua ut notet statum eximium et vere iberum Ecclesie Testamenti Novi sub Rege Messia Exercitat," in Orat. Dominic. Exercit, ix. § II

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 favored 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 enquire.

The Gospel Church is a kingdom not of this world, in regard to its origin.

From the time of Nimrod to the present age, secular empires have generally originated in the vile passions of their first founders: for, in almost every instance, avarice and pride, ambition and a lust of dominion, have been conspicuous. -- Not so, in the kingdom of Christ. The remote foundation of his dominion was laid in the counsels of Heaven before time commenced, by all comprehending wisdom and infinite goodness, for the glory of God and the benefit of man: 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 lived. No sooner, for instance, were we capable of reflecting upon our civil connections, than we found ourselves freeborn 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 subjects 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 does not arise from any political relation subsisting among 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 Caesar, the qualifications and obedience of his real subjects must be so too. 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, conscience, and heart, no less than to the external behaviour. Consequently, all the subjects of his government must have spiritual dispositions, and yield spiritual 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*.¹⁵ *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*.¹⁶ *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 will.¹⁷ 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

¹⁵ John 18:17; Gal. 3:7,9,1; John 4:4,6

¹⁶ Gal. 3:10; John. 8:23; 1 John 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:5; John 8:38, 41, 44; 1 John 3:8.

¹⁷ Rom. 3:6-8; Eph. 5:8; John. 8:44; Eph. 2:2

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: for if the heart be not under his dominion, he reigns not at all 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, and lively stones* in the spiritual temple.¹⁸ 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."*¹⁹

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 fullness 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 an 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 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.*²⁰

¹⁸ Acts 2:41; Rom. 1:6; 1 Cor 1:2; Eph 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2; 2 Thess 1:3; Heb 3:1; 1 Pet. 1:1-3 and 2:5; 2 Pet. 1:1

¹⁹ Observat. Sac. L.V.C. iv.

²⁰ Jer. 31: 31 — 34, Heb. 8:8, 9.

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, internal, and everlasting. 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 representing *temporal* blessings, nor concerning any merely *external relation* to the Great 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, from which it is extremely different. It is also pronounced *a better* Covenant than that which Jehovah made with the ancient Israel: and so it is, 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 *continuance*: 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, exceeds that of the chosen tribes -- as blessings entirely spiritual and immortal, are more excellent than those of an earthly kind 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 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 covenantee, and is become for ever 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 *sacrifices*, 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,²¹ 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.²² 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

²¹ Heb. 8:6, 7:19. 9:23, 11:17

²² 2 Cor. 3:7—11

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 him²³. These prerogatives were enjoyed, independent of sanctifying grace, and of any pretention to it, either in themselves, or in their parents.

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 ail the ancient Israelites; even where it is manifest that multitudes 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 the Messiah's kingdom, absolutely forbids our supposing, that either Jews or Gentiles are warranted to call the Great Supreme *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

²³ Judges 8:23; 1 Sam. 8:6, 7; 7:12; 2 Chron. 28:5; 29:23; 9:8

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 about 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 not yet the divine Father. Once, indeed, it was otherwise: for, concerning the Israelitish nation, it is thus 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.*²⁴ - It was the peculiar honor and happiness of Israel, to have a Sovereign who was the only object their worship. For thus the Psalmist sings; *Blessed is the nation, whose (king) Jehovah is their God!*²⁵ Hence Jehovah's complaint; *They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*²⁶ 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 Abraham 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

²⁴ Hosea 13:10; Judges 8:23; 1 Sam 7:12.

²⁵ Psalm 33:12; 144:15; Heb. See the Septuagint Version and that of Junius and Tremellius; together with Poli *Synopsis*. and Venema *Comment* in loc.

²⁶ 1 Sam. 8:7

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, calls it *the HOLY mount*.²⁷ 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 presence, 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 Sinai²⁸; 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 stiled *holy*²⁹ — The Divine presence residing among them, appears to have had an extensive influence upon the people, with regard to relative sanctity and external purity. So, 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.³⁰ Nay, divine law expressly required, that even the surface of the ground on which they trod should be preserved from one species of defilement; and the injunction is enforced by this consideration, *For Jehovah thy God walketh in the midst of the camp*.³¹

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*.³² 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.

²⁷ Exod. 3:5; Josh. 5:15; 2 Pet. 1:18

²⁸ Exod. 19:18

²⁹ See Exod. 28:2, 4; 29:1; Lev. 19:23, 24; 20:26; 25:2,4; 27:14, 30; Numb. 26:3, 38; 35:34; Deut. 7:6.

³⁰ Numb. 5:2,3; 35:34

³¹ Deut. 23:12, 13, 14

³² Exod. 29:43, Vid. Junium and Tremell. in loc.

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."³³

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 date, 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 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; and the laws of the state 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 throne, to be king for the Lord thy God. Of the Jewish magistrates it is also written, Ye judge not for man, but for Jehovah. 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 toward the Jews.³⁴

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

³³ Differtat. Sac. L. ii. C. iii. § 6

³⁴ 2 Chron. 19:6 § Matt. 3:7-12

thing; which existed under the Old economy, is gone for ever: 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 Covenant³⁵: 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 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 lest 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 in all*. We may therefore safely conclude, that were the Jews converted and resettled in Palestine, both they and their infant offspring would be as entirely destitute of the ancient relative holiness, as those Mahomedans 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 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, clerical habits, and 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, neither agrees with the laws of Judaism, nor with the nature of Christianity. But 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: but is it not plain, that a National church is inimical 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

³⁵ Jer. 31:31-34. Heb. 8:7-13

entered in parish registers?³⁶ --- 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 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. Its principal officers are appointed by the crown; and, in virtue of ecclesiastical station, are lords of Parliament³⁷. Nay, even

³⁶ 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, that is Jesus, was not at all likely to be a competitor with Caesar: that a kingdom of truth could not interfere with the claims of his master: that it was trifling to accuse him as an enemy of Caesar. But then, had Jesus said that he was setting upon 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.

³⁷ 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 requireth 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, duke, *lords*, knights, temporal judges, or any other 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*: "This much I dare say 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 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. 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 are 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 more honorable member of his church, on account of *wealth* or *power*, of *parts* or *learning*. These things, though useful in their places, of much reputation to 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

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 controllers of mints. Well, well, is this their duty? Is this their office? Is this their calling? Should we have ministers of the church controllers 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 saine know who controlleth the devil at home in his parish, which he controlleth 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 with they can rule and serve as 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 nowadays." In Mr. Peirce's *Vindict of Dissent*. Part III Chap. 1.

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 honor 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 honor 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 honorable 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 honor: *Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*³⁸ This being the law of honor, and the rule of promotion, in the kingdom of Christ, we may safely conclude, that the meanest domestic maybe a dignified chamber 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 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 honorable 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 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 favour 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 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 that sublime 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

³⁸ Matt. 20:26, 27; Mark 10:42-45

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 *honor 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 honor than merely to be a Prophet, or an Apostle. For Balaam was the former, and Judas was the later; 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 gist 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 agreeable turns of wit. Christ and conscience feel their interests but little concerned. The former is too observant of the preacher's motives, and too jealous of his own honor, to be pleased with such a procedure; and the latter is either too sleepy to be aroused, or too much pained to receive relief, by those means. If our Lord consider himself as honored 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 honor of Christ and the tranquility 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 the other nations under their control. — The principle 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, or in the field of war; they were 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 unpolite 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 their 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 of righteousness, of love and of peace.

Were the Messiah's kingdom *of this world*, his loyal subjects might lawfully take the sword, to repel assailants and subdue his enemies: for without the liberty of such defense, 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.*³⁹ 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.

³⁹ John 28:11, 36

In former times, the Holy Spirit frequently came upon the subjects of Jehovah's government, to inspire them with martial courage for the defense 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: 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 call upon him. His accoutrements are, as Paul informs us, the girdle of truth, and the breastplate of righteousness; the shield of faith, and helmet of hope, and the sword of the Spirit.*⁴⁰ 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 upon power, wealth, or learning, either for ornament or support. *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith 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 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 goodwill to all mankind, that our Lord is honored, 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 to 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 fears no examination: but the operations of policy are subtle, and its first designs are latent. 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

⁴⁰ Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Thess 5:8; 2 Cor. 10:3-5

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*. To adorn 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 sight; and that the consciences of others might not be pained, softening interpretations of divine precepts have been given. To strand 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, solemnly professed their consent to what they could not approve; and frequently practiced, as part of their public devotions, what they were constrained to wish had never existed.⁴¹ Nay, as it 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.⁴² Thus

⁴¹ 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*?

⁴² Thus runs part of an Oath which is taken by Graduates in the University of Oxford. Item speclaliter tu jurabis, quod intenullas communitates, vel personas istius Universitatis, impedies pacem, concordiam et amorem -- Nec Conventiculis interesse debes, nec eis tacite vel expresse consentire; SED EA POTIUS, MODIS QUIBUS POTERIS IMPEDIRE. Excerpt. e Corp. Statut. Universit. Oxon. Tit. IX. Sect. vi. S. I. 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 - Nor ought you to be present in Conventicles, nor either expressly nor 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 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 shall 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

multitudes have subscribed and consented, trined 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 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 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 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 apposite manner. The former would make an admirable text; the latter, a noble conclusion: and they are as follows: "Such a man as I -- Is not this great Babylon that I have built?"⁴³ Others, and often the same

held and allowed, which may rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful churches: Let him be excommunicated, and not restored, but 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 the 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 all, that is good for aught.*" Enquiry into the Orig. Nature, Institut. and Comm. of Evang. Churches, p. 228, 229.

⁴³ Mr. G Gregoey, when animadverting 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

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 characters. 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 addressing 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 hearers? Yet that is the general end of preaching. Or can the preacher have any devotion, while showing the airs of a mountebank; 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 sight of God, and has reason to tremble. Such a man serves not our Lord Jesus Christ, but his own interests, in some form or other. 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, upon earth, are we to expect solemnity, if not in the pulpit? There, a man should be serious and solemn as death.

It may perhaps be said; "*This kind of trifling has its use. It is a means 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 the farcical conduct, here

vulgar." Sermons, Introduct. 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 Composition of a Sermon Vol. 1, p. 3.

censured, lawful, there would be reason to think that the cause of Christ, and the interests of harlequin, are very 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 ministers⁴⁴) 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.⁴⁵

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 carnal and win their affections; he laboured, *by manifestation of the truth, to commend himself to every man's conscience, as in the sight 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 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 an 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, which is the object of our censure!

⁴⁴ Vid. *Vitringam in loc*

⁴⁵ Heb. 12:28, 29; Deut. 4:24; 9:3

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 playhouse.

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 merryandrews? If, instead of *sound speech, which cannot be condemned*, they meet with extravagance and nonsense, what will thy 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 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 intreating them *to be reconciled to God*; a farcical droll appear, spouting low wit and provoking resibility, will 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 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 angles 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 lead imperfect, extend their obliging power no further than the exterior behaviour: for it would be vain and foolish 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 enabled 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. Controuling the thoughts and binding the conscience, their sanction is entirely spiritual. The motives enforcing obedience to them, are the smiles, or the frowns, of Him who has our everlasting all at his disposal.

As is the kingdom, such is the sovereign; and as 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 carnal 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 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 to 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. 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. For under the Old economy, the laws of religion were sanctified by *temporal politics*, and frequently those of the severest kind.⁴⁶ To be cast out of the congregation, to be forbidden access to the sanctuary worship, (except for ceremonial pollution) was to

⁴⁶ See Exod. 7:53, 19; 30:33, 38; 31:14; Lev. 7:20-27; 27:3-9; 29:8; 23:27, 28, 29; Numb. 9:13; 15:30, 31; 19:13. With many other familiar places.

be deprived, not only of ecclesiastical privileges, but also of civil rights. The church and the state being coextended, 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 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, 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, or the Codex of Gibson, 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 implicit. *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 honor; 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 world, 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, and the elegance of its public buildings. Magnificent palaces and royal robes are quite in character for secular princes. Ensigns of honor, 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 depository 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 honor to Christianity, by erecting *pompous places* of worship, by *consecrating* those places, and by adorning 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, no thing inconsistent with station or profession. But confine them there, and by no means think of decorating the kingdom, or of promoting the cause of Christ, by any thing similar. Were any man to lacker gold, and paint the diamond, to increase their lustre, 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*, conveniency 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:⁴⁷ 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 honors 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

⁴⁷ Ezra 3:10, 11

worship, being abolished, and too much resembles a Jewish, or a Popish consecration.⁴⁸

In 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 life 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?

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 furplice, 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, maybe 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

⁴⁸ 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 everything 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 blesses 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.

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 radical falsehood is detestable: and when any minister thinks of magnifying his office, by pomposity in the pulpit, he betrays his ignorance relating to the nature of that kingdom in which he professes to be an officer. --Do the laws of this holy empire forbid the subjects to affect shining and costly apparel, as not becoming those who *profess godliness*;⁴⁹ 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 these who understand the Christian system, and are heavenly minded, form the determination.

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 highpriest, 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,⁵⁰ as well as a temple, where 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*.⁵¹ 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 country*,⁵² 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

⁴⁹ 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Pet. 3:3, 4

⁵⁰ Matt. 5:35

⁵¹ Heb. 9; Col. 2:8, 20

⁵² John. 1:2. See Dr. *Doddridge* in loc.

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 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 from the garb of a minister. Though far from supposing rusticity, illiteracy, and meanness, to be characteristics of a Gospel church; yet I may venture to assert, that an assembly of princes in a splendid cathedral, with an archprelate 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 dishonor unto him."⁵³

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 cross; -- if, 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 principle; Yes, let those monopolize the 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,⁵⁴ if they would know on what foundations 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 principle officers in it are appointed by him, and

⁵³ *On the Person of Christ*, p. 354, 355

⁵⁴ 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. Gobson's Codex*, p. 122. Edit. 3d.

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 founding 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; but it should not 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 desired by them, to assemble in an elegant edifice, and for their minister 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, are 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,⁵⁵ yet let not Protestant Dissenting ministers implicitly arrogate an apostolic mission, powers, and authority, by calling themselves AMBASSADORS *of Christ*. For that character, it is plain, belonged 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 ecclesiastical station, their credentials must be produced.

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."⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ These things were undoubtedly suited to the nature of that Dispensation, and to the church of

⁵⁵ See Dr. Owen's *Nature of a Gospel Church, and its Government*. P. 33

⁵⁶ *Theological Dissertations*. P. 69.

⁵⁷ 1 Chron. 16:4, 5, 6; 2 Chron. 29:25

God, while in a state of minority.⁵⁸ 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 skillful 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 both, to the people, and to 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.⁵⁹ -- 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 practice a ritual nearly akin to the rubrics 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, should 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 and please the carnal mind -- Because the simplicity and 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 lave appearances, however, as many things in the Jewish ritual were pretty well adapted to please the carnally minded, 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 honorable and profitable to the priest, 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, *Honorable 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

⁵⁸ Gal. 4:1-7

⁵⁹ Gal. 4:9; Heb. 9:10

inclined always to *wash their feet*, before they perform sacred service;⁶⁰ much less to perform *barefoot*⁶¹ -- 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 Jewish ceremony 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."⁶² *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?*⁶³

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 customs; yet we are taught by the most respectable ecclesiastical historians, that they originated in 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 temples and of ceremonies; Constantine had no sooner abolished the 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 rites. Ministers of the word, for example, when performing their office, appeared in canonical habits, and with priestly pomp. Their newly created 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; precentors were appointed, and laws were framed by different Councils to direct the singers in the performance of their service, -- 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 he 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.

⁶⁰ Exod. 30:17-21

⁶¹ See Dr. Lightfoot's *Temple Service*, Chap 1 and 10. And Dr. Gill on Exod. 3:5

⁶² In 1 Cor. 14:19

⁶³ Jer. 5:31

But well may he demand, with the aspect of incensed majesty, *Who hath required this at your hand?*

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world, in respect of its immunities, its riches, and its honors.

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 honors and the greatest emoluments which the subjects of an earthly kingdom can enjoy, are all of them unsatisfactory: and, therefore, the first favourites of temporal princes are sometimes the most unhappy. Of this we have a remarkable instance in Haman, the prime favourite of Ahasuerus. -- Great privileges and exalted honors 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, and grants from the crown, are but seldom bestowed, how loyal forever the subjects may be. Besides, those distinguished favors are of short duration, and quite uncertain.

Whereas, the immunities, emoluments, and honors of our Lord's kingdom, are all of them spiriual 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 of future glory, are some of the privileges and honors 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 favourites of our celestial Sovereign, for they are common to ail 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 honors, bestowed by the King Messiah, are ail 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 honor, 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, honors, and victory over their enemies, were promised by Jehovah to their external obedience.⁶⁴ The punishments also, that were denounced against flagrant breaches of the Covenant made at Horeb, were of a temporal kind.⁶⁵

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 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, those, 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 must indeed be acknowledged, that as vicious tempers and immoral practices have a natural tendency to impair health, distress the mind, and waste the property; to the exercise of holy affections, and the practice of true godliness, have the most

⁶⁴ See Exod. 15:25, 26; 23:25-28; Lev. 26:3-14; Deut 7:12-24; 8:7, 8, 9; 11:13-17; 28:3-13

⁶⁵ Lev. 16:14-39; Deut. 4:25, 26, 27; 28: 15-68; 29:22-28. See Dr. Erskine's *Theolog. 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 consistent, therefore, with its being the duty of Abraham's natural seed to perform *internal* obedience to that Sublime Sovereign, considered as God of the whole earth; and with final punishment being inflicted by him, in failure of that obedience

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 that 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 persecution, 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 authority, and the warmest zeal for his honor, 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, both by office and by 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 falling 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 honor and ease; but by admitting them into more intimate communion with himself, and by rejoicing their hearts with his favor.⁶⁶ Yes, to deliver from spiritual enemies, and to provide for spiritual wants; to indulge with spiritual riches, and to ennoble with spiritual honors, 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 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 things 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,*

⁶⁶ John 7:26 and 14:21, 23

*and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*⁶⁷ 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 *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!*⁶⁸

Once more; *The empire of Christ, or the Gospel Church is called THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.* As our Lord, in the most emphatical manner, is denominated, THE KING OF KINGS; we may 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 honors, 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 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 favour 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 foundation 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, conscience, and 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 that worship the Father, *must worship 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 principle 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, not attended with *spiritual mindedness*: because it

⁶⁷ Psalm 122:8; Dan 7:14; Luke 1:33

⁶⁸ ; Psalm 122:15; 1 Cor. 15:25

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 honor of this kingdom chiefly consist. Indifference about these, is 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, honors, pleasures. To enjoy his favor, 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 feeling 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 preeminence, 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 *honor 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 favor 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 only 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*.⁶⁹ They knew, indeed, that he inhabited celestial mansions; and therefore, when bending the knee before him, their hands were extended toward heaven:⁷⁰ 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 Oeconomy, 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 object.⁷¹

"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 which all impurities and indecencies were forbidden, as things which, though tolerable in others, 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."⁷²

⁶⁹ 1 Kings 8:27-30, 38, 42, 44, 48; 2 Kings 19:15; Psalm 28:2; 80; 1 Dan 6:10

⁷⁰ 1 Kings 8:22

⁷¹ See Dr. Goodwin on *Christ the Mediator*, B. 6. Chap. 3

⁷² *Theological Dissertations* p. 4, 5, 6

Yes, under the Mosaic system, the high priest only, and he but once in a year, was admitted to the mercyseat, 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 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 ceptre; 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."⁷³

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.*⁷⁴ 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 lustre 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:⁷⁵ which veil was an emblem, not only of the Jewish blindedness, 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 not only represents the

⁷³ Dr. Doddridge's Note, on Eph. 2:19

⁷⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 18. In an unveiled face. So, I humbly conceive, should here be rendered. Compare 2 Cor. 4:6. where the inspired writer speaks of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. That will admit the supplemental preposition in, as well as with, cannot, I presume, be doubted: and that the whole scope of Paul's reasoning; in the context leads us to think of the face of 6'Ar/,,, rather than that of believers, being unveiled, is, if I mistake not, solidly proved by the learned Ikenius, in his *Dissertat. Philolog. Theplog.* Dissert. 26. § 4, 5, 6.

⁷⁵ Exod. 34:29-35

state and privileges of the Gospel Church, as greatly 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 favored subjects of Messiah's 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 religious 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 an earthly sanctuary. Whereas the subjects of Jesus Christ have access to the Father of mercies, 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 a 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, conscience, and 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 his 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 is 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 exults in the light of God's countenance, partaking of joy that is *unspeakable and full of glory*; yet he frequently mourns the want of that exalted pleasure, and *groans being burdened*.

Not with what he is: for he feels much depravity, and laments 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!*

Not with what he *does*: for though he sincerely desires 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 guilt; faith in the great atonement, and confidence in paternal mercy; the ardour of petition, and the comfort of expectation, should be all united. But frequently, alas! his thoughts 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 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-gradulation, 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 our Maker, than self-applause respecting acceptance

with God. Knowing himself to be a polluted worm that 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 they 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 honor. For as this life is the seed-time 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 favor, 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 honor unto God by him, without being exercised in the ascription of honor, 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 unto 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 expresseth 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.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ *On the Person of Christ*, Chap. 20 p. 365, 366