

the same source, and that transgression always bears the same relation to authority, although there may be various degrees of the consequences or results of transgression as it respects ourselves.

Where now is the doctrine of non-essentials? We have been preparing them a respectable burial without the hope of a resurrection. If God be the author of all the precepts and laws of the bible, and if we acknowledge that with regard to the obligation of law or the enforcement of obedience, there is no diminution of authority, however trivial, in our view of the effects of disobedience, I cannot find anything but darkness nor any place but the grave for the unequal doctrine of some things *essential* and some things *not essential* in the statute book of heaven. The pure essence of such doctrine, resulting in a convert, makes a nearer relation than a German cousin to infidelity. CONDUCTOR.

#### CONFESSIONS OF FAITH—CONFESSIONS OF OPINION.

AFTER all that has been said on this subject, there is not a sect in this country, of which we have heard, that has a confession of faith, properly so called. They have books and pamphlets, which they call by this name, and by which they impose upon themselves and upon one another. If it be not too late, we would give them a true and proper name, a name which we are assured every man of good sense and of common education must approve, as well as agree to discard the common name as a misnomer, as incorrect, and as absurd. The proper name of those instruments is, doubtless, according to the English language, A Confession of Opinions, or, Confessions of Opinions. If there be any difference between faith and opinion, (and that there is, all languages and dictionaries declare,) then the name we have given them is perfectly *apropos*, and their common name perfectly incongruous.

All writers on faith, properly so called, define it to be, "the belief of testimony, either human or divine." And opinion is, "the notions, judgment, or view which the mind forms of any thing." For example, I believe the testimony which God has given of Jesus of Nazareth, or I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the son of the living God. This is a well attested fact, in proof of which the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit have given, or agree in one testimony. Concerning this person, his mission, and character, various opinions may be formed. All things testified of him are articles or items of belief; and all views, judgments, or notions formed of the things testified, are matters of opinion.—Now all the abstract views of God and man, of things present and future, with which these confessions are replete, are matters of opinion; and as the general character of these books should fix upon them their name, they should be styled Confessions of Opinions. To speak philosophically, I believe what is testified, I know what I have observed or experienced, and I am of opinion in all things speculative. It is true, in one sense, I may be said to know what I have believed, when my faith has been proved by observation and experience. But the terms faith, knowledge, and opinion.