

I. THE NATURE AND OBJECTS OF THE CHURCH AS A DIVINE INSTITUTION.

The Church of Christ is one in character, purpose, means, modes of operation and development, and designed to bear upon the existing condition of the world in relation to God and his designs, and upon moral renovation and happiness. Under divine government, the perpetuity of existing world conditions is an impossibility. Revealed procedure points to this fact in the foreshadowed, recognized, supremacy of Jehovah over all intelligent beings; supremacy flowing from His character, and announced determination, as exhibited in the mission and death of His Son, and in the institution of the church as a subordinate instrumentality. In that mission, and around the Cross, all divine attributes,—all moral principles,—all foreshadowed purposes harmonize, and to develop that harmony, as the element of a redeemed, reconstructed world, is the church's special work. This arrangement at once brings divine wisdom into collision with the ignorance and pride of human nature, and its reluctance of dictation and control, and hence, as in the plan of mercy itself, so in all its essential details, nothing is left doubtful or open to human legislation. All is sovereign,—divine,—repudiating man's interference,—proclaiming perfect adaptation to all Jehovah's purposes; and christian faithfulness and experience attest the great fact,—“The blood of Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin.” The redeemed are they “who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

The subjection,—cheerful or reluctant,—of a rebellious world to sovereign rule, on principles and modes of action clearly defined,—denouncing innovation, and irreverent interference, is the Church's destiny; and here failure, or success, is the test of character, alike of the church and her ministry. To alter, or supplement, revelation, as to reveal, is God's sole prerogative, whether as to principles or forms. As a human pretension it is presumptuous intermeddling. The church is *not* an independent institution. It is, simply, an instructed, accountable, because divinely appointed agency,—accountable, solely, for the use of means: presenting to men God and truth as received by herself. and hence, unquestioning acceptance of the revealed is her grand duty. In reference to the individual, her object is the production, and development, of moral character, meeting relation to God, and supplying want; and in reference to the great ends of the institution itself, the combination of the separate, redeemed, elements, in one vast, harmonious, aggressive, activity, in relation to the revealed future of