

heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the word and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.^b

III. Church censures are necessary for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for deterring of others from the like offences; for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel; and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.^c

IV. For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the church are to proceed by admonition, suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season, and by excommunication from the church, according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the person.^d

CHAP. XXXI.—Of Synods and Councils.

I. **F**OR the better government, and further edification of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called Synods or Councils.^a

II. ^b Matt. xvi. 19; Matt. xviii. 17, 18; John xx. 21, 22, 23; 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7, 8.

III. ^c [1 Cor. v. throughout.] 1 Tim. v. 20; Matt. vii. 6; 1 Tim. i. 20. [1 Cor. xi. 27 to the end.] Jude, ver. 23.

IV. ^d 1 Thess. v. 12; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15; 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 13; Matt. xviii. 17; Tit. iii. 10.

I. ^a Acts xv. 2, 4, 6.