

ways. His *gracious presence* consists in the special manifestations of Himself to His intelligent creatures, in particular places and in different modes, as the Lord God, merciful and gracious. When we think of the essential presence of God: His immensity or relation to infinite space: His omnipresence or relation to all His creatures in this and all other worlds, our minds are apt to become bewildered, and to lose any idea of the Divine Personality. But God, in His condescension and mercy to our finite nature, and feebleness and infirmity of mind, has appointed what we call means of grace, consisting of places, things, and actions, in our use of which He is pleased to draw us near to Himself, manifesting Himself to us, granting us spiritual blessings, and permitting us to hold conscious communion with Him. These means of grace He has ordained in His church from the beginning of the world; and consist of prayer, praise, the reading and hearing of God's word, offerings, and sacraments; for the Jews of old had what the Presbyterian *Confession of Faith* truly calls the Sacraments of the Old Testament, which in regard to the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited were for substance the same as those of the New." (Chapt. XVII. sect V.) Moreover, there have been from the beginning certain places, regarded as holy, or sacred, in which these means of grace have been more or less statedly used, the sacredness arising from a special or gracious presence of God in them. For example there was the place of the altar east of Eden, from which "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord," (Gen. iv. 16), and Bethel, "the house of God and gate of Heaven," where the lonely traveller Jacob found the presence of God, (Gen. xxviii. 16, 17), and to which, in after years, the patriarch with his family and large household was commanded of God to return and there build an altar for domestic worship.