

dominion of sin, and to constitute them His sons and daughters. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." But "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," further than that our likeness to Christ shall be complete in body and soul when He appears. Much remains, all his life, matter of promise to the believer. It has not pleased God that he should be exempted from suffering while he is in the body, or that he should have experience of the redemption of the body till Christ reappears. And the question now before us is, Whether or not the Word of God warrants the persuasion that God will, in any case, communicate to the believer in the present life, grace in such kind and measure, that he shall live entirely free from sin in thought, word and deed? Or is such a communication of Divine grace reserved for another state than the present? There can, as we have said, be no question as to His power to communicate such grace; and its communication is a matter of absolute certainty in the experience of every believer—not, indeed, because God is under any obligation to communicate it, but only because He has bound Himself by His own promise, by which, as one has well expressed it, He makes Himself a debtor to his own faithfulness. The only question is, *when*, according to His Word, does this communication of His grace become the actual experience of the believer? It is confessed, as it is patent, that it is not the experience of *all* believers, in the present life. Does the Word of God give intimation of it being the experience of *any*? While there is nothing new in the contention that God, on certain conditions, communicates to the believer in this life such grace that, as one expresses it, "sin is taken away from his inmost spiritual being," and nothing new in the assertion by individuals of their having such experience, Christians generally have always maintained the contrary. Our own Church, in particular, in all her symbolic books, pronounces very distinctly and emphatically in opposition to all such contentions and assertions, as being contrary to the Word of God.

If there is one thing which the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches with more than its characteristic clearness and emphasis it is that God does not in this life, wholly extinguish or "take away the corruption of our fallen nature," but that, on the contrary, the believer is, all his life, in

conflict with sin dwelling in him, as well as with the evil surrounding him. It affirms (chap. vi. 5) that the original corruption of nature, from which, it is said, "do proceed all actual transgression," "*doth remain during this life* in those that are regenerated, and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin."

No one who is acquainted with the Confession can fail to be struck with the frequency with which reference is made to the same truth. This frequency is indeed unavoidable in relation to a great practical principle that is pervasive of the Christian system. In the chapter (ix. 4, 5) on "Free Will," we read: "When God converts a sinner and translates him into the state of grace, He freeeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by His grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so as that, by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not *perfectly or only* will that which is good, but *also* will that which is evil. The will of man is made *perfectly* and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only." Again, in the chapter on "Sanctification" (xiii. 2, 3), "This sanctification is throughout the whole man, yet *imperfect* in this life; there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome: and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Once more, in the chapter on "Good Works" (xvi. 4, 5, 6), we read: "They who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate," "that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do. We cannot, by our best works, merit pardon," for this, among other reasons, that "as they are good, they proceed from the Spirit of God; and as they are wrought by us, they are *defiled* and *mixed* with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment. Yet notwithstanding the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in Him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unreplicable in God's sight; but that He, look-