

body, nor abated, in the least degree, His interest in them; so that the Christian is bound, still, according to the grace given to him, to seek souls in the world by the testimony of God's righteousness and love, as displayed in the cross of Christ; and also to seek the unity of the body in all patience, and the edification of all its members for the building of it up in dependence on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In giving this brief summary of the Church's constitution, position, and hope, I have not noticed the leading orthodox truths, which I receive in common with all Christians, as my object in writing is not to present a confession of faith, or a treatise of divinity, but merely to explain, for the profit of others, the grounds of my personal course amidst the general mass of profession in the present day.

### CHAPTER III.

#### CONTRAVENTION OF BASIS PRINCIPLES IN THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH AT LARGE.

At this point I am conscious of entering on a thorny path, though controversy, in its ordinary acceptation, is not in the least degree my aim. As little also is it my aim to wound the feelings of any Christian, whatever his position or his path may be. Truth indeed may wound, and the light may make manifest the darkness; but the truth will heal as well as wound; and God has called us out of darkness into His own marvellous light, to walk as children of the light. But there has been so wide a departure by the whole Church of God from the grounds on which it was originally set, and a departure so long continued, that the conscience which should take notice of this declension is almost extinct; and the only standard by which everything must be tried, in the present case, is considered by no small majority of Christians, practically, at least, to be almost obsolete.

Now the difficulty which arises, to the thoughtful mind, in such a state of things as this, is not the difficulty of avowed infidelity, which is so common in the world, but of appealing to the authority of a standard, which, while it is so acknowledged in word and confession, is, at the same time, disallowed in thought and application. And that this is the position which the Scriptures hold in the minds of the majority of persons who profess to be guided by them, one must have had very slight, or very unthoughtful, intercourse with the people of God, not to have perceived.

But when it produces the recoil of an almost hopeless feeling to know, beforehand, that nearly every statement which depends, for its practical effect, upon a conscience in healthful exercise, will only be met by one that is blunted and paralyzed, and that needs almost to be new-created. But "with God all things are possible;" and that He will have a testimony to the end, and will continue to work in grace amidst every confusion and corruption in His Church, is my conviction and my joy. But I hazard little when I assert that a national establishment is not that testimony; and as little is dissent either the presentation of the positive good to meet the need of souls, or an efficient protest against the evil which as a tide on every hand is coming in. For neither the one nor the other, in fact or principle, presents any barrier to the inroads of Popery and infidelity; but as systems, are strongly acted on by both. Individuals may be faithful, and God will assuredly keep His own; but the time is come in which everything is being tried as to its pretensions and reality, and nothing that has not the power of God with it will stand.