

THE  
CHRISTIAN BANNER.

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."  
"This is love, that we walk after his commandments."

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A NARRATIVE  
OF THE ORIGIN OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFSSION.  
No. VI.

The following hints will be found in Neal's History, vol. 3. page 392—5.

"But the fiercest contention between the assembly and parliament arose upon the power of the keys, which the former had voted to be in the eldership or presbytery, in these words: "The keys of the kingdom of heaven were committed to the officers of the church, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut the kingdom of heaven against the impenitent both by the word and censures, and to open it to the penitent by absolution; and to prevent the profanation of the holy sacrament by notorious and obstinate offenders, the said officers 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;" all which power they claimed, not by the laws of the land, but *jure divino*, or by divine appointment.

The Independents claimed the like power for the brotherhood of every particular congregation, but without any civil sanctions or penalties annexed; the Erastians were for laying the communion open, and referring all crimes to the civil magistrate.

Though the parliament did not deem it prudent wholly to reject the ordinance for excommunication, because it had been the popular complaint in the late times, that pastors of churches had not power to keep unworthy communicants from the Lord's table; yet the speeches of learned gentlemen made such an impression, that they resolved to render it ineffectual to all the purposes of church tyranny; accordingly they sent to the assembly to specify, in writing, what degree of knowledge in the christian religion were necessary to qualify a person for the communion? and what sort of scandal deserved suspension or excommunication? Which, after much controversy, they presented to the house, who inserted them in the body of their ordinance for suspension from the Lord's supper, dated October 20, 1645, together with certain provisos of their own, which stripped the presbyteries of that power of the keys which they were reaching at:—

"Provided always, that if any person find himself aggrieved with