

A DISCOURSE

ON THE UNITY OF THE

2,

CHURCH

AS A MONUMENTAL

PILLAR OF THE TRUTH;

DESIGNED TO RECONCILE CHRISTIANS OF ALL PARTIES AND

DENOMINATIONS IN

CHARITY AND FELLOWSHIP, AS ONE BODY IN CHRIST;

DELIVERED BEFORE AN

ASSOCIATION OF MINISTERS

CONVENED AT PORTSMOUTH, OCTOBER 12, 1791,

AND IN SUBSTANCE REPEATED AT A

LECTURE IN HAMPTONFALLS,

JANUARY 26, 1792.

BY SAMUEL LANGDON, D. D.

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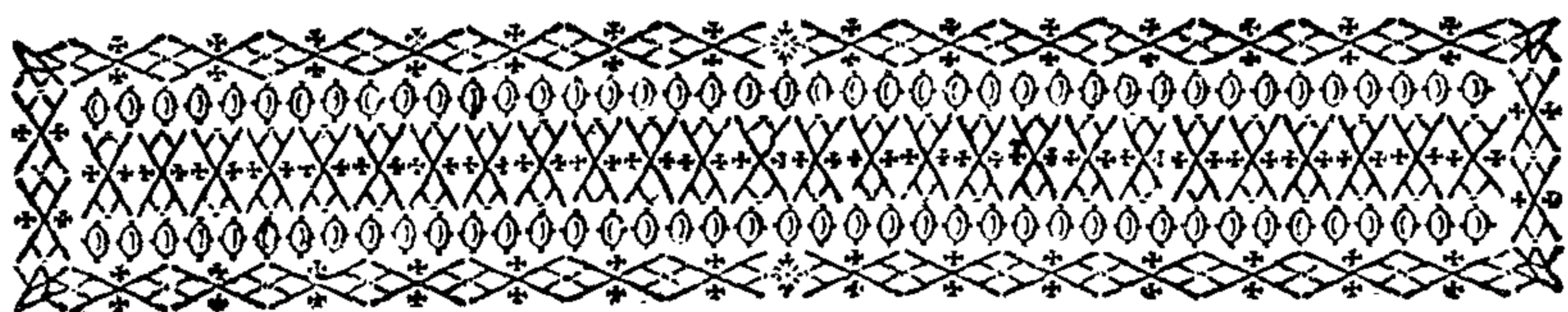
STATE OF NEWHAMPSHIRE.

—WHEREAS THERE IS AMONG YOU ENVYING AND STRIFE AND
DIVISIONS, ARE YE NOT CARNAL, AND WALK AS MEN?—

I. COR. 3. 3.

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A DISCOURSE, &c.

I. Timothy, 3—14, 15.

THESE THINGS WRITE I UNTO THEE, HOPING TO COME UNTO THEE SHORTLY: BUT IF I TARRY LONG, THAT THOU MAYEST KNOW HOW THOU OUGHTEST TO BEHAVE THYSELF IN THE HOUSE OF GOD, WHICH IS THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH.

THE apostle Paul, in the course of his ministry, had spent two years at Ephesus, a very populous and magnificent city of the lesser Asia; where he had converted many to the faith of CHRIST, and had a good opportunity of spreading the gospel thro' all the neighbouring countries, so that churches began to be formed every where around, which needed very particular care and instruction. Therefore, when Paul found it necessary to leave them for a time, that he might visit Macedonia and the churches then forming in Greece, he intreated Timothy, his companion and assistant in the ministry, to remain still at Ephesus; that he might oppose the influence of certain teachers who had insinuated themselves there, and were perverting the doctrines of the gospel, in order to bring christians under the yoke of the mosaic law;

and likewise that he might appoint proper persons to the office of ELDERS, or, which is the same thing in the language of the new-testament, BISHOPS or OVERSEERS ; and to that of DEACONS ; for no other offices are described in his letter to Timothy, as essentially necessary for the institution and government of the churches ; and moreover, that if St. Paul should be detained in his present circuit longer than he intended, Timothy might be directed in many particulars what to teach, and how to conduct all matters relating to the order and welfare of the church of GOD.

THESE epistles to Timothy are not to be considered as designed to constitute him a fixed Bishop of the church of Ephesus, with extraordinary powers above other Elders : for it does not appear from any thing which the apostle writes, that he was to take up his constant residence there for the future ; but only that he was left there on the present occasion to settle that infant church in proper order, and confirm it in christian doctrine. His proper work was that of an evangelist, an assistant of Paul, and under his constant direction, in preaching the gospel in all places where the apostle traveled, and where his help was found necessary. Therefore we find that Paul, after this, took him again with him in his travels ; and, when he was a prisoner at Rome, sent for him there.

WE find, in the 20th. chapter of the Acts, that the church of Ephesus was well furnished with ELDERS, when Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, before he was sent a prisoner to Rome; for he sent for them to Miletus, and gave them a solemn charge to feed the flock of GOD of which he had made them BISHOPS. And as these Elders were plainly called Bishops, so these names were used in the same promiscuous manner until the end of the second century, when christianity began to be corrupted by the ambition of a degenerating clergy.

EUSEB^I_Λ and other writers of the ^{fourth} ~~third~~ century do, indeed, reckon Timothy as the first Bishop of Ephesus; but notwithstanding their authority, who wrote after new ideas of Bishops were introduced, it may with reason be doubted whether he was ever a fixed Bishop in that city, or Elder of that particular church; especially according to the modern idea of a Bishop, which is quite inconsistent with the primitive office of an Evangelist: but after Paul's martyrdom, and when his more extensive work was finished, he might confine his labors in the gospel more especially to the Asiatic churches, make Ephesus his principal residence, and act in concert with the Elders of that city and neighbourhood for the common benefit of the churches.*

NOTE.

* As the first churches, or congregations of christians, consisted of persons newly converted from Judaism or heathenism, who needed much instruction in many particulars of christian faith and practice, and very careful

WITH equal reason it may be doubted, notwithstanding the authority of credulous or designing ecclesiastical writers when the church began to be corrupted, whether either Peter or Paul ever were particular bishops of Rome, tho' for a time they preached in that great city, and erected the church there ; for it was inconsistent with their extensive office, as apostles, to limit their labors to any one church or district.

WHAT has been said may be sufficient to illustrate the first part of our text, as introductory to the observations which may be made on the several emphatic phrases used by the apostle ; viz.

NOTE.

inspection and government, every church was furnished with a number of elders in proportion to the labour required ; which was not only public preaching, but teaching from house to house, catechizing the ignorant, and educating the youth in all the principles of piety and rudiments of christian knowledge. All the elders were of equal rank in the church, however the ministry was divided among them : but it would be unreasonable to suppose that all the elders or presbyters of a particular church could be accomplished with great knowledge and learning, or all such qualifications as were most desirable in men to whom the oversight of the church was committed. The best qualified christians undoubtedly were chosen to this office ; but among them it would be strange if some one was not appointed confessedly superior to the rest, to whose judgment and peculiar gifts the rest would readily pay great deference, and whom they would honor with the moderator's chair in every session of the elders. He being thus regarded as the chief elder, or bishop, i. e. overseer of the church, his name, and the names of those who in like manner succeeded to the moderator's chair, would be distinguished in the records of that church, and handed down in succession to posterity, while the rest might not be so much noticed. Thus we may easily understand what is meant, in the book of revelations, by the angel of a church ; and how the several catalogues of bishops were drawn out by the ancient Fathers. Therefore if Timothy was ever joined with the elders of Ephesus, tho' but for a time, no doubt he was acknowledged as chief among them ; and this was sufficient to give him the first place in the catalogue of bishops or presbyters of that city.

“The house of GOD—The church of the living GOD—The pillar and ground of the truth.” Each of which demand our particular consideration.

“THE HOUSE OF GOD,” is a phrase frequently used in the old testament for the tabernacle and temple, erected among the Israelites for the honor of GOD, where his visible glory resided, and his peculiar presence was promised to his people, and where all the tribes of Israel were required to appear before the LORD three times in a year: This constituted the visible form of that ancient church. Therefore the phrase is used by the apostle, in our text, and other places, metaphorically for the christian church, not as appearing in any one place of religious worship, but in a general view, as consisting of the whole body of believers throughout the world; who are like one glorious temple erected for the honor of GOD, cemented together by faith in CHRIST, and mutual love, like living stones, each having its proper place in the divine structure. So the apostle, in I. Cor. 3, 9, speaks of the christian church as GOD’s building, in erecting and completing which all the apostles and ministers of CHRIST had performed their proper part; and thus addresseth the Corinthians, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of GOD, and that the spirit of GOD dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of GOD, him shall GOD destroy: for the temple of

“GOD is holy, which temple ye are.” The same figurative language is used by Peter, I. Peter 2—4, 5,
 “To whom coming [speaking of CHRIST] as unto
 “a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of GOD and precious, ye also as lively stones are
 “built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to
 “offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to GOD thro’
 “JESUS CHRIST.” The name CHURCH is often given to houses erected for the convenience of christian assemblies ; and too often we are misled to confine our idea of the church to that particular body of christians who meet in the same house with us, or belong to the same holy table, and worship in the same form : but the house is not properly the church ; for the most HIGH dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool ; he fills heaven and earth : nor is the church confined to christians of one particular form of society and mode of worship, or another ; for it comprehends all that in every
 “place call on the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST,
 “both their’s and our’s.” All who hold the doctrine of CHRIST, trust in him as the only saviour, love him in sincerity, and observe all things whatsoever he has commanded, make up that one church which CHRIST has purchased for himself and will finally glorify in his heavenly kingdom. The apostle further explains what he means by the HOUSE OF GOD, in the next phrase which occurs in our text, viz.

“ WHICH IS THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD.”

Here St. Paul most certainly useth the word *church* in the most catholic sense, as comprehending all particular churches, thro’ the world ; for they are all one in CHRIST JESUS the head ; agreeably to our LORD’s most pathetic prayer for all believers to the end of the world, John 17. 20—23, “ Nei-
 “ ther pray I for these alone, but for them also
 “ which shall believe on me through their word ;
 “ that they all may be one ; as thou Father art in
 “ me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in
 “ us ; that the world may believe that thou hast
 “ sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I
 “ have given them ; that they may be one, even
 “ as we are one : I in them, and thou in me, that
 “ they may be made perfect in one, and that
 “ the world may know that thou hast sent me,
 “ and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

Concerning this unity of the church this same apostle writes in very plain terms to the Ephesians, chap. 4, ver. 3—6—“ Endeavoring to keep the u-
 “ nity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is
 “ one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in
 “ one hope of your calling ; one LORD, one faith,
 “ one baptism, one GOD and father of all, who is
 “ above all, and through all, and in you all.” And
 that epistle is concluded with this truly catholic
 prayer—“ Peace be to the brethren, and love with
 “ faith from GOD the father, and the LORD JESUS

“CHRIST. Grace be with all them that love the
“LORD JESUS CHRIST in sincerity. Amen.”

CHRIST is not divided ; nor was it ever the design or tendency of the gospel to separate believers of the same heavenly doctrines into distinct parties, unconnected with, and alienated in affection from one another ; “for as the body is one, and hath
“many members, and all the members of that one
“body, being many are one body ; so also is
“CHRIST : for by one spirit are we all baptized into
“one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made
“to drink into one spirit.” The living GOD is the universal father of mankind, and requires the same worship and obedience from all that know his name. His boundless mercy provided a glorious Saviour for sinners of all nations, and in all ages ; and has given the same revelation of his grace to be published thro’ the world, and declared that whosoever believed^{the} this revelation shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.—

Therefore, by this declaration, GOD has made the grand division of mankind into believers, and unbelievers ; those who shall be saved, and those who must perish. All who are entitled to eternal salvation he acknowledges as his church in a peculiar sense, and the rest have the common appellation of the world. From which it follows, that a just idea of the church of the living GOD must in

clude all believers of every nation, age, and condition ; and all who make a public profession of christianity, and are associated for the important purpose of worshipping God according to his word, and obeying his commands, without regard to any difference in modes and forms, which do not imply a contradiction to the main design of true religion. Any number of professed christians, voluntarily associating and steadily assembling for the peculiar purposes of christian worship, constitute a particular christian church ; and the principal form, necessary to its being properly embodied, is to have teachers or overseers set over them for their constant instruction and government ; and proper officers to take care of the poor, and perform the common services of the church for its benefit as a society : the former officers were appointed over all the primitive churches by the name of ELDERS or BISHOPS, used promiscuously in the new testament for one and the same order of ministers : and the latter were appointed by the name of DEACONS : nor are any other officers mentioned in the apostolic writings as absolutely and at all times necessary in the constitution of a church ; tho' others were occasionally called to serve the church on special or extraordinary occasions. But as every christian church partakes of the general nature of common societies, and must have power to preserve itself from dissolution, and manage many incidental

matters of prudence, every particular rule to be observed in all cases that might occur could not be delivered in the gospel, but many things were necessarily left to the wisdom & prudence of every particular church, observing the general orders which CHRIST has given. Thus full liberty is left for churches of different nations, and in different circumstances, to vary one from another in many matters of prudence as to form and order, according to their various views of the order and obligations of common society.

IT is no where said in the new testament whether baptism shall be administered by dipping, or sprinkling; whether precomposed common prayers shall be used in the church, or such as are more unconfined, and express the desires of the church according to present varying circumstances; whether we must pray or receive the LORD's supper kneeling; whether the churches shall be formed into diocesses, presbyteries, or associations, or ministers distinguished by gradations of honor according to their different gifts and qualifications. Therefore no wonder if christian professors have a diversity of sentiments and customs in all these respects, arising from different national habits and ideas of civil society. But so long as the grand doctrine of salvation only by JESUS CHRIST is continued, the true worship of the living GOD main-

tained according to his written word, and godliness and virtue practiced agreeably to CHRIST's commands, and no decrees or rules made which in their nature or direct tendency subvert the express doctrines or laws of CHRIST, or exclude from christian charity and fellowship any whom CHRIST receives as his disciples, all the different parties and denominations of christians constitute but one church of the living GOD.

CHRISTIAN unity by no means depends on perfect uniformity of modes and rituals ; but in preserving the faith once delivered to the saints, keeping the commands of GOD, and loving the whole family of his children. Without such unity all acts of uniformity, whether made by the Pope and his clergy, or any civil or ecclesiastical powers under the name of PROTESTANTS, are foolish, wicked, and cruel attempts to subjugate the consciences of men, and more effectual to divide and destroy the church, than to build it up into one glorious temple of GOD.

NOTHING hath disgraced and weakened the christian profession more than the uncharitable divisions of different parties, claiming, in opposition to each other, to be the only true churches of CHRIST, and excluding all others from christian communion. If all that believe and obey the gospel, thro' all the

world, make but one church of the living GOD, it may be laid down as an indisputable maxim, that the peculiarities which distinguish one denomination of christians, who believe and obey the word of CHRIST, from another, do not belong to the essence of christianity, but are only as meats and drinks. It is well known, that there is one who sits in the temple of GOD, shewing himself that he is GOD, who takes upon him to change the laws of CHRIST, and make as many new ones as he pleases, commanding all to obey him on pain of damnation, and acknowledging none to be christians but such as submit to his arbitrary decrees. It would have been happy for the protestant churches if they had renounced all pretensions to the same high power, and abhorred the thought of laying any yoke on the necks of CHRIST's disciples as to matters in which he has left them free. When one church excludes every other church from christian fellowship, not for departure from the doctrine of CHRIST, but for not complying with all the rites and forms established by their own authority it is a remarkable imitation of popish superstition and tyranny, and affords ground of suspicion that it prefers the ordinances of men to the royal law of CHRIST. JESUS CHRIST is not peculiarly the favour of Episcopalians, or Presbyterians, or Anabaptists, or Congregationalists, or Quakers, &c. but of all sincere believers of every church, under whatever form.

Therefore whenever we see zealots going about with a plain design to make profelytes from one party to another, more than to convert men from sin to GOD, tho' their main aim is covered with a cloak of piety, their zeal is of the same kind with that of the ancient Pharisees; and we may be sure they are ignorant, superstitious, or enthusiastic, if they are not charg^eable with detestable hypocrisy.

THE church universal is the glory of CHRIST, the temple of GOD in the world, his visible kingdom erected in opposition to all ignorance, idolatry, and wickedness; and it is designed to be to him a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth. The true church of the living GOD is adorned with the doctrine of the Apostles as with a crown of twelve stars; she is cloathed with the pure robes of righteousness which CHRIST has granted her: she shines as the brightness of the sun in the image of her MAKER and REDEEMER; and, keeping this world under her feet, aims at the honor and complete felicity of heaven, where she is to reign with CHRIST in perfection of beauty forever. GOD is now in the midst of her, she shall not be moved: GOD will help her, and that right early.

BUT let us now proceed to take particular notice of what the Apostle says of the church in the next

phrase which occurs in our text; he calls it "*The pillar and ground of the truth*;" according to our translation of the Bible; or according to others, *The pillar and foundation of the truth*: but neither of these give a proper and distinct idea of the Apostle's meaning; and indeed the church of Rome has taken advantage of such a translation to affirm, that the church is in such a sense the foundation of the truth, that our faith must be founded upon the authority of the church, so that nothing ought to be received for the truth but what she believes, and the doctrines which she establishes are a sufficient ground of our faith, without further examination. But the Greek words *stulos kai bedraioma*, most properly signify a pillar, or the shaft of a column, and the pedestal on which it stands: and so the text should be translated—*The pillar and pedestal of the truth*;—as alluding to the common use of magnificent pillars with their pedestals to support some grand building; or rather to monumental pillars, erected to perpetuate the memory of great victories and conquests, or other very remarkable occurrences. These were often decorated, especially on the pedestals, with trophies and inscriptions, expressing the design for which the monument was erected. Some such antient monuments remain to this day; particularly Pompey's pillar in Egypt of wonderful workmanship; and those of Trajan and Antonine at Rome: of the

same kind is the monument in the city of London, built in remembrance of the great fire which consumed a large part of the city, A. D. 1666. In our text the church is compared to such a pillar, of which *the truth* made known in the gospel is the glorious *capital*, and by which it is perpetuated through all ages.

LET us now particularly consider what the Apostle means by the *truth*; and in what respects the church may be justly called *the pillar and pedestal of the truth*.

1st. LET us enquire what is meant by *the truth*, which is expressed emphatically by the article before it; as not referring to truth in general, but that truth by which the christian church was at first formed, which is plainly the revealed gospel. This is the truth; in opposition to the idols of the heathen, which are called vanity and a lie; and to all the abominable falsehoods connected with idolatry; also in opposition to the systems of vain philosophers, whose uncertain reasonings blend error with truth, and can never give men infallible instruction in the paths of wisdom and righteousness, and lead them to perfect happiness in the future world; in short, in opposition to all the errors to which the human mind is at all times liable when we depend merely on our own reasonings in matters of religion.

BUT what does the gospel reveal ? Does it contain but one single doctrine ? Or is there a complete system of doctrines, which, in one united view make what is so emphatically called *the truth* ? The latter is plainly the case : but there is one capital truth, with which all the rest are connected, and on which they depend, viz—That the WORD OF GOD, who was in the beginning, and before all things ; by whom GOD made the worlds ; who is declared to be the SON OF GOD, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person ; in the fulness of time, according to the prophecies of the old testament, took upon him our flesh and blood ; was born of a virgin ; grew in wisdom and stature to a state of manhood ; went about preaching the kingdom of GOD, and working the greatest miracles ; and then died on the cross as the true and only sacrifice for sins ; but arose again from the dead by his divine power, and ascended into heaven in the view of his disciples, where he lives forever as our great High Priest and Intercessor, and hath all power in heaven and earth committed to him, is made head over all things to the church, and appointed to be Judge of the world at the last day.—This is the great doctrine which the apostles preached every where ; who were appointed especially to be witnesses of CHRIST'S resurrection, because this was an important evidence of the truth of his whole character. And this doctrine is most emphatically

called *the gospel*, by which it is distinguished from all other systems of religion and morality. Paul, giving a definition of the gospel of GOD, in the beginning of his epistle to the Romans, says, it is, “concerning JESUS CHRIST his son, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the SON of GOD, with power according to the SPIRIT of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” And in the beginning of the 15th chapter of the first to the Corinthians, he makes this recital of the gospel which he had preached to them, and by which they were saved, viz. “That CHRIST died for our sins according to the scriptures ; and that he was buried ; and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures ; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve ; after that he was seen of above 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep ; after that he was seen of James ; then of all the apostles ; and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” Indeed, every where in the new testament, the preaching of the apostles is summed up in their preaching CHRIST JESUS the LORD, in all the characters of his person and mediatorial offices. Now these are connected with a view of the holy nature of the great GOD, the purity and strictness of his law, the justice of his government and the riches of his mercy ; with

a belief of the sinful ruined state of all mankind, the necessity of repentance toward GOD, and faith toward our LORD JESUS CHRIST ; dependence on that one offering for sins on the cross by which he has perfected forever those that are sanctified ; love and gratitude for all that he has done and suffered for our deliverance from sin and the wrath to come ; submission to his authority as king of the church ; a sincere cheerful compliance with all his commands, and careful imitation of his example ; the obligation of believers to set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth, to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and keep themselves pure from all the corruptions of the world, and while they look for the second coming of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the judgment of all men according to their works, to give diligence that they may be found of their Judge in peace, and obtain the great promise of eternal life in his heavenly kingdom. This is that system of divine truth plainly comprehended in the gospel ; every article of which is essential, and must be admitted by all who give proper credit to the revelation which GOD has given us by his son. It appears quite distinguishable from all the inventions of human wisdom, from all the precepts of morality which make up the religion of philosophers ; and all the doubtful disputations which have long disgraced and obscured the primitive gospel. This glorious system of

truth, GOD himself hath framed, his church is connected with it, and is designed to support and exhibit it to the view of the world, and be a perpetual monument of it. This is the sense in which the church is called *the pillar and pedestal of the truth*.——Let us therefore,

2dly CONSIDER with what propriety the church is called *the pillar and pedestal of the truth*. The church like a wonderful column, which GOD has erected and firmly established, supports the truth as the beautiful capital of the pillar, and exhibits it to the view of the world. By every church, which really belongs to CHRIST, the essential truths of the gospel are maintained, have been continued from the beginning of the gospel to this day, and will remain, notwithstanding all the efforts of satan and the powers of the world to overthrow and obliterate them. By the public ministry of the gospel ; by its holy ordinances ; by the united profession of believers and their holy conversation ; by the sufferings of martyrs ; and by the saving effects of the gospel from age to age, and in every nation where the church appears, the same great truths of christianity are supported and exhibited to the view of the world. Every church is a true church of CHRIST, and ought to be received and acknowledged by all other churches as in christian union and fellowship, which holds these great articles of

christianity uncorrupted by the commands and traditions of men, whatever difference there may be as to some outward rites and customs which are of no more importance than disputes about meats and drinks. Nothing ought to hinder the churches from acknowledging and loving each other but such great corruptions as strike at the very root of christianity, and are opposite to the essential doctrines and precepts on which it is founded.

THE church is a monumental pillar, all round which, and on its pedestal are inscribed the victory of CHRIST's death over the powers of darkness ; the glorious manifestations of divine justice and mercy in man's redemption ; the multitudes of satan's captives which CHRIST has released ; the characters of his peculiar people, and the privileges and blessings to which they are entitled. So long as the church remains, these wonderful effects of CHRIST's appearing and kingdom will be remembered ; the world may see and admire ; may behold and learn what the SAVIOUR has done ; and know and embrace the offers of mercy to miserable mankind. The very continuance of this monument from age to age, with its original inscriptions, is a standing evidence of the truth of that gospel which the apostles preached ; enough to confound all the futile cavils of infidelity. Your own thoughts may suggest many other things which I have omit-

ted for the sake of brevity ; and now I shall only add a few words of application.

LET me speak to all christians who have heard this discourse. You are members of the church of the living GOD, which is erected as the support and monumental pillar of the truth. If you desire to justify your character, and adorn and perpetuate the doctrine of GOD our SAVIOUR, take heed that you believe the uncorrupted gospel of CHRIST, and acquaint yourselves with every important article of the christian religion, clearly connected with GOD's design in sending his SON into the world for the redemption and salvation of sinful men. But beware of multiplying the particular articles of your creed, so as to introduce matters of doubtful disputation, perplexing to the mind ; and which may be believed or rejected without any injury to the common cause of christianity. Steadfastly maintain the faith once delivered to the saints ; contend earnestly for it ; but never spend your zeal upon matters of mere speculation, grounded on metaphysical subtilties, and nice distinctions, which are not conducive to godly edification. Believe those truths of revelation which are founded on plain facts ; which occur in almost every page of the new testament ; and without the acknowledgement of which no man is entitled to the name of a christian. Remember

that the principal design of every doctrine is to work effectually on the hearts of men ; to humble them under a sense of sin and bring them to repentance ; to bring them to receive CHRIST as their SAVIOUR and LORD, who of GOD is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ; and to teach them all manner of holy conversation and unblameable conduct. —Remember, that you are called into CHRIST's kingdom to be under the government of his laws ; that you may be taught what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of GOD, and with a spirit of love and freedom obey all his commands ; that, being led by the spirit of CHRIST, you may escape the corruptions of the world, bear the moral image of your GOD and SAVIOUR, shew your faith by your practice, and continue to seek a glorious immortality by perseverance in well doing ; that you may shine as lights in the world, and exhibit to all men an evidence of the excellency of the gospel in your whole temper and deportment. See that you pay a special regard to CHRIST's new command of love to all the brethren. Love all who love the truth, for the truth's sake which dwelleth in them, wherever they live, and under whatever denomination they are ranked. Take heed of that spirit of party which is evidently the spirit of the world, not of CHRIST ; which, by dividing, has a most direct tendency to weaken and pull down that one church

which GOD has erected for his own honor. Choose for yourselves that form and order which in your view comes nearest to the simplicity of the primitive apostolic constitution, and appears best adapted to promote the original design of christianity : but never excommunicate, either in mind or practice, any ministers or churches who hold the same truths which the apostles every where preached, and follow after that holiness of heart and life which the gospel requires. If any churches of any particular denomination deny communion at the LORD's table, to all who do not follow with their party, this is a very material objection against joining their particular society, sufficient to hinder christians, who know what the church of CHRIST is, from subjecting themselves to such arbitrary rules as CHRIST never established, and which are contrary to the fundamental law of his kingdom, viz. unity and love of the brethren.

EVERY christian may consider himself as making a part of that monument which GOD has erected to exhibit and perpetuate the truth, and must join in supporting and adorning the gospel of our SAVIOUR. Therefore let the faith you possess, and the eminent *profess* graces and virtues of your constant practice exhibit the primitive excellency of that religion taught by the son of GOD who came from heaven.

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Whatsoever things are honest, or just, or pure, or lovely and of good report, if there is any virtue or any thing which deserves praise, think on these things and do them.

GOD grant all the churches may preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and appear beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusaleme, and terrible as an army with banners!

2. LET no man glory that he belongs to this church or that, though the purest church in the world, or most conformable to the simplicity of the apostolic pattern, while he himself remains a servant of sin, and has a mind blinded to the glorious excellencies of CHRIST's character, and alienated from the life of GOD. In vain you read and hear the word of CHRIST, and profess to belong to the church of the living GOD, if the truth dwelleth not in your hearts, and has no influence on your lives. If you are not convinced of sin, and brought to repentance; if you have not fled from the wrath to come, and heartily embraced the offer of salvation by JESUS CHRIST, who only can deliver you; if you are not fully persuaded to follow him as true disciples, to learn what he teaches, and do whatever he commands; you are not such members of his church as he will acknowledge at the great day.

They are not all the Israel of GOD, which are of Israel ; all that are included in the visible church are not christians whose hearts are right in the sight of GOD ; and many who are now in GOD's visible kingdom, will be disowned by CHRIST, at the last day as workers of iniquity, and be shut out from his heavenly kingdom. Therefore rest not satisfied with any forms of christianity, or outward privileges ; but remember, that in CHRIST JESUS, neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, baptism by dipping or sprinkling, praying by the best composed forms or without, but faith which worketh by love ; and makes men new creatures, producing all the fruits of the spirit, which are opposed to the works of the flesh and the corruptions of the world. Let nothing flatter your hope of eternal life by CHRIST, but the power of the gospel manifestly appearing in the temper of your minds, the affections of your hearts, and the holiness of your lives.

3. I WILL now say a few words to my brethren in the ministry here present. Brethren—we who are employed as servants in the house of the living GOD, to minister to his people the word which he hath spoken by his son, and teach them to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded, may be instructed, quickened, and encouraged by

the preceding discourse. The gospel is committed to our trust, that we may testify the grace of GOD to sinful men through OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, and constantly declare the characters of the glorious SAVIOUR, and all the important truths connected with the great doctrine of salvation, by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the SON of GOD. By the constant preaching of the same doctrines of CHRIST upon which the church at first was built, it must be upheld and continued, and additions made from time to time of such as are saved. It is our part to preserve with care all the original inscriptions on the monumental pillar of the truth, and never suffer them to be defaced, obliterated or altered ; to make the truth manifest to every man's conscience, and exhibit it to the world, not only by uncorrupted doctrine, but by the example of our own faith, purity of life, meekness, humility, and all holy conversation. Our continual aim and labour must be to convert sinners to GOD, and build up believers in faith and holiness, shewing them what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of GOD, exhorting to the exercise of every grace, and the practice of every virtue, that they may make the excellency of the gospel conspicuous to the world, and secure to themselves an inheritance among those who are sanctified. *Written* directions are given us, by inspiration of GOD, what doc-

trines to preach : we have no liberty to depart from them and preach another gospel than what CHRIST and his apostles preached, or mix with it deceitful schemes of vain philosophy, or the traditions of men ; but must scrupulously adhere to the faithful word in its original meaning and true intent. We are also directed, not only in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, but in many other scriptures, how we ought to conduct ourselves in the church of GOD, and manage all its important affairs ; and we cannot submit to any man's authority over us, to command us to teach or do what CHRIST's word does not require, or to forbid us to comply with the directions he has given for promoting the welfare of the church. Therefore let us diligently study our divine Master's orders, and depend on his holy spirit to guide us more and more to the knowlege of the truth, and assist us in the discharge of our duty, that in our respective stations we may be instrumental of preserving and spreading the knowlege of the glorious REDEEMER, and honoring him in the world. Let us avoid, as much as possible, the perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and give no occasion of vain janglings. Let us beware of preaching ourselves instead of CHRIST JESUS the LORD, or engaging unnecessarily and uncharitably in such party controversies as rather serve to increase the enmity of professors to each

other, than to promote truth, godliness and love to all the brethren. Let none of us behave as lords over GOD's heritage, assuming dictatorial authority, and subjecting the churches to our own arbitrary management, but shew ourselves helpers of their faith and joy ; that believing and obeying CHRIST's word, they may have comfort in his promises, and obtain the glory of his eternal kingdom.

MAY GOD prosper our ministry, multiply the number of sincere believers every where, unite them in the knowlege and love of the truth, and make his church universal a name of praise to him among all nations of the earth !

A M E N.

