

deemer, and twenty-five non-essentials; but there are twenty-five precepts concerning which I am much in doubt, being almost persuaded of their essentiality, and I cannot co-operate with any of my dearly esteemed brethren until these doubtful precepts are satisfactorily determined.' It is, my son, easily perceived, without giving all the details of this council, that the members of it must agree in the number of non-essentials in order to effect either a sentimental or practical union.—Still, what I before affirmed is not yet proved. I have said that the existence of certain systems of religion depends as much upon their non-essentials as their essentials. Now the proof is given in one sentence: *THEY DO NOT OBEY ALL THE DIVINE REQUIREMENTS, and therefore if they CANNOT SHOW that some of these requirements are unimportant and unessential, THE FOUNDATION OF THEIR REFUGE IS OVERTURNED, while at the same time their righteousness is proved not to excel the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.* And here let me tell a sectarian secret. Theological legislators found it necessary, indispensably necessary, to establish the distinction between the essential and non-essential, because it gave them a license to comply with as many of the requisitions of christianity as would answer their convenience, or be required to accomplish the devices of craft: for, had they been disposed to submit humbly to the commandments of God, a non-essential had never been named.

ALPHA.—But father, if I understood the preacher, he taught the importance of agreeing exclusively upon the essentials. He enumerated a few tenets which he considered essential, and which, he affirmed, were substantially his belief; and all who would assent or subscribe to these, and consent to unite with him, he was willing to acknowledge brethren in the Lord. No other examination, preparation, or qualification he said would be necessary.

OMEGA.—Undoubtedly, and with much apparent charity and show of liberality,—a liberality, which, when dissected and stript of all ambiguity, retains much of the astringency of Roman tyranny in its composition. For, at the close of the sermon, had you offered yourself as a candidate for membership in his communion, your assent to every item in his summary of essentials and non-essentials would have been imperiously demanded.

ALPHA.—I begin now to perceive their demand for non-essentials; and also I begin to perceive the necessity of agreeing in the non-essentials in order to agree in the essentials. A little study develops these matters clearly. But it requires intricate machinery to assimilate the religion of God with the religion of men. Father will you tell me your principal objections and reasons against the doctrines of which we have been speaking?