

The other point to which we refer is the view given of this subject in our own formula of questions to ministers, probationers, and elders. Presbyterianism is there said to be *founded on and agreeable to* the word of God. Now, some have taken upon them to give a loose interpretation to this phrase. Our forefathers were long accustomed to fight for the *De jure divino*, that is the divine right of Presbytery.—They believed it to be clearly and distinctly revealed and laid down in scripture; they believed it was the only system laid down there, and they believed that they were bound to adopt this just as implicitly as any other portion of God's inspired word. Some, however, maintain that the phrase in our formula—"founded on and agreeable to the word of God"—is not so binding, not so authoritative as the *De jure divino*. It at least smoothes it down—softens its sharp edge—takes away its harshness. But we cannot see this. What greater evidence could we have of the divine right of Presbytery than to assert, it is "founded on and agreeable to" the word of God? Is not the authority as great as for some of the most important doctrines of our creed? What more can we say of the doctrine of Christ's imputed righteousness and many others, than that it is "founded on and agreeable to" the word of God. With true manliness therefore—with noble candour—let us openly contend for this portion of our faith—and contend for it as of divine right and authority. There is no bigotry in this, no illiberality, no sectarianism. We contend for what we believe: our difference is a difference of interpretation of scripture. We admit that the Episcopalian may contend as conscientiously for his system as we, and we admit that the congregationalist may do the same. We admit that such parties may appeal to scripture as earnestly as we do; and we know well that they do so. What then? Are we to break up fellowship and communion one with another? Are we to ex-communicate one another as *publicans and heathens*? By no means.—As if to meet this very case the apostle has laid down a clear rule by which we are to be regulated: Philip 3: 16, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Church government is intended for regulating the church upon earth. It is not of itself absolutely essential to salvation. The day will come when varied forms and varied governments will pass away. In the world of bliss we shall be one as Christ is one. As the waters of the river, when they have rolled into the bosom of the ocean, are swallowed up by its million billows; as the lights that lighten heaven by night, all melt away into the

bright splendour of the noon-day sun; so in heaven shall our varied external governments give way to the one bright and glorious government of him who sits on the mediatorial throne, and is head over all things to the church.

At the same time, this is no reason why we should not "earnestly contend" for this portion of the faith. It is often the case, that much, very much depends upon church government and church discipline for preserving the purity of the doctrines of the gospel, and the purity of a church communion? Are not these important matters matters? And can any one read church history without coming to this conclusion? To us especially as descendants of those who on this very ground fought the battle of civil and religious liberty, does not history read exciting lessons, why we should "earnestly contend?" Are not voices heard coming floating down the stream of ages, calling upon us to be steadfast? Is not the voice of Calvin for three long centuries heard echoing afar from Geneva's lake, and from amid the mountain avalanches of Switzerland, and saying:—"Be ye steadfast and unmoveable?" Is not the voice of the noble Knox heard ringing forth from Scotland's hills and Scotland's valleys—"I have established your schools—I have planned your colleges—I have modelled your church strictly in accordance with the directions of God's word—with its sessions and presbyteries and synods and assemblies;—hold fast what ye have received—be ye steadfast and unmoveable?"—Is not the voice of many a martyred one who died for Christ's crown and covenant, and who lies under lonely mountain cairn, or beneath the heathy moss—heard in the wail-blast saying:—"For this cause we were persecuted and tormented—were driven from home and kindred—were hunted like the partridge upon the mountain—and at last poured out our life's blood at the stake and upon the scaffold—and will ye, our descendants, will ye prove recreant—will ye not be found "steadfast and unmoveable?" But above all and better than all, is not the voice of him who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last heard saying from his throne in the heavens in words which cannot be misunderstood:—"Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life?" With such endearing associations—with such sweet and hallowed remembrances—with such exemplars rousing to holy deeds, who would not "stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free,"—who would not "earnestly contend" for this portion of our faith?

We come now to consider,

II. SOME SPECIAL REASONS WHY WE SHOULD EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE