

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 CONFESSION.

No. V.

As the reader, not acquainted with the origin of the present religious institutions, will be curious to know how the lay elders or ruling elders, got into existence, we shall while noticing these proceedings of the assembly, just remark, that while they were inquiring into the constitution of the Jewish Sanhedrim and defining its ecclesiastical and civil powers, it was remarked that "Moses appointed that he that should not hearken to the priest or the judge should die." Deut. xvii. 12. It was inferred in favor of church power that the priest held one court and the civil magistrate another. But Mr. Selden observed that the Vulgate Latin, until within these 40 years, read thus, *Qui non obediverit sacerdoti et decreto judicis morietur*. "He that will not obey the priest shall die by the sentence of the judge." Mr. Lightfoot added, that when the judges of inferior courts went up to Jerusalem by way of appeal; it was only for advice and consultation. But when the question was put for a subordination of synods and lay elders, as so many courts of judicature, with power to dispense church censures, it was carried in the affirmative, and asserted in their humble advice to parliament, with this addition, "So Christ has furnished some in his churches besides ministers of the word, with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same when called thereto, who are to join with the ministers in the government of the church, which officers the reformed churches generally call elders." Hence their name, authority, and office.

When this point was carried by a large majority, the Independents entered their dissent in writing, and complained to the world of "the unkind usage they met with in the assembly; that the papers they offered were not read, and that they were not allowed to state their own questions, being told they set themselves industriously to puzzle the cause and render the clearest propositions obscure, rather than argue the truth or falseness of them; that it was not worth the assembly's while to spend so much time in debating with so inconsiderable a number of men." They also declared that the assembly refused to debate their main proposition, viz. Whether a divine right of church government did not remain with every particular congrega-