

judgment, the Shorter Catechism is the most masterly, comprehensive, and judicious production of that venerable convention of divines. It contains a collection of divine truths so compendious, just, comprehensive and well-connected, as is scarcely to be equalled in any human performance. But after all, that venerable Assembly were not without their weaknesses and mistakes: and, indeed, they would have been more than men if they had been free from them. Perfection, in a state of imperfection, is not to be expected. The distinctions between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world, and the right of private judgment in matters of religion, they did not well understand; and with all deference to these great men, I am humbly of opinion, that their views of religious covenanting were very erroneous, and also the methods of propagating the covenanted uniformity of religion in that age by civil pains."

Such were the limitations with which the Relief Church received the Westminster standards. We shall notice them more fully afterwards. At present let us hear Mr. Hutcheson on some of the general doctrinal views in which his Church coincide entirely with the Confession and Catechisms:—

"Man being formed after the image of God, and adorned with his fair resemblance, God entered into a covenant with him, as the public head of that numerous family who were to spring from him, by ordinary generation. For his accommodation, God placed him in Paradise, where he had everything entertaining to the sight and pleasing to the taste, under the easy restriction of abstaining from the tree of knowledge of good and evil; which prohibition was intended to manifest his Creator's just authority over him, and to be the trial of his virtue and obedience. A severe threatening was denounced if he transgressed the royal mandate of Heaven: 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' This threat was equally to affect him and his posterity. At the same time, the threatening of death upon transgression implied a promise of life to Adam and his posterity, if he had performed the condition of the covenant by yielding perfect and persevering obedience during the time appointed for the continuance of his probationary state. Had he kept the covenant he and his offspring would have been confirmed, like the elect angels, in a state of unchangeable goodness. But being seduced by the devil, and the solicitation of his wife, he tasted the fruit of the prohibited tree, and hence the source of all our woe. By the disobedience of this one man all his posterity are made guilty. Being their federal head, by the Divine constitution, the sin he committed in that capacity is imputed to them, and they are as much exposed to the penal sanction of the covenant as if they had committed the original transgression in their own persons. The death threatened in that constitution was threefold: temporal, spiritual and eternal. Accordingly, whenever Adam sinned he lost his spiritual life, the image of God, and a power of living to him in holy obedience. The seeds of mortality were sown in his constitution, which gradually sprung up and strengthened in his frame, till they brought him to his original dust; and from the time of his transgression, he was exposed to eternal death.

"As by virtue of Adam's federal representation his posterity were considered as one person in law, what took place with him holds also with them. The guilt of his fatal transgression was not only charged on him, but his soul was corrupted in all its faculties. His understanding was darkened, his will perverted, and his affections misplaced. And the very same is the situation of all his posterity; they have guilt *imputed* and sin *inherent*. Adam's sin is imputed to them, as he was their *federal head*, and corruption of nature is conveyed from him to them, as their *natural root* in the way of ordinary generation."

These statements respecting the covenant of works, are followed by a like compendious view of the covenant of grace:—

"This better covenant is, with peculiar propriety, called the covenant of grace, because grace. Divinely rich and free, was the original spring of it, and