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doctrines, order, and polity  
of the  
Presbyterian church in the  
United States

A SERIES

OF

TRACTS

ON THE

DOCTRINES, ORDER, AND POLITY

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

EMBRACING

SEVERAL ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

PAUL T. JONES, PUBLISHING AGENT.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE desire having been frequently expressed, that the Tracts issued by the Presbyterian Board of Publication should be preserved in a permanent form, the Executive Committee have collected them, and now present them to the Church in two volumes. The first contains the Tracts from No. I. to X. inclusive, with the exception of No. V., which is the Catechism. The second contains the remainder of the Tracts, with the exception of No. XVI., which is the Explanatory Catechism, and Nos. XVIII. and XIX., (Halyburton's Great Concern) which are now published in another form, and will hereafter take their place as one of the volume series.

WM. M. ENGLER, Editor.

PRESBYTERIANISM  
THE  
TRULY PRIMITIVE  
AND  
APOSTOLICAL CONSTITUTION  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF CHRIST.

BY SAMUEL MILLER, D.D.

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PHILADELPHIA :

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION

JAMES RUSSELL, PUBLISHING AGENT.

1840.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Manual has been prepared at the particular request of the Tract Society of the Synod of Philadelphia. A polemical spirit in the Church of God is by no means commendable. And even when different denominations of professing Christians are compelled, either in public teaching, or in social intercourse, to recur to the points in regard to which they differ, it ought ever to be done with as much mildness and inoffensiveness as can be reconciled with fidelity. It is doing no more than justice to Presbyterians to say, that they have ever been remarkable for their freedom from a proselyting spirit. Assuredly, there is no denomination of Christians in the United States, from whose pulpits so little is heard of the nature of vaunting their own claims, or impugning the peculiarities of others, as in those of the Presbyterian Church. Seldom is a sentence uttered in their public assemblies adapted to invade the tenets of any evangelical Christian; almost never, indeed, unless in defending themselves against the attacks of other denominations.

In the meanwhile, several other numerous and respectable denominations habitually act on a different policy. Their preaching, their ecclesiastical journals, and their popular Tracts, are characteristically and strongly sectarian. Of this no complaint is made. We live in a free country, where all denominations, in the eye of the civil government, stand upon a level. May it ever continue to be so! But there is a point, beyond which silence in respect to our peculiarities, may be censurable. We are bound to defend ourselves against unscriptural attacks, not merely for our own sakes, but for the sake of others. It is incumbent on us to show to those within our pale, or who may be inclined to unite with us, that we "have not followed cunningly devised fables."

This, and this only, is the design of the following Manual. It is not intended to invade the precincts, or assail the members of other religious communities; but solely for the instruction of Presbyterians; and to satisfy them that the system by which they are distinguished, is, throughout, truly primitive and apostolic. Inquiries are frequently made by young people and others of our denomination, why we differ, as to a variety of particulars, from some other churches. Is it wrong; can it be deemed inconsistent with the most scrupulous Christian charity, and even delicacy, to provide a manual adapted to answer these inquiries? Surely, this is a debt which we owe to our children. And as Presbyterian ministers are seldom heard to preach on the peculiarities by which our beloved and truly scriptural Church is distinguished, there seems to be the more propriety in putting into the hands of our youthful and less instructed members, a summary of the arguments by which they may be enabled to meet the attacks, and repel the insinuations, of those unwearied worshippers of sect, who cease not to insist that they alone are entitled to the character of true Churches.

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Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1835, by Dr. A. W. Mitchell, in the office of the Clerk of the District Court, of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

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# PRESBYTERIANISM.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE Church of God, in the days of the Apostles, as is well known, was not divided into different denominations. Even then, indeed, there were parties in the Church. The restless and selfish spirit of depraved human nature soon began, in different places to display its unhallowed influence, either in the form of judaizing claims, philosophical speculations, or turbulent opposition to regular ecclesiastical authority. In the Church of Corinth, though planted and nurtured by "the chiefest of the Apostles," there were factious and troublesome members, who contended among themselves, and said, one to another, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." Still the Church was one. The names, "Presbyterian," "Episcopalian," "Congregationalist," &c. &c., were unknown. All professing Christians, "though many, were considered as one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." The only popular distinction then recognised, as far as the professed followers of Christ were concerned, was between the Church and the heretics.

Not long after the Apostolic age, when heresies had become numerous, when each of them claimed to belong to the Church, and when convenience demanded the adoption of some term which might distinguish between the true or orthodox Church, and the various sects of errorists—the title of Catholic (or general, as the term Catholic signifies,) was applied to the former; while the latter were distinguished by various names, derived either from the nature of their distinguishing opinions,

or from the original authors or promoters of those opinions. It is well known, indeed, that the blinded and superstitious followers of the Bishop of Rome claim the title of Catholic, as exclusively applicable to themselves. In their own estimation, they are *the Church*, the *only true Church*, the *Catholic*, or *universal Church*; and all the other classes of nominal Christians, throughout the world, are *heretics*, out of the way of salvation. This claim, however, in the estimation of all enlightened Christians, is as presumptuous as it is vain. That department of nominal Christendom, instead of being the only true Church, is considered by many as too far gone in corruption to be comprehended under the Christian name at all; and instead of there being no salvation out of her communion, the danger of eternal perdition is rather to those who are found within her pale. It is not doubted, indeed, that there are many pious individuals within that pale; but it is believed that they are placed in circumstances deplorably unfavourable to their growth in grace; and that the multitudes around them, in the same communion, are immersed in darkness, superstition, and dreadful error, which place them in the utmost jeopardy of eternal perdition. This is that "Antichrist," that "Man of sin," and "Son of Perdition," who exalteth himself above all that is called God, and who is yet to be "destroyed with the breath of Jehovah's mouth, and with the brightness of his coming."

No particular denomination of Christians is now entitled to be called, by way of eminence, the Catholic, or universal Church. There are Churches, indeed, which bear a nearer resemblance to the Apostolical model than others; and which deserve to be favourably distinguished in the list of Christian communities. But the visible Catholic Church is made up of all those throughout the world, who profess the true religion, together with their children. The Presbyterian, the Congregationalist, the Methodist, the Baptist, the Episcopalian, the Independent, who hold the fundamentals of our holy religion, in whatever part of the globe they may reside, are all members of the same visible community; and, if they be sincere believers, will all finally be made partakers of its eternal blessings. They cannot, indeed, all worship together in the same solemn assembly, even if they were disposed to do so. A physical impossibility forbids it; and, in many cases, prejudice and folly widely separate those who ought to be entirely united. Still, in spite of all the sects and names by which professing Christians are divided, there is *a visible Church Catholic*. There is a precious sense in which the



whole visible Church on earth is *one*. All who “hold the Head,” of course belong to the body of Christ. Those who are united by a sound profession to the same divine Saviour; who embrace the same precious faith; who are sanctified by the same spirit; who eat the same spiritual meat; who drink the same spiritual drink; who repose and rejoice in the same promises; and who are travelling to the same eternal rest—are surely *one body*:—*one* in a sense more richly significant and valuable than can be ascribed to millions who sustain and boast a mere nominal relation.

But while we thus maintain the doctrine of the unity of the visible Church Catholic; and while we rejoice in the assured belief, that sectarian names, as they were unknown in the Apostolic age, so they will be unknown among the members of the Redeemer’s glorified body; still, in this militant state, there *is* a separation, not merely nominal, but real and deplorable; a separation which interferes most deeply with the communion of saints, and which lamentably mars those precious opportunities of proximity and intercourse, which too often, alas! become incentives to contention and strife, rather than to Christian love.

Amidst this diversity of sects and names, it becomes, to every intelligent and conscientious Christian, a most interesting question—Which of the various denominations which bear the name of Christian Churches, may be considered as approaching nearest to the New Testament model? We freely acknowledge, indeed, as Churches of Christ, all who hold the fundamentals of our holy religion, and consider it as our duty to love and honour them as such; carefully avoiding all treatment of them that tends to the increase of strife and division, and that is contrary to “godly edifying.” Still, it cannot be doubted, by any rational man, that *some one* of these denominations is nearer to the Apostolic model, as a Church of Christ, than any of the rest. Which of the whole number this is, is a most serious question in the view of every one who wishes to know the will of Christ, and who desires to be found walking in that way which was trod by inspired Apostles, and in which they left the Church harmoniously walking, when they ceased from their labours.

It is the sincere belief of the writer of these pages, that the *Presbyterian Church*, as it now exists in these United States, entirely unconnected with the civil government, and taking the word of God as its “only infallible rule of faith and practice,” is more truly primitive and apostolical in its whole constitution, of *doctrine, worship, and order*, than any

other Church, now on earth. An humble attempt to evince the truth of this position, will occupy the following pages.

For the fulfilment of the purpose in view, I shall endeavour, very briefly, to consider the *History* of Presbyterianism; its *doctrine*, its *order*, or *form of government*; its *worship*; and its *comparative advantages*. In each of these respects, unless I am deceived, it will be easy to show that it approaches nearer than any other Christian denomination, to the Apostolical mode.

To prepare the way more fully for the ensuing discussion, it may be proper to state, that there are four distinct forms of Church order, each of which claims a scriptural warrant; the Papal, or spiritual *monarchy*—the Episcopal, or spiritual *prelacy*—Independency, or spiritual *democracy*—and Presbyterianism, or spiritual *republicanism*. The first maintaining the necessity of one supreme, universal, infallible Head of the whole Christian body throughout the world, as the authorised vicar of Christ. The second, contending for an order of clerical prelates, above the rank of ordinary ministers of the Gospel, who are alone, in their view, empowered to ordain, and without whose presiding agency, there can be no regular Church. The third, holding that all ecclesiastical power resides in the mass of the Church members, and that all acts of ecclesiastical authority are to be performed immediately by them. While in the fourth and last place, Presbyterians believe, that Christ has made all ministers who are authorised to dispense the word and sacraments, perfectly equal in official rank and power: that in every Church the immediate exercise of ecclesiastical power is deposited, not with the whole mass of the people, but with a body of their representatives, styled Elders; and that the whole visible Church Catholic, so far as their denomination is concerned, is not only one in name, but so united by a series of assemblies of these representatives, acting in the name, and by the authority of the whole, as to bind the whole body together as one Church, walking by the same principles of faith and order, and voluntarily, yet authoritatively governed by the same system of rule and regulation.

*Presbyterianism*, then, is a term which primarily refers to the form of Church government. That is a *Presbyterian Church*, in which the *Presbytery* is the radical and leading judicatory; in which Teaching and Ruling *Presbyters* or *Elders*, have committed to them the watch and care of the whole

flock ; in which all ministers of the word and sacraments are equal ; in which Ruling Elders, as the representatives of the people, form a part of all ecclesiastical assemblies, and partake, in all authoritative acts, equally with the Teaching Elders ; and in which, by a series of judicatories, rising one above another, each individual church is under the watch and care of its appropriate judicatory, and the whole body, by a system of review and control, is bound together as one homogeneous community. Wherever this system is found in operation in the Church of God, there is *Presbyterianism*. Though there may be much diversity in the names of the several judicatories ; and though, in the minuter details of arrangement, some variety may exist, still it is essentially the same. Thus the Reformed Churches in France, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Scotland, and Geneva, are all Presbyterian, notwithstanding some minor varieties in the names and regulations of their judicatories. Wherever ministerial parity ; the government of the church by Elders, instead of the mass of the communicants ; and the authoritative union of churches under courts of review and control, are found, there we have that ecclesiastical system which it is the object of the following pages to explain and recommend.

But although the term Presbyterian has a primary reference to the form of Church government ; yet Presbyterian Churches were originally agreed, and have been commonly, in all ages agreed, in a variety of other matters, which we believe are all warranted by the Holy Scriptures. It is to the whole system, then, of doctrine, government, and mode of worship, which now distinguishes the Presbyterian Church in the United States, that the attention of the readers of these pages is requested ; and which, it shall be my aim to show, is set forth in the Word of God, “the only infallible rule of faith and practice.”

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## CHAPTER II.

### HISTORY OF PRESBYTERIANISM.

The essential principles of Presbyterian Church order were of very early origin. Those principles are the authoritative binding of the whole Church together as one body ; and conducting this government, not by the entire ecclesiastical popu

lation, but by representatives, elected by, and acting on behalf of the whole. That this mode of administering the affairs of the visible Church was adopted long before the coming of Christ, is certain, and can be doubted by none who intelligently and impartially read the Old Testament Scriptures. Even before the institution of the ceremonial economy, while the covenanted people of God were yet in bondage in Egypt, we find that they had their Elders, that is, their men of gravity, experience and wisdom, who were obeyed as heads of tribes, and rulers among the people, Exodus iii. 16. The powers committed to them, and exercised by them, are not particularly specified; but we may take for granted, with confidence, that their office was to inspect and govern the people, and to adjust all disputes both of a civil and ecclesiastical nature. Before the publication of the law from Mount Sinai, and anterior to the establishment of the ceremonial economy, Moses chose wise and able men out of the tribes of Israel, made them rulers over thousands, over hundreds, over fifties, and over tens. Exodus xviii. These rulers are elsewhere, in almost every part of the Old Testament, styled Elders. To them, as we are expressly informed, all the ordinary cases of government and discipline were committed. The same mode of dispensing justice and order among the people, seems to have been employed after the institution of the Aaronic priesthood; during the time of the Judges, and of the Kings; during the Babylonish captivity; and after the return of the captives from Babylon. At whatever time the Synagogue system was adopted, it is evident that the plan of conducting government by means of a body of Elders, was universal, through all the land of Judea, up to the time of the Saviour's advent. The synagogues were the parish churches of the Jews. There the ordinary worship and instruction of the Sabbath were conducted; and the excommunication of an individual from the body of the professing people of God, was expressed by "putting him out of the synagogue." In these synagogues the essential principles of Presbyterianism were universally established. The similarity, as to every important point, was exact. In short, during the whole tract of time embraced in the history of the Mosaic economy, we have complete evidence that the ecclesiastical government, as well as the civil, was conducted, under God, the Supreme Ruler, by boards of Elders, acting as the authorized representatives of the people. To this mode of government, as is notorious, every city, and every synagogue was accustomed. In no instance, in either Church or State, is a case recollected in which the population was called together to settle a dispute,

or to dispense justice between persons at variance. The representative system was universally in use. The work of administering justice was always done by a body of rulers or officers, commonly styled, amidst all the changes of dispensation, "Elders of the people."

Nor was this all. As each particular synagogue was governed by a bench of Elders, of which the Bishop or "Angel of the Church," was the presiding officer; so also, as the whole Jewish body was one;—one Catholic Church,—there were always appeals admitted, in cases of alleged incorrectness of judgment, to the "great synagogue" at Jerusalem, where an opportunity was given for redressing what was done amiss. Nothing like the independency of particular synagogues was admitted or thought of. A system which bound the whole community together as one visible professing body, was uniformly in operation.

The first converts to Christianity being all native Jews, who had been always accustomed to the exercise of government by benches of "Elders," in the manner just specified; and this representative plan being so equitable, so wise, and so convenient in itself; no wonder that the same plan was adopted by the apostles in organizing the primitive Church. Accordingly, as in the account which the inspired writers give of the Jewish constitution, we read continually of the "Rulers of the synagogue," and of the "Elders of the people," as a body distinguished from the priests; so, when they proceed to give us an account of the organization and proceedings of the New Testament Church, we find the same language used in cases almost innumerable. We read of "Elders being ordained in every church;" of an important question being referred to a synod, made up of "Apostles and Elders;" of "Elders who ruled well, but did not labour in the word and doctrine;" of the "Elders of the Church being called together" to consider ecclesiastical questions; of the "Elders of the Church being called for to visit and pray over the sick," &c.

The question, whether the exact mode of conducting the government and discipline of the Church, which we find delineated in the New Testament, is obligatory on Christians now, is one concerning which there is no small diversity of opinion. That an entire conformity to that model, in every minute particular, is essential to the existence of the Church, will be maintained by few; and certainly by no Presbyterians. None can doubt, however, that it is most expedient and safe to keep as near as may be to that plan of Church order, which inspired men approved and left in use, when they ceased from

their labours. As to what that plan was, it would really seem almost impossible that intelligent and impartial readers of the New Testament should entertain different opinions. The moment we open the inspired history of the apostolic age, we find a style of speaking concerning the officers of the Church, and a statement of facts, which evince, beyond all controversy, that the model of the synagogue was that which was then adopted, and which was left in universal use when inspired men surrendered the Church to their successors. We find preaching the Gospel, "feeding the sheep and the lambs" of Christ, and administering the Christian sacraments, the highest offices entrusted to the Ministers of Christ. We find a plurality of "Elders," by divine direction, ordained in every church. In no instance, in the whole New Testament, do we find an organized congregation under the watch and care of a single officer. Further, we find "Bishop" and "Elder," titles given, interchangeably, to the same persons; plainly showing that the term "Bishop," in the apostolic age, was the title which designated the pastor or "overseer," of a single flock or church. We find in the New Testament history, no trace of prelacy. All priority or pre-eminence among the ministers of Christ is expressly rebuked and forbidden. There is evidently but one commission given to the authorized ministers of the word and sacraments. When the Saviour left the world he commissioned no higher officer in his Church, speaks of no higher than he who was empowered to go forth and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The ordaining power is manifestly represented as possessed and exercised by ordinary pastors, and as performed by the "laying on of the hands of the Presbytery." There is not a solitary instance to be found in all the New Testament, of an ordination being performed by a single individual, whether an ordinary, or extraordinary minister. In all the cases which we find recorded, or hinted at, a plurality of ordainers officiated. When Paul and Barnabas were designated to a special mission, it was by a plurality of "Prophets and Teachers of the Church in Antioch," Acts xiii. When they went forth to preach and organise churches, we are informed that they together, "ordained Elders in every church." Timothy was ordained by the "laying on of the hands of the Presbytery." 1 Tim. iv. 14. And even when the Deacons were set apart to their office, it is plain, from the narrative, Acts vi. 1—6 that a plurality laid hands upon them with prayer and fasting. It is plain too, that the whole visible Church, in the apostolic

age, whether in Jerusalem or in Antioch, in Philippi or in Ephesus, was regarded as *one body*, all governed by the same laws, subject to the same authority, and regulated by the same judicial decisions. Thus, when a question arose which interested and affected the whole Christian community, it was decided by a synod of the "Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem," and the "decrees" of that synod were sent down to "all the churches," to be registered and obeyed. Here was evidently an assembly of Ministers and Elders, acting as the representatives of the whole Church, and pronouncing judicial decisions, which were intended to bind the whole body. If this be not Presbyterianism, then there is nothing of the kind in Scotland or in the United States.

When we pass from the New Testament to the earliest records of uninspired antiquity, the same form of church order is every where apparent. The plan of ecclesiastical government disclosed by the Epistles of Ignatius, as actually existing in his day, is manifestly Presbyterian. He represents every particular church of which he speaks, as furnished with a Bishop or Pastor, a bench of Elders and Deacons; he continually employs language which implies that these officers were present in every worshipping assembly; and he most evidently gives us to understand, that these Elders, with the Pastor or Bishop at their head, conducted the government and discipline of each church. Clemens Romanus, contemporary with Ignatius, speaks in language of similar import. He represents Bishops and Presbyters,—the Episcopate and the Presbyterate, as the same; and expressly states that the Presbyters were "set over the church" by the choice of the Church; and that to rise up in rebellion against them, was considered as highly criminal. The testimony of Irenæus, who lived in the second century, is no less decisive in favour of our system. He continually applies the title of Bishop and Presbyter to the same men; speaks of "the succession of the Episcopate," through the Presbyters and through the Bishops, as the very same; nay, represents the apostolical succession, the Episcopal succession, and the Presbyterian succession, as all identical. In short, he could scarcely have kept a more scrupulous and exact balance, than he does between the dignities, powers, and duties connected with each title, and ascribed interchangeably to all. I might go on to quote Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, and other early fathers, as speaking a language of equivalent import. But there is no need of going into further detail. The truth is, for the first two hundred years after Christ, it is certain

that neither Prelacy nor Independency was known in the Church of Christ. There is not a single record within that period, which either asserts or implies it; but every thing of a contrary aspect. Every flock of professing Christians had its Pastor or Bishop, with its bench of Elders, by whom the government and discipline were conducted; and its body of Deacons, by whom the funds collected for the relief of the poor, were received and disbursed.

In the third century after Christ the aspect of things began to change. Some seasons, in this century, of exemption from persecution and of comparative outward prosperity, were marked by very sensible departure from the simplicity and purity of the preceding times. Heresies and schisms began to distract the congregations of God's professing people. The Ministry and Eldership of the Church declined both in zeal and faithfulness. The clergy became ambitious and voluptuous, and, as a natural consequence, full of intrigue and contention. The pictures given of their cupidity, mutual encroachments, and degrading strife, by Cyprian, by Origen, and by Eusebius, as in full operation in the third century, are truly of the most revolting character. Some have said, indeed, that the Church, in the Cyprianic age presented, on the whole, one of the most satisfactory models of ecclesiastical perfection. Those who can entertain this opinion must judge of what is desirable in a Church, by a very different criterion from that which the Bible furnishes. Let them impartially read the statements given by the writers just mentioned, and they will speedily alter their opinion. Among such a clergy, an undue aspiring after preferment, titles and places might be expected, as a matter of course. Indeed, in such circumstances, it would have required a constant succession of miracles to prevent prelacy from arising. Nor was this all. As the Church declined from her primitive simplicity and purity, some of her more serious ministers thought themselves warranted in resorting to other forms of attraction for drawing the populace into the Church. For attracting the Jews they began to adopt some of the titles, ceremonies, and vestments of the temple service. They began to call the Christian ministry the "priesthood;" and, as a natural consequence, to speak of "priests" and "high priests," and "altars," and "sacrifices," &c. &c.; for all which, in reference to the Christian economy, there is not the smallest warrant in the New Testament. Other ecclesiastical leaders, for the purpose of conciliating and attracting the Pagans, introduced a variety of rites from the ceremonial of the heathen, intended



to make the Christian ritual more splendid, dazzling, and alluring to those who had been the votaries of dumb idols, and whose chief objection to the religion of Christ was, that its worship was too simple and unadorned. The consequence was, that, toward the close of the third century, Prelacy was gradually and insidiously introduced. All orders of ecclesiastical men partook of the spirit of ambitious encroachment. The Deacons, whom the Apostles had appointed to be guardians of the poor, and of the temporalities of the Church, became too proud to discharge the appropriate duties of their office, employed "sub-deacons" to perform their official work, and, after a while, claimed, and had conceded to them, the power of preaching and baptizing. The Presbyters or Elders partook of the same spirit, and although the greater part of them had been chosen and set apart for ruling only, yet as the discipline of the Church became relaxed and unpopular, and finally in a great measure abandoned, they all aspired to be public teachers, and turned away from their original work, to what they deemed a more honourable employment. The Bishops, who had been originally overseers or pastors of single flocks, claimed authority over the congregations in their neighbourhood, which had branched out from their original charges; so that, by little and little, they became prelates;—a new office covertly brought in under an old name. Nor did the principle of ambitious encroachment stop here. Metropolitans and Patriarchs began to "lord it" over Bishops. And to crown the gradations of rank, the Bishop of Rome, seduced by the imperial splendour which surrounded him, and countenanced by imperial power and munificence, came to be acknowledged as the supreme head, under Christ, of the whole Church upon earth, and the infallible interpreter of the Saviour's will.

This statement is confirmed by early Christian writers of the highest character, and who were nearly contemporary with the criminal innovation of which they speak. Thus Ambrose, who wrote about the year 376 after Christ, in his commentary on Ephesians iv. 2, has the following passage: "After churches were planted in all places, and officers ordained, matters were settled otherwise than they were in the beginning. And hence it is that the Apostles' writings do not, in all things, agree with the present constitution of the Church; because they were written under the first rise of the Church; for he calls Timothy, who was created a Presbyter by him, a Bishop, for so, at first, the Presbyters were called." This passage is so plain, that it requires no comment. Still more

unequivocal and decisive is the language of Jerome. "Among the ancients," says he, "Presbyters and Bishops were the same. But by little and little, that all the seeds of dissension might be plucked up, the whole care was devolved on one. As, therefore, the Presbyters know, that by the custom of the Church, they are subject to him who is their president, so let Bishops know, that they are above Presbyters more by the custom of the Church, than by the true dispensation of Jesus Christ!" And in order to establish his position, that, in the apostolic age, Bishop and Presbyter were the same, he quotes precisely those passages of Scripture which Presbyterians have been accustomed, for three hundred years, to adduce in attestation of the same fact. The testimony of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, is to the same amount. In writing to his contemporary Jerome, who was a Presbyter, he expresses himself in the following language: "I entreat you to correct me faithfully when you see I need it; for, although, according to the names of honour which the custom of the Church has *now* brought into use, the office of Bishop is greater than that of Presbyter, nevertheless, in many respects, Augustine is inferior to Jerome." *Oper. Tom. II. Epist. 19. ad Hieron.* It is worthy of notice, that Bishop Jewel, in his "Defence of his Apology for the Church of England," produces this passage from Augustine, for the express purpose of showing the original identity of Bishop and Presbyter, and translates it thus: "The office of Bishop is above the office of priest, not by authority of Scripture, but after the names of honour which the custom of the Church hath now obtained." *Defence, 122, 123.* And, finally, to the same effect is the testimony of Chrysostom, who wrote toward the close of the fourth century. In his eleventh Homily on the Epistles to Timothy, he speaks thus: "Having spoken of Bishops, and described them, Paul passes on to the Deacons. But why is this? Because, between Bishop and Presbyter there is not much difference; for these also, in like manner, have committed to them both the instruction and the government of the Church; and what things he has said concerning Bishops, the same, also, he intended for Presbyters; for they have gained the ascendancy only in respect to ordination; and of this they seem to have defrauded the Presbyters." This passage of the eloquent father needs no comment. If there be meaning in words, Chrysostom distinctly conveys the idea, not only that ordination was the only point in respect to which Bishops, in his day, had gained precedence over Presbyters, but that they had gained even this by fraudulent means. This is the undoubted

import of the word which he employs, and which we translate defraud. The same word is employed in 1 Thessalonians iv. 6. "That no man go beyond and *defraud* his brother in any matter," &c. And again, 2 Cor. vii. 2. "We have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have *defrauded* no man." And be it remembered, no individual in the fourth century was more competent, in every respect, than Chrysostom to say whether the pre-eminence which had been gained by Bishops in his day, rested on a divine warrant, or had been fraudulently obtained.

Thus it is evident—the ancients themselves being our witnesses—that, in the apostolic age, Bishop and Presbyter were the same; that, the Bishops were parish ministers; that, in every parish, a body of Elders, with their Pastor at their head, conducted the government and discipline; that, of course, Presbyterian parity in the Gospel ministry universally prevailed; that the rite of ordination was equally the prerogative of all who were empowered to preach the Gospel, and administer the sacraments; that it was habitually performed "by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery;" that matters continued in this situation for more than a hundred years after the close of the apostolic age; that then clerical pride, ambition, and cupidity began, more sensibly than in preceding times, to disclose their native effects; and that the pastors of the more opulent towns claimed special pre-eminence and powers, as peculiarly the successors of the Apostles, which, by little and little, were admitted, and at length, permanently established. Thus were parochial Bishops, or the pastors of single congregations, gradually transformed into diocesan, or prelatial Bishops, and, under an old and familiar title, a new office artfully introduced; until, in the fourth century, when Christianity became the established religion of the empire, when the clergy were pampered by imperial bounty, defended by imperial authority, and their honours arranged according to the gradations of rank which were obtained in the state; all traces of primitive simplicity and purity were lost in the plans and splendour of worldly policy. Bishops became "lords over God's heritage," rather than "examples to their flocks."

We are not to suppose, however, that this departure from the apostolic model of church order was universal. There were "witnesses of the truth," who, in humble retirement, bore a faithful testimony to the original system of discipline as well as doctrine. The simple-hearted Paulicians, in the seventh century, testified against the encroachments of pre-

lacy. They were succeeded, not long afterwards, by the Waldenses and Albigenses, who still more distinctly and zealously protested against all encroachments on Presbyterian simplicity. This is freely acknowledged by many of the advocates of prelacy, as well as others. *Æneas Sylvius*, afterwards Pope *Pius* the II., declares—"They, (the Waldenses,) deny the hierarchy; maintaining that there is no difference among the priests, by reason of dignity or office." *Medina*, a learned prelatist in the council of *Trent*, asserted that the doctrine of ministerial parity had been condemned in *Aerius*, and in the *Waldenses*, as well as in others specified by him. *Bellarmino* acknowledges that the *Waldenses* denied the divine right of prelacy. The Rev. Dr. *Rainolds*, an eminently learned Episcopal divine, professor of Divinity in the university of *Oxford*, in the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, in writing on this subject to Sir *Francis Knollys*, declares—"All those who have, for 500 years past, endeavoured the reformation of the Church, have taught, that all pastors, whether they be called Bishops or Priests, are invested with equal authority and power;—as first, the *Waldenses*; next *Marcilius Petavinus*; then *Wickliffe* and his disciples; afterwards *Huss* and the *Hussites*; and last of all, *Luther*, *Calvin*, *Bullinger*, *Musculus*, &c." Their own historians, *John Paul Perrin*, and Sir *Samuel Morland*, make statements, and exhibit documents which fully confirm this representation. For although in some of the records of the *Waldenses* certain *Seniors* are mentioned who performed particular duties for the sake of order; yet we are explicitly informed that *they claimed no superiority by divine right*. Accordingly *Peter Heylin*, a bigoted Episcopalian, speaking of the Bohemian Brethren, a branch of the same people, and who are known to have received ministers from them—says, that "they had fallen upon a way of ordaining ministers among themselves, without having recourse unto the bishop, or any such superior officer as a superintendent."—History of Presbyterianism, pp. 409, 410. The Rev. *John Scott*, the pious Episcopal continuator of *Milner's Ecclesiastical History*, in giving a particular statement of the tenets and practices of the *Waldenses*, addressed by *George Mauzel*, one of their most devoted ministers, to *Æcolampadius*, the celebrated Reformer, in 1530, represents that minister as stating, in the most unequivocal manner, that the different orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, *did not exist in their ministry*. Vol. I. 139. The Rev. *Adam Blair*, one of the latest and most profound writers on the history of the Wal

denses, asserts and shows, with the utmost confidence, that their ecclesiastical government was not Episcopal. *History of the Waldenses*, in two volumes octavo, 1833. "Like Presbyterians and Independents," says this writer, "they denied the establishment of the different orders of ministers then received in the Western Church, such as Bishops, Archbishops," &c. I. 176. Again he says—"No form of ecclesiastical government in Great Britain, seems *exactly* the same with the ancient Waldenses." Viewing them as having a constant moderator, Episcopalians think him like a Bishop. But in regard to Episcopal consecration, Mr. *Acland*, an Episcopalian, informs us, that "this ornament of our church establishment, as justly cherished by us, is unquestionably no longer preserved among the *Vaudois*." Viewing them as having a Synod, and having a Consistory, or session, in each congregation, they are Presbyterians; yet with this difference, that, in our country, Synods and Presbyteries have a new moderator every year, and the lay-elders are sent by the session in each congregation; while the Waldensian congregations meet and appoint the elder. The visits of the moderator to the different congregations, as appointed by the court, have nothing in them inconsistent with Presbytery. Mr. *Gilly*, (also an Episcopalian) admits that the present *Vaudois* are nearer to Presbyterians, than to any other form of church government, only not so rigid." Vol. I. 540, 541. But the undoubted fact, which places this whole subject beyond all question, is, that after the commencement of the Reformation in *Geneva*, the Waldenses not only held communion with that Church, which we all know was strictly Presbyterian, but also received ministers from her, and of course recognised the validity of her ordinations in the strongest practical manner. This they could never have done, had they been in the habit of regarding the subject in the same light with modern prelatists.

But the Waldenses were not merely Presbyterian as to the point of ministerial parity. According to their own most authentic writers, as well as the acknowledgment of their bitterest enemies—they resembled our beloved Church in almost every thing. They rejected all human inventions in the worship of God,—such as the sign of the cross in baptism; fast and festival days; the confirmation of children and youth; the consecration of edifices for public worship, &c. We are also told that all their churches were bound together by Synods, which assembled once a year; that these Synods were composed of Ministers and Ruling Elders, as in the Presby-

terian Church; that their business was to examine and ordain candidates for the ministry, and authoritatively to order every thing respecting their whole body. We may say, then, with strict regard to historical verity, that, in the darkest and most corrupt periods of the Church, Presbyterianism was kept alive in the purest, and indeed, in the *only* pure churches now known to have then existed.

When the Reformation from Popery occurred, it is at once wonderful and edifying to observe, with what almost entire unanimity the leaders in that glorious enterprise, concurred in proclaiming and sustaining Presbyterian principles. Luther, Melancthon and Bucer, in Germany; Farel, Viret and Calvin, in France and Geneva; Zuingli and Œcolampadius, in Switzerland: Peter Martyr, in Italy; A. Lasco, in Hungary; Junius and others, in Holland; Knox, in Scotland; and a decided majority of the most enlightened and pious friends of the Reformation, even in England,—all, without concert, concurred in maintaining, that in the apostolical age there was no prelacy, Bishop and Presbyter being the same; that the government of the Church by Ruling as well as Teaching Elders, was plainly warranted in Scripture; and that individual congregations were not to be considered as independent communities, but as so many members of the body to which they belonged, and to be governed by representative assemblies, for the benefit of the whole. It is true, these different leaders of the Reformed Churches did not, all of them, actually establish Presbyterian order in their respective ecclesiastical bodies; but while all the Reformed Churches in France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Geneva, and Scotland, were thorough Presbyterians, not only in principle, but also in practice—even the Lutherans universally acknowledged that ministerial parity was the order of the apostolic Church, and also, that in the primitive times Ruling Elders conducted the government and discipline in all the Churches. Still many of them holding, as they did, that the Church was not bound to adhere, in every respect, to the apostolic model of government and discipline, but was at liberty to modify it according to exigencies, and as they might deem, for edification; they adopted forms of regulation and discipline, differing from each other, and differing, as they did not hesitate to confess, from the plan actually in use in the days of apostolic simplicity. The Church of England was the *only one in all Protestant Christendom*, which, at the Reformation, adopted the system of Prelacy. This was occasioned by the fact, that in that country the Bishops, the court-clergy, and the monarchs, took the lead in

reforming the Church ; and, as might have been expected, chose to retain the system of ecclesiastical pre-eminence which had been so long established. It is notorious, however, that this was done originally, without any claim of divine right ; with a spirit of affectionate intercourse and communion with all the non-episcopal Churches on the continent of Europe, and after all, contrary to the judgment of large numbers of the most eminently pious and learned friends of the Reformation in that kingdom.

It is very common for the more uninformed opponents of Presbyterianism to assert, that this form of ecclesiastical order was invented by Calvin, and first set in operation in the Church of Geneva. The ignorance of those who can make this allegation is indeed surprising ! Passing by all that has been said of the palpable existence of Presbyterian order in the apostolic age ; of its plain delineation in the Epistles of Ignatius, and in the writings of other fathers succeeding the pastor of Antioch ; and waiving all remark on its acknowledged establishment, as we have seen, among the pious Waldenses ; it was undoubtedly in use in Switzerland and in Geneva long before Calvin had appeared as a reformer, or had set his foot in either of those countries. The Rev. Mr. Scott, the Episcopal continuator of Milner's Ecclesiastical History, before quoted, explicitly states, that as early as 1528, when Calvin was but nineteen years of age, and was wholly unknown in the ecclesiastical world, "the Presbyterian form of church government was introduced into Switzerland," and that the doctrine of ministerial parity had been uniformly taught by Zuingle, before the time of Calvin. In Geneva, likewise, before Calvin ever saw that city, his countrymen, Farel and Viret, had gone thither and commenced the Reformation upon Presbyterian principles. There, when he consented to cast in his lot with them, he found a "Presbytery" established ; and all that he had to do was to complete the system by adding the bench of Ruling Elders for conducting the discipline of the Church ; and even this he did not invent, but confessedly borrowed from that branch of the Waldenses called the Bohemian Brethren ; although he evidently considered, and represented it as distinctly warranted by Scripture.

Presbyterianism, as it has long existed in Scotland, Holland, France, Geneva, and Germany, is, in substance, the same system, differing only in these several countries, in minor details, and chiefly in the names and arrangements of their several ecclesiastical assemblies. As those who com

menced the Presbyterian Church in America, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, were chiefly emigrants from North Britain and Ireland, so the Church of Scotland was more than any other, their model. Our whole arrangement of judicatories, and our whole ecclesiastical nomenclature, are with few exceptions borrowed from Scotland. What our ecclesiastical Mother and we call the "Church Session," most of the Presbyterians on the continent of Europe call the "Consistory;" and what we call the "Presbytery," they call the "Classis." But in general principles, we are all entirely agreed.

Although it is well-known that Presbyterianism, in some parts of the old world, has been, and continues to be connected with the State; as in Scotland, Holland, Geneva, and some parts of Germany; yet this is by no means a necessary, or even a natural connection. It is deeply to be lamented that such a connection was ever formed in any case; having proved, it may be safely affirmed, in all cases essentially injurious. This form of ecclesiastical order existed in the days of the Apostles, not only without any alliance with the civil government, but in the midst of its most unrelenting persecution: and this continued to be the case for more than a hundred years after the last Apostle had gone to his reward. The same may be said of this form of ecclesiastical order, as it existed among the pious Waldenses. It was the object, in no case, of state-patronage, but of unceasing persecution. It is much to be regretted, that any portion of the Church of Christ, under any form of organization, has ever sought to be united with the state, or consented to receive support from the civil power. Such a union has never failed to be followed by disastrous consequences to the best interests of religion. It is undoubtedly better—far better for the spiritual welfare of the Church that she should be persecuted, rather than supported by the civil government.

Happily, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, has never formed or sought any kind of connection with the state. Nay, she has gone further. When, after the establishment of our national independence, it became proper to revise and modify our ecclesiastical formularies, our fathers threw out of them every thing relating to the interposition of the civil magistrate in the affairs of the Church, and introduced, in place of what was thus excluded, a solemn declaration against any particular class or denomination of Christians receiving any species of religious establishment, or preference from the civil government. So that our public standards contain an open, solemn,



and permanent Protest against any claim or attempt on the part of our own, or any other Church, obtaining the least patronage or pre-eminence from governmental favour. Nor is there any point concerning which a more firm and deep-rooted sentiment prevails, than on this point, throughout the Presbyterian Church. It is universally regarded as a settled principle, that scarcely any greater calamity could happen to our body, than that it should be, in any way, directly or indirectly, connected with the state.

It would be doing gross injustice to Presbyterianism not to state, before closing this historical sketch, that it has been found, in all ages, friendly to "the rights of man;" conducive to the advancement, rather than the destruction of civil and religious liberty. In making this statement, it is not meant to be maintained, that no Presbyterian has ever been chargeable with the spirit or practice of persecution; but simply to say, that the general characteristic of the Presbyterian Church, as a denomination, is, that it has ever shown itself friendly to the diffusion of knowledge, to the rights of conscience, and to the enjoyments of rational liberty. It has often, very often, been a *persecuted, but never a persecuting Church*. The few examples of a contrary aspect which have appeared, were, in almost all cases, traceable, either to individual mistake and infirmity, or to a momentary impulse of retaliation on bloody persecutors, when unexpectedly placed in the power of those who had been recently the victims of the most cruel oppression. The death of Servetus (even allowing all the agency in his death on the part of Calvin, which the enemies of that illustrious man have been fond of ascribing to him, but which every well informed and impartial person knows cannot be allowed) had no real connection with Presbyterianism. The cases of undue severity exercised towards others, by Presbyterians in Great Britain, in the course of the seventeenth century were almost all referable to the maxim, that "oppression makes even wise men mad;" and seldom rose much above the point of self-defence.\* And as to the fierce and unrelent-

\* It is truly wonderful that intelligent and conscientious men, while they make such a hideous outcry concerning the affair of Servetus, and study to place in so odious a light the severities indulged towards some of the Episcopal clergy, by the Independents, in England, during the period of the Commonwealth, should entirely forget the instances of persecution, a hundredfold more frequent and more severe, practised by Prelacy. Archbishop Cranmer was immediately active in dragging at least *four* persons to the flames, of whom two were women. Let the flames which consumed the body of the amiable and pious Ann Askew, kindled through the misguided zeal of that prelate, confound those who would represent Calvin as the prince of persecutors. More than this,

ing oppression recently experienced by evangelical men in Geneva, it is notoriously the spirit and the work of Unitarianism; the same spirit which, in the sixteenth century, prompted the leading Socinians, when Francis David, one of their own number, who believed with them the mere humanity of Christ, and therefore thought that divine worship ought not to be paid him,—to throw him into prison, where he died.

Especially may it be said that, in our own country, during the one hundred and thirty years in which it has existed in an organized form, Presbyterianism has uniformly proved herself the friend of civil and religious liberty; and though often herself persecuted, has never been, in a single instance, chargeable with invading the rights of others. Nay, to the present hour she is, on every side, bitterly reviled and calumniated, as “narrow,” “sectarian,” “ambitious,” “aspiring at a civil establishment,” &c., when it is notorious, that there is not a single denomination in our country so exempt from narrow sectarianism; so free from a proselyting spirit; so ready to unite with all evangelical denominations in enterprises of benevolence; and which has been so signalized by the most solemn protests, public and private, against every species of connexion between the Church and the civil government. When, with these unquestionable facts before our eyes, we hear the calumnies before referred to proclaimed on every side, can the most unbounded charity imagine that they are really believed, or that the motive which actuates their propagators can be a regard to truth?

in the reign of Edward VI., he is also confessed by the historians of his own church, to have “procured the death” of Joanna Bocher and George Paris, labouring, and with success, to overcome the scruples of the young king, in signing the warrant for burning them. Again: during the reign of James I., about twenty-five persons were hanged, drawn, and quartered for their religion, in England. (See *Brook's History of Religious Liberty*, Vol. II. p. 403.) During the same reign, (A. D. 1612,) Bartholomew Legate, and Edward Wightman, were burnt to death for the same cause; the former under the immediate administration and authority of Dr. King, Bishop of London, and the latter under the direction of Neile, Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry, who are acknowledged to have had an immediate agency in bringing them to the stake. One would think, that in more than half a century after the affair of Servetus, the prelates of England might have become a little more enlightened with regard to the rights of conscience. But the miserable oppressions and cruelty exercised by prelacy, and especially by Archbishop Laud and his coadjutors; and the still more cruel ejections, imprisonments, and massacres, both in North and South Britain, which marked the reigns of Charles II. and James II., are enough to sicken the heart, and ought for ever to impose silence on prelacy, with regard to persecution.

## CHAPTER III.

## DOCTRINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

The Presbyterian Church has been distinguished, in all ages, for laying great stress on the maintenance of PURE DOCTRINE. Such was eminently the case in primitive times, when it was enjoined upon them to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." And such was no less remarkably their characteristic when, under the name of *Waldenses*, for five or six hundred years before the Reformation, they maintained a noble testimony in favour of the truth, in the midst of the deplorable darkness and corruption of the Papacy. At the period of the Reformation, the same zeal for the true doctrines of the Gospel of Christ, led the faithful servants of God, in different parts of the Church, to form and publish their "Confessions of Faith," which remain to the present day as monuments of their fidelity to their Master's will. The people of whom we speak, evidently regarded the pure doctrines of the Gospel as lying at the foundation of Christian character and hope; and while they attached no small importance to the government and discipline of the Church, they regarded, as of far more vital importance, those great, fundamental principles of our common salvation, which enter essentially into the character and life of Christian experience.

The system of doctrine of which the Presbyterian Church has solemnly declared her acceptance and belief, is comprised in the "Westminster Confession of Faith," and the "Larger and Shorter Catechisms." These we believe contain a summary of the doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures; and, on this account alone, we profess to receive them, and require a solemn assent to the "Confession of Faith" on the part of all who are admitted to the pastoral office, or that of spiritual ruling in our body. This system of doctrine has received the distinctive title of *Calvinism*. Not because *Calvin* invented it; but because, among all the modern advocates of it, he was, undoubtedly, the most profound and able; and because it has suited the policy of some to endeavour to convey the idea that the system in question was unknown until *Calvin* began to propagate and defend it.

In the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, there are many doctrines in which we entirely agree with our brethren of other denominations. In regard to all that is embraced in that formula concerning the being and perfections of

God; the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; the divinity, incarnation, and atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, &c., we may be said to hold, substantially in common with all sects who deserve the Christian name. But with respect to the true state of human nature before God; the doctrine of sovereign unconditional election to eternal life; the doctrine that Christ died in a special sense for his elect people; the doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone; of sanctification by the special and invincible power of the Holy Spirit, and of the perseverance of the saints in holiness,—we differ very materially from many who bear the Christian name. In short, with regard to what are commonly called the “five points,” discussed and decided in the Synod of *Dort*, our Confession is opposed to Arminianism, and coincides with the Calvinistic system maintained by that body.

It may be safely said that no theological system was ever more grossly misrepresented, or more foully and unjustly vilified than this. It has been by multitudes defamed, as an abominable system, revolting to every dictate of reason; dishonourable to God; unfriendly to Christian comfort; adapted to beget discouragement and despair on the one hand, or presumption and licentiousness on the other. The gross misrepresentations with which it has been assailed; the disingenuous attempts to fasten upon it consequences which its advocates disavow and abhor; and the unsparing calumny which is continually heaped upon it, and its friends, have scarcely ever been equalled in any other case in the entire annals of theological controversy. Those who have been accustomed to listen to this blind and unhallowed abuse, are respectfully requested to weigh with serious impartiality the following considerations:

1. It is but justice to ascertain *what the real system is which Presbyterians believe*. The opponents of this system are wont to give the most unjust and shocking pictures of it. Whether this is done from ignorance or dishonesty, it would be painful, as well as vain, at present, to inquire. They allege, that it represents God as really the author of sin, and man as laid under a physical necessity of sinning, and then as damned for it, do what he can. They insist that our doctrine of depravity, and the mode of inheriting it, if true, destroys moral agency, reduces our race to the condition of mere machines, and, of course, makes all punishment of sin unjust and absurd. In short, they contend that the view which we give of the plan of salvation, makes it a system of heathenish fate, or of refined Antinomianism, equally destructive of holiness

and of comfort ; and that, under the guise of free grace, we build up a fabric of favouritism on the one hand, and of fixed necessity on the other, at once making God a tyrant, and man a passive subject of his arbitrary will. But is it true that Presbyterians embrace any such system as this? Nothing can be further from the truth. It is a shameful caricature, which has no correspondence with any thing but the perverted pictures of prejudice and bigotry. We abhor such sentiments just as much as our uncandid accusers.

The truth is, it would be difficult to find a writer or speaker who has distinguished himself by opposing Calvinism, who has fairly represented the system, or who really appeared to understand it. They are for ever fighting against a *caricature*. Some of the most grave and venerable writers in our country, who have appeared in the Arminian ranks, are, undoubtedly, in this predicament. Whether this has arisen from the want of knowledge, or the want of candour, the effect is the same, and the conduct is worthy of severe censure. The writer of these pages is fully persuaded that Arminian principles, when traced out to their natural and unavoidable consequences, lead to an invasion of the essential attributes of God, and, of course, to blank and cheerless atheism. Yet in making a statement of the Arminian system, as actually held by its advocates, he should consider himself as inexcusable, if he departed a hair's breadth from the delineation made by its friends. The system itself is one thing ; the consequences which may be drawn from it, another.

Without pretending to go over all the points of Calvinism in detail, let it suffice to say, that the system which Presbyterians profess to receive, is of the following character and amount :—That the Gospel finds all men by nature dead in trespasses and sins, destitute alike of the image and favour of God, and incapable of regaining either, in virtue of any strength or resources within themselves ; that the plan of man's recovery from this state of rebellion, depravity, and ruin, is, from beginning to end, a system of mere unmerited grace ; that it was the wonderful, unprompted grace, or undeserved love of God, which, in the eternal counsels of peace, contemplating man as fallen, devised a stupendous plan of redemption from the guilt and power of sin ; that in these eternal counsels and purposes he regarded the whole human race as equally fallen, and as equally undeserving on account of their sins ; that, however, in his sovereign mercy, he resolved to save a portion of them ; that he was prompted to this choice, not by any foresight of faith and obedience on the part of the

elect, because their faith and obedience are his own sovereign gift; but by the mere good pleasure of his will, that they might be to the praise of the glory of his grace; that God was under no obligation to provide deliverance for any of our race; that he might justly have left us all to perish in our iniquity, as he did the fallen angels, toward whom he was, surely, guilty of no injustice; that he was pleased, however, in the exercise of amazing mercy, to provide a plan of pardon, and of restoration to life and blessedness; that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but obtain everlasting life. We believe further, that not only the providing of this Saviour, but the disposition, in each individual, to accept of him, is all of grace, that is, the free, unmerited gift of God. We have no doubt that all mankind, left to themselves, would reject this great salvation, and that it is discriminating and all-conquering grace which inclines any to receive it. We are persuaded, further, that, as salvation is all of grace, and, as it is evident from Scripture and from daily observation, that all men are not believers, and, of course, that all are not saved, so it was not God's original intention to save all; for it is granted that he does not actually save all; and that which he now does, if he be such a God as the Bible represents him, he always intended to do. We believe that known unto God are all his works and ways from the beginning; and that all the dispensations of his grace, as well as of his providence, and among the rest, the effectual calling and salvation of every believer, entered into his plan from all eternity; "yet so, (as our Confession of Faith declares,) as that thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." In short, the sum of our belief in reference to this great economy, may be expressed in one sentence—"All that is evil in man is of himself, and to him belongs the blame of it; and all that is good in him is of God, and to him belongs the praise of it." We are aware that this system of belief may be perverted, misrepresented, and made perfectly odious, by drawing consequences from it which we utterly reject and abhor. For such perversions and unjust inferences, the advocates of no creed are responsible. Let any one carefully and dispassionately read over the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, and he will soon perceive that the professed representations of it which are daily proclaimed from the pulpit and the press are wretched slanders, for which no apology can be found but in the ignorance of their authors.

2. Consider *the ample support of this system which is found in the Word of God.* The first question which every sincere and devout inquirer after truth will ask, is, “what saith the Scripture?” Our own reasonings and cavils, when thrown into the scale against revelation, are nothing. “Let God be true and every man a liar.” Now it is confidently believed, that when we reverently open the book of God, and impartially examine what it teaches concerning the important points which distinguish our doctrine from other forms of belief, we shall find the divine authority clearly and strongly in favour of that creed which Presbyterians profess to receive.

Those who doubt this, are requested seriously, and with prayer, to ponder the following Scriptures :

By one man sin entered into the world. By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners, Romans v. 18, 19. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law, Romans iii. 24—30. By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For if it be of works, it is no more of grace, otherwise, grace is no more grace, Ephes. ii. 5. Rom. xi. 6. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world, Acts xv. 18. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed, Acts xiii. 48. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter i. 2. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, Ephes. i. 4—7. Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we say, then, to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ

that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. viii. 29—39. Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel, according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 2 Timothy i. 8, 9. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, Philippians i. 6. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand, John x. 27, 28. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee, Isa. liv. 10. Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou hast not received? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? 1 Cor. iv. 7. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil, John xvii. 11, 15. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world, John xvii. 24. Even so, then at this present time, also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Rom. xi. 5—7. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, Psalm cx. 3. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you; and I will



take away the hard and stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. Ezekiel xxxvi. 26—28.

The reader of these pages is earnestly requested to ponder seriously the foregoing Scriptures; to examine them in their connection; to interpret them with the same candour and simplicity with which he is wont to interpret other writings, and then to say whether they do not manifestly support those peculiar doctrines for which Presbyterians are so much reproached and vilified? The question is, not whether the ingenuity of biblical criticism may not torture these passages into a different meaning; but whether the plain, natural, and obvious meaning be not that which will sustain the system in support of which we are wont to quote them? If it will, the controversy is at an end; for whatever is plainly contained in Scripture, we are bound to receive.

3. It is worthy of notice that the system of doctrine maintained by the Presbyterian Church, is *the same in substance with that which was maintained by the Witnesses for the truth, and by the great body of the Reformers, and which has generally been styled, "the doctrines of the Reformation."*

There is probably no class of professing Christians more remote than Presbyterians, from a disposition to appeal to human authority as a test of truth. Our ecclesiastical formularies, as well as our history, proclaim that we consider the *Scriptures* as the infallible rule of faith and practice; and that we are distinguished from Prelatists and others, by contending for this principle, in reference to every department of the Christian system. Yet it is, undoubtedly, an interesting fact, well worthy of being noticed, and adapted to confirm our confidence in the system which we have embraced, that *all* the great and good men who took the lead in bearing testimony against error, and in reforming the Church from the corruptions of the Papacy, however diverse in their views on other points,—agreed, with scarcely an exception, in adopting and maintaining that system of doctrine which is popularly denominated Calvinism, and which many of its bigoted opponents are so ignorant as to imagine that Calvin invented. The Waldenses, those far-famed witnesses of the truth, whom all Protestants profess to venerate, but whom few, alas! appear to understand and follow; not only adopted in substance, the whole Presbyterian government and discipline, as we have seen in a former page; but also, all the leading features of our system of doctrine. The following extract

from one of their confessions is conclusive. The eleventh article is in these words: "God saves from that corruption and condemnation, into which all have fallen, those whom he has chosen from the foundation of the world, *not for any disposition, faith, or holiness which he foresaw in them, but of his mere mercy in Jesus Christ his Son; passing by all the rest, according to the irreprehensible reason of his free will and justice.*" And in one of their ancient Catechisms, they tell us, that the real Church of Christ consists

of the *elect of God*, from the beginning to the end of the world, by the grace of God, through the merit of Christ, gathered together by the Holy Spirit, and *foreordained to eternal life.*" (See Gilly's "Narrative of Researches among the Waldenses," Appendix. See, also, Sir Samuel Morland, p. 40, 48, &c. Milner, iii. p. 440, 441.) The same general system was undoubtedly adopted by John Wickliffe, the "morning star of the Reformation;" by John Huss and Jerome of Prague, his companion in faith, and in martyrdom. "The distinguishing tenet of Wickliffe in religion," says Milner, "was, undoubtedly, the election of grace." And the same writer gives an account of Huss and Jerome, which precludes all doubt that, in their general system, they followed Wickliffe, who was a disciple of Augustine.

When we come down to the time of the Reformation, the same general fact continues to be unquestionable. It is notorious that Luther, long before Calvin was known as a Reformer, or even as a theological writer, publicly maintained the doctrines of the divine decrees, and human impotence, as thoroughly as Calvin ever did. The proof of this is so complete, that no one well informed in the history of those times will dare to deny it. Melancthon, the friend, coadjutor, and survivor of Luther, also held in substance the very same system. Those who read the statements, and the extracts from his writings, which appear in the pages of the Rev. Mr. Scott, the Episcopal continuator of Milner's Ecclesiastical History, can no longer doubt of this. Melancthon assured Calvin that he concurred with him in his creed; and Calvin, in his Preface to Melancthon's book of "Common Places," recommends the work as one, in the doctrines of which he concurred. Zuingli, the apostolic reformer of Switzerland, it is well known, adopted the same system. After all that has been alleged to the contrary, nothing is more certain than that he maintained the doctrines of the depravity and moral impotence of human nature, the sovereign election of grace,

and the perseverance of the saints in holiness, as decisively, and zealously as any of his contemporaries. Yet Zuingle died before Calvin was ever heard of as a friend to the Reformation; and before he had published a sentence in reference to it. Of course, the Swiss reformer was indebted for no part of his creed, to the ministry or the writings of the illustrious pastor of Geneva. The same may be said of Bucer, of Peter Martyr, of Bullinger, of Bugenhagius, of Junius, and, in general, of all the leaders of the Reformation on the continent of Europe.

When we pass over to Great Britain precisely the same fact appears. Hamilton, Wishart, Archbishop Cranmer, Bishops Ridley, Hooper, and Latimer, Archbishops Grindal and Whitgift, John Knox, and, in short, *all* the Reformers of any name, both in North and South Britain, were *doctrinal Calvinists*. This fact, indeed, has been denied; but not by any candid, well informed man. The proof of it is complete. Let any one read the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, especially the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and seventeenth,—let him particularly, ponder well the last mentioned article, which treats directly of the doctrine of Predestination, and ask, whether it is possible fairly to give it any other than a Calvinistic interpretation. I am not, indeed, ignorant that prejudice and bigotry have sometimes contended that this seventeenth article is decidedly Anti-calvinistic in its import; and as proof of this, the qualifying clause toward the end of it is cited as sufficient evidence. Now, it so happens that that qualifying clause is nearly copied from Calvin's Institutes; and the latter part of it is a literal translation of that Reformer's caution against the abuse of this doctrine! Again: let him who entertains a doubt on this subject, read the celebrated Catechism of Dr. Nowell, which was reviewed, corrected, formally approved, and ordered to be published, as containing a summary of true doctrine, by the same Convocation which formed and adopted the Thirty-nine Articles, and which is acknowledged by the bitterest enemies of Calvin to be decisively Calvinistic. Let him read the Lambeth Articles, drawn up and signed by Archbishop Whitgift, and also subscribed by the Archbishop of York, and at least three other leading prelates, and by them transmitted to the University of Cambridge, as containing doctrines "corresponding with those professed in the Church of England." Let him recollect, that for more than half a century after the Reformation was established in England, Calvin's Body of Divinity, commonly styled his "Institutes

of the Christian Religion," was publicly received and studied as a standard of orthodoxy in both the Universities; and that by a Convocation held at Oxford, the work was recommended to the general study of the nation.

Now, is it not remarkable that all the great and good men who took the lead in the Reformation, men of different languages, habits, and prejudices; many of them absolute strangers to each other, not merely in Geneva, but in Great Britain, in France, in Germany, in Holland, in Switzerland—nay, wherever the darkness of the Papacy was dissipated, and her corruptions abandoned—all—all, with scarcely an exception, should become advocates in substance, of that system, which we denominate Calvinism; that appealing to the Bible, as the common repository and standard of Gospel truth, they should with almost entire unanimity, without concert, and however divided as to other points, be so harmoniously united in the great doctrines of sovereign grace, that they have ever since been styled emphatically, '*the doctrines of the Reformation?*' How shall we account for it, that brethren who claim to be well informed, should represent this system as originating with Calvin, and peculiar to him and his followers, when, to say nothing of its Scriptural authority, every one knows it was, in substance, espoused by Augustine, a thousand years before Calvin was born; by all the witnesses of the truth, during the "dark ages," and by all those venerable men, whose piety, wisdom, and devotedness, have been the theme of gratitude and praise, for three hundred years? Above all, how shall we account for it, that brethren, who find no language too strong by which to express their profound veneration for the spirit, the opinions, and the services of Cranmer, Parker, Whitgift, and other distinguished prelates, who, under God, conducted and completed the Reformation in England; while they are never tired of vilifying the character, and denouncing the creed of the venerable Calvin, whose name those very lauded men never mentioned but with epithets of the highest honour; whose writings they made their text books for students of theology, and whose person and ministry they regarded as among the most glorious lights of Christendom?

4. As the system of doctrine taught in our Confession is most in accordance with Scripture, and was common to all the Reformers, so it has, to say the least, *quite as few difficulties attending it as any other system.*

It is not pretended that the Calvinistic system is free from all difficulties. When finite creatures are called to scan either the works, or the revealed will of an Infinite Being, they

must be truly demented, if they expect to find nothing which they cannot comprehend. Accordingly, when we undertake to solve some of the difficulties which that system of Christian doctrine, usually styled Calvinism, presents, it cannot be denied that "such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it." How to reconcile what the Scriptures plainly reveal, on the one hand, concerning the entire dependence of man, and on the other, concerning his activity and responsibility; how to explain the perfect foreknowledge and predestination of God, in consistency with the perfect freedom and moral agency of his intelligent creatures, is a problem, which no thinking man expects fully to solve. But the question is, are there fewer difficulties attending any other system? Especially, are there fewer difficulties attending the Arminian or Pelagian systems, which are commonly the resort of those who reject Calvinism? There are not: nay, instead of being less, they are greater, far greater, both in number and magnitude. The writer of these pages rests in the Calvinistic system with a confidence daily increasing, not only because the more he examines it, the more clearly it appears to him to be taught in the Holy Scriptures; but also, because the more frequently and impartially he compares the amount of the difficulties on both sides, the more heavily by far they seem to him to press against the Arminian and Pelagian schemes.

It is easy, and in the estimation of the superficial and unreflecting, it is conclusive, to object, that Calvinism has a tendency to cut the nerves of all spiritual exertion; that if we are elected, we shall be saved, do what we *will*; and if not elected, we shall be lost, do what we *can*. But is it not perfectly evident that this objection lies with quite as much force against the Arminian or Pelagian hypothesis? Arminians and Pelagians grant that all men will not be actually saved; that the salvation or perdition of each individual is distinctly foreknown by God; and that the event will certainly happen as he foresees that it will. May not a caviller then say, with quite as much appearance of justice in this case, as in the other; "the result as to my salvation is known and certain. If I am to be saved, no anxiety about it is necessary; and if I am to perish, all anxiety about it would be useless?" But would Arminians consider this objection as valid against their creed? Probably not. Yet it is just as valid against *theirs* as against *ours*. The truth is, Arminians and Pelagians, by resorting to their respective schemes, do not really get rid of one particle of the difficulty which they allege against the Calvinistic system; they only place it *one step further back*, but must meet it in

unimpaired strength after all. If there be a God, who is endowed with perfect foreknowledge, and who is, and always has been, acting upon a *plan*, of which he knew the end from the beginning;—and there is such a being, or there is no God,—then all the difficulty which lies against the doctrine of sovereign, unconditional predetermination, lies equally and in all its unmitigated force, against the doctrine of foreknowledge, and certain futurity; and all the shocking consequences with which they charge our system of belief, are quite as legitimately chargeable on their own.

No other proof of this is needed than the subterfuges to which Arminians and Pelagians have resorted in order to avoid the difficulties which they have felt pressing on their schemes. Some have denied the possibility of God's foreknowing future contingencies, alleging that such foreknowledge cannot be conceived or admitted, any more than his power of doing impossibilities, or doing what involves a contradiction. Others have denied the plenary foreknowledge of God, alleging that there are many things which he does not choose to know; the latter making the divine ignorance of many future things voluntary, while the former consider it as necessary. Pelagians, to get rid of the same difficulties, take refuge in the principle that the Most High is deficient in power as well as in knowledge; that he would be glad to have less natural and moral evil in his kingdom than exists; would be glad to have many more saved than will be; but is not able to fulfil his wishes, and is constantly restrained and thwarted by his own inability.

Those who wish to see a specimen of the difficulties to which good men feel themselves reduced in the course of their opposition to Calvinism, may see a remarkable one in the Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. There they will find an amiable and pious man driven to the necessity of borrowing from the Socinian camp, a *denial of the essential omniscience of God*, because he saw that this attribute, if admitted, would unavoidably land him in the peculiarities of Calvinistic theology! A more painful example of prejudice, and of subserviency to the dictates of a favourite system, can scarcely be produced in the annals of Christian piety!

Are not these consequences even more shocking than the worst which its adversaries charge on the Calvinistic system? Do not the allegations, that God is not omnipotent; that he is not omniscient; that he is not acting upon an eternal plan; that his purposes, instead of being eternal, are all formed in

time; and instead of being immutable, are all liable every day to be altered, and are, in fact, altered, by the changing will of his creatures; that there is no certainty of his predictions and promises ever being fulfilled, because he can neither foresee nor control future contingencies; that it is his express design to save all men alike, while yet it is certain that all will not be saved; that he purposes as much, and does as much for those who perish, as for those who are saved; but is, after all, baffled and disappointed in his hopes concerning them; that he is certain of nothing, because he has determined on nothing, and is not able to do all his pleasure;—I say, do not these allegations shock every serious mind? Are they not equally contrary to Scripture, to reason, and to all the hopes of the pious? Yet they have all been either actually avowed by the opponents of Calvinism, or they follow unavoidably from the principles which they assume. The truth is, the moment we abandon the ground that Jehovah is acting upon an infinitely wise and eternal plan; that he is ordering all things according to the counsel of his own will; and that his people are not their own saviours, but indebted to his sovereign grace for every real good which they possess or hope for; the moment we abandon this ground, we abandon all that is solid and tenable, and if we would follow up unavoidable consequences, must plunge into the gulf of Atheism.

The same train of remark may be applied to the difficulties which attend the doctrine of original sin. The humiliating *fact*, that all men are by nature sinners; that their nature is corrupt; that is, that there is such a tendency to sin in all the children of men, that no mere man of all the human family ever failed of falling into it;—is not only taught in Scripture, but is notorious to universal observation. Now the question is, how shall we account for this fact? Presbyterians, speaking the language of Calvinism, of their Confession of Faith, and, above all, as they think, of the Bible, say that Adam was constituted the covenant head of his posterity, that they were to stand or fall with him; that when he fell, all his posterity in that first transgression, sinned in him, and fell with him; in other words, that the guilt of this sin, in virtue of a sovereign and righteous constitution, was imputed to his posterity—that is, it was set to their account; they incurred the same forfeit as if they had themselves committed it. And hence, as Adam, by that transgression, became mortal, lost the moral image of God, and incurred the penalty of a corrupt nature—so all his posterity, in consequence of their covenant relation to him, came into the world mortal, depraved, and guilty, and liable

to the same penalty, in all its extent, which fell upon him. This, Presbyterians profess to believe, is the meaning of those Scriptures which declare, "in Adam all die," 1 Cor. xv. 22. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation," Romans v. 18, 19. They do not suppose, indeed, that there is here any transfer of moral character, or any transfusion of Adam's act into his posterity; but that, in consequence of the covenant relation in which he and they stood, they are treated *as if* they had themselves committed the sin by which our race fell. This, and this only, is the imputation of the sin of our first parents for which Presbyterians contend.

Pelagians, revolting at this view of the subject, hope to remove all difficulty by saying that man's nature is not corrupt; that all men come into the world in the same state of entire innocence that Adam was when first created; and that to suppose men to be born with a corrupt nature, would be dishonourable to God, and inconsistent with moral agency. They acknowledge, however, that all men are in fact, sinners; and that all begin to sin as soon as they become capable of moral action. But is any difficulty which is supposed to attend the Calvinistic doctrine really removed, or even diminished, by this hypothesis? Is it more honourable to God, or less revolting to our sense of justice, to represent the whole human family, without the adoption of any covenant arrangement, or representative principle, as brought into being, and placed by their Creator in circumstances in which not one of their number ever fails of falling into sin?

Arminians, or semi-Pelagians, also rejecting the Calvinistic doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, but at the same time, perceiving that the Pelagian hypothesis is utterly unscriptural, take another method of removing the difficulty. They tell us that Adam was not constituted the covenant head of his posterity, and that the guilt of his first sin was not imputed to them; but yet that, in virtue of their connection with him, and descent from him, they come into the world mortal, and infected with a sinful nature; but that it is on account of their own sin, and not that of Adam, that they are guilty, and exposed to any penalty. Is it not plain, however, that this hypothesis, instead of removing the difficulty which its advocates suppose to lie against the Calvinistic doctrine of original sin, rather increases it? On what principle is it, according to them, that mortality, and a depraved nature descend from Adam to his posterity? Not, it seems, in virtue of any covenant relation between them; not on the principle



of representative headship; but of an arbitrary constitution, ordering it so by a mere act of authority. And while they reject the doctrine of imputation, they are constrained to confess that in consequence, somehow, of Adam's sin, all his posterity come into the world with a depraved nature, which, if not removed, must lead to everlasting destruction. And is this no evil, no penalty? But if being born in this condition be a penalty, and a heavy penalty too, why was this penalty inflicted upon them? It cannot be said that it was on account of their depravity; for this would be to make their depravity the procuring cause of itself. No imputation of our first father's sin! and yet acknowledge that in consequence of that sin, some of the most awful inflictions are sent upon us that can affect moral and immortal beings! No imputation! Whence, then, the fact, that all the posterity of Adam are born depraved, and liable to death? How came this calamity upon them? Surely, while the term is rejected, we have here the essence of all the imputation for which we contend! Alas! we never fail to augment difficulties, and introduce additional perplexity, whenever we deviate from the simple statements of God's word!

5. The very *same objections were made in Apostolic times* to the doctrines of grace, as taught by the inspired Paul. In the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the doctrine of sovereign, distinguishing grace, is discussed professedly and at length. The Apostle boldly announces the language of God to be, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." He then asks, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." Still the Apostle is aware that a blind caviller may continue to object. He therefore adds—"Thou wilt say, then, unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" The very language and scope of this objection show that the Apostle meant that his doctrine should be understood in a Calvinistic sense, for upon any other ground, the objection would be irrelevant. How does he reply to it? Does he retract or disavow that view of the subject on which the cavil is evidently founded? Not at all. He attempts no mitigation or softening. His reply is—"Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing

to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" Here the Apostle has anticipated the whole force of the Arminian objection. It cannot be pushed further than he has carried it in a single sentence. No addition has ever been made to its force by the most ingenious gainsayer. Yet the Apostle answers it, not by an attempt to explain, to bring down to human comprehension, or to show that his statements had been misconstrued. Nothing like it. He resolves the whole into the supremacy, the sovereignty and the incomprehensibility of God and his counsels, and calls upon all to yield to this great and all governing principle; closing as he does in another place, when on the same subject, with that memorable exclamation—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

6. It is a strong argument in favour of that creed which the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church exhibits, that every serious, devout professor of religion, however decided as an Arminian or Semi-Pelagian he may be, in preaching, or in conversation, *never fails to be a Calvinist in prayer*. So far as my observation has gone, the most zealous advocates of Arminianism almost always lay aside their favourite opinions, when they pour out their hearts in prayer, under a feeling sense of their dependence and their unworthiness. How many examples have we of this in thousands of pulpits, and in thousands of published volumes, in which the preaching is decidedly semi-Pelagian, while the prayers are quite as decidedly Calvinistic! The reason of this inconsistency is perfectly evident. In preaching and conversation, errorists argue to maintain a point; in prayer, they supplicate grace. In the former, they are actuated by the spirit of controvertists; in the latter, they feel their entire dependence as creatures, and their lost and perishing conditions as sinners. "A prayer," says one, "upon Arminian principles, and into which the peculiarities of that system were introduced, we have never seen, and never have heard. It would be a theological curiosity sufficiently daring in its structure; but we venture to say, no man of Christian humility and devotion will be found to carry it into the presence of his God." There,—there the sinner ever acknowledges his weakness and depravity; disclaims all merit; confesses his multiplied sins; adores the sovereign unmerited mercy of God; ascribes to his grace every good de-

sire and hope; glorifies his universal government over all his creatures and all their actions; and ascribes the plan, the execution, and the consummation of that deliverance for which he hopes, to the sovereign undeserved grace of God abounding through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Now here is the very essence of Calvinism. Not, indeed, of those monstrous absurdities and impieties in which its adversaries are ever fond of dressing it up; but of that sober and scriptural system which is found in our formularies, and for which all whom we acknowledge as Calvinists, have ever contended.

7. Finally, it is worthy of serious inquiry, whether *the moral influence of the Calvinistic system has not been found in all ages, more pure and happy, than that of any other.* For this appeal no apology is necessary. That system which is ever found connected with larger measures of the spirit of prayer, and of humble, habitual, deep devotion; that system which is ever productive of more holy living, and more active Christian benevolence than any other, we may confidently say, without presumption, is most agreeable to Scripture, and, of course, most worthy of being embraced. This allegation, it is presumed, will not be denied. For, although the opponents of this system, at one time, charge it with having a tendency to promote licentiousness; yet much more frequently and unanimously they charge it with being austere, over strict in its abstinence from worldly pleasures, and standing unnecessarily aloof from the various forms of public amusement. Is it not notorious that the followers of *Augustine*, of the Paulicians, of *Claudius of Turin*, of the Waldenses, and of *Wickliffe*, *Huss*, and *Jerome*, in the dark ages, were far more pure in their morals, devout in their habits, and separated from a corrupt and idolatrous world, than any of their contemporaries? Will it not be granted by every intelligent reader that, during the first half century after the Reformation was established in England, when no one doubts that nineteen twentieths of the Protestant clergy in that kingdom, were avowed Calvinists, the state both of piety and of morals was unspeakably better, than during the latter half of the seventeenth century, when Arminianism had, among the majority, taken its place? What was the character of the two thousand "ejected ministers," in the reign of Charles II. who were almost to a man Calvinists? Were they not, characteristically, as a body, the most pious, pure, diligent, and exemplary servants of Christ, that England ever saw? Is it not universally admitted, that the state of piety and of morals

has ever been far more pure in Scotland, than in England, and pre-eminently, in those districts and congregations in Scotland, in which Calvinism has maintained a steady reign? And can any part of the world be named, in which, for nearly a hundred years after its settlement, purer morals reigned than in New England, in which, as every one knows, during the greater part of that period, a Calvinistic creed almost universally prevailed?

The following remarks by a distinguished divine of the Church of England, who professes not to be a Calvinist, are as just as they are striking.

“Does not this opinion (of the immoral tendency of Calvinism,) in a great measure originate from a mistaken conception of what Calvinism is? Those who would impute all these practical evils to the operation of Calvinism, appear to suppose that the belief of the Calvinist, by which he admits the doctrine of personal election, necessarily includes also an assumption of his own election. The Calvinist, *properly so called*, is no enthusiast. He believes, indeed, in the eternal purposes of God, as to the salvation of the elect; but as to the hopes of his own salvation, and of his individual interest in those purposes, he professes to obtain it by the evidences which he possesses of his being himself in a renewed and justified state. He knows from the word of God that the saints are ‘chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit,’ no less than ‘the belief of the truth,’ that they are ‘predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ,’ and ‘created in Christ Jesús unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them.’ And hence he feels that it is only so long as he experiences the sanctifying influences of the Spirit in his own heart, so long as he himself in some degree reflects the image of Christ, and walks imperfectly indeed, but yet sincerely, in good works, that he can have any scriptural grounds for concluding that he is one of God’s elect, and will have his portion with the saints. This is true Calvinism. And where is the tendency of this doctrine to make its followers slothful or confident, negligent of the means of grace, or inattentive to moral and relative duties? While the practical evils which Calvinism is charged with producing, are so prominently and studiously exhibited to view by many of its opponents; let us not omit, on the other hand, to do justice to this calumniated system, nor forget the abundant good which it is not only capable of accomplishing, but which it actually does accomplish. I have no doubt, but that some of the sublimest feelings of

pure and spiritual delight which are ever experienced on earth, are those of which the Calvinist partakes, when in his secret retirement with his God, “the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit,” and shining on his own gracious operation on the heart, he meditates on the wonderful and unspeakable privileges to which, through Christ, he sees himself entitled; and resolving all the blessings which have been already received, or are prepared for him hereafter, into the eternal purpose, and electing love of God, his Father, and absorbed in a holy contemplation of the divine counsels and perfections, he lies prostrate before the throne of grace, in deep humiliation, and with overwhelming joy. I do not say that others have not their peculiar feelings of spiritual delight; but these are his. And does he rise from such communion with his God, without enlarged desires and resolutions of more seriously devoting himself to the divine favour, of more decidedly overcoming the flesh and the world, and of more faithfully doing the will, and advancing the glory of his Lord and Saviour? Facts and experience reply to this inquiry. Among no denomination or description of professing Christians, is there to be found a larger portion of humble, pious, and devoted servants of God, persons of a truly Christian spirit, zealous of good works, and exemplary in every duty and relation of life, than among those who hold the Calvinistic tenets. I am sure that your observation and your candour will fully justify this statement. And, therefore, so far as this system is to be judged of by its actual effects, I think that, on a candid reconsideration of the subject, you will be induced to abandon your objection, and to admit that it was founded on an erroneous and partial view of the subject.”\*

In the same general strain, Bishop Burnet, who was avowedly, a moderate Arminian, expresses the following opinion as to the practical advantages of Calvinism. “A Calvinist is taught by his opinions to think meanly of himself, and to ascribe the honour of all to God; which lays in him a deep foundation for humility: he is also much inclined to secret prayer, and to a fixed dependence on God.”

A very able and learned foreign lawyer, the author of the article *Predestination*, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, though he is evidently no friend to Calvinism, makes the following declaration: “there is one remark which we feel ourselves

\* “Letters addressed to a Serious and Humble Inquirer, &c.” by the Rev. *Edward Cooper*, Rector of Hamstall Ridware.

bound in justice to make, although it appears to us somewhat singular. It is this : that, from the earliest ages down to our own days, if we consider the character of the ancient Stoics, the Jewish Essenes, the modern Calvinists and Jansenists, when compared with that of their antagonists, the Epicureans, the Sadducees, the Arminians, and the Jesuists, we shall find that they have excelled in no small degree, in the practice of the most rigid and respectable virtues ; and have been the highest honour of their own ages, and the best models for imitation to every age succeeding. At the same time, it must be confessed, that their virtues have in general been rendered unamiable by a tinge of gloomy and severe austerity.”

After all, however, that can be said in favour of that doctrinal system which it is our happiness and honour, as a Church, to receive ; however demonstrative its scriptural support, and however manifest its deduction from the character of an infinitely great, wise, and good Governor of the universe ; it will never cease, while human nature remains as it is, to be hated, reviled, caricatured, ridiculed, and rejected by a large majority of the professedly religious world. It is too humbling to human pride ; it calls for too much self-denial, self-renunciation, and submission of the mind and the heart to heavenly teaching ; demands too much spirituality and withdrawment from worldly pleasures and amusements, not to be opposed by the mass of mankind, and even by the mass of professing Christians, who have little taste for the Spirit of the Gospel. These very doctrines were thus treated in the days of the inspired Apostles, who first taught them in their fulness ; and, even in our own communion, those of our members who are most tinctured with the worldly spirit, are ever found most apt to quarrel with the peculiarities of our creed. The most deeply humble, enlightened and spiritual Christians are, in all ages and churches, ever found to be those to whom the doctrines of free and sovereign grace, for substance, as collected in our Standards from the Scriptures of truth, are most precious, and in whose view they are most glorious.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

THE Church, being a social body, called out of the world, and constituted by the authority of Jesus Christ, indispen-

sably needs a form of government. No Society can exist in purity and peace without order. And no order can be maintained without authority, laws, and a set of officers to apply the laws, and administer the form of order which may have been adopted. Our Master in heaven has commanded "his body, the Church," to preserve within her borders purity of doctrine, and holiness of conversation; and for this purpose to "warn the unruly;" to admonish the careless; reclaim the wandering; and to cut off those who are obstinately corrupt, either in faith or practice. All this she was commanded to do, and actually did perform, while all the civil governments of the world were leagued against her, and the fires of martyrdom were kindled on every side. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. It has nothing to do with earthly governments, and ought to be maintained in entire disconnexion and independence of them all.

Now, it is obviously impossible for the Church to fulfil these obligations, without such an ecclesiastical constitution, such a system of laws, and such a body of officers, as will enable her to apply to her members that authority which her Master has vested in her, "for edification and not for destruction." Hence, the necessity of organizing the Church under some distinct and definite form. It is not asserted, or believed by us, that any one form of government is essential to the existence of the Church; but, simply, that if purity and peace be maintained, there must be some form adopted; and that that form which is derived from the word of God is, undoubtedly, the best, and binding on all.

The Presbyterian Church claims to derive her form of government from the Holy Scriptures. She is persuaded that the New Testament most distinctly presents, as existing in the Apostolic Church, all the three features which constitute the peculiarities of her ecclesiastical polity, viz: the parity of her ministers; the government of the Church by Ruling Elders; and the attainment of unity and cooperation by courts of review and control. She aims to avoid the unauthorised pretensions of Prelacy on the one hand, and the lax, inadequate scheme of Independency on the other; and to adopt that system of ministerial equality, and efficient representation in the government of the Church, which at once guards, as far as possible, against the encroachments of clerical ambition; secures the rights of the people, and provides for the exercise of pure and wholesome discipline in the most edifying manner.

I. In the first place, we reject the claim of *Prelacy*.

Our Episcopal brethren contend that in the Christian Church there are three orders of clergy,—Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons; that the first only have power to ordain, and the last to preach, and administer the sacrament of baptism alone. We maintain, that all ministers of the Gospel who are empowered to administer the word and sacraments, are *officially equal*, and authorized to perform the highest acts of ecclesiastical power. We believe, in a word, that there is but one order of Gospel ministers authorized in the New Testament; that the title of Bishop was constantly applied in the apostolic age, and for a considerable time afterwards, to the ordinary pastors of particular churches; and that setting up a superior under this title, as exclusively possessed of the power of ordaining, is a departure from the primitive model; a usurpation for which there is not the smallest warrant in the word of God.

Our Episcopal brethren, indeed, freely acknowledge, that the title of “Bishop” is never employed in the New Testament, in a single instance, to designate that class of officers to which they now exclusively apply it. They, with one voice, grant, that all that we read in the apostolical writings concerning Bishops, is to be regarded as pertaining to Presbyters, or the ordinary pastors of churches; in other words, to what they call the “second grade” of ministers. They allege, however, that the Apostles occupied a place of ecclesiastical pre-eminence in the primitive Church; that they alone, while they lived, were endowed with the power of ordination; that, as they deceased, their pre-eminence was transmitted to certain successors; that to these successors of the Apostles, the title of Bishop, which had before, while the Apostles lived, been given to Presbyters, began to be appropriated; and that ever since the apostolic age, this title has been confined to Prelates;\* to those who succeeded to the apostolic pre-eminence, and who, like the Apostles, exclusively possess the power of ordination.

But, to no part of this claim does the New Testament afford the least countenance. It is manifest, that ordination was not confined to the Apostles, officially, and technically so called; for nothing can be plainer, than that Barnabas, Timothy, and Titus, who were not Apostles in the appropriated sense, were invested with the ordaining power, and actually and abundantly exercised it. It is equally manifest, that when the Apostles ceased from the Church, they left no suc-

\* See Bishop Onderdonk’s “Episcopacy tested by Scripture.” p. 12.



cessors, in that peculiar and pre-eminent office, which they filled during their lives. "The apostolical office," says Dr. Barrow, an eminent Episcopal divine,—“The apostolical office, as such, was personal and temporary; and, therefore, according to its nature and design, not successive, nor communicable to others, in perpetual descendance from them. It was, as such, in all respects extraordinary, conferred in a special manner, designed for special purposes, discharged by special aids, endowed with special privileges, as was needful for the propagation of Christianity, and founding of churches. To that office, it was requisite that the person should have an immediate designation and commission from God; that he should be endowed with miraculous gifts and graces; that he should be able, according to his discretion, to impart spiritual gifts; and that he should govern in an absolute manner, as being guided by infallible assistance, to which he might appeal. Now such an office, consisting of so many extraordinary privileges, and miraculous powers, which were requisite for the foundation of the Church, was not designed to continue by derivation, for it contained in it divers things, which apparently were not communicated, and which no man, without gross imposture and hypocrisy, could challenge to himself.\*

Such is the judgment of this learned and able Prelatist, concerning the foundation of the whole argument before us. There is not the semblance of support, then, to be found in Scripture for the alleged transmission of the pre-eminent and peculiar powers of the Apostles to a set of ecclesiastical successors. As men endowed with the gifts of miracles and inspiration, who were, prior to the completion of the New Testament canon, constituted the infallible guides of the Church: they had no successors; nor can the remotest hint be found in Scripture, that they had, or were ever intended to have, any such successors. But as ministers of Christ, empowered to go forth preaching the Gospel and administering Christian sacraments, they had successors, and these successors were, manifestly, all those who were empowered to preach the Gospel, and administer the sacramental seals of discipleship: for, in the final commission which the Saviour gave to the Apostles, and which must be considered as embracing their final and highest functions, they are sent forth to disciple all nations, and to baptize them “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” and it

\* Pope's Supremacy, p. 79.

was in immediate connexion with the command to discharge these ordinary duties, that the promise which is considered as pointing to the ministerial succession, was given:—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." If the friends of Prelacy could produce even the semblance of testimony from Scripture, that the ordaining power is something more sacred and elevated than that of dispensing the Gospel, and administering sacraments; if they could produce the least hint from the New Testament, that the powers possessed by the Apostles were afterwards divided, and that one class of ministers succeeded them in certain pre-eminent powers, not mentioned in their final commission, while another class succeeded them only in respect to lower and more ordinary functions; their cause would rest on some plausible ground; but there is not a syllable in Scripture which gives the most distant intimation of either of these alleged facts. It is not so much as pretended, that a passage is to be found, which gives a hint of this kind. Accordingly, when we ask the advocates of Episcopacy whence they derive their favourite doctrine, that diocesan Bishops succeed the Apostles in the appropriate powers and pre-eminence of their apostolical character, they refer us to no passages of Scripture, asserting or even hinting it; but to some equivocal suggestions and allusions of several Fathers, who wrote within the first four or five hundred years after Christ. The writer most frequently quoted by our Episcopal brethren for this purpose, is *Theodoret*, who flourished about the middle of the fifth century, and who speaks thus: "The same persons were anciently called Bishops and Presbyters; and those whom we now call Bishops, were then called Apostles. But in process of time, the title of Apostle was appropriated to those who were called Apostles in the strict sense, and the rest, who had formerly the name of Apostles, were styled Bishops. In this sense Epaphroditus is called the Apostle of the Philippians; Titus was the Apostle of the Cretians, and Timothy of Asia." On this testimony, several remarks may be made: 1. It is not the testimony of Scripture, but the dream of a writer four centuries after the apostolic age, in whose time the Church had become very corrupt, and in whose works much superstition and error are found.

2. No one doubts that in *Theodoret's* time, Prelacy had obtained a complete establishment, and that he alleges principles and facts in relation to the priesthood in his day, which none but Papists are prepared to sanction.

3. It is very certain that the Fathers who flourished nearest

to the apostolic age, generally represent Presbyters, and not Prelates, as the successors of the Apostles. Ignatius, in particular, who was contemporary with the last of the Apostles, expresses himself again and again in the following language: "The Presbyters succeed in the place of the bench of the Apostles;" and again, "in like manner, let all reverence the Presbyters as the sanhedrim of God, and college of the Apostles;" and again, "Be subject to your Presbyters, as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ our hope." And once more, "Follow the Presbyters as the Apostles." Which shall we believe, Ignatius or Theodoret? Beyond all doubt, neither is to be trusted in relation to a matter which receives no countenance from Scripture. It is notorious, too, that Irenæus, a Christian father, who flourished toward the latter part of the second century, repeatedly speaks of Presbyters as being the successors of the Apostles. In other places he speaks of the same persons as Bishops, and under that title also represents them as the successors of the Apostles. And this he does, not once only, but several times, as if his object were to show that, according to the representation of the New Testament, Bishop and Presbyter were the same.

4. Augustine, a writer earlier than Theodoret, more learned, and of higher authority, expressly declares, that the apostolical office was above that of any Bishop. *De Baptis. contra Donatis.* ii. 1.

5. And after all, to what does Theodoret's statement amount? Why, only that in the fifth century, such claims and such language as he presents, were common. Who doubts this? But does he say that the New Testament authorizes any such statement? He does not. Nor, if he had, could we possibly believe him with the Bible in our hands. The truth is, no such fact as this argument supposes, is stated or hinted at in Scripture. It every where represents the Apostles as extraordinary officers, who, in their peculiar qualifications and authority, had no successors; but who, in respect to that office which is perpetual, are succeeded by all regularly authorized ministers of the Gospel. And to give any other view of the subject, is an imposition on popular credulity. Accordingly, this whole argument for the superiority of Bishops, drawn from the plea, that they are the peculiar and exclusive successors of the Apostles in their official pre-eminence, has been wholly abandoned by a number of the most distinguished divines of the Church of England, as invalid and untenable.

The next argument commonly urged by our Episcopal

TIMOTHY & TITUS

brethren in support of Prelacy is, that Timothy was evidently, in fact, Bishop of Ephesus, and Titus of Crete; and that this furnishes, of course, a plain example of an order of ministers superior to common pastors. This alleged fact is a corner stone of the Episcopal fabric, and unless it can be supported, the whole edifice must fall to the ground.

But for this alleged Prelacy of Timothy and Titus, there is not only no positive proof, but there is not even a shadow of it, in the whole New Testament. There is no evidence whatever, that either of them ever had a fixed pastoral charge at Ephesus or Crete. There is no evidence that either of them ever performed the work of ordination alone. One of them, while at Ephesus, was expressly directed to "do the work of an evangelist," and there is not the slightest intimation that either acted in any higher character. There is no hint that they performed any act, to which any regular minister of the Gospel is not fully competent. In short, the whole Episcopal argument drawn from the charge to Timothy and Titus, is destitute of the semblance of proof from Scripture. All the premises on which it is founded, are taken for granted without evidence. All that appears to have been done by these evangelists, is done every day by evangelists authorized and sent forth by the Presbyterian Church; and no reason can be assigned for ascribing to the missionaries to Ephesus and Crete any higher character, than that the Episcopal cause demands it. In truth, when thrown into the form of a regular syllogism, its amount is neither more nor less than the following: "None but diocesan Bishops can ordain ministers, and 'set in order' churches; but Timothy and Titus, discharged these offices; therefore, Timothy and Titus were diocesan Bishops." But is not the very thing to be proved, viz: that diocesan Bishops alone can ordain, &c., here taken for granted? Can there be a more gross begging of the whole question than this argument exemplifies?

It is hardly necessary to inform any intelligent reader of the Bible, that the postscripts, at the close of the second epistle to Timothy, and of the epistle to Titus, and which speaks of the former as "the first Bishop of Ephesus," and the latter as "the first Bishop of Crete," are of no authority. It is acknowledged by all learned men, that they make no part of the sacred text. They were, no doubt, interpolated by officious transcribers, more than four hundred years after the date of the epistles. They are not found at all in the most authentic copies of the original. They are not the same in the copies in which they are found. They were excluded

from all the earliest English translations. And for a long time after their introduction, they were printed in a different type from the received text, to indicate that they formed no part of the authentic Scriptures. But when our present translation of the Bible, in the reign of James I., was executed, as the translators were all Episcopalians, they, very improperly, suffered these postscripts to occupy the place in which we now find them, without any mark to distinguish them from the authorized text.

Such is the amount of the argument drawn from the alleged Episcopal character of Timothy and Titus. It finds no countenance whatever in the New Testament. Every fact which is stated in the inspired history concerning those pious evangelists, is not only perfectly reconcilable with the Presbyterian doctrine, but agrees far better with it than with the Episcopal hypothesis. Accordingly, the eminent Episcopal divine, Dr. Whitby, with all his zeal for Prelacy, speaks in his commentary in the following language: "The great controversy concerning this, and the epistles to Timothy is, whether Timothy and Titus were indeed made Bishops, the one of Ephesus, and the proconsular Asia; the other of Crete. Now, of this matter, I confess *I can find nothing in any writer of the first three centuries, nor any intimation that they bore that name.*" And afterwards he adds, concerning the whole argument; "I confess that these two instances, absolutely taken, afford us no convincing arguments in favour of a settled diocesan Episcopacy, because there is nothing which proves they did, or were to exercise these acts of government rather as Bishops than evangelists." It is true, this learned writer, while he acknowledges that no evidence in favour of the Episcopal character of these missionaries, is to be found within the first three centuries, expresses an opinion, that there is testimony enough to establish it in writers of the fourth and fifth centuries. This, however, is not Scriptural testimony; and what is not found in the Bible, is surely not binding on the Church. Besides; this testimony of the fourth and fifth centuries, when impartially examined, and compared with other contemporaneous testimony, will be found perfectly worthless, and, of course, unavailing to the cause in support of which it is adduced, because it is not consistent either with itself, or with the New Testament.

Another argument from Scripture, commonly urged by our Episcopal brethren, is derived from the "Angels" addressed in the Epistles to the Seven Churches of the Lesser Asia.

“In each of those Churches,” say the advocates of Prelacy, “an individual is addressed under the title of ‘Angel,’ which is a very strong argument against ministerial parity, and in favour of Episcopacy.” But this argument is just as powerless as any of the preceding, or rather, it is destitute even of their degree of plausibility. The term “Angel” signifies messenger. As an ecclesiastical title, it is derived from the Old Testament. In every Jewish Synagogue, or worshipping congregation, there was an “Angel of the Church,” whose duty it was to preside and take the lead in public worship. This title was evidently transferred from the Synagogue to the Christian Church. And if we suppose each of these “Angels” to be the ordinary pastor of a single church or congregation, it will perfectly accord with every representation concerning them found in the epistles in question. But he who looks carefully into the addresses to the several churches contained in these epistles, will find much reason to doubt whether individual ministers are at all designated by the title of “Angel.” Some have supposed that collective bodies of pastors were intended. Of this opinion a number of the most eminent Episcopal writers have been the advocates. There is absolutely not a shadow of proof that prelates or any thing like them, are referred to. Some of the most learned and zealous advocates of prelacy have acknowledged this; and the whole argument really amounts to nothing more than a mere gratuitous assumption of the point to be proved.

One more argument may be briefly adverted to, which our Episcopal brethren sometimes urge in support of their cause. They say that the Apostle James was evidently the Bishop of Jerusalem. This they attempt to prove by telling us that he spoke last, and gave a very pointed sentence, or opinion, in the Synod of Jerusalem; that Peter, after his release from prison, said to certain persons, go show these things unto James and to the brethren; and that when Paul visited Jerusalem, it is said concerning him—and the day following, Paul went in with us unto James, and all the Elders were present. On these, and other occasions, the advocates of Episcopal claims tell us, James was spoken of as a distinguished man, and treated with marked respect; and from this circumstance it is inferred that he was the Bishop of Jerusalem.

This argument, when stripped of all its decorations, stands thus: “James was the last speaker, and gave a decisive opinion in an ecclesiastical assembly; therefore, he was superior to all others present, and, of course, the Bishop of Jerusalem! Peter requested an account of his release from prison to be

sent to James; *therefore*, James was the Bishop of Jerusalem! Paul and his company went to the house of James in Jerusalem, and there found the Elders convened; *therefore*, James was the ecclesiastical governor of that city!" This is absolutely the whole of the scriptural argument drawn from the character of James! Surely, a more singular instance of the gratuitous assumption of what ought to be proved, was never exhibited!

So utterly groundless, then, do we find the claim of our Episcopal brethren, when brought to the test of Scripture. Their claim, it will be observed, is positive and explicit. It is, that the New Testament holds forth, as existing in the Apostolic Church, and intended to be perpetual, an order of men superior to ministers of the word and sacraments; that this order is alone empowered to ordain; and, of course, that without ordination by this order of men, there can be no ministry, no Church, no valid ordinances, no "covenanted mercy," to any of the children of men. In short, they would persuade us, not only that the New Testament bears them out in maintaining the actual existence of such an order in the apostolic Church; but also that it warrants them in contending for it as perpetually and indispensably necessary. The burden of proof lies on them. They have not proved and cannot prove either. That the power of ordaining was not confined to the Apostles while they lived, is manifest to all who read the Bible without prejudice. That the extraordinary powers of the Apostles were to be transmitted to successors, can no more be proved from the word of God, than that inspiration and miracles are still continued, and transmitted from man to man in the Church. That Timothy and Titus were prelates, because they were appointed to "ordain Elders," and "set in order the things that were wanting" in Ephesus and Crete, when it is utterly uncertain whether either of them performed a single ordination alone—is no more proved, or even probable, than that modern Presbyterian missionaries to frontier settlements are prelates, because they are commissioned to perform similar work. And so of all the other alleged sources of proof from Scripture. They are just as destitute of force, and just as delusive as the Popish doctrine, that the primacy of St. Peter, and the transmission of that primacy to the Bishops of Rome, may be proved from the word of God.

Some of the most learned advocates of Episcopacy, however, while they have freely confessed that their favourite system could not be established from Scripture, have confidently asserted, that it is abundantly and unquestionably supported by

the testimony of the Fathers. Into this field it is not judged proper here to enter, for the following reasons :

1. The *Bible* contains the religion of Protestants. It is the only infallible, and the sufficient rule of faith and practice. Even if Prelacy were found unequivocally represented as existing, by the Fathers, in fifty years after the last Apostle, yet if it be not found in the Bible, as it assuredly is not, such testimony would by no means establish its apostolic appointment. It would only prove that the Church was very early corrupted. We know, indeed, that no such testimony exists ; but if it did, as long as we have the Bible, we ought to reject it.

2. We know that human inventions, and various forms of corruption did in fact very early obtain currency in the Christian Church ; and that several practices, quite as likely to be opposed as the encroachments of Prelacy, were introduced and established within the first three hundred years.

3. This is a kind of testimony very difficult to be brought within a narrow compass. For, while some detached passages from the early Fathers have the appearance at first view of favouring Prelacy ; yet, when carefully examined, and compared with other passages from the same Fathers, and others of equal credibility—their testimony will be found utterly unfavourable to Prelatical claims. He who reads what the learned Jerome, in the fourth century, declares concerning Prelacy, as having no foundation in Divine appointment, and as gradually brought in by human ambition, will begin to see that the testimony of the Fathers on this subject is very different from what sanguine and ardent Prelatists are accustomed to represent it. So the testimony of Jerome was understood by bishop Jewel, by bishop Morton, by archbishop Whitgift, by bishop Bilson, by bishop Stillingfleet, and by a number of other divines as learned and able, as ever adorned the Church of England. And with respect to the testimony of Ignatius, early in the second century, who is commonly regarded and resorted to as the sheet-anchor of the Episcopal claim ; we could scarcely wish for a more distinct and graphic description of Presbyterianism than his Epistles represent as existing in all the churches which he addressed. Ignatius speaks expressly of a Bishop, Elders, and Deacons existing in every worshipping assembly which he addressed. Is this the language of Prelacy ? So far from it, nothing can be plainer than that this language can be reconciled with the Presbyterian system alone. Presbyterians are the only denomination who have, in every worshipping assembly, a Bishop, Presbyters, or Elders, and Deacons.



But it cannot be too often repeated, or too constantly kept in view, that whatever the Fathers may say on this subject, is not to decide respecting it. If Episcopacy, when brought to the test of Scripture, cannot stand, we may very willingly leave its support from other sources to those who may feel inclined to "receive for doctrines the commandments of men." This principle formed one of the great dividing lines between our fathers, the Puritans of England, and the Prelates and others by whom the Reformed Church was organized in that land. The Puritans contended that the Bible was the only infallible rule of faith and practice; that it ought to be regarded as the standard of church government and discipline as well as of doctrine; and that the Church, as it stood in the days of the Apostles, is the proper model for our imitation. But the bishops and the court clergy openly maintained that the Scriptures were not to be considered as the only standard of church government and discipline; that the Fathers and the early Councils were to be united with them as the rule; that the Saviour and his Apostles left the whole matter of church order to be accommodated to the discretion of the civil magistrate, and to the form of polity in the state; and that the form of church government adopted in the third and fourth centuries, and especially in the civil establishment under Constantine, was really to be preferred to that which existed in the days of the Apostles, which they considered as peculiarly fitted to the infant state of the Church, while depressed by persecution. And upon this plan it is notorious that the men, who took the lead in reforming and organizing the Church of England avowedly proceeded.

But we can not only prove a negative; that is, we can not only establish that there is no evidence in favour of diocesan Episcopacy to be found in Scripture; but we can go further, and show that the testimony in favour of ministerial parity found in the New Testament, is clear and strong. Nothing is plainer than that our blessed Lord severely rebuked, and explicitly condemned all contests among his ministering servants about rank and pre-eminence. It is acknowledged, by the great mass of learned and pious men, of all Protestant denominations, that it is plain, from the apostolical writings, that the ecclesiastical order of the Synagogue was transferred by inspired men to the Christian Church. It is evident, on the slightest inspection of the New Testament history, that the names and functions of the church officers appointed by the Apostles, were derived, not from the Temple, but from the Synagogue. It is explicitly granted by our Episcopal breth-

ren themselves, that in the New Testament the titles, Bishop and Presbyter were used interchangeably to designate the same office, and that the names were then common. Nothing is plainer than that the Elders of the Church of Ephesus, are spoken of as its Bishops, Acts xx., and, of course, that there were a plurality of Bishops in the same Church, which is wholly inconsistent with the doctrine of Prelacy. It is manifest, that Timothy received his designation to the sacred office "by the laying on of the hands of the *Presbytery*." We find that such men as Barnabas, and Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, none of whom, it is evident were Prelates,—were commanded to lay their hands on Paul, and one of their own number, and "separate them" to a special ministry, on which they were about to depart; "and when they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them away." But it is contrary to all order, human and divine, for an official inferior, authoritatively to bless, and by imposition of hands, to send forth an official superior. And, finally, it is evident, that the mere silence of Scripture, as to the claim of our Episcopal brethren, affords positive and conclusive proof that it cannot be well founded. The advocates of Prelacy, especially the more zealous and determined of their number, make their claim a fundamental one. According to them, as before said, there can be no covenanted Church, no valid ministry or sacraments, without ordination to the sacred office by Prelates. Now, can it be believed, that a matter so important, nay, vital, should not be laid down in Scripture in explicit terms, and with incontrovertible evidence? Surely, if the claim were well founded, whatever else was left in doubt, the prerogative of the Bishop might be expected to be set forth with reiterated and unquestionable evidence. But our Episcopal brethren themselves acknowledge, that this is not the case. Their scriptural testimony is, in no one instance, direct and explicit, but all *indirect, and remotely inferentiul*. They do not pretend to quote a single passage of Scripture which declares, in so many words, or any thing like it, in favour of their claim; but their whole reliance, in regard to scriptural testimony, is placed on facts, and deductions from those facts, which many of the most learned of their own denomination pronounce utterly unavailing for their purpose. Now, can any rational man believe, that our blessed Lord and his Apostles could possibly have regarded the doctrine of Prelacy in the same light, and laid equal stress upon it with our Episcopal brethren, and yet have left the whole subject, to say the least, in so inex-

PLICIT and dubious a posture? He, who can believe this, is prepared to believe any thing that his prejudices may dictate.

In conformity with the foregoing statements, it is well known that, at the era of the Reformation, the leaders of the Church of England *stood alone* in reforming their Church upon Prelatical principles. Luther, Melancthon, Zuingle, Bucer, and Peter Martyr, as well as Calvin and Knox, as stated in a preceding chapter—all—all—scattered throughout every part of Europe, without concert, interpreted the New Testament as plainly teaching the doctrine of ministerial parity, and regarded every kind of imparity in the Gospel ministry as the result of human contrivance, and not of Divine appointment. In short, in every part of Protestant Christendom, out of England—however the leaders of the Reformation differed, and differed sometimes with ardour on other subjects, here they, with scarcely a single exception, were all agreed, that, in the Apostles' days, Bishop and Presbyter were the same, in fact as well as in name; and that, even when it was thought proper to allow to any ministers a degree of pre-eminence, it was to be defended on the ground of human prudence alone. How shall we account for this fact, but by supposing that the plain and obvious construction of the word of God on this subject, is favourable to Presbyterian parity, and unfriendly to Prelatical claims?

But while our Episcopal brethren depart from the primitive and apostolic model in regard to Bishops, so they equally depart from that model in respect to the Deacon's office. They contend that Deacons are one of the orders of clergy, and are authorized, by Divine appointment, to preach and baptize. Let any one impartially read the first six verses of the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and then say whether there is the smallest warrant for this opinion. The Apostles say to the people, "It is not meet that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Can it be supposed, in direct opposition to this whole statement, that these very Deacons were appointed, after all, not to take care of the poor, but to labour in "the ministry of the word?" This were an inconsistency, nay, an absurdity so glaring, that the only wonder is, how any one can possibly adopt it after reading the inspired statement. The circumstance of Philip, sometime after his appointment as Deacon, being found preaching and baptizing in Samaria and

other places, does not afford the smallest presumptive evidence against this conclusion. Are not cases frequently occurring in the Presbyterian Church, in which young men, after serving a year or two as Ruling Elders or Deacons, are set apart as ministers of the Gospel? Soon after Philip's appointment to the deaconship in Jerusalem, the members of the Church in that city were chiefly "scattered abroad by persecution." He was, of course, driven from his residence. Now, the probability is, that about this time,—seeing he was "a man full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," and, therefore, eminently qualified to be useful in preaching the Gospel, he received a new ordination as an Evangelist, and in this character went forth to preach and baptize. He is expressly called an "Evangelist," by the same inspired writer who gives us the account just recited of his appointment as Deacon. Acts xxi. 8. Until it can be proved, then, that he preached and baptized as a Deacon, and not as an Evangelist, the supposition is utterly improbable, and wholly unworthy of credit.

The truth is, the primitive and apostolical office of Deacon was to take care of the poor and "serve tables." By little and little, several centuries after the apostolic age, the occupants of this office usurped the functions of a higher one; which usurpation was afterwards confirmed by ecclesiastical custom. So a number of the most respectable of the early Fathers clearly understood the matter. Thus Origen, in his commentary on the 21st chapter of Matthew, speaking of the corruption which prevailed among the Deacons in his day, represents them—not as neglecting to preach or baptize—but as "neglecting the poor, and converting to their own use the Church's charitable funds." Again, the same Father tells us, *Tract 16, in Matt.* "The Deacons preside over the money-tables of the church." And again, "The Deacons were appointed to preside over the tables of the church, as we are taught in the Acts of the Apostles." Ambrose, in the fourth century, in his commentary on Ephesians, expressly declares, that, in his day, "the Deacons ordinarily were not authorized to preach." Chrysostom, in the same century, in his commentary on Acts vi. *Homil.* 14, tells us, that in his time "there were no such Deacons in the Church as the Apostles ordained," and, in the same connection, gives it as his opinion, that it ought to have been then as it was in the Apostles' days. Jerome, in his famous letter to Evagrius, expressly calls the Deacon, "a minister of tables and widows." The "Apostolical Constitutions," commonly referred to the fourth or fifth century, contain (book II. chapter 27,) the following passage ·

“ Let the Deacon give nothing to any poor man without the Bishop’s knowledge and consent.” And in the sixth general council of Constantinople, *Can. 16*, it is declared, that “ the Scriptural Deacons were no other than overseers of the poor, and that such was the opinion of the ancient Fathers.”

But parity among her ministers is not the only feature which distinguishes the government of the Presbyterian Church. Her mode of conducting discipline in each church by a bench of Elders, acting as the representatives of the members at large ; and by courts of review and control, admitting of appeals, where parties feel aggrieved, and binding all the particular churches together as one body, walking by the same rules of truth and order, and subject to the same uniform constitutional authority, are among her peculiar advantages. In regard to both these points, Presbyterians differ from Independents and Congregationalists, as well as from Episcopalians, and, indeed, from most other denominations of Christians. To these, our attention will next be directed.

Independents and Congregationalists commit the whole government and discipline of their churches immediately to the body of the communicants. In some of their churches all the communicants, male and female, have an equal vote ; in others, the males only take a part in discipline. In the estimation of Presbyterians this mode of conducting ecclesiastical discipline is liable to most serious objections. They consider it as wholly unsupported by Scripture ; as “ setting those to judge, in many cases, who are least esteemed in the church ;” as extremely unfavourable to the calm and wise administration of justice ; nay, as, of all the forms of ecclesiastical discipline, most exposed to the sway of ignorance, prejudice, passion, and artful intrigue : that, under the guise of liberty, it often leads to the most grievous tyranny ; and is adapted to exert an injurious influence on the characters both of the pastor and the people.

In the Presbyterian Church, the government and discipline in each congregation is committed to a bench of Elders, consisting of eight or ten of the most pious, enlightened, wise, prudent, and grave members of the church. They constitute, with the pastor at their head, a judicial body, who maintain an official inspection over the members of the church, and deliberately sit in judgment on all those delicate, and yet momentous cases which are connected with receiving, admonishing, rebuking, suspending, excommunicating, and dismissing the members of the flock committed to their care. Our

reasons for conducting in this manner the government and discipline of the Church, are the following:

1. It is certain, that in the system of the Jewish Synagogue, according to the model of which the Christian Church was undoubtedly organized, the whole government and discipline was conducted by a bench of Elders, and not by the body of the people.

2. It is manifest that government and discipline were so conducted in the Apostolic Church. We read that, in every church under the direction of the Apostles, a plurality of Elders were ordained; and we find a class of Elders distinctly spoken of, who "ruled well," but did not "labour in the word and doctrine," 1 Tim. v. 17.

3. We find this class of Elders, as bearing rule in each Church, very distinctly and frequently alluded to in several of the earliest Christian Fathers, and by none more clearly than by Ignatius, the pious pastor of Antioch.\*

4. The pious witnesses of the truth, who kept alive the true doctrine and order of the Church during the dark ages, more especially the Waldenses and the Bohemian brethren, uniformly governed their churches by means of Ruling, as well as Teaching Elders, as we have before seen.

5. All the leading Reformers on the continent of Europe, with scarcely an exception, though separated from each other by different names, and strong prejudices, agreed, without concert, in teaching the Divine authority of Ruling Elders, and in proof of it, referred to the same Scriptures which we are accustomed to cite for establishing the same thing. The Reformers in England stood alone, in excluding this class of officers from their Church; and even some of their number, among the rest, Archbishop Whitgift, as we have seen, acknowledged that there were such officers in the primitive Church; but that, in the then existing circumstances, it was not necessary or expedient to retain them.

6. Such officers are indispensably necessary to the maintenance of sound and edifying discipline. Without them, discipline will either be wholly neglected, or carried on with

\* This is explicitly acknowledged by a number of learned Episcopalians. Among the rest, Archbishop Whitgift expresses himself thus:—"I know that in the primitive Church, they had in every church certain seniors, to whom the government of the congregation was committed; but that was before there was any Christian prince or magistrate that openly professed the Gospel, and before there was any Church by public authority established." *Defence against Cartwright*, p. 638. 651.

popular noise and confusion; or conducted by the pastor himself—thus often placing him in circumstances adapted to make him either a tyrant, partial to favourites, or a political temporizer. This has appeared so manifest to many Independent and Congregational churches, that they have appointed each a committee, consisting of six or eight of their most pious, enlightened, and grave members, on whom was devolved the whole business of preparing, arranging, and managing every case of discipline, so that the body of the communicants might have nothing more to do than to give their public sanction, by a vote, to what had been virtually done already by this judicious committee. Could there be a more emphatic acknowledgment of the importance and necessity of this class of officers?

Finally: Independents and Congregationalists consider each particular church as entirely independent of every other church. They suppose that the authority exercised by the communicants of each church, is supreme and final; and that no courts of review and control, formed by the representatives of a number of co-ordinate churches, and invested with judicial power over the whole, ought to be admitted. Hence, when any member of an Independent, or of a strictly Congregational Church, is considered by himself, or by his friends, as unjustly cast out, or as in any way injuriously treated, he has no remedy. The system of Independency furnishes no tribunal to which he can appeal. He must sit down, while he lives, under the oppressive sentence, unless the body, originally pronouncing it, should choose to remove it. The same essential defect in this system also appears in a variety of other cases. If a controversy arise between a pastor and his flock, acting on strict Congregational principles; or if a contest occur between two Independent or Congregational churches in the vicinity of each other, their ecclesiastical constitution furnishes no means of relief. The controversy may be subjected to the decision of a civil court, or to the judgment of selected arbitrators, just as may be done when controversies occur among secular men. But their system of Church order affords no remedy. Recourse must be had for relief to those worldly instrumentalities, which are equally painful to the pious heart, and dishonourable to the cause of Christ.

But, for all these difficulties, Presbyterianism, in her essential constitution furnishes appropriate, prompt, and for the most part, adequate relief. Her system of government and discipline contains, within its own bosom, the means of ad-

justment and of peace. Every species of controversy is committed for settlement, to a grave and enlightened judicial body, made up of the representatives of all the churches in a given district; a body, not the creature of a day, which, when its work is done, ceases to exist; but organized, permanent, and responsible; whose decisions are not merely advisory, but authoritative; and from whose sentences, if they be considered as erroneous, an appeal may be taken to a higher tribunal, embracing a larger portion of the Church, and far removed from the excitement of the original contest.

We find the principle on which these courts of review and control are founded, strikingly exemplified in the New Testament history, and our practice abundantly warranted by New Testament facts. When a question arose at Antioch, respecting the obligation of Jewish observances, the church in that place did not attempt, as a body of Independents would, of course, have done, to decide the matter for themselves, leaving the other churches to do as they pleased. But they felt that, as it was a question which concerned the whole Christian body, so a general and authoritative decision of the question, binding on the whole body, ought to be made. They, therefore, empowered special delegates to carry up the question to "the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem," to be by them conclusively settled. There, accordingly, it was debated and decided upon in full Synod; and that decision, in the form of "decrees," (*δογματα*) that is, authoritative adjudications,—sent down to all the churches to be registered and obeyed. Can any one conceive of a more perfect example of a Presbyterian Synod, convened as a judicial body, and pronouncing a decision, not as a mere advisory council, but as a judicatory of Christ, invested with judicial power to declare the path of duty in a given case; not for a single congregation merely, but for the whole visible Church?

There is no doubt, indeed, that this system of authoritative decision, not for one congregation only, but for a number of churches belonging to the same visible body, may be weakly or wickedly managed. Like every thing in the hands of man, and even like the Gospel itself, it may be unskilfully administered, and sometimes even perverted into means of oppression and mischief. So may the most perfect system in the world, civil or ecclesiastical. So may Independency and Congregationalism. For, as an eminent Independent, (the Rev. Robert Hall,) remarked, in speaking on this very subject, "While power is dangerous in the hands of a few, wisdom is seldom with the multitude." The fault, however, is not in the system, but in the administration. Here is a form



of ecclesiastical polity, complete in all its parts; fitted to obviate every difficulty; not indeed armed with civil power; not permitted to enforce its decisions by civil penalties, (in which every friend of genuine Christianity must rejoice); a polity to which folly, caprice, or rebellion may refuse to bow; but, so far as happy adjustment, and moral power can go, better adapted to promote the union, and the harmonious counsel and cooperation of all the churches which are willing to avail themselves of its advantages, assuredly, than any other that Christendom presents.

Such is a cursory view of the argument in favour of Presbyterian church government, and of the peculiar advantages attending that form of ecclesiastical order. It is better adapted than any other to repress clerical ambition; to prevent clerical encroachments and tyranny; to guard against the reign of popular effervescence and violence; to secure the calm, enlightened, and edifying exercise of discipline; to maintain the religious rights of the people against all sinister influence; and to afford relief in all cases in which a single church, or an inferior judicatory, may have passed an improper sentence, from either mistake, prejudice, or passion. It establishes, in all our ecclesiastical borders, that strict, republican, *representative* system of government, which has been "ever found to lie at the foundation of all practical freedom, both political and religious;" and which, under God, affords the best pledge of justice and stability in the administration. It affords that inspection over the lives and conversation of church members, which is ever indispensably needed, and which is at once vigilant, parental, and judicious; and when faithfully carried into execution, is better fitted than any other to bring the whole Church to act together, and to unite all hearts and hands in Christian beneficence. And, finally, it is better fitted than any other to maintain a wise, impartial, and faithful inspection over the lives and ministrations of the body of the clergy. How much better is a venerable Presbytery adapted to discharge this duty to edification, than a single Bishop, who, to say nothing of other faults, may indulge in the grossest favouriteism or tyranny, without the possibility of adequate control! This form of church government cannot, indeed, of itself, infuse life and activity into an ecclesiastical body; but where vitality, and zeal, and resources exist, there is, undoubtedly, no form of ecclesiastical organization so well adapted to bind together a body consisting of many parts; to unite counsels; to invigorate efforts; and to cause a large and extended mass of professing Christians to walk by the same rules; to mind the same things; to

speak the same language; and to feel that they are in fact, as well as in name, one body in Christ, and every "one members one of another."

Our Methodist brethren refuse to admit any representation from the laymen of their churches, into their Conferences, to which the exercise of ecclesiastical authority is committed: and by this refusal, as well as on account of some other things of a similar nature, they have occasioned a serious schism in their body. Our Episcopal brethren, yielding to what appeared to them the necessity and importance of introducing a lay representation into their ecclesiastical assemblies, have "lay deputies" in the lower house of all their "Conventions." For this feature, however, in their organization in this country, they do not pretend to offer any divine warrant. It is well known that there is no such feature in the Church from which they derive their origin; and it is without the shadow of support from any other principle in their system than that which grows out of the supposed right of the Church to institute, at her pleasure, both rites and offices which the Master never sanctioned. On the contrary, for every part of her system, the Presbyterian Church claims a scriptural warrant. She maintains, that no Church is at liberty to appoint officers, or to exercise authority which cannot be found in Scripture. She vests Ruling Elders with the function of overseeing and governing in the Church—not because they are convenient and useful, or even necessary; but because she finds ample evidence of their institution in the Apostolic Church. She commits to appropriate judicial assemblies the authoritative regulation of all her affairs, under the laws of Christ; not merely because she sees many human advantages resulting from this system; but also, and chiefly because she finds in the Scriptural principles of the essential unity of the visible Church, and in the decisive example of the Synod of Jerusalem, the fullest inspired warrant for this plan of ecclesiastical polity. Let Presbyterians rejoice, that even those denominations which reject, in theory, her scriptural representative system, are compelled, after all, to resort to it in fact, and cannot without it preserve either unity or order.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE WORSHIP OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

A fundamental principle of the Presbyterian Church, in forming her "Directory for the Worship of God," is, that

here, as in every thing else, Holy Scripture is the only safe guide. One of the earliest practical errors which gained ground in the Christian community, was the adoption of the principle that the ministers of religion might lawfully add, at their pleasure, to the rites and ceremonies of the Church. In consequence of the admission of this error, Augustine complained, as early as the beginning of the fifth century, that for one appointment of God's, ten of man's had crept into the Church, and formed a burden greater, in some respects, than was the ceremonial economy of the Jews. The fact is, for the sake of drawing both Jews and Pagans into the Church, many rites and ceremonies were adopted from both, that they might feel more at home in the Christian assemblies. This evil increased, until, before the Reformation, it had reached that revolting amount of superstition which now distinguishes the Church of Rome.

It was in reference to this point, that our Fathers, both in Scotland and England, had many conflicts, when their respective Churches, in those countries were organized and settled in the sixteenth century. On the one hand, the Prelates, and other court clergy were in favour of a splendid ritual, and were disposed to retain a large number of the ceremonies which had been so long in use in the Church of Rome. On the other, the Puritans in England, and the corresponding body in Scotland, contended that the Scriptures being the only infallible rule of faith and practice, no rite or ceremony ought to have a place in the public worship of God, which is not warranted in Scripture, either by direct precept or example, or by good and sufficient inference. In Scotland the advocates of primitive simplicity prevailed, and established in their national Church the same mode of worship which we believe existed in the apostolic age, and which now obtains in the Presbyterian Church in that country, and in the United States. In England, our Fathers, the Puritans, were not so happy as to succeed in establishing the same scriptural system. Under the influence of the monarch and the court clergy, they were outvoted. Still it is undoubtedly certain that a large portion of the most pious and devoted of the clergy of the Church of England, during the reign of queen Elizabeth, and some of her most worthy dignitaries, when the character of that Church, under its reformed regimen, was finally fixed, did importunately plead for laying aside in public worship, every thing to which Presbyterians, at the present day, object, as having no warrant in Scripture. And although they failed of securing their object in the national Church, yet the descendants of

the Puritans, both in that country and our own, have been permitted to realize their wishes as to most of the particulars on which they then insisted. On some of the principal of these particulars it is proposed now to dwell, and to assign, with regard to each, our reasons for adhering to them in our system of worship.

But before we proceed to this detail, it may be useful to offer a general remark or two, which will serve to show why we object to all human inventions and additions in the worship of God.

1. Christ is the only King and Head of the Church. His word is the law of his house. Of course the Church ought not to consider herself as possessing any power which that word does not warrant. If, therefore, she cannot find in Scripture, authority, either direct, or fairly implied, to the amount contended for, she does not possess that authority.

2. We think that such inventions and additions are expressly forbidden in Scripture. The significant question asked by God of his ancient people, when speaking on this very subject, Isaiah i. 12, "Who hath required this at your hands?" seems to be decisive. "Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," is spoken of, Matt. xv. 9. by our blessed Saviour as highly offensive to him. It would seem tacitly to imply, that we are wiser than God, and understand the interests of the Church better than her Head and Lord.

3. If we once open this door, how or when shall it be closed? The Church, we are told, has power to decree rites and ceremonies; that is, a majority of the ruling powers of the Church have power at any time, as caprice, or a love of show, or superstition, or any other motive may prompt, to add rite after rite, and ceremony after ceremony, at pleasure, to the worship of God. Now if this power be really inherent in the Church, what limit shall we put to its exercise? If she have power to add ten or twenty new ordinances to her ritual, has she not equal power to add a hundred, or five hundred, if a majority of her ministers should feel inclined to do so? And was it not precisely in this way, and upon this very principle, that the enormous mass of superstition which characterizes the Papacy, gradually accumulated? Surely, a power which carries with it no limit but human caprice, and which has been so manifestly and shockingly abused in past ages, ought by no means to be claimed or exercised in the Church of God. But to be more particular.

#### SECTION I.—*Presbyterians reject prescribed Liturgies.*

We do not, indeed, consider the use of forms of prayer as

in all cases unlawful. We do not doubt that they have been often useful, and that to many this mode of conducting public devotions is highly edifying. If any minister of our Church should think proper to compose a form of prayer, or a variety of forms, for his own use, or to borrow those which have been prepared by others, he ought to be considered as at perfect liberty so to do. But we object to being *confined* to forms of prayer. We contend that it is of great importance to the edification of the Church, that every minister be left at liberty to conduct the devotions of the sanctuary as his circumstances, and the dispensations of Providence, may demand. Our reasons for adopting this judgment, and a corresponding practice, are the following :

1. We think it perfectly evident that no forms of prayer—no prescribed Liturgies were used in the apostolic age of the Church. We read of none ; nor do we find the smallest hint that any thing of the kind was then employed in either public or social worship. Will the most zealous advocates of Liturgies point out even a probable example of the use of one in the New Testament? Can any one believe that Paul used a prescribed form of prayer when he took leave of the Elders of Ephesus, after giving them a solemn charge? Acts xx. 37. Can it be imagined that he used a Liturgy when, in bidding farewell to a circle of friends in the city of Tyre, who had treated him with kindness, he kneeled down on the sea shore and prayed with them? Or can we suppose that he and Silas read from a book, when, at midnight, in the prison at Philippi, they prayed and sang praises unto God? Again; when Paul exhorted Timothy to see that “kings and all in authority” were remembered in public prayer, is it not evident that the Church had no Liturgy? If she had been furnished with one, and confined to it, such direction would have been unnecessary, or rather absurd; for they would have had their prayers all prepared to their hand. In short, when we find prayer spoken of in the New Testament on a great variety of occasions, and in a great variety of language, is it not passing strange, if Liturgies were then used, that no turn of expression, giving the remotest hint of it, should be employed? Surely, if forms of prayer had been regarded in the days of the Apostles, as not only obligatory, but so highly important as some Protestants now profess to regard them; who can believe that the inspired writers would have passed over them in entire silence? The very least that we can infer from this circumstance is, that the use of them is not binding on the Church. The primitive Christians had indeed, pre-

composed Psalms and Hymns, which they united in singing, and probably, a uniform method, derived from the example and letters of the first ministers, of administering the sacraments, and blessing the people; but so have Presbyterians, and various other ecclesiastical bodies, who yet are not considered as using a Liturgy. These, of course, have no application to the present inquiry.

2. The Lord's Prayer, given at the request of the disciples, forms no objection to this conclusion. It was, evidently, not intended to be used as an exact, and far less as an exclusive form. It is not given in the same words by any two of the Evangelists. As it was given before the New Testament Church was set up, so it is strictly adapted to the old rather than the new economy. It contains no clause, asking for blessings in the name of Christ, which the Saviour himself afterwards solemnly enjoined as indispensable. After the resurrection and ascension of Christ, when the New Testament Church was set up, we read nothing more in the inspired history concerning the use of this form. And it is not until several centuries after the apostolic age, that we find this prayer stately introduced into public worship. Accordingly, it is remarkable, that Augustine, in the fourth century, expresses the decisive opinion, "that Christ intended this prayer as a model rather than a form; that he did not mean to teach his disciples what words they should use in prayer, but what things they should pray for."

3. No such thing as a prescribed form of prayer appears to have been known in the Christian Church, for several hundred years after Christ. The contrary is, indeed, often asserted by the friends of Liturgies, but wholly without evidence; nay, against the most conclusive evidence. The most respectable early writers who undertake to give an account of the worship of the early Christians, make use of language which is utterly irreconcilable with the practice of reading prayers. They tell us, that the minister, or person who led in prayer, "poured out prayers according to his ability;" that he prayed, "closing his bodily eyes, and lifting up the eyes of his mind, and stretching forth his hands toward heaven." Surely, in this posture, it was impossible to "read prayers." Socrates and Sozomen, respectable ecclesiastical historians, who wrote in the fifth century, both concur in declaring, that, in their day, "no two persons were found to use the same words in public worship." And Augustine, who was nearly their contemporary, declares, in relation to this subject,—"There is freedom to use different words, provided the same things

are mentioned in prayer." Basil, in the fourth century, giving directions about prayer, remarks, that there were two parts of this service; first, thanksgiving and praise, with self-abasement; and, secondly, petition. He advises to begin with the former, and, in doing it, to make choice of the language of Scripture. After giving an example of his meaning, he adds, "When thou hast praised him out of the Scriptures, as thou art able, (a strange clause, truly, if all had been prepared before hand, and read out of a book,) then proceed to petition."—*Clarkson on Liturgies*, p. 120. Would not all this be manifestly absurd, if public prayer had been by a prescribed Liturgy in Basil's days? The truth is, it is evident that extemporary or free prayer was generally used in the primitive Church, and continued to be used until orthodoxy and piety declined, and the grace as well as the gift of prayer greatly diminished. Then ministers began to seek the best aid that they could procure. The Church, however, at large, even then, provided no Liturgies; but each pastor, who felt unable to pray extemporaneously, procured prayers composed by other individuals, which he used in public. Accordingly, Augustine tells us, that some ministers in his day, (a period in which we have complete evidence that many of the sacred order were so uneducated as to be unable to write their own names) "lighted upon prayers which were composed not only by ignorant babblers, but also by heretics; and through the simplicity of their ignorance, having no proper discernment, they made use of them, supposing them to be good." Surely, this could never have happened, if the Church had been accustomed at that time to the use of prescribed Liturgies. In short, the very first document in the form of a prayer-book, of which we read, is a *Libellus Officialis*, mentioned in the proceedings of the council of Toledo, in the year 633 after Christ; and that was, evidently, rather a "Directory for the worship of God," than a complete Liturgy. There is, indeed, evidence that, before this time, ministers, deficient in talents and piety, either wrote prayers for themselves, or procured them from others, as before stated; but the first hint to be found of an ecclesiastical body interposing to regulate the business of public prayer, appears about the middle of the fifth century.

With respect to the boasted Liturgies of St. Mark, St. James, &c., of which we often hear, all enlightened Protestants, it is believed, agree that they are manifestly forgeries; and as to the Liturgies attributed to Chrysostom, Basil, and several others of the early Christian Fathers, bishop White,

an English prelate, who lived in the seventeenth century, delivers the following opinion:—"The Liturgies," says he, "fathered upon St. Basil and St. Chrysostom, have a known mother, (to wit, the Church of Rome;) but there is (besides many other just exceptions) so great a dissimilitude between the supposed fathers of the children, that they rather argue the dishonest dealings of their mother, than serve as lawful witnesses of that which the adversary intended to prove by them."—*Tracts against Fisher, the Jesuit*, p. 377.

4. If the Apostles, or any apostolic men, had prepared and given to the Church any thing like a Liturgy, we should, doubtless, have had it preserved, and transmitted with care to posterity. The Church, in this case, would have had one uniform book of prayers, which would have been in use, and held precious, throughout the whole Christian community. But nothing of this kind has ever been pretended to exist. For let it be remembered, that the prayers, in the Romish and English Liturgies, ascribed to some of the early Fathers of the Church, and even to apostolical men, supposing them to be genuine, which, by good judges, as we have just seen, is more than doubted,—were not Liturgies, but short prayers, or "collects," just such as thousands of Presbyterian ministers, who never thought of using a Liturgy, have composed, in their moments of devout retirement, and left among their private papers. Who doubts that devotional composition is made by multitudes who reject the use of prescribed forms of prayer in public worship? Accordingly, when Liturgies were gradually introduced into general use, in the sixth and subsequent centuries, on account of the decline of piety and learning among the clergy, there was no uniformity even among the churches of the same state or kingdom. Every Bishop, in his own diocese, appointed what prayers he pleased, and even indulged his taste for variety. Accordingly, it is a notorious fact, which confirms this statement, that when the Reformation commenced in England, the established Romish Church in that country had no single uniform Liturgy for the whole kingdom; but there seems to have been a different one for the diocese of every Bishop. And when, in the second year of king Edward's reign, the principal ecclesiastical dignitaries of the kingdom were directed to digest and report one uniform plan for the public service of the whole Church, they collated and compared the five Romish missals of the several dioceses of Sarum, York, Hereford, Bangor, and Lincoln, and out of these formed a Liturgy for the Protestant Episcopal Church of England. So that the Prayer-books which had been used



in five Popish bishoprics, constituted the basis of the first Liturgy of king Edward, and consequently of the book of Common Prayer, as now used in Great Britain and the United States. This Liturgy, at first, contained a number of things so grossly Popish, that, when it was read by Calvin and others, on the continent of Europe, to whom copies were sent for obtaining their opinion, their severe criticisms led to another review, and a considerable purgation. Still a number of articles were left, acknowledged on all hands to have been adopted from the missals of the Church of Rome, which, as stated in various parts of this chapter, exceedingly grieved the more pious and evangelical part of the Church; but which the queen, and the ecclesiastics more immediately around her person, refused to exclude. Their antiquity was plead as an argument in their favour.

5. Confining ministers to forms of prayer in public worship, tends to restrain and discourage the spirit of prayer. We cannot help thinking, that the constant repetition of the same words, from year to year, tends to produce, at least with very many persons, dullness, and a loss of interest. We are sure it is so with not a few. Bishop Wilkins, though a friend to the use of forms of prayer, when needed, argues strongly against binding ourselves entirely to such "leading strings," as he emphatically calls them, and expresses the opinion, that giving vent to the desires and affections of the heart in extemporaneous prayer, is highly favourable to growth in grace.—*Gift of Prayer*, chap. II. p. 10, 11. Accordingly, it is remarkable that, when those who were once distinguished for praying extemporaneously with fluency and unction, lay aside this habit, and confine themselves to stinted forms for many years, they are apt to manifest a striking decline in the spirit of devotion, and are no longer able to engage in free prayer without much hesitation and embarrassment.

6. No form of prayer, however ample or diversified, can be accommodated to all the circumstances, exigencies, and wants of either individual Christians, or of the Church in general. Now, when cases occur which are not provided for in the prescribed forms, what is to be done? Either extemporaneous prayer must be ventured upon, or the cases in question cannot be carried before the throne of grace, in words, at all. Is this alternative desirable? Cases of this kind have occurred, approaching the ludicrous, in which ministers have declined engaging in social prayer in situations of the deepest interest, because they could find nothing in their Prayer-book adapted to the occasion! Nay, so common and so interesting a ser-

vice as the monthly concert in prayer, on the first Monday evening of every month, can never be attended upon by an Episcopal pastor, in an appropriate and seasonable manner, without indulging in extemporary prayer. This has been, more than once, confessed and lamented by ministers of that denomination.

7. It is no small argument against confining ministers and people to a prescribed form, that whenever religion is in a lively state in the heart of a minister accustomed to use a Liturgy, and especially when it is powerfully revived among the members of his church, his form of prayer will seldom fail to be deemed an undesirable restraint; and this feeling will commonly either vent itself in fervent extemporary prayer, or result in languor and decline under restriction to his form. The more rigorous and exclusive the confinement to a prescribed form, the more cold and lifeless will the prevailing formality generally be found. The excellent Mr. Baxter expresses the same idea with more unqualified strength:—"A constant form," says he, "is a certain way to bring the soul to a cold, insensible, formal worship."—*Five Disputations*, §c. p. 385.

8. Once more: prescribed Liturgies, which remain in use from age to age, have a tendency to fix, to perpetuate, and even to coerce the adoption and propagation of error. It is not forgotten, that the advocates of Liturgies urge, as an argument in their favour, a consideration directly the converse of this, viz., that they tend, by their scriptural and pious character, to extend and perpetuate the reign of truth in a Church. Where their character is really thus thoroughly scriptural, they may, no doubt, exert, in this respect, a favourable influence; but where they teach or insinuate error, the mischief can scarcely fail to be deep, deplorable, and transmitted from generation to generation. Of this, painful examples might be given, if it were consistent with the brevity of this sketch, to enter on such a field.

On the whole, after carefully comparing the advantages and disadvantages of free and prescribed prayer, the argument, whether drawn from Scripture, from ecclesiastical history, or from daily experience, is clearly in favour of free or extemporary prayer. Its generally edifying character may, indeed, sometimes be marred by weak and ignorant men; but we have no hesitation in saying that the balance is manifestly in its favour. For, after all, the difficulty which sometimes occurs in rendering extemporary prayer impressive and edifying, is by no means obviated, in all cases, by the use of a Prayer-

book. Who has not witnessed the recitation of devotional forms conducted in such a manner as to disgust every hearer of taste, and to banish all seriousness from the mind? As long as ministers of the Gospel are pious men; “workmen that need not be ashamed;” qualified “rightly to divide the word of truth,” and “mighty in the Scriptures,” they will find no difficulty in conducting free prayer to the honour of religion, and to the edification of the Church. When they cease to possess this character—they must have forms, they ought to have forms of devotion provided for them. It was precisely in such a state of things that the use of Liturgies gradually crept into the Christian Church in the fifth and sixth centuries. But it is manifestly the fault of ministers, if extemporary prayer be not made, what it may, and ought ever to be,—among the most tender, touching, and deeply impressive of all the services of the public sanctuary.

#### SECTION II.—*Presbyterians do not observe Holy-days*

We believe, and teach, in our public formularies, that “there is no day, under the Gospel dispensation, commanded to be kept holy, except the Lord’s day, which is the Christian Sabbath.”

We believe, indeed, and declare, in the same formula, that it is both scriptural and rational, to observe special days of Fasting and Thanksgiving, as the extraordinary dispensations of Divine Providence may direct. But we are persuaded, that even the keeping of these days, when they are made stated observances, recurring, of course, at particular times, whatever the aspect of Providence may be, is calculated to promote formality and superstition, rather than the edification of the body of Christ.

Our reasons for entertaining this opinion, are the following:

1. We are persuaded that there is no scriptural warrant for such observances, either from precept or example. There is no hint in the New Testament that such days were either observed or recommended by the Apostles, or by any of the churches in their time. The mention of Easter, in Acts xii. 4, has no application to this subject. Herod was a Jew, not a Christian; and, of course, had no desire to honour a Christian solemnity. The real meaning of the passage is,—as the slightest inspection of the original will satisfy every intelligent reader; “intending after the passover to bring him forth to the people.”

2. We believe that the Scriptures not only do not warrant

the observance of such days, but that they positively discountenance it. Let any one impartially weigh Colossians ii. 16 and also, Galatians iv. 9, 10, 11; and then say whether these passages do not evidently indicate, that the inspired Apostle disapproved of the observance of such days.

3. The observance of Fasts and Festivals, by divine direction, under the Old Testament economy, makes nothing in favour of such observances under the New Testament dispensation. That economy was no longer binding, or even lawful, after the New Testament Church was set up. It were just as reasonable to plead for the present use of the Passover, the incense, and the burnt offerings of the Old economy, which were confessedly done away by the coming of Christ, as to argue in favour of human inventions, bearing some resemblance to them, as binding in the Christian Church.

4. The *history* of the introduction of stated Fasts and Festivals by the early Christians, speaks much against both their obligation, and their edifying character. Their origin was ignoble. They were chiefly brought in, by carnal policy, for the purpose of drawing into the Church Jews and Gentiles, who had both been accustomed to festivals and holy-days. And from the moment of their introduction, they became the signal for strife, or the monuments of worldly expedient, and degrading superstition.

As there were no holy-days, excepting the Lord's day, observed in the Christian Church while the Apostles lived; and no hint given, that they thought any other expedient or desirable; so we find no hint of any such observance having been adopted until towards the close of the second century. Then, the celebration of Easter gave rise to a controversy; the Asiatic Christians pleading for its observance at the same time which was prescribed for the Jewish Passover, and contending that they were supported in this by apostolic tradition; while the Western Church contended for its stated celebration on a certain Sunday, and urged, with equal confidence, apostolic tradition in favour of their scheme. Concerning this fierce and unhallowed controversy, Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, who wrote soon after the time of Eusebius, and begins his history where the latter closes his narrative; speaking on the controversy concerning Easter, expresses himself thus: "Neither the ancients, nor the fathers of later times, I mean such as favoured the Jewish custom, had sufficient cause to contend so eagerly about the feast of Easter; for they considered not within themselves, that when the Jewish religion was changed into Christianity, the literal observance of the

Mosaic law, and the types of things to come, wholly ceased. And this carries with it its own evidence. For no one of Christ's laws permits Christians to observe the rites of the Jews. Nay, the Apostle hath in plain words forbidden it, where he abrogates circumcision, and exhorts us not to contend about feasts and holy-days. For, writing to the Galatians, he admonishes them not to observe days, and months, and times, and years. And unto the Colossians, he is as plain as may be, declaring, that the observance of such things was but a shadow. Neither the Apostles nor the Evangelists have enjoined on Christians the observance of Easter; but have left the remembrance of it to the free choice and discretion of those who have been benefited by such days. Men keep holy-days, because thereon they enjoy rest from toil and labour. Therefore, it comes to pass, that in every place they do celebrate, of their own accord, the remembrance of the Lord's passion. But neither our Saviour nor his Apostles have any where commanded us to observe it." Socrates, Lib. 5, cap. 21.

Here, then, is an eminent Christian writer who flourished early in the fifth century, who had made the history of the Church his particular study; who explicitly declares, that neither Christ nor his Apostles gave any command, or even countenance to the observance of festival days; that it was brought into the Church by custom; and that in different parts of the Church there was diversity of practice in regard to this matter. With respect to Easter, in particular, this diversity was striking. We no sooner hear of its observance at all, than we begin to hear of contest, and interruption of Christian fellowship on account of it; some quoting the authority of some of the Apostles for keeping this festival on one day; and others, with equal confidence, quoting the authority of other Apostles for the selection of a different day: thereby clearly demonstrating, that there was error somewhere, and rendering it highly probable that all parties were wrong, and that no such observances at all, were binding on Christians.

The festival of Easter, no doubt, was introduced in the second century, in place of the Passover, and in accommodation to the same Jewish prejudice which had said, even during the apostolic age, "Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Hence, it was generally called *pascha*, and *pasch*, in conformity with the name of the Jewish festival, whose place it took. It seems to have received the title of Easter in Great Britain, from the

circumstance, that, when Christianity was introduced into that country, a great Pagan festival, celebrated at the same season of the year, in honour of the Pagan goddess Eostre, yielded its place to the Christian festival, which received, substantially, the name of the Pagan deity. The title of Easter, it is believed, is seldom used but by Britons and their descendants.

Few festivals are celebrated in the Romish Church, and in some Protestant Churches, with more interest and zeal than Christmas. Yet when Origen, about the middle of the third century, professes to give a list of the fasts and festivals which were observed in his day, he makes no mention of Christmas. From this fact, Sir Peter King, in his "Inquiry into the Constitution and worship, &c. of the Primitive Church," &c., infers, that no such festival was then observed; and adds, "It seems improbable that they should celebrate Christ's nativity, when they disagreed about the month and the day when Christ was born." Every month in the year has been assigned by different portions and writers of the Christian Church as the time of our Lord's nativity; and the final location of this, as well as other holy-days, in the ecclesiastical calendar, was adjusted rather upon astronomical and mathematical principles, than on any solid calculations of history.

5. But the motives and manner of introducing Christmas into the Christian Church, speak more strongly against it. Its real origin was this. Like many other observances, it was borrowed from the heathen. The well known Pagan festival among the Romans, distinguished by the title of Saturnalia, because instituted in honour of their fabled deity, Saturn, was celebrated by them with the greatest splendour, extravagance, and debauchery. It was, during its continuance, a season of freedom and equality; the master ceased to rule, and the slave to obey; the former waiting at his own table upon the latter, and submitting to the suspension of all order, and the reign of universal frolic. The ceremonial of this festival was opened on the 19th of December, by lighting a profusion of waxen candles in the temple of Saturn; and by suspending in their temple, and in all their habitations, boughs of laurel, and various kinds of evergreen. The Christian Church, seeing the unhappy moral influence of this festival; perceiving her own members too often partaking in its licentiousness; and desirous, if possible, of effecting its abolition, appointed a festival, in honour of her Master's birth, nearly about the same time, for the purpose of superseding it. In doing this, the policy was to retain as many of these habits which had prevailed in

the Saturnalia as could in any way be reconciled with the purity of Christianity. They made their new festival, therefore, a season of relaxation and mirth, of cheerful visiting, and mutual presents. They lighted candles in their places of worship, and adorned them with a profusion of evergreen boughs. Thus did the Romish Church borrow from the Pagans some of her most prominent observances; and thus have some observances of this origin been adopted and continued by Protestants.

6. It being evident, then, that stated fasts and festivals have no divine warrant, and that their use under the New Testament economy is a mere human invention; we may ask those who are friendly to their observance, what limits ought to be set to their adoption and use in the Christian Church? If it be lawful to introduce five such days for stated observance, why not ten, twenty, or five score? A small number were, at an early period, brought into use by serious men, who thought they were thereby rendering God service, and extending the reign of religion. But one after another was added, as superstition increased, until the calendar became burdened with between two and three hundred fasts and festivals, or saint's days, in each year; thus materially interfering with the claims of secular industry, and loading the worship of God with a mass of superstitious observances, equally unfriendly to the temporal and the eternal interests of men. Let the principle once be admitted, that stated days of religious observance, which God has no where commanded, may properly be introduced into the Christian ritual, and, by parity of reasoning, every one who, from good motives, can effect the introduction of a new religious festival, is at liberty to do so. Upon this principle was built up the enormous mass of superstition which now distinguishes and corrupts the Romish Church.

7. The observance of uncommanded holy-days is ever found to interfere with the due sanctification of the Lord's day. Adding to the appointments of God is superstition. And superstition has ever been found unfriendly to genuine obedience. Its votaries, like the Jews of old, have ever been found more tenacious of their own inventions, of traditionary dreams, than of God's revealed code of duty. Accordingly, there is, perhaps, no fact more universal and unquestionable, than that the zealous observers of stated fasts and festivals are characteristically lax in the observance of that one day which God has eminently set apart for himself, and on the sanctification of which all the vital interests of practical religion are suspended. So it was among the Israelites of old. As early as the fifth

century, Augustine complains that the superstitious observance of uncommanded rites, betrayed many in his time, into a spirit of irreverence and neglect towards those which were divinely appointed. So it is, notoriously, among the Romanists at the present day. And so, without any breach of charity, it may be said to be in every religious community in which zeal for the observance of uncommanded holy-days prevails. It is true, many in those communities tell us, that the observance of holy-days, devoted to particular persons and events in the history of the Church, has a manifest and strong tendency to increase the spirit of piety. But if this be so, we might expect to find much more scriptural piety in the Romish Church than in any other, since holy-days are ten times more numerous in that denomination than in the system of any Protestant Church. But is it so? Let those who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, decide.

If the foregoing allegations be in any measure well founded; if there be no warrant in God's word for any observances of this kind; if, on the contrary, the Scriptures positively discourage them; if the history of their introduction and increase mark an unhallowed origin; if, when we once open the door to such human inventions, no one can say how or when it may be closed; and if the observance of days, not appointed of God, has ever been found to exert an unfriendly influence on the sanctification of that holy-day which God has appointed, surely we need no further proof that it is wise to discard them from our ecclesiastical system.

### SECTION III.—*We reject God-fathers and God-mothers in Baptism.*

It is well known that the Presbyterian Church differs from Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, in regard to sponsors in baptism. We differ in two respects. First, in not requiring or encouraging the appearance of any other sponsors, in the baptism of children, than the parents, when they are living, and qualified to present themselves in this character; and, secondly, in not requiring, or even admitting any sponsors at all in cases of adult baptism. And we adopt this principle and practice for the following reasons:

1. There is not a shadow of evidence in the New Testament, that any other sponsors than parents were ever admitted to answer for their children in baptism in the apostolic Church; nor is any text of Scripture attempted to be adduced in its support, by the warmest friends of this practice. When the jailor at Philippi was baptized, "he and all his straight-



way;" and when Lydia and "her household" were baptized, we read of no sponsors but the heads of these families, whose faith entitled them to present their households to receive the appropriate seal of faith.

2. We find no trace of any other sponsors than parents during the first 500 years after Christ. When some persons, in the time of Augustine, who flourished toward the close of the fourth, and the beginning of the fifth century, contended that it was not lawful, in any case, for any, excepting their natural parents to offer children in baptism, that learned and pious Father opposed them, and gave it as his opinion, that, in extraordinary cases, as, for example, when the parents were dead; when they were not professing Christians; when they cruelly forsook and exposed their offspring; and when Christian masters had young slaves committed to their charge; in these cases, (and the pious Father mentions no others,) he maintains that any professing Christians, who should be willing to undertake the charge, might, with propriety, take such children, offer them in baptism, and become responsible for their Christian education. In this principle and practice, all intelligent and consistent Presbyterians are agreed. The learned Bingham, an Episcopal divine of great industry and erudition, seems to have taken unwearied pains, in his "Ecclesiastical Antiquities," to collect every scrap of testimony within his reach, in favour of the early origin of sponsors. But he utterly fails of producing even plausible evidence to this amount; and at length candidly acknowledges, that in the early ages, parents were, in all ordinary cases, the presenters and sureties of their own children; and that children were presented by others only in extraordinary cases, such as those already stated, when their parents could not present them. It was not until the council of Mentz, in the ninth century, that the Church of Rome forbade the appearance of parents as sponsors for their own children, and required this service to be surrendered to other hands.

3. The subsequent history of this practice marks the progress of superstition. Mention is made by Cyril, in the fifth century, and by Fulgentius, in the sixth, of sponsors in some peculiar cases of adult baptism. When adults, about to be baptized, were dumb, or under the power of delirium, through disease, and, of course, unable to speak for themselves, or to make the usual profession; in such cases, it was customary for some friend, or friends, to answer for them, and to bear testimony to their good character, and to the fact of their having sufficient knowledge, and having before expressed a desire

to be baptized. For this, there was, undoubtedly, at least some colour of reason; and the same thing might, perhaps, be done without impropriety, in some conceivable circumstances now. From this, however, there was a transition soon made to the use of sponsors in all cases of adult baptism. This latter, however, was upon a different principle from the former. When adults had the use of speech and reason, and were able to answer for themselves, the sponsors provided for such never answered or professed for them. This was invariably done by the adult himself. Their only business, as it would appear, was to be a kind of curators or guardians of the spiritual life of the persons baptized. This office was generally fulfilled, in each church, by the Deacons, when adult males were baptized; and by the Deaconesses, when females came forward to receive this ordinance. Hence, in the Roman Catholic, and some Protestant sects, the practice was ultimately established of providing god-fathers and god-mothers in all cases of adult baptism.

4. Among the pious Waldenses and Albigenses, in the middle ages, no other sponsors than parents were in common use. But where the parents were dead, or absent, or unable, on any account, to act, other professors of religion who were benevolent enough to undertake the charge, were allowed to appear in their place, and answer and act in their stead.

5. If, then, the use of god-fathers and god-mothers, as distinct from parents, in baptism, has no countenance in the word of God; if it was unknown in the Church during the first 500 years after Christ; and if it was superstitious in its origin, and connected with other superstitions in its progress; we have, undoubtedly, sufficient reason for rejecting the practice. When the system is to set aside parents in this solemn transaction; to require others to take their places, and make engagements which they alone, for the most part, are qualified to make; and when, in pursuance of this system, thousands are daily making engagements which they never think of fulfilling, and, in most cases, notoriously have it not in their power to fulfil, and, indeed, appear to feel no special obligation to fulfil, we are constrained to regard it as a human invention, altogether unwarranted, and adapted, on a variety of accounts, to generate evil rather than good.

According to one of the canons of the Church of England, "Parents are not to be urged to be present when their children are baptized, nor to be permitted to stand as sponsors for their own children." That is, the parents, to whom God and nature have committed the education of children; in whose

families they are to grow up; under whose eye and immediate care their principles, manners, and character are to be formed, shall not be allowed to take even a part in their dedication to God, nor encouraged even to be present at the solemn transaction! In the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, "parents shall be admitted as sponsors, if it be desired." But in both countries, it is required that there be sponsors for all adults, as well as for infants.

#### SECTION IV.—*The Sign of the Cross in Baptism.*

This is one of the additions to the baptismal rite which Protestant Episcopalians have adopted from the Romanists, and which Presbyterians have always rejected. A large body of the most pious and learned divines of the established Church of England, in an early part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when the Reformation of that Church was about to be conclusively settled, earnestly petitioned that the sign of the cross in baptism, as well as stated fasts and festivals, god-fathers and god-mothers in baptism, kneeling at the Lord's Supper, bowing at the name of Jesus, &c., might be abolished. When their petitions to this amount were read, and their arguments heard, in the lower house of Convocation, the vote was taken, and passed by a majority of those present; forty-three voting in favour of granting the prayer of the petitioners,—in other words, in favour of abolishing the rites complained of, and thirty-five against it. But when the proxies were called for and counted, the scale was turned; those in favour of the abolition being fifty-eight, and those against it fifty-nine. So that, by a solemn vote of the Convocation, the several rites regarded and complained of, as Popish superstitions, and the sign of the cross among the rest, were retained in the Church only by a majority of one.

In the objections at that time urged against the sign of the cross in baptism, by those learned and venerable Episcopal divines, Presbyterians have ever concurred. These objections are the following:

1. Not the smallest countenance is to be found in Scripture for any such addition to the baptismal rite. Nothing of this kind is pretended to be produced by its most zealous advocates. All acknowledge it to be a human invention.

2. In the records of the earliest writers by whom it is mentioned, it appears associated with so much superstition as cannot fail to discredit it in the view of all intelligent Christians. From the very same sources from which we gather the information that, in the second and third centuries, the sign of

the cross was added to the rite of baptism, we also learn that there were added to the same ordinance a number of other human inventions—such as “exorcising” the candidate for baptism, to drive away evil spirits; putting into his mouth a mixture of milk and honey, as a symbol of his childhood in a new life; anointing with spittle and with oil, and the laying on of hands for the purpose of imparting the Holy Spirit. These are all deemed, by Protestants, unwarranted additions to Christ’s simple appointment; and in what respect does the sign of the cross stand upon better ground?

3. Tertullian, one of the earliest writers in whom we find any mention made of the sign of the cross as a religious rite, represents it as used in his day with a degree of superstition scarcely credible in such an early age, and which ought to operate as a permanent warning to all succeeding ages. “Every step,” says he, “that we take, when we come in, and when we go out; when we put on our clothes or our shoes; when we bathe, eat, light up candles, go to bed, or sit down,—we mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross. If for these, and other acts of discipline of the same kind, you demand a text of Scripture, you will find none; but tradition will be alleged as the prescriber of them.”—*De Corona*. cap. iii. The sign of the cross was thought, by those deluded votaries of superstition, a sure preservative against all sorts of malignity, poisons, or fascination, and effectual to drive away evil spirits. The principal fathers of the fourth century affirm that it was the constant and undoubted means of working many miracles. “This sign,” says Chrysostom, “both in the days of our forefathers and our own, has thrown open gates that were shut; destroyed the effect of poisonous drugs; disarmed the force of hemlock; and cured the bites of venomous beasts.”—Tom. vii. p. 552. A.

4. When we consider the miserable superstition with which the use of the sign of the cross is constantly marked by Roman Catholics; that they regard it as essential to the validity of the ordinance of baptism; that they adore it; that they apply it in every step and act of religious life; that many of them consider no oath as binding which is taken on the Bible without the figure of the cross upon it; and that they rely upon it as a kind of talisman, connected with every blessing;—surely, when we see this degrading system of superstition connected with this sign,—acknowledged on all hands to be a mere human invention,—it is no wonder that enlightened and conscientious Christians should feel constrained to lay it aside.

SECTION V.—*We reject the Rite of Confirmation.*

In the Apostolic Church, there was no such rite as that which, under this name, has been long established in the Romish communion as a sacrament, and adopted in some Protestant Churches as a solemnity, in their view, if not commanded, yet as both expressive and edifying. In giving the views of Presbyterians on this subject, it is not at all intended to condemn those who think proper to employ the rite in question; but only to state with brevity some of the reasons why the venerated fathers of our Church thought proper to exclude it from our truly primitive and apostolical ritual; and why their sons, to the present hour, have persisted in the same course.

1. We find no warrant for this rite in the word of God. Indeed, its most intelligent and zealous advocates do not pretend to adduce any testimony from Scripture in its behalf.

2. Quite as little support for it is to be found in the purest and best ages of uninspired antiquity. Toward the close of the second century, indeed, and the beginning of the third, among several human additions to the rite of baptism which had crept into the Church—such as exorcising the infant, to drive away evil spirits—putting a mixture of milk and honey into his mouth—anointing him with spittle and with oil, in the form of a cross; it became customary to lay on hands, for the purpose of imparting the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This laying on of hands, however, was always done immediately after the application of water, and always by the same minister who performed the baptism. Of course, every one who was authorized to baptize, was also authorized to lay on hands upon the baptized individual. As this was a mere human invention, so it took the course which human inventions are apt to take. It was modified as the pride and the selfishness of ecclesiastics prompted. When Prelacy arose, it became customary to reserve this solemn imposition of hands to Prelates, as a part of their official prerogative. As soon as convenient after baptism, the infant was presented to the bishop, to receive from him the imposition of hands, for conveying the gift of the Spirit. Jerôme, in the fourth century, bears witness, however, that this was done rather for the sake of honouring their office, than in obedience to any Divine warrant. But, in process of time, another modification of the rite was introduced. The imposition of the bishop's hands did not take place immediately after baptism, nor even in the infancy of the baptized individual, but was postponed for a number of

years, according to circumstances, and sometimes even till adult age. Then the young person, or adult, was presented with great formality to the bishop for his peculiar benediction. Among many proofs that this was not the original nature of the rite, is the notorious fact, that throughout the whole Greek Church, at the present time, the laying on of hands is administered, for the most part, in close connection with baptism, and is dispensed by any priest who is empowered to baptize, as was done in the third and fourth centuries, before the Greek Church was separated from the Latin. In like manner, in the Lutheran and other German Churches, where a sort of confirmation is retained; although they have ecclesiastical superintendents or seniors, the act of laying on hands is not reserved to them, but is performed by each pastor for the children of his parochial charge.

3. The rite of confirmation is not only altogether destitute of Divine warrant, but it is also superfluous. As it was plainly, at first, a human invention, founded on the superstitious belief that, by the laying on of hands, the special gifts of the Holy Spirit were to be continued in the Church; so it is unnecessary. It answers no practical purpose which is not provided for quite as well, to say the least, in the Presbyterian Church, which rejects it. It is said to be desirable that there should be some transaction or solemnity by which young people, who have been baptized in their infancy, may be called to recognize their religious obligations, and as it were, to take upon themselves the profession and the vows made on their behalf in baptism. Granted. There can be no doubt that such a solemnity is both reasonable in itself, and edifying in its tendency. But have we not just such a solemnity in the Lord's Supper; an ordinance divinely instituted; an ordinance on which all are qualified to attend, and ought to attend, who are qualified to take on themselves, in any scriptural or rational sense, their baptismal obligations; an ordinance, in fact, specifically intended, among other things, to answer this very purpose, viz. the purpose of making a personal acknowledgment and profession of the truth, the service, and the hopes of Christ;—have we not in the Sacramental Supper just such a solemnity as we need for the purpose in question simple, rational, scriptural, and to which all our children may come just so soon as they are prepared, in any suitable manner, to confess Christ before men? We do not need confirmation, then, for the purpose for which it is proposed. We have something better, because appointed of God; quite as expressive; more solemn; and free from certain objectionable features which are next to be mentioned.

4. Finally ; we reject the rite of confirmation in our Church, because, in addition to all the reasons which have been mentioned, we consider the formulary prescribed for its administration in the Church of England, and substantially adopted in the Episcopal Church in this country, as liable to the most serious objections. We do not think it a duty to administer, in any form, a rite which the Saviour never appointed ; but our repugnance is greatly increased by the language in which the rite in question is dispensed by those who employ it. In the "Order of Confirmation," as prescribed and used in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, the following language occurs. Before the act of laying on hands, the officiating bishop, in his prayer, repeats the following sentence : "Almighty and ever living God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants, by water, and the *Holy Ghost*, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins," &c. &c. And again, in another prayer after the imposition of hands, he speaks to the Searcher of hearts thus : "We make our humble supplications unto thee for these thy servants, upon whom, after the example of thy holy Apostles, we have now laid our hands ; to certify them by this sign of thy favour and gracious goodness toward them," &c. And also, in the act of laying on hands, assuming that all who are kneeling before him already have the holy sanctifying Spirit of Christ, he prays that they "may all daily increase in this Holy Spirit more and more."

Such is the language addressed to large circles of young people of both sexes, many of whom there is every reason to fear are very far from having been "born of the Spirit," in the scriptural sense of that phrase ; nay, some of whom manifest so little seriousness, that any pastor of enlightened piety would be pained to see them at a communion table ; yet the bishop pronounces them *all*, and he appeals to heaven for the truth of his sentence—he pronounces them *all* regenerate, not only by water, but also by the *Holy Ghost* ; certifies to them, in the name of God, that they are objects of the divine "favour ;" and declares that, being already in a state of grace, and reconciliation with God, they are called to "grow in grace," and to "increase in the Holy Spirit more and more."

An enlightened Presbyterian minister would consider himself, if he were to use such language, to such a circle, as encouraging radical misapprehensions of the nature of true religion ; as perverting the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit ; and as speaking a language adapted fatally to deceive the souls of those whom he addressed. Surely, with such

views, we should be highly criminal were we to adopt such a rite, and dispense it after such an example.

SECTION VI.—*We reject Kneeling at the Lord's Supper.*

This is another part of the Romish rituals, which a large body of the most pious and learned divines of the Church of England, at the period of the Reformation, were earnestly desirous of having laid aside; but they were overruled by the Queen, and the court clergy, who chose to retain it; and it has ever since found a place in the Protestant Episcopal Church. It is well known, that Presbyterians differ, in this respect, from their Episcopal neighbours. They prefer what has been commonly called "the table posture," for such reasons as the following:

1. It is granted, on all hands, that the posture in which the Lord's Supper was first administered by the Saviour himself, was that in which it was customary to receive ordinary meals. It is not known that any one denies or doubts this. The Evangelists are too explicit in their statement of this fact to admit of doubt. The Evangelist Matthew declares; "Now when the evening was come, he *sat down* with the twelve. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples," &c. But if the Saviour himself chose this posture, as most agreeable to his will, may we not conclude, that it is, on the whole, the wisest and best?

2. It is very certain that kneeling at the Lord's table was unknown in the Christian Church for a number of centuries after the apostolic age. Indeed, in the second, third, and following centuries, it was accounted unlawful even to kneel on the Lord's day; this posture being reserved for days of fasting and humiliation. This is asserted by Tertullian; and the Council of Nice passed a solemn decree to the same amount, because on that day is celebrated the joyful remembrance of our Lord's resurrection. This posture, both of public prayer on the Lord's day, and of receiving the communion, was invariably standing. The proof of this is so complete as to preclude the possibility of doubt. The most ardent friends of kneeling do not pretend, so far as is now recollected, to find any example of this posture, in the whole history of the Church, prior to the thirteenth century. That is, not until the Papacy had reached the summit of its system of corruption. And, accordingly, in the Greek Church, which separated from the Latin, before the doctrine of Transubstantiation arose, kneeling at the communion is unknown. In short,



kneeling at the Lord's table was not introduced until Transubstantiation arose; and with Transubstantiation it ought, by Protestants, to have been laid aside. When men began to believe that the sacramental elements were really transmuted into the body and blood of the Redeemer, there was some colour of apology for kneeling and adoring them. But when this error was abandoned, that which had grown out of it ought to have been abandoned also.

The essential nature of the Eucharist renders the attendance upon it in a kneeling posture incongruous, and, of course, unsuitable. This ordinance is a feast, a feast of love, joy, and thanksgiving. The very name, Eucharist, implies as much. It is intended to be a sign of love, confidence, and affectionate fellowship, between each communicant and the master of the feast, and between all the members of his body. It is also intended to be an emblem, and a means of that spiritual nourishment which is found in feeding by faith, and, in a spiritual sense, on the body and blood of the Redeemer, set forth in this ordinance as crucified for us. Now, it has been often asked—"In what nation is it thought suitable to kneel at banquets?" Where do men eat and drink upon their knees? True, indeed, humility and penitence become us in every approach to God; and certainly in no case more peculiarly than when we celebrate the wonders of grace and love manifested in the Saviour's dying for us. Yet it is equally true, that, as the ordinance is, characteristically, a feast of confidence, fellowship, joy, and thanksgiving, so the exercises and the posture most becoming the attendance on it, are those which indicate gladness, gratitude, and affectionate intercourse. He must be strangely prejudiced in favour of a superstitious precedent, who can persuade himself that kneeling is the most suitable expression of those exercises.

4. Finally; the abuse and the misapprehension of the practice of kneeling at the Lord's Supper, are considerations of no small weight in the minds of those who reject this practice. As it originated in gross error, so it is adapted to nourish error and superstition; and however understood by intelligent Christians, it has been misapprehended, and will be, as long as it shall be used, misapprehended by many ignorant minds. Accordingly, as before stated, when the English Liturgy was revised, and about to be ultimately settled, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, some of the most pious and learned divines of that Church entreated that kneeling at the Eucharist might either be abolished altogether, or, at least, left optional or indifferent. When the divines, appointed to report on the sub-

ject, brought in a report which left it indifferent, the Queen drew her pen over the lines which represented it, and made the practice binding. And all that the friends of abolishing the practice could obtain, was a rubric, or marginal advertisement, declaring that by communing in this posture, no worship of the elements was intended. This obstinate adherence to the practice in question, greatly grieved the foreign Protestants, and the learned Beza wrote to Archbishop Grindal on the subject, in a style of respectful, but firm remonstrance. "If," says Beza, "you have rejected the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and the practice of adoring the host, why do you symbolize with Popery, and seem to hold both by kneeling at the Sacrament? Kneeling had never been thought of had it not been for Transubstantiation." The archbishop replied, "That though the Sacrament was to be received kneeling, yet the rubric accompanied the service-book, and informed the people that no adoration of the elements was intended." "O! I understand you," said Beza; "there was a certain great lord who repaired his house, and having finished it, left before his gate a great stone, for which he had no occasion. This stone caused many people in the dark to stumble and fall. Complaint was made to his lordship, and many an humble petition was presented, praying for the removal of the stone; but he remained long obstinate. At length he condescended to order a lanthorn to be hung over it. 'My lord,' said one, 'if you would be pleased to rid yourself of further solicitation, and to quiet all parties, order the stone and the candle to be both removed.'"

SECTION VII.—*We do not Administer the Lord's Supper in Private.*

Few ordinances have been more misapprehended and perverted than the Lord's Supper. Before the close of the third century, superstitious views of its efficacy, and its necessity to salvation, began to be adopted, and led to a corresponding practice. Entirely mistaking the meaning of John vi. 53, many Christians of that day supposed that no one could die safely without having participated of this ordinance. Accordingly, it was not only administered to all adult persons, who professed to be the disciples of Christ; but also to infants, soon after their baptism. Nay, to such an extravagant height was this phrensy of superstition carried, that when any one had died suddenly, without having partaken of this sacrament, the consecrated elements were, in many instances, thrust into the mouth of the lifeless corpse, in hope that it might yet not

be too late to impart a saving benefit to the deceased. This delusion soon produced, or rather strongly implied the Popish doctrine, that this sacrament, as well as baptism, carried with it an inherent efficacy, (an *opus operatum*, as they expressed it,) which insured a saving operation in all cases in which it was regularly administered. From this, the transition was easy to the notion, that the consecrated elements, when exhibited, cured diseases, and accomplished many other wonderful miracles. Hence, these elements, before the commencement of the third century, after being dispensed in the public assembly, were sent, generally by deacons, to those who, on any account, were absent. Not long afterwards, the sick, the dying, and those who were confined, on any account, to their dwelling, had a portion of the elements despatched to them, either by ecclesiastics, or, if more convenient, by the hands of laymen, and even children. Some, on receiving the elements in church, contrived to carry away with them a portion, and were in the habit of taking a small part of this portion every day, for thirty or forty days together. Nay, some carried a portion of the sacrament (as they expressed it,) with them on long journies and voyages; had recourse to it as a defence in cases of danger; and inserted some portion of it in plaisters for healing wounds and ulcers. All this under the impression that these sacramental elements had an inherent energy of the most potent and beneficial kind. No wonder, that wherever these sentiments prevailed, private communion, if such an expression may be allowed, was universal. The sacrament, in a great measure, lost its character as a social ordinance; and the symbols of the Redeemer's broken body and shed blood were considered as invested with a sort of magical influence, wherever they appeared; to be carried about the person as an amulet, for defence; and resorted to as a medicine of sovereign power.

It is true, some of these views and habits were checked by the rise of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. When the elements were believed, by the consecrating prayer, to have been transmuted into the real body and blood of Christ, it was thought indecent to carry them home, to deposit them in a chest or cupboard, and to swallow a small portion every day. Still the most humiliating superstitions, as to the consecrated elements, continued to prevail.

When the Reformation took place in the land of our fathers, many of these views and habits, and especially the more gross of them, were happily corrected. Still it is to be lamented, that the Reformation in the Church of England, in respect to

this ordinance, as well as some others, was not more thorough; and that after all the remonstrances and importunity of the most venerable and pious divines of that Church, a number of things were left in use, which it were to be wished had been laid aside. Of these the habit of private communion is one.

The Eucharist is administered, by the clergy of that Church, every day, to the sick and the dying, with scarcely any scruple, whenever it is requested. To the worldly, the careless, and even the most profligate, it is freely carried, when they come to die, if they desire it; indeed, some have supposed that any minister who should publicly refuse to administer this ordinance to a sick person, when requested, would be liable, in that country, to a civil prosecution. Suffice it to say, that such a refusal is very seldom given. Even criminals of the most profligate character, just before their execution, always have this sacrament administered to them, if they are willing to receive it, and that when no appearance whatever of genuine penitence is manifested.\*

Presbyterian ministers, in all ordinary cases, decline administering the Lord's Supper to the sick and the dying, and generally in private houses, for reasons which appear to them conclusive. They are such as these:

1. They consider this ordinance as social and ecclesiastical in its very nature. It is a communion, in which the idea of a "solitary mass," as admitted among Papists, would seem to be an absurdity.

2. We find no warrant for private communion in the New Testament. It is true, we read of Christians, in the apostolic age, "breaking bread from house to house;" but that is, evidently, a mode of expressing their ordinary worshipping assemblies. They had no ecclesiastical buildings. They worshipped altogether in private houses, in "upper chambers," &c. There, of course, they administered the communion to as many as could come together. And, as they could not occupy the same apartment stately, or, at any rate, long together, on account of the vigilance of their persecutors, they went "from house to house" to worship, as circumstances invited; or in a number of houses at the same time, where Christians were too numerous for a single dwelling. We read of no instance of the sacramental symbols being carried to an individual on a sick bed. On the contrary, when the inspired Apostle gives directions that the sick be visited and

\* See the cases of the hardened Despard and Bellingham, mentioned in the Christian Observer, vol. xiii. p. 6.

prayed with by the "Elders of the Church," James v. 14, he says not a word of administering to them the communion.

3. If persons, on their dying beds, earnestly desire this ordinance to be administered to them, as a *viaticum*, or preparation for death, and as a kind of pledge of the divine favour and acceptance, we believe that, on this very account, it ought to be refused them. To comply with their wishes, at least in many cases, is to encourage them to rely on the power of an external sign, rather than on the merit of the Saviour himself. Such views being, manifestly, unscriptural, false, and adapted to deceive and destroy the soul, ought by no means to be countenanced. But what can tend more directly to favour, and even nurture these views, than to hasten with the sacramental memorials to the bed-side of every dying person who desires them? Ought the evident propensity of careless and ungodly men to fly to this ordinance as the last refuge of a guilty conscience, to be deliberately promoted by the ministers of religion?

4. If this practice be once begun, where is it to end? All men are serious when they come to die. Even the most profane and licentious, in that crisis, are commonly in no small degree anxious and alarmed, and disposed to lay hold of every thing that seems favourable to the smallest hope. Yet every wise man, who has lived long, and observed much, is deeply suspicious of the sincerity of death-bed penitents. What is a conscientious minister to do in such cases? How is he to draw the line between those who are, and those who are not, in his judgment, fit subjects for this ordinance? Is it not unseasonable, as well as distressing to have any thing like arguing or disputing with the sick and the dying on such a subject? On the one hand, if we faithfully refuse to administer the ordinance where the dying man gives no evidence of either knowledge or faith—shall we not agitate the patient, distress his friends, and give against him a kind of public sentence, so far as our judgment goes, of his reprobation? And, on the other hand, if we strain conscience, and, in compliance with earnest wishes, administer the ordinance to those who give no evidence whatever of fitness for it—shall we not run the risk of deceiving and destroying souls, by lulling them asleep in sin, and encouraging reliance on an external sign of grace? Will not by-standers be likely to be fatally injured? And shall we not, by every such act, incur great guilt in the sight of God?

5. By declining, in all ordinary cases, to administer this ordinance on sick beds, either to saints or sinners, we avoid

these embarrassments so deep and trying to a conscientious man. We avoid multiplied evils, both to the dying themselves, and their surviving friends. And we shall take a course better adapted than any other to impress upon the minds of men that great and vital truth, that the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Redeemer, imputed to us, and received by faith alone, are the only scriptural foundation of hope toward God:—that, without this faith, ordinances are unavailing; and with it, though we may be deprived, by the providence of God, of an opportunity of attending on outward ordinances in their prescribed order of administration, all is safe, for time and eternity. The more solemnly and unceasingly these sentiments are inculcated, the more we shall be likely to benefit the souls of men; and the more frequently we countenance any practice which seems to encourage a reliance on any external rite as a refuge in the hour of death, we contribute to the prevalence of a system most unscriptural, deceptive, and fatal in its tendency.

It was remarked, that Presbyterians take this ground, and act upon these principles in all ordinary cases. It has sometimes happened, however, that a devout and exemplary communicant of our Church, after long enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, has been confined for several, perhaps for many years, to a bed of sickness, and been, of course, wholly unable to enjoy a communion season in the ordinary form. In such cases, Presbyterian ministers have sometimes taken the Elders of the Church with them, and also invited half a dozen other friends of the sick person—thus making, in reality, a “church,” meeting by its representatives—and administered the communion in the sick chamber. To this no solid objection is perceived. But the moment we open the door—unless in very extraordinary cases indeed—to the practice of carrying this sacrament to those who have wholly neglected it during their lives, but importunately call for it as a passport to heaven, in the hour of nature’s extremity; we countenance superstition; we deceive souls; and we pave the way for abuses and temptations, of which no one can calculate the consequences, or see the end.

#### SECTION VIII.—*We reject bowing at the name of Jesus.*

Those who have frequently witnessed the worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church, have no doubt observed, that when the name Jesus occurs, in repeating the Apostle’s Creed, there is a sensible obeisance, or bowing of the knee, which occurs in pronouncing no other name in the public ser-

vice. This obeisance is, in many cases, confined to the pronounciation of the name as it occurs in the Creed. The same name may be pronounced in the other parts of the Liturgy, or in the sermon, without being accompanied with any such act of reverence. Presbyterians have never adopted this practice, for the following reasons:

1. We find no semblance of a warrant for it in Scripture. Some Episcopal apologists, indeed, for this practice, of the inferior and less intelligent class, have cited in its defence Philippians ii. 10; but this plea has been abandoned, it is believed, by all truly learned and judicious friends of that denomination. Dr. Nichols, one of the most able and zealous advocates of the ritual of the Church of England, expressly says—"We are not so dull as to think that these words can be rigorously applied to this purpose."

2. It seems unaccountable that the obeisance in question should be so pointedly made at this name of the Saviour, and not at all when his other titles are pronounced. When his titles of God, Redeemer, Saviour, Christ, Immanuel, and even Jehovah, are pronounced, no such testimonial of reverence is manifested. Can any good reason, either in the Bible or out of it, be assigned for this difference? We feel as if, with our views of the subject, it would be superstition in us to adopt or countenance such a practice.

3. Is not the habit of such observances, without warrant, and, as would seem, without reason, plainly adapted to beget a spirit of superstition, and to occupy our minds with the commandments of men, rather than with the ordinances of Heaven? It will, perhaps, be said in reply, that we surely cannot pronounce the name of Jesus, our adorable Saviour, with too much reverence; why, then, find fault with an act of obeisance at his glorious name? True; every possible degree of reverence is his due. But why not manifest the same at the pronounciation of all his adorable and official names? Suppose any one were to single out a particular verse of Holy Scripture, and whenever he read that verse were to bow his head, or bend his knees, in token of reverence; but wholly to omit this act of obeisance in reading all other parts of Scripture, even those of exactly the same import as the verse thus distinguished? Should we not consider his conduct as an example of strange caprice, or of still more strange superstition? Such, however, precisely, is the case before us. And if this mode of reading the Scriptures were enjoined by ecclesiastical authority, we should, doubtless, consider it as still more strange. Even this, however, is done in the case

now under consideration. For the eighteenth canon of the Church of England contains the following injunction:—  
“When in the time of divine service the Lord Jesus shall be mentioned, due and lowly reverence shall be done by all persons present, as it hath been accustomed.”

This practice of bowing at the name of Jesus, was never heard of in the Christian Church, so far as is now recollected, until the *fifteenth century*. Some trace it to the Papal reign of Gregory X., in the thirteenth century. It may possibly have existed then; but the earliest authoritative injunction of it that is remembered, is that of the council of Basil, in 1435. The deplorable state of the Church at that time, both in respect to superstition and profligacy, will not furnish, it is presumed, a very strong recommendation of a rite which then took its rise. A more worthy origin of it is unknown.

As to the practice of praying toward the east, and that of wearing in the reading desk, or during the prayers, a white surplice, they are too inconsiderable to be made the subjects of particular discussion. Nevertheless, as this manual is intended to give a comprehensive view of the points in which we differ from surrounding denominations, it may not be amiss to say, in passing, that both the practices last mentioned were borrowed from the Pagans. And although plausible reasons soon began to be urged in their favour; reasons which were made to wear a Christian aspect, yet their heathen origin is unquestionable. True, there is no sin in them. They are little things; too little to be formally animadverted upon. Yet they are among the things which we think it our duty to reject. And when asked, as we sometimes are, why we do not adopt them? we have only to say, that our desire is to keep as closely as we can to “the simplicity that is in Christ;” that to indulge superstition in trivial things, is as really censurable, in principle, as in things of more importance; and that “the beginning of evil is like the letting out of water.” And especially when we recollect, that three centuries have not elapsed, since some of these very things were made terms of communion in the land of our fathers; and some of the most pious and venerable men that ever lived in that land, were fined, imprisoned, and ejected from office, because, according to the popular language of that day, they “scrupled the habits,” or the prescribed dress, we shall see the evil of tampering with uncommanded rites.



SECTION IX.—*We reject the reading of Apocryphal Books in public worship.*

The Church of Rome considers a number of the books of the Apocrypha as canonical; that is, as belonging to the inspired canon, and as of equal authority with any of the books of the Old or New Testament; and accordingly orders them to be read in her public assemblies, just as the inspired Scriptures. Protestants, with one voice, deny that the Apocryphal books make any part of the sacred canon, or form any part of the infallible rule of faith and practice.

In the Church of England, however, large portions of the Apocryphal books are read in her public assemblies, and appealed to as if they were canonical books. It is true, the Church, in her sixth article, declares that these books are not appealed to as any part of the rule of faith; and they are not read on Sundays. But on holy-days they are read continually.

The Episcopal Church in this country has adopted the same practice, under the same restrictions.

Presbyterians object to this practice, and refuse to adopt it for the following reasons.

1. Because they are persuaded that nothing ought to be read under the name of Holy Scripture, but that which is regarded as the inspired word of God. To do this, is to depart from an important Protestant principle, and open the door for endless abuse.

2. Because those Apocryphal books, out of which the lessons referred to are taken, evidently contain some false doctrines, some misstatements, and not a few things adapted to promote ridicule rather than edification.

3. Notwithstanding, in the 6th Article of the Church of England, it is expressly stated, that these Apocryphal books are not read as any part of the rule of faith, still in her Homilies they are spoken of in language of a very different aspect. Baruch is cited as the Prophet Baruch, and his writing is called the word of the Lord to the Jews. The Book of Tobit is expressly ascribed to the Holy Ghost, in the most unequivocal terms, as follows: "The same lesson doth the Holy Ghost also teach in sundry places of the Scriptures, saying; mercifulness and almsgiving purgeth from all sins, and delivereth from death, and suffereth not the soul to come into darkness," &c. (See Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion, part i. p. 475; and Homily on Almsdeeds, part ii. p. 328.) Surely, if "the Holy Ghost teach-

eth" what is written in this book, it is an inspired book, and ought to be considered as a part of "the rule of faith." It is worthy of notice here, that the Article and Homilies here quoted, make a part of the formularies of the Episcopal Church in the United States, as well as in that of England.

4. The practice of reading these lessons in public worship, from writings acknowledged not to be canonical, and from writings which contain much exceptionable matter, was early protested against by many of the most learned and pious dignitaries, and other divines of the Church of England, and has been, at different times, ever since, matter of regret and complaint among the most valuable members of that body; but in spite of these remonstrances and petitions, it has been maintained to the present day. This fact shows, in a strong light, the mischief of commencing an erroneous practice: and how difficult it is to get rid of any thing of this kind, when it is able to plead established custom in its support.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### CONCLUSION.

SUCH are the considerations which satisfy Presbyterians that their Doctrine, their Ecclesiastical Order, and their Worship, are truly primitive and scriptural. We condemn not our neighbours. To their own Master they stand or fall. Our only object, in what has been said, is to "render a reason" for our own belief and practice. The names of other denominations would not have been so much as mentioned, or alluded to, in the foregoing statements, had it been possible, without doing so, to exhibit our own peculiarities, and to show wherein and why we differ from some of our sister churches. But firmly believing that all the leading features of the Presbyterian system are more in accordance with the word of God, and with the usage of the purest and best ages of the Christian Church, than any other, we feel bound to maintain them; to teach them to our children, and to bear testimony in their favour before the world. We deny to none, who hold fast the essentials of our holy religion, the name of Christian Churches. It is enough for us to know that we adhere to "the simplicity that is in Christ;" that we walk in the footsteps of the primitive Christians. We forbid none who profess to cast out devils, "because they follow not with

us." Let them do all the good they can in their own way. We claim the same privilege; and only beg to be permitted, with the *Bible* in our hands, to ascertain "what saith the Scripture;" and how Apostles and martyrs glorified God. We "call no man master; one is our Master, even Christ." And, therefore, throughout the foregoing pages, our primary appeal has been to his *Word*, the great statute book of his kingdom. However plausible in theory, or attractive in practice, any rite or ceremony may appear, we dare not adopt it, unless we find some warrant for it in the only infallible guide of the Church. If, then, Presbyterianism, in all its essential features, is plainly found in the word of God; if it maintains, throughout, the great representative principle which pervades the kingdom of God; if it guards more perfectly than any other system, against clerical assumption and tyranny, on the one hand, and against popular excitement and violence on the other; if it provides, in itself, for complete concert in action, without the necessity of resorting to extra voluntary associations; if it furnishes the best means for maintaining pure and energetic discipline, and bringing the whole Church in doubtful and difficult cases, to give a calm and equitable judgment; and if it presents the most effectual means of purging out error, and correcting abuses; then, surely, we have no small evidence that it is from the God of truth and order, and ought to be maintained in all the Churches.

Let it never be forgotten, however, that, as Presbyterianism, in all its leading features, *was, undoubtedly, the primitive and apostolic model of the Church*; so, in order to the maintenance and execution of this system to the best advantage, *there must be a large portion of the primitive and apostolic spirit reigning in the Church*. No sooner did Christians lose the spirit of the first and purest age, than they began to depart from the simplicity of Christ's institutions. Having less spirituality to present, they thought to compensate for this defect by outward show and ceremonial. Uncommanded rites and forms were multiplied, for the purpose of attracting both Jews and Pagans into the Church. Purity of doctrine gave way to the speculations of philosophy. Purity of discipline became unpopular, and yielded to the laxity of luxurious and fashionable life. Prelacy, as we have seen in a former chapter, gradually crept into the Church; and with it many inventions of men to allure and beguile those who had lost all relish for primitive simplicity.

Now, just so far as we retain the simple devoted spirit of the apostolic age, we shall love, retain, and honour Presbyte-

rianism. Those who possess most of this spirit, will be most friendly to this system. But just in proportion as that spirit declines, Presbyterian doctrines will be thought too rigid; Presbyterian worship will appear too simple and naked; and Presbyterian discipline will be regarded as too unaccommodating and austere. Let Presbyterians, then, learn a lesson of wisdom from this consideration. Let them remember that their system will never appear so well, or work so well, as in the midst of simple, primitive, and devoted piety. This is its genial soil. As long as such a soil is furnished, it will grow. When such a soil is not furnished, it will still live, and do better than any other system, on the whole; but its highest glory will have departed, and something else will begin to be thought desirable by the votaries of worldly indulgence, and worldly splendour. The friends of our beloved Church ought to know, and lay to heart, that their happiness and their strength consist in cordial and diligent adherence to that vital principle, the language of which is, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

THE END.

QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES

OF

R U L I N G E L D E R S

IN THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY THE

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# RULING ELDERS, &c.

## AUTHORITY FOR RULING ELDERS.

IN the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, ample provision has been made for the wise and equitable government of the Church by Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies. In these judicatories are vested various grades of authority, which, in their relative exercise, happily tend to secure the particular rights of individuals, and to promote the general interests of the Gospel. A session is the lowest ecclesiastical court, and is composed of the Pastor and Ruling Elders of a particular Congregation; the latter are properly the representatives of the people, by whom they are chosen; and in the various judicatories, possess an equality of power with the clergy. Frequent attempts have been made by the advocates of Diocesan Episcopacy, and of Independency, to invalidate the authority of this class of church officers; but we have direct and collateral evidence that they were recognised by the primitive church, and accordingly, that they now act under a scriptural warrant. It has been generally conceded, that the first Christian congregations were formed after the model of the Jewish Synagogues, and it is to be presumed that this correspondence included the principal features of government, as well as of worship. In the Synagogue, there was a presiding officer, who conducted the worship, and who was called the minister, or angel, of the church; and there were associated with him, persons styled Rulers of the Synagogue, whose office rendered it incumbent on them to aid the minister in the government. The Apostles, to whom was intrusted the organization of the Christian Church, were intimately acquainted with all the forms and peculiarities of the Synagogue worship, and were no doubt ready to incorporate into the structure of the former, any features observable in the latter, which might be adapted to their purpose. A sense of propriety, and regard for the interest of the infant church, would induce them, also, to guard carefully against any needless deviations from the established religion, in favour of which public sentiment was so strongly enlisted; and there was every reason to believe that in the particular case referred to, they did not deviate. If the minister of the Synagogue required the assistance of the Rulers of the Synagogue to maintain a proper government, it was natural to suppose that in a Christian Church, in which Sacraments were to be administered, discipline en-

forced, and a strict oversight of the flock observed, the minister would have still stronger reasons to seek the aid of a corresponding class of officers. The Apostles must have foreseen this, and is it not therefore probable that they provided for the exigency, especially when so forcibly reminded by the example before them? We think the presumption is in favour of their having adopted this peculiarity in the structure of the Jewish Church.

But we are not left to mere probable evidence. If the Scriptures are silent on this subject, the right of lay elders may well be impugned; for although expediency may suggest and sanction the appointment of secular officers in the house of God, without any infringement upon its scriptural order, it can never give validity to the appointment of its spiritual officers. A licence of this kind has never been contemplated by the word of God, and should it be assumed, the Church of Christ would groan under the incumbrances of man's device.

There are three passages which are relied on, principally, as furnishing the authority for Lay-elders. When viewed in connexion, they mutually interpret each other, and explicitly teach that, in the primitive church, there was a class of officers whose duty it was to *rule*, in distinction from Pastors, who instructed the people in their public preaching, and from Deacons, who attended to the necessities of the poor.

In 1 Corinthians xii. 28, the Apostle, in referring to the different officers established in the Church, says, "God hath set some in the church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, GOVERNMENTS, diversities of tongues." GOVERNMENTS are here presented as a distinct office, and the first clause of the verse prevents the application of the term as denoting the civil magistracy. It is one of the offices which *God has set in the Church*.

In Romans xii. 4-8, the Apostle describing the Church as a body, composed of various and distinct members, says, "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he THAT RULETH, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." If this passage describes the gifts and offices bestowed on the Church, as it evidently does, we think we discern in it the three distinct offices—of the Pastor, who instructs the people by prophesying,



teaching, and exhortation; of the Deacon, who takes care of the poor, and who is required to give in simplicity, and show mercy with cheerfulness; and of the Elder, who is to *rule with diligence*.

The third passage which we shall quote is from 1 Timothy, v. 17. "Let the Elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour; especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." Here again is a clearly marked distinction between Elders who rule, and Elders who teach. This distinction is designated by the word *especially*, the introduction of which, in this connexion, would have been contrary to the propriety of language, if but one kind of Elders had been referred to. When Paul tells Titus (Titus i. 10.) "There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, *especially* they of the circumcision," he plainly distinguishes between the persons of this character, who belonged to the circumcision, and the persons of this character, who did not belong to the circumcision; and so in the passage before quoted, the word *especially* distinguishes between the Elders who rule well, and the Elders who labour in the word and doctrine.

But it has been urged, that if this be really an office in the Church of Christ, the duties appertaining to it would certainly have been specified. This consequence is by no means certain. We cannot precisely learn what were the peculiar duties of an Apostle, or an Evangelist, from any Scriptural enumeration of them, and yet, who will pretend to doubt that there were such officers in the Church? But the supposition, that the Scriptures are silent respecting the duties of Lay-elders is entirely gratuitous. We learn something respecting the nature of their office, when informed that it is not a part of their duty to labour in the word and doctrine; and this information becomes more accurate, when we are told that it is their duty to rule well and diligently. Besides whatever is said of preaching Elders, in relation to the discipline and general government of the Church, may be fairly concluded as applicable to Ruling Elders, who are associated with them as HELPS.

Although Calvin exercised an active instrumentality in reviving this office, and placing it upon its present basis, yet, it is perfectly gratuitous to assert that it was the result of his inventive genius. He merely restored to the light what had been concealed beneath the corruptions of the church. The general prevalence of Popery accounts for the disuse into which it had fallen; for it was totally at variance with the spirit of that system to admit the authority of a Lay-eldership, which would operate, in any degree, as a restraint upon the domineering pride of the clergy. Among the Waldenses, however, tha

glorious remnant of God's heritage, the Church was governed, (as we are informed by Perrin, their historian,) by the united counsels of Ministers and Elders. And if we look back to the fourth century, we find both Augustine and Ambrose distinctly recognising the Eldership as distinguished from the clerical office. Even at that early period, it did not, it is true, occupy the prominence to which it was entitled; but the fact is alluded to by Ambrose, as a matter of regret, and as an evidence of corruption in the Church. "The Jewish Synagogue and primitive Christian Church," says he, "had Elders, without whose counsel nothing was done. By what negligence they fell into disuse, I know not; unless it were through the sloth or rather pride of the clergy, desiring to appear the sole important order in the Church." The suggestion of the Father is highly probable, as the existence of a properly constituted Lay-eldership must ever be a serious difficulty in the way of a corrupt clergy, who aim at the assumption of exclusive ecclesiastical dominion.\*

#### QUALIFICATIONS OF RULING ELDERS.

In the preceding remarks, we have attempted to demonstrate the scriptural authority of a Lay-eldership; and it is our purpose, in the present, to designate some of the principal QUALIFICATIONS which are requisite to the dignified and efficient discharge of its official duties.

As the office is spiritual, and the duties belonging to it are of a strictly religious nature, it is manifest that SINCERE PIETY is one of its principal and indispensable prerequisites.

Whilst none, we presume, will dispute the fact itself, many who are deeply concerned in this matter, may form a very mistaken estimate of the nature and extent of the thing required. The sincerity and genuineness of this piety should first be ascertained, by a careful examination of its origin, its exercises, and its aims. Is it assumed, or is it real? Is it a form of godliness merely, or a form attended with power? Is it a routine of ceremonies well and strictly observed, or is it a system of graces carefully cultivated? Does it pervade and control the soul, as well as rectify every obliquity in the life? Is the Spirit of God its author, the law of God its rule, and the glory of God its aim? Will it endure scrutiny? Will it justify its character

\* For a complete and satisfactory proof of the position here advanced, the reader is referred to an Essay on the Nature and Warrant for the Office of Ruling Elder, in the Presbyterian Church, by Samuel Miller, D. D., Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in the Theological Seminary at Princeton.

under the application of scriptural tests? Is it mere profession, or is it profession well sustained by practice? A man may be a hypocrite from design, or a hypocrite through mistake; if we are conscious of having no intention of deceiving others, are we fully persuaded that we do not deceive ourselves? The result, in both cases, will be fatal, and in the latter, extreme caution is required to obviate the danger. No man should style himself a Christian upon slight evidence; in a concern of such infinite moment, a hasty conclusion may prove the cause of eternal regret. A satisfactory opinion of personal piety is not to be derived from a comparison of ourselves with others, but by a comparison of ourselves with the law and testimony of Christ. This is the only infallible standard, and by this we are to determine the character of religious feeling and sentiment. Guided by this, we shall perceive that genuine piety is distinguishable from a formal adoption of general principles, and from the wild ebullition of visionary and enthusiastic feeling; that it is the union of rational opinions, and of sanctified emotions; that it supposes the proper exercise of the intellectual faculties, and the cordial enlistment of the affections: that it is supreme love to God, and universal benevolence to man; that it consists not in an occasional exercise, but in a permanent habit of holiness; that it is a participation of the spirit of Christ, and a sedulous imitation of his example; that, in a word, it is a fountain of life opened in the soul by the Spirit of God, whence continually flow "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance."

But those who bear rule in the Church of Christ, should not only ascertain the genuineness of their piety, but possess the graces of the Christian in more than their ordinary degree of perfection. Their piety should not only be real but conspicuous. Without attempting to enumerate all the traits in which their exemplariness should be manifest, it may not be amiss to give prominence to a few.

1. It is important that they who are called to "rule well" in the house of God, should possess a piety strikingly characterized by its **SPIRITUALITY**. The religion of many consists in forms and observances; it resembles a statue, symmetrical in its proportions, and perfect in its external features, but destitute of freshness, warmth, and vitality, because not pervaded by an ethereal spirit. There may be no moral precept which such men evidently violate, and no outward duty which they seem to neglect; and yet, in their religion, there is a sensible want—a destitution of warmth and life, which greatly detracts from its excellence. The soul is not thrown into it; it has not thoroughly imbued the mind, or taken hold of the affections of the

heart ; instead of sinking deeply into the inner man, it floats upon the surface. On the other hand, the religion to which the Holy Spirit has affixed the seal of his approbation, is deeply seated in the heart, purifying its affections, spiritualizing its thoughts, and constituting between it and heaven, the principle of a secret, yet powerful attraction. It is the new creation of the soul, the regeneration of its powers, which cannot consist with habitual worldly mindedness. Those who have experienced it, are no longer of the world, but are chosen out of the world ; from it, they extract not their pleasures, nor derive their consolations ; they live in it, and yet they live above it ; they use it, but they do not abuse it ; they are risen with Christ, and seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, placing their affections on things above, not on things on the earth. The religion which is spiritual, and all true religion partakes of this character, disposes the soul to frequent and holy intercourse with God ; it dwells much in heavenly contemplations ; it filially confides in God ; pants after him as the hart for the water brook ; seeks closer intimacy, and sweeter communion with him, and breathes forth its continual and fervent aspirations for larger communications of grace, and brighter manifestations of the divine glory. Such piety is not nominal, but real, and such should be the piety of rulers in the Church of Christ. Heavenly mindedness should characterize them, and by the tenderness of their religious sensibilities, and the warmth of their devotions, they should be distinguished above others. They should be remarked as men of prayer, and not as men of vain conversation : as men devoutly engaged in the cause of the Gospel, and not as the eager aspirants for worldly distinction. It is a dishonour to them and their profession, that they should display greater zeal in politics than in religion ; that they should be more familiar with their ledgers than their Bibles ; and that they should manifest greater eagerness, and deeper interest, at the marts of worldly traffic, than among the assemblies of the saints. True it is, that they are peculiarly tempted to worldly mindedness from the nature of their occupations ; secular business brings them into contact with worldly men ; they, necessarily, mingle much in their society, upon the equality which similarity of avocations produces, and, accordingly, unusual watchfulness is required to prevent them from descending from their high station, and from being known before the world merely as men of business. But if the danger be manifest, the duty of guarding against it is equally manifest. We would not recommend to them in this intercourse, the adoption of demure looks, a forbidding distance of manners, a religious phraseology studied and measured, or that kind of se-

verity, or strictness, which might excite prejudice against religion as a thing unlovely and undesirable ; but we would dissuade from that undue familiarity, which induces unwarrantable concessions and compromises to the claims of the world, and which, eventually, terminates in inconsistencies of conduct, which men of unsanctified minds are shrewd in detecting, and prompt in converting into an occasion of reproach. Be spiritual ; let your religion be of that kind which converses much with heavenly things ; and respect from the world, and usefulness in the Church, will infallibly be secured.

2. Those who are called to rule in the house of God, should also possess a piety which displays its power in SELF-GOVERNMENT. By this we do not merely mean the control of the sensual appetites and passions ; for this is a primary duty of Christians in every station. They who put on Christ, have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts, and are obliged to be temperate in all things. But we particularly refer to the command of temper which, in its unrestrained ebullitions, is peculiarly dishonourable in one who is designated as a spiritual guide. It may be said of temper, that in a very peculiar and signal manner, it characterizes the man. When well regulated, it conceals almost every defect ; and when unrestrained, it hides and neutralizes almost every virtue. It is the every-day aspect by which an individual is distinguished, and according as it is well or ill-governed, he secures esteem or excites contempt. He neither deserves, nor can acquire influence over others, who does not subdue and manage his own spirit. Ruling Elders, to secure efficiency in their office, should be exemplary in this respect, and whilst exercising a general control over their spirit, they should particularly avoid *moroseness, imperiousness, and irritability* of temper.

MOROSENESS is peculiarly unfortunate in those who are obliged, by their official duties, to exert a salutary influence over others. It throws an atmosphere of gloom around its victim, the very neighbourhood of which is studiously avoided. The sour and sullen aspect, which is its external index, never fails to repel ; it forbids esteem and confidence, which are won only by the face which beams with light, and the heart which overflows with kindly feeling. The morose man is not only an undesirable companion, but, if a professor of the Gospel, an exceedingly unfavourable specimen of the effect of Christian principle. He should, therefore, never be elevated to "high places," to the manifest detriment of the good cause, but be left to indulge his sullenness in obscurity. His mind is morbid ; it is ill at ease with itself ; it is accustomed to contemplate even the glorious and animating subjects of religion through a discoloured me-

dium ; and hence, the more distant his removal from public view, the more effectually will the cause of the Gospel be subserved. Cheerfulness, courteousness, and urbanity, on the contrary, not only secure esteem, but prepare the way for enlarged usefulness.

IMPERIOUSNESS is another defect in temper, which should be carefully avoided, by spiritual rulers. The communication of any degree of power, implying superiority, has a tendency to inflate the mind, and produce this objectionable feature of character. Station can never dignify the incumbent, unless the incumbent, by the propriety of his conduct, adds lustre to his station ; and there is no reason why men should plume themselves on their authority, and lord it over God's heritage, merely from the fact of their official designation. An Elder should assume no consequence ; he should never imagine that his office has imparted to him any superiority in virtue, and hence, he should not regard the poorest and obscurest of the flock as his inferiors. The Scriptures require that we should not be high-minded, but condescending and courteous. Authority may be exercised without offence, but the imperious exercise of it is always odious ; and if the general deportment of a ruler in the church gives rise to the suspicion, that he is proud and haughty, his presence will be disliked, and his influence proportionally diminished.

IRRITABILITY of temper is even still more exceptionable in an Elder. Peevishness or anger, quickly and upon slight provocation excited, betrays the most pitiable weakness of character, and the most striking want of self-command. An inflamed man, as he loses self-respect, so he loses the respect of others ; he is an object of pity to his friends, and of contempt to his enemies. And shall one who is to be an example to the flock, be easily provoked ? Shall the fiercest fires be kindled in his bosom upon the application of the slightest spark ? Is he to encounter no opposition without awakened wrath ? In religious and secular affairs, is he to be known as one *given to anger* ? It would be disgraceful in any Christian, but in an officer of the Church it is an enormity. Frequent instructions are given in the word of God, which are intended to counteract this evil, and all these apply with peculiar force to those who rule in the Church. Much, very much, depends upon temper, in relation to personal comfort, and the welfare of the Church ; and he that is unable to govern himself, is utterly unfit to govern "in the house of God."

3. The piety of one, who is to rule in the Church, should further evince itself in ACTIVE ZEAL. That is, it should be an earnest piety—a piety always abounding in mercy and good

fruits. Zeal, as applied to religion, expresses itself under three modes: by *personal contributions* of our worldly substance, in such proportions as an enlightened conscience and the wants of the Church may dictate; by the *dedication of our time*, influence, and general talents, regulated by the same proportion; and by *fervent and importunate prayer*. The zeal which does not display itself in all these modes, is essentially defective. It is not sufficient that we give our money alone, or our time, or our prayers; sincerity in our religious profession, and a heart-felt desire for the glory of Christ, will constrain us to unite them, and we shall grudge neither time, nor wealth, nor prayers, for the furtherance of the Gospel. This is a duty incumbent upon every Christian, but more particularly upon the Eldership. A glance at the Church will sufficiently evince, that the tone of zeal in any particular congregation, is derived from its spiritual officers. Let a deep interest for the success of the Gospel pervade their bosoms, and the sacred feeling will communicate itself to the people; but let apathy paralyze their energies, and its benumbing influence will inevitably seize upon the flock. An Eldership of penurious and contracted spirit, will not only counteract the efforts of a minister, but render the Church over which they preside, utterly useless, as it respects the benevolent projects of the day. Alas! how many painful illustrations of this truth rise before our view! How has the cause of the Gospel suffered, and how has the treasury of the Lord been defrauded, through the default of those who were bound to teach the Church its duty, by their example? So impressed are we with this subject, that we are constrained to believe, that an Eldership destitute of the zeal which we have described, is a curse to the Church.

The next general qualification of a Ruling Elder may be expressed in his having a "good report of them which are without." His general conduct should be so uniformly excellent, his integrity so incorruptible and so far above suspicion, and his profession and practice so harmonious and correspondent, as to constrain the good opinion of the world. Religious consistency is very closely scrutinized by the world; any defect in it, is a popular apology for irreligion among those who reject the Gospel, and the apology is relied on in proportion to the high standing of him, in whom the defect is observable. Office gives prominence, and prominence increases responsibility; the ministers of the sanctuary, therefore, and the rulers in the house of God, should cultivate a spirit and maintain a deportment which, instead of shrinking from scrutiny, would silence the gainsaying of ungodly men. Whilst Elders should have a good report for their general consistency, there are some par

ticular points in their character and conduct especially deserving their attention.

They should be noted for their **GRAVITY**. By this we do not mean demureness or sourness of aspect, for this is neither gravity itself, nor the proper external expression of it. A man may be grave, and yet his countenance wear the most benignant expression; it may be illuminated with cheerfulness, and smile kindly upon all. But on the other hand, by gravity, we wish to denote a state of the feelings, a chastened soberness of spirit, resulting from deep and uniform impressions of the presence, and of the love of God, of the uncertainty of life, and of the nearness of eternity. He who has these things continually in view will feel his spirit subdued into a quietness and sobriety which are utterly uncongenial with the "jesting which is not convenient," and the boisterous merriment which is folly. Lightness of speech and frivolity of behaviour will be alike avoided, and his associates will not be selected from among those who are known to have adopted for their motto, "let us eat, drink, and be merry." Such gravity may well be expected from him who is an Elder.

Elders should be noted for their **PRUDENCE**; not merely in the management of their worldly goods, by which lavish and unnecessary expenditures will be prevented, but particularly in relation to their religious intercourse, and the discharge of their official duties. We know that it has become fashionable to decry prudence in religion, as if it were a mere pretext for the neglect of difficult duty; but, admitting that it may sometimes be thus perverted, is it not dangerous to inculcate obedience to the impulse of feeling without regard to prudential considerations? May not the cause of Christ suffer by injudicious management? May not a "zeal without knowledge" prove as injurious as the absence of all zeal? May not the heart of a sinner be hardened against the truth by an ill-timed and ill-expressed admonition or rebuke, when a more prudent course might have won him? May not hatred and contempt be unnecessarily incurred? Is it not quite possible that many who suppose they are persecuted for righteousness' sake, are really persecuted for the sake of their imprudence? We verily believe that prudence is one of the first, and yet one of the most difficult duties of the Christian; and in the officers of the Church, it is of equal importance in the guidance of its concerns, with experience and skill in the pilot, who overcomes the difficulties and dangers of the deep, by the judicious management of the helm.

An Elder should have a good report from without, in relation to his **SECULAR TRANSACTIONS**. Religious reputation is very apt to receive a taint from a free intercourse with the world, and yet



it is by no means a necessary result. A Christian Elder may and ought to evince his principles in the ordinary details of life ; and in his secular vocation, he should not leave his Christianity behind him, but carry it with him. This *integrity* should first be conspicuous, not only in abstaining from direct dishonesty, but from those pitiful frauds which many consider as justifiable arts in trade, and which consist in overrating commodities for sale, and thus producing a wrong impression on purchasers, or in underrating commodities to be bought, and thus producing an equally erroneous impression on sellers. Every transaction should be commended for its candour and honesty, and even the suspicion of an attempt to gain an unfair advantage should be avoided. How much is religion injured by an opposite conduct in professors of religion, and how unworthy are they of their name, when they permit their love of gain to produce in them forgetfulness of the rules of equity ! Christian integrity requires the exact fulfilment of all business obligations and promises. Truth must be regarded, and no obligation should be assumed which might endanger truth. But if misfortune should overtake the Christian ; if circumstances should prevent the fulfilment of his obligations ; if he should become bankrupt and involve others in his failure, it should be made to appear, that there was no intentional dishonesty, no culpable misconduct, no unrighteous appropriations ; and in the event of future prosperity, he should consider his obligations as renewed, although they may have been legally cancelled, and his duty as imperative, to liquidate former claims. This is the obvious dictate of Christian integrity. *Generosity* is equally essential with integrity, in the high character of a Christian Elder in his transactions ; a generosity which would spurn meanness, parsimony, and close dealing ; a generosity opposed to the “love of filthy lucre,” which grasps at every thing, and will accumulate gains by every method not positively condemned by the laws of the land ; in fine, a generosity that would refuse to take advantage of the embarrassments of others by exacting inordinate interest. In all these things an Elder should be a pattern, letting his light so shine as to obviate any suspicion of his Christian character.

Once more, an Elder should have a good report from without in relation to the GOVERNMENT OF HIS FAMILY. He should be “one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity ; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God ?” The argument of the Apostle is conclusive, and the qualification it is intended to enforce is of the first importance. To maintain the worship of God in their families is the first branch of this duty. This should be observed with undeviating punctuality ;

with seriousness and fervour, and with a Christian discretion, which will prevent a tediousness on the one hand, and hurried formality on the other. The religious instruction of children, and as far as practicable, of domestics, is another branch. A practical inculcation of the truth of the Gospel, and an untiring perseverance in the duty are indispensable. The Catechisms of our Church afford an excellent text book, and an unequalled summary of the truths taught in the Holy Scriptures. These, treasured up in the memories of youth, will not soon be obliterated; and although not comprehended in the first instance, will form a noble foundation for future acquisitions of divine knowledge. But it will be necessary to accompany such instructions with affectionate exhortation and fervent prayer, to render it effectual. Without, however, attempting to enumerate all the particular duties which a Christian owes to his family, we would dwell with particular emphasis upon one, which officers in the Church of Christ owe to themselves, their families and the Church; we mean an avoidance of undue compliance with the customs of the world, and the exercise of their authority in restraining, in this respect, those under their guardian care. It is the unhappiness of the Church in the present day, to be brought to terms of improper familiarity with the world. The line of demarkation between the two communities, is not sufficiently distinct. But why is it so? It is perhaps to be attributed to a relaxation of discipline in the Church, and this remissness of discipline is perhaps countenanced by those who have the exercise of it in their own hands, to shield their own delinquencies. We have heard professing Christians, as well as others, plead in justification of their worldly compliances, the example of Ministers and Elders! Their children, it was true, were found at the ball room, the theatres, and the midnight rout, but then they were in company with the children of Ministers and Elders! And if this plea be well founded, how, we ask, will officers in the Church justify their conduct before God, in countenancing customs of the world, which, if not positively vitiating, at least create distaste for the self-denying doctrines of the Gospel? How will they excuse themselves for causing the flock of Christ to stray by their example? If the souls of their offspring perish through this default, how can their skirts be clear of their blood? The people of God *must be peculiar*, they must be separate from the world, and the leaders of the people must set the example. "Touch not, taste not, handle not."

The last qualification we shall mention as desirable, and even necessary in a Ruling Elder is INTELLIGENCE. Under this term we do not comprehend what is technically styled *learned*

*knowledge*, which is the result of an exact and finished education; for, although the best talents and largest acquirements would not be misplaced by such an application, yet the circumstances of the case forbid that they should be regarded as indispensable. But we mean such a degree of information on subjects relating to the official duties of their station, as would distinguish the incumbent above ordinary Christians, and induce them to regard his counsels with respect. No one should accept a station, of the duties of which he is ignorant, and for the proper occupancy of which, he is conscious of his unfitness. Ignorance is never respectable, and it is particularly contemptible when exposed in high places, and presuming to guide and instruct. The intelligence which we consider necessary in the present instance, should extend to the following particulars:

1. An Elder should possess an adequate and even systematic knowledge of the doctrines of Revelation. Not with the view of preparing himself for skillful controversy, but that his faith may be an intelligent one, and that he himself may not be driven about by every wind of doctrine. He should distinctly know what he does believe, and be prepared as distinctly to state the reasons upon which his faith is founded. All should be able to perceive that his adoption of a particular system of opinions, has not resulted from educational prejudice, or from a species of chance, but from rational examination. A deficiency in this respect would be censurable in a private Christian, but highly inexcusable in a spiritual leader. Two important advantages would result from a sanctified acquaintance with the principles of religion: it would benefit the possessor, and assist him in benefiting others. Knowledge is the guide of practice; it imparts tone to the external conduct, and in proportion as right views of divine truth are attained, stability in the faith is secured, and religious comfort is promoted. But not only the personal satisfaction, but the public usefulness of an Elder depend on this knowledge. His faith may be assailed, and he should be able to defend it; or he may be appealed to for instruction, and he should be prepared to communicate it. Whatever, therefore, God has been pleased to reveal, should be considered as deserving of careful study; and whilst the formularies of the church are rendered familiar by frequent perusal, they should be diligently compared with the word of God upon which they are professedly based, and of which they form an admirable exposition.

2. An Elder should possess an intelligent acquaintance with the order and discipline of the Church, in which he bears rule. The necessity of knowledge in this case must at once be obvious. In his circumstances, it would be discreditable to be at

a loss for a reason of his preference of Presbyterianism to Episcopacy and Independency : and in cases of ecclesiastical process, in which he is called to act as a judge, it would not only be discreditable, but criminal, to display such an ignorance of the rules of procedure as might prove a serious detriment to those, whose Christian character or standing is at stake. It is too common for Elders to depend on the knowledge of the clergy in such cases, instead of examining for themselves ; and hence, in the various judicatories, they seldom assist by judicious opinions and counsels in the transaction of business involving ecclesiastical law. This fact is much to be regretted ; but the remedy is within the reach of every one who will be at sufficient pains to study the "Form of Government," the "Book of Discipline," the "Rules for Judicatories," and the "Assembly's Digest" of adjudged cases ; all of which have been prepared for Elders as well as Ministers, and may be perfectly understood by the patient application of plain common sense.

3. An Elder should be acquainted with casuistical divinity, or, in other words, he should be skilled in resolving cases of conscience. Frequently, in the discharge of his duty, he will be required to consider the cases of professing Christians in all the variety of their aspects, and to exercise a discrimination, without which his advice and counsel will be perfectly nugatory. A general strain of religious remark which is used upon all occasions, if it does no harm, will not, likely, do much good. Different cases in conscience, like different cases of disease, require different treatment ; and to adapt it properly, there should be a large acquaintance with the various methods of God's dealing with the souls of men, and with the various arts and devices which the great adversary employs to deceive and destroy. An Elder should himself be experienced, that he may with greater skill discriminate between false and just hopes, between fictitious and genuine feeling ; that he may be able to direct the anxious, succour the tempted, console the disconsolate, and warn the self-deceiving and presumptuous. They become the best furnished in this respect, who exercise themselves most diligently. The best sources from which information is to be drawn upon these subjects, are the examples recorded in Scripture, Christian biography, conversation with fellow Christians, and frequent visits to the bed of sickness and death. A careful resort to these sources will furnish both the mind and heart, and qualify an Elder to become a messenger of glad tidings.

4. Finally, an Elder should be no novice in his acquaintance with men. As ignorance of the world disqualifies for the successful pursuits of worldly business, so ignorance of the diver-

sity of human character, will prove a serious impediment in the government of the Church. We have often known congregations to be thrown into tumult, and reduced to the verge of ruin, by an imprudent exercise of authority, originating in this kind of ignorance. The same rule of procedure cannot be applied to all cases with the same propriety. A wise parent will study the different dispositions of his children, and adapt his treatment accordingly; and the same course will be pursued by a wise ruler in the Church. In this sense, Paul became all things to all men. To acquire influence over an individual, it is necessary that his dispositions, his temperament, and his peculiar mode of thinking should be first studied. This preliminary knowledge obtained, it will be easy to see how to proceed in doing him good; but if, in the neglect of this knowledge, one general course is pursued in relation to all, it will as likely be wrong as right, in a majority of cases. Thus, every man conversant with the affairs of the Church must know, that, in the exercise of discipline, the ends of it will be defeated, if the application of it be not regulated by discretion. The severity of the rebuke, which might be indispensable in one case, would be ruinous in another; some are melted and won by tenderness, when they have been guilty of a censurable act, and others are only to be aroused by severity. In a word, a well ordered Church, in which the unity of the spirit is preserved in the bonds of peace, will always be found to be greatly indebted to this kind of knowledge in its spiritual officers, which inclines them to act judiciously, and to conduct the affairs of the Church with discretion.

Having thus presented an imperfect view of what we conceive to be the qualifications of Ruling Elders, we will now consider the duties incumbent upon them in this office.

#### DUTIES OF RULING ELDERS.

As men are not to be selected for the Eldership from the mere circumstance of wealth, station, or worldly respectability, or because they may be covetous of the distinction; so, when solemnly chosen from a persuasion of their peculiar fitness, they should never regard their office as a sinecure. It is lamentably true, that it is often thus regarded by incumbents, who, either ignorant or forgetful of their peculiar responsibilities, are seldom seen in the discharge of a solitary duty appropriate to their station. They may occasionally attend the meetings of session, or assist in the distribution of the sacramental emblems, but in the more spiritual duties of their station, how

seldom are they found cordially engaged? Whenever it is to any considerable extent true, that Elders are habitually unmindful of their duty as spiritual leaders, the flock committed to their oversight must be exposed to danger, and the occupation of the office will be worse than useless. It appears highly necessary then, that the nature of the service which the Church has a right to expect from them should be explicitly stated and urgently enforced.

It is the duty of an Elder, to bring into energetic exercise, the qualifications which we have before enumerated, in promoting the interests of the particular church with which he is associated, and in extending aid to the church more generally.

1. He should heartily cooperate with his pastor in giving efficacy to the measures which immediately relate to his particular church. Here he enjoys an appropriate sphere of action, in which his labours, if they be faithfully directed, may prove eminently serviceable. One of his most peculiar duties is, to encourage, by his presence and aid, MEETINGS FOR SOCIAL WORSHIP. The existence and prosperity of such meetings are essential to the well-being of a church. It is no longer problematical, but certain, that where they are neglected, religion languishes, and the public ministrations of the word come home to the heart with less energy and effect. And the reason is evident. They afford salutary pauses during the week, to repress the strong tendencies to worldly-mindedness—to deepen reflection—to cherish the spirit of devotion, and to prepare the heart for the most profitable employment of the privileges of the Sabbath. To promote and enliven these meetings, Elders must attend constantly and conscientiously, and engage fervently and devoutly; and we can scarcely imagine a valid excuse for their absence, except in serious bodily indisposition. Their example must produce an effect; it will either incite the people to more diligent attention to the means of grace, or it will afford them a plausible pretext for their criminal neglect; and wherever such meetings have been established, it will generally be found, that the attendance of the people is proportioned to the attendance of their spiritual officers. This being the fact, how heavy must be their responsibilities, and how aggravated their criminality, if through their default, the people forsake the assembling of themselves together, and cease to be instant in prayer!

Another particular duty incumbent upon them is, the INSTRUCTION OF THE YOUTH OF THE CHURCH. This, it is true, is an important pastoral duty, but it is one in which the Eldership should participate. Their assistance is essential to its proper performance, and is required by all the circumstances of the

case. The youth of a Church are its hope ; they are naturally regarded as its future supporters and guardians, upon whom its prosperity in a succeeding age is dependent ; but if their minds are not early imbued with religious truth, and an early attachment in them to divine things secured, this expectation is disappointed, and a sorrowful prospect for the future is presented. The lambs of the flock, defenceless, inexperienced, and disposed to wander, should be carefully guarded, patiently instructed, and affectionately guided in the path of truth. The religious culture of many of them is wholly neglected by their parents, who feel no solicitude for their souls and employ no means for their instruction in righteousness. The dangers, therefore, to which they are exposed, from irreligious example at home, should plead powerfully in their behalf. They have precious and undying souls—they are subject to peculiar and pressing temptations—they are, from the tenderness of their age, susceptible of impressions which may be permanently good or bad—they may be won or lost to God—and shall not these considerations insure to them the paternal care of the church ? Will not their Elders tenderly watch for their souls, and instil into them the principles of true piety ? Unquestionably this is their duty.

VISITATION is another branch of his duty. Not only every communicant, but every individual in a church should be familiarly known to its officers ; and this acquaintance cannot be acquired without systematic visitation. The objections usually urged against this plan, are more imaginary than real, and the experiment would prove that it is not only practicable, but pleasant and useful. In the prosecution of it, innumerable opportunities would occur of benefiting both parents and children. Many practical lessons might be inculcated—many useful inquiries might be answered—many seasonable admonitions might be administered—and many persuasives to piety be employed in relation to persons, whose peculiar cases have not been fully met, in the public ministrations of the word. But whilst there should be a general visitation, particular attention should be extended to the sick and afflicted. In such cases much attention is expected, and far more than a Pastor can ordinarily give, under the pressure of his various duties. The Elders, therefore, must be his helpers, evincing sympathy for the distressed ; reminding them of their duties in the day of affliction, and bearing with them the message of peace to the sick and the dying. And to this duty they should be excited by the consideration, that the heart, when touched by affliction, is more sensitive and more accessible to religious truth, and its pride and repulsiveness are more likely to be overcome by well

adapted exhortation and reproof. If the sick are required to "call for the Elders of the church," that they may "pray over them," it implies the duty of the Elders to be prompt in obeying the call; and if the Elders are supposed to possess "pure and undefiled religion before God," they should demonstrate it, by "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

THE ADMISSION OF INDIVIDUALS TO THE SEALING ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH is another duty incumbent on Elders in connexion with their Pastors. Our Church has wisely provided that the personal piety of individuals, proposing themselves as candidates for church fellowship, should be strictly scrutinized. An honest profession always rests upon this foundation, and all other is but plausible hypocrisy. To guard against unhallowed intrusions, caution and vigilance are necessary in the officers of the Church. A Pastor should never assume the responsibilities connected with this duty, to the exclusion of the opinions and judgment of his session. Here they may, and ought to act as very important "helps;" and if ever they are called upon to bring into requisition their knowledge of men, and their acquaintance with experimental religion, it should be in cases of this kind. If formality in the profession of the Gospel is a curse to the church, they are solemnly pledged to employ every means to prevent its introduction. And how can this be done, unless they are cautious, discreet, and watchful in opening the pale of communion to candidates? Examinations are conducted in a manner entirely too loose and lenient; as if the admission of the individual were to be a matter of personal favour, rather than a matter of conscience. Improper motives may multiply the facilities of admission; and among these improper motives, perhaps no one has usually greater influence than the "lust of numbers," or a desire to impose the belief, that a particular church is flourishing and prosperous. Sad must be the result when such is the motive. The kingdom of Christ is not strengthened by accessions, but by accessions of the *right* kind; and the army of the living God is not rendered more effective by a large enlistment of such as have no spiritual discipline. To prevent the evil effects of indiscriminate admissions, there should be a thorough inquiry into the nature and ground of every candidate's faith, and into the tenor of his life. The best appearance may be false, and although human sagacity may not always be able to discriminate between the genuine and the spurious, yet the cautious attempt should always be made, both in mercy to the church, and in mercy to the candidate. Sessions, therefore, should uniformly inquire, is the knowledge of the individual competent? Are his views of divine truth correct and connected? Does he appear conscious of a work



of grace in his heart? Is his experience of a Gospel hope well evidenced? Has sufficient time elapsed to test the solidity and the operations of his faith? And, on the contrary, it would be well to inquire, if the application has not been the result of undue solicitation, or encouragement, from some quarter? If it may not be accounted for upon the ground of temporary apprehension, animal excitement, or morbid feeling? If there be suspicion, there can be no danger in postponement, with a view to further trial. Caution is indispensable, and where this is prayerfully and conscientiously used, the church, although it may embrace fewer professors, will abound with more graces.

A still further duty is activity in RECONCILING DIFFERENCES, AND QUIETING ANGRY FEELINGS WHICH MAY ARISE IN THE CHURCH. These are to be expected from the imperfection of human nature; and yet their occurrence is always destructive of spirituality. Such differences usually originate in trivial causes, and subsequent imprudence in the parties widen the breach. A cautious and prudent mediator may arrest the evil at the commencement, and quiet the exasperation, which, if permitted to gain strength, may result in entire alienation. A pastor cannot accomplish this duty alone; the Elders should be anxious to participate in the blessing promised to peace-makers. Private Christians are seldom aware of their duty, in seeking a friendly interview with those against whom they have any cause of complaint; and if such interviews are sought, they are generally managed in so bad a spirit as to magnify the difficulty, and produce greater estrangement. This, however, may be obviated by the seasonable interference of their spiritual officers, who, by their affectionate exhortations and discreet counsels, may unite Christians in the bonds of peace, and thus essentially subserve the cause of the Gospel.

It is the duty of Elders to SUSTAIN THEIR PASTORS AND TO INCREASE THEIR INFLUENCE. This is to be done not merely *negatively*, by abstaining from secret insinuations against their character or ministerial conduct, which may lessen them in the esteem of the people; but *positively*, by cooperating with them in every proper measure; by evincing for them a cordial friendship; by removing from the minds of any of the people any dislike which they may have conceived against them; and by reporting to them any circumstances, or facts, the knowledge of which may be useful to them in the discharge of their sacred functions. Ministers are in no ordinary degree dependent upon their Elders; the neglect or misconduct of the latter may essentially mar the usefulness of the former, whilst their zealous and friendly cooperation may render them a blessing to the flock.

But finally, it is a highly important duty of the Eldership to

**EXERCISE DISCIPLINE.** The proper subjects of discipline are those who walk disorderly ; and excellent rules in those painful cases, may be found in the Book of Discipline, provided by the Church. On this subject, we can do no more than offer a few brief hints. There should be *caution* in selecting the subjects of discipline. Every case which may be censurable, does not demand a formal process. The interests of the Church are jeopardized by multiplying the cases of discipline, and accordingly, proceedings should be instituted only, when the peace and purity of the Church may evidently require them. In prosecuting discipline, there should be no *undue severity*. The chief design of Church authority is to benefit, and not to crush those under its exercise ; and an Elder should never take pleasure in stretching its cords to their utmost tension ; and much less should he suffer any private pique, or personal feeling to influence him in pronouncing judgment. The authority of the Church is impiously perverted, when used as an instrument of gratifying personal malice. There should, farther, be no *improper partialities*. Whatever be the station and relation of the disciplined, let equal justice be rendered. Private considerations of friendship should not interfere with public duty ; and there should be no shrinking because the offender may hold a high rank in society, and may possess an extended influence. To the poor and to the rich, to the obscure and to the conspicuous, the measure of justice should be dealt out with the same impartial hand. Finally, there should be no *needless exposures*. The great objects of discipline are often better accomplished by private rebuke and censure, than by public exposure ; and the acts of Session should never be blazoned abroad, unless the purity of the Church evidently requires it. And much less should the officers of a Church make the failings of Christians the topic of public discourse, or the theme of private gossip. They compromise their dignity, and injure their usefulness by condescending to such improprieties.

Such are the prominent duties which an Elder owes to his particular Church, and for the faithful discharge of which, he needs the illuminating and strengthening grace of God.

Having enumerated the principal duties devolving upon Elders in relation to their particular Church, we will in the second place, briefly advert to those which they owe to the Church in a more general sense. Whatever is obligatory on private Christians in this respect, is in a more emphatic sense obligatory upon them. Zion should be near and dear to their hearts ; it should be their chiefest joy to promote its interests, and enlarge its boundaries. Their prayers, their wealth, their talents, their time, their influence, should, in no small measure, be devoted to

God in the service of the Gospel. But in addition to the duties which rest upon them in common with private Christians, there are others which are particularly connected with their official station. We will speak of but two.

The first is, **PROMPTNESS AND ZEAL IN SUSTAINING RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.** Some of these are more general in their character, founded on a liberal basis, and embracing Christians of different denominations. And where Christians can meet without the compromise of principle, and cooperate with each other on common grounds, it is not only pleasing but highly desirable. In the distribution of the Bible, this may be done without conflict. The Bible, without comment, is the standard of every Christian's faith, and therefore all may safely unite in its wide circulation. Other institutions are established upon the same principle, although not with the same unanimity. But whilst we heartily commend a catholic spirit, we believe it to be perfectly consistent with strong partiality for a particular branch of the Church. Such partialities we know are decried as sectarian, but the designation of them by an odious name will never prove them to be wrong. Every Christian exercises his right in selecting the denomination under which he wishes to be embraced; he does it too under a persuasion that it is to be preferred on account of some peculiar features which recommend it above others; and whilst he thus prefers, he cannot but desire in a very particular manner, the prosperity of that denomination. This, instead of infringing upon the rights of others, is no more than the assertion of individual right, and is both honest and proper. The charity which can be offended at it must be of a sickly temperament. Presbyterianism is preferred by many, and of this preference none have a right to complain; and Presbyterianism has her peculiar institutions, around which her attached friends should rally, and to the support of which they should apply their resources. Elders, as officers in this Church, are particularly obliged by their station to promote its interests, to foster its institutions, and to guard against such insidious representations as would be calculated to weaken their sectional attachments. If young men are to be educated for the ministry of our Church, is it not important that they should be trained in our own Seminaries, and under the superintendence of our own Education Societies? Shall their instruction be committed to voluntary associations, composed of different denominations, under which they are likely to imbibe sentiments contradictory to our standards? And if our missionaries are to be sent forth to supply the wants of our Church, should they be commissioned by similar associations, which act upon the liberal basis of sending men without much regard to their

doctrinal principles? We earnestly protest against a catholicism of this kind, and remind the Eldership of our church to be awake to the danger of countenancing such principles.

The Presbyterian Church has her Boards of Education and Missions, and with the success of these her prosperity is identified. In the various sections of the Church, the Eldership may essentially contribute to their efficiency by their personal influence and exertion; and if they withhold these, they fail in their duty to the church of which they are officers. We appeal to them from a conviction that their agency is important, if not essential to the welfare of these interesting institutions, which, if properly sustained and managed, may send forth streams of spiritual life and health to the remotest limits of our Church.

The other duty which Elders owe to the Presbyterian Church at large, is a PUNCTUAL AND FAITHFUL ATTENDANCE UPON THE HIGHER JUDICATORIES. The regular attendance upon *Sessions* is not all their duty; their obligation extends to *Presbyteries*, *Synods*, and when specially appointed, to *General Assemblies*. If these Judicatories are really necessary to the good government of the Church, those who are properly the representatives of the people, should not absent themselves. They are established for important purposes, and the interests intrusted to them are not only local but general.

They are courts of appeal and review; the rights of individuals, the rights of particular congregations, as well as general principles relating to doctrine and discipline, are brought before them for adjudication; and in all these cases, the counsel and votes of the laity may be very important to a right decision. In relation to this point, there is a very observable remissness in the Eldership, and that equitable balance of power contemplated by our Constitution, is often affected by it. The lay delegation, to Presbyteries, Synods, and Assemblies, is always inadequate, and yet Elders are bound, by the requirements of their office, to fulfil this duty, and the people whom they represent have a right to expect it from them. We are well assured, that if this duty was estimated as it ought to be, the usual apologies for neglect would lose their weight, and sacrifices would be encountered, if sacrifices were called for, in its performance.

Such are the qualifications, and such are the duties pertaining to Elders. How important and responsible their station! Let those who occupy it, take heed to themselves and to the flock of which they are overseers; and as they are stewards of God, may they strive to be found faithful.

THE  
SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE  
OF  
THE ATONEMENT

ILLUSTRATED AND DEFENDED.

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## THE ATONEMENT.

THE Atonement of Jesus Christ is a subject of deep and vital importance. It forms the basis of our holy religion; it lies at the foundation of a sinner's hopes for eternity. It constitutes the grand and distinguishing peculiarity of Christianity. Such a subject deserves our solemn and deliberate consideration. We should approach it with humble and candid minds; desirous of discovering the truth, and fearful of being deluded by error.

Let us, then, in humble reliance on Divine assistance, look at the *nature*, the *extent*, and the *necessity* of the atonement made by our Lord Jesus Christ.

From human reason we may learn something of the necessity of a satisfaction for sin; but from divine revelation alone can we learn the true nature and the real extent of Christ's atonement. Metaphysical speculation and refinement must not approach this sacred subject; they serve only to obscure, darken, and distort this precious doctrine. To be seen in its just proportions and native beauty, it must be viewed in the pure and steady light of inspiration. Inspired prophets and apostles, not proud philosophers, are to be our teachers. We are to bow, not to the dictates of erring human reason, but to the authoritative statements of the word of God. Our anxiety should be to know what the Lord has been pleased to reveal in relation to this subject, so interesting to fallen, ruined man.

That Jesus Christ died and was buried, are facts disputed by none. That he was the Son of God, God over all, blessed forever; that he condescended to become the mediator between heaven and earth; that, having assumed human nature into a personal union with his divine nature, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; that, in this manner, he made atonement for the sins of men; and that being now alive from the dead, he ever lives to intercede for his people; are truths so plainly taught in Holy Scripture, as to be universally admitted and believed, by all who are worthy to be acknowledged as Christians.

## THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT.

But, when it is asked, why did Christ die? what is the nature of his atonement for sin? a question is proposed that divides Christians into two distinct classes, who embrace two distinct and very different theories on this momentous subject. The one class contend for an *indefinite*, the other for a *definite* atonement. Let us examine both theories, and see which will bear the test of Scripture.

The first class maintain, that Jesus Christ has made atonement for the sins of all mankind, as well for the sins of the damned as for the sins of the saved; and that his atonement consists in making a *display* of the evil of sin, and in satisfying the *rectoral* justice of God. Affirming that Christ only suffered for sin, and denying that he was charged with the sins of his people, or bore for them the penalty of the violated law, they contend, that the atonement merely opened the way of salvation for sinners, and that it secures salvation to none.

This scheme is, in our view, at once unscriptural and inconsistent with itself. By this scheme the penalty of God's law is abandoned; its claims remain forever unsatisfied. Jehovah had solemnly threatened that sin should certainly be punished: but, notwithstanding this solemn and positive threatening of infinite truth, sin escapes merited punishment. Neither the sinner saved, nor any one in his place, is punished. The divine law is of course dishonoured; it lies prostrate in the dust.

But our opponents will insist, that in the sufferings of Christ, the evil of sin has been conspicuously displayed, and that God has proclaimed his abhorrence of sin. That they are mistaken in this view of the subject, and that according to their theory, no such results follow, will be shown. But before this is attempted, let us notice a previous question. If the atonement consisted merely in making a display of the evil of sin, what necessity existed for the sufferings of our Redeemer? By the miseries of this fallen world, and the tremendous judgments inflicted upon ungodly sinners, the evil of sin had been exhibited in a fearful manner. It has been shown in the destruction of the old world by the waters of the flood; and in the overwhelming of the cities of the plain with a deluge of fire. It has been written in the blood of slaughtered millions of our race, read in the light of burning cities, and proclaimed in the history of fallen kingdoms and empires. The agonies of dying infants, the ashes of



mouldering generations, war, famine, and pestilence, are awful testimonies to the dreadful evil of sin. In the fall and ruin of angels it may be seen; and when, in the day of judgment, impenitent millions of men, the devil, and his rebellious associates, shall be driven from the presence of Christ, into everlasting fire, it will be seen in a still more striking manner. The flames and torments of hell will forever exhibit the horrible evil of sin, and proclaim God's abhorrence of it, in tones of thunder to the universe of intelligent beings.

Is not this atonement enough? Will not all this suffering of millions of immortal beings, extended through eternal ages, be a sufficient display of the hateful nature and dreadful evil of sin? Is it affirmed that a more awful and striking display of this evil was required for the good of the universe, and that this is seen in the sufferings and death of the Son of God? According to the definite scheme of atonement, such results will be found to follow; but not according to the indefinite scheme. In fact, on the principles of the latter theory, no display of the evil of sin can be seen in the Saviour's sufferings. In the misery of fallen men and fallen angels, it may be seen; because, being sinners, they are justly punished for their sins. But let us suppose a holy angel, whose heart glows with love, and burns with zeal, while he serves his God, subject to dreadful torments; would such a spectacle in heaven of a pure and innocent creature thus suffering, exhibit to an intelligent universe the evil of sin? How could the sufferings of a creature entirely free from sin, both *personal* and *imputed*, display its evil? But suppose the place of immolation to be changed, and this sinful world, and not heaven, to be selected as the theatre of his sufferings; would this change of circumstances produce a different impression on the minds of intelligent creatures, in viewing such a transaction? Certainly not. It would be an awful spectacle; it would inspire dread; but it could make no discovery of the evil of sin.

Jesus Christ, the Lord of angels, submitted to the deepest humiliation, and endured the bitterest agonies both in soul and body. He was, it is agreed, perfectly holy and free from all *personal* sin; and consequently could not suffer for *personal* guilt: and if, as the theory we oppose affirms, he was free from all *imputed* sin, he could not suffer for sin at all; and consequently the evil of sin could not be seen in sufferings not inflicted as punishment for sin.

Nor can there be, according to the scheme we consider, in the death of Christ, any *satisfaction* to God's *rectoral justice*

Suppose a distinguished citizen of the United States, who had done great service to his country, and had committed no offence, were seized by the president, thrown into prison, subjected to bitter sufferings, and finally deprived of life, when no law required such treatment, could any satisfaction to public justice be perceived in such a flagrant transaction of arbitrary power? Would not every man of common sense exclaim against it as an odious exhibition of great injustice? The law of God, it is admitted by the advocates of the indefinite scheme, did not demand the death of Christ; nor did he die on account either of personal or of imputed sin. How then could the justice of God, as moral governor, require the Saviour's death? and if justice did not demand his sufferings, how could there be in them either a display of justice, or satisfaction to its claims? If, under the government of Jehovah, it were possible for the occurrence of such a spectacle, as we have supposed; if it were possible for a creature perfectly holy, free entirely both from personal and from imputed guilt, to be subjected to sufferings the most intense and dreadful, such as were endured by our blessed Lord, there might be exhibited a revolting exhibition of divine *sovereignty*; but no display of God's rectoral justice, nor satisfaction to its claims, could be seen in a spectacle so terrible.

On juster principles are the sufferings of the Redeemer accounted for by the advocates of a definite atonement. Christ, according to their theory, stood, as the *substitute* of his people, *charged* with their sins, and consequently he was justly required to bear the penalty due to them; and, in this way, made *ample satisfaction* to divine justice, and procured for them the blessings of salvation. Now, all the particulars contained in this brief statement are plainly taught in the Scriptures. If this can be made to appear, it will clearly follow that the definite plan is true and scriptural. Let us examine.

#### I. CHRIST WAS THE SUBSTITUTE OF HIS PEOPLE.

As the Son of God, the Redeemer was subject to no law; and when he assumed human nature, he was in that nature, by its personal union to his divine nature, entitled to the highest possible honours. Yet it is expressly stated, that Christ "was made under the law." He came under obligation to obey the law, both moral and ceremonial. Accordingly he was, on the eighth day, circumcised; he attended the Jewish feasts, and observed the Mosaic ritual; and he

yielded a willing obedience to the moral law. How is this fact to be accounted for? Why did the Son of God come under this obligation? The same inspired writer whom we have just quoted, and who has taught us this wonderful fact, assigns the reason of it immediately after stating it; for he goes on to say, "That he might redeem them that were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons." Not for himself, but for us, Christ became subject to the law, and obeyed all its requisitions. He assumed our obligation, and yielded that obedience which we failed to yield.

That, in doing this, our blessed Lord acted as the *substitute* of his people seems obvious from the nature of the case. If he were not their substitute, how could he become subject to the law and obey it for them? Is additional proof demanded? We are able to meet the demand. Two propositions are used by the inspired writers, when speaking of Christ's sufferings, which, in the Greek language, plainly denote substitution. "The Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom *for* (*ἀντί*, *in the place of*) many." (Matt. xx. 28.) So spake our Lord himself. In like manner his apostle speaks: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died *for* (*ὑπὲρ*, *in the room, or in the stead of*) the ungodly." (Rom. v. 6.) Indeed the context will not admit of a different interpretation; for when the inspired writer says, in the seventh verse, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die;" it is perfectly plain that he intends *substitution*; that is, one dying in the place of a good man, to save his life. Now, if substitution is exhibited in the comparison by which he illustrates his subject, substitution must be found in the subject, Christ dying for the ungodly; which he exalts above every display of benevolence to be found in the history of human transactions; "But God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. Much more being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Rom. v.)

Besides, let it be remembered that Christ is expressly denominated a *surety*; that is, one who stipulates to meet the engagement of another, and to pay his debt. "By so much," says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "was Jesus made a SURETY of a better testament." (Heb. vii. 22.) "And

for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." (Heb. ix. 15.)

## II. CHRIST, AS THE SUBSTITUTE OF HIS PEOPLE, WAS CHARGED WITH THEIR SINS.

Imputation of sin is by some, who pride themselves on their discoveries in theological science, ridiculed as a novel and absurd idea. But were they to reflect that imputation of sin depends on a principle interwoven with the very framework of civil society, and essential to some of its most important transactions; and that it was for ages before the Christian dispensation, daily exhibited to the Jewish church in the sacrifices offered for sin, their sneers would be repressed by a conviction of their own ignorance. Were imputation to involve a transfer of moral character, so as to represent Christ as actually a sinner, and sinners as actually innocent, it would be absurd enough. But this idea we reject; and we think our opponents ought to possess intelligence sufficient to see that it has no connexion with the doctrine we advocate.

The acts of an attorney are imputed to his client; the acts of a woman to her husband; the acts of a representative to his constituents; the acts of an ambassador to the nation from whom he has received his commission. Did any one ever dream, that these transactions in human affairs and of daily occurrence, involved the transfer of moral character? Is it not easily understood and well known, that imputation in all these cases depends on the *union* of the parties. Union is the principle on which imputation is founded. The acts of one human being are never imputed to another, unless some union exists between them. This is the very ground on which sin is imputed to Christ. He and his people are united. The Father gave them to him to be redeemed; and he stipulated to become their surety, to stand in their place, to be responsible for their sins. Thus a sufficient union was constituted between the Saviour and his people, for the imputation of their sins to him.

Opposed as it is by some writers and some preachers, imputation of sin has, in every age, been exhibited to the church, by the God of truth. It was incorporated in the whole system of Levitical sacrifices, which were divinely instituted to show forth the good things to come under the gospel dispensation. The worshipper, having brought to

the altar a victim, and laid his hands on its head, confessed over it his sins. The victim was then slain. What was the meaning of this symbolical transaction? Did it not signify that the offerer wished his sins to be transferred from himself to the victim; which was slain as his substitute, and symbolically bore his punishment? Is not imputation seen in these sacrificial acts? Could it be taught with greater plainness in symbols, than it was on the great day of expiation? "And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, PUTTING THEM UPON THE HEAD OF THE GOAT, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and THE GOAT SHALL BEAR UPON HIM *all their iniquities* unto A LAND NOT INHABITED." (Lev. xvi. 21, 22.) Was not imputation of sin exhibited in this memorable transaction? Could any Jew contemplate the solemn scene, and not see this idea held up to his view in the clearest light?

The law was a shadowy representation of gospel realities. All the sacrifices under the law prefigured the grand sacrifice of Christ. To the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, they all pointed and directed the faith and hope of God's ancient Church. This is most plainly and particularly taught in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Jews, in celebrating the passover, were commanded not to break a bone of the lamb on which they feasted; and that this was intended to be typical of what occurred at the death of our Saviour, we are expressly taught by an evangelist to believe; for, after noticing the fact that the bones of Christ were not broken, although the bones of his fellow sufferers were, he states; "These things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken." (John xix. 36.) Now, if so minute a circumstance in the Mosaical institutions was fulfilled in the history of our Lord, can a doubt be entertained whether the important and leading idea, of the imputation of sin, so distinctly exhibited in the ancient sacrifices, was realized in the great sacrifice offered up to God by Christ? He gave "himself," says the apostle, "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin." (Eph. v. 2. Heb. x. 4.) "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix. 14.) But how could he take away sins, unless

they were laid upon him, or imputed to him, as they were symbolically laid upon, or imputed to, the animal victims, divinely appointed under the law to be types of him and his great sacrifice?

In accordance with this reasoning, we find plain scriptural statements. "He hath made him to be *sin for us*, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) How strong this language! Does it not carry the idea of imputed sin? Some, I am aware, interpret the passage simply to mean, that Christ was made a *sin-offering* for us. But how could he have been made a sin-offering, if no sin had been imputed to him? Thousands of animals were slain in Judea, and in dying suffered as much pain as animals slain at the altar; yet they were not sin-offerings, because they were not qualified for so important a service. For an animal to become a sin-offering, it was requisite that the sins of the offerer should be laid upon it before it was slain. In like manner for Christ to become a sin-offering, it was requisite that the sins of his people should be laid upon him, or imputed to him, previously to his sufferings and death. Thus, bearing their sins, and in no other way, could he be slain as a sacrifice to God, and become a sin-offering for our race.

This great and vital truth is inculcated by the evangelical prophet. Speaking of Christ, Isaiah says, "The Lord hath *laid* on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. liii. 6.) And with the prophet agrees the apostle Peter, who, in testifying of the Redeemer, represents him as bearing the same heavy burden: "Who his own self bare our sins, in his own body on the tree, that we being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness." (1 Pet. ii. 24.) But how could Christ bear our sins, or have them laid upon him, except by imputation? Sins are not *tangible* substances that can be removed from one person and laid on another. They are criminal acts, that may be imputed to another person than the offender, so as to render him responsible for them and liable to their punishment.

### III. JESUS CHRIST, BEING CHARGED WITH THE SINS OF HIS PEOPLE, BORE THE PUNISHMENT DUE TO THEM.

This is affirmed to be impossible; and if assertion be allowed to go for proof, and the right of making definitions be resigned to our opponents, the controversy must be yielded to them. "Punishment," says a writer of some note, "is natural evil inflicted for *personal* sin." Admit

this definition to be complete, and it will follow that Christ could not endure our punishment. But correct the definition, by adding two or three words, and you deprive the weapon of its edge, and render it harmless. Let punishment be, as it ought to be defined, natural evil inflicted for *personal*, or for *IMPUTED* sin; and it will operate in our favour.

Christ, certainly, was not subject to spiritual death; for had he been a sinner, he could not have made satisfaction for sin, nor have saved any of our sinful race. "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." All men are subject to one and the same penalty; yet it operates, on different men, in ten thousand different ways; and although spiritual death must necessarily seize on the transgressor, yet the law did not require the infliction of this part of the penalty on the surety of sinners. The reparation of its insulted honour demanded only, that he should submit to that humiliation, pain, shame, and anguish, both in body and in soul, which constitute the essence of its penalty.

Another point of difference between the punishment inflicted on a sinner and that inflicted on the Redeemer, is seen in their duration. The punishment of a sinful creature must necessarily be protracted through eternal ages; because he is unable to bear it in a limited period. But the Divine Saviour was able, in consequence of his almighty power, to bear, in a given time, any amount of suffering; and could, by the infinite dignity of his person, impart to his sufferings an infinite value: so that the law derived from the infliction of its penalty on the great Mediator, during the few years of his humiliation and sufferings, more honour than it would have derived from the infliction of the penalty on the whole human race, during the ages of eternity.

That our blessed Redeemer really endured the penalty of the violated law of God, seems plain from the history of his life. He submitted to deep humiliation; he led a life of poverty and sorrow; he felt not only the bitterness of death, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body, but the bitter agonies of what may be denominated the death of the soul. While suffering inconceivable anguish in the garden of Gethsemane, and trembling with horror and amazement of mind, he said to his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

In this light inspired writers place the Redeemer's sufferings. They teach, if not in identical, yet in *equivalent* terms, the same doctrine we teach, that he endured the pe-

nalty of the law. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being *made a curse* for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. iii. 13.) The curse of the law, from which Christ has redeemed us, is its *penalty*. And what can his being "made a curse for us," mean, but his enduring the curse or penalty of the law for us. The attempt to explain away the force of this text, by representing it as importing no more, than that Christ was hung upon a tree, is degrading to his sufferings. He suffered unutterably more than the pains of crucifixion. He endured the wrath of God. His *soul* was made an offering for sin. Compared with his mental agonies, his bodily pains were a mere trifle. The curse was vastly more than crucifixion or hanging on a tree. The quotation at the close of the text, shows the wisdom of Divine Providence, which so ordered the circumstances of Christ's death, that he died *visibly*, and he did *in reality* die, under a curse. In fulfilment of typical representations of his sufferings, our Saviour submitted to crucifixion or hanging on a tree; which mode of punishment had, in reference to this very event, been, under the law, pronounced accursed.

The same character is assigned to our Redeemer's sufferings by the evangelical Isaiah. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the *chastisement* of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath LAID ON HIM *the iniquity of us all*." Here the prophet states a *fact*, the sufferings of Christ; and then assigns the *cause* of these sufferings, our sins. First, iniquity is laid upon him, imputed to him, charged to his account; and then, the Lord, as a righteous judge, wounds him for our transgressions, and bruises him for our iniquities. Chastisement is *penal*. The original word signifies *exemplary punishment*. How plain and full the proof! And can it, in the face of such scriptural testimonies, be denied that our blessed Lord endured the penalty of the law? Let prejudice bow to inspired teaching.

#### IV. JESUS CHRIST HAS MADE AMPLE SATISFACTION TO DIVINE JUSTICE FOR THE SINS OF MEN.

Obscurity has been cast on this part of our subject, and error introduced, by a distinction made between God's justice and his *rectoral* justice. In human affairs we distinguish between a man and his office. He may derive dignity from



his office, while he imparts no dignity to his office. He may be offended *officially*, and not *personally*. To criminals a judge may say: "You have offended, not me, but the law; and I subject you to punishment, not to do away any dishonour done to myself, but to do away the dishonour done to the law." But this distinction will not apply to the Sovereign of the universe, nor would such language become his infinite majesty. Jehovah receives his right to reign from none. All his authority comes from himself. Having made the universe, he possesses an inherent right to govern all his creatures. Infinite majesty imparts dignity to office; office can impart no dignity to infinite majesty. It is condescension in God to hold the reins of universal empire. Through his office of moral Ruler, he displays his glory; but from his office he receives no real increase of glory. HE is offended, when his law is violated; and *He* punishes, not merely to uphold His law, but to vindicate His *own insulted majesty*. To the sinner *He* cannot say, you have not offended me: you have broken the law. In the day of judgment he will take care of his own glory. He will deny and condemn the ungodly, because "He cannot *deny HIMSELF*." The Judge will indeed come to save his people; but the ultimate end of the final transactions will be to *glorify HIMSELF*.

In its injurious effects on creatures, the evil of sin is indeed seen; but its unutterable evil can be seen only in the insult it offers to infinite majesty. This view of sin is essential to true repentance; and until a sinner gets this view of it, he is no true penitent. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," was the language of David; and it is the language of every contrite heart. A penitent grieves for the hurtful effects of his sinful conduct on himself and others; but he grieves especially for the dishonour he has done to God. It is on this account chiefly that sin deserves punishment. It offends the infinite majesty of Jehovah; and if there were but one intelligent creature in existence, and he a sinner, he would deserve to be punished, and would be accursed of God.

Divine justice or God's justice demands the punishment of sin; and this is the reason why Jesus Christ submitted to the penalty of the law. Consequently, by enduring the punishment which divine justice demanded, He made a *real and proper SATISFACTION for sin*. He bore what Jehovah deemed requisite to vindicate, not merely the honour of his law, but the honour of his own infinite majesty. So is the

matter represented in sacred Scripture. “For it *became Him, for whom* are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation *perfect through sufferings.*” (Heb. ii. 10.) Here the reason of Christ’s sufferings is assigned. What is it? A regard for the divine law? Certainly this was a reason; but it is not the reason here assigned. It was Jehovah’s regard for HIMSELF. The inspired writer refers not to his *official* but to his *personal* honour. He does not say, it became the Ruler of the universe; but “it became HIM, for *whom*, and by whom are all things;” that glorious Being who made all things *for his own glory*. The glory of God, and not simply his honour as moral governor, required the Saviour’s sufferings. The particular attribute that demanded satisfaction for sin, was his *justice*. In this light, inspiration places the truth. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. iii. 25.) Here we have stated the following truths; 1. Christ became a propitiation (*ιλασηντιον*) by the shedding of his blood: 2. He became a propitiation in proof of God’s righteousness in passing by sins committed in past ages: 3. Had not Christ shed his blood or suffered, God could not have been just, while he justified sinners. From all this it follows conclusively, that Divine justice demanded a satisfaction for sin, that salvation might be extended to sinful man, in a way consistent with the claims of this glorious attribute of a holy God; and consequently that as God, without disparaging his adorable justice, and while he appears upon the mercy-seat as a JUST God, does, from a regard to Christ’s blood, justify all who believe in Him, a *real and proper* SATISFACTION to his *justice* must have been made by the Redeemer.

V. FINALLY, ON THIS PART OF THE SUBJECT: IT IS TO BE PROVED, THAT CHRIST PURCHASED FOR HIS PEOPLE ALL THE BLESSINGS OF SALVATION.

None will deny that the Redeemer purchased his people; for such a denial would contradict the express testimony of inspiration. Paul affirms, “Ye were bought with a price;” and Peter, “Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your

vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers ; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb, without blemish and without spot." But why did Christ purchase his people ? Was it to make them his *own property* ? They were his own property by the right of creation and preservation. Why then did he pay his precious blood as a price for them ? It was, Peter tells us, to "redeem them from their vain conversation ;" from a sinful nature, which leads to a sinful life : it was to bring them into a new and peculiar relation to himself ; it was that he might, in a manner consistent with the claims of Divine justice, deliver them from all the miseries of their apostacy, and elevate them to the enjoyment of future and eternal happiness. If then they were purchased with the blood of Christ for this purpose, it will follow, that all the blessings conferred on them were bought with the same invaluable price. Accordingly we find in Holy Scripture, all these blessings exhibited in close connexion with the death of Christ, and represented as the fruits of his merits. Here by plain texts of Scripture, it might be shown that forgiveness, reconciliation, justification, sanctification, peace with God, adoption, and the eternal inheritance, were bought with the Saviour's blood. But we need not go into this detail. If the assertion in reference to the first and the last mentioned blessings be proved, it will be sufficient. Relative to the first, Paul says, "In whom we have *redemption through His BLOOD*, the *forgiveness of sins*, according to the *riches* of his grace:" and in regard to the last ; "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that, by *MEANS OF DEATH*, for the *redemption* of transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called *might receive the ETERNAL INHERITANCE*." (Eph. i. 7. Heb. ix. 15.)

Such, according to scriptural statements, is the *true nature* of Christ's atonement. In making it, inspired writers exhibit him as his people's *substitute*, *charged* with their sins, and bearing their *punishment* : and in this way, *satisfying* Divine justice, and *purchasing* for sinners, salvation with eternal glory.

#### THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

If the view given of the nature of the Atonement be adopted, one can hardly go aside from the truth in regard to its extent : or if on this point, he were to differ from us, we should feel little disposition to dispute the matter with him. All he could say would be this : "Christ in a certain sense

died for others besides his chosen people ;” which, on examination, would be found to be a mere verbal difference.

Not so the advocates of indefinite atonement. They affirm that Christ died for all and every man ; and that he made atonement as much for Judas who perished, as for Peter who was saved. This we cannot believe. It militates with what we have seen to be the true nature of the Atonement.

That the value of our Lord’s satisfaction is, in itself, considered infinite ; sufficient, if applied, to save the whole of Adam’s fallen race ; and that had it been God’s intention to save all mankind, our Saviour’s obedience and sufferings would have been amply meritorious ; and no addition to the depth of his humiliation, or to the purity of his life, or to the intensity of his agonies would have been required by Divine justice : all this we fully believe. In saving his chosen people, our Redeemer did and suffered all that would have been demanded, if the number given to Him to be redeemed, had been indefinitely increased. This conclusion follows from the *nature* of his work, from the *infinite dignity* of his person, and from the effect of the *representative principle* on which he acted.

Nor do we hesitate to admit, that all mankind, as well as those who live under the gospel’s light, have been benefited by the Redeemer’s death. Blessings have flowed from this precious fountain of mercy to our sinful world, that would, if Christ had not died, have been withheld. But when the question is proposed, what is the extent of our Saviour’s atonement ? for whom did he satisfy Divine justice ? in whose place did he lay down his precious life ? we answer ; for all to whom his atonement shall be applied ; for all believers ; for all who shall be saved ; for all whom his Father gave him to redeem. Hear his own language ; “ I lay down my life for the *sheep*.” “ I pray for them ; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me ; for they are thine.” (John x. 15 ; xvii. 9.) “ All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me : and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life : and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John vii. 37 —40.) Had it been the *intention* of God to save all, and the

*intention* of Christ to satisfy for the sins of all, all would certainly be saved. But all will not be saved. Millions will perish in their guilt. But how could any perish, if Christ really died with the intention of saving all, unless his purpose could be frustrated? His purpose can never be frustrated. He will do all his pleasure.

The texts adduced from Scripture that seem to militate against this statement, are easily explained. The universal terms found in them, are to be restrained in their meaning; as is necessary in many other portions of the Scriptures. For example, in these texts, the term *all* must be restricted; "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and *all* Judea, and *all* the region round about." "And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee, beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and *all men* come to him." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto me." The term *all* in each of these passages does not denote absolute universality; it necessarily requires limitation. And why do we restrict the term? Because facts demand the restriction. And for a reason equally good, do we restrict the import of universal terms in those texts that are cited by our opponents. The true scriptural nature of the Atonement demands the restriction.

#### THE NECESSITY OF AN ATONEMENT.

The necessity of an Atonement has appeared already in the explanation of its nature. But let us look at this point more distinctly.

Impressions of the necessity of an Atonement have rested on the human mind, in every age, and in every part of the world. The painful inquiry, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" has suited the feelings of convinced sinners, even in heathen lands. Hence the numerous altars erected, in all parts of the world; and hence the streams of blood that have flowed from those altars. Hence, in times of great distress, the immolation of children. Sacrifices originated in infinite wisdom; but the universal prevalence of them among heathen nations, who had lost the knowledge of their design,

resulted from strong impressions on the human mind, that a satisfaction for sin was necessary to propitiate Heaven.

The truth, that an Atonement was indispensably requisite, appears, with conclusive evidence, from the fact, that an Atonement full and perfect has been made by the Son of God in human nature. That this transcendently glorious person, so infinitely dear to his eternal Father, could have been subjected to such deep humiliation, such overwhelming shame, such agonizing pains, to the wrath of God, and to the curse of a violated law, when there was no real necessity for a satisfaction for sin, is incredible. The Saviour's unanswered prayer in the garden, that the cup might, *if possible*, pass from Him, was full proof, that the Father's will to save sinners could not be accomplished, unless their Surety drank the bitter cup of Divine wrath. "Without the shedding of the blood" of this great sacrifice there could be "no remission" of sin.

But whence, it may be inquired, did this necessity arise? It arose from the claims of Jehovah's perfections; which would have been dishonoured, if sinful man had been saved, without a satisfaction for sin.

The *holiness* of God could not permit man to be taken into favour and fellowship, without a full and public expression of Divine abhorrence of sin; to convince all intelligent beings, that God was not like sinners, but perfectly free from all moral defilement.

The justice of God demanded full satisfaction for the dishonour done by the transgressor to his law, to his government, and to his own infinite majesty. It could admit a substitute; but it could not dispense with punishment. Either man, or his surety, must bear the penalty of a violated law. In confirmation of this, we refer the reader to remarks previously made on two passages of Scripture.\*

The *truth* of God demanded satisfaction for sin. He had sanctioned his law by a fearful penalty denounced against disobedience.

Thus his truth was concerned in the infliction of punishment. That a transfer of the penalty from the original offender to his surety, is consistent with Divine truth, God himself hath decided: and by the same convincing fact, the death of his own Son in man's stead, he has decided, that his truth could not allow sin to be pardoned, without the execution of his threatenings against sin. In justification

\* See pages 13, 14.

the believer is pronounced righteous ; but how could such a sentence be pronounced by the God of truth, if the justified sinner were not rendered righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ ? “ Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” “ Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” (Rom. x. 4.—iii. 22.)

#### OBJECTIONS.

Against the doctrine maintained, serious objections are urged.

1. It is pronounced *unjust* to punish the innocent for the guilty. So affirm the advocates of indefinite atonement.

That Christ suffered for sinners, is acknowledged by those whose system we reject. He suffered all that pain and shame that infinite wisdom and justice deemed proper to measure out to him, while accomplishing our redemption. All this he suffered for the guilty. The sufferings of our Saviour we denominate *punishment* ; because inspired writers attribute to them this character. Now, it is perfectly plain, that, by thus denominating Christ's sufferings, we do not increase his humiliation, his pain, his sorrow, his shame, his anguish, in the smallest degree. We only call them what Paul and Isaiah called them. If, in the estimation of our opponents, it was not unjust for the Redeemer to endure overwhelming suffering for guilty men, what reason can they assign for affirming it to be unjust for him to endure the same overwhelming sufferings, as a punishment for guilty men ? It has been shown, in explaining the nature of the Atonement, that Jesus Christ was charged with his people's sins ; and that, on this account he did, and could justly, suffer punishment for them. Had he not been their substitute, had not their sins been imputed to him, he could not have suffered for them. So that objectors, by denying his substitution, and his being charged with sin, take away the very ground on which his sufferings can be vindicated. That death is the wages, the penalty, the punishment of sin, they cannot deny ; nor can they deny that our Redeemer suffered death : and it is for them to show, how it was consistent with justice, to inflict *death*, “ the wages of sin,” on one who was not only perfectly free from *personal*, but perfectly free from *imputed* sin ; to treat him as a sinner, and to make him a curse or accursed.

But this objection comes from another quarter. Infidels urge it against the truth of the Gospel. It is a weapon, how-

ever, whose edge is easily turned. Injustice cannot be done, without injuring some one. But who is injured in the great transaction under consideration? Not man; for he is saved from eternal misery, and raised to the enjoyment of eternal happiness. Not God; for he is glorified by the atonement; his law is honoured and magnified; his moral government is vindicated and sustained in all its authority. Not the Saviour; for he had a right to lay down his life, and he did it voluntarily: and having laid it down, he resumed it again, and has gone to receive an infinite reward; being in his human nature exalted above all creatures, and sitting as Mediator on the throne of Jehovah. There he rejoices with exceeding joy, in seeing the fruits of his toils and sufferings, millions of immortal beings saved from ruin, and brought to glory; and the influence of his redemption pervading the universe, and diffusing through the minds of all holy intelligent creatures the most delightful sensations.

True we can find no parallel to this wonderful transaction in human affairs.

But the principle on which it was based, is well known. It is daily acted on in the business of *suretyship*; which often involves individuals and their families in the most distressing calamities. And the reason why it is not applied to cases of a criminal kind, that would occasion the forfeiture of the lives of innocent persons, is, that human government could not render such an application of it productive of good. But let us suppose a case. Several portions of an empire rise in rebellion against government. Civil war is kindled. Desolation marks the progress of the conflicting armies. But after many hard-fought battles, the rebels are subdued. Multitudes are taken with arms in their hands. Justice demands exemplary punishment. The condemned refuse to sue for mercy. At this crisis an illustrious citizen comes forth, and offers to die for them. He has power to raise himself from the dead; and after his resurrection he will possess such an influence over the objects of his benevolence, as will secure their entire submission and convert them into useful and obedient citizens. In such circumstances, if they could exist in human affairs, would it not be wise and just in government to admit substitution in criminal matters, as well as in pecuniary concerns? We need not stay to show how these circumstances meet in the great affair of man's redemption.

2. It is asserted, that the transfer of punishment from the sinner to the Redeemer, was *impossible*; because



the penalty of the law can only be inflicted on the transgressor.

The history of mankind supplies many practical refutations of this bold assertion. How often have men been tried, convicted, condemned, and executed for crimes which they had not committed? A thousand times have penalties of human laws been inflicted on innocent individuals. To assert then that only the guilty can be punished, is to contradict undeniable facts. That punishment inflicted on the innocent is unjust, is certainly true; but the injustice of it cannot be pleaded against the fact, that innocent persons have often been punished, not only through mistake, but wilfully by unjust judges. Inspired writers, we have seen, do, in very plain and strong language, characterize the sufferings of our blessed Lord as partaking strictly of the nature of punishment. Not only were they laid upon him by a righteous judge, and inflicted on account of imputed sin; but they are, in Scripture, denominated a *curse*, a *chastisement*, a *punishment*.

3. It is urged that the views of Atonement advocated in this tract, are incompatible with *free and sovereign grace* in man's salvation.

This objection is based on the supposition, that *grace* and *purchase* cannot coalesce in saving sinners. Now, if fallen man had furnished the price, this would be true: for Paul testifies, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." But it is utterly groundless and false, when applied to the Redeemer's purchase. Redemption was not purchased by man. Man was infinitely too poor to furnish the price of redemption. The inexhaustible treasures of heaven alone could pay the ransom. In the infinite riches of his mercy, God provided the price; he sent his own Son into the world to pay it, by laying down his precious life. Now, when we consider all this; that the plan of our redemption was laid by divine wisdom; that it was executed by the Son of God; that the price of our salvation was furnished by his boundless love; and that the application of the Atonement is the effect of divine grace; are not the infinite riches of God's grace magnified beyond all conception? How surprising that any Christian should find an objection against the freeness of grace, on the very fact, which inspired writers exhibit as the highest demonstration of divine love, and which draws from them the loftiest strains of praise! "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins." "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

4. The last objection to be noticed, is, that in preaching the Gospel, our doctrine does not harmonize with a full and free offer of salvation to every sinner. It involves, it is said, a degree of insincerity, to tender salvation to those for whom Christ has not made satisfaction.

As those from whom this objection comes, believe the doctrine of personal election to everlasting life, it is fair to ask them, whether there is any insincerity in the proffers of salvation to individuals not elected to eternal life. Now, if the doctrine of particular election harmonizes with a full and free offer of saving blessings, why should the doctrine we maintain be supposed at all inconsistent with the same gracious arrangement of divine mercy?

Believing, as we do, that the atonement of Christ, in itself considered, is of infinite value; that God has established an *infallible connexion* between faith and salvation; and that he requires all who hear the Gospel to believe its precious truths, and embrace its proffered grace; we feel no difficulty in delivering our message to all our fellow sinners. We feel authorized to tell every human being to whom we have access, of the Saviour's love in dying for a fallen race; to assure him of his ability and willingness to save every sinner who will apply to him in the appointed way; to tender to him *individually* every blessing of salvation; to declare the solemn truth, that, if he perish, it will be owing, not to any *deficiency* in the value of Christ's Atonement, but to his own *wilful unbelief*; in a word, persuaded that the application of salvation in each case is made by the Spirit of God, we feel free in fulfilling the high commission—"Go ye into all the world, and *preach the gospel to every creature.*" All this is true; and if any complain, and venture to impute to such a message of grace the want of *sincerity*, they will find the Lord, the God of truth, can vindicate his own ways, and confound all who shall dare to dispute with him. "He that believeth not God, hath made him a *liar*; because he hath not believed that record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

## REFLECTIONS.

The review of this subject is calculated to awaken deep emotions of gratitude to God, for the all-sufficient Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Had not this wonderful provision of mercy been devised and prepared, what would have been our condition? Divine justice must have exacted the dreadful forfeiture of life on account of sin; and a holy God would have glorified himself in the eternal miseries of a fallen world. On earth not a note of praise would have been heard; and from every dwelling of man, the blasphemies of hell would have resounded. But how different the scene! Through the blood of Atonement, strangers are brought nigh to God; peace is established between rebels and their offended sovereign; the light of life gladdens every believing heart; praise ascends from earth to heaven; salvation and glory to God resound throughout the church. Heaven is receiving to its mansions millions of fallen men, washed in atoning blood, and sanctified by renewing grace. On earth a temple is building for God; in which, when finished and removed to a better world, his glory will shine forever with unutterable majesty and grandeur. Let our hearts overflow with emotions of gratitude and joy. Let us celebrate forever redeeming grace.

2. The Atonement of Christ claims an exalted place in the system of evangelical truth.

To speak of it as only opening a door of hope for sinners; to deny its securing salvation to any; to affirm that notwithstanding the sacrifice of Christ, all might have perished; is not uttering language in accordance with that of inspired men. It is undervaluing the Saviour's blood; it is degrading his propitiatory sacrifice. The Atonement holds in the system of revealed truth the highest place. In fact, it is the *centre*. Like the sun, it imparts light and heat to the whole system. It is the basis of all God's transactions with our fallen world. By inspired men it has always been exhibited as the grand object of faith. It was the substance of the types; the all-absorbing theme of prophecy; and the burden of apostolical preaching. The church before our Saviour's advent looked forward to his cross, with holy anticipation; the church since his coming looks back to his cross, with confidence and joy; and the whole church in heaven will forever contemplate the cross, and there see the price

of their redemption, and the brightest exhibition of divine glory.

The Atonement secures the salvation of no one! Yet inspired writers speak of it as the fountain of every saving blessing; and Paul, who well knew its inestimable value, gave to it his whole heart, and selected it as the sum and substance of his preaching; "God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." "For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." (Gal. vi. 14. 1 Cor. ii. 2.)

Reader, dost thou confide in the great Atonement? Thy faith may be orthodox, and thy heart wrong. In speculation thou mayest honour, but in practice dishonour, the sacrifice of Christ. Of what avail to thee will be the knowledge of an unfailing remedy, if it be not applied? The cross is lifted up to the view of all; look to it, and live.

AMEN AND AMEN.

THE END.

THE DUTY  
OF  
CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION.

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## CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION.

CATECHETICAL Instruction must have been coeval with the human family. At first all knowledge was communicated orally, and handed down by tradition. The first man delivered a stock of important ideas to his children; and they again to theirs, with different degrees of ability and fidelity. The most usual place of instruction was, doubtless, for a long time, the domestic circle. Here the pious patriarch would spend much time in dealing out to his listening children the lessons which he had learned in his youth from his predecessors, and those which he had been taught by his own experience. These instructions were properly of the nature of *catechising*, which may be defined to be “the familiar communication of knowledge, orally.” As long as this duty was faithfully performed by parents, the darkness of ignorance and idolatry were prevented, but as soon as it fell into neglect, error and vice must have been the consequence. Of Abraham, God certifies, “I know that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment,” Gen. xviii. 19. And God, by Moses, insisted more upon no duty than this, of domestic instruction in the truths of religion. “And the words which I command thee shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up.” Again, “Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach thy sons, and thy son’s sons.” Deut. iv. 9, 10. vi. 7. To these precepts the Psalmist refers, when he says, “He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children: that the generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children.”

Psal. lxxviii. 5, 6. The word *catechise*, is properly Greek, derived from the verb *κατηχέω*, “to instruct with the voice,” which is found, in some of its parts, six or seven times in the New Testament, but is commonly translated “to instruct;” because in English, the word *catechise* has somehow acquired a narrower signification than the original term, and conveys the idea of *instruction by question and answer*; whereas, the word in Greek includes all manner of elementary, oral instruction: and it would be desirable to bring back the word to its original meaning. This, however, is of small moment. The passages in which the original word is found, are the following: Luke, i. 4. Acts, xviii. 25. xxi. 22, 24. Rom. ii. 18. 1 Cor. xiv. 19. Gal. iv. 6.

It appears therefore that this mode of instruction is fully recognised in the sacred Scriptures. Indeed, if no other methods of inculcating divine truth were resorted to, than delivering elaborate and continued discourses from the pulpit, very little information would be gained by the young and the ignorant. Preaching supposes and requires some preparatory knowledge in the hearers, to render it useful in communicating religious knowledge. Elementary principles must be acquired in some other way; and this was more especially the case before the invention of printing, when books were very scarce, and few persons were able to read. It seems that the apostles and first teachers of the Christian religion were much occupied in giving religious instruction, from house to house; and we know from undoubted authorities, that in the earliest times of the primitive church, all who applied for admission into the church, from among the heathen, and all the children of Christians, were carefully instructed by catechising; that is, by a course of familiar teaching, *viva voce*. To every church a class of catechumens was attached and formed a kind of school, in which the first principles of religion were inculcated, and certain formulas of Christian doctrine, such as the early creeds, carefully committed to memory, together with portions of the sacred Scriptures. In some places these schools for catechumens became very famous, and were supplied with teachers of the highest character for learning and piety; so that they were frequented by the lovers of sacred literature from other countries. A celebrated institution of this sort flourished for several ages at Alexandria, in Egypt in which Origen was educated, and at which he became the most distinguished teacher. A large number of the treatises written by the fathers, in different countries, and in different centuries, were composed expressly for the instruction of the



catechumens. And until darkness overspread the church, and her unnatural pastors deprived the people of the Scriptures, the church was, as it ever should be, like a great school, where holy men of God devoted their time to the instruction of the rising generation, and of converts from paganism.

In catechetical, or elementary instruction, the grand secret is, "little at a time and often repeated." Whoever would successfully instruct children and very ignorant adults, should avoid the error of crowding too many things into their minds at once. It is as preposterous a practice as it would be to attempt to increase the activity, vigour, and size of the body, by cramming the stomach with as much food as it could hold. Moreover, the truths first communicated should be as simple as possible. Tender minds must not be fed with strong meat, but with pure milk. To accommodate instruction to the state of advancement in knowledge, and to the degree of development of the mental faculties, is certainly that part of education which is most difficult, and at the same time most important. That historical facts should form the commencement of a course of religious instruction, is indicated, first, by the method pursued in the Bible; and secondly by the predilection of all children for this species of knowledge. But at a very early period, moral and doctrinal instruction of the most important kind may be connected with the scriptural facts inculcated, and may always be most advantageously engrafted on them. Doctrinal catechisms are, it is admitted, not commonly understood well by children; but it can do them no harm to exercise themselves in committing the words to memory; for it is universally admitted, that to strengthen the memory, it must be frequently and vigorously exercised: and will it not be much better to have it stored with words which contain the most salutary truths, rather than those which may, by some association, prove injurious on the recollection? Sometimes the having committed to memory such a system as the Shorter Catechism, is of the utmost importance to an individual when his lot is cast where he has no means of correct information; or in case the person should lose his sight or hearing. We once noticed an exemplification of this in the case of a man of strong mind, who had led a busy life, without much concern with books, and who in his latter years was entirely blind. In conversation on the most important topics of religion, in which he took a deep interest, he would continually recur to the answers in the Shorter Catechism, which he had learned when young; and which now seemed to serve as a guide to

his thoughts in all his meditations. But the true reason why so many children learn the Catechism without understanding its meaning, is that no pains are taken to explain its doctrines, and to illustrate them, in a way adapted to their capacity. Parents are, for the most part, either incapable of giving such instruction or negligent in the performance of this important duty. "Most parents then stand in need of some helps to enable them to explain the meaning of the Catechism; and such helps have been amply provided, and should be in the hands of every Presbyterian family. We have works of this description by Vincent, Flavel, Thompson, and others of former days; and more recently an excellent exposition of the Shorter Catechism by the Rev. Mr. Belfrage of Scotland; and still more recently we have an excellent set of Lectures on the Shorter Catechism from the pen of the venerable Doctor Green, in two volumes, which we sincerely wish might be found in every family in our church, as a work of sound theology, written in a correct and perspicuous style. And while we are recommending expositions of this excellent little compend, we would not omit to mention with high approbation, the Rev. Matthew Henry's "Scriptural Catechism," in which all the questions are derived from those in the Shorter Catechism; and the answers throughout are in the very words of Scripture. This in our opinion is an admirable work, and ought to be reprinted and widely circulated. We are also free to recommend "Fisher's Catechism," as a valuable doctrinal work, which has been much used in Scotland, and by many Presbyterians in this country. The "Key to the Shorter Catechism," we also approve, and from the testimony of those who have tried it, we are led to believe, it may be made very useful in aiding children to understand the meaning of words and phrases used in the Catechism. The old Presbyterian custom of devoting the Sabbath evening, sacredly, to the business of catechising the children and domestics, in every family, ought to be revived among us where it has fallen into disuse; no other means which have been substituted for this, are likely to answer as good a purpose. Or, if public services in the church are considered on the whole expedient, on this evening, let an hour in the morning, or immediately after dinner be appropriated to this important work; it is as useful to parents, as to children; and is the most effectual method of inducing young persons to commit the Catechism well to memory; and unless this is done, the religious instruction of servants and domestics will be neglected. These family instructions should be conducted with great

gravity and kindness of manner: at such times, chiding and scolding should be avoided; and the addresses to the consciences of delinquents should be made with affectionate tenderness.

We do earnestly hope that attention to doctrinal instruction will not be relinquished, nor diminished, in our church. Hitherto Presbyterians have been distinguished above all people in the world, for a correct and thorough knowledge of the tenets of their own church. No people on earth are so well indoctrinated in the principles of religion, and in the proof of the doctrines believed, as the Scotch, and their descendents in Ireland and America. Other people far exceed them in metaphysical speculations, and in the knowledge of other matters: but for sound religious knowledge, commend us to Scotch Presbyterians of every sect.

The benefits of thorough instruction in the doctrines of religion cannot be calculated. The truths thus received into the mind may prove ineffectual, in some cases, to restrain from open sin; but even in these, the force of the truth is often felt, and the person thus situated, is much more likely to be convinced of the error of his ways than those transgressors whose minds are almost totally destitute of the knowledge of the doctrines of religion. There is, moreover, an unspeakable benefit from the possession of correct doctrinal information, when the mind falls under serious impressions of religion; for then, truths which had been early inculcated, and long forgotten, will revive in the memory, and serve to guard the anxious mind from those enthusiastic errors into which ignorant persons are so prone to fall when they are deeply exercised on the subject of their salvation. Let not the members of the Presbyterian Church, therefore, become remiss in that which has ever been her most honourable distinction; the careful initiation of children into the doctrines of religion, contained in her Catechisms; than which we believe, a sounder system of theoretical and practical theology, cannot be found in any language. It may appear rather extraordinary, that the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, should have prepared two catechisms, as this seems rather calculated to distract than edify the church. But the history of this matter is simply this. The Larger Catechism was first composed by a committee of three members; Dr. Tuckney, Dr. Arrowsmith, and the Rev. Mr. Newcomen; though there is good reason to believe that the first named had the chief hand in the composition. The work was highly approved, but was thought to be too long to be generally com-

mitted to memory by children, the committee was therefore directed to prepare a catechism containing the same truths, in a more condensed form. The Shorter Catechism is therefore an abridgment of the Larger, and by comparison it will be found to contain the substance of the Larger, expressed with more brevity, but containing, for the most part, the very language of the original. It was formerly a frequent thing for young persons of both sexes, in our church, to commit to memory, accurately, the whole of the Larger Catechism. Whether this practice is continued in many of the Presbyterian congregations, under the care of the General Assembly, our information is not sufficient to enable us to declare; but we cannot but believe that young persons who have accomplished this object, have acquired a treasure which may be to them of more value than thousands of silver and gold. One thus armed with the panoply of divine truth, will not be liable to be "carried about with every wind of doctrine," and every wild spirit of enthusiasm which may be abroad in the world; and when he reads religious books, or hears discourses from the pulpit, he will not only be capable of understanding them better than others, but will carry about with him a test, by which he can make trial of the correctness of what he hears or reads, and thus be in a situation to obey the apostle's exhortation, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." We cannot be contented to let the opportunity pass of bestowing merited commendation on those denominations of Scotch Presbyterians who are not in communion with the General Assembly, for their indefatigable industry and care in giving doctrinal instruction to their children. In this respect, it must be acknowledged, they greatly excel all other denominations of Christians in our country. Among them, we have reason to believe, there has been no falling off in attention to the Catechisms; and few instances ever occur of the members of these churches being seduced by the insidious arts of the propagators of error and infidelity.

The question may occur to some, To whom does it belong to give catechetical instruction? We answer, to all who are capable of teaching any thing of divine truth correctly. But, especially, it is the duty of parents, guardians, masters, school-masters, elders and ministers. All who can be enlisted in the service should be engaged to teach those more ignorant than themselves. And we feel constrained to give our testimony strongly in favour of Sunday Schools, in which so many persons are employed, so beneficially to themselves and others, in giving instruction out of the Bible. When this is

called a new institution, it surely is not meant that any new instruction is given; or that there is any thing new in the manner of communicating religious knowledge. The whole novelty of the thing consists in the success of the attempt to engage such a multitude of teachers in giving lessons, and such a multitude of scholars in learning them. But we would respectfully ask, whether parents, and ministers, and elders, have not become more remiss in catechising since the introduction of Sunday Schools?

In order to render the public catechising of children profitable, the pastor of the flock must manifest a deep and lively interest in the exercise. If he should appear indifferent, and attend on catechetical exercises in a formal or careless manner, no great good can be expected to arise from such meetings; but if he will take pains to arrange all the circumstances of such exercises: so as to render them interesting to old and young;—if he will propose special subjects of inquiry, refer to proper books, and converse freely with his people on this topic, a spirit of investigation will be excited, religious knowledge will be pursued with diligence and alacrity, and catechising will be found to be the most effectual means of diffusing correct information on the doctrines of religion.

If common schools were what they ought to be, seminaries in which Christian doctrine was carefully taught, then our schoolmasters would all be catechists, and the children would be trained in the knowledge of God, and their duty. The business of catechising youth seems also to be one of the appropriate duties of the eldership: for surely these officers ought not to be restricted to mere matters of order and government. As leaders of the people, they should go before them in religious instruction; and it would be an expedient, as it is a common arrangement, to have each parish so divided into districts, that every elder would have a little charge of his own to look after, the families within which he might frequently visit, and where he might frequently collect and catechise the youth. If ruling elders are commonly incompetent to perform such a work as this, they are unfit for the office which they hold, and can be of little service in the church in other respects. It is now becoming matter of common complaint, that our ruling elders are not generally sensible of the important duties which belong to their office, and are not well qualified to perform them. But how can this evil be remedied? We answer, that the effectual remedy will be found in an increased attention to instruction in the doctrines of the church, by which means many will ac-

quire a taste and thirst for religious knowledge; and whenever this occurs, there will be rapid progress in the acquisition of such a fund of sound theology, as will qualify them to communicate instruction to the young and ignorant. In the mean time, let every pastor meet with the elders of his church, once in the week, for the express purpose of discussing questions which relate to the duties belonging to their office: and thus those who are really desirous of executing their office in a faithful and intelligent manner, will become better and better prepared for their important work every year.

The question has often been agitated, whether it would not be expedient to have an order of catechists, whose duty it should be to attend to this whole concern; and the idea has been favourably entertained by some in the Presbyterian church. But to us it appears, that such an office would be worse than useless: for, if the catechist be taken from among the members of the church, where he is expected to officiate, and this must be the case if every church is supplied with one or more, then why not constitute him at once a ruling elder? Surely the mere name of *catechist* would not qualify him to give instruction; and if he is qualified, would he not be as able to teach, if called by the name elder as catechist? And if the office is judged to be expedient, because we cannot obtain well qualified elders, how can it be supposed that competent catechists could be found? The idea of some, however, is, that to perform the duties of catechising well, requires much more time than men can commonly afford from their own business; and, therefore, proper persons should be employed at a reasonable salary, to devote their whole time to this important branch of instruction. Now all this is very reasonable, and brings us to the very point mentioned before, viz. that schools, among Christians, should have it as their chief object, to bring up children in the knowledge of divine things; and the proper catechists of the church would be the teachers of these schools. If it be said, that school-masters are often incompetent to perform this part of their duty; we reply, that the same thing would be true if they were called catechists; or if other persons were sought for, in the present state of the church, there would exist the same difficulty in obtaining them as there is now in finding well qualified school-masters. The truth is, the church should take pains to train men for this very office; and the parents should set a much higher value on it, than they have been accustomed to do; and the office

ought to be rendered more respectable, and more desirable than it is at present.

It may, perhaps, be thought by some, that the prevalence of Sunday schools renders it unnecessary for church officers to concern themselves with the instruction of the youth under their charge. If, indeed, the schools of this description within the parish are under the special superintendence and tuition of the Pastor and Elders, there is no good reason why catechetical instruction should not be given in a Sunday school as well as any where else. Catechising is an exercise peculiarly suited to the Sabbath, and if the officers of any church should agree to conduct this part of instruction in these valuable institutions, it would certainly be an improvement on the plan on which they are commonly conducted. But when, as is commonly the case, these schools are made up of children of different denominations, and are under the direction of persons not connected with any one church, their existence and prosperity, while it will greatly facilitate pastoral labours, ought not to be considered as a substitute for catechising. We are afraid, however, that some pastors, as well as many parents, have become remiss in this part of their duty, from the mistaken idea, that their labours in this field are now superseded. This mistake should be carefully counteracted; and while the benefits of Sunday schools are gratefully acknowledged, the instruction of our youth in the Catechisms of our own church should be pursued with increasing diligence.

The old Presbyterian plan of conducting catechising did not confine this method of instruction to children and youth, but extended it to all persons except the officers of the church. And certainly one of the chief hinderances to the success of catechetical instruction has been that it commonly terminates too soon. When children have arrived at the age of twelve or fourteen years, they take up the opinion that they are too big and too old to repeat the catechism; in consequence of which, until the institution of Bible classes, our youth received no appropriate instruction, in many congregations, in that period of their lives which of all others is most important for improvement in knowledge. While we are strong advocates for catechetical instruction, we are at the same time warm friends to the method of instruction pursued in Bible classes; and we should be pleased to see both these methods of instruction extended to all ages and conditions of men; for who is there that has not something yet to learn? And what upon earth is so worthy of time and pains as the knowledge of God's word, and the doctrines of his wonderful love and

grace? Every man who contributes to the increase of this kind of learning by his writings, should be deemed more a public benefactor than he who invents the most useful machine. Let all, then, whom God has entrusted with so excellent a talent as that of writing well on theology, take heed that they do not hide it in a napkin or bury it in the earth; for never was there a time when there was a greater need of good books and tracts to counteract the floods of error which are issuing from a thousand sources; and never was there a period when the effect of good writing was so extensive. By means of the improvements in printing, and the facilities of conveyance in our day, opportunity is afforded of circulating opinions throughout the land; and if religious men sleep, there is no doubt that the enemy will sow his tares plentifully. Let the friends of truth, therefore, be watchful and wise, and ever on the alert, in seizing opportunities of enlightening the world with the pure doctrines of the word of God.

THE END.



LOVE

TO THE

DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE

AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT

OF

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

By REV. EDWARD W. HOOKER.

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## DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE, &c.

THE word of God describes various evidences of a renewed heart. That we may know our true spiritual state, it is important to try ourselves by them all. Each evidence is also to be examined in its particular exercises. As regards love, for example, the professor of religion is to inquire, not only have I, in general, a benevolent spirit; but do I love God, his people, law, service, kingdom, and the doctrines of his holy word? Love, as a "fruit of the spirit," exercises itself toward all its appropriate objects. The Christian under its influence will not love one proper object, and be averse to another; love God, but withhold his affections from some child of God; or love one precept and not another; one doctrine of the Bible and not another. If you are a true Christian, you will give evidence of it in this, that you love all that God requires you to love; himself, each child of his family, each precept and each doctrine of his holy word.

The object of the present tract is to consider "the love of the truth,"—attachment to the doctrines of the Bible—as an evidence of grace in the soul. God has set forth in his word a system of holy and glorious truths, toward which no Christian can feel indifference or aversion; some of these are, the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit; the sovereignty of God, as displayed both in his moral government, and in the accomplishment of his own most holy will and pleasure; as comprised in this last, the doctrines of decrees and election; the free moral and accountable agency of man; the universal, native and total depravity of mankind; regeneration, by the special and supernatural agency of the Holy Ghost; the atonement of Christ for man's sins by his sufferings and death; justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone; the final perseverance of the saints; the judgment of the world by Jesus Christ at the last day; and the future and eternal punishment of the wicked and blessedness of the righteous. The subject named as the title of this tract, is discussed with particular reference to these doctrines; for reasons which will be obvious. They, with others, compose the system sometimes called "evangelical," or "orthodox;" sometimes "the doctrines of the Reformation; but a better,

and an apostolical appellation, is that given by Paul, viz. "Christ crucified." Even some sceptical men, denying the inspiration of the Scriptures by the Holy Ghost, but interpreting Scripture language as they do that of other books, have candidly acknowledged that they teach this system of doctrines. If so even they judge, the man who professes himself a pious believer in the Bible as God's word, can withhold neither his faith in these doctrines, nor his love to them, and at the same time make good his claim to being considered a Christian.

Here we should distinguish between love to the doctrines of the Bible, and some things men are in danger of mistaking for it, to their ruin. An assent of the understanding, simply, to a truth of the Bible, it scarce needs be said, is not love to it. Men's understandings are often convinced of things as true, which they oppose, and from which they are utterly averse. This is true in relation to doctrines of the Bible, in many men. They regret that they are true, and their feelings are against them; while knowing in their own consciences that they are immutable truths. Love to the doctrines of the Scriptures should also be carefully distinguished from that preference which arises from some selfish or sinister reason. In the controversies respecting religious doctrines, it is not unfrequent that feelings of partizanship enlist unconverted men on the side of the truth. Do not boast that you are ready to contend for the truth. Do you love it? An orthodox head, as well as an Arminian or Pelagian one, may be associated with an unrenewed heart. A devout Christian can find no more complacency in orthodoxy itself, united with heartlessness and inactivity in the service of Christ, than in a blustering and denunciatory Pelagianism or Arminianism. Love to the truth is also to be distinguished from that kind of intellectual interest which arises from seeing its positions ingeniously proved or ably defended, in argument. It is also to be distinguished from simple hereditary preferences. Men are sometimes found preferring the faith of their fathers or ancestors; without any satisfactory evidence that they love the truths of the Bible therein set forth, for their own sakes. Some probably die in the speculative faith of their fathers in the very truths of God, and "die in their sins," and are forever lost.

Love to divine truth is an affair of the heart, as renewed by the Holy Spirit. It fixes the mind, the whole soul on the instructions of God's word. The sincere lover of the divine doctrines says of God, "I have esteemed the words of

his mouth as more than my necessary food." "I rejoice at thy word, as those that find great spoil." "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." His preference of divine truth is decided; "I have chosen the way of truth." He earnestly desires and prays for increased knowledge of it and guidance into it; "O send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me, and let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy habitation." He finds sacred satisfaction in seeing others receiving, honouring, and obeying it; says, with that apostle whose character seemed all love, "I rejoiced greatly, that I found of thy children walking in the truth;" "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth."

This Scripture account of love to divine truth, is attested by the experience of all who have been renewed by the Holy Ghost. It is deeply interesting to trace in the religious exercises and character of devoted Christians, their love to the doctrines of God's word. They describe their feelings not only respecting divine truth in general, but particular doctrines in which they have found peculiar satisfaction and to which they had great aversion, before they became Christians. They are not only convinced of them in their understandings and consciences, but rejoice in them, with an affectionate joy. Doctrines which they once regarded with indifference; or at which they were uneasy and jealous, and against which, perhaps, they often contended with all their powers; the Spirit of God has taught them to see in an entirely different light, and to esteem them as cause of gratitude and love to God. We might give, did our limits permit, multitudes of most instructive examples from the Scriptures, and from Christian biography, showing affectionate delight in divine truth generally, and in many particular doctrines, as an evidence of grace, prominent, bright and beautiful.

The reasons of this holy affection to the doctrines of the Bible are various. It is *God's* truth. In every Scripture account of it, he hears the voice of his Father and his God. He also perceives the character of God, which he supremely loves, as reflected by each truth of his word. There is also an excellence in the nature of divine truth itself, to his spiritual taste. "How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." Its effects also render it inestimable in its value. Its adaptedness to humble, quicken, sanctify him, and render him conformed to the character of his Lord and Saviour, renders it precious to his soul. He

loves it also for its effects on others, as the instrument of their conversion and sanctification to eternal life. He looks upon a world in sin and rebellion against God; sees every where the "stout-hearted and far from righteousness." What, he asks, shall break the power of this rebellion, bring down these stout hearts, stay the enmity of these spirits, bring back these wanderers to God? He remembers "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," and joins in the prayer of David, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, in thy glory and in thy majesty;" "thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things;" "let thine arrows be sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies, whereby they fall under him;" fall to be subdued, brought to obey and love him. His heart delights in such truths; gives glory to God for them, and for all they accomplish by the power of the Spirit of grace, to the salvation of man and the glory of God. In short, the Christian feels that his heart is attached to the doctrines of God's word, by cords which nothing can sunder. As he loves the divine character, so he loves divine truth. As he finds satisfaction in contemplating it here, he lives in happy anticipations of spending eternity in the contemplation of it, amidst the glories of heaven. And it is an animating reflection, that if here, where he "sees through a glass darkly," the doctrines of God's word appear so lovely, sublime, glorious; what will they be, when contemplated in the light which, to eternity, shall beam from the throne of his Redeemer and his God.

We consider, more particularly, the influence of love to the doctrines of the Bible on the Christian's character, habits of thought, feeling, and action. We shall find this part of the subject to have close application for the consciences of professors of religion in this day of fondness for modifications of doctrine, and of professions of new discoveries respecting religious truth.

Love to the doctrines of God's word will lead to prayerful and diligent searching of the Scriptures, to know more of them. The true Christian will desire to be an intelligent one, respecting divine truth. He will be content with no past attainments in the knowledge of it. "I follow after;"—"I count not myself to have apprehended." With the fervent desire to know the truth better, which he so much loves, he will look up to his Father and his God, saying, "lead me in thy truth, and teach me, for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness." In forming our opinion of Christian character, we are warranted in build

ing our judgment respecting individuals, as regards this evidence,—love to the truth,—very much on the devotedness and diligence with which we find them inquiring for it in “the lively oracles of God.” The professed Christian who lives upon opinions he has gathered, and from lack of interest, or from disinclination, spends little time in his closet with his Bible and his God, is one whose love to the truth is very questionable. For where there is grace in the heart, there is implanted a spiritual taste; and that taste will seek its gratification in an increasing knowledge of these beloved truths.

It will also lead the Christian to seek satisfaction in the various means of advancing in knowledge of it. Conversation with intelligent Christians, the writings of devout and able men; plain, faithful preaching of the truth; will all be highly prized. He finds, with other Christians, satisfaction, like that of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, in “talking together of all these things;” and his heart will burn within him, through this means, as owned of the Spirit for his quickening. Such a Christian will naturally and easily fall into conversation upon divine truth. He prizes next to the Bible, the books which are enriched by large drafts from the pure word. A text of Scripture is a bright spot to his eye, shedding light all around it. The preaching and writings of good men are valued by him, according as they help his conceptions of divine truth. He will sit in the sanctuary with devout satisfaction while he hears “the voice of the Lord,” in his proclaimed truths. It will be to him like the “voice from the excellent glory,” which the disciples heard in the mount of the transfiguration. Spoken by a frail and imperfect man like himself, it may be; yet he will listen to it, “not as the word of man,” but as the voice of God speaking through the lips of an “ambassador for Christ.” The messenger will be forgotten in the message. He will be conscious, that on the one hand, his devout affections for the truth and the feasting of his soul upon it, will be observed by Him to whose eyes, “all things are naked and open;” and that, on the other, if there lurk in the most secret recess of his soul a feeling which is reluctant at the reception and approval of “jot or tittle” of the doctrines of God’s word; that too will be known to Him “whose eyes are as a flame of fire.”

Another influence of love to the truth will be its inducing a jealous care that the head and the heart shall go together. The real lover of the truth will never be satisfied with mere intellectual progress and attainment in it. “Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have not love, I am nothing.”

Another influence of love to the doctrines of the Bible will be to inspire perfect confidence in their adaptedness to do good to the souls of men. Many calling themselves Christians, and among them some ministers, question or deny the profitableness of doctrinal instruction; and assert the hurtfulness of it; especially of certain doctrines. Those of the original and total depravity of man, divine sovereignty, decrees, election, the work of the Holy Spirit in renewing the soul, and the perseverance of the saints, are more frequently distrusted, as to their effects, than others. Respecting these, or any other doctrines set forth in the Bible, it will be the last question a lover of divine truth will ask, "will they do any good? will they not do hurt?" His confidence in the eternal and "only wise God" will be too childlike, implicit, and firm, to permit him to believe that in putting his holy word into the hands of men, he has given them instruction which will "do no good," and may or will "do hurt," as is a frequent allegation in these days. He will remember that which is written, "if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel should shine unto them;" and that also which is written respecting the very ministry of the truth, as being to some, "a savour of death unto death." He will remember that it is not through the unhappy tendencies of these doctrines that any are driven away from Christ and lost; but because they turn them into the means of injury to themselves, by "wresting the Scriptures to their own condemnation." If men will not submit to be slain by the "sword of the Spirit," as wielded by "the power of the Spirit," that they may live unto God; but will violently use it by perversion, to slay their own souls; the Christian proves that "their blood will be upon their own heads." His confidence in it, as of salutary efficacy, is implicit and happy, while he considers the good which it has done to his own soul; and to the thousands on earth, and the "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" now in glory. In view of the strange opinions of some, that there are doctrines in the Bible which do hurt; he may ask himself "is it possible that I have entered the kingdom of heaven, not only under hazards from my own wicked heart, the world, and Satan; but in hazard too from some of the very doctrines of the Bible." And his whole soul will recoil at the thought, as if Satan had whispered blasphemy in his ears. No. The Christian, loving the doctrines of God's word, will be willing to leave the ef-



fect of every one of them to Him, in the sure confidence that God can and will take care of his own truth.

Love to divine truth is a steadfast principle. We see changes in the midst of professors of religion, at the present day; from professed belief of the doctrines of the gospel, to an unsettled state of mind, and scepticism respecting them; and then to positive aversion. This is a dark sign, as respects the true spiritual state of any one. That doctrine of the gospel which a Christian has once loved, he will no more cease from loving, than he will "fall from grace." What is an apparent change, from loving any given doctrine, to distrust of it, and aversion, is only the manifestation of the solemn fact that it never has been loved. Love to the truth is not a thing which will, "like a vapour continue for a little time and then vanish away," leaving the Christian to be "tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" and at the sport of the feelings of uneasiness, prejudice, and aversion. The truths which the Christian begins to love, he will love to all eternity. The very thought of a change of the state of his affections towards any truth of God, would distress him like the undermining of the foundation of his hope.

The true Christian, as loving the doctrines of the Bible, will be willing to have them embraced in his confession of faith; and when he joins himself to the visible church, will be willing to declare to men, before God and all heaven, that he believes them. There is in our churches at the present time a singular sensitiveness respecting creeds and confessions. Now if a Christian has "received the love of the truth;" if the doctrines of the gospel have done his soul good; if he expects to be sanctified and saved through their means; what motive can he possibly have for keeping his belief of them secret. If he believes they have been to him "a savour of life unto life," why should he not tell the world so, with the explicitness of language, and the frankness of feeling, which become one who supposes himself to have "passed from death unto life!" Does the man who has been rescued from the borders of the grave, feel ashamed to tell his fellow men what was the medicine which has ministered to his restoration? And shall the converted man, in whom, through the instrumentality of the holy truths of God, has been laid the foundation of eternal health,—immortal vigour—be ashamed to tell the world from which he separates himself, in a Christian profession, the doctrines of God which have been blessed

to his regeneration? And shall a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, bought with his blood and renewed and sanctified by his Holy Spirit, be unwilling to record in their creed, and show to the world, the doctrines by which they live and grow and thrive; and in which they hope to rejoice eternally in the presence of "the Lord God and the Lamb." No. That Christian who loves the holy truths of God, will take sacred and sweet delight in giving honour to them and their author, by a full and ingenuous showing of it in his confession of faith. And a church which has not travelled down into the darkness and delusion, for which that of Laodicea was so solemnly rebuked, would shrink from the crime of revising any truth of God out of their symbols of faith. Secrets to keep, in matters of faith! Ashamed to tell the world what they believe! If the love of God and of the truth be in them, and in exercise, they would as soon think of making a secret of their hope of eternal life; as soon think of being "ashamed of Jesus." To those whose breasts have been the seats of such unhappy workings, and whose declarations to the world respecting their faith have become equivocal, we commend the solemn consideration of that word of Christ "Whosoever therefore shall be *ashamed of me and of my words*, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Love to the doctrines of the Bible will forbid the substitution of any thing else which professes to be a part of Christian character, instead of a cordial belief of those doctrines. Here is a point of imminent danger with multitudes who are considered converts, and who enter the church at the present day. Much is said, and with propriety, of "coming out on the Lord's side," of "being for God," "working for God," and "coming up to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Along with this however we also have—what surely does not well comport with these things,—much said in depreciation of the importance of doctrines and doctrinal instructions,—and of those doctrines especially which prostrate the pride of the human heart, and show the sinner to himself as in the hands of a holy and sovereign God. The popular voice calls loudly for what is termed practical preaching, as invidiously contrasted with doctrinal. The professed fears of many attribute to some of those holy truths of God, at which the human heart most reluctates, tendencies which hinder or check revivals of religion, perplex young Christians and introduce disputes. *Do duty, and let alone the truth*, is the

substance of too much of the pulpit preaching and private advice which is given to dying men; on whose knowledge and obedience of the truth is solemnly depending the eternal life of the soul. Thus, as it has been well remarked by a sound and discerning minister, "religion is made to condemn the truth." These questions are serious in their bearing on this great practical error. Is it *the love of God* which thus in effect attempts to set *doing* at variance with *believing*? which puts zeal instead of knowledge and "sanctification through the truth?" which professes to bring out the *commands* of God to bear on the consciences of men, while it shuts up the doctrines of God, by silence concerning them, or by cautious and timid presentations of them, in which their meaning is misunderstood; or caricatures of them, which hold them up to derision and contempt?—Love to the truth will be found allied with a belief in such a thing as integrity of Christian character,—of the importance of both doing the commands and believing the doctrines of the sacred word. The true Christian will feel and act on the feeling, that love to all divine truths is one of the chief corner-stones which constitute the basis of Christian character. The conviction will be settled and immutable in his mind and heart, that he can no more preserve the integrity and consistency of his character as a Christian without being a cordial lover and believer of the whole truth, than he can be a Christian without repentance or "faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ."

Love to divine truth will be an effectual preventive against all uneasiness and dissatisfaction with its doctrines. It is an absurdity in terms,—the idea of a Christian being uneasy and dissatisfied with what he professes to love, and love to which is an essential element of Christian character. What does one who professes himself a follower of Christ declare to a sinful world, which is worthy of a declaration, if not that he is attached to the truths of God's word? There are doctrines in relation to which the feelings of the professor of religion will assist him easily to perceive the relevancy and importance of this point. Take, for example, the doctrine of the deity of Christ: If you are a true Christian, this is the truth which you love, and in relation to which you feel no uneasiness or dissatisfaction. So of the atonement of Christ; if there be a doctrine of the Bible which you love, surely it is this. So of the free moral agency and accountableness of man; your mind is in no balancing of uneasiness, has no dissatisfaction with this. Here, now is the doctrine of God's sovereignty, including among other things, "his having mercy

on whom he will have mercy ;” the doctrine of the original and total depravity of mankind ; the doctrine of regeneration, as declaring man’s dependence on the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. These are as clearly doctrines of the Bible, as the first named. They have God for their author ; are as holy in their character ; as essential in the great system of divine truth, are as important to the production of given effects on the heart and conscience of the sinner. They are also to be loved by the Christian. They are so loved. There is scarce a doctrine in the Bible with which Christians have testified stronger satisfaction, than with the doctrine of divine sovereignty, for example : if you are a Christian, you include these last named among the truths which you approve and love. If you call yourself a Christian, and still are averse to these truths, explain this to yourself, if you can, and still keep hold of your hope. If you do love these truths, how is it possible that uneasiness or dissatisfaction with them can have place in your breast ? What kind of a Christian must he be, who unites in his experience these strange contrarieties, love to divine truth, and also uneasiness and dissatisfaction with some of its grand articles. We press this, as a point for consideration, because we see multitudes who are professedly the friends of God and his truth, who sit with a most mysterious uneasiness under the preaching of certain doctrines, and have a very singular sensitiveness respecting their holding a place in their articles of faith.

In this connexion we remark, that love to divine truth will utterly forbid all disposition to be excused from receiving any given doctrine of the Bible, because that difficult questions can be raised respecting it by sceptical men ; or because God has not stripped it of mystery, and laid it open to human conceptions. It will also most authoritatively repress all inclination to assent to the cavils of unbelieving men, respecting the doctrines of the Bible. A *Christian* is the last man on earth from whom to expect such things.

Love to the doctrines of the Bible will constrain the Christian to a faithful and fearless defence of them, whenever he hears them reproached or denied. The true Christian is of a tender spirit, respecting every thing which touches the honour of God. Of the doctrines of his Father’s word, which he has received in love, and in which his soul rejoices, he says, “ He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.” His soul is hurt, “ cast down within him,” when he sees them dishonoured by unbelief, held up to ridicule, and contemned ; and, above all, when he sees these things in

men professing the religion of Christ; perhaps even in the sacred office of the ministry. Living in a world where God speaks by his word, and writes out upon its pages as with a sun-beam, his glorious "mind and will," he cannot withhold himself from "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." He hears a voice saying to him, "Speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee." He feels that silence would be to betray the truth. For is not the truth worthy of defence? Is not the God of truth to be feared? Must great doctrines of the gospel, "pertaining to life and godliness," be cast down, and trampled upon, and that too, in the church, and in the pulpit; and not a son of God lift his voice in their defence? Shall the church yield by one inch after another, "the ground of the truth;" or let presumptuous and unholy hands take away the pillars of its temple, and prostrate it in the dust? Have Christians nothing to do, but to believe the truth for their own good; and may they quietly suffer dying men, with whom they are soon to stand before God in judgment, to trifle with it, to treat it with indignity, and to cast out its name as evil? No; the love of Christ in his true friends will constrain them to do their duty. Girding themselves "with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," and watching for the divine honour, "with all diligence," they will ever be ready. In every conflict respecting the doctrines of the sacred word, they will be seen wielding "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" moving on, firm, faithful, "valiant for the truth." "The Captain of their salvation," will go before them; lead them, encourage their spirits; and make "the weapons of their warfare mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds."

But the Christian is not one who delights in controversy, except called to it for the honour of his Lord. He will, therefore, covet more the delightful employment of propagating the knowledge of the truth among men. If his faith in the doctrines of the gospel is not to be hidden in a corner; neither will he shut up the knowledge of them from others. "To do good, and to communicate, forget not," applies to imparting the knowledge of truth, as well as to almsgiving. In this he will have regard not only to the propagation of the gospel in heathen lands, but the promotion of the pure faith among all around him. The very church sometimes becomes in a measure corrupt in the faith; and there arises occasion for saying to many professing Christians, "For whereas, for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one

teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God." But not more imperious is the necessity for communicating the truth to the nations which "sit in darkness," than it sometimes is to re-communicate it to those who have once seemed to know it. There is an indistinctness of view in individual Christians, and pervading many of the churches of our land, respecting divine truth, which is both surprising and alarming; and in many professors of religion, an ignorance of truth, and an aversion to it, which is almost heathenish. The Christian enters into the desire of his Lord, to have "all men come to the knowledge of the truth. Therefore, he will seek in various ways to aid men's acquaintance with it; will promote their study of the Scriptures as the great depository of divine doctrines; will "reason with men out of the Scriptures;" will promote publications which set forth plain, scriptural, instructive delineations of divine truth; will uphold the preaching of the truth, and endeavour to bring all he can to attend upon its ministrations. In whatever the good knowledge of God's holy truth can be advanced among men, in that he will labour, cheerfully, diligently, humbly; and God will make it to be successfully. For "the truth is great, and must prevail." God may, for a time, permit men to rage against it, and their opposition to check its progress; and the subtlety and ingenuity of false philosophy to perplex and try men's minds, and to lead away into the dark mazes of error, those who have "not received the love of the truth." And those who thus sin may, for a time, feel encouraged to think, that they shall "cast down the truth to the ground," and yet prosper. But God is all this time saying, "in his secret place of thunder," "I know thy going out and thy coming in, and thy rage against me." And the time is coming, when he will make them tremble and submit; or, as "despisers, wonder and perish." "He hath given a banner to them that fear him, that it may be displayed, because of the truth." And "yet a little while, and he (the King of truth) that shall come, will come, and will not tarry;" and will gather around their banner, multitudes that know and rejoice in the truth; and the enemies of it he will clothe with shame. While these things are certain, the lovers of his truth have nothing to do, but to move steadily onward, labouring to scatter the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God." Their hearts' desire and prayer to God shall be answered; and his knowledge will yet fill this fallen world.

There are modes of thinking, and attitudes of mind, in

many churches in our country at the present time, respecting several of the doctrines of the sacred word we have named, which make necessary a close application of the subject of this tract.

Respecting those who "receive not the love of the truth," it is a solemn, fearful declaration, "For this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." If men sin against God, persisting in their feelings of aversion to the doctrines he has taught, let them be well aware of the fearful danger to which they expose themselves. If they continue averse to them, their doom is thus foretold. God will not permit men to trifle with his truth. Mark the expression, "strong delusion," Error, inasmuch as it is opposed to the powerful truth of God, is brought forth with the best strength of the human mind, and rendered plausible and almost irresistible, by sophistry and ingenuity. See how one whose mind is not the residence of "the love of truth," is enticed, led, overcome, ensnared, as he looks upon the plausible delusion of error, in which while the *name* of a holy truth is perhaps retained, its *character* has undergone a complete transformation, so that it is no more the truth. He says in himself, "How reasonable this looks; how consistent with the feelings of my heart; how clear; here is no mystery; here are no 'hard sayings;' all meets my mind." And with some wrested Scriptures, to sustain the ingenious sophistries of unbelief, he draws the conclusion: "This must be the truth." He sits down satisfied, because he has succeeded in getting away from doctrines which were unwelcome to his feelings. "Strong delusion!" binding the soul with its cords of iniquity, perhaps never to be sundered, till death separates his body to the grave, and his soul to the scenes of eternity. Take heed how by "receiving not the love of the truth," you provoke God to send upon you "strong delusion."

The professor of religion has occasion to fear respecting his own spiritual state, who finds himself uneasy, dissatisfied, disposed to dispute against any of the doctrines of the Bible we have named. Ask yourself, "Is my heart right with God?" What must be the state of your affections toward him whom you call your Father in heaven, if you find yourself excepting against any portion of his revealed will!

That professor of religion has occasion to be anxious respecting himself, who wishes to set aside any doctrine of

God's word, on the plea that it is unessential to be believed, in order to salvation; or, that it is a point of difference between man and man, on which true wisdom is silence. There is in use much language of this description, respecting some doctrines we have particularly stated. The remark is a common one, as a short-hand way of putting down a doctrine,—“This is one of those points which are of no great importance.” Points! The whole truth of God is made up of “points;” and every one of them is designed by the Spirit of God, to be “sharper than any two-edged sword.” God has filled his word with these, that they may take effect on the soul of the sinner, and test the state of the professed Christian. And the moment a man winces under their effect, and endeavours to get away from it, he is trying to get away from the sword of the Spirit. And if he succeed, he will at last find that he succeeded, most fearfully, in getting away from being converted to God. It is an opinion gaining considerable credence, and that, too, among those who would feel themselves injured by any question about their orthodoxy, that they have been converted, and that others can be, without concerning themselves with the doctrines we have mentioned. Such will find in the end, that they are to prove converted through the means of these as well as other doctrines, and brought into harmony of feeling with them, or that they have not been converted at all. The only wise God knows what effects need to be accomplished upon your heart; and what truths are adapted and necessary to the accomplishment of these effects. If you are to be born again, it will be through the means, and into the belief of these much despised truths. God will not commit himself to the dictation of any sinner, as to the means by which he will be converted. You must submit to the means he has appointed in his *whole* and holy truth.

The opinion has place in the minds of some men in the sacred office, that it is practicable to modify or lay aside these “offensive doctrines,” or interweave them with others, so that they shall not be distinctly perceived; that there is what a sensible writer calls “a certain wise way,” in which their offence shall be made to cease. Others there are, who go farther, and pronounce them the needless peculiarities of a system; and hold them up to ridicule, under some opprobrious epithet or appellation; and pronounce preachers of them enemies of the conversion of sinners, and of revivals of religion; and pride themselves on converting sinners by an easier way, and in the taking up of the stumbling-blocks out of their path



to the cross, by keeping or putting these hated doctrines out of sight. And multiplied conversions are counted, as produced by this more excellent way. It is proper to remind such, that the day is approaching, when God has declared, that "the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is;" when it will be seen whether such ministrations have been, truly, building on the foundation God has laid, that which shall abide; or that which God will "consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming." Take heed of the impiety of the attempt to be wiser than God, in fixing upon the means by which men shall be brought to his footstool.

The assumption is made by those who talk of doctrines which are not essential, or "minor points," that though God has revealed by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and preserved almost miraculously in the world, for six thousand years, his announcements of these truths; yet that it is man's right to sit in judgment on their real value; and if he pleases, to pronounce them unessential. It is a strange fact, that men confessedly unconverted and out of the church, oppose these doctrines as of *some importance*; while men professing themselves Christians and in the church seek to degrade them from their dignity and hide their glory, by pronouncing them unimportant,—“non-essentials.” We are constrained to ask whether of these twain is the greatest offender against God; he who opposes a truth in the acknowledgment of its magnitude, or he who despises it under the pretext of its insignificance?

Now we ask for that Scripture which warrants this so common and popular notion, that there are doctrines in the Bible unessential to be believed. Which is the doctrine of God's word, on which a minister can be silent and yet blameless? Which is the truth so unessential, that, respecting it a man may live in unhappy, spirit-chafing prejudice, and yet not have to "give account thereof in the day of judgment?" Tell us what is that doctrine of God with which a man may contend, secretly or openly; which he may shut up in studied silence, or openly malign; and yet lie down on his death bed in peace, feeling that he owes to God no repentance, and to man no acknowledgment of dishonour done to the Bible? Can a man pass from fighting against a truth of God, to the bliss of saints and angels bowing before the throne in adoration of his truth?

The plea of the unessentialness of given truths goes upon a principle which would excuse almost any errorist who ever rejected a truth of the Bible. If I may with impunity pro-

nounce one truth unessential; another may declare another so. If I may set aside one truth, which I call unessential, and not endanger my soul; why may not another do the same by two, three, five, which he pleases to consider so, and be as safe as myself? Where is the line which separates between me and the Universalist, the Deist, yea, even the Atheist, in this matter?

No: let no man who calls himself a Christian, and a lover of divine truth, talk of *unessential truths of the ETERNAL GOD*: of the majesty of heaven sending down from amidst the brightness of his glory, a book in which he trifles with men, by giving them their choice what portion of its announcements they will believe, and what they will set aside as not of sufficient importance to be believed. If you are a sincere lover of divine truth, you will spend no time, and commit no sin, in making exceptions to doctrines of the Bible; nor in searching for excuses to quiet conscience in withholding your assent from any given truth. On the contrary, you will embrace in the range of your holy affections, the whole. You will fear breaking in upon the perfections and harmony of the great system of divine truth, by thus taking away *one*. And if you expect to meet God in heaven as your reconciled Father; and to be owned and blessed, through eternity, as a child of his love; believe him in all the declarations of his truth; and love them,—as you are bound to love Himself,—with all your soul, mind and strength. And be yours the blessedness of the blissful contemplation of all God's glorious truths, in the light which shall beam from his eternal throne!

THE END.

THE  
DOCTRINE  
OF THE  
PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS,  
ILLUSTRATED, PROVED AND APPLIED.

BY  
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## PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

IN every age the Church has been pained by beholding persons whose professions were high and specious, declining from the truth, returning to the world, and again indulging in the lusts of the flesh. Such examples tend to afflict humble believers, and to fill them with apprehensions that their own state is unsafe, and may terminate in destruction. To prevent such an inference, the Scriptures, whenever they predict, or relate, the apostacy of those who had once “the form of godliness,” immediately subjoin, as a source of consolation, an assurance that the *real* children of God shall be preserved from defection. Thus the Saviour (Matt. xxiv.) foretelling the appearance of those who should come in his name, and “deceive many,” intimates that the elect shall not be deceived. Thus Paul (2 Tim. ii. 19.) mentioning the apostacy of Hymeneus and Philetus, probably eminent teachers in the Church, adds, lest believers should suppose that their own condition was uncertain, and their own faith liable to be destroyed: “nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his”—‘they that are built upon the foundation of his unchangeable love and purpose shall never be overthrown.’ Thus also the apostle John (1 John ii. 19.) having mentioned that many antichrists were in the world who were generally apostates, adds: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us;”—as if he had said, ‘Whatever plausible appearances they make, they prove, by becoming apostates, that they were hypocrites; for if they had been true believers, renewed by grace and vitally united to Christ, they would have persevered in communion with us; but they went out that they might appear to the world in the real characters of false-hearted professors.’

Such is the spirit of the language of Scripture, and in these, and other similar passages, is plainly taught the doctrine of  
THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

It is a doctrine which lies at the foundation of all the hope which the believer enjoys; it inspires confidence in danger, comfort in sorrow, succour in temptation, and is an “anchor to his soul,” amidst tempests the most violent.

Let us inquire what reason we have to receive this doctrine as the truth of God.

In making this investigation we shall arrange our reflections in the following order :

I. We shall definitely state the question at issue, and show what we mean when we maintain the final perseverance of the saints.

II. We shall establish the doctrine by arguments.

III. We shall answer the principal objections against it.

First. It is necessary to begin by clearly stating the doctrine under discussion.

When we say that the saints shall finally persevere, we mean not by the word *saints* those who, having made a profession, and possessing a semblance of religion, are regarded by others as pious ; or those who are confidently esteemed by themselves as godly : or those who are only federally holy—by external consecration to God, as were the people of Israel. We grant that all these may finally and entirely apostatize. But by *saints* we mean those, and those only, who have really been born again ; who have been brought from a state of enmity against God into a state of reconciliation and love ; who have been justified, accepted and adopted ; who are animated by the Holy Spirit, that dwelling both in Christ and them, forms an intimate union between him the head, and them the members.

When we say that such persons shall not finally and entirely fall away from grace, we do not mean that their graces may not languish and decline. The question is not concerning the *decay*, but the *loss* of grace ; not concerning sickness and debility, but total death. A person may faint away, showing no signs of animation, while a principle of life remains ; and spiritual life may undergo so violent a shock as to be brought apparently to the very verge of death, and yet not be extinguished.

Neither do we mean that the *acts* of grace shall never be interrupted ; but only that the *spirit* and *habit* of it shall never be lost. We grant that the saints may fall into many and great sins ; but we maintain that, through the presence of God cherishing the principles of spiritual life once implanted, they shall never so sin, as to fall into that state in which they were before conversion, and of the children of the Holy One, become the children of the devil. They may fall into transgressions that deserve perdition, but God will excite their repentance, animate their faith, enliven their hope, and thus keep them in his covenant and love.

When we say that the saints shall persevere, we mean not, that considered *in themselves*, and with no strength but their own, they will be able to stand. We rest the certainty of their perseverance on the assistance of the Spirit, and the support of God. In themselves, they are weak, unable to begin, to continue, or to finish the life of holiness; but according to the divine covenant and promises, they “are kept by his power through faith unto salvation.”

Neither do we assert that grace, considered *in itself*, is absolutely *incapable of being lost*. It is one thing to affirm that it shall not be lost, and another thing to affirm that it is in its nature absolutely incapable of being lost. We know that the world shall no more be overwhelmed by a flood, but we at the same time admit that it is susceptible of being drowned. We therefore ground the perseverance of the saints, not upon the firmness and unchangeableness of grace, as it subsists in the creature, but upon the love, the power, the wisdom, the faithfulness, and the covenant of Almighty God.

Attending to these distinctions and limitations, we have a proper view of the doctrine before us. It may be conveyed in the following proposition :

All who are truly regenerated and vitally united to Christ, though weak and frail in themselves, shall be so protected and kept by the power of God that the habits of grace shall never be entirely lost, nor the principle of spiritual life totally extinguished; and although they may fall into sins, yet they shall never fall from their interest in the covenant, but shall be renewed to repentance, and be at last brought, by a steady perseverance, to eternal salvation.

This is the sum of the doctrine before us. We proceed  
II. To establish its truth.

1. The first argument which we adduce for the perseverance of the saints is derived from *the purposes of God*. By the purposes of God we mean those eternal acts of his will concerning all things that come to pass, which are (if we may so speak) the rule of his operations. Without entering upon any disputes unconnected with the point in question, we shall merely by presenting several texts of Scripture prove that God has purposed the perseverance of his saints in love and holiness, and that his purpose is immutable. The apostle Paul tells us (Rom. viii. 29, 30.) “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them

he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." These words which connect a past and future eternity, show the inseparable connexion between the decree of God, and the salvation of his people, and point out the intermediate links which join together the two objects. On the last clause we shall fix our attention: "whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." If language can prove any thing, these words evince beyond all doubt the indissoluble connexion between effectual calling, justification, and glorification.

But there could be no such connexion if it were possible for the saints not to persevere; if they could finally and entirely fall away, it would not be true that whom God justifies he also glorifies. No conditions are here spoken of that man can perform; and to impose them upon the purposes of God, when he himself has given us no such intimation, and then to suspend their execution on conditions thus invented, is to arraign in no small degree his infinite wisdom, and to take an unwarrantable liberty with his holy word.

Another passage which we adduce under this head is John vi. 37—40. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Christ had been charged by the Jews with endeavouring to promote his own private purposes and ambitious designs: he tells them in these words, that on the contrary he came to do the will of his Father. This *will* can signify nothing but the eternal purpose of God. Christ describes the persons to whom this purpose related—those who were "given to him by the Father" in the covenant of redemption; and who, as the necessary consequence, believingly "come to him." He informs us that the will of God with respect to them is, that he should "confer on them eternal life;" that he "should lose none of them," and that he should "raise them up at the last day." Hence we conclude that God having purposed to bestow these blessings upon believers, and having committed the accomplishment of this purpose to Christ, who is faithful in all things and endued with power, believers shall certainly be preserved to the end designed: none of them shall be lost through any assaults of Satan; through any deceitfulness of sin; through any destruction of their graces;



but all shall have a glorious resurrection, and a blissful immortality.

I pass by many texts which might be introduced under this head, and proceed to the second argument, which is founded on the *promises of God*.

2. From the great variety of these promises, I select but a few. As recorded by John in his gospel, (x. 27—29.) the Saviour says: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” In the preceding verse the Saviour gives the reason why the Pharisees continued incredulous, notwithstanding his preaching and miracles; “they were not his sheep.” In these verses he declares the condition of his sheep, and promises, in the most explicit manner, their continuance in that state. I know not what terms can possibly be employed to convince a man of the perseverance of the saints, if he remain unconvinced by this passage. The Saviour promises that he “will give them eternal life;” that “they shall never perish” through their own weakness, or remaining corruptions; that none (the word *man* is not in the original) “shall pluck them out of his hand;” and that the omnipotence of the Father and the faithfulness of the Son, guarantee their preservation.

Attend also to that promise of God that is found in Isaiah (liv. 7—10.) “For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee in a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” Who that is free from prejudice will not acknowledge that in this language God directly promises his children that he will always continue his loving kindness, and will never remove his affection from them. He has further promised that “the righteous shall hold on their way, and become stronger and stronger,” (Job xvii. 9.) that “the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake, because it hath pleased him to make them his people;” (Sam. xii. 22.) that “he loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints, for they are preserved forever;” (Ps. xxxvii. 28.)

that he “will never leave nor forsake them.” (Heb. xiii. 5.)

Attend to some other plain and explicit declarations: “They shall go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.” (Ps. lxxxiv. 7.) “The way of the Lord is strength to the upright; the righteous shall never be removed.” (Prov. x. 29-30.) “The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov. iv. 18.) “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, but I will not forget thee.” (Isa. xlix. 15.) “He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.” (John v. 24.) “I am the living bread that came down from heaven, if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.” (John vi. 51.) “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John vi. 54.) “Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.” (Luke x. 42.)

These promises, with many others of a similar kind, “are yea and amen in Christ Jesus;” made by him who “cannot lie,” to which he has annexed his solemn oath, for the performance of which he has pledged his faithfulness. They must insure the final happiness of all believers.

3. We pass to a third argument—it is founded on the *covenant of grace*. In the covenant of works we were left to stand in our own strength; but in “the new and better covenant,” Christ undertakes for his people, and God has pledged his faithfulness that they shall not be separated from him. The nature of this covenant is explained in various parts of the Old Testament and the New.—I shall invite attention but to a single passage, Jer. xxxii. 40. “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me.” Are not these words sufficiently plain and emphatic? Let us consider the force of these expressions; “an everlasting covenant will I make;” a covenant founded on everlasting purposes, and of everlasting duration. But may we not frustrate this covenant, and make it void? No, replies the Lord, “I will not turn away from them to do them good.” But may not *we* turn away from him, and thus nullify the covenant with respect to ourselves? No, saith the Lord, “I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

Such is the nature, and such are the terms of the “new

covenant." In it the perseverance of man is suspended, not on his own strength, but on the immutability of God's grace and promises. If then God be true; if on the one hand, he will not turn away from his people, and on the other, will so influence their hearts that they shall not depart from him, they must persevere to the end, and be saved.

4. A fourth argument for this doctrine is derived from *the relations which subsist between Christ and believers*.

Let us open the Scriptures, and learn in what terms they speak of this relation. They tell us that believers are the care and charge of Christ, committed to him by the Father; and will he not preserve and keep them? They tell us that they are his "peculiar people," (Titus ii. 14.) his purchased people," (1 Peter ii. 9.) bought by his own precious blood; and will he neglect his own property, and suffer it to be taken from him by craft or power? They tell us that believers are members of his body; and can the head suffer any of the members to perish? They tell us that they are his spiritual seed, to whom he is related as a parent; and can he be so careless of his sons and daughters as to present them at the last day incomplete in number, and say, "Behold me, O Lord! and that portion of the children whom thou hast given me that have not become the children of satan." They tell us that believers are his spouse to whom he has betrothed himself in loving kindness and forever; his bride in whom he delights; his beloved, "over whom he rejoices;" and can he suffer these objects of his affection finally to perish? No! it is impossible. Their spiritual union with Christ infallibly secures their perseverance. By faith they become "one with him;" their life and interest are identified with his; and as long as there is life in him there can be no eternal death in them. It is as natural for him to diffuse his virtues constantly into them, as for a vine to send its sap into its own branches, or the sun to cherish the plants of its own production. He will administer whatever tends to their sustenance and growth, and remove whatever would weaken their Christian graces. "Having once loved them, he will love them unto the end;" having "begun a good work, he will perform it." He has expressly declared, (John xiv. 19.) "Because I live, ye shall live also;" words which represent the salvation of believers as absolutely certain as the eternal happiness of Christ. Who can sever that bond of union which fastens together the Saviour and his friends? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these

things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 35—39.) Here is enumerated every thing that can be conceived of; and if "neither height nor depth; if the celestial height of God's holiness, and the infernal depth of man's sin cannot separate believers from the Lord, then the saints are infallibly secured against final apostacy.

Believers are interested in the *intercession of Christ*, and therefore must persevere. We learn from what the Saviour himself tells us that he prays for all whom "the Father hath given to him;" not only for those who were his disciples in the days of his flesh, but for all who shall believe on him to the end of the world. And for what does he pray? That God "would keep them through his own name;" that he would "keep them from evil;" that he would "sanctify them through his truth;" and that they all hereafter may be with him, and "behold his glory"—he therefore evidently prays that God would keep them from *apostatizing*. But is he ever denied in his suit? Is his plea always valid; his intercession continually effectual? Hear his own testimony, (John xi. 41, 42.) "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and *I know that thou hearest me always.*" Since then Christ prays for his people that God would keep them, and since God always hears his prayers, the conclusion is inevitable, that they shall all be saved—that not one shall be lost.

5. The next argument that we urge is derived from "the operations of the Holy Spirit, and his perpetual residence in the hearts of believers."

The Saviour assures his disciples, (John xiv. 16.) "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may ABIDE WITH YOU FOREVER." That this promise is applicable to *all* true believers, and not exclusively to the apostles, is evident from the following considerations:

The Saviour, in his sacerdotal petition, gives a rule for the interpretation of his prayers, which is equally applicable to his promises: "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which believe on me, through their word"—words which authorize believers now to draw the same consolation from this promise, as they did whom the Saviour originally addressed.

The blessing promised, the indwelling of the Spirit, is the

fruit of the Saviour's ascension and intercession; and therefore enjoyed by all for whom Jesus Christ is an advocate.

Again.—Those to whom the promise is made, are distinguished not from *other believers*, but from a *wicked world*; as the additional words teach, “even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive.” For these reasons it is evident that the promise is made to all in every age who are united to Jesus Christ by faith. Thus we have the testimony of the true and faithful witness, that the Spirit, as a guide and comforter, “shall abide with believers *forever*,” and shall be “in them a well of water springing up unto *everlasting life*.” What is his design in regeneration, but their complete holiness? what is his purpose in taking up his residence in their souls, but to fit them for immortal glory? By him they “are sealed,” distinguished and marked, “unto the day of redemption;” (Eph. iv. 30.) the day when they shall be redeemed from the power of the grave, and delivered from all the effects of sin: he surely then cannot leave them. He is “the earnest of their inheritance.” (Eph. i. 14.) Now as an earnest is part of the whole, and is given in assurance of its full enjoyment, the words must import the absolute certainty of the final performance and future bliss of all true believers.

But this doctrine, which we regard as so inestimably precious, which is inseparably interwoven with the mercy and grace of the new covenant, has been strenuously opposed: it is represented as no doctrine of the gospel, no part of the purchase of Christ, a mere invention of man, and a strong temptation to sin. Let us

III. Examine these objections; and we shall find that instead of invalidating, they tend more strongly to confirm this truth.

1. One of the most plausible objections that has been brought against the doctrine, is derived from the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, and 24th verse: “But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.”

“Here,” it is said, “we are taught, that a man may be truly righteous and good, and yet become wicked, and die in his sins, and perish forever.”

This conclusion is not authorized by the text for the following reasons:

(1.) If we look at the context, we shall find that this whole chapter does not, in the smallest degree, relate to the mode of God's dealing with his saints in reference to their spiritual and eternal state, but to the manner of his dealing with the house of Israel, in reference to the land of Canaan. We find from the second verse, that the object of God, through the whole of this chapter, is to show the falsity of a proverb then in use among the Israelites—"the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;" that is, we are suffering for the sins of our forefathers—it is because *they* have transgressed, that the greater part of our nation were slain in the land of Israel, and the rest carried into captivity. To vindicate the equity of his proceedings, God by his prophet, recounts many of their sins, and by making several suppositions of their risings and fallings, proves that for *their own* transgressions, and not for the transgressions of their fathers, they were afflicted. This being evidently the aim, scope, and object of this chapter, it is plain that this twenty-fourth verse, wrested from the midst of the prophet's discourse, has no relation at all to the question concerning the saint's perseverance. A text intended only to evince the righteousness of the divine dealings to the Jewish people at a peculiar time, cannot, with any show of reason, be given as testimony that they who have been taken into covenant with God, and brought nigh to him by the blood of his Son, can totally and finally fall away. I add,

(2.) That the whole of this chapter not only relates to a matter entirely different from the question which we are discussing, but to a matter in which the principle and rule of God's proceedings are totally different from the rule of his proceedings in that covenant of grace in which believers are interested. In the fourth verse he declares, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die"—*that same* soul, and not another: while in the covenant of grace, he causes "the just to die for the unjust"—the soul that never sinned, for souls that had sinned. Can we then with any shadow of propriety, bring a text from this chapter to decide the doctrine of the saints' perseverance.

(3.) But supposing that these things are not so, still the words would only show, (what we are willing to grant,) the infallible connexion between total apostacy and eternal perdition; but they by no means prove that a really pious man can finally fall away without recovery. In Leviticus xviii.

5. we have these words: "Ye shall keep my statutes and my judgments, which, *if* a man do, he shall live in them;" words which the apostle (Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 12.) refers to "the righteousness which is of the law," and which he interprets—"if a man perfectly obey the law of God, he is justified by his works." But are we hence to infer that any man in his present fallen state will perfectly obey the whole law? Paul (Gal. i. 8.) declares, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." But are we thence to infer that an angel from heaven ever will preach another gospel? So, when the prophet says, "*When* the righteous turneth away from his righteousness," is it asserted (supposing that by the term *righteous*, a true saint is denoted,) that he will finally fall away from his righteousness? Is any thing more than a supposition expressed, and a consequence stated?

We might add other reflections; but these are sufficient to show that notwithstanding this passage, our doctrine stands firm and immoveable.

2. Another text that is frequently opposed to the doctrine which we are maintaining, is 1 Cor. ix. 27. "I bring under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." The denier of the saints' perseverance relying upon this passage, says, "since the apostle Paul was in a possibility of being cast away, other believers may totally fall away from grace." We deny the propriety of this deduction from the text before us; we deny that it was possible for Paul, or that he thought it was possible for him, to be finally destroyed. He every where expresses the most confident assurance of his salvation, and in the very verse preceding the text declares that he "runs not *uncertainly*. In this passage he merely teaches that his salvation is inseparably connected with certain means, and that *if* these means be neglected, then he might be a castaway. But does this prove that it was uncertain whether he would be saved?

Let us compare the language of the apostle here with his sentiments and conduct on another occasion. We learn from the twenty-seventh chapter of Acts, that on his passage to Rome he was overtaken by a dangerous storm, and that he received an express promise from God that not one of those who were in the ship with him should perish. The preservation of all their lives was an event absolutely fixed and certain. But when the sailors let down their boat to escape,

Paul said to the centurion, "except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." Thus though the preservation of the crew was as certain as the promise of God could make it, still the apostle declared that this preservation was so connected with the use of proper means, that if these means were neglected, the crew would perish. In like manner, though his perseverance in holiness was most certain, he yet declares that proper means were so connected with the attainment of this end, that if these means were neglected, the end would fail. And will not the most strenuous advocates of the saint's perseverance maintain the same principle?

3. Another scripture on which great reliance is placed, is Heb. vi. 4—6. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

But this passage proves nothing against the doctrine for which we are pleading, for these two reasons:

(1.) Admitting that the apostle is speaking of true saints, still the proposition is only *hypothetical*—"if they fall away"—and does by no means assert that they can totally apostatize. It is certain that *if* Gabriel should apostatize he would be cast down to hell; but are we thence to infer that he ever will, or can, apostatize?

(2.) But nothing is said of these persons which is *peculiar to believers*. Not a word of their faith in Christ, nor of their regeneration, nor of the sanctification by the Spirit, nor of their justification through the righteousness of the Saviour. Look at the characteristics here presented, and you find them all capable of being possessed by those who in the apostolic age were destitute of the saving grace of God.

They were "*enlightened*;" but many may be instructed in the nature and design of the Christian religion, and have a speculative knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, without partaking of that grace which accompanies salvation.

They have "*tasted of the heavenly gift*," have had some faint relish of divine things.

They have been "*made partakers of the Holy Ghost*;" not of his sanctifying influences, but of his ordinary, or of his miraculous gifts—gifts which in the apostolic age, were sometimes bestowed upon those who had no saving grace.

They "*tasted of the good word of God*;" had a superfi-



cial knowledge of it, without its powers; were pleased with it for a season, as was Herod with the ministry of John the Baptist; as were the stony-ground hearers who “endured only for a time, because there was no root in them.”

They have “tasted of the powers of the world to come.” The expression in the original is ambiguous: it may mean either that they *performed miracles under the gospel dispensation*, which were sometimes wrought by those who were not the true disciples of Christ, or that, like Balaam, they had some *faint desires for the joys of the heavenly world*.

The apostle in the seventh and eighth verses, appears to decide that these persons are not real Christians—for their character seems to be expressed under the image of “the earth which beareth thorns and briers;” while that of real believers is expressed under the figure of “the earth which bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed.”

4. Another objection against the doctrine which we are maintaining, is derived from Heb. x. 29. “Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing.” The force of the objection lies in the words “the blood of the covenant wherewith *he* was sanctified.” But the pronoun *he* may refer to the Saviour, who is spoken of immediately before, and not to the person who hath trodden him under foot. Jesus Christ was sanctified or set apart by the Father for the mediatorial office, for he was fore-ordained and appointed for this purpose: and his undertaking to redeem men is called his sanctifying, or devoting himself to the work, as he says; “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” (John xvii. 19.) The meaning then is—“the blood of the covenant whereby Christ was sanctified, and dedicated to God as the High Priest of his Church—this was esteemed an unholy thing.”

5. Another objection is derived from the *sins of the scriptural saints*. But their greatest falls can only prove that grace in the believer can languish and decline, and that the principle exists, while for a time, it is inactive. So that the lapses of God’s children which are recorded in his word, instead of operating against this truth, have a favourable aspect upon the doctrine of perseverance: and probably one design of the Spirit in penning these narratives might be to confirm the doctrine by giving us so particular an account of their repentance and recovery. If the principle of grace could ever be extin-

guished, and languish into eternal death, we should think it would be under such sinful acts as David, Solomon, and Peter committed. But they arose from their falls, "brought forth fruits meet for repentance," and thus showed that "the incorruptible seed remained in them, which liveth and abideth forever." (1 Pet. i. 23.)

Whatever is said concerning the apostacy of any Christian professors is decisively explained by the apostle; "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." 1 John ii. 19.

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### REMARKS.

1. This subject should excite *the highest and most devout admiration*. "Stand still, and behold the salvation of the Lord!" View his deliberate determination to save all his saints, and the means which he is employing for this end, and with holy astonishment exclaim, "what hath God wrought." Let your souls, believers, be filled with high and eternal admiration of that sovereign grace which has so certainly secured your salvation, that nothing within or without you, shall ever be able to defeat it, not even "the gates of hell." Shaken you may be, and tossed with tempest," but not utterly overthrown, because you have a foundation that is everlasting. He who commenced the salvation of his children in the eternal purposes of his love; who carried it on by "delivering up his Son" to the agonies of the cross, and exalting him "as Head over all things to the Church;" who sent the Spirit of grace to enlighten, quicken, and purify the soul, will not, after all this amazing labour, leave that work unfinished a work which he has so much at heart. Why should his design be frustrated? Why should he ever abandon his work? If those who enjoy his favour were worthless sinners when by his Spirit he quickened them, will he now when they are "raised to spiritual life," utterly forsake them? If a regenerate soul, one that has been rescued out of Satan's hand, were finally to fall, and perish forever; it would argue, if not the want of power to maintain the conquest, yet a change of resolution; and so would bring discredit upon the wisdom of his first design. But shall it ever be said; "God began to build and was not able to finish?" No! believers; all ordinances, providences, temptations, and afflictions; life, death, things present and things to come, are all made subservient to

the purposes of God, and work together to bring about the glorious consummation. When all the parts shall be brought together and set in order, how beautiful will the work appear! Angels and men shall shout for the glory of it; shall acknowledge that God hath done nothing in vain; shall see no deficiency of power, no want of wisdom, no change of resolution. Now begin to magnify the riches of his grace, his love never to abate, his purpose never to alter, his plan of operation never to be frustrated.

2. The doctrine of the saints' perseverance, though often reproached as tending to licentiousness, is a *most powerful incentive to holiness*. It promotes obedience the most cheerful, because it removes all those hard thoughts of God, the tendency of which is to impair our love to him. If we could be persuaded that the Father of Mercies is so careless of some of the children of his family as to permit Satan to enter in and take them away; that Jesus, "the Good Shepherd," is so regardless of his flock as to allow lions and wolves to make havoc of it at their pleasure; that God is so unmindful of his covenant as to suffer the regenerated soul, on whom his heart is fixed, finally to perish; what impression would be produced upon our heart? Are not thoughts like these calculated to quench the flames of love to God, and insensibly to weaken the delight which his children have in the contemplation of his character? But, on the contrary, is there any thing more endearing to the heart of the believer, or more calculated to fix their souls upon God than the assurance that his love to them is unchangeable and eternal? that though the manifestations of it may vary, yet its existence shall never cease.

The doctrine of perseverance displays the love of God to his saints as infinitely free and totally undeserved. It teaches us that he loved them, and gave them to Christ not because of their worthiness, but because of the sovereignty of his grace; that the same grace sanctified and kept them from falling: and that the same grace will exert its power in bringing them all safely into the kingdom of heaven. Can an ingenuous new-born soul resist the power of love so rich, and free, and sovereign? Must it not constrain to gratitude and obedience? Must it not lead the pardoned rebel to strive continually to make some suitable returns of affection and thankfulness.

Surely the value of God's love is inconceivably diminished if we take away its constancy and unchangeableness; if we say that it is of such a nature that he may love his children one day, and the next be alienated from them; that he may

one hour embrace them, and the next cast them into hell; that he may at one time "rejoice over them with joy," and at another be willing to destroy them. The doctrine of perseverance on the contrary teaches us that the love of God, like himself, is immutable; that it may be eclipsed and obscured in its influences for a season, but that it cannot be changed, or entirely turned away. Must not such a consideration render it unspeakably precious to the saints, and lead them to make God the supreme object of their faith, confidence and hope? It is a great mistake to suppose that the fear of hell is the greatest preventive of sin, the most cogent incentive to holiness, and the most powerful stimulant to obedience. It does at times influence the unregenerate, and act as a curb upon their passions, though Saul and Judas, with this restraint, rushed headlong to perdition. But it lays not the axe at the root of sin, and therefore cannot effectually destroy it: it is a spirit contrary to the spirit of "love, of faith, and of a sound mind:" it is a principle from which flows only that servile obedience which is unacceptable to God; that service which is weak and wavering; that reluctant duty which enervates the soul, and takes away all its strength. But love that "casteth out fear" produces obedience which is heart-felt, affectionate, and joyful. And what will tend so much to excite this strong and operative principle, as the persuasion that our covenant-God will never leave nor forsake us, but by his grace "keep us through faith unto salvation!"

What different views of the Divine Being does this doctrine present from that which is exhibited by the opposite sentiment! Shall we call her a loving and affectionate mother who could behold a ravenous beast, which she might easily drive away, tearing her child from her arms, and devouring it before her face, and not put forth her strength for its assistance and deliverance? And shall we suppose that the love of God to his children, which infinitely exceeds the love of the tenderest mother to her offspring, is of a nature like this? Can we suppose that he will carelessly behold them languishing, falling, and sinking into endless misery; that he will see the "roaring lion" coming to snatch them from his arms, and devouring them in his presence, without putting forth his power and the efficacy of his grace for their preservation? No! no! we cannot—dare not, ascribe such a disposition to God. Our doctrine assures us that the divine love is a fountain whence streams of mercy, grace, and refreshment constantly flow; that from this source proceed pardon, peace, purity of heart and life; and that in consequence of it, we "shall not want."

When we consider that from this covenant love our wasted portion has been so often renewed, our dying graces so often quickened, our dreadful backslidings so often healed, the pardon of our sins so often sealed, we must be constrained to cheerful, active, holy obedience.

Let us then hear no more that unfounded objection that a persuasion of the certain continuance of the divine love to believers is the means of making them careless, negligent, and unfruitful. What! are the saints such monsters as to reason thus: "because God loves us with an everlasting love, therefore we will hate him with a perpetual hatred; because he will assuredly give us grace to serve him unto death, therefore we will despise him and trample on his goodness; because he will never leave nor forsake us, therefore we will abandon him, and disobey his commands." Can they be true believers, animated by the Spirit and renewed by grace, who make such deductions from this doctrine? No! they are dead in sin, and in the broad way to final ruin.

Let us show by our *conduct* how unfounded is this objection. Though we may be assured of our perseverance, yet we should live continually pleading for the aid of divine grace, for support in times of trial, and for protection against all our enemies. Our Saviour was absolutely sure of enjoying the reward which was promised to him as Mediator; yet he supplicated for it with as much fervour as any saint can possibly do for holiness and heaven—a noble example to us amidst our confident persuasion of the covenant faithfulness of our God. Let us live near to him, and be ever at the throne of grace, let us "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," lest by our careless conduct, the Redeemer be dishonoured, the Holy Spirit grieved, the glorious gospel reproached, weak believers offended, and the hands of the wicked strengthened. Let us "watch and pray lest we enter into temptation." A sense of our own weakness and insufficiency should ever abide on our souls, ever appear in our conduct, ever influence us to "keep the heart with all diligence." The enemies of our peace and salvation are active in seeking to compass our fall and disgrace, and to impair our usefulness and comfort. Let us "fight the good fight of faith;" never relaxing our exertions until we are beyond the reach of danger; never laying down our armour until we are called to wear our crown; never mistaking the field of battle for the bed of repose—"Be sober, be vigilant."

3. This doctrine is the *only solid and sufficient foundation for peace and joy to the believer.*

How can he who supposes that the love and faithfulness of God were not engaged for his preservation, secure for himself solid peace? How can he free himself from perplexing apprehensions and fears? He may say, "For the present I am in a good condition; but so were the rebellious angels who are now groaning in hell. Were they not in a far better state than I am? and yet they are now bound in chains of everlasting darkness. Adam in Paradise had no corrupt nature to tempt him, and no sinful charms of the world to entice him; and yet being in honour he abode not. What hope is there then that I should stand? I, in whom by nature dwelleth no good thing; I who am assaulted continually by a deceitful world and a tempting devil? There is no eternal purpose of God that I shall be preserved; no absolute promise that I shall not depart from him; no constant and effectual intercession of Christ that my faith may not fail: I am left to myself, and what may be the issue I know not." If a person have such thoughts, (and surely every one who rejects the perseverance of the saints should have them) what solid consolation can he enjoy?

But on the contrary, when we embrace this interesting doctrine, and have satisfactory evidence of the renovation of our hearts, of our union to Christ, and of our interest in the covenant, then we have a sanctuary to which we may flee in our fears and dangers. Though there is nothing within, or around us to sustain, yet there is something above in which we can confidently trust. "The Lord is faithful who shall establish and keep you from evil." Rejoice then, ye feeble followers of the Lord; ye shall be kept safely, even unto the end. If there be any immutability in the purpose of God, any fidelity in his promises, any stability in his covenant; if there be any efficacy in the intercession of Jesus, any power in the operations of the Spirit, ye shall persevere. When the powers of earth and the gates of hell assail you, menacing destruction, then "the name" the promises, the oath, and the attributes, "of the Lord," are "a strong tower;" you "can run into it, and be safe." When you are afflicted by the apprehension that you shall finally fall into perdition, then think of your Redeemer; of his compassion on the cross, and his power on the throne. While there is love in his heart, and omnipotence in his hand; while his name is Jesus, and his work salvation, he must "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." "Rejoice then in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice."

THE END.

INFANT BAPTISM

SCRIPTURAL AND REASONABLE:

AND

BAPTISM

BY

SPRINKLING OR AFFUSION,

THE MOST SUITABLE AND EDIFYING MODE

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

The substance of the following discourses was delivered, in two sermons, in the church in Freehold, Monmouth county, New Jersey, on the 29th of September, 1834. A desire for their publication having been expressed by some who heard them, I have thought proper to revise and enlarge the whole, and present it in the present form. The subject is one which has given rise to much warm discussion, and it would seem, at first view, to be a work of supererogation, if not of still more unfavourable character, to trouble the Christian community with another treatise upon it. But our Antipædobaptist brethren appear to be resolved that it shall never cease to be agitated; and as, indeed, the constant stirring of this controversy seems to furnish no small share of the very aliment on which they depend for subsistence as a denomination, they cannot be expected to let it rest. The great importance of the subject, in my estimation; and the hope that this little volume may reach and benefit some, who are in danger of being drawn into the toils of error, and have no opportunity of perusing larger works, have induced me to undergo the labour of preparing it for the press.

My object is not to write for the learned, but to present the subject in that brief, plain, popular manner which is adapted to the case of those who read but little. I have, therefore, designedly avoided the introduction of much matter which properly belongs to the subject, and which is to be found in larger treatises; and have especially refrained from entering further into the field of philological discussion, than was absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of my plan.

If I know my own heart, my purpose is, not to wound the feelings of a human being; not to stir up strife; but to provide a little manual, better adapted than any of *this class* that I have seen, for the use of those Presbyterians who are continually assaulted, and sometimes perplexed, by their Baptist neighbours. May the Divine benediction rest upon the humble offering!

S. M.

Princeton, July, 1834.

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1835, by Dr. A. W. Mitchell, in the office of the Clerk of the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.



# INFANT BAPTISM.

## DISCOURSE I.

And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us saying, if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into mine house and abide there.—*Acts xvi. 15.*

AS MAN has a body as well as a soul, it has pleased infinite wisdom to appoint something in religion adapted to both parts of our nature. Something to strike the senses, as well as to impress the conscience and the heart; or rather, something which might through the medium of the senses, reach and benefit the spiritual part of our constitution. For, as our bodies in this world of sin and death, often become sources of moral mischief and pain, so, by the grace of God, they are made inlets to the most refined moral pleasures, and means of advancement in the divine life.

But while the outward senses are to be consulted in religion, they are not to be invested with unlimited dominion. Accordingly the external rites and ceremonies of Christianity are few and simple, but exceedingly appropriate and significant. We have but two sacraments, the one emblematical of that spiritual cleansing, and the other of that spiritual nourishment, which we need both for enjoyment and for duty. To one of these sacramental ordinances there is a pointed reference in the original commission given by their Master to the apostles: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,—baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (*Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.*) And, accordingly, wherever the Gospel was received, we find holy baptism reverently administered as a sign and seal of membership in the family of Christ. Thus on the occasion to which our text refers, “a certain woman,” we are told, “named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, heard Paul and Silas preach in the city of Philippi; and the Lord opened her heart, so that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have

judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into mine house and abide there.”

I propose, my friends, from these words, to address you on the subject of *Christian Baptism*. You are sensible that this is a subject on which much controversy has existed, in modern times, among professing Christians. It shall be my endeavour, by the grace of God, with all candour and impartiality, to inquire what the Scriptures teach concerning this ordinance, and what appears to have been the practice in regard to it in the purest and best ages of the Christian church, as well as in later times. May I be enabled to speak, and you to hear as becomes those who expect in a little while, to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

There are two questions concerning baptism to which I request your special attention at this time, viz: Who are the *proper subjects* of this ordinance? And in *what manner* ought it to be administered? To the first of these questions our attention will be directed in the present, and the ensuing discourse.

I. Who are to be considered as *the proper subjects of Christian Baptism*?

That baptism ought to be administered to all adult persons, who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, and who have not been baptized in their infancy, is not doubted by any. In this all who consider baptism as an ordinance at present obligatory are agreed. But it is well known that there is a large and respectable body of professing Christians among us who believe, and confidently assert, that baptism ought to be confined to adults; who insist, that when professing Christians bring their infant offspring, and dedicate them to God, and receive for them the washing of sacramental water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, they entirely pervert and misapply an important Christian ordinance. We highly respect the sincerity and piety of many who entertain these opinions; but we are perfectly persuaded that they are in error, nay in great and mischievous error; in error which cannot fail of exerting a most unhappy influence on the best interests of the Church of God. We have no doubt that the visible church is made up, not only of those who personally profess the true religion, but also of their children; and that we are bound not only to confess Christ before men for ourselves, but also to bring our infant seed in the arms of faith and love, and present them before the Lord, in that ordinance which is at once a seal of God's covenant with his people, and an emblem of

those spiritual blessings which, as sinners, we and our children equally and indispensably need.

Our reasons for entertaining this opinion, with entire confidence are the following :

1. Because *in all Jehovah's covenants with his professing people, from the earliest ages, and in all states of society, their infant seed have been included.* That this was the case with regard to the first covenant made with Adam in paradise, is granted by all; certainly by all with whom we have any controversy concerning infant baptism. And indeed the consequences of the violation of that covenant to all his posterity, furnish a standing and a mournful testimony that it embraced them all. The covenant made with Noah, after the deluge, was, as to this point, of the same character. Its language was, "Behold, I establish my covenant with thee and with thy *seed*." The covenant with Abraham was equally comprehensive. "Behold," says Jehovah, "my covenant is with thee. Behold, I establish my covenant with thee, and with thy *seed*, after thee." The Covenants of Sinai and of Moab, it is evident, also comprehended the children of the immediate actors in the passing scenes, and attached to them, as well as to their fathers, an interest in the blessings or the curses, the promises or the threatenings which those covenants respectively included. Accordingly when Moses was about to take leave of the people, he addressed them as "standing before the Lord their God, with their little ones, and their wives, to enter into covenant with the Lord their God." (Deut. xxix. 10—12.) And when we come to the New Testament economy, still we find the same interesting feature not only retained, but more strikingly and strongly displayed. Still the promise, it is declared, is "to us and our children, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Now, has this been a feature in all Jehovah's covenants with his people in every age? And shall we admit the idea of its failing in that New Testament or Christian covenant, which, though the same in substance with those which preceded it, excels them all in the extent of its privileges, and in the glory of its promises? It cannot be. The thought is inadmissible. But farther,

2. *The close and endearing connection between parents and children* affords a strong argument in favour of the church-membership of the infant seed of believers. The voice of nature is lifted up, and pleads most powerfully in behalf of our cause. The thought of severing parents from

their offspring, in regard to the most interesting relations in which it has pleased God in his adorable providence to place them, is equally repugnant to Christian feeling, and to natural law. Can it be, my friends, that when the stem is in the church, the branch is out of it? Can it be that when the parent is within the visible kingdom of the Redeemer, his offspring, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, have no connection with it? It is not so in any other society that the great moral Governor of the world ever formed. It is not so in civil society. Children are born citizens of the State in which their parents resided at the time of their birth. In virtue of their birth they are plenary citizens, bound by all the duties, and entitled to all the privileges of that relation, whenever they become capable of exercising them. From these duties they cannot be liberated. Of these privileges they cannot be deprived, but by the commission of crime. But why should this great principle be set aside in the church of God? Surely it is not less obvious or less powerful in grace than in nature. The analogies which pervade all the works and dispensations of God are too uniform and striking to be disregarded in an inquiry like the present. But we hasten to facts and considerations still more explicitly laid down in Holy Scripture.

3. *The actual and acknowledged church-membership of infants under the Old Testament economy* is a decisive index of the divine will in regard to this matter.

Whatever else may be doubtful, it is certain that infants were, in fact, members of the church under the former dispensation; and as such, were the regular subjects of a covenant seal. When God called Abraham, and established his covenant with him, he not only embraced his infant seed, in the most express terms, in that covenant, but he also appointed an ordinance by which this relation of his children to the visible church was publicly ratified and sealed, and that when they were only eight days old. If Jewish adults were members of the church of God, under that economy, then, assuredly, their infant seed were equally members, for they were brought into the same covenant relation, and had the same covenant seal impressed upon their flesh as their adult parents. This covenant, moreover, had a respect to spiritual as well as temporal blessings. Circumcision is expressly declared, by the inspired apostle, to have been "a seal of the righteousness of faith." (Rom. iv. 11.) So far was it from being a mere pledge of the possession of Canaan, and the enjoyment of temporal prosperity there, that it rati

fied and sealed a covenant in which “all the families of the earth were to be blessed.” And yet this covenant seal was solemnly appointed by God to be administered, and was actually administered, for nearly two thousand years, to infants of the tenderest age, in token of their relation to God’s covenanted family, and of their right to the privileges of that covenant. Here then, is a *fact*,—a fact incapable of being disguised or denied,—nay, a fact acknowledged by all—on which the advocates of infant baptism may stand as upon an immoveable rock. For if infinite wisdom once saw that it was right and fit that infants should be made the subjects of “a seal of the righteousness of faith,” before they were capable of exercising faith, surely a transaction the same in substance may be right and fit now. Baptism, which is, in like manner, a seal of the righteousness of faith, may, without impropriety, be applied equally early. What once, undoubtedly, existed in the church, and that by divine appointment, may exist still, without any impeachment of either the wisdom or benevolence of Him who appointed it. But,

4. As the infant seed of the people of God are acknowledged on all hands to have been members of the church, equally with their parents under the Old Testament dispensation, *so it is equally certain that the church of God is the same in substance now that it was then*; and, of course, it is just as reasonable and proper, on principle, that the infant offspring of professed believers should be members of the church now, as it was that they should be members of the ancient church. I am aware that our Baptist brethren warmly object to this statement, and assert that the church of God under the Old Testament economy and the New, is not the same, but so essentially different, that the same principles can by no means apply to each. They contend that the Old Testament dispensation was a kind of political economy, rather national than spiritual in its character; and, of course, that when the Jews ceased to be a people, the covenant under which they had been placed, was altogether laid aside, and a covenant of an entirely new character introduced. But nothing can be more evident than that this view of the subject is entirely erroneous. The perpetuity of the Abrahamic covenant, and, of consequence the identity of the church under both dispensations, is so plainly taught in Scripture, and follows so unavoidably from the radical scriptural principles concerning the church of God, that it is indeed wonderful how any believer in the Bible can call in

question the fact. Every thing essential to ecclesiastical identity is evidently found here. The same Divine Head; the same precious covenant; the same great spiritual design; the same atoning blood; the same sanctifying Spirit, in which we rejoice, as the life and the glory of the New Testament church, we know, from the testimony of Scripture, were also the life and the glory of the church before the coming of the Messiah. It is not more certain that a man, arrived at mature age, is the same individual that he was when an infant on his mother's lap, than it is that the church, in the plenitude of her light and privileges, after the coming of Christ, is the same church which, many centuries before, though with a much smaller amount of light and privilege, yet, as we are expressly told in the New Testament, (Acts vii. 38,) enjoyed the presence and guidance of her Divine Head "in the wilderness." The truth is, the inspired apostle, in writing to the Galatians, (iv. 1—6,) formally compares the covenanted people of God, under the Old Testament economy, to an heir under age. "Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

Hence, the inspired apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, (iv. 2,) referring to the children of Israel, says—"Unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them." Again in writing unto the Corinthians, (x. 1—4,) he declares, "They did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank it of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ." "Abraham," we are told, (John viii. 56,) "rejoiced to see Christ's day; he saw it, and was glad." And, of the patriarchs generally, we are assured that they saw Gospel promises afar off, and embraced them. The church under the old economy, then, was not only a church—a true church—a divinely constituted church—but it was a Gospel church, a church of Christ—a church built upon the "same foundation as that of the apostles."

But what places the identity of the church, under both dispensations, in the clearest and strongest light, is that memorable and decisive passage, in the 11th chapter of the Epistle

to the Romans, in which the church of God is held forth to us under the emblem of an olive tree. Under the same figure had the Lord designated the church by the pen of Jeremiah the prophet, in the 11th chapter of his prophecy. The prophet speaking of God's covenanted people under that economy, says—"The Lord called thy name a green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit." But concerning this olive tree, on account of the sin of the people in forsaking the Lord, the prophet declares: "With the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled a fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken." Let me request you to compare with this, the language of the apostle in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches; but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say, then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God! on them which fell severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness. Otherwise thou also shalt be broken off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in *again*. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive tree, how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"

That the apostle is here speaking of the Old Testament church, under the figure of a good olive tree, cannot be doubted, and is, indeed, acknowledged by all; by our Baptist brethren as well as others. Now the inspired apostle says concerning this olive tree, that the natural branches, that is the Jews, were broken off because of unbelief. But what was the consequence of this excision? Was the tree destroyed? By no means. The apostle teaches directly the contrary. It is evident, from his language, that the root and trunk, in all their "fatness," remained; and Gentiles, branches of an olive tree "wild by nature," were "grafted

into the good olive tree;”—the *same tree* from which the natural branches had been broken off. Can any thing be more pointedly descriptive of *identity* than this? But this is not all. The apostle apprizes us that the Jews are to be brought back from their rebellion and wanderings and to be incorporated with the Christian church. And how is this restoration described? It is called “grafting them in *again into their own olive tree.*” In other words, the “tree” into which the Gentile Christians at the coming of Christ were “grafted,” was the “old olive tree,” of which the ancient covenant people of God were the “natural branches;” and, of course, when the Jews shall be brought in, with the fulness of the Gentiles, into the Christian church, the apostle expressly tells us they shall be “*grafted again into their own olive tree.*” Surely, if the church of God before the coming of Christ, and the church of God after the advent, were altogether distinct and separate bodies, and not the same in their essential characters, it would be an abuse of terms to represent the Jews, when converted to Christianity, as *grafted again into their own olive tree.*

5. Having seen that the infant seed of the professing people of God *were* members of the church under the Old Testament economy; and having seen also that the church under that dispensation and the present is *the same*; we are evidently prepared to take another step, and to infer, that *if infants were once members, and if the church remains the same, they undoubtedly are still members, unless some positive divine enactment excluding them, can be found.* As it was a positive divine enactment which brought them in, and gave them a place in the church, so it is evident that a divine enactment as direct and positive, repealing their old privilege, and excluding them from the covenanted family, must be found, or they are still in the church. But can such an act of repeal and exclusion, I ask, be produced? It cannot. It never has been, and it never can be. The introduction of infants into the church by divine appointment, is undoubted. The identity of the church, under both dispensations, is undoubted. The perpetuity of the Abrahamic covenant, in which not merely the lineal descendants of Abraham, but “*all the nations of the earth were to be blessed,*” is undoubted. And we find no hint in the New Testament of the high privileges granted to the infant seed of believers being withdrawn. Only concede that it has not been formally withdrawn, and it remains of course. The advocates of infant baptism are not bound to produce from the New



Testament an express warrant for the membership of the children of believers. The warrant was given most expressly and formally, two thousand years before the New Testament was written; and having never been revoked, remains firmly and indisputably in force.

It is deeply to be lamented that our Baptist brethren cannot be prevailed upon to recognise the length and breadth, and bearing of this great ecclesiastical fact. Here were little children eight days old, acknowledged as members of a covenanted society—a society consecrated to God for spiritual as well as temporal benefits—and stamped with a covenant seal, by which they were formally bound, as the seed of believers, to be entirely and forever the Lord's. Can infant membership be ridiculed, as it often is, without lifting the puny arm against Him who was with “his church in the wilderness, and whose ways are all wise and righteous?”

6. Our next step is to show *that baptism has come in the room of circumcision*, and therefore, that the former is rightfully and properly applied to the same subjects as the latter. When we say this, we mean, not merely that circumcision is laid aside in the church of Christ, and that baptism has been brought in, but that baptism occupies the same place, as the appointed initiatory ordinance in the church, and that, as a moral emblem, it means the same thing. The meaning and design of circumcision was chiefly spiritual. It was a seal of a covenant which had not solely, or even mainly, a respect to the possession of Canaan, and to the temporal promises which were connected with a residence in that land; but which chiefly regarded higher and more important blessings, even those which are conveyed through the Messiah, in whom “all the families of the earth” are to be blessed. So it is with baptism. While it marks an external relation, and seals outward privileges, it is, as circumcision was, a “seal of the righteousness of faith,” and has a primary reference to the benefits of the Messiah's mission and reign. Circumcision was a token of visible membership in the family of God, and of covenant obligation to him. So is baptism. Circumcision was the ordinance which marked, or publicly ratified, entrance into that visible family. So does baptism. Circumcision was an emblem of moral cleansing and purity. So is baptism. It refers to the remission of sins by the blood of Christ, and regeneration by his Spirit; and teaches us that we are by nature guilty and depraved, and stand in

need of the pardoning and sanctifying grace of God by a crucified Redeemer. Surely, then, there is the best foundation for asserting that baptism has come in the place of circumcision. The latter, as all grant, has been discontinued; and now baptism occupies the same place, means the same thing, seals the same covenant, and is a pledge of the same spiritual blessings. Who can doubt, then, that there is the utmost propriety, upon principle, in applying it to the same infant subjects?

Yet, though baptism manifestly comes in the place of circumcision, there are points in regard to which the former differs materially from the latter. And it differs precisely as to those points in regard to which the New Testament economy differs from the Old, in being more enlarged, and less ceremonial. Baptism is not ceremonially restricted to the eighth day, but may be administered at any time and place. It is not confined to one sex; but, like the glorious dispensation of which it is a seal, it marks an enlarged privilege, and is administered in a way which reminds us that "there is neither Greek nor Jew, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, in the Christian economy; but that we are all one in Christ Jesus."

7. Again; it is a strong argument in favour of infant baptism, that *we find the principle of family baptism again and again adopted in the apostolic age*. We are told, by men learned in Jewish antiquities, that, under the Old Testament economy, it was customary, when proselytes to Judaism were gained from the surrounding nations, that all the children of a family were invariably admitted to membership in the church with their parents; and on the faith of their parents; that all the males, children and adults, were circumcised, and the whole family, male and female, baptized, and incorporated with the community of God's covenanted people.\* Accordingly, when we examine the New Testament

\* I consider the Jewish baptism of proselytes as a historical fact well established. I am aware that some Pedobaptists, whose judgment and learning I greatly respect, have expressed doubts in reference to this matter. But when I find the Jews asking John the Baptist, "Why baptizest thou, then, if thou be not the Christ?" &c., I can only account for their language by supposing that they had been accustomed to that rite, and expected the Messiah, when he came, to practice it. We have the best evidence that they baptized their proselytes as early as the second century; and it is altogether incredible that they should copy it from the Christians. And a great majority of the most competent judges in this case, both Jewish and Christian, from Selden and Lightfoot down to Dr. Adam Clarke, have considered the testimony to the fact as abundant and conclusive.

history, we find that under the ministry of the apostles, who were all native Jews, and had, of course, been long accustomed to this practice, the same principle of receiving and baptizing families on the faith of the parents, was most evidently adopted and acted upon in a very striking manner. When "the heart of Lydia was opened, so that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul," we are told that "she was baptized and her household." When the jailor at Philippi believed, "he was baptized, he and all his, straightway." Thus also we read of "the household of Stephanas" being baptized. Now, though we are not certain that there were young children in any of these families, it is highly probable there were. At any rate, the great principle of *family baptism*, of receiving all the younger members of households *on the faith of their domestic head*, seems to be plainly and decisively established. This furnishes ground on which the advocate of infant baptism may stand with unwavering confidence.

And here let me ask, was it ever known that a case of family baptism occurred under the direction of a Baptist minister? Was it ever known to be recorded, or to have happened, that when, under the influence of Baptist ministrations, the parents of large families were hopefully converted, they were baptized, they and all their's straightway? There is no risk in asserting that such a case was never heard of. And why? Evidently, because our Baptist brethren do not act in this matter upon the principles laid down in the New Testament, and which regulated the primitive Christians.

8. Another consideration possesses much weight here. We cannot imagine that the privileges and the sign of infant membership, to which all the first Christians had been so long accustomed, could have been abruptly withdrawn, *without wounding the hearts of parents, and producing in them feelings of revolt and complaint against the new economy*. Yet we find no hint of this recorded in the history of the apostolic age. Upon our principles, this entire silence presents no difficulty. The old principle and practice of infant membership, so long consecrated by time, and so dear to all the feelings of parental affection, went on as before. The identity of the church under the new dispensation with that of the old, being well understood, the early Christians needed no new warrant for the inclusion of their infant seed in the covenanted family. As the privilege had not been revoked, it, of course, continued. A new and formal enactment in favour of the privilege would have been altogether

superfluous, not to say out of place ; especially as it was well understood, from the whole aspect of the new economy, that, instead of withdrawing or narrowing the privileges, its whole character was that it rather multiplied and extended them.

But our Baptist brethren are under the necessity of supposing, that such of the first Christians as had been Jews, and who had ever been in the habit of considering their beloved offspring as included, with themselves, in the privileges and promises of God's covenant, were given to understand, when the New Testament church was set up, that these covenant privileges and promises were no longer to be enjoyed by their children ; that they were, henceforth, to be no more connected with the church than the children of the surrounding heathen ; and this under an economy distinguished, in every other respect, by greater light, and more enlarged privilege :—I say, our Baptist brethren are under the necessity of supposing that the first Christians were met on the organization of the New Testament church, with an announcement of this kind, and that they acquiesced in it without a feeling of surprise, or a word of murmur ! Nay, that this whole retrograde change passed with so little feeling of interest, that it was never so much as mentioned or hinted at in any of the epistles to the churches. But can this supposition be for a moment admitted ? It is impossible. We may conclude, then, that the acknowledged silence of the New Testament as to any retraction of the old privileges, or any complaint of its recall, is so far from warranting a conclusion unfavourable to the church membership of infants, that it furnishes a weighty argument of an import directly the reverse.

9. Although the New Testament does not contain any specific texts, which, in so many words, declare that the infant seed of believers are members of the church in virtue of their birth ; yet *it abounds in passages which cannot reasonably be explained but in harmony with this doctrine.* The following are a specimen of the passages to which I refer.

The prophet Isaiah, though not a New Testament writer, speaks much, and in the most interesting manner, of the New Testament times. Speaking of the “latter day glory,” of that day when “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and when there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain ;” speaking of that day, the inspired prophet declares, “Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. F

as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble ; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, *and their offspring with them.*" Isaiah lxx. 17, 22, 23.

The language of our Lord concerning little children can be reconciled with no other doctrine than that which I am now endeavouring to establish, "Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray ; and his disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands upon them, and departed thence." Matt. xix. 13—15. On examining the language used by the several Evangelists in regard to this occurrence, it is evident that the children here spoken of were young children, infants, such as the Saviour could "take in his arms." The language which our Lord himself employs concerning them is remarkable. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." That is, theirs is the kingdom of heaven, or, to them belongs the kingdom of heaven. It is precisely the same form of expression, in the original, which our Lord uses in the commencement of his sermon on the mount, when he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ;" "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This form of expression, of course, precludes the construction which some have been disposed to put on the passage, in order to evade its force, viz. that it implies, that the kingdom of heaven is made up of such as resemble little children in spirit. We might just as well say, that the kingdom of heaven does not belong to those who are "poor in spirit," but only to those who resemble them ; or, that it does not belong to those who are "persecuted for righteousness sake," but only to those who manifest a similar temper. Our Lord's language undoubtedly meant that the kingdom of heaven was really theirs of whom he spake ; that it belonged to them ; that they are the heirs of it, just as the "poor in spirit," and the "persecuted for righteousness sake," are themselves connected in spirit and in promise with that kingdom.

But what are we to understand by the phrase "the kingdom of heaven," as employed in this place ? Most manifestly, we are to understand by it, the visible Church, or the visible kingdom of Christ, as distinguished both from the world, and the old economy. Let any one impartially ex-

amine the Evangelists throughout, and he will find this to be the general import of the phrase in question. If this be the meaning, then our Saviour asserts, in the most direct and pointed terms, the reality and the Divine warrant of infant church membership. But even if the kingdom of glory be intended, still our argument is not weakened, but rather fortified. For if the kingdom of glory belong to the infant seed of believers, much more have they a title to the privileges of the church on earth.

Another passage of Scripture strongly speaks the same language. I refer to the declaration which we find in the sermon of the apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost.—When a large number of the hearers, on that solemn day, were “pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren what shall we do?” The reply of the inspired minister of Christ was, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. *For the promise is unto you, and to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” The apostle is here evidently speaking of the promise of God to his covenant people; that promise in which he engages to be their God, and to constitute them his covenanted family. Now this promise, he declared to those whom he addressed, extended to their children as well as to themselves, and, of course, gave those children a covenant right to the privileges of the family. But if they have a covenant title to a place in this family, we need no formal argument to show that they are entitled to the outward token and seal of that family.

I shall adduce only one more passage of Scripture, at present, in support of the doctrine for which I contend. I refer to that remarkable, and, as it appears to me, conclusive declaration of the apostle Paul, concerning children, which is found in the seventh chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, in reply to a query addressed to him by the members of that church respecting the Christian law of marriage: “The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.” The great question in relation to this passage is, in what sense does a believing parent “sanctify” an unbelieving one, so that their children are “holy?” It certainly cannot mean, that every pious husband or wife that is allied to an unbelieving partner, is always instrumental in conferring on that partner true spiritual

purity, or, in other words, regeneration and sanctification of heart; nor that every child born of parents of whom one is a believer, is, of course the subject of gospel holiness, or of internal sanctification. No one who intelligently reads the Bible, or who has eyes to see what daily passes around him, can possibly put such a construction on the passage. Neither can it be understood to mean, as some have strangely imagined, that where one of the parents is a believer, the children are legitimate; that is, the offspring of parents, one of whom is pious, are no longer bastards, but are to be considered as begotten in lawful wedlock! The word "holy" is no where applied in Scripture to legitimacy of birth. The advocates of this construction may be challenged to produce a single example of such an application of the term. And as to the suggestion of piety in one party being necessary to render a marriage covenant valid, nothing can be more absurd. Were the marriages of the heathen in the days of Paul all illicit connexions? Are the matrimonial contracts which take place every day, among us, where neither of the parties are pious, all illegitimate and invalid? Surely it is not easy to conceive of a subterfuge more completely preposterous, or more adapted to discredit a cause which finds it necessary to resort to such aid.

The terms "holy" and "unclean," as is well known to all attentive readers of Scripture, have not only a spiritual, but also an ecclesiastical sense in the word of God. While in some cases, they express that which is internally and spiritually conformed to the divine image; in others, they quite as plainly designate something set apart to a holy or sacred use; that is, separated from a common or profane, to a holy purpose. Thus, under the Old Testament economy, the peculiar people of God, are said to be a "holy people," and to be "severed from all other people, that they might be the Lord's;" not because they were all, or even a majority of them, really consecrated in heart to God; but because they were all his professing people,—his covenanted people; they all belonged to that external body which he had called out of the world, and established as the depository of his truth, and the conservator of his glory. In these two senses, the terms "holy" and "unclean" are used in both Testaments, times almost innumerable. And what their meaning is, in any particular case, must be gathered from the scope of the passage. In the case before us, the latter of these two senses is evidently required by the whole spirit of the apostle's reasoning.

It appears that among the Corinthians, to whom the apos-

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He wrote, there were many cases of professing Christians being united by the marriage tie with pagans; the former, perhaps, being converted after marriage; or being so unwise, as, after conversion, deliberately to form this unequal and unhappy connexion. What was to be deemed of such marriages, seems to have been the grave question submitted to this inspired teacher. He pronounces, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, that, in all such cases, when the unbeliever is willing to live with the believer, they ought to continue to live together, that their connexion is so sanctified by the character of the believing companion, that their children are "holy," that is, in covenant with God; members of that church with which the believing parent is, in virtue of his profession, united: in one word, that the infidel party is so far, and in such a sense, consecrated by the believing party, that their children shall be reckoned to belong to the sacred family with which the latter is connected, and shall be regarded and treated as members of the Church of God.\*

"The passage thus explained," says an able writer, "establishes the church membership of infants in another form. For it assumes the principle, that when both parents are reputed believers, their children belong to the Church of God as a matter of course. The whole difficulty proposed by the Corinthians to Paul, grows out of this principle. Had he taught, or they understood, that no children, be their parents believers or unbelievers, are to be accounted members of the church, the difficulty could not have existed. For if the faith of both parents could not confer upon the child the privilege of membership, the faith of only one of them certainly could not. The point was decided. It would have been mere impertinence to tease the apostle with queries which carried their own answers along with them. But on the supposition that when both parents were members, their children were also members; the difficulty is very natural and serious. "I see," would a Corinthian convert exclaim, "I see the children of my Christian neighbours, owned as members of the Church of God; and I see the children of others, who are unbelievers rejected with themselves. I believe in Christ myself; but my husband, my wife, believes not. What is to become of my children? Are they to be admitted with myself? Or are they to be cast off with my partner?"

\* It is worthy of notice that this interpretation of the passage is adopted, and decisively maintained by Augustine, one of the most pious and learned divines of the fourth century. *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, ch. 27.



“Let not your heart be troubled,” replies the apostle, “God reckons them to the believing, not to the unbelieving parent. It is enough that they are yours. The infidelity of your partner shall never frustrate their interest in the covenant of your God. They are holy because *you* are so.”

“This decision put the subject at rest. And it lets us know that one of the reasons, if not the chief reason of the doubt, whether a married person should continue, after conversion, in the conjugal society of an infidel partner, arose from a fear lest such continuance should exclude the children from the church of God. Otherwise, it is hard to comprehend why the apostle should dissuade them from separating by such an argument as he has employed in the text. And it is utterly inconceivable how such a doubt could have entered their minds, had not the membership of infants, born of believing parents, been undisputed, and esteemed a high privilege, so high a privilege, that the apprehension of losing it, made conscientious parents at a stand whether they ought not rather to break the ties of wedlock, by withdrawing from an unbelieving husband or wife. Thus the origin of this difficulty, on the one hand, and the solution of it, on the other, concur in establishing our doctrine, that by the appointment of God himself, the infants of believing parents are born members of his church.”\*

10. Finally; *the history of the Christian Church from the apostolic age*, furnishes an argument of irresistible force in favour of the divine authority of infant baptism.

I can assure you, my friends, with the utmost candour and confidence, after much careful inquiry on the subject, that, for more than fifteen hundred years after the birth of Christ, there was not a single society of professing Christians on earth, who opposed infant baptism on any thing like the grounds which distinguish our modern Baptist brethren. It is an *undoubted fact*, that the people known in ecclesiastical history under the name of the Anabaptists, who arose in Germany, in the year 1522, were the very first body of people, in the whole Christian world, who rejected the baptism of infants, on the principles now adopted by the Antipædobaptist body. This, I am aware, will be regarded as an untenable position by some of the ardent friends of the Baptist cause; but nothing can be more certain than that it is even

\* *Essays on the Church of God*, by Dr. J. M. Mason. *Christian's Magazine*, ii. 49, 50.

so. Of this a short induction of particulars will afford conclusive evidence.

Tertullian, about two hundred years after the birth of Christ, is the first man of whom we read in ecclesiastical history, as speaking a word against infant baptism; and he, while he recognises the existence and prevalence of the practice, and expressly recommends that infants be baptized, if they are not likely to survive the period of infancy; yet advises that, where there is a prospect of their living, baptism be delayed until a late period in life. But what was the reason of this advice? The moment we look at the reason, we see that it avails nothing to the cause in support of which it is sometimes produced. Tertullian adopted the superstitious idea, that baptism was accompanied with the remission of all past sins; and that sins committed after baptism were peculiarly dangerous. He, therefore, advised, that not merely infants, but young men and young women; and even young widows and widowers should postpone their baptism until the period of youthful appetite and passion should have passed. In short, he advised that, in all cases in which death was not likely to intervene, baptism be postponed, until the subjects of it should have arrived at a period of life, when they would be no longer in danger of being led astray by youthful lusts. And thus, for more than a century after the age of Tertullian, we find some of the most conspicuous converts to the Christian faith, postponing baptism till the close of life. Constantine the Great, we are told, though a professing Christian for many years before, was not baptized till after the commencement of his last illness. The same fact is recorded of a number of other distinguished converts to Christianity, about and after that time. But, surely, advice and facts of this kind make nothing in favour of the system of our Baptist brethren. Indeed, taken altogether, their historical bearing is strongly in favour of our system.

The next persons that we hear of as calling in question the propriety of infant baptism, were the small body of people in France, about twelve hundred years after Christ, who followed a certain *Peter de Bruis*, and formed an inconsiderable section of the people known in ecclesiastical history under the general name of the *Waldenses*. This body maintained that infants ought not to be baptized, because they were incapable of salvation. They taught that none could be saved but those who wrought out their salvation by a long course of self-denial and labour. And as infants were incapable of thus "working out their own salvation," they held

that making them the subjects of a sacramental seal, was an absurdity. But surely our Baptist brethren cannot be willing to consider these people as their predecessors, or to adopt their creed.

We hear no more of any society or organized body of *Antipædobaptists*, until the sixteenth century, when they arose, as before stated, in Germany, and for the first time broached the doctrine of our modern Baptist brethren. As far as I have been able to discover, they were absolutely unknown in the whole Christian world, before that time.

But we have something more than mere negative testimony on this subject. It is not only certain, that we hear of no society of *Antipædobaptists* resembling our present Baptist brethren, for more than fifteen hundred years after Christ; but we have positive and direct proof that, during the whole of that time, infant baptism was the general and unopposed practice of the Christian Church.

To say nothing of earlier intimations, wholly irreconcilable with any other practice than that of infant baptism, *Origen*, a Greek father of the third century, and decidedly the most learned man of his day, speaks in the most unequivocal terms of the baptism of infants, as the general practice of the church in his time, and as having been received from the Apostles. His testimony is as follows—"According to the usage of the church, baptism is given even to infants; when if there were nothing in infants which needed forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would seem to be superfluous." (Homil. VIII. in Levit. ch. 12.) Again; "Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? Or, when have they sinned? Or, can there be any reason for the laver in their case, unless it be according to the sense which we have mentioned above, viz: that no one is free from pollution, though he has lived but one day upon earth? And because by baptism native pollution is taken away, therefore infants are baptized." (Homil. in Luc. 14.) Again: "For this cause it was that the church received an order from the Apostles to give baptism even to infants."\*

The testimony of *Cyprian*, a Latin Father of the third century, contemporary with *Origen*, is no less decisive. It is as follows:

In the year 253 after Christ, there was a Council of sixty-six bishops or pastors held at Carthage, in which Cyprian presided. To this Council, *Fidus*, a country pastor, pre-

\* Comment. in Epist. ad Romanos. Lib. 5.

sented the following question, which he wished them, by their united wisdom, to solve—viz. Whether it was necessary, in the administration of baptism, as of circumcision, to wait until the *eighth day*; or whether a child might be baptized at an earlier period after its birth? The question, it will be observed, was *not* whether infants ought to be baptized? *That* was taken for granted. But simply, whether it was necessary to wait until the *eighth day* after their birth? The Council came *unanimously* to the following decision, and transmitted it in a letter to the inquirer.

“Cyprian and the rest of the Bishops who were present in the Council, sixty-six in number, to Fidus, our brother, greeting :

“As to the case of Infants,—whereas you judge that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born, and that the rule of circumcision is to be observed, that no one should be baptized and sanctified before the eighth day after he is born; we were all in the Council of a very different opinion. As for what you thought proper to be done, no one was of your mind; but we all rather judged that the mercy and grace of God is to be denied to no human being that is born. This, therefore, dear brother, was our opinion in the Council; that we ought not to hinder any person from baptism, and the grace of God, who is merciful and kind to us all. And this rule, as it holds for all, we think more especially to be observed in reference to infants, even to those newly born.” (Cyprian, Epist. 66.)

Surely no testimony can be more unexceptionable and decisive than this. Lord Chancellor King, in his account of the primitive church, after quoting what is given above, and much more, subjoins the following remark—“Here, then is a synodical decree for the baptism of infants, as formal as can possibly be expected; which being the judgment of a synod, is more authentic and cogent than that of a private father; it being supposable that a private father might write his own particular judgment and opinion only; but the determination of a synod (and he might have added, the *unanimous* determination of a synod of sixty-six members) denotes the common practice and usage of the whole church.”\*

The Famous *Chrysostom*, a Greek father, who flourished towards the close of the fourth century, having had occasion to speak of circumcision, and of the inconvenience and pain which attended its dispensation, proceeds to say—“But *our*

\* Inquiry into the Constitution, &c. Part II. Chap. 3.

circumcision, I mean the grace of *baptism*, gives cure without pain, and procures to us a thousand benefits, and fills us with the grace of the Spirit; and it has *no determinate time*, as that had; but one that is in the *very beginning of his age*, or one that is in the middle of it, or one that is in his old age, may receive this circumcision made without hands; in which there is no trouble to be undergone but to throw off the load of sins, and to receive pardon for all past offences." (Homil. 40. in *Genesis*.)

Passing by the testimony of several other conspicuous writers of the third and fourth centuries, in support of the fact, that infant baptism was generally practised when they wrote, I shall detain you with only one testimony more in relation to the history of this ordinance. It is that of *Augustine*, one of the most pious, learned and venerable fathers of the Christian Church, who lived a little more than three hundred years after the Apostles,—taken in connexion with that of *Pelagius*, the learned heretic, who lived at the same time. Augustine had been pleading against Pelagius, in favour of the doctrine of original sin. In the course of this plea, he asks—"Why are infants baptized for the remission of sins, if they have no sin?" At the same time intimating to Pelagius, that if he would be consistent with himself, his denial of original sin must draw after it the denial of infant baptism. The reply of Pelagius is striking and unequivocal. "Baptism," says he, "ought to be administered to infants, with the same sacramental words which are used in the case of adult persons."—"Men slander me as if I denied the sacrament of baptism to infants."—"I never heard of any, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants; for who can be so impious as to hinder infants from being baptized, and born again in Christ, and so make them miss of the kingdom of God?" Again: Augustine remarks, in reference to the Pelagians—"Since they grant that infants must be baptized, as not being able to *resist the authority of the whole church, which was doubtless delivered by our Lord and his Apostles*; they must consequently grant that they stand in need of the benefit of the Mediator; that being offered by the sacrament, and by the charity of the faithful, and so being incorporated into Christ's body, they may be reconciled to God," &c. Again, speaking of certain heretics at Carthage, who, though they acknowledged infant baptism, took wrong views of its meaning, Augustine remarks—"They, *minding the Scriptures, and the authority of the whole church*, and the form of the sacrament itself, see well that

baptism in infants is for the remission of sins.” Further, in his work against the *Donatists*, the same writer speaking of baptized infants obtaining salvation without the personal exercise of faith, he says—“which *the whole body of the church holds*, as delivered to them in the case of little infants baptized; who certainly cannot believe with the heart unto righteousness, or confess with the mouth unto salvation, nay, by their crying and noise while the sacrament is administering, they disturb the holy mysteries: and yet *no Christian man* will say that they are baptized to no purpose.” Again, he says—“The custom of our mother the church in baptizing infants must not be disregarded, nor be accounted needless, nor believed to be any thing else than *an ordinance delivered to us from the Apostles*.” In short, those who will be at the trouble to consult the large extracts from the writings of Augustine, among other Christian fathers, in the learned *Wall’s* history of Infant Baptism, will find that venerable father declaring again and again that he never met with any Christian, either of the general church, or of any of the sects, nor with any writer, who owned the authority of Scripture, who taught any other doctrine than that infants were to be baptized for the remission of sin. Here, then, were two men, undoubtedly among the most learned then in the world—Augustine and Pelagius; the former as familiar probably with the writings of all the distinguished fathers who had gone before him, as any man of his time; the latter also a man of great learning and talents, who had travelled over the greater part of the Christian world; who both declare, about three hundred years after the apostolic age, that they never saw or heard of any one who called himself a Christian, not even the most impious heretic, no nor any writer who claimed to believe in the Scriptures, who denied the baptism of infants. (See *Wall’s* History, Part I. ch. 15—19.) Can the most incredulous reader, who is not fast bound in the fetters of invincible prejudice, hesitate to admit, first, that these men verily believed that infant baptism had been the universal practice of the church from the days of the Apostles; and, secondly, that, situated and informed as they were, it was impossible that they should be mistaken.

The same Augustine, in his *Epistle to Boniface*, while he expresses an opinion that the parents are the proper persons to offer up their children to God in baptism, if they be good faithful Christians; yet thinks proper to mention that others may, with propriety, in special cases, perform the same kind office of Christian charity. “You see,” says he, “that a

great many are offered, not by their parents, but by any other persons, as infant slaves are sometimes offered by their masters. And sometimes when the parents are dead, the infants are baptized, being offered by any that can afford to show this compassion on them. And sometimes infants whom their parents have cruelly exposed, may be taken up and offered in baptism by those who have no children of their own, nor design to have any." Again, in his book against the *Donatists*, speaking directly of infant baptism, he says—"If any one ask for divine authority in this matter, although that which *the whole church practises*, which *was not instituted by councils*, but was *ever in use*, is very reasonably believed to be no other than a thing delivered by the authority of the Apostles; yet we may besides take a true estimate, how much the sacrament of baptism does avail infants, by the circumcision which God's ancient people received. For Abraham was justified before he received circumcision, as Cornelius was endued with the Holy Spirit before he was baptized. And yet the apostle says of Abraham, that he received the sign of circumcision, 'a seal of the righteousness of faith,' by which he had in heart believed, and it had been 'counted to him for righteousness.' Why then was he commanded to circumcise all his male infants on the eighth day, when they could not yet believe with the heart, that it might be counted to them for righteousness; but for this reason, because the sacrament is, in itself of great importance? Therefore, as in Abraham, 'the righteousness of faith' went before, and circumcision, 'the seal of the righteousness of faith came after;' so in Cornelius, the spiritual sanctification by the gift of the Holy Spirit went before, and the sacrament of regeneration, by the laver of baptism, came after. And as in Isaac, who was circumcised the eighth day, the seal of the righteousness of faith went before, and (as he was a follower of his father's faith) the righteousness itself, the seal whereof had gone before in his infancy, came after; so in infants baptized, the sacrament of regeneration goes before, and (if they put in practice the Christian religion) conversion of the heart, the mystery whereof went before in their body, comes after. By all which it appears, that the sacrament of baptism is one thing, and conversion of the heart another."

So much for the testimony of the Fathers. To me, I acknowledge, this testimony carries with it irresistible conviction. It is, no doubt, conceivable, considered in itself, that in three centuries from the days of the apostles, a very mate-

rial change might have taken place in regard to the subjects of baptism. But that a change so serious and radical as that of which our Baptist brethren speak, should have been introduced without the knowledge of such men as have been just quoted, is *not conceivable*. That the church should have passed from the practice of none but adult baptism, to that of the constant and universal baptism of infants, while such a change was utterly unknown, and never heard of, by the most active, pious, and learned men that lived during that period, cannot, I must believe, be imagined by any impartial mind. Now when Origen, Cyprian, and Chrysostom, declare, not only that the baptism of infants was the universal and unopposed practice of the church in their respective times and places of residence; and when men of so much acquaintance with all preceding writers, and so much knowledge of all Christendom, as Augustine and Pelagius, declared that they *never heard of any one who claimed to be a Christian, either orthodox or heretic, who did not maintain and practice infant baptism*; I say, to suppose, in the face of such testimony, that the practice of infant baptism crept in, as an unwarranted innovation, between their time and that of the apostles, without the smallest notice of the change having ever reached their ears is, I must be allowed to say, of all incredible suppositions, one of the most incredible. He who can believe this, must, it appears to me, be prepared to make a sacrifice of all historical evidence at the shrine of blind and deaf prejudice.

It is here also worthy of particular notice, that those pious and far famed witnesses for the truth, commonly known by the name of the *Waldenses*, did undoubtedly hold the doctrine of infant baptism, and practise accordingly. In their Confessions of Faith and other writings, drawn up between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, and in which they represent their creeds and usages as handed down, from father to son, for several hundred years before the Reformation, they speak on the subject before us so frequently and explicitly, as to preclude all doubt in regard to the fact alleged. The following specimen of their language will satisfy every reasonable inquirer.

“Baptism,” say they, is administered in a full congregation of the faithful, to the end that he that is received into the church may be reputed and held of all as a Christian brother, and that all the congregation may pray for him that he may be a Christian in heart, as he is outwardly esteemed to be a Christian. *And for this cause it is that we present*



*our children in baptism*, which ought to be done by those to whom the children are most nearly related, such as their parents, or those to whom God has given this charity.”

Again; referring to the superstitious additions to baptism which the Papists had introduced, they say, in one of their ecclesiastical documents,—“The things which are not necessary in baptism are, the exorcisms, the breathings, the sign of the cross upon the head or forehead of the *infant*, the salt put into the mouth, the spittle into the ears and nostrils, the unction of the breast, &c. From these things many take an occasion of error and superstition, rather than of edifying and salvation.”

Understanding that their Popish neighbours charged them with denying the baptism of infants, they acquit themselves of this imputation as follows :

“Neither is the time nor place appointed for those who are to be baptized. But charity and the edification of the church and congregation ought to be the rule in this matter.

“Yet, notwithstanding, *we bring our children to be baptized*; which they ought to do to whom they are most nearly related; such as their parents, or those whom God hath inspired with such a charity.”

“True it is,” adds the historian, “that being, for some hundreds of years, constrained to suffer their children to be baptized by the Romish priests, they deferred the performance of it as long as possible, because they detested the human inventions annexed to the institution of that holy sacrament, which they looked upon as so many pollutions of it. And by reason of their pastors, whom they called *Barbes*, being often abroad travelling in the service of the church, they could not have baptism administered to their children by them. They, therefore, sometimes kept them long without it. On account of which delay, the priests have charged them with that reproach. To which charge not only their adversaries have given credit, *but also many of those who have approved of their lives and faith in all other respects.*”\*

\* See John Paul Perrin’s account of the Doctrine and Order of the Waldenses and Albigenses; Sir Samuel Morland’s do.; and also Leger’s *Histoire Generale des Eglises Vaudoises*. Mr. William Jones, a Baptist, in a work entitled, a *History of the Waldenses*, in two volumes octavo, professes to give a full account of the Faith and Order of these pious witnesses of the truth; but, so far as I have observed, carefully leaves out of all their public formularies and other documents, every thing which would disclose their Pædobaptist principles and practise! On this artifice comment is unnecessary.

It being so plainly a fact, established by their own unequivocal and repeated testimony, that the great body of the Waldenses were Pædobaptists, on what ground is it that our Baptist brethren assert, and that some have been found to credit the assertion, that those venerable witnesses of the truth rejected the baptism of infants? The answer is easy and ample. A small section of the people bearing the general name of Waldenses, followers of Peter de Bruis, who were mentioned in a preceding page, while they agreed with the mass of their denomination in most other matters, differed from them in regard to the subject of infant baptism. They held, as before stated, that infants were not capable of salvation; that Christian salvation is of such a nature that none can partake of it but those who undergo a course of rigorous self-denial and labour in its pursuit. Those who die in infancy not being capable of this, the Petrobrussians held that they were not capable of salvation; and, this being the case, that they ought not to be baptized. This, however, is not the doctrine of our Baptist brethren; and, of course, furnishes no support to their creed or practice. But the decisive answer is, that the Petrobrussians were a very small fraction of the great Waldensian body; probably not more than a thirtieth or fortieth part of the whole. The great mass of the denomination, however, as such, declare, in their Confessions of Faith, and in various public documents, that they held, and that their fathers before them, for many generations, always held, to infant baptism. The Petrobrussians, in this respect, forsook the doctrine and practice of their fathers, and departed from the proper and established Waldensian creed. If there be truth in the plainest records of ecclesiastical history, this is an undoubted fact. In short the real state of this case may be illustrated by the following representation. Suppose it were alleged that the Baptists in the United States are in the habit of keeping the seventh day of the week as their Sabbath? Would the statement be true? By no means. There is, indeed, a small section of the Antipædobaptist body in the United States, usually styled "Seventh day Baptists"—probably not a thirtieth part of the whole body—who observe Saturday in each week as their Sabbath. But, notwithstanding this, the proper representation, no doubt is,—(the only representation that a faithful historian of facts would pronounce correct)—that the Baptists in this country, as a general body, observe "the Lord's day" as their Sabbath. You may rest assured, my friends, that this statement most exactly illustrates the real

fact with regard to the Waldenses as Pædobaptists. Twenty-nine parts, at least, out of thirty, of the whole of that body of witnesses for the truth, were undoubtedly Pædobaptists. The remaining thirtieth part departed from the faith of their fathers in regard to baptism, but departed on principles altogether unlike those of our modern Baptist brethren.

I have only one fact more to state in referenee to the pious Waldenses, and that is, that soon after the opening of the Reformation by Luther, they sought intercourse with the Reformed churches of Geneva and France; held communion with them; received ministers from them; and appeared eager to testify their respect and affection for them as "brethren in the Lord." Now it is well known that the churches of Geneva and France, at this time, were in the habitual use of *infant* baptism. This single fact is sufficient to prove that the Waldenses were Pædobaptists. If they had adopted the doctrine of our Baptist brethren, and laid the same stress on it with them, it is manifest that such intercourse would have been wholly out of the question.

If these historical statements be correct, and that they are so, is just as well attested as any facts whatever in the annals of the church, the amount of the whole is conclusive, is *demonstrative*, that, for fifteen hundred years after Christ, the practice of infant baptism was universal; that to this general fact there was absolutely no exception, in the whole Christian church, which, on principle, or even analogy, can countenance in the least degree, modern Anti-pædobaptism; that from the time of the Apostles to the time of Luther, the general, unopposed, established practice of the church was to regard the infant seed of believers as members of the church, and, as such, to baptize them.

But this is not all. If the doctrine of our Baptist brethren be correct; that is, if infant baptism be a corruption and a nullity; then it follows, from the foregoing historical statements, most inevitably, that the ordinance of baptism was lost for fifteen hundred years: yes, entirely lost, from the apostolic age till the sixteenth century. For there was manifestly, "no society, during that long period, of fifteen centuries, but what was in the habit of baptizing infants." *God had no church, then, in the world for so long a period!* Can this be admitted? Surely not by any one who believes in the perpetuity and indestructibility of the household of faith.

Nay, if the principle of our Baptist brethren be correct, the ordinance of baptism is irrecoverably lost altogether; that is, irrecoverably without a miracle. Because if, during

the long tract of time that has been mentioned, there was no true baptism in the church; and if none but baptized persons were capable of administering true baptism to others? the consequence is plain; there is no true baptism now in the world! But can this be believed? Can we imagine that the great Head of the Church would permit one of his own precious ordinances to be banished entirely from the church for many centuries, much less to be totally lost? Surely the thought is abhorrent to every Christian feeling.

Such is an epitome of the direct evidence in favour of infant baptism. To me, I acknowledge, it appears nothing short of *demonstration*. The invariable character of all Jehovah's dealings and covenants with the children of men; his express appointment, acted upon for two thousand years by the ancient church; the total silence of the New Testament as to any retraction or repeal of this privilege; the evident and repeated examples of family baptism in the apostolic age; the indubitable testimony of the practice of the whole church on the Pædobaptist plan, from the time of the apostles to the sixteenth century, including the most respectable witnesses for the truth in the dark ages; all conspire to establish on the firmest foundation, the membership, and the consequent right to baptism of the infant seed of believers. If here be no divine warrant, we may despair of finding it for any institution in the Church of God.

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## DISCOURSE II.

### OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

“And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us saying—if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into mine house, and abide there.”—*Act*: xvi. 15.

Having adduced, in the preceding discourse, the direct evidence in support of Infant Baptism, let us now attend to some of the most common and popular *objections*, brought by our Baptist brethren, against the doctrine which we have attempted to establish. And,

1. The first is, that we have *no direct warrant in the New Testament, in so many words, for Infant Baptism*. “We are no where,” say our opponents, “in the history of the

apostolic age, told, in express terms, either that infants ought to be baptized, or that they were, in fact, baptized. Now is it possible to account for this omission on the supposition that such baptism was generally practised?" This objection has been urged a thousand times, with great confidence, and with no inconsiderable effect, on the minds of some serious persons of small knowledge, and of superficial thought. But when thoroughly examined, it will, I am persuaded, appear destitute of all solid foundation.

For, in the first place, even if it were as our Baptist brethren suppose; that is, even if no express warrant, in so many words, were found in the New Testament, authorizing and directing infant baptism, could this reasonably be considered, upon Pædobaptist principles, unaccountable, or even wonderful? The Pædobaptist principle, let it be borne in mind, is, that the church under the New Testament economy is the same with the church under the Old Testament dispensation; that the former was the minority or childhood, the latter the maturity of the visible kingdom of the Messiah; that one of the most striking features in the New Testament character of this kingdom is, a great increase of light, and enlargement of privilege; that the infant seed of believers had been born in covenant with God, and their covenanted character marked and ratified by a covenant seal, for two thousand years before Christ appeared; and that, if this privilege had been intended simply to be continued, no new enactment was necessary to ascertain this intention, but merely allowing it to proceed without interposing any change. This is the ground we take. Now, taking this ground; assuming as facts what have been just stated as such, can any thing be more perfectly natural than the whole aspect of the New Testament in relation to this subject? Very little, explicit or formal, is said in reference to the covenant standing of children, on the opening of the new economy, simply because no material alteration as to this point, was intended. All the first Christians having been bred under the Jewish economy, and having been always accustomed to the enjoyment of its privileges, would, of course, expect those privileges to be continued, especially, if nothing were said about their repeal or abridgement. To announce to these Jewish believers, that the covenant standing, and covenant advantages of their beloved children, were not to be withdrawn or curtailed, if no other alteration in reference to this matter, than an increase of privilege were intended, would have been just as unnecessary as to inform them that the true God was still to be worshipped, and the atoning sacrifice of

the Messiah still regarded as the only ground of hope. In short, assuming Pædobaptist principles, we might expect the New Testament to exhibit precisely the aspect which it does exhibit. Not to say, in so many words, that the privilege in question was to be continued; but all along to speak as if this were to be taken for granted, without an explicit enactment; to assure the first Christians that “the promise was still to them and their children;” and not to them only, but also to “as many as the Lord their God should call” into his visible church; to tell them that, in regard to this matter, the administration of his New Testament kingdom was to be such as to abolish all distinction of sex in Christian privilege; that, in Christ, there was to be no longer a difference made between “male and female;” and, in conformity with this intimation, and as practical comment upon it, to introduce *whole families* with the *converted parents* into the church, by the appropriate New Testament rite, as had been invariably practised under the Old Testament economy.

But now turn, for a moment, to the opposite supposition; to that of our Baptist brethren. They are obliged, by their system, to take for granted, that, after the children of the professing people of God had been, for nearly two thousand years, in the enjoyment of an important covenant privilege; a privilege precious in itself, and peculiarly dear to the parental heart; it was suddenly, and without explanation, set aside: that on the opening of the New Testament dispensation, a dispensation of larger promises, and of increased liberality, this privilege was abruptly and totally withdrawn; that children were ejected from their former covenant relation; that they were no longer the subjects of a covenant seal, or of covenant promises; and that all this took place without one hint of any reason for it being given; without one syllable being said, in all the numerous epistles to the churches, by any one of justification or apology, for so important a change! Nay, that, instead of such notice and explanation, a mode of expression, under the new economy, should be throughout used, corresponding with the former practice, and adapted still to convey the idea that both parents and children stood in their old relation, notwithstanding the painful change! Is this credible! Can it be believed by any one who is not predetermined to regard it as true?

But if the New Testament economy does not include the church membership of the infant seed of believers, such a change, undoubtedly, did take place, on the coming in of the new economy. The Jewish disciples of Christ saw

their children at once cut off from the covenant of promise, and denied its appropriate seal, to which they had always been accustomed, and in which the tenderest parental feelings were so strongly implicated. Yet we hear of no complaint on their part. We find not a word which seems intended to explain such a change, or to allay the feelings of those parents who could not fail, if such had been the fact, both to feel and to remonstrate.

I must say, my friends, that, to my mind, this consideration, if there were no other, is *conclusive*. Instead of our Baptist brethren having a right to call upon us to find a direct warrant in the New Testament, in favour of infant membership, we have a right to call upon them to produce a direct warrant for the great and sudden change which they allege took place. If it be, as they say, that the New Testament is silent on the subject, this very silence is quite sufficient to destroy their cause, and to establish ours. It affords proof positive that no such change as that which is alleged ever occurred. That a change so important and interesting should have been introduced, without one word of explanation or apology on the part of the inspired apostles, and without one hint or struggle on the part of those who had enjoyed the former privilege; in short, that the old economy, in relation to this matter, should have been entirely broken up, and yet the whole subject passed over by the inspired writers in entire silence, is surely one of the most incredible things that can well be imagined! He who can believe it, must have a mind "fully set in him" to embrace the system which requires it.

So much on the supposition assumed by our Baptist brethren, that there is no direct warrant in the New Testament for infant membership, and of course, none for infant baptism. Admitting that the New Testament is silent on the subject, their cause is ruined. No good reason, I had almost said, no possible reason, can be assigned for such silence, in the circumstances in which the Christian church was placed, but the fact that things, as to this point, were to go on as before. That the old privilege, so dear to the parent's heart, was to receive no other change than a *new seal*, less burdensome; applicable equally to both sexes; in a word, recognising, extending, and perpetuating all the privileges which they had enjoyed before.

But it cannot be admitted that the New Testament contains no direct warrant for infant membership. The testimony adduced in the preceding discourse is surely worthy,

to say the least, of the most serious regard. When the Master himself declares concerning infants, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven;" when an inspired apostle proclaims—"The promise is to us and our children;" and when we plainly see, under the apostolical administration of the church, whole families received, in repeated instances, into the church, on the professed faith of the individuals who were constituted their respective heads, just as we know occurred under the old economy, when the membership of infants was undisputed: when we read such things as these in the New Testament, we surely cannot complain of the want of testimony which ought to satisfy every reasonable inquirer.

2. A second objection often urged by our Baptist brethren, is drawn from what they insist is the *general law of positive institutions*. "In cases of moral duty, say they, we are at liberty to argue from inference, from analogy, from implication; but in regard to positive institutions, our warrant must be direct and positive. Now, as we nowhere find in the New Testament any positive direction for baptizing infants, the general law, which must govern in all cases of positive institution, plainly forbids it. Here no inferential reasoning can be admitted."

This argument, I am persuaded, will not be regarded as forcible by any who examine it with attention and impartiality. The whole principle is unsound. The fact is, inferential reasoning may be, and is in many cases, quite as strong as any other. Besides, if it be contended, that in every thing relating to positive institutes, we must have direct and positive precepts, the assumed principle will prove too much.

Upon this principle, females ought never to partake of the Lord's Supper; for we have no positive precept, and no explicit example in the New Testament to warrant them in doing so, and yet our Baptist brethren, forgetting their own principle, unite with all Christians who consider the sacramental supper as still obligatory on the church, in admitting females to its participation. This practice is, no doubt, perfectly right. It rests on the most solid inferential reasoning, which may be just as strong as any other, and which, in this case, cannot be gainsayed or resisted. But every time our Baptist brethren yield to this reasoning, and act accordingly, they desert their assumed principle.

3. A third objection frequently urged is, that if infant baptism had prevailed in the primitive church, *we might have expected to find in the New Testament history some ex*



*amples of the children of professing Christians being baptized in their infancy.* Our Baptist brethren remind us that the New Testament history embraces a period of more than sixty years after the organization of the church, under the new economy. "Now," say they, "during this long period, if the principle and practice of infant baptism had been the law of the church, we must, in all probability, have found many instances recorded of the baptism of the children of persons already in the communion of the church. Whereas, in all that is distinctly recorded, or occasionally hinted at, concerning the churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, Galatia, Colosse, &c., we find no mention made of such baptisms. We, therefore, conclude that none such occurred."

This objection, when examined, will be found, it is believed, to have quite as little weight as the preceding. The principal object of the New Testament history is to give an account of the progress of the Gospel. Hence it was much more to the purpose of the sacred writers to inform us respecting the conversions to Christianity, from Judaism and Paganism, than to dwell in detail on what occurred in the bosom of the church itself. Only enough is said on the latter subject to trace the disturbances which occurred in the churches to their proper source, and to render intelligible and impressive the various precepts in relation to these matters which are recorded for the instruction of the people of God in all ages. Hence all the cases of baptism which are recorded, are cases in which it was administered to *converts from Judaism or Paganism, to Christianity*. To the best of my recollection, we have no example of a single baptism of any other kind. Now this, upon Pædobaptist principles, is precisely what might have been expected. In giving a history of such churches, who would think of singling out cases of infant baptism? This is a matter so much of course, and of every day's occurrence, that it is in no respect a remarkable event, and, of course, could not be expected to be recorded as such. No wonder, then, that we find no instance of this kind specified in the annals of the apostolical church.

But this is not all. There is connected with this fact, a still more serious difficulty, which cannot fail of bearing with most unfriendly weight on the Baptist cause. Though it is not wonderful, for the reason just mentioned, that we read of no cases of infant baptism, among the Christian families of the apostolical age; yet, upon Baptist principles, it is much more difficult to be accounted for, that we find no example of

persons born of Christian parents being baptized *in adult age*. Upon those principles, the children of professing Christians bear no relation to the church. They are as completely "without" as the children of Pagans and Mohammedans, until by faith and repentance they are brought within the bond of the covenant. Their being converted and baptized, then, we might expect to be just as carefully noticed, and just as minutely detailed, as the conversion and baptism of the most complete "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." Yet the fact is, that during the whole three score years after the ascension of Christ, which the New Testament history embraces, we have no hint of the baptism of any infant born of Christian parents. In my judgment this fact bears very strongly in favour of the Pædobaptist cause.

4. It is objected, that *Jesus Christ himself was not baptized until he was thirty years of age; and, therefore, it is inferred, that his disciples ought not to be baptized until they reach adult age.* To this objection I reply.

(1.) Christ was baptized by John. Now, it is certain, that John's Baptism was not Christian baptism; for it is evident from the Acts of the Apostles, (chap. xix. 1—5.) that those who were baptized by John, were baptized over again, "in the name of the Lord Jesus." Besides, it is evident, from the whole passage, that the baptism of Christ by John was an essentially different thing from baptism as now practised in the Christian church. The ministry of John the Baptist was a dispensation, if we may say so, intermediate between the Old and the New Testament economies. And, as our blessed Lord thought proper to "fulfil all righteousness," he submitted to the baptismal rite which marked that dispensation. Besides, under the Old Testament economy, when the High Priest first entered on his holy office, he was solemnly washed with water. And that officer, we know, was wont to come to the discharge of his functions at "about thirty years of age," the very age at which our Saviour was baptized, and entered on his public ministry. In like manner, when the "great High Priest of our profession," Christ Jesus, entered on his public ministry, he thought proper to comply with the same ceremony; that he might accomplish the prophecy, and fulfil all the typical representations concerning the Saviour, which had been left on record in the Old Testament Scriptures. The baptism of Christ, then, has no reference to this controversy, and cannot be made to speak either for or against our practice in regard to this ordinance. But

(2.) If this argument have any force, it proves more than

our Baptist brethren are willing to allow, viz: that no person ought to be baptized under thirty years of age. So that even a real Christian, however clear his evidences of faith and repentance, though he be *twenty, twenty-five*, or even *twenty-nine* years of age, must in no case think of being baptized until he has reached the full age of thirty. A consequence so replete with absurdity, that the simple statement of it is enough to insure its refutation.

5. A fifth objection continually made by our Baptist brethren is, that *infants are not capable of those spiritual acts or exercises which the New Testament requires in order to a proper reception of the ordinance of Baptism*. Thus the language of the New Testament, on various occasions is—“Repent, and be baptized. Believe, and be baptized. If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized. They that gladly received the word were baptized. Many of the Corinthians, having believed, were baptized.” In short, say our Baptist brethren, as baptism is acknowledged on all hands to be a “seal of the righteousness of faith;” and as infants are altogether incapable of exercising faith: it is, of course, not proper to baptize them.

In answer to this objection, my first remark is, that all those exhortations to faith and repentance, as prerequisites to baptism, which we find in the New Testament, are addressed to *adult persons*. And when *we* are called to instruct adult persons, who have never been baptized, we always address them precisely in the same way in which the apostles did. We exhort them to repent and believe, and we say, just as Philip said, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized.” But this does not touch the question respecting the infant seed of believers. It only shows that when adults are baptized, such a qualification is to be urged, and such a profession required. And in this, all Pœdobaptists unanimously agree.

But still, our Baptist brethren, unsatisfied with this answer, insist, that, as infants are not capable of exercising faith; as they are not capable of acting either intelligently or voluntarily in the case at all, they cannot be considered as the proper recipients of an ordinance which is represented as a “seal of the righteousness of faith.” This objection is urged with unceasing confidence, and not seldom accompanied with a sneer or even ridicule, at the idea of applying a covenant seal to those who are incapable of either understanding, or giving their consent, to the transaction. It is really, my friends, enough to make one shudder to think

how often, and how unceremoniously language of this kind is employed by those who acknowledge that *infants of eight days old*, were once, and that by express Divine appointment, made the subjects of circumcision. Now circumcision is expressly said by the apostle to be a "seal of the righteousness of faith," as well as baptism. But were children of eight days old then capable of exercising faith, when they were circumcised, more than they are now when they are baptized? Surely the objection before us is as valid in the one case as in the other. And, whether our Baptist brethren perceive it or not, all the charges of "absurdity" and "impiety" which they are so ready to heap on infant baptism, are just as applicable to infant circumcision as to infant baptism. Are they, then, willing to say, that the application of a "seal of the righteousness of faith" to unconscious infants, of eight days old, who, of course, could not exercise faith, was, under the old economy, preposterous and absurd? Are they prepared thus to "charge God foolishly?" Yet they must do it, if they would be consistent. They cannot escape from the shocking alternative. Every harsh and contemptuous epithet which they apply to infant baptism, must, if they would adhere to the principles which they lay down, be applied to infant circumcision. But that which unavoidably leads to such a consequence cannot be warranted by the word of God.

After all, the whole weight of the objection, in this case, is founded on an entire forgetfulness of the main principle of the Pædobaptist system. It is forgotten that in every case of infant baptism, faith is required, and, if the parents be sincere, is actually exercised. But it is required of the parents, not of the children. So that, if the parent really present his child in faith, the spirit of the ordinance is entirely met and answered. It was this principle which gave meaning and legitimacy to the administration of the corresponding rite under the old dispensation. It was because the parents were visibly within the bond of the covenant, that their children were entitled to the same blessed privilege. The same principle precisely applies under the New Testament economy. Nor does it impair the force of this consideration to allege, that parents, it is feared, too often present their children, in this solemn ordinance, without genuine faith. It is, indeed, probable that this is often lamentably the fact. But so it was, we cannot doubt, with respect to the corresponding ordinance, under the old dispensation. Yet the circumcision was neither invalidated, nor rendered

unmeaning, by this want of sincerity on the part of the parent. It was sufficient for the visible administration that faith was visibly professed. When our Baptist brethren administer the ordinance of baptism to one who professes to repent and believe, but who is not sincere in this profession, they do not consider his want of faith as divesting the ordinance of either its warrant or its meaning. The administration may be regular and scriptural, while the recipient is criminal, and receives no spiritual benefit. It is, in every case, the profession of faith which gives the right, in the eye of the church, to the external ordinance. The want of sincerity in this profession, while it deeply inculcates the hypocritical individual, affects not either the nature or the warrant of the administration.

6. Again; it is objected, that *baptism can do infants no good*. "Where," say our Baptist brethren, "is the *benefit* of it? What good can a little 'sprinkling with water' do a helpless, unconscious babe?" To this objection I might reply, by asking in my turn—What good did circumcision do a Jewish child, helpless and unconscious, at eight days old? To ask the question is almost impious, because it implies an impeachment of infinite wisdom.\* God appointed that ordinance to be administered to infants. And accordingly, when the apostle asked, in the spirit of some modern cavillers, "What profit is there of circumcision?" He replies, *much, every way*. In like manner, when it is asked, "What profit is there in baptizing our infant children?" I answer, *Much, every way*. Baptism is a sign of many important truths, and a seal of many important covenant blessings. Is there no advantage in attending on an ordinance which holds up to our view, in the most impressive symbolical language, several of those fundamental doctrines of the Gospel which are of the deepest interest to us and our offspring; such as our fallen, guilty, and polluted state by nature, and the method appointed by infinite wisdom and love for our recovery, by the atoning blood, and cleansing Spirit of the Saviour? Is there no advantage in solemnly dedicating our children to God by an appropriate rite, of his own appointment? Is there no advantage in formally binding ourselves, by covenant engagements, to bring up our offspring "in the

\* A grave and respectable Baptist minister, in the course of an argument on this subject, candidly acknowledged that the administration of circumcision to an infant eight days old, would have appeared to him a useless, and even a silly rite! An honest, and certainly a very natural confession.

nurture and admonition of the Lord?" Is there no advantage in publicly ratifying the connection of our children, as well as ourselves, with the visible church, and as it were binding them to an alliance with the God of their fathers? Is there nothing, either comforting or useful in solemnly recognising as our own that covenant promise, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and *thy seed after thee, to be a God to thee and thy seed after thee?*" Is it a step of no value to our children themselves, to be brought, by a divinely appointed ordinance, into the bosom, and to the notice, the maternal attentions, and the prayers of the church, "the mother of us all?" And is it of no advantage to the parents, in educating their children, to be able to remind them, from time to time, that they have been symbolically sanctified, or set apart, by the seal of Jehovah's covenant, and to plead with them by the solemn vows which they have made on their behalf? Verily, my dear friends, those who refuse or neglect the baptism of their children, not only sin against Christ by disobeying his solemn command; but they also deprive both themselves and their children of great benefits. They may imagine that, as it is a disputed point, it may be a matter of indifference, whether their children receive this ordinance in their infancy, or grow up unbaptized. But is not this attempting to be wiser than God? I do not profess to know all the advantages attendant or consequent on the administration of this significant and divinely appointed rite; but one thing I know, and that is, that Christ has appointed it as a sign of precious truths, and a seal of rich blessings, to his covenant people, and their infant offspring; and I have no doubt that, in a multitude of cases, the baptized children, presented by professing parents who had no true faith, but who, by this act, brought their children within the care, the watch, and the privileges of the church, have been instrumental in conferring upon their offspring rich benefits, while they themselves went down to everlasting burnings. If I mistake not I have seen many cases, in which as far as the eye of man could go, the truth of this remark has been signally exemplified.

Let it not be said, that such a solemn dedication of a child to God, is usurping the rights of the child to judge and act for himself, when he comes to years of discretion; and that it is inconsistent with the privilege of every rational being to free inquiry, and free agency. This objection is founded on an infidel spirit. It is equally opposed to the religious education of children; and, if followed out, would militate

against all those restraints, and that instruction which the word of God enjoins on parents. Nay, if the principle of this objection be correct, it is wrong to pre-occupy the minds of our children with an abhorrence of lying, theft, drunkenness, malice, and murder ; lest, forsooth, we should fill them with such prejudices as would be unfriendly to free inquiry.

The truth is, one great purpose for which the church was instituted, is to watch over and train up children in the knowledge and fear of God, and thus, to “prepare a seed to serve him, who should be accounted to the Lord for a generation.” And I will venture to say, that that system of religion which does not embrace children in its ecclesiastical provisions, and in its covenant engagements, is most materially defective.

Infants may not receive any apparent benefit from baptism, at the moment in which the ordinance is administered ; although a gracious God may, even then, accompany the outward emblem with the blessing which it represents, even “the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.” This, indeed, may not be, and most commonly, so far as we can judge, is not the case. But still the benefits of this ordinance, when faithfully applied by ministers, and faithfully received by parents, are abundant—nay, great and important every way. When children are baptized, they are thereby recognised as belonging to the visible church of God. They are, as it were, solemnly entered as scholars or disciples in the school of Christ. They are brought into a situation, in which they not only may be trained up for God, but in which their parents are *bound* so to train them up ; and the church is bound to see that they be so trained, as that the Lord’s claim to them shall ever be recognised and maintained. In a word, by baptism, when the administrators and recipients are both faithful to their respective trusts, children are brought into a situation in which all the means of grace ; all the privileges pertaining to Christ’s covenanted family ; in a word, all that is comprehended under the broad and precious import of the term *Christian education*, is secured to them in the most ample manner. Let parents think of this, when they come to present their children in this holy ordinance. And let children lay all this to heart, when they come to years in which they are capable of remembering and realizing their solemn responsibility.

7. A seventh objection which our Baptist brethren frequently urge is, that, upon our plan, *the result of baptism seldom corresponds with its professed meaning. We say it is a symbol of regeneration ; but experience proves that a*

*great majority of those infants who are baptized, never partake of the grace of regeneration.* The practice of Pædo-baptists, they tell us, is adapted to corrupt the church to the most extreme degree, by filling it with unconverted persons. To this objection we reply :

That baptism is not more generally connected or followed with that spiritual benefit of which it is a striking emblem, is indeed to be lamented. But still this acknowledged fact does not, it is believed, either destroy the significance of the ordinance, or prove it to be useless. If it hold up to view, to all who behold it, every time that it is administered, the nature and necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit ; if it enjoin, and, to a very desirable extent, secure, to the children of the church enlightened and faithful instruction, in the great doctrines of the Gospel, and this doctrine of spiritual cleansing in particular ; and if it is, in a multitude of cases, actually connected with precious privileges, and saving benefits ; we have, surely, no right to conclude that it is of small advantage, because it is not in all cases followed by the blessing which it symbolically represents. How many read the Bible without profit ! How many attend upon the external service of prayer, without sincerity, and without a saving blessing ! But are the reading of the Scriptures, and the duty of prayer less obligatory, or of more dubious value on that account ? In truth, the same objection might be made to circumcision. That, as well as baptism, was a symbol of regeneration, and of spiritual cleansing : but how many received the outward symbol without the spiritual benefit ? The fact is, the same objection may be brought against every institution of God. They are all richly significant, and abound in spiritual meaning, and in spiritual instruction ; but their influence is moral, and may be defeated by unbelief. They cannot exert a physical power, or convert and save by their inherent energy. Hence they are often attended by many individuals without benefit ; but still their administration is by no means, in respect to the church of God, in vain in the Lord. It is daily exerting an influence of which no human arithmetic can form an accurate estimate. Thousands, no doubt, even of baptized *adults* receive the ordinance without faith, and of course, without saving profit. But thousands more receive it in faith, and in connexion with those precious benefits of which it is a symbol. This is the case with all ordinances ; but because they are not always connected with saving benefits, we are neither to disparage, nor cease to recommend them



But if baptism be a symbol of regeneration; if it hold forth to all who receive it, either for themselves or their offspring, the importance and necessity of this great work of God's grace; if it bind them to teach their children, as soon as they become capable of receiving instruction, this vital truth, as well as all the other fundamental truths of our holy religion; if, in consequence of their baptism, children are recognised as bearing a most important relation to the church of God, as bound by her rules, and responsible to her tribunal: and if all these principles be faithfully carried out into practice: can our children be placed in circumstances more favourable to their moral benefit? If not regenerated at the time of baptism, (which the nature of the ordinance does not necessarily imply) are they not, in virtue of their connexion with the church, thus ratified and sealed, placed in the best of all schools for learning, practically, as well as doctrinally, the things of God? Are they not, by these means, even when they fail of becoming pious, restrained and regulated, and made better members of society? And are not multitudes of them, after all, brought back from their temporary wanderings, and by the reviving influence of their baptismal seal, and their early training, made wise unto salvation? Let none say, then, that infant baptism seldom realizes its symbolical meaning. It is, I apprehend, made to do this far more frequently than is commonly imagined. And if those who offer them up to God in this ordinance, were more faithful, this favourable result would occur with a frequency more than tenfold.

8. A further objection often urged by the opponents of infant baptism is, *that we have the same historical evidence for infant communion that we have for infant baptism*; and that the evidence of the former in the early history of the church, altogether invalidates the historical testimony which we find in favour of the latter.

In reply to this objection, it is freely granted, that the practice of administering the eucharist to children, and sometimes even to very young children, infants, has been in use in various parts of the Christian church, from an early period, and is, in some parts of the nominally Christian world, still maintained. About the middle of the third century, we hear of it in some of the African churches. A misconception of the Saviour's words—"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;" led many to believe that a participation of the Lord's supper was essential to salvation. They were, therefore, led to give a small

portion of the sacramental bread dipped in wine to children, and dying persons, who were not able to receive it in the usual form ; and, in some cases, we find that this morsel of bread moistened with the consecrated wine was even forced down the throats of infants, who were reluctant or unable to swallow it. Nay, to so revolting a length was this superstition carried in a few churches, that the consecrated bread and wine united in the same manner as in the case of infants, were thrust into the mouths of the *dead*, who had departed without receiving them during life !

But it is doing great injustice to the cause of infant baptism to represent it as resting on no better ground than the practice of infant communion. The following points of difference are manifest, and appear to me perfectly conclusive.

(1.) Infant communion derives not the smallest countenance from the word of God ; whereas, with regard to infant baptism, we find in Scripture its most solid and decisive support. It would rest on a firm foundation if every testimony out of the Bible were destroyed.

(2.) The historical testimony in favour of infant communion, is greatly inferior to that which we possess in favour of infant baptism. We have no hint of the former having been in use in any church until the time of Cyprian, about the middle of the third century ; whereas testimony more or less clear in favour of the latter has come down to us from the apostolic age.

(3.) Once more : Infant communion by no means stands on a level with infant baptism as to its *universal* or even *general* reception. We find two eminent men in the fourth century, among the most learned then on earth, and who had enjoyed the best opportunity of becoming acquainted with the whole church, declaring that the baptism of infants was a practice which had come down from the apostles, and was universally practised in the church ; nay, that they had never heard of any professing Christians in the world, either orthodox or heretical, who did not baptize their children. But we have no testimony approaching this, in proof of the early and universal adoption of infant communion. It was manifestly an innovation, founded on principles which, though, to a melancholy degree prevalent, were never universally received. And as miserable superstition brought it into the church, so a still more miserable superstition destroyed it. When transubstantiation arose, the sacred elements, (now transmuted, as was supposed, into the real body and blood of the Saviour) began to be considered as too awful in their character to be

imparted to children. But in the Greek church, who separated from the Latin before the transubstantiation was established, the practice of infant communion still superstitiously continues.

9. Again: It is objected that *Pædobaptists are not consistent with themselves, in that they do not treat their children as if they were members of the church.* “Pædobaptists,” say our Baptist brethren, “maintain that the children of professing Christians are, in virtue of their birth, members of the church—plenary members—externally in covenant with God, and as such made the subjects of a sacramental seal. Yet we seldom or never see a Pædobaptist church *treating her baptized children as church members*, that is, instructing, watching over, and disciplining them, as in the case of adult members. Does not this manifest that their system is inconsistent with itself, impracticable, and therefore unsound?” This objection is a most serious and weighty one, and ought to engage the conscientious attention of every Pædobaptist who wishes to maintain his profession with consistency and to edification.

It cannot be denied, then, that the great mass of the Pædobaptist churches, do act inconsistently in regard to this matter. They do not carry out, and apply their own system by a corresponding practice. That baptized children should be treated by the church and her officers just as other children are treated: that they should receive the seal of a covenant relation to God and his people, and then be left to negligence and sin, without official inspection, and without discipline, precisely as those are left who bear no relation to the church, is, it must be confessed, altogether inconsistent with the nature and design of the ordinance, and in a high degree unfriendly to the best interests of the Church of God. This distressing fact, however, as has been often observed, militates, not against the doctrine itself, of infant membership, but against the inconsistency of those who profess to adopt and to act upon it.

If one great end of instituting a church, as was before observed, is the training up of a godly seed in the way of truth, holiness, and salvation; and if one great purpose of sacramental seals is to “separate between the precious and the vile,” and to set a distinguishing mark upon the Lord’s people; then, undoubtedly, those who bear this mark, whether infant or adult, ought to be treated with appropriate inspection and care, and their relation to the Church of God never, for a moment, lost sight of or neglected. In regard to adults,

this duty is generally recognised by all evangelical churches. Why it has fallen into so much neglect, in regard to our infant and juvenile members, may be more easily explained than justified. And yet it is manifest, that attention to the duty in question in reference to the youthful members of the church, is not only important, but, in some respects, pre-eminently so; and peculiarly adapted to promote the edification and enlargement of the Christian family.

If it be asked, what more can be done for the moral culture and welfare of baptized children, than is done? I answer, *much*, that would be of inestimable value to them, and to the Christian community. The task, indeed, of training them up for God, is an arduous one, but it is practicable, and the faithful discharge of it involves the richest reward. The following plan may be said naturally to grow out of the doctrine of infant membership; and no one can doubt that, if carried into faithful execution, it would form a new and glorious era in the history of the Church of God.

Let all baptized children, from the hour of their receiving the seal of God's covenant, be recorded and recognised as infant disciples. Let the officers of the church, as well as their parents according to the flesh, ever regard them with a watchful and affectionate eye. Let Christian instruction, Christian restraint, and Christian warning, entreaty and prayer ever attend them, from the mother's lap to the infant school, and from the infant school to the seminary, whatever it may be, for more mature instruction. Let them be early taught to reverence and read the word of God, and to treasure up select portions of it in their memories. Let appropriate catechisms, and other sound compends of Christian truth, be put into their hands, and by incessant repetition and inculcation be impressed upon their minds. Let a school or schools, according to its extent, be established in each church, placed under the immediate instruction of exemplary, orthodox, and pious teachers, carefully superintended by the pastor, and visited as often as practicable by all the officers of the church. Let these beloved youth be often reminded of the relation which they bear to the Christian family; and the just claim of Christ to their affections and service, be often presented with distinctness, solemnity, and affection. Let every kind of error and immorality be faithfully reprov'd, and as far as possible suppressed in them. Let the pastor convene the baptized children as often as practicable, and address them with instruction and exhortation in the name of that God to whom they have been dedicated, and every endeavour made

to impress their consciences and their hearts with Gospel truth. When they come to years of discretion, let them be affectionately reminded of their duty to ratify, by their own act, the vows made by their parents in baptism, and be urged, again and again, to give, first their hearts, and then the humble acknowledgment of an outward profession, to the Saviour. Let this plan be pursued faithfully, constantly, patiently, and with parental tenderness. If instruction and exhortation be disregarded, and a course of error, immorality, or negligence be indulged in, let warning, admonition, suspension, or excommunication ensue, according to the character of the individual, and the exigencies of the case. "What!" some will be disposed to say, "suspend or excommunicate a young person, who has never yet taken his seat at a sacramental table, nor even asked for that privilege?" Certainly. Why not? If the children of professing Christians are born members of the church, and are baptized as a sign and seal of this membership, nothing can be plainer than that they ought to be treated in every respect as church members, and, of course, if they act in an unchristian manner, a bar ought to be set up in the way of their enjoying Christian privileges. If this be not admitted, we must give up the very first principles of ecclesiastical order and duty. Nor is there, obviously any thing more incongruous in suspending or excluding from church privileges a young man, or young woman, who has been baptized in infancy, and trained up in the bosom of the church, but has now no regard for religion, than there is in suspending or excommunicating one who has been, for many years, an attendant on the Lord's table, but has now forsaken the house of God, and has no longer any desire to approach a Christian ordinance. No one would consider it as either incongruous or unreasonable to declare such a person unworthy of Christian fellowship, and excluded from it, though he had no disposition to enjoy it. The very same principle applies in the case now under consideration.

It has been supposed, indeed, by some Pædobaptists, that although every baptized child is a regular church member, he is a member only of the general visible church, and not in the ordinary sense, of any particular church; and, therefore, that he is not amenable to ecclesiastical discipline until he formally connects himself with some particular church. This doctrine appears to me subversive of every principle of ecclesiastical order. Every baptized child is, undoubtedly, to be considered as a member of the church in which he received baptism, until he dies, is excommunicated, or regularly

dismissed to another church. And if the time shall ever come when all our churches shall act upon this plan ; when infant members shall be watched over with unceasing and affectionate moral care ; when a baptized young person, of either sex, being not yet what is called a communicant, shall be made the subject of mild and faithful Christian discipline, if he fall into heresy or immorality ; when he shall be regularly dismissed, by letter, from the watch and care of one church to another ; and when all his spiritual interests shall be guarded, by the church, as well as by his parents, with sacred and affectionate diligence ; when this efficient and faithful system shall be acted upon, infant baptism will be universally acknowledged as a blessing, and the church will shine with new and spiritual glory.

The truth is, if infant baptism were properly improved ; if the profession which it includes, and the obligations which it imposes, were suitably appreciated and followed up, it would have few opponents. I can no more doubt, if this were done, that it would be blessed to the saving conversion of thousands of our young people, than I can doubt the faithfulness of a covenant God. Yes, infant baptism is of God, but the fault lies in the conduct of its advocates. The inconsistency of its friends has done more to discredit it, than all the arguments of its opposers, a hundred fold. Let us hope that these friends will, one day, arouse from their deplorable lethargy, and show that they are contending for an ordinance as precious as it is scriptural.

10. Another objection, often urged with confidence, against infant membership and baptism is, that, *if they be well founded, then it follows, of course, that every baptized young person, or even child, who feels disposed to do so, has a right to come to the Lord's table, without inquiry or permission of any one.* Upon this principle, say our Baptist brethren, as a large portion of those who are baptized in infancy are manifestly not pious, and many of them become openly profligate ; if their caprice or their wickedness should prompt them to go forward, the church would be disgraced by crowds of the most unworthy communicants.

This objection is founded on an entire mistake. And a recurrence, for one moment, to the principles of civil society, will at once expose it. Every child is a citizen of the country in which he was born : a plenary citizen : there is no such thing as half-way citizenship in this case. He is a free born citizen in the fullest extent of the term. Yet, until he reach a certain age, and possess certain qualifications, he is

not eligible to the most important offices which his country has to confer. And after he has been elected, he cannot take his seat for the discharge of these official functions, until he has taken certain prescribed oaths. It is evident that the State has a right, and finds it essential to her well being, by her constitution and her laws, thus to limit the rights of the citizen. Still no one supposes that he is the less a citizen, or thinks of representing him as only a half-way citizen prior to his compliance with these forms. In like manner every baptized child is a member—a plenary member of the church in which he received the sacramental seal. There his membership is recognised and recorded, and there alone can he regularly receive a certificate of this fact, and a dismissal to put himself under the watch and care of any other church. Still the church to which this ecclesiastical minor belongs, in the exercise of that “authority which Christ has given, for edification and not for destruction,” will not suffer him, if she does her duty, to come to the Lord’s table, until he has reached an age when he has “knowledge to discern the Lord’s body,” and until he shall manifest that exemplary deportment and hopeful piety which become one who claims the privileges of Christian communion. If he manifest an opposite character, it is her duty, as a part of her stated discipline, to prevent his enjoying these privileges just as it is her duty, in the case of one who has been a communicant for years, when he departs from the order and purity of a Christian profession, to debar him from the continued enjoyment of his former good standing. In short, the language of the apostle Paul, though originally intended for a different purpose, is strictly applicable to the subject before us: “The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from the servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the Father.” In a word, in the Church, as well as in the State, there is an order in which privileges are to be enjoyed. As it is not every citizen who is eligible to office; and as not even the qualified have a right to intrude into office uncalled; so youthful church members, like all others, are under the watch and care of the church, and the time and manner in which they shall recognise their baptismal engagements, and come to the enjoyment of plenary privileges, Christ has left his church to decide, on her responsibility to himself. No one, of any age, has a right to come to her communion without the consent of the church. When one, after coming to that communion has been debarred from it for a time, by regular ecclesiastical

authority, he has no right to come again until the interdict is taken off. Of course, by parity of reasoning, one who has never yet come at all, cannot come without asking and obtaining the permission of those who are set to govern in the church.

This view of the subject is at once illustrated and confirmed by the uniform practise of the Old Testament church. The children of Jewish parents, though regular church members in virtue of their birth, and recognised as such in virtue of their circumcision, were still not allowed to come to the Passover until they were of a certain age, and not even then, unless they were ceremonially clean. This is so well attested by sacred antiquarians, both Jewish and Christian, that it cannot be reasonably called in question. Calvin remarks, that "the Passover, which has now been succeeded by the sacred Supper, did not admit guests of all descriptions promiscuously; but was rightly eaten only by those who were of sufficient age to be able to inquire into its signification." The same distinct statement is also made by the Rev. Dr. Gill, an eminent commentator of the Baptist denomination. "According to the maxims of the Jews," says he, "persons were not obliged to the duties of the law, or subject to the penalties of it in case of non-performance, until they were, a female, at the age of twelve years and one day, and a male at the age of thirteen years and one day. But then they used to train up their children, and inure them to religious exercises before. They were not properly under the law until they were arrived at the age above mentioned; nor were they reckoned *adult* church members until then; nor then neither unless worthy persons; for so it is said, "He that is worthy, at thirteen years of age, is called a son of the congregation of Israel." (Commentary on Luke ii. 42.)

The objection, then, before us is of no force. Or rather, the fact which it alleges and deprecates has no existence. It makes no part of the Pædobaptist system. Nay, our system has advantages in respect to this matter, great and radical advantages, which belong to no other. While it regards baptized children as members of the church, and solemnly binds the church, as well as the parents, to see that they be faithfully trained up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," it recognises the church as possessing, and as bound to exercise the power of guarding the communion table from all the profane approaches, even of her own children, and so regulating their Christian culture, and their personal recognition of Christian duty, as shall best serve the great purpose of



building up the church as “an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

11. The last objection which I propose to consider is this “If baptism,” say our opponents, “takes the place of circumcision, and if the church is the same in substance now as when circumcision was the initiating seal, then *why is not baptism as universal in the New Testament church, as circumcision was under the old economy?* Why is not every child, under the light of the Gospel, baptized, as every Israelitish child was circumcised.” I answer, this undoubtedly, *ought to be the case.* That is, all parents, where the Gospel comes, ought to be true believers; ought to be members of the Church of Christ themselves; and ought to dedicate their children to God in holy baptism. The command of God calls for it; and if parents were what they ought to be, they would be all prepared for a proper application of this sacramental seal. Under the Mosaic dispensation, a single nation of the great human family, was called out of an idolatrous world to be the depository of the word and the ordinances of the true God. Then all who belonged to that nation were bound to be holy; and unless they were at least ceremonially clean, the divine direction was, that they should be “cut off from their people.” The obligation was universal, and the penalty, in case of delinquency, was universal. Multitudes of parents, no doubt, under that economy, presented their children to God in the sacrament of circumcision, who had no true faith; but they professed to believe; they attended to all the requisitions of ceremonial cleanness, and that rendered the circumcision authorized and regular. So in the New Testament church. This is a body, like the other, called out from the rest of mankind, but not confined to a particular nation. It consists of all those, of every nation, who profess the true religion. Within this spiritual community baptism ought to be as universal as circumcision was in the old “commonwealth of Israel.” Those parents who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, and those only, ought to present their children in baptism. There is, indeed, reason to fear that many visible adult members are not sincere. Still, as they are externally regular, their children are entitled to baptism. And were the whole infant population of our land in these circumstances, they might, and ought to be baptized.

I have thus endeavoured to dispose of the various objections which our Baptist brethren are wont to urge against the cause of infant baptism. I have conscientiously aimed to

present them in all their force ; and am constrained to believe that neither Scripture, reason, nor ecclesiastical history afford them the least countenance. The longer I reflect on the subject, the deeper is my conviction, that the membership and the baptism of infants rest on grounds which no fair argument can shake or weaken.

From the principles implied or established in the foregoing pages, we may deduce the following practical conclusions :

1. We are warranted in returning with renewed confidence to the conclusion stated in advance, in the early part of our first discourse, viz : that the error of our Baptist brethren in rejecting the church membership and the baptism of infants, *is a most serious and mischievous error*. It is not a mere mistake about a speculative point ; but is an error which so directly contravenes the spirit of the whole Bible, and of all Jehovah's covenants with his people, in every age, that it must be considered as invading some of the most vital interests of the body of Christ, and as adapted to exert a most baneful influence on his spiritual kingdom. On this subject, my friends, my expressions are strong, because my convictions are strong, and my desire to guard every hearer against mischievous error increasingly strong. I am, indeed, by no means disposed to deny either the piety or the honest convictions of our respected Baptist brethren in adopting an opposite opinion from ours. But I am, nevertheless, deeply convinced that their system is not only entirely unscriptural, but also that its native tendency is to place children, who are the hope of the church, in a situation less friendly to the welfare of Zion, and less favourable, by far, to their own salvation, than that in which they are placed by our system ; and that its ultimate influence on the rising generation, on family religion, and on the growth of the church, must be deeply injurious.

2. Again ; it is evident, from what has been said, that *the baptism of our children means much, and involves much solemn tender obligation*. We do not, indeed, ascribe to this sacrament that kind of inherent virtue of which some who bear the Christian name have spoken and inferred so much. We do not believe that baptism is regeneration. (See Additional Notes.) We consider this as a doctrine having no foundation in the word of God, and as eminently fitted to deceive and destroy the soul. We do not suppose that the ordinance, whenever legitimately administered, is necessarily accompanied with any physical or moral influ-

ence, operating either on the soul or the body of him who receives it. Yet, on the other hand, we do not consider it as a mere unmeaning ceremony. We cannot regard it as the mere giving a name to the child to whom it is dispensed. Multitudes appear to regard it as amounting to little, if any more than one or both of these. And, therefore, they consider the season of its celebration as a kind of ecclesiastical festival or pageant. They would not, on any account, have the baptism of their children neglected; and yet they solicit and receive it for their offspring, with scarcely one serious or appropriate thought; without any enlightened or adequate impression of what it means, or what obligation it imposes on them or their children. A baptism, like a marriage, is regarded by multitudes as an appropriate season for congratulation and feasting, and very little more, in connection with it, seems to occur to their minds. This is deeply to be deplored. The minds of the mass of mankind seem to be ever prone to vibrate from superstition to impiety, and from impiety back to superstition. Those simple, spiritual views of truth, and of Christian ordinances which the Bible every where holds forth, and which alone tend to real benefit, too seldom enlighten and govern the mass of those who bear the Christian name. Now, the truth is, little as it is recollected and laid to heart, few things can be more expressive, more solemn, or more interesting, more touching in its appeals, more deeply comprehensive in its import, or more weighty in the obligations which it involves, than the baptism of an infant. I repeat it—and oh, that the sentence could be made to thrill through every parent's heart in Christendom—*the baptism of a child is one of the solemn transactions pertaining to our holy religion.* A human being, just opening its eyes on the world; presented to that God who made it, devoted to that Saviour without an interest in whose atoning blood, it had better never have been born; and consecrated to that Holy Spirit, who alone can sanctify and prepare it for heaven; is indeed a spectacle adapted to affect every pious heart. In death, our race is run; worldly hope and expectation are alike extinct; and the destiny of the immortal spirit is forever fixed. But the child presented for baptism, if it reach the ordinary limit of human life, has before it many a trial, and will need all the pardoning mercy, all the sanctifying grace, and all the precious consolations which the blessed Gospel of Christ has to bestow. And even if it die in infancy, it still needs the pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace which are set forth in this ordinance.

On either supposition, the transaction is important. A course is commenced which will be a blessing or a curse beyond the power of the human mind to estimate. And the eternal happiness or the misery of the young immortal will depend, under God, upon the training it shall receive from the hands of those who offer it.

Let those, then, who bring their children to the sacred font to be baptized, ponder well what this ordinance means, and what its reception involves, both in regard to parents and children. Let them remember that in taking this step, we make a solemn profession of belief, that our children, as well as ourselves, are born in sin, and stand in indispensable need of pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. We formally dedicate them to God, that they may be “washed and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And we take upon ourselves solemn vows to train them up in the knowledge and fear of God; to instruct them, from the earliest dawn of reason, in the principles and duties of our holy religion; to consider and treat them as ingrafted members of the family of Christ, and to do all in our power, by precept and example, by authority and by prayer, to lead them in the ways of truth, of holiness, and of salvation. Is this an ordinance to be engaged in as a mere ceremony, or with convivial levity? Surely if there be a transaction, among all the duties incumbent on us as Christians—if there be a transaction which ought to be engaged in with reverence, and godly fear: with penitence, faith, and love; with bowels of Christian compassion yearning over our beloved offspring; with humble and importunate aspirations to the God of all grace for his blessing on them and ourselves; and with solemn resolutions, in the strength of his grace, that we will be faithful to our vows,—this is that transaction! O how full of meaning! And yet how little thought of by the most of those who engage in it with external decorum!

3. The foregoing discussion will show *by whom children ought to be presented in holy baptism*. The answer given by the old Waldenses to this question is, undoubtedly, the wisest and best. They say, as before quoted, “Children ought to be presented in baptism by those to whom they are most nearly related such as their parents, or those whom God hath inspired with such a charity.” If parents be living and be of a suitable character; that is, if they have been baptized themselves, and sustain a regular standing as professing Christians, they, and they alone, ought to present

their children in this ordinance. And all introduction of godfathers and godmothers, as sponsors, either instead of the parents, or besides the parents, is regarded by the great majority of Pædobaptist churches as superstitious, unwarranted, and of course, mischievous in its tendency. Whatever tends to beget erroneous ideas of the nature and design of a Gospel ordinance; to shift off the responsibility attending it from the proper to improper hands; and to the assumption of solemn engagements by those who can never really fulfil them, and have no intention of doing it, cannot fail of exerting an influence unfriendly to the best interests of the Church of God.

But if the parents be dead; or, though living, of irreligious character; and if the grand parents, or any other near relations, of suitable qualifications, be willing to undertake the office of training up children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," it is proper for them to present such children in baptism. Or if deserted, or orphan children be cast in the families of strangers, who are no way related to them according to the flesh, but who are willing to stand in the place of parents, and train them up for God; even these strangers, in short, any and every person of suitable character, who may be willing to assume the charitable office of giving them a Christian education, may and ought to present such children for Christian baptism. Not only the offspring of Abraham's body, but "all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money," were commanded to be circumcised. Surely no Christian who has a child, white or black, placed in his family, and likely to be a permanent member of it, can doubt that it is his duty to give it a faithful Christian education. And as one great object of infant baptism is to secure this point, he will not hesitate to offer it up to God in that ordinance which he has appointed, provided no valid objection in regard to the wishes of the parents of such a child interpose to prevent it.

4. This subject shows *how responsible, and how solemn is the situation of those young persons who have been in their infancy dedicated to God in holy baptism!* This is a point concerning which both old and young are too often forgetful. It is generally conceded, and extensively felt, that parents, by dedicating their children to God in this ordinance, are brought under very weighty obligations, which cannot be forgotten by them, without incurring great guilt. But young people seldom lay to heart as they ought, that their early reception of the seal of God's covenant, in conse-

quence of the act of their parents, places them in circumstances of the most solemn and responsible kind. They are too apt to imagine that they are not members of the church, until by some act of profession of their own, they are brought into this relation, and assume its bonds; that their making this profession, or not making it, is a matter of mere choice, left to their own decision; that by omitting it, they violate no tie—contract no guilt; that by refraining, they leave themselves more at liberty; and that the only danger consists in making an insincere profession. This is a view of the subject, which, however common, is totally, and most criminally erroneous. The children of professing Christians are already in the church. They were born members. Their baptism did not make them members. It was a public ratification and recognition of their membership. They were baptized because they were members. They received the seal of the covenant because they were already in covenant by virtue of their birth. This blessed privilege is their “birth-right.” Of course, the only question they can ask themselves is, not—shall we enter the church, and profess to be connected with Christ’s family? But—shall we continue in it, or act the part of ungrateful deserters? “Shall we be thankful for this privilege, and gratefully recognise and confirm it by our own act; or shall we renounce our baptism; disown and deny the Saviour in whose name we have been enrolled as members of his family; and become open apostates from that family?” This is the real question to be decided; and truly a solemn question it is! Baptized young people! think of this. You have been in the bosom of the church ever since you drew your first breath. The seal of God’s covenant has been placed upon you. You cannot, if you would, escape from the responsibility of this relation. You may forget it; you may hate to think of it; you may despise it; but still the obligation lies upon you; you cannot throw it off. Your situation is solemn beyond expression. On the one hand, to go forward, and to recognise your obligation by a personal profession, without any love to the Saviour, is to insult him by a heartless offering; and on the other, to renounce your allegiance by refusing to acknowledge him, by turning your backs on his ordinances, and by indulging in that course of life by which his religion is dishonoured, is certainly, whether you realise it or not, to “deny him before men,” and to incur the fearful guilt of apostacy; of “drawing back unto perdition.”

“According to this representation,” I shall be told, “the

condition of many of our youth is very deplorable. It is their duty, you say, to profess the name of Christ, and to seal their profession at a sacramental table. This they cannot do; for they are conscious that they do not possess those principles and dispositions which are requisite to render such a profession honest. What course shall they steer? If they do not profess Christ, they live in rebellion against God: if they do, they mock him with a lie. Which side of the alternative shall they embrace? Continue among the profane, and be consistently wicked? Or withdraw from them in appearance and play the hypocrite?"

The case is, indeed, very deplorable. Destruction is on either hand. For "the *unbelieving* shall have their part in the lake of fire; (Rev. xxi. 6.) and the hope of the *hypocrite* shall perish:" (Job. viii. 13.) God forbid that we should encourage either a false profession, or a refusal to make one. The duty is to embrace neither side of the alternative. Not to continue with the profane, and not to act the hypocrite; but to receive the Lord Jesus Christ in truth, and to walk in him. "I *cannot* do it," replies one: and one, it may be, not without moments of serious and tender emotions upon this very point: "I *cannot* do it." My soul bleeds for thee, thou unhappy! But it must be done, or thou art lost forever. Yet what is the amount of that expression—in the mouth of some a flaunting excuse, and of others, a bitter complaint—I cannot? Is the inability to believe in Christ different from an inability to perform any other duty? Is there any harder necessity of calling the God of truth a *liar*, in not believing the record which he hath given of his Son, than of committing any other sin? The inability created, the necessity imposed, by the *enmity* of the carnal mind against God? (Rom. viii. 7.) It is the inability of wickedness, and of nothing else. Instead of being an apology, it is itself the essential crime, and can never become its own vindication.

But it is even so. The evil does lie too deep for the reach of human remedies. Yet a remedy there is, and an effectual one. It is here—"I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh; and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. (Ezek. xxxvi.

25—27.) Try this experiment. Go with thy “filthiness,” and thine “idols;” go with thy “stony heart,” and thy perverse spirit, which are thy real inability, to God upon the throne of grace; spread out before him his “exceeding great and precious promises; importune him as the hearer of prayer, in the name of Jesus, for the accomplishment of them to thyself. Wait for his mercy, it is worth waiting for, and remember his word—Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.\*

5. Finally, from the foregoing principles and considerations, it is evident, that *the great body of Pædobaptist churches have much to reform in regard to their treatment of baptized children, and are bound to address themselves to that reform with all speed and fidelity.* It has been already observed, that one great end for which the church of God was instituted, was to train up, from age to age, a seed to serve God, and to be faithful witnesses in behalf of the truth and order of his family, in the midst of an unbelieving world. If this be so, then, surely the church, in her ecclesiastical capacity, is bound carefully to watch over the education, and especially, the religious education of her youthful members; nor is there any risk in asserting, that just in proportion as she has been faithful to this part of her trust, she has flourished in orthodoxy, piety, and peace; and that when she has neglected it, her children have grown up in ignorance, and too often in profligacy, and wandered from her fold into every form of error. If the church wishes her baptized youth to be a comfort and a strength to their moral mother; if she wishes them to adhere with intelligence, and with dutiful affection to her distinctive testimony; and to be a generation to the praise of Zion’s King, when their fathers shall have gone to their final account; then let her, by all means, watch over the training of her young people with peculiar diligence and fidelity; and consider a very large part of her duty, as a church, as consisting in constant and faithful attention to the moral and religious culture of the rising generation.

What is the reason that so many of the baptized youth, in almost all our Pædobaptist churches, grow up in ignorance

\* The two preceding paragraphs are from the powerful and eloquent pen of the late Rev. J. M. Mason, D. D. See *Christian’s Magazine*, Vol. II. p. 414—416.



and disregard of the religion of their parents? Why are so many of them, when they come to judge and act for themselves, found embracing systems of gross error, if not total infidelity, and wandering, in too many instances, into the paths of degrading profligacy? It is not enough to say, that our children are by nature depraved, and prone to the ways of error and folly. This is, doubtless, true; but it is not the whole truth. It cannot be questioned, that much of the reason lies at the door of the church herself, as well as of the parents of such youth. The church has too often forgotten that baptism is as really a seal to the church, as it is to the parents and the children who receive it. And, therefore, while in many instances, a superstitious regard has been paid to the mere rite of Baptism, a most deplorable neglect of the duties arising from it has been indulged, even by some of our most evangelical churches. Parents while most vigilantly attentive to the literary, scientific, and ornamental education of their children, have slighted, to a most humiliating degree, their moral and religious training. They have sent them to schools conducted by immoral, heretical, or infidel teachers, who, of course, paid no regard to that part of their education which is unspeakably the most important of all; or who rather might be expected to exert in this respect, a most pestiferous influence. And, after this *cruel treatment of their offspring*, have appeared to be utterly surprised when they turned out profligates! What other result could have been expected?

While it is granted that the primary movements in the great work of Christian education, are to be expected from the parents; indeed, if the work be not begun in the mother's lap, a most important period has been suffered to pass unimproved;—yet the church has a duty to perform in this matter which is seldom realized. It is hers, by her pastor and eldership, to stimulate and guide parents in this arduous and momentous labour; to see that proper schools for her baptized youth are formed or selected; to put the Bible and suitable Catechisms, and other compends of religious truth into their hands; to convene them at stated intervals for instruction, exhortation, and prayer; to remind them from time to time, with parental tenderness, of their duty to confess Christ, and recognize their relation to his church, by their own personal act; and, if they fall into gross error, or open immorality, or continue to neglect religion, to exercise toward them, with parental affection, and yet with firmness, that discipline which Christ has appointed expressly for the ben-

efit of all the members, and especially of the youthful members of his covenanted family. If this plan were faithfully pursued with our baptized youth, I am constrained to concur with the pious Mr. Baxter in believing that in nineteen cases out of twenty, our children, consecrated to God in their infancy would grow up dutiful, sober, orderly, and serious, and before they reached mature age, recognise their membership by a personal act, with sincerity and to edification. Happy era! When shall the church of God be blessed with such fidelity, and with such results?

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### DISCOURSE III.

#### THE MODE OF ADMINISTERING BAPTISM.

Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?—  
*Acts x. 47.*

HAVING endeavoured, in the preceding discourses, to show that the baptism of infants is a scriptural and reasonable service, I now proceed to inquire into the *mode* in which this ordinance ought to be administered.

And here, it is well known, that there is a very serious diversity of opinion. On the one hand, our Baptist brethren believe that there is no true baptism unless the whole body be plunged under water. While on the other hand, we, and a very great majority of the Christian world, maintain that the mode of baptism by sprinkling or affusion is a method just as valid and lawful as any other. It will be my object, in the present discourse, to support the latter opinion; or rather to maintain, from Scripture, and from the best usage of the Christian church, that baptism by sprinkling or affusion not only rests on as good authority as immersion; but that it is a method decisively more scriptural, suitable, and edifying.

From the very nature of this subject it will require some little extent of discussion to place it in a proper light, and some closeness of attention to apprehend and follow the arguments which may be employed. Let me then request from you a candid and patient hearing. If I know my own heart, it is my purpose to exhibit the subject in the light of

truth ; and to advance nothing but that which appears to rest on the authority of Him who instituted the ordinance under consideration, and who is alone competent to declare his will concerning it. And,

1. Let us attend to *the real meaning of the original word which is employed in the New Testament to express this sacramental rite.*

The Greek word βαπτίζω, which we translate *baptize*, from the circumstance of its having been so constantly and so long the subject of earnest discussion, and from its near resemblance to the English word which we employ to render it, (or we might rather say, its identity with that word) has become so familiar with the public mind, that it may almost be regarded as a naturalized term of our language.

Now, we contend, that this word does not necessarily, nor even commonly, signify to immerse ; but also implies to wash, to sprinkle, to pour on water, and to tinge or dye with any liquid ; and, therefore, accords very well with the mode of baptism by sprinkling or affusion.

I am aware, indeed, that our Baptist brethren, as before intimated, believe, and confidently assert, that the only legitimate and authorised meaning of this word, is to immerse ; and that it is *never* employed, in a single case, in any part of the Bible, to express the application of water in any other manner. I can venture, my friends, to assure you, with the utmost confidence, that this representation is wholly incorrect. I can assure you, that the word which we render baptize, does legitimately signify the application of water in any way, as well as by immersion. Nay, I can assure you, if the most mature and competent Greek scholars that ever lived may be allowed to decide in this case, that many examples of the use of this word occur in Scripture, in which it not only *may*, but manifestly *must* signify sprinkling, perfusion or washing in any way. Without entering into the minute details of Greek criticism in reference to this term, which would be neither suitable to our purpose, nor consistent with our limits ; it will suffice to refer to a few of those passages of Scripture which will at once illustrate and confirm the position which I have laid down.

Thus, when the Evangelists tell us that the Scribes and Pharisees invariably “ washed (in the original, baptized) their hands before dinner ;” when we are told that, when they come in from the market, “ except they wash, (in the original, ‘ except they baptize,’) they eat not ;” when we read of the Pharisees being so scrupulous about the “ wash-

ing (in the original, the 'baptising') of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and tables?" when our Saviour speaks of his disciples being "baptized with the Holy Ghost," in manifest allusion to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; when John the Baptist predicted, that they should be "baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire," in reference to the Holy Ghost sitting upon each of them as with "cloven tongues of fire" on the same day: when we find the apostle representing the children of Israel as all baptized by a cloud passing over without touching them; and also as baptized in the Red Sea, when we know that none of them were immersed in passing through, or, at most, only sprinkled by the spray of the watery walls on each side; for we are expressly told that they went through "*dry shod*:" when Judas, in celebrating the Paschal supper with his Master, in dipping a morsel of bread on a bunch of herbs in the "sop" in the dish, is said, by Christ himself, to "baptize his hand in the dish," (as it is in the original, Matt. xxvi. 23.) which no one can imagine implies the immersion of his whole hand in the gravy of which they were all partaking; I say, when the word "baptize" is used in these and similar senses, it surely cannot mean in any of these cases to immerse or plunge. If a man is said by the inspired Evangelist to be baptized, when his hands only are washed: and if "tables" (or couches, on which they reclined at meals, as appears from the original) are spoken of as "baptized," when the cleansing of water was applied to them in any manner, and when the complete immersion of them in water is out of the question; surely nothing can be plainer than that the Holy Spirit who indited the Scriptures, does not restrict the meaning of this word to the idea of plunging, or total immersion.

Again: the New Testament meaning of this term appears from the manner in which it is applied to the ablutions of the ceremonial economy. The apostle in writing to the Hebrews, and speaking of the Jewish ritual, says, "It stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings," (in the original 'divers baptisms.')

Now we know that by far the greater part of these "divers washings" were accomplished by sprinkling and affusion, and not by immersion. The blood of the Paschal Lamb was directed to be "sprinkled" on the door-posts of the Israelites, as a token of Jehovah's favour, and of protection from death. When they entered into covenant with God at Sinai, their solemn vows were directed to be sealed by a similar sign. After Moses

had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, and they had given their consent, and promised to obey: he took the blood of the sacrifice, and water, and “sprinkled” both the book and the people, (Heb. ix. 19.) On the great day of the atonement, when the High Priest went into the most Holy place, he “sprinkled” the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat, as a token of propitiation and cleansing. When any individual was to be cleansed, and delivered from legal guilt, the blood of the sacrifice was to be “sprinkled” upon him seven times. In like manner at other times, the consecrated oil was to be “sprinkled” upon him who applied for deliverance from pollution.

Thus the people were to be ceremonially delivered from their uncleanness.\* When Aaron and his sons were set apart to their office, they were sprinkled with blood, as a sign of purification. When tents or dwelling houses were to be cleansed from pollution, it was done among other things, by sprinkling them with water. When the vessels, used in domestic economy, were to be ceremonially cleansed, the object was effected in the same manner, by sprinkling them with water. (See Numbers, xix. 17—22.) In a few cases, and but a few, the mode of cleansing by plunging in water is prescribed. Now these are the “divers baptisms” of which the apostle speaks. It is worthy of notice that they are divers, (*διαφοροίς*). If they had been of one kind—immersion only—this term could not with propriety have been used. But they were of different kinds—some sprinkling, others pouring, some scouring and rinsing, (see Leviticus vi. 28,) and some plunging: but all pronounced by the inspired apostle to be baptism.

But happily, the inspired apostle does not leave us in doubt what those “divers baptisms” were, of which he speaks. He singles out and presents sprinkling as his chosen and only specimen. “For” says he, in the 13th, 19th, and 21st verses of the same chapter, explaining what he means by ‘divers baptisms,’ “if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, *sprinkling* the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, &c. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves, and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hys-

\* See Exodus, xxix. 40; Leviticus, i. 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, and 15 chapters; Numbers, 19th chapter, and Deuteronomy, 12th and 15th chapters.

sop, and *sprinkled* both the book and all the people. Moreover, he *sprinkled* likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry." If the Apostle understood his own meaning, then, it is manifest that in speaking of "divers baptisms," he had a principal reference to the application of blood and of water by *sprinkling*.

In short, it is perfectly manifest, to every one competent to judge in the case, that the Greek words which we translate baptize and baptism, do undoubtedly signify, in a number of cases in both the Old and New Testaments, the washing with water, or the application of water in any way. To immerse, is, undoubtedly, one of the senses which may be applied to the words. But it is so far from being the universal, the necessary meaning, as our Baptist brethren assert, that it is not even the common meaning. And I am well persuaded that the venerable Dr. Owen, certainly one of the greatest and best men of the day in which he lived, is borne out by truth when he pronounces, "That no one instance can be given in Scripture, in which the word which we render baptize, does necessarily signify either to dip or plunge." In every case the word admits of a different sense; and it is really imposing on public credulity to insist that it always does, and necessarily must signify immersion.\*

In like manner, if we examine the senses manifestly attached to βαπτω and βαπτίζω, by the best Greek classical writers, as shown by the ablest lexicographers and critics, the same result will be established; in other words, it will appear that these words are used, and often used, to express the ideas of cleansing, pouring, washing, wetting, and tinging, or dying, as well as immersion: and, of course, that no certain evidence in favour of the doctrine of our Baptist brethren, can be derived from this source. Indeed, a late eminent anti-pædobaptist writer while he strenuously maintains that βαπτίζω, always signifies to immerse, acknowledges that he has "all the lexicographers and commentators against him in that opinion." (*Carson on Baptism*, p. 79.) How far the confidence which, in the face of this acknowledgment, he expresses, that they are *all wrong*, and that his interpretation alone is right, is either modest or well-founded, must be left to the impartial reader.

\* See this point set in a clear and strong light by the Rev. Dr. Woods, in his "Lectures on Infant Baptism;" by the Rev. Professor Stuart, in the "Biblical Repository," No. 10; by the Rev. Professor Pond, of Maine, in his "Treatise on Christian Baptism," in the 'Biblical Repertory,' Vol. III. p. 475, &c. &c.

It is evident, then, that our Baptist brethren can gain nothing by an appeal to the original word employed in the New Testament to express this ordinance. It decides nothing. All impartial judges—by which I mean all the most profound and mature Greek scholars, who are neither theologians nor sectarians—agree in pronouncing, that the term in question imports the application of water by sprinkling, pouring, tinging, wetting, or in any other way, as well as by plunging the whole body under it.

2. *There is nothing in the thing signified by baptism which renders immersion more necessary or proper than any other mode of applying water in this ordinance.*

Our Baptist brethren suppose and insist that there is something in the emblematical meaning of baptism, which renders dipping or plunging the only proper mode of administering the ordinance. And hence nothing is more common, among the brethren of that denomination, than to pour ridicule on all other modes of baptizing, as entirely deficient in meaning and expressiveness. I am persuaded, my friends, that the slightest examination of the subject will convince every impartial inquirer that there is no solid ground for this representation.

It is granted, on all hands, that the thing principally signified by baptism, is the renovation and sanctification of the heart, by the cleansing influences of the Holy Spirit. This was, undoubtedly, the blessing of which circumcision was an emblem. It signified, as the inspired Apostle tells us, “the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” (Colossians, ii. 11.) “He is not a Jew,” says the same apostle, “who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.” (Romans, ii. 28, 29.) In like manner, baptism signifies the renovation of the heart by the special operation of the Spirit of God. It is intended ever to keep us in mind, by a very significant and striking emblem, that we are all by nature polluted and guilty, and that we stand in need of the pardoning and purifying grace of God by a crucified Redeemer.

Now, when the inspired writers speak of imparting the influences of the Holy Spirit to the children of men, by what kind of figure is that blessing commonly expressed? I answer—as every one who is familiar with the Bible will concur in answering—much more frequently by sprinkling and pouring out, than by any other form of expression. Thus the prophet Isaiah speaks again and again of the Spirit being

poured out upon the people from on high. (Isaiah, xxxii. 15; xlv. 3.) Take a single specimen—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." The prophets, Ezekiel, Joel, and Zechariah, repeatedly employ the same language; (Ezekiel, xxxix. 29. Joel, ii. 28, 29. Zechariah, xii. 10.) and this form of expression is also found more than once in the New Testament. (Acts, ii. 17, 18; x. 45.) Indeed it seems to be the favourite language of the Spirit of God when speaking on this subject. In other places the term sprinkling is employed to express the same idea. Accordingly, Jehovah says, by the prophet Ezekiel, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." (Ezekiel, xxxvi. 25, 26.) And in like manner, the prophet Isaiah, when speaking of the coming of the Messiah, and the benefits accruing to the church in New Testament times, foretels—"So shall he sprinkle many nations." (Ezek. lii. 15.) Again, this divine sanctifying influence in its application to men, is represented by the Psalmist, and by the prophet Hosea, under the similitude of rain, which we know descends in drops, sprinkling the earth, and its verdant furniture. (Psalm, lxxii. 6. Hosea, vi. 3.) "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth."

But to come still nearer to the point in hand. We have not only seen that whenever the inspired writers wish to express the idea of the Holy Spirit being imparted to men, either to sanctify their hearts, or to furnish them with miraculous powers, the figure of "pouring out" is, in almost all cases, adopted, and that of immersion *never*; but, further, when they use the specific term which expresses the ordinance before us; when they speak of the "baptism of the Spirit," how do they explain it? Hear the explanation by the Master himself. The Saviour, after his resurrection, told his disciples, that "John truly baptized with water, but they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost" not many days from that time, (Acts i. 4, 5,) and directing them to remain in Jerusalem until this promise should be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. And how did the Holy Spirit baptize the people then? By immersion? Not at all; but by being "poured out." Accordingly, the apostle Peter, in giving an account to his



brethren of what occurred in the house of Cornelius, declares : “ And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, *as on us at the beginning*, (that is at the beginning of the New Testament economy, on the day of Pentecost). Then remembered I the words of the Lord, how he said, John, indeed baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.” (Acts xi. 15, 16.) The *baptism of the Holy Ghost*, then, consisted in the *pouring out*, or *effusion* of the *Holy Ghost*. This was the baptism predicted by the prophets. This was the baptism which our Lord himself promised. And this was the baptism realized on the day of Pentecost. I ask, again, was this immersion? Yet it was baptism. And here, we may add is an indubitable example of the word baptism being used in a sense which cannot possibly imply immersion.

Surely it is not without design or meaning, that we find language of this kind so generally, I might almost say, so uniformly used. Can a single instance be produced from the word of God in which the cleansing influences of the Holy Spirit are symbolized by dipping or plunging into water, or into oil or blood? Or can a single example be found in which believers are represented as being dipped or plunged into the Holy Ghost? No such example is recollected. Whenever the inspired writers speak of the Holy Spirit being imparted to the children of men, either in his sanctifying power, or his miraculous gifts, they never represent the benefit under the figure of immersion; but always, unless my memory deceives me, by the figures of “sprinkling,” “pouring out,” “falling,” or “resting upon” from on high. Now, if baptism, so far as it has a symbolical meaning, is intended to represent the cleansing of the Holy Spirit, as all agree; it is evident that no mode of applying the baptismal water can be more strikingly adapted to convey its symbolical meaning, or more strongly expressive of the great benefit which the ordinance is intended to hold forth and seal, than sprinkling or pouring. Nay, is it not manifest that this mode of administering the ordinance, is *far more* in accordance with Bible language, and Bible allusion, than any other? Surely, then, baptism by sprinkling or affusion, would have been treated with less scorn by our Baptist brethren, if they had recollected that these are, invariably, the favourite figures of the inspired writers when they speak of the richest covenant blessings which the Spirit of God imparts to his beloved people. Surely all attempts to turn this mode of applying the sacramental water in baptism into ridicule, is really

nothing less than shameless ridicule of the statements and the language of God's own word?

3. *The circumstances attending the several cases of baptism recorded in the New Testament, render it highly probable, not to say morally certain, that the immersion of the whole body could not have been the mode of baptism then commonly adopted.*

The baptism of the three thousand converts made by the instrumentality of Peter's preaching, on the day of Pentecost, is the first remarkable instance of Christian baptism which occurs in the New Testament history. Christ had promised, before he left his disciples, that he would send to them his Holy Spirit, and the favourite expression by which he was accustomed to designate this gift, was that he would *pour out* the Holy Spirit upon them. Accordingly, in ten days after his ascension to heaven, he was pleased, in a most extraordinary manner, to fulfil his promise. The Spirit was poured out with a power unknown before. And, what is remarkable, the apostle Peter assures the assembled multitude, that what they then witnessed was a fulfilment of the prediction by the prophet Joel, that the Holy Spirit should be imparted in a manner prefigured by the term *pouring out*, or affusion. Three thousand were converted under the overwhelming impression of divine truth, dispensed in a single sermon; and were all baptized, and "added to the church" in a single day. From the short account given of this wonderful transaction, we gather, that the multitude on whom this impression was made, was convened in some part of the temple. They seem to have come together about the third hour of the day, that is, nine o'clock in the morning, according to the Jewish mode of computing time. At least, when Peter rose to commence his sermon, that was the hour. Besides the discourse of which we have a sketch in the chapter containing the account, we are told he exhorted and testified with many other words. All these services, together with receiving the confession of three thousand converts, must unavoidably have consumed several hours; leaving only four or five hours, at the utmost, for baptizing the whole number. But they were all baptized that same day. We read nothing, however, of the apostles taking the converts away from "Solomon's Porch," or wherever else they were assembled, to any river or stream for the sake of baptizing them. Indeed, at that season of the year, there was no river or brook in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem, which would admit of immersing a human being. Besides, is it likely that this

great multitude, most of whom were probably strangers in Jerusalem, could have been furnished with such a change of raiment as health and decorum required; or that they could have been baptized without clothing altogether; or remained on the ground, through the public exercises, in their wet clothes? Surely all these suppositions are so utterly improbable that they may be confidently rejected. But, above all, was it physically possible, supposing all the apostles to have officiated in the administration of this ordinance, for twelve men to have immersed three thousand persons in four or five hours; which we have seen must have been the case, if, as is evident, the preaching, the examination of candidates, and the baptizing of the whole number took place after nine o'clock in the forenoon? Those who have witnessed a series of baptisms by immersion know how arduous and exhausting is the bodily effort which it requires. To immerse a single person, with due decorum and solemnity, will undoubtedly require from five to six minutes. Of course, to immerse one hundred, would consume, at this rate, between nine and ten hours. Now, even if so much time could possibly be assigned to this part of the work, on the same day, which is plainly inadmissible, can we suppose that the twelve apostles stood, for nine or ten hours, themselves, in the water, constantly engaged in a series of efforts among the most severe and exhausting to human strength that can well be undertaken? \* To imagine this, would be among the most improbable, not to say extravagant imaginations that could be formed on such a subject. Yet even this supposition, unreasonable as it is, falls far short of providing for even one half of the requisite number. The man, therefore, who can believe that the three thousand on the day of Pentecost were baptized by immersion, must have great faith, and a wonderful facility in accommodating his belief to his wishes.

With regard to the baptism of John, many of the same remarks are entirely applicable. Our Baptist brethren universally take for granted that John's baptism was performed

\* "A gentleman of veracity told the writer, that he was once present when *forty-seven* were dipped in one day, in the usual way. The first operator began, and went through the ceremony, until he had dipped *twenty-five persons*; when he was so fatigued, that he was compelled to give it up to the other, who with great apparent difficulty dipped the other *twenty-two*. Both appeared completely exhausted, and went off the ground into a house hard by, to change their clothes and refresh themselves." *Scripture Directory for Baptism by a Layman*, 14.

by immersion; and on the ground of that assumption, they speak with great confidence of their mode of baptism as the only lawful mode. Now, even if it were certain that the forerunner of Christ had always baptized by immersion, still it would be little to the purpose, since it is plain that John's baptism was not Christian baptism. Had this been the case, then, it is evident, that a large part of the population of "Jerusalem and Judea, and of the region round about Jordan," would have been professing Christians. But was it so? Every reader of the New Testament history knows it was not; that, on the contrary, it is apparent from the whole narrative, that a great majority of those whom John baptized, continued to stand aloof from the Saviour. But what decides this point, beyond the possibility of appeal or cavil, is the statement in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where we are told that some who had received John's baptism, were afterwards baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Some opponents of this conclusion have suggested that in the narrative given of this transaction, (Acts xix. 1—6,) we are to consider the 5th verse, not as the language of the inspired historian, but as a continuation of Paul's discourse, as recorded in the 4th verse. Professor Stuart, in his remarks on the "Mode of Baptism," in the "Biblical Repository," (No. X. 386,) has shown conclusively that this gloss is wholly inadmissible; and even leads to the most evident absurdity. But there is no evidence, and I will venture to say, no probability, that John ever baptized by immersion. The evangelist informs us that he baptized *great multitudes*. It appears, as before suggested, that "all Jerusalem, and all Judea, and the region round about Jordan," flocked to his ministry, and "were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Some have supposed that he baptized *two millions* of people. But suppose the number to be one-twentieth part of this computation. The smallest estimate that we can consider as answering the description of the inspired historians is, that he baptized one hundred thousand individuals. And this, in about one year and a half. That is, he must have immersed nearly two hundred, upon an average, every day, during the whole of the period in question. Now, I ask, is it possible for human strength, day after day, for more than five hundred days together, to undergo such labour? It cannot be imagined. The thing is not merely improbable; it is impossible. To accomplish so much, it would have been necessary that the zealous Baptist should spend the whole of every day standing in the water, for a year and a half, and

even this would have failed altogether of being sufficient. say again, with confidence, it is impossible.

But that John baptized by immersion is utterly incredible on another account. Can we imagine that so great a multitude could have been provided on the spot with convenient changes of raiment to admit of their being plunged consistently with their health? Or can we suppose that the greater part of their number, would remain for hours on the ground in their wet clothes? And if not, would decency have permitted multitudes of both sexes to appear, and to undergo the administration of the ordinance in that mode, in a state of entire nakedness? Surely we need not wait for an answer. Neither supposition is admissible.

Nor is this reasoning at all invalidated by the statement of one of the evangelists, that John "baptized at Enon, near Salim, because there was much water there;" or, as it is in the original, "because there were *many waters* there." For, independently of immersion altogether, plentiful streams of water were absolutely necessary for the constant refreshment and sustenance of the many thousands who were encamped from day to day, to witness the preaching and the baptism of this extraordinary man; together with the beasts employed for their transportation. Only figure to yourselves a large encampment of men, women, and children, consisting almost continually of many thousand souls, continuing together for a number of days in succession; constantly coming and going; and all this in a warm climate, where springs and wells of water were comparatively rare and precious; only figure to yourselves such an assemblage, and such a scene, and you will be at no loss to perceive why it was judged important to convene them near the banks of abundant streams of water. Had not this been done, they must, in a few hours, have either quitted the ground, or suffered real distress.

It is evident, then, that often and confidently as the baptism of John has been cited as conclusive, in favour of immersion, it cannot be considered as affording the least solid ground for such a conclusion. There is not the smallest probability that he ever baptized an individual in this manner. As a poor man, who lived in the wilderness; whose raiment was of the meanest kind; and whose food was such alone as the desert afforded; it is not to be supposed that he possessed appropriate vessels for administering baptism to multitudes by pouring or sprinkling. He, therefore, seems to have made use of the neighbouring stream of water for this purpose, descending its banks, and setting his feet on its margin, so as to admit of his

using a handful, to answer the symbolical purpose intended by the application of water in baptism.

The circumstances attending the baptism of our blessed Saviour by John, have been often adduced by our Baptist brethren as strongly favouring the practice of immersion: but when they are examined, they will be found to afford no real aid to that cause. In our common translation, indeed, the Evangelist Matthew tells us, (ch. iii. 16,) 'That Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, &c.; and the Evangelist Mark tells us, (ch. i. 9, 10,) That Jesus was baptized of John in Jordan; and straightway, coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, &c. This is considered by many superficial readers as decisive in establishing the fact that immersion must have been used on that occasion; but the moment we look into the original, it becomes evident that the language of both the Evangelists imports only that Jesus, after he was baptized, went up from the water, that is, ascended the banks from the river. Nothing more is, unquestionably, imported by the terms used; and this leaves the mode of administering the ordinance altogether undecided. Laying aside his sandals, he might only have stepped a few inches into the river, or he might have gone merely to the water's edge, without stepping into it at all.\*

The baptism of Paul, by Ananias, is another of the scriptural examples of the administration of the ordinance in question, which yet affords not the smallest hint or presumption in favour of immersion; but rather the contrary.

We are told that Paul, the infuriated persecutor, while "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," was met on his way to Damascus, and by the mighty power of the Saviour whom he persecuted, was stricken down, and fell prostrate and blind to the ground. In this feeble state he was lifted up, and "led by the hand, and carried into Damascus; and he was there three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink." In these circumstances, Ananias, a servant of God, is directed to go to him, and teach him what to do. "And Ananias," we are told, "went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way, as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou

\* "See a very luminous and satisfactory view of the record of this baptism, by Professor Stuart, of Andover, in the *Biblical Repository*, No. X. p. 319, 320

mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord? And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat he was strengthened." (Acts, ix. and xxii. compared.)

The attentive reader will no doubt, take notice that in this narrative there is not a single turn of expression which looks like baptizing by immersion. There is no hint that Paul changed his raiment; or that he and Ananias went out of the house to a neighbouring pond or stream. On the contrary, every part of the statement wears a different aspect. Paul, when Ananias went to him, was evidently extremely feeble. He was sitting or lying in the house, perfectly blind, and having taken no sustenance for three days. Can it be imagined that a wise and humane man, in these circumstances, would have had him carried forth, and plunged into cold water, which, in his exhausted state, would have been equally distressing and dangerous? It cannot be for a moment supposed. Nothing like it is hinted. Ananias simply directs him to "stand up and be baptized." "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." It was after the baptism, as we learn, that he received sustenance and was "strengthened." It would really seem as if no impartial reader could receive any other impression from this account, than that Paul *stood up*, in the apartment, in which Ananias found him, and there received baptism by pouring or sprinkling on him a small quantity of that water which is applied in this ordinance as a symbol of spiritual cleansing.

Again, the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, when duly considered, will be found equally remote from affording the smallest countenance to that conclusion in favour of immersion, which has been so often and so confidently drawn from it.

The eunuch was travelling on the public highway, when Philip met him. They had been reading and commenting on a prophecy of the Messiah, in which mention is made of his *sprinkling many nations*. When they came to a rivulet of water, the eunuch said, 'See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?' Philip had, no doubt, been explaining to him the nature, design, and obligation of this ordinance, or he would not have been likely to ask such a question. The servant of God consented to baptize him;

and, as they were travelling, and probably destitute of any convenient vessel for dipping up a portion of water from the stream, they both went down to the water, probably no further than to its margin; far enough to take up a small portion of it to sprinkle or pour on the eunuch. The narrative, in the original, ascertains nothing more than that they both went to and from the water. In our translation, indeed, it is said, they both went down into the water, and came up out of the water. But, when we look into the original text, we find the strict meaning of the terms employed, to be, that Philip and the eunuch went down the banks to the water, and coming from the water, reascended the banks again, to the place where the chariot in which they rode had been left. The same form of expression is used as in the case of Peter and the tribute money, (Matt. xvii. 27.) "Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook," &c. Here we cannot suppose that our Lord meant to command Peter to plunge into the sea, but only to go to the water's edge, and cast in a hook. The same form of expression is also employed in many other passages of the New Testament, where immersion is wholly out of the question: As in John, ii. 12, where it is said, Jesus went down to Capernaum; Acts vii. 15, Jacob went down into Egypt; Acts xviii. 22, He went down to Antioch, &c. Surely, no one will dream of immersion in any of these cases. There is nothing, then, in any of the language here used, which necessarily, or even probably, implies immersion. At any rate, the terms employed apply equally to both. There is the same evidence that Philip was plunged, as that the eunuch was. It is said they both went to the water. Nor can we consider it as at all likely that, in the circumstances in which they were placed as travellers, they were either of them immersed. It is plain, therefore, that all the confidence which our Baptist brethren have so often expressed, that the case of the Ethiopian eunuch is a certain example of immersion, must be regarded as presenting no solid evidence in their favour, and as really amounting to a gross imposition on popular credulity.

The next remarkable instance of baptism recorded in the New Testament, is that of Cornelius and his household. Cornelius, a "devout man, who feared God," was directed, in a vision, to send for Peter, the apostle, who should impart to him the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. Peter, on his arrival, having ascertained, wherfore Cornelius had sent for him, unfolded to him, and to all who were convened in his house, the way of salvation. "While he was yet



speaking, the Holy Ghost fell upon all of them which heard the word, then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

In this passage, there is nothing that has the remotest appearance of immersion. No hint is given of the candidates for baptism being led out of the house, to a river or pool, for the purpose of being dipped. The language of Peter has an entirely different aspect. "*Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?*" That is "Can any man forbid water being brought in a convenient vessel, to be applied by pouring or sprinkling?" He had just spoken of the Holy Ghost being poured out upon them; and what could be more natural than that he should apply water, the emblem of spiritual cleansing, in conformity with the same striking figure? "They were not dipped into the Holy Ghost; but the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them. They were not applied to the Holy Ghost; but the Holy Ghost was applied to them. He "fell upon them;" and the introduction of water, to be applied in a corresponding manner, was immediately authorized.

The baptism of the jailer and his household, at Philippi, still more decisively leads to the same conclusion. If we examine the circumstances which attended this baptism, they will be found to preclude, not only the probability, but I may say with confidence, the possibility of its having been performed by immersion. Paul and Silas were closely confined in prison when this solemn service was performed. While they were engaged in "praying and singing praises to God," a great earthquake shook the prison to its foundation, and the bonds of the prisoners were immediately unloosed. The jailer, awaking from his sleep, called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." This whole transaction, you will observe, occurred a little after midnight, and in a prison, that is, in the outer prison, for the jailor seems to have brought them out of the dungeon, or "inner prison," into some other apartment of the edifice. For it was not until next morning, some hours after the bap-

tism, that the magistrates gave the keeper permission to let them out of the prison. He and his family were evidently baptized "the same hour of the night," that is, between midnight (when we are expressly told the earthquake occurred,) and day; and while yet in the place of confinement. Now, I ask, how can we imagine it possible that the jailer and his family should be baptized by immersion, in the circumstances in which they were placed? We cannot suppose that there was a river, or a pool of water, or a baptistery within the walls of the prison, adapted to meet an occasion as unexpected as any thing could be, which had never occurred there before, and was never likely to occur, in like circumstances again. He who can believe this, must be ready to adopt any supposition, however extravagant, for the sake of an hypothesis. As little can we imagine that Paul and Silas would be dishonest enough to steal out of the prison by night, and accompany the jailer and his family to the river which runs near the city of Philippi, for the purpose of plunging them; especially as we know, on the one hand how backward they were, the next morning to quit the prison, unless brought out by the magistrates who had illegally imprisoned them: and on the other hand how much terrified the jailer was at the thought of the prisoners escaping from confinement, and of his being responsible even with his own life, for their safe keeping.

In like manner, we might go over all the other cases of baptism recorded in the New Testament, and show that, in no one case have we any evidence that the ordinance was administered by immersion. Now, as the disciples of Christ baptized such great multitudes—even more, at one period than John; can we imagine, if the constant, or even the common mode of baptising had been by plunging the whole body under water, and especially, if they had laid great stress on adherence to this mode; can we imagine, I say, that amidst so many cases of baptism, some term of expression, some incidental circumstance would not have occurred, from which the fact of immersion might have been clearly manifested, or irresistibly inferred? One thing is certain. The inspired writers of the New Testament could not possibly have regarded immersion in baptism in the same light in which it is regarded by our Baptist brethren. The latter, consider their mode of applying water, as essential to the ordinance. They dwell upon it with unceasing fondness, introduce it into every discussion; and loose no opportunity of recommending and urging it as that, without which an

alleged baptism is a nullity ; nay, an offence to the Head of the Church. While the former, though speaking, directly or indirectly on the subject, in almost every page of the New Testament, and under a great variety of aspects, have not stated a single fact, or employed a single term, which evinces that they either preferred or practised immersion in any case. They have stated, indeed, some facts which can scarcely, by possibility, be reconciled with immersion ; but in no instance have they made a representation which is not entirely reconcileable with the practice of perfusion or sprinkling. On the supposition that the doctrine of our Baptist brethren is true, this is a most unaccountable fact ? What ! not one evangelist or apostle, though taught by the Spirit of God what to say—kind enough, or wise enough, to put this matter beyond a doubt ? The unavoidable inference is, that the inspired writers did not deem the mode of applying water in baptism, an essential matter ; and did not think it necessary to state it precisely ; and, of course, that they differed entirely from our Baptist brethren.

4. Even if it could be proved (which we know it cannot be,) that the mode of baptism adopted in the time of Christ and his apostles, was that of immersion ; yet if that method of administering the ordinance were not significant of some truth, which the other modes cannot represent, we are plainly at liberty to regard it as a non-essential circumstance, from which we may depart when expediency requires it, as we are all wont to do in other cases, even with respect to positive institutions. For example, the Lord's Supper was, no doubt, originally instituted with unleavened bread ; and this was, probably, at first the common custom. But as being leavened or unleavened had nothing to do with the design and scope of the ordinance ; as bread of either kind is equally emblematical of that spiritual nourishment which it is intended to represent ; most professing Christians, and our Baptist brethren among the rest, feel authorised to celebrate the Lord's Supper with leavened bread without the smallest scruple.

Again ; the manner of sitting at the Lord's Supper, was, in conformity with the then prevailing posture at feasts, to recline on the elbow on a couch. There can be no doubt that this was the uniform posture at the convivial table, at that time ; and in the narratives of the evangelists, we have abundant evidence that the same posture was adopted by our blessed Lord in the institution of the sacramental Supper. But as it was only a circumstance connected with the

habits of those days, we do not feel bound; and our Baptist brethren among others, do not feel bound, in administering this ordinance, to conform to the original mode. We consider the sacrament as completely and validly dispensed, if bread and wine be reverently received, in commemoration of the Saviour's death, with any posture of the body. Nay, the example of our Saviour himself, plainly shows that, under a change of circumstances non-essential modes, originally used, may be dispensed with. The prescribed ritual of the Passover required that the lamb should be eaten with shoes on the feet, and with staves in the hand; but this custom was not followed by Him or his disciples, and perhaps, never was observed after the entrance into Canaan. But was the Passover rendered either less perfect, or less useful, for all practical purposes, by this omission? Surely we need not wait for an answer.

Now, unless it can be proved, that plunging the body into water, and lifting it out again, was designed to be emblematical of something which cannot be otherwise expressed, we have full liberty given us by the example of our Lord himself, to consider this mode as an unimportant circumstance. If the cleansing element of water be applied, in any reverential mode, to the human body, the whole symbolical expression of the ordinance is attained, provided convenience and decorum be duly consulted. If the cleansing or purifying quality of the element used, be the idea intended to be set forth in the emblem; and if the greater part, as we have seen, of the typical purifications prescribed under the ceremonial economy were effected by sprinkling; it is plain that the emblem is complete, however the cleansing element may be applied.

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## DISCOURSE IV.

### THE MODE OF ADMINISTERING BAPTISM.

Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?  
*Acts, x. 47.*

5. *THE difficulties attending the administration of baptism by immersion, in many cases, ought to satisfy us that this mode of administering the ordinance cannot be the only valid mode, and is not the most proper and edifying mode.*

It is perfectly evident, to every reflecting mind, that the obstacles which may be conceived, and which very frequently, in fact, occur, to render baptism by immersion difficult, if not impracticable, are very many, and very serious. It will be sufficient to hint at a few of the more familiar and obvious. It is well known that some very large districts of country, in various parts of our globe, are so parched and dry, and streams of water so rare, or rather, in many cases, so unknown, for many miles together, that the means of immersing a human body, in any natural stream or pool of water, cannot possibly be obtained but with great trouble and expense; a trouble and expense impracticable to a large portion of every community inhabiting those countries. There are other parts of our globe, near the polar regions, where, during the major portion of every year, the constant reign of severe frost, seals up every natural stream and fountain, and renders the immersion of a human body not merely difficult, but impracticable, without great labour and cost. Nor is this all; even in the temperate and well watered latitudes, there are seasons of the year, often of four or five months continuance, when baptism by immersion is generally dangerous, and, in many cases, highly so, to the health, and even the lives of both those who administer, and those who receive the ordinance.\* And, finally, at all seasons, persons

\* The Rev. Dr. Austin, in his answer to Mr. Merrill, speaks thus—“In besieged cities, where there are thousands, and hundreds of thousands of people; in sandy deserts like those of Africa, Arabia, and Palestine; in the northern regions, where the streams, if there be any, are shut up with impenetrable ice: and in severe and extensive droughts, like that which took place in the time of Ahab; sufficiency of water for animal subsistence is scarcely to be procured. Now, suppose God should, according to his predictions, pour out plentiful effusions of his spirit, so that all the inhabitants of one of these regions or cities, should be born in a day. Upon the Baptist hypothesis, there is an absolute impossibility that they should be baptized, while there is this scarcity of water; and this may last as long as they live.” p. 41.

So also, Mr. Walker, in his “Doctrine of Baptisms,” (chapter 10) speaks of a Jew, who, while travelling with Christians, in the time of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, about sixty or seventy years after the apostles, was converted, fell sick, and desired baptism. Not having water, they sprinkled him thrice with sand, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He recovered, and his case was reported to the Bishop, (or pastor, there being no prelates then) who decided that *the man was baptized, (si modo aqua denuo perfunderatur)* if he only had water poured on him again. This record shows, not merely that the “difficulties” referred to, are far from being ideal; but also that when the defect of the baptism by sand was attempted to be supplied it was not by any sort of immersion, but only by the pouring on of water

labouring under disease, can never be baptized in this mode, with safety, at all : and, of course, must be deprived entirely of the privilege of receiving this seal of the Christian covenant, so reasonable in itself, and so gratifying to the pious mind. It is also certain, that Baptist ministers who are aged and infirm, can never safely officiate in baptizing in any case ; and when they are men remarkably frail and feeble in body, they can never undertake, without manifest danger, to baptize individuals of large stature, or more than common corpulency. To all which may be added, that the public baptism of females with all the delicacy and care which can possibly be employed, is certainly, as thousands attest, a practice little in keeping with those religious feelings and impressions with which it is desirable that every Christian solemnity should be attended.

Now, contrast all these difficulties, which, surely, form a mass of no small magnitude with the entire absence of every difficulty of baptizing by sprinkling or affusion. According to our plan, which, we have no doubt, is by far the most scriptural and edifying, baptism may be performed with equal ease and convenience in all countries ; at all seasons of the year ; in all situations of health or sickness ; with equal safety by all ministers, whether young or old, athletic or feeble ; and in all circumstances that can well be conceived. How admirably does this accord with the Gospel economy, which is not intended to be confined to any one people, or to any particular climate ; but is equally adapted, in all its principles, and in all its rites to every “ kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue !”

Accordingly, it is a notorious fact, that, in consideration of the difficulties which have been mentioned as attending immersion, a large body of Baptists, in Holland, I mean the Mennonites, who were once warm and uncompromising contenders for this mode of administering baptism, at length gave it up, and, while they still baptize none but adults, have been, for more than a hundred years, in the practice of pouring water on the head of the candidate, through the hand of the administrator. They found that when candidates for baptism were lying on sick beds ; or confined in prison ; or in a state of peculiarly delicate health ; or in various other unusual situations, which may be easily imagined ; there was so much difficulty, not to say, in some cases, a total impossibility in baptizing by plunging ; that they deliberately, as a denomination, after the death of their first leader, agreed to lay aside, as I said, the practice of immersion, and substituted the plan of affusion.

There is one difficulty more, in reference to the mode of baptism by immersion, of which it is not easy to speak, on an occasion like the present, without appearing to intend ridicule of an ordinance so solemn and important. Fidelity to the subject, however, demands that I speak of it; and I trust no one will suspect me of a design to make any other than a perfectly grave and fair use of the matter to which I refer. The circumstance to which I allude is, that in the third, fourth, and immediately following centuries—in the days of Cyprian, Cyril, Athanasius, and Chrysostom—when, as all agree, the mode of baptizing by immersion was the most prevalent method; there is no historical fact more perfectly established, than that, whenever baptism was thus administered, the candidate, whether infant or adult, male or female, was *entirely divested of all clothing*: not merely of outer garments, but, I repeat, of *all clothing*. No exception was allowed in any case, even when the most timid and delicate female importunately desired it. This fact is established, not only by the most direct and unequivocal statements, and that by a number of writers, but also by the narration of a number of curious particulars connected with this practice.\* Among the rest we are told of scenes of indecorum exhibited in the baptisteries of those days, which convinced the friends of religion that the practice ought to be discontinued, and it was finally laid aside. Perhaps it will be asked, whether this fact in the history of Christian baptism is adverted to for the purpose of reflecting odium, in a sinister and indirect manner, on the practice of immersion? I answer, by no means; but simply for the purpose of showing that in tracing the history of baptism by immersion, we have the *very same evidence* in favour of immersing *divested of all clothing*, that we have for immersing at all: that, so far as the history of the church, subsequent to the apostolic age, informs us, these two practices must stand or fall together;† and that an appendage to baptism so revolting, so im-

\* The zealous Baptist Robert Robinson, bears, on this subject, the following testimony: "The primitive Christians baptized naked. Nothing is easier than to give proof of this by quotations from the authentic writings of the men who administered baptism, and who certainly knew in what way they themselves performed it. There is no ancient historical fact better authenticated than this. The evidence does not go on the evidence of the single word, naked; for then a reader might suspect allegory; but on facts reported, and many reasons assigned for the practice." History of Baptism, p. 85. He then quotes several examples dated in the fourth century.

† The learned Wall speaks on the subject thus: "The ancient Christians, when they were baptized by immersion, were all baptized

moral, and so entirely inadmissible, plainly shows that those who practised it must have been chargeable with a superstitious and extravagant adoption of a mere form, which, from its character, we are compelled to believe was a human invention, and took its rise in the rudeness of growing superstition, perhaps from a source still more impure and criminal.

Besides, if the principle for which our Baptist brethren contend, be correct; if the immersion of the whole body be essential to Christian Baptism, and if the thing signified be the cleansing and purifying of the individual by an ablution which must of necessity extend to the whole person; it would really seem that performing this ceremony, divested of all clothing, is essential to its emblematic meaning. Who ever thought of covering the hands with gloves when they were about to be washed; or expected really to cleanse them through such a covering? No wonder, then, when the principle began to find a place in the church, that the submersion of every part of the body in water, that the literal bathing of the whole person was essential both to the expressiveness and the validity of the emblematical transaction; no wonder, I say, that the obvious consequence should soon be admitted, that the whole body ought to be uncovered, as never fails to be the case, with any member of the body which may wish to be successfully cleansed by bathing. And we have no hesitation in saying, that, if we fully adopted the general principle of our Baptist brethren in relation to this matter, we should no more think of subjecting the body to that process which must, in order to its validity, be strictly emblematical of a complete spiritual bathing, while covered with clothes, than we should think, in common life, of washing the hands or the feet, while carefully covered with the articles of dress with which they are commonly clothed. Whereas, if the principle of Pædobaptists on this subject be adopted, then the solemn application of water to that part of the body which is an epitome of the whole person, and which is always, as a matter of course, uncovered, is amply sufficient to answer every purpose both of emblem and of benefit.

naked; whether they were men, women, or children. The proofs of this, I shall omit, because it is a clear case. The English Antipædobaptists need not have made so great an outcry against Mr. Baxter for his saying that they baptized naked; for if they had, it would have been no more than the primitive Christians did. They thought it better represented the putting off the old man, and also the nakedness of Christ on the cross. Moreover, as baptism is a washing, they judged it should be the washing of the body, not of the clothes." Wall, Chapter XV. Part II



Besides, let me appeal to our Baptist brethren, by asking, if they verily believe that the primitive and apostolic mode of administering baptism was by immersion, and that this immersion was performed in a state of entire nakedness; how can they dare, upon their principles, to depart, as to one iota from that mode? Let them not say, that they carefully retain the substance, the essential characters of the plan of immersion. Very true. This is our plea; and it accords very well with what we consider as the correct system; but in the mouth of a Baptist it is altogether inadmissible. The institute in question is a "positive" one; and, according to him, we must not depart one jot or tittle from the original plan.

These considerations, strike me as affording decisive evidence, that a mode of baptism attended with so many real and formidable difficulties, cannot be of divine appointment; at any rate that it cannot be universally binding on the church of God; and that laying so much stress upon the completeness of the submersion, is servility and superstition. We may say of this ordinance, as our Lord said of the Sabbath. *Baptism was made for man, and not man for baptism.* Where a particular mode of complying with a religious observance would be, in many cases, "a yoke of bondage," and one, too, for which no divine warrant could be pleaded, it would surely argue the very slavery of superstition, to enforce that mode of the observance as essential to a regular standing in the visible family of Christ.

6. As a further objection to the doctrine of our Baptist brethren in relation to the mode of baptism, let us examine *some of the figurative language of Scripture which refers to this ordinance*; and especially certain passages on which they are accustomed to place their greatest reliance for the support of their cause.

Perhaps no passages in Scripture have been more frequently and confidently pressed into the service of baptism by immersion than those that are found in Romans vi. 3, 4, and Colossians ii. 12. In the former we find the following: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Corresponding with this in Colossians ii. 12, the following passage occurs: "Buried with him in Baptism; wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

Now, our Baptist brethren, believing and insisting that baptism and immersion ought to be considered, in all cases, as synonymous terms, take for granted that the expression, "Buried with him in baptism," is intended to refer to the resemblance between the interment of a dead body, and its subsequent resurrection from beneath the surface of the earth; and the immersion of a baptized person entirely under the water, and raising him up again from beneath the surface of the fluid. In a word, our Baptist brethren assure us, that the design of the apostle in these passages is to say, that "the baptized person's communion with Christ in his death and burial, is represented by his being laid under the water; and his communion with him in his resurrection, by his being raised out of it." In this general interpretation of the figure many Pædobaptists have agreed; and have thus not a little confirmed the confidence of anti-pædobaptists in their cause. I am persuaded, however, that a candid examination of the real import of the figurative language before us, will show that this confidence is entirely unfounded.

The Apostle, in the preceding part of the epistle to the Romans, had shown that Christians are justified by faith in the righteousness of Christ. He proceeds in the sixth chapter to obviate the objection, that this doctrine tends to licentiousness. "What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!" He rejects with abhorrence the odious thought. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" He then adverts to the significance of baptism, which being the ordinance which seals our introduction into the family of Christ may be considered as exhibiting both the first principles of Gospel truth, and the first elements of christian character. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?" He then infers, that since baptism has so immediate a reference to the death of Christ, it must, by consequence, be connected also with his resurrection; and that, as in the former view, it teaches the regenerated the abandoning of the old life of sin; so, in the latter, it equally teaches them the pursuit and progress of the new life of righteousness. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

The obvious design of the apostle is to illustrate the character and obligations of believers, from the circumstance, that they are, in a certain respect, conformed to Christ's

*death*; that as he died *for* sin, so they are dead, or are under obligations to be dead, *to* sin; that is they are holy, or are, by their profession, obliged to be holy. "So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death." And this is explained by what follows. "In that Christ died, he died unto sin (or on account of sin) once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, (or in respect to sin,) but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." This is what was signified by baptism. And so believers were baptized *into Christ's death*: not that baptism was a symbol of *death*, or the state of the dead; for water, or washing in water, never was a symbol of this. But water, used in ceremonial, whether by washing or sprinkling, and afterwards in Christian baptism, always signified the *fact*, or the acknowledged *necessity* of *purification*. Now being *dead* or in a state of *death to sin*, is the same thing as to be *spiritually purified*, or made *holy*. And this is the very thing that *baptism*, coming in the place of ablutions under the former economy, is exactly adapted to signify. Or, to say all in a word, water used in baptism is a sign of that moral purification of believers, which the Apostle means to express by their being *crucified, dead*, and conformed to Christ's death. Their being *dead* in conformity with Christ, is the expression which contains the metaphor. And baptism, as an appointed token or *symbol*, denotes what is signified by the metaphor, not the metaphor itself.\* The sum of the apostle's illustration, then, so far as the point before us is concerned, is simply this—That in baptism, as a rite emblematical of *moral purification*, Christians profess to be baptized *into the death of Christ*, as well as, *into* (or into the hope of) *his resurrection*; that they are *dead* and *buried* in respect to sin, that is, in a moral and spiritual sense; so that every Christian can say, with *Paul*—"I am crucified with Christ; I have been made conformable to his death; being dead indeed to sin, and alive to God by Jesus Christ."

But besides all this, which is sufficient of itself to show how little reliance is to be placed on the gloss of this passage adopted by our Baptist brethren—the burial of Christ was

\* See Dr. Woods' *Lectures on Infant Baptism*, p. 188, 189. See this interpretation of *Rom. vi. 3, 4*, and the corresponding passage in *Colossians ii. 12*, well illustrated in the *Essay on Baptism*, by *Greville Ewing*, D. D. of *Glasgow*, and also in a *Dissertation on Infant Baptism*, by *Ralph Wardlaw*, D. D. of *Glasgow*; and still more recently by *Professor Stuart*, in the *Biblical Repository*, p. 327. 332.

by no means such as the friends of this exposition commonly suppose. The body of our Saviour was never buried in the manner in which we are accustomed to inter human corpses, that is by letting it down into the bosom of the earth, and covering it with earth. It was placed in a tomb hewn out of a rock; not a tomb sunk in the earth, but hollowed out of a rock, above ground, and containing separate cells for the reception of bodies, "as the manner of the Jews was to bury." Even supposing, then, that it were yielded to our Baptist brethren that the design of the Apostle is to teach the *mode* of baptism, by comparing it to the burial of Christ, it would by no means serve their purpose. There was not in fact any such subterranean immersion, if the expression may be allowed, as they imagine. The body of the Saviour was evidently laid in a stone cell, above ground, in which no earth came in contact with it, and in which, when the stone which closed up the door was taken away, the body was distinctly visible. In short, the burial of Christ no more resembled the modern interment of a dead body among us, than the depositing such a body, for a time, in an apartment in the basement story of a dwelling house, the floor of which was either not sunk below the surface of the earth at all, or if any, not more than a few inches; admitting of free ingress and egress as a common inhabited room. The figure in question, then, does not serve the turn of our Baptist brethren; thus affording another proof, that nothing more was intended by its use, than to set forth that by being *baptized into the death of Christ*, we profess to be *dead and buried in respect to sin*, without any reference whatever to the *mode* in which either the burial or the baptism might be performed.

Accordingly in the verse immediately preceding that before commented on, in the second Epistle to the *Colossians*, the following passage occurs, evidently intended to teach the same lesson: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ." And in the verse immediately following that in which the burial of Christ is alluded to, the figure of circumcision as an emblem of spiritual cleansing, is still pursued: "And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." Here it is plain, the same general idea is meant to be conveyed, as in the reference to baptism, which has come in the room of circumcision. In both the

putting away sin; the "putting off the sins of the flesh," is emblematically represented and sealed: as a man dead and buried is cut off from all temporal connections and indulgences; so the baptized man is really, or at least by profession, dead to sin, and in this way made conformable to the death of Christ in its great design and efficiency, which are to purify to himself a peculiar people, dead to the world, dead to carnal ambition, and secluded from every unhallowed practice.

Another signal example of the figurative language of Scripture applied to baptism, occurs in 1 *Corinthians*, x. 1, 2. "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto *Moses* in the cloud and in the sea." Now, when we turn to the narrative given by *Moses*, in the fourteenth chapter of *Exodus*, we find that the Red Sea, through which the Israelites passed, was divided before them; that the waters stood up like a wall on each side; and that they passed through on DRY GROUND. We are also informed, that the *cloud* by which their line of march was divinely directed, did not even fall upon them in the form of a shower, much less submerge them; but that it alternately went *behind* them and *before* them; now hanging in their rear, for the purpose of concealing them from their enemies; and then preceding them in their course, presenting a face of splendour to them, and a face of darkness to their pursuers. In all this, there was evidently nothing like immersion. The utmost that could have happened, in consistency with the inspired narrative, was their being sprinkled by the spray of the sea, or by drops from the miraculous cloud, when it passed over their heads.

The last passage of the class under consideration to which I shall advert, is that found in the first Epistle of *Peter*, iii. 20, 21: "The long-suffering of God waited in the days of *Noah*, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure wherunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The principle implied in this passage is plain; and it affords not the smallest countenance to the doctrine of our Baptist brethren. Every one sees, that in the case of *Noah* and his family, and of all the animals preserved with them in the ark, there was no immersion in the waters of the flood. Nay, this was the very evil from which the ark preserved them. Of course,

whatever else the passage may prove, it is impossible that it should be legitimately considered as favouring baptism by plunging the whole body under water.

7. Further; that immersion is not necessary in baptism; and that to insist upon it, as indispensable, is superstition, appears from the indisputable fact, that *both the significance and the effect of baptism are to be considered as depending, not on the physical influence of water, or upon the quantity of it employed, but on its symbolical meaning, and on the blessing of God upon its application as a symbol.* There has always been a tendency in human nature to lay more stress than the Bible warrants upon outward forms: and to imagine that external rites have a virtue inherent in themselves, by which their recipients are of course savingly benefited. It is generally granted by enlightened Protestants to be one of the mischievous errors of Popery, that baptism, and the other appointed rites of our religion, when administered by authorized hands, have an inherent efficacy; a sort of self-operating power on those to whom they are administered. This we consider as a superstitious and dangerous error. We believe that no external ordinance has any power in itself; but that its power to benefit those who receive it depends altogether upon the influence of the Holy Spirit of God, making it effectual; and that this influence may accompany or follow the ordinance, whatever may be the outward form of its administration. If, indeed, we had reason to believe that the benefit of baptism was caused by the physical influence of water on any or every part of the body, and depended upon that influence: if the least intimation of this kind were given us, either by the word of God, or the nature of the case; it would be wise to insist on a rigorous adherence to that form. But as the benefit of the ordinance has no connection, so far as we know, with the operation of water on the animal frame; but is the result, solely, of a divine blessing on a prescribed and striking emblem; and as the word of God has no where informed us of the precise mode in which that emblem shall be applied—we infer that the divine blessing may attend upon any mode of applying it. The language of our blessed Saviour on a memorable occasion is full of instruction on this subject. In order to give his disciples a striking lesson both of humility and purity, he condescended, on a certain evening when they were assembled under solemn circumstances, to *wash their feet*. Simon Peter, when his Master came to him, like too many at the present day, misunderstanding the nature and signifi-

cance of the symbolical action, at first strongly objected, and said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." To which Peter, in the fulness of his fervent zeal, replied, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Jesus, however, meaning to convey the idea that the whole action was symbolical, and that the application of water to any part of the body was abundantly sufficient, rejoins to Peter. "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; as much as to say, "It is not the *physical ablution*, but the *symbolical meaning*, to which I now wish to call your attention; and for this purpose the application of water to the feet only, carries with it all the fulness of meaning, and all the richness of benefit, that could have resulted from the most plentiful application of it to the whole frame."

8. Another, and in my view, conclusive reason for believing that our Baptist brethren are in error, in insisting that no baptism unless by immersion is valid, is *that the native tendency of this doctrine is to superstition and abuse*. The tendency here alleged has been often observed and lamented by serious people, as likely to be connected with a false hope and to destroy the souls of multitudes. Facts in support of this remark have fallen under my own painful observation. I have known many Baptists who appeared to feel as if there was some *inherent efficacy* in being "buried under the water," and that those who submitted to that self-denying rite, were, of course, real Christians. They have evidently appeared to think that *that* was the *great step* in religion; and that, having taken it, all was secure. Now, I contend, that this is the *natural tendency* of the Baptist doctrine; that their laying so much stress upon "going under the water," and holding it up, with unceasing zeal, to the popular view, as the great distinguishing, and indispensable badge of discipleship, is unavoidably, adapted to betray "unwary souls" into a delusive confidence. There is no disposition in depraved human nature more deeply inwrought, or more incessantly operative, than the disposition to rely upon something done by us for securing the divine favour. It is this disposition which has led to all that enormous mass of superstitious observances which distinguishes the Papal system, and which we have every reason to believe is built upon by millions, as the foundation of hope, instead of Christ. Whenever, therefore, any external rite becomes the grand distinction of a sect, and the object of something approaching to sectarian idolatry, we may be sure there exists not only the danger, but the actual

commencement, to some extent, of that superstitious reliance, which he who has not learned to fear, "knows nothing of the human heart yet as he ought to know."

That this suggestion has something more than mere fancy on which to rest, is evident from facts of recent and most mournful occurrence. A large and daily increasing sect has arisen, within a few years, in the bosom of the Baptist denomination which maintains the delusive and destructive doctrine, that baptism is regeneration; that no man can be regenerated who is not immersed; and that all, without exception, who have a historical faith, and are immersed, are of course, in a state of salvation. This pernicious heresy, so contrary to the plainest principles and facts of the word of God, and so manifestly adapted to destroy the souls of all who believe it, has been propagated to a melancholy extent, by a plausible, reckless, and impious demagogue, and is supposed to embrace one half of the Baptist body in the western country, besides many in the east. In short, the Baptist churches, in large districts of country, are so rent in pieces, and deluded by the miserable impostor referred to, that their prospects, for many years to come, are not only gloomy, but without a special interposition of the King of Zion in their favour, altogether desperate.

Now I maintain that this wretched delusion is by no means an unnatural result of the doctrine and practice of our Baptist brethren, in regard to the baptismal rite. Multitudes of them, I know, reject and abhor the heresy in question as much as any of us. But have they duly considered, that it seems naturally to have grown out of their own theory and practice in regard to baptism; their attaching such a disproportioned importance to the mode of administering that ordinance; often, very often, directing the attention of the people more to the river than the cross; excluding all from Christian communion, however pious, who have not been immersed; and making representations which, whether so intended or not, naturally lead the weak and the uninformed to consider immersion as a kind of talisman, always connected with a saving blessing? This, I sincerely believe, is the native tendency of the doctrine of our Baptist brethren, although *they*, I am equally confident, neither perceive nor admit this to be the case. If pious Christians who have not been immersed cannot be admitted to communion in the church below, there would seem to be still more reason for excluding them from the purer church above. And so far as this principle is received and cherished, though far from being alike mis-



chievous in all cases, it can scarcely fail of predisposing many minds in favour of that awful delusion, by which we have reason to believe that not a few, under its higher workings have been blinded, betrayed, and lost.

9. Finally ; that immersion cannot be considered, to say the least, as *essential* to a valid baptism, is plain *from the history of this ordinance*.

It is not denied that, for the first few centuries after Christ, the most common mode of administering baptism, was by immersion. But it is maintained that affusion and sprinkling were also practised, and when used, were considered as perfectly valid and sufficient. Of this the proof is so complete and indubitable, that no one really acquainted with the early history of the church, will think, for a moment, of calling it in question. The learned *Wall*, whose "History of Infant Baptism" is generally considered, by competent judges, as one of the most profound and faithful works extant, on the subject before us ; after showing conclusively that Pædobaptists ought not to refuse the admission, that baptism by dipping was the most prevalent mode, even in the western church, for a number of centuries after Christ ; goes on to remark that, on the other hand, the Antipædobaptists will be quite as unfair in their turn, if they do not grant, that in cases of sickness, weakliness, haste, want of a sufficient quantity of water, or any such extraordinary occasion, baptism by the affusion of water on the face, was, by the ancients, counted sufficient baptism. Of the testimony which he offers in support of this statement, a specimen will be presented.\*

Eusebius states, (Book 6, chapter 43,) on the authority of preceding writers, that Novatian being sick, and near death, as was supposed, was baptized on his bed by affusion. He, however, recovered, and was afterwards ordained to the work of the ministry. And although some questioned, whether a man who had been brought to make a profession of religion only on a sick bed, and when he considered himself as about to die, ought to be made a minister ; yet this doubt arose, we are assured, not from any apprehension that the baptism itself was incomplete ; but on the principle, that he who came to the faith not voluntarily, but from necessity, ought not to be made a priest, unless his subsequent diligence and faith should be distinguished and highly commendable.

Of the character of Cyprian, who flourished in the former

\* *Wall*, Part II. chapter ix. p. 352, &c.

part of the third century, enough has been said in a preceding discourse. A certain Magnus, a country minister, consulted him on the question, whether those who had been introduced into the Christian Church, by baptism on their sick beds, and, of course, by affusion or sprinkling, ought to be baptized again, if they recovered? Cyprian's answer to this question is as follows :

“ You inquire, my dear son, what I think of such as attain grace in time of sickness and infirmity : whether they are to be accounted lawful Christians, because they have not been *washed all over* with the water of salvation, but have only had some of it *poured on them*. In which matter I would use so much modesty and humility, as not to prescribe so positively, but that every one should enjoy the freedom of his own thought, and do as he thinks best. I do, however, according to the best of my mean capacity, judge thus : That the divine favours can in no wise be mutilated or weakened, so that any thing less than the whole of them is conveyed, where the benefit of them is received with a full and complete faith, on the part both of the giver and receiver. For, in the sacrament of salvation, the contagion of sin is not washed off in the same manner as the filth of the body is in a carnal and secular bath. It is entirely in a different way that the heart of a believer—it is after another fashion that the mind of man is by faith cleansed. In the sacraments of salvation, through the indulgence of God, when necessity compels, the shortest way of transacting divine matters, conveys the whole benefit to those who believe. Nor let any be moved by the fact, that the sick, when they are baptized, are only perfused or sprinkled, since the Scripture says, by the prophet Ezekiel, (chapter xxxvi. 25, 36,) “ I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you ; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” It is also said in the book of numbers, (chap. xix.) “ And the man which shall be unclean until the evening, shall be purified on the third day, and on the seventh day, and he shall be clean. But if he shall not be purified on the third day, and on the seventh day, he shall not be clean, and that soul shall be cut off from Israel, because the water of aspersion hath not been sprinkled upon him.” And again, the Lord spake unto Moses, in the book of Numbers, (chap. viii.) “ Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them ; and thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse them ; sprinkle water of purifying upon them.”

And again, “the water of aspersion is purification.” From which it appears that sprinkling is sufficient instead of immersion; and whensoever it is done, if there be a sound faith, on the part both of the giver and receiver, it is perfect and complete.”

From these passages, as well as from a number of others, which might be quoted, found in the works of Cyprian, it is evident, that, in a little more than one hundred and fifty years from the death of the last apostle, cases of baptism by perfusion or sprinkling had notoriously, and in repeated instances, occurred; that such examples were found among the heretics, as well as in the orthodox church; that a man so learned and pious as the venerable Cyprian, was decisively of the opinion that they were to be justified; and, finally, that he considered this as a point concerning which Christians were at liberty to entertain their own opinion, and to do as they judged best. Plainly implying that he did not consider it at all as an essential matter.

Origen was contemporary with Cyprian. He wrote in the Greek language. It was his vernacular tongue; and he was, probably, the most learned man of the century in which he lived. This venerable Christian father, commenting on 1 Kings, xviii. 33, in which we read of Elijah’s ordering water to be *poured* on the burnt sacrifice, tells us that he *baptized* the wood on the altar. Was not Origen a good judge of the meaning of a Greek word? Can we imagine that he would have used the word *baptize* in this sense, if he had regarded immersion as its exclusive meaning?

When Laurentius, a Roman deacon, about the middle of the third century, was brought to the stake to suffer martyrdom, a soldier who had been employed to be one of his executioners, professed to be converted, and requested baptism from the hands of him whom he had been engaged to assist in burning. For this purpose a *pitcher of water* was brought, and the soldier baptized at the place of execution.\* In circumstances so solemn as these, surely no conscientious man would have sported with a divine ordinance, or subjected it to any essential mutilation. It was, doubtless, deemed a sufficient mode of administering baptism.

Gennadius, a distinguished ecclesiastic of Marseilles, in the fifth century, speaks of baptism as administered in the French church indifferently, by either immersion or affusion, or sprinkling. For having said, “We believe the way of

\* Walfridius Strabo, De Rebus Ecclesiast. as quoted by Wall.

salvation to be open only to baptized persons;" he adds, "except only in the case of martyrdom, in which all the sacraments of baptism are completed." Then, to show how martyrdom has all in it that baptism has, he says, "The person to be baptized, owns his faith before the priest; and when the interrogatories are put to him, makes his answer. The same does a martyr before the heathen judge. He also owns his faith; and when the question is put to him, makes answer. The one, after his confession is either wetted with the water, or else plunged into it; and the other, is either wetted with his own blood, or plunged into the fire." This language plainly evinces that in the time of Gennadius, both modes of baptism were in use and deemed equally valid.

Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventura, are well known as two learned ecclesiastics of the twelfth century. In their time it is evident that both plunging and affusion were used in the churches of Italy, in the administration of baptism. Aquinas, in writing on the subject, expresses himself thus: "Baptism may be given not only by immersion, but also by affusion of water, or by sprinkling with it. But it is the safer way to baptize by immersion, because that is the most common custom." On the other hand, his contemporary, Bonaventura, observes, "The way of affusion in baptism was *probably used by the apostles*, and was, in his time, used in the churches of France, and some others;" but remarks, "The method of dipping into the water is the more common, and therefore the fitter and safer."

The Synod of Angiers, A. D. 1275, speaks of *dipping* and *pouring* as indifferently used; and blames some ignorant priests, because they *dipped* or *poured on water*, but *once*; and at the same time declaring that the general custom of the church was to dip, or to pour on water *three times*. The Synod of Langres, A. D. 1404, speaks of pouring or perfusion only. "Let the priest make three pourings or sprinklings of water on the *infant's* head," &c. The Council of Cologne, in 1536, evidently intimate that both modes were constantly practised. Their language is, "The child is thrice either *dipped* or *wetted* with water." Fifteen years afterwards, in the Agenda of the Church of Mentz, published by Sebastian, there is found the following direction: "Then let the priest take the *child* on his left arm, and holding him over the font, let him, with his right hand, three several times, take water out of the font, and pour it on the child's head, so that the water may wet its head and shoulders." Then they give a note to this purpose; that

immersion, once or thrice, or pouring of water may be used, and have been used, in the church; that this variety does not alter the nature of baptism! and that a man would do ill to break the custom of the church for either of them. But they add, that it is better, if the church will allow, to use *pouring on* of water. "For suppose," say they, "the priest be old and feeble, or have the palsy in his hands; or the weather be very cold; or the *child* be very infirm; or too big to be dipped in the font; then it is much fitter to use affusion of the water." Then they bring the instance of the apostles baptizing *three thousand* at a time; and the instance of Laurentius, the Roman deacon, before spoken of—and add, "That, therefore, there may not be one way for the sick, and another for the healthy; one for children, and another for bigger persons; it is better that the administrator of this sacrament do observe the safest way, which is, to pour water thrice; unless the custom be to the contrary." (*Wall*, Part II. chapter ix. p. 360, 361.)

One more historical record, which though apparently inconsiderable in itself, is, in my view, decisive, shall close the present list of testimonies. It is one referred to in a former discourse, when speaking of *Infant* baptism. I mean the undoubted fact, that the Waldenses, those far-famed and devoted witnesses of the truth, who maintained, during the darkness and desolation of the Papacy, "the testimony of Jesus," very soon after the Reformation opened, approached with the most cordial friendliness, the Reformed churches of Geneva and France; recognised them as sisters in the Lord; received ministers from them; and maintained with them the most affectionate communion. Now it is certain that, at that time, in the churches of both Geneva and France, the baptism of *infants*, and the administration of the ordinance by *sprinkling*, were in constant use. On such an incontestable fact, the argument is this: The Waldenses either baptized by *sprinkling* or by *immersion*. If by *sprinkling*, an important testimony is gained in favour of that mode, from ecclesiastical history. If by *immersion*, they plainly laid no such *stress* upon the mode as our Baptist brethren now do; since they were willing to commune with, and to receive ministers from, churches which were in the habit of using sprinkling only. In my view, as I said, this argument is decisive. We *know* that the Waldenses habitually baptized *infants*; but in what *mode* they administered the ordinance is not quite so certain. But one thing is unquestionable; and that is, that those pious witnesses

for Christ, even if they did immerse, did not consider the mode as *essential*, but were ready to hold the most unreserved communion with those who practised aspersion.

These testimonies, and many more to the same purpose, which might be presented if it were necessary, must, it appears to me, satisfy every impartial mind, that, from the days of the apostles down to the Reformation, affusion, and sprinkling in baptism, as well as immersion, have been in constant use; that some of the gravest and most soberminded writers, have firmly defended the two former, as well as the latter; that the strong arguments in favour of affusion or sprinkling, as the preferable mode, have been, in all ages, distinctly appreciated; and that it has ever been considered as a part of *Christian liberty* to use *either* mode, as may be conscientiously preferred.

Suffer me now to close this discussion by presenting two or three practical inferences from the view which has been given of this latter part of the subject. And,

1. If our statement of evidence as to the mode of baptism be correct, then the conduct of our Baptist brethren, in not only denying to the infant seed of believers all right to membership in the church, but also making immersion *indispensable* to a valid baptism, are chargeable with taking ground which is plainly unscriptural, and with dividing the body of Christ, for a mere uncommanded circumstance; a circumstance in regard to which all reasoning, and all history are, on the whole against them. We do not deny that the baptisms of these brethren are valid; but we *do* deny that they rest upon any more solid ground than ours; and we are persuaded that, without the least authority, they lay on the recipients of baptism "a yoke of bondage," which has no warrant from the word of God; and which the whole genius of the Gospel forbids. Surely, if the inspired writers had regarded immersion in the same light with our Baptist brethren, we should have had some explicit statements on this subject in the instructions given to the churches in the infancy of their New Testament course. And, surely, the attempt to lay burdens which the Spirit of God has no where authorized, is to incur the guilt imputed to those who "add to" the things which are contained in the book of life. On this subject I feel that it is no longer our duty to content ourselves with standing on the defensive. Our opponents in this controversy, I verily believe, are chargeable with "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;" and, of course, I consider them as equally sinning against the Head of the Church, and against "the generation of the righteous."

2. These things being so, we may see how the conduct of *some* of our Baptist brethren, in particular states of the church, ought to be regarded by the friends of Zion. The conduct to which I refer is, their having so often intruded into churches in which some religious attention has existed, and in which scarcely a family of their own denomination was to be found; and when the minds of many individuals were anxious respecting their eternal interests, immediately broaching the controversy respecting infant baptism, and immersion, and distressing the consciences of serious inquirers—not with the great and momentous question, “what they shall do to be saved?” but—before their minds are at all settled as to their personal hope in Christ, or their fitness for any sacramental seal; perplexing them with the controversy about an external rite, which they themselves grant is not essential to salvation. I have personally known such proceedings to occur with a frequency as wonderful as it was revolting; and with an obtrusive zeal worthy of a better cause. Young and timid consciences have been distressed, if not with the direct assertion, at least by the artful insinuation, that their particular mode of baptism was all in all; that there could be no safe Christianity without it. *The river, the river*, really seemed, by some, to be placed in the room of the *Saviour!*

There is something in all this so deeply offensive to every enlightened and judicious Christian: which involves so much meanness; and which manifests so much more concern for the enlargement of a sect, than the salvation of souls, that it is difficult to speak of it in terms of as strong reprobation as it deserves, without infringing on the limits of Christian decorum and respectfulness. It is conduct of which no candid and generous mind, actuated by the Spirit of Christ, will ever be guilty. And, I am happy to add, it is conduct in which many belonging to the denomination to which I allude, have souls too enlarged and elevated to allow themselves to indulge.

3. Once more; let us all be careful, my Christian friends, as a practical deduction from what has been said, to forbear “returning evil for evil,” on this, or any other point of ecclesiastical controversy. However other denominations may treat *us*, let us never be chargeable with treating *them* in an unchristian manner. We are conscientiously compelled to differ from our Baptist brethren. We believe them to be in error; in important and highly mischievous error. But what then? They are still brethren in Christ. Let us,

therefore, love them, and, however they may treat *us*, treat them with fraternal respectfulness, and seek their welfare. Let us never indulge a spirit of unhallowed proselytism. Let us never employ any other weapons against them than those of candid argument, and fervent prayer. Instead of “doting about questions, and strifes of words, whereof come envy, railings, evil surmisings, and corrupt disputings;” let us follow after patience, forbearance and charity; ever remembering that all who really belong to Christ, however they may differ in externals, are “one body in Him, and members one of another.” May we all be deeply imbued with the spirit which ought to flow from this precious truth; and may all that we do be done with charity! Amen!



## ADDITIONAL NOTES.

## (NOTE A.)

## GIVING A NAME IN BAPTISM.

In administering the rite of *circumcision*, it was customary to give *a name* to the child. This is evident from the circumstances attending the circumcision of John the Baptist, as related in the gospel according to Luke, i. 59—64; and also those attending the circumcision of our blessed Saviour, as found recorded in the next chapter of the same gospel. The same practice probably existed, from the earliest period of the New Testament church, in the administration of *baptism*. It makes, however, no *necessary*, or even *important* part of the rite. A baptism administered *without a name*, would, of course, be just as valid as if one were announced; and there is nothing in the essential nature of the case, which would forbid a name given to a child in baptism being *reconsidered* and *altered* afterwards. Yet, inasmuch as a child, when baptized, is announced to the church as a new member, subject to its maternal watch and care, it ought, in common, for obvious reasons, to be introduced and known under some name, so that each child may be distinguished, and may receive its appropriate treatment. To introduce a *nameless* member into any society, would be both unreasonable and inconvenient. Moreover, it is of great consequence, both to civil and religious society, that the birth and baptism of every child be *recorded* in regular church books. The formation of this record requires, it is evident, the use of a *name*; and after the name is adopted and recorded in this public register, it is plain that frequent alterations of the name, and tampering in a corresponding manner, with the public register would lead to endless confusion and mischief. Thus we are conducted, by a very obvious train of reasoning, to the conclusion that the name announced in baptism ought, in general, to be carefully retained, without subtraction or addition. Sometimes, indeed, the civil law requires such registers to be made and preserved, in regard to every birth and baptism. Where this is the case, there is, evidently, an additional reason for adhering strictly to the name announced in baptism, recorded in the appropriate

register, and thus brought under official notice, and recorded as the property of the state. See a number of curious questions proposed and resolved, concerning the names imposed in baptism, in the *Politicae Ecclesiasticæ* of the learned *Gisbertus Voetius*. Tom. I. p. 714—724.

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(NOTE B.)

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

This unscriptural and pernicious doctrine is not confined to the *Roman Catholics*, in whose system it may without impropriety be said to be indigenous; but is also frequently found in the pulpits and manuals of some *Protestants*, in the midst of whose general principles, it ought to be regarded as a poisonous exotic.

I. The doctrine referred to, as held by some Protestants, in its most objectionable form, appears to be this:—that the spiritual change which the Scriptures designate by the term *regeneration*, is always attendant upon, and effected by, the rite of baptism, when duly administered; that, on the one hand, every person, infant or adult, who has been baptized by an authorized minister, is a regenerated person; and that, on the other, every person who has not been baptized, however deep or mature his penitence and faith, is still unregenerate. In short, the position is, that the inward grace of regeneration *always* accompanies the outward sign of baptism; that they are inseparable; that the one cannot exist without the other; that he who has been thus regenerated, if he die without falling from grace, is certainly saved; that baptism is essential to salvation; and that to call by the name of regeneration any moral change, from the love of sin to the love of holiness, which takes place either *before* or *after baptism*, is unscriptural and absurd. This, as I understand them, is the doctrine maintained by Bishop Tomline, Bishop Marsh, Bishop Mant, and a number of other writers, of equal conspicuity, in the church of England, and by not a few divines of the Protestant Episcopal church in our own country.

This doctrine, I apprehend, is contrary to Scripture; contrary to experience; contrary to the declared opinion of the most wise, pious, and venerated divines even of the Episcopal denomination; and adapted to generate the most danger-

ous errors with regard to Christian character, and the Gospel plan of salvation.

1. It is contrary to *Scripture*. Without regeneration, the Scriptures declare, it is impossible to enter into the kingdom of heaven. But the penitent malefactor on the cross undoubtedly entered into the kingdom of heaven, if we are to credit our Lord's express declaration. Yet this penitent, believing malefactor was never baptized, therefore he was regenerated without baptism; and of course, regeneration and baptism are not inseparably connected. Again, Simon Magus received the outward and visible ordinance of baptism, with unquestionable regularity, by an authorized administrator; yet who will venture to say, that he received the "inward and invisible grace" signified and represented in that ordinance? He was evidently from the beginning a hypocrite, and remained, after baptism, as before "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." Therefore the outward and sensible sign, and the inward and invisible grace are not in *all cases*, or *necessarily*, connected. Again; it is evident that the apostle Paul, Lydia, the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian jailor, &c. "believed with the heart," and were, consequently, brought into a state of acceptance with God *before* they were baptized, But we are told (John i. 12, 13,) that as many as believe have been "born of God," and made the "sons of God." Of course, regeneration *may* take place, in the case of *adults*, *ought* to take place, and in these cases, *did* take place, *before* baptism; and, consequently, is not *the same thing* with baptism, or inseparably connected with that rite. Once more; we are assured in Scripture, that "he who is born of God, or regenerated, doth not commit sin, (that is, deliberately or habitually,) for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God;" and farther, that "every one that loveth is 'born of God' and knoweth God;" and that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." But can it be said that this character belongs to all who are baptized? Or, that none who are unbaptized manifest that they possess it? Surely no one in his senses will venture to make the assertion. Therefore a man may be "born of God" before he is baptized, and, consequently, the administration of the outward ordinance, and that work of the Holy Spirit, called in the word of God regeneration, are not always connected.

2. The doctrine before us is as contrary to *experience* as it is to Scripture. "It is asserted," says an eminent divine of the church of England, now living—"It is asserted, that

the spiritual change of heart called regeneration invariably takes place in the precise article of baptism. If this assertion be well founded, the spiritual change in question will invariably take place in every adult at the identical moment when he is baptized; that is to say, at the very instant when the hand of the priest brings his body in contact with the baptismal water; at that precise instant, his understanding begins to be illuminated, his will to be reformed, and his affections to be purified. Hitherto he has walked in darkness; but now, to use the scriptural phrase, he has passed from darkness to light. Hitherto he has been wrapped in a death-like sleep of trespasses and sins; but now he awakes, and rises from the dead, Christ himself giving him life. Hitherto he has been a chaos of vice, and ignorance, and spiritual confusion; the natural man receiving not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: but *now* he is created after God in righteousness and true holiness; being in Christ he is a 'new creature;' having become spiritual, the things of the Spirit of God are no longer foolishness to him; he knows them because they are spiritually discerned. Such are the emphatic terms in which regeneration is described by the inspired writers. What we have to do, therefore, I apprehend, is forthwith to inquire, whether every baptized adult, without a single exception, is invariably found to declare, that, in the precise article of baptism, his soul experienced a change analogous to that which is so unequivocally set forth in the above mentioned texts of Scripture."\* We need not dwell long on the inquiry. The fact is notoriously not so. Nor does it diminish the difficulty, in admitting the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, to say, as the Arminian advocates of this doctrine invariably do say, that those who are once regenerated may fall from grace, and manifest a most unhallowed temper. This is not the question. The question is, does experience evince, that every subject of baptism, who has reached an age capable of manifesting the Christian character, does, *at the moment of receiving the baptismal water*, show that he is the subject of that regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, by which "old things are passed away, and all things become new in the Lord?" No one who has a particle of intelligence or candour can imagine that any such fact exists; but if it do not, then the doctrine under consideration falls of course.

3. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration is contrary to

the declared opinion of the most pious, judicious, and venerable Protestant *divines*, including those of the very highest authority in the church of England. Nothing can be more certain than that the mass of the English reformers distinctly taught that baptism is a *sign* only of regeneration, and that the thing signified might or might not accompany the administration of the outward ordinance, according as it was received worthily or otherwise. In support of this assertion, the most explicit quotations might be presented from the writings of those distinguished martyrs and prelates, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and Hooper; and after them from the writings of the eminent bishops, Jewell, Davenant, Hall, Usher, Reynolds, Leighton, Hopkins, Tillotson, Beveridge, Burnet, Secker, and a host of other divines of the English church, of whose elevated character it would be little less than an insult to any intelligent reader to attempt to offer testimony. All these men declare in the most solemn manner, against the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, in the sense which we are now considering. Indeed, I cannot call to mind a single writer of that church, from the time of Archbishop Cranmer to the present hour, who had the least claim to the character of an *evangelical* man, who did not repudiate the doctrine which I am now opposing; and not a few of them denounce it as *Popish*, and adapted to subvert the whole system of vital and spiritual religion.

4. The last argument which I shall urge against the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, is, that it is adapted to generate the most *fatal errors* with regard to the Gospel plan of salvation.

So far as this doctrine is believed, its native tendency is, to beget a superstitious and unwarranted reliance on an external ordinance; to lower our estimate of that inward spiritual sanctification which constitutes the essence of the Christian character; in fact, to supersede the necessity of that spiritual change of heart, of which the Scriptures speak so much, and for which the most holy and eminent servants of Christ have, in all ages, contended. The truth is, the doctrine now under consideration is the very same in substance, with the doctrine of the *opus operatum* of the *Papists*, which all evangelical Protestants have been opposing for more than three hundred years, as a mischievous delusion. Accordingly, the Popish character and fatal tendency of this error have been unreservedly acknowledged by many bishops, and other pious divines of the church of England, as well as by many of the same denomination in this country.

Further; if regeneration, which is the commencement of holiness in the soul, is always communicated in baptism, then it follows, as, indeed, those who entertain this doctrine distinctly avow,—that baptism invariably places its subject in a state of salvation; so that every baptized person who dies immediately after the administration of this sacrament, is infallibly sure of entering the kingdom of heaven. If this doctrine were fully believed, would not every thinking, anxious parent refrain from having his child baptized in infancy, and reserve the ordinance for an hour of extremity, such as the approach of death, that it might serve as an unfailing passport to glory? Would it not be wise in every adult who may be brought to a knowledge of the Saviour, from Paganism, or from the world, to put off his baptism to the last hour of his life, that he might be sure of departing in safety? This is well known to have been one of the actual corruptions of the fourth century, growing out of the very error which I am now opposing. “It was the custom of many,” says Dr. Mosheim, “in that century, to put off their baptism till the last hour; that thus immediately after receiving by this rite the remission of their sins, they might ascend pure and spotless to the mansions of life and immortality.” This is no far-fetched or strange conceit. It is the native fruit of the doctrine before us. Nay, if we suppose this pernicious theory to take full possession of the mind, would it not be natural that a tender parent should anxiously desire his child to *die* immediately after baptism; or even, in a desperate case, to *compass its death*, as infallibly for its eternal benefit? And, on the same principle, might we not pray for the death of every adult, immediately after he had received baptism, believing that *then* “to die would certainly be gain?” In fine, I see not, if the doctrine be true, that a regenerating and saving efficacy attends every regular baptism—I see not how we can avoid the conclusion, that every Pagan, whether child or adult, that can be seized by force, and however thoughtless, reluctant or profane, made to submit to the rite of baptism, is thereby infallibly made “a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven?”

These consequences, which appear to me demonstrably to flow from the theory in question, afford sufficient evidence that it is an unscriptural and pernicious error, even if no other means of refutation could be found.

It is not forgotten that language which seems, at first view, to countenance the doctrine which I am opposing, is found in some of the *early Fathers*. Some of them employ terms

which would imply, if interpreted literally, that baptism and regeneration were the same thing. But the reason of this is obvious. The Jews were accustomed to call the converts to their religion from the Gentiles *little children*, and their introduction into the Jewish church, a *new birth*, because they were brought, as it were, into a *new moral world*. Accordingly, circumcision is repeatedly called in Scripture "*the covenant*," because it was the *sign* of the covenant. Afterwards, when baptism, as a Christian ordinance, became identified with the reception of the Gospel, the early writers and preachers began to call this ordinance *regeneration*, and sometimes *illumination*, because every *adult* who was baptized, professed to be born of God, illuminated by the Holy Spirit. By a common figure of speech, they called the *sign* by the name of the *thing signified*. In the truly primitive times this language was harmless, and well understood; but as superstition increased, it gradually led to mischievous error, and became the parent of complicated and deplorable delusions.

II. But there is another view of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which is sometimes taken, and which, though less pernicious than that which has been examined, is still, I apprehend, fitted to mislead, and, of course, to do essential mischief. It is this: That baptism is that rite which marks and ratifies the introduction of its subject into the visible kingdom of Christ; that in this ordinance the baptized person is brought into a new state or relation to Christ, and his sacred family; and that this new state or relation is designated in the Scripture by the term *regeneration*, being intended to express an *ecclesiastical birth*, that is, being "born" into the visible kingdom of the Redeemer. Those who entertain this opinion do not deny, that there is a great moral change, wrought by the Spirit of God, which must pass upon every one, before he can be in a state of salvation. This they call *conversion, renovation, &c.*; but they tell us that the term "*regeneration*" ought not to be applied to this spiritual change; that it ought to be confined to that change of *state* and of *relation* to the *visible kingdom of Christ* which is constituted by baptism; so that a person, according to them, may be regenerated, that is, regularly introduced into the visible church, without being really born of the Spirit. This theory, though by no means so fatal in its tendency as the preceding, still appears to me liable to the following serious objections.

1. It makes an unauthorised use of an important theologi-

cal term. It is vain to say, that, after giving fair notice of the *sense* in which we use a term, no misapprehension or harm can result from the constant use of it in that sense. The plea is insufficient. If the sense in question be an unusual and especially an unscriptural one, no one can estimate the mischief which may result from the use of it in that sense. *Names* are so closely connected with *things*, that it is of the utmost importance to preserve the nomenclature of theology from perversion and abuse. If the sense of the word "regeneration" which is embraced in this theory, were now by common consent admitted, it would give an entirely new aspect to all those passages of Scripture in which either regeneration or baptism is mentioned, making some of them unmeaning, and others ridiculous; and render unintelligible, and in a great measure useless, if not delusive, nine-tenths of the best works on the subject of practical religion that have ever been written.

2. But there is a more serious objection. If men be told that every one who is baptized, is thereby regenerated—"born of God"—"born of the Spirit,"—made a "new creature in Christ,"—will not the mass of mankind, in spite of every precaution and explanation that can be employed, be likely to mistake on a fundamental point; to imagine that the disease of our nature is trivial, and that a trivial remedy for it will answer; to lay more stress than they ought upon an external rite; and to make a much lower estimate than they ought of the nature and necessity of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord?

After all, however, although the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, in the first and most objectionable sense, is known to be rejected by all the truly evangelical divines of the church of England, and by the same class in the Protestant Episcopal church in this country; yet it cannot be denied that something, to say the least, very like this doctrine is embodied in the baptismal service of that denomination on both sides of the Atlantic. The following specimens of its language will at once illustrate and confirm my meaning: "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that *this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church*, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning." And again: "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to *regenerate this infant by thy Holy Spirit*, to receive him for thine own child by adop-



tion, and to incorporate him into thy holy church," &c. The same language is also repeated in the baptismal service for "those of riper years." They are represented as being "regenerated;" as being "born again," and "made heirs of salvation;" and as having "put on Christ." This language is differently interpreted, by the Episcopal ministers who employ it, according to the opinion which they adopt with regard to baptism. Those who coincide in opinion with Bishop Mant, and others of similar sentiments, make no scruple of avowing, that these expressions literally import, what they fully believe, that every one who is duly baptized, is, in and by that rite, born of the Spirit, and brought into a state of grace and salvation. A second class of interpreters, however, consider this language of the Liturgy as merely importing that the person baptized is brought into a new state, or a new relation to the visible church. While a third class, although they acknowledge that the language before us, literally interpreted, does certainly express more than a mere visible relation, even the participation of truly spiritual and saving blessings; yet say, that they can conscientiously employ it, because a Liturgy intended for general use, ought to be, and must be, constructed upon the principle, that those who come to receive its offices are all to be considered as *sincere*, and as having a *right*, in the sight of God, to the ordinance for which they apply! And thus it happens, that those who reject as Popish and delusive, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, as taught by Mant, and those who concur with him, feel no difficulty in publicly and solemnly repeating this language, every time they administer the ordinance of baptism.

It is not for one of another communion to interpose between the consciences of Episcopal ministers, and the import of their public formularies. In fidelity to my own principles, however, and as a warning to those of my own church who may be assailed by the proselyting efforts of some of this denomination, I may be permitted to say, that if I believed with Bishop Mant, and his associates in sentiment, the language of the baptismal service would be entirely to my taste; but if not, I could not, on any account, conscientiously employ it. It would not satisfy me to be told, that the language of one of the Thirty-nine Articles, and some of the language found in the Book of Homilies, bears a different aspect. This is, no doubt, true. Still this does not remove or alter the language of the baptismal service. There it stands, a distress and a snare to thousands of good

men, who acknowledge that they could wish it otherwise, but dare not modify it in the smallest jot or tittle.\* Had I no other objection to ministering in the church of England, or in the corresponding denomination in this country—this part of the Liturgy would alone be an insurmountable one. I could not consent continually to employ language, which, however explained or counteracted, is so directly adapted to deceive in a most vital point of practical religion. I could not allow myself to sanction by adoption and use, language which, however explained and counteracted in my own ministry, I knew to be presented and urged by many around me in its literal import, and declared to be the only true doctrine of the church.

As to the plea, that a Liturgy must necessarily be constructed upon the principle that all who come to its offices must be *presumed* to be *sincere*, and be solemnly *assured*, in the name of God, that they are so, nothing can be more delusive. Cannot scriptural truth be as plainly stated, and as wisely guarded in a liturgical composition as in any other? Our Methodist brethren have a prescribed form for baptism; and so far as I recollect its language, they have succeeded, without apparent difficulty, in making it at once instructive, solemn, appropriate, and unexceptionable. And I have heard Presbyterian ministers a thousand times tell their hearers, with as much distinctness in administering sacraments, as in ordinary preaching, that “the sacraments become effectual to salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit *in them that by faith receive them.*”

But it may be asked, what kind or degree of *efficacy* do Presbyterians consider as connected with baptism? Do they suppose that there is any beneficial influence, physical or moral, in *all cases*, connected with the due administration of this sacrament? I answer, *none at all*. They suppose that the washing with water in this ordinance is an *emblem* and a *sign* of precious benefits; that it holds forth certain great truths, which are the glory of the Christian covenant, and the joy of the Christians’s heart; that it is a seal affixed by God to his covenant with his people, whereby he certifies

\* An evangelical and deeply conscientious minister of the Episcopal church, who, after struggling for some time with the most distressing scruples, as to this very feature in the baptismal service, ventured to alter a few words, was forthwith given to understand, that such liberties would not be tolerated, and was soon constrained to withdraw from the Episcopal communion.

his purposes of grace, and pledges his blessing to all who receive it with a living faith; nay, that it is the seal of valuable *outward privileges*, even to those who are not then, or at any other time, “born of the Spirit;” that, as a solemn rite appointed by Christ, it is adapted to make a solemn impression on the serious mind; but that when it is administered to the persons, or the offspring of those who are entirely destitute of faith, there is no pledge or certainty that it will be accompanied with *any blessing*. They receive the *water*, but not the *Spirit*. They are engrafted into the visible church, but not into the spiritual body of Christ, and are, *after* baptism, just as they were *before*, like Simon the Sorcerer, “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

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(NOTE C.)

SPONSORS IN BAPTISM.

It is well known that the Presbyterian church differs from the Episcopal in regard to the subject announced at the head of this note. We differ in two respects. *First*, in not requiring or encouraging the appearance of any other sponsors, in the baptism of *children*, than the *parents*, when they are living and qualified to present themselves in this character: and *secondly*, in not requiring, or even admitting, any godfathers or godmothers at all in cases of *adult* baptism. My object in the remarks which I am about to make on this subject, is, not to impugn either the principles or practice of our Episcopal brethren; but simply to state, for the instruction of the members of our own church, why we cannot think or act with them in relation to this matter.

It is curious to observe the several steps by which the use of sponsors, as now established in the Romish and some Protestant churches, reached its present form. Within the first five or six hundred years after Christ, there is no evidence that children were *ever* presented for baptism by any other persons than their *parents*, provided those parents were living, and were professing Christians. When some persons in the time of Augustine, who flourished toward the close of the *fourth*, and beginning of the *fifth* century, contended that it was not lawful, in any case, for any excepting their natural parents to offer children in baptism; that learned

and pious father opposed them, and gave it as his opinion, that in *extraordinary cases*, as, for example, when the parents were *dead*; when they were not professing Christians; when they cruelly forsook and exposed their offspring; and when masters had young slaves committed to their charge, in these cases, (and the pious Father mentions no others,) he maintains that any professing Christians, who should be willing to undertake the benevolent charge, might with propriety, take these children, offer them in baptism, and become responsible for their Christian education. This, every one will perceive, is in strict conformity with the principles maintained in the foregoing essay, and with the doctrine and habits of the Presbyterian church.

The learned Bingham, an Episcopal divine of great learning, seems to have taken unwearied pains, in his "Ecclesiastical Antiquities," to collect every scrap of testimony within his reach, in favour of the early origin of sponsors. But he utterly fails of producing even plausible evidence to that amount; and at length candidly acknowledges that in the early ages, *parents* were, in all ordinary cases, the presentors and sureties for their own children; and that children were presented by others only in *extraordinary cases*, such as those already alluded to. It is true, indeed, that some writers, more sanguine than discriminating, have quoted Dionysius, Tertullian, and Cyril of Alexandria, as affording countenance to the use of sponsors in early times. Not one of those writers, however, has written a sentence which favours the use of any other sponsors than parents, when they were in life, and of a proper character to offer their children for the sacramental seal in question. Even Dionysius, whose language has, at first view, some appearance of favouring such sponsors; yet, when carefully examined, will be found to speak only of sponsors who undertook to train up in the Christian religion some of the children of Pagans, who were delivered, for this purpose, into the hands of these benevolent sureties, by their unbelieving parents. But this, surely, is not inconsistent with what has been said. And, after all, the writings of this very Dionysius are given up by the learned Wall, and by the still more learned and illustrious Archbishop Usher, as a "gross and impudent forgery," unworthy of the least credit.

It was not until the council of Mentz, in the ninth century, that the church of Rome forbade the appearance of parents as sponsors for their own children, and required that this service be surrendered to other hands.

Mention is made, by Cyril, in the *fifth* century, and by Fulgentius in the *sixth*, of sponsors in some peculiar cases of *adult* baptism. When adults, about to be baptized, were *dumb*, or under the power of *delirium*, through disease, and of course unable to speak for themselves, or to make the usual profession; in such cases it was customary for some friend or friends to answer for them, and to bear testimony to their good character, and to the fact of their having before expressed a desire to be baptized. For this, there was, undoubtedly, some reason; and the same thing might, with propriety, in conceivable circumstances be done now. From this, however, there was a transition soon made to the use of sponsors in *all cases* of adult baptism. This latter, however, was upon a different principle from the former. When adults had the gifts of speech and reason, and were able to answer for themselves, the sponsors provided for such, never answered or professed for them. This was invariably done by the adult himself. Their only business, as it would appear, was to be a kind of curators or guardians of the spiritual life of the persons baptized. This office was generally fulfilled, in each church, by the *deacons* when adult *males* were baptized; and by the *deaconesses* when *females* came forward to receive this ordinance.

Among the pious Waldenses and Albigenses, in the middle ages, no other sponsors than parents seem to have been in common use. In one of their catechisms, as preserved by Perrin, and Morland, they ask, "By whom ought children to be presented in baptism?" Answer, "By their parents, or by any others who may be inspired with this charity;" which is evidently intended to mean, as other documents respecting them show, that where the parents were dead, or absent, or could not act, other pious professors of religion might take their places.

According to one of the canons of the church of England, "parents are not to be *urged* to be *present* when their children are baptized, nor to be *permitted* to stand as sponsors for their own children." In the Protestant Episcopal church in this country, parents "shall be admitted as sponsors if it be desired." But in both countries it is required that there be godfathers and godmothers for all adults, as well as for infants.

The baptismal service of the Methodist church in the United States, for infants, does not recognise the use of any sponsors at all, excepting the parents, or whatever other "friends" may present them.

It is plain then, that the early history of the church, as

well as the word of God, abundantly sustains the doctrine and practice of the Presbyterian church in this matter. We maintain, that as the right of the children of believers to baptism, flows from the membership and faith of their parents according to the flesh; so those parents, if living, are the only proper persons to present them for the reception of this covenant seal. If, however, their proper parents, on any account, cannot do this, they may, upon our principles, with propriety, be presented by any professed believers, who, *quoad hoc*, adopt them as their children, and are willing to engage, as parents, to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

If, indeed, nothing else were contended for in this case, than that, when believing parents have pious and peculiar friends who are willing to unite with them in engagements to educate their children in the true religion, such friends might be permitted to stand with them; there might not be so much to condemn. Even then the solemn question might be asked; "Who hath required this at your hands?" But when the system is, to set aside parents; to require that others take their places, and make engagements which *they* alone, for the most part, are qualified to make; and when, in pursuance of this system, thousands are daily making engagements which they never think of fulfilling, and in most cases, notoriously have it not in their power to fulfil, and, indeed, feel no special obligation to fulfil; we are constrained to regard it as a human invention, having no warrant whatever, either, from the word of God or primitive usage; and as adapted, on a variety of accounts, to generate evil, much evil, rather than good.

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(NOTE D.)

#### CONFIRMATION.

In the apostolic church, there was no such rite as that which under this name has been long established in the Romish communion as a sacrament, and adopted in some Protestant churches as a solemnity, in their view, if not commanded, yet as both expressive and edifying. It is not intended in this note to record a sentence condemnatory of those who think proper to employ the rite in question: but only to state with brevity some of the reasons why the

fathers of the Presbyterian Church, thought proper to exclude it from their ritual; and why their sons, to the present hour, have persisted in the same course.

1. We find no foundation for this rite in the word of God. Indeed our Episcopal brethren, and other Protestants who employ it, do not pretend to find any direct warrant for it in Scripture. All they have to allege, which bears the least resemblance to any such practice, is the statement recorded in Acts viii. 14—17: "Now when the apostles, which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. (For as yet he had fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." That there is here a reference to the *extraordinary* or *miraculous* gifts of the Holy Ghost, and these conferred by extraordinary officers, is so perfectly apparent, that it is no wonder the advocates of Confirmation do not press it as *proof* of their point. The only wonder is, that they ever mention it as affording the most remote countenance to their practice. The diligent reader of Scripture will find *four* kinds, or occasions of laying on hands recounted in the New Testament. The first, by Christ himself, to express an authoritative benediction, Matt. xix. Mark x. 16; the second, in the healing of diseases, Mark xvi. 18, Acts xxviii, 8; the third, in conferring the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, Acts viii. 17, xix. 6; and the fourth, in setting apart persons to sacred office, Acts vi. 6. xiii. 3. 1 Tim. iv. 14. The venerable Dr. *Owen*, in his commentary on Heb. vi. 2, expresses the opinion, that the laying on of hands there spoken of, is to be considered as belonging to the third class of cases, and, of course, as referring to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. Others have supposed that it rather belongs to the fourth example above enumerated, and therefore applies to the ordination of ministers. But there is not a syllable or hint in the whole New Testament which looks like such a laying on of hands as that for which the advocates of Confirmation contend.

2. Quite as little support for Confirmation can be found in the purest and best periods of uninspired antiquity. Towards the close of the second century, several uncommanded and superstitious additions had been made to the ordinance of baptism. Among these were anointing with *oil*, in avowed imitation of the Jewish manner of consecration; administer-

ing to the baptized individual a mixture of *milk* and *honey* as the symbol of his childhood in a new life, and as a pledge of that heavenly Canaan, with all its advantages and happiness, to which the hopes of the baptized were directed; the *laying on of the hands* of the minister officiating in baptism, for imparting the Holy Spirit; to all which may be added, that immediately after the close of this century, we find the practice of *exorcism* introduced as a preliminary to baptism, and as a means of expelling all evil spirits from the candidate for this ordinance. These superstitious additions were made to succeed each other in the following order; *exorcism*, confession; renunciation; baptism; *chrismation*, or anointing with oil, which was done in the form of a *cross*; and finally, the laying on of hands, or *confirmation*, which immediately followed the anointing with oil, and the administration of the simple element above mentioned. "As soon as we are baptized," says *Tertullian*, "we are anointed with the blessed unction." And he adds, "This unction is according to the Jewish dispensation, wherein the high priest was anointed with oil out of a horn." The laying on of hands, or confirmation, immediately followed the unction. "As soon as we come from the baptismal laver," says *Tertullian*, "We are anointed, and then hands are imposed." This was considered as essential to the completion of the ordinance. "We do not receive the Holy Ghost," says the same father, "in baptism, but being purified by the water, we are prepared for the Holy Ghost, and by the laying on of hands, the soul is illuminated by the Spirit." The exorcism, then, the anointing with oil, the sign of the cross, the imposition of hands for conveying the Holy Spirit, and the administration of milk and honey to the candidate, were all human additions to baptism, which came in about the same time, and ought, in our opinion, to be regarded very much in the same light with a great variety of other additions to the institutions of Christ, which, though well meant, and not destitute of expressiveness, are yet wholly unauthorized by the King and Head of the Church.

3. When the practice of the laying on of hands, as an ordinary part of the baptismal service, was added, by human invention, to that ordinance, it always *immediately followed* the application of water, and the anointing with oil. "As soon as we come from the baptismal laver," says *Tertullian* "we are anointed, and then hands are laid on." And it is further acknowledged by all, that every one who was competent to baptize, was equally competent to lay on hands.



The two things always went together; or rather formed parts of the baptismal ordinance, which was not thought to be consummated without the imposition of hands by him who had applied the water and the unction. And this continued to be the case, throughout the greater part of the church, for the first three hundred years. Then the term *bishop* signified the pastor or overseer of a flock or congregation. Every pastor was a bishop, as had been the case in apostolic times. And then, in ordinary cases, none but the bishop or pastor of each church, administered baptism. Of course, he only laid on hands. But afterwards, in the progress of corruption, when Prelacy was gradually brought in, it became customary, for the sake of doing greater honour to the prelates, to reserve this imposition of hands to them, as a part of their official prerogative. *Jerome* (Dialog. Adv. Lucifer,) expressly declares, that the committing this benediction wholly to the bishops, was done "rather in honour of the priesthood, than from necessity imposed by any law." Even now, throughout the Greek Church, this rite is administered, for the most part, in close connection with baptism, and is dispensed by any priest who is empowered to baptize. In like manner, in the Lutheran and other German churches, in which confirmation is retained, it is administered by every pastor. Still even when confined to prelates, this imposition of hands was not, in ordinary cases, long separated from the baptism: for the children were commonly carried to the bishop to have his hands laid upon them as soon as convenient. After a while, however, it became customary to separate the two things much more widely. Confirmation, or the laying on of the bishop's hands, began to be postponed for a number of years, according to circumstances; until, at length, it was often left till the arrival of adult age, and even, in some cases, till the decline of life. All these progressive steps evidently marked a mere human invention, for which there is no divine appointment or warrant whatever.

4. The rite of confirmation is *superfluous*. As it was plainly a human invention, so it is *unnecessary*, and answers no purpose which is not quite as well, to say the least, provided for in the Presbyterian Church, which rejects it. It is said to be desirable that there should be some transaction or solemnity by which young people who have been baptized in their infancy, may be called to recognise their religious obligations, and, as it were, to take upon themselves the profession and the vows made on their behalf in bap-

tism? Granted. There can be no doubt that such a solemnity is both reasonable in itself, and edifying in its tendency. But have we not just such a solemnity in the Lord's Supper; an ordinance divinely instituted; an ordinance on which all are *qualified* to attend, and ought to attend, who are qualified to take on themselves, in any scriptural or rational sense, their baptismal obligations; an ordinance, in fact, specifically intended, among other things, to answer this very purpose, viz. the purpose of making a personal acknowledgment and profession of the truth, the service, and the hopes of Christ:—have we not, I say, in the Sacramental Supper just such a solemnity as we need for the end in question—simple, rational, scriptural, and to which all our children may come, just as soon as they are prepared in any form to confess Christ before men? We do not *need* confirmation, then, for the purpose for which it is professed to be desired. We have something better, because appointed of God; quite as expressive; more solemn; and free from certain objectionable features which are now to be mentioned.

5. Finally; we reject the rite of confirmation in our Church, because in addition to all the reasons which have been mentioned, we consider the formula prescribed for its administration in the Church of England, and substantially adopted by the Episcopal Church in this country, as liable to the most serious objections. We do not think it a duty in any form, to practise a rite which the Saviour never appointed; but our repugnance is greatly increased by the language with which the rite in question is administered by those who employ it. In the "Order of Confirmation," as prescribed and used in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, the following language occurs. Before the act of laying on hands, the officiating bishop, in his prayer repeats the following language; "Almighty and ever living God, who hast vouchsafed to *regenerate these thy servants, by water and the HOLY GHOST*, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins," &c. &c. And again, in another prayer, after the act of confirmation is completed, he speaks to the Searcher of hearts thus—"We make our humble supplications unto thee for these thy servants, upon whom, after the example of thy holy apostles, we have now laid our hands; to *certify them by this sign of thy favour and gracious goodness towards them*," &c. And also, in the act of laying on hands, assuming that all who are kneeling before him *already have* the holy sanctifying spirit of Christ, he prays that they "may all daily *increase* in this Holy Spirit more and more."

Such is the language addressed to large circles of young people of both sexes, many of whom there is every reason to fear, are very far from having been “born of the Spirit,” in the Bible sense of that phrase; nay, some of whom manifest so little seriousness, that any pastor of enlightened piety would be pained to see them at a communion table; yet the bishop pronounces them *all*—and he appeals to heaven for the truth of his sentence—he pronounces them *all* regenerate, not only by *water*, but also by the HOLY GHOST; *certifies* to them, in the name of God, that they are objects of the divine “*favour* ;” and declares that, being *already* in a state of grace and favour with God, they are called to “grow in grace ;” to “increase in the Holy Spirit more and more.”

There are many who have long regarded, and who now regard this language not only with regret, but with shuddering, as adapted to cherish false hopes, nay, to deceive and destroy souls by wholesale. I must again say, that if there were no other obstacle to my consenting to minister in the Protestant Episcopal church, *this* alone would be an insurmountable one. For it must come home to the conscience and the feelings, not of the bishop only, but of every pastor in that church who has, from time to time, a circle of beloved youth to present for confirmation. It is vain to say, that the church *presumes* that all who come are sincere, and of course born of the Spirit, and in a state of favour with God. This is the very point of our objection. She so presumes, and undertakes to “*certify*” them of it. Presbyterian ministers do not, dare not, use such language. They do not and dare not, undertake to “*certify*” to any number of the most mature and exemplary communicants that ever gathered round a sacramental table, that they are *all* in a state of grace and salvation, and that they have nothing to do but to “follow on,” and “increase in the Holy Spirit.” Nor is it a sufficient answer, I repeat, to say, that a liturgy, being a fixed composition, cannot be so constructed as to discriminate between different characters. This is denied. Every enlightened and faithful minister of whatever denomination, who is at liberty to employ such language as he approves, knows how to express himself, both in prayer and preaching, in discriminating and expressive terms; and how to avoid modes of expression adapted to deceive and betray unwary souls. It is surely not impracticable to address the largest and most promiscuous assembly in a manner which though not adapted to the precise case of every individual shall be at least free from error, free from every thing of a

deceptive and ensnaring character. Our Methodist brethren, it was before remarked, have a prescribed liturgical form for baptism; which they have rendered sufficiently discriminating, and at the same time unexceptionably safe. And, what is not unworthy of notice in this place, though the liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal church is evidently the model which, to a certain extent, they have kept before them in constructing their own, they have wisely discarded altogether the ceremony of confirmation from their ritual.

The advocates of confirmation, as a separate ecclesiastical rite, seldom fail of quoting *Calvin* as expressing an opinion decisively in favour of it. This is doing great injustice to that illustrious man. *Calvin* directly and warmly opposes the idea of confirmation being considered as a distinct ordinance, claiming divine authority in the Church of God. This he reprobates; and especially the practice of confining the administration of it to prelates; but adds, "that he has no objection to parents bringing their children to their minister, at the close of childhood, or the commencement of adolescence, to be examined according to the catechism in common use, and then, for the sake of greater dignity and reverence, closing the ceremony by the imposition of hands. "Such imposition of hands, therefore, says he, *as is simply connected with benediction*, I highly approve, and wish it were now restored to its primitive use, uncorrupted by superstition." (Institutiones, Lib. iv. cap. xix. § 4). But what serves to throw light on *Calvin's* real sentiments on this whole subject is that, in commenting on Acts viii. 17, he reproaches the Papists for pressing that passage into the support of their sacrament of confirmation; and not only asserts, but proves, that the laying on of hands there spoken of, relates, not at all to the ordinary and sanctifying, but to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, which have long since ceased in the church; and, of course, that the passage in question ought never to be quoted in favour of confirmation, or of any other permanent rite in the Christian Church

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(NOTE E.)

VOTE OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY RESPECTING BAPTISM.

It has been sometimes ignorantly, and most erroneously asserted that the Wesminster Assembly of divines, in put-

ting to vote, whether baptism should be performed by *sprinkling* or *immersion*, carried it in favour of *sprinkling*, by a majority of *one only*. This is wholly incorrect. The facts were these. When the committee who had been charged with preparing a "Directory for the worship of God," brought in their report, they had spoken of the mode of baptism thus: "*It is lawful and sufficient to sprinkle the child.*" To this Dr. Lightfoot, among others, objected; not because he doubted of the entire sufficiency of sprinkling; for he decidedly *preferred* sprinkling to immersion; but because he thought there was an impropriety in pronouncing that mode *lawful* only, when no one present had any doubts of its being so, and when almost all preferred it. Others seemed to think, that by saying nothing about *dipping*, that mode was meant to be *excluded*, as *not a lawful* mode. This they did not wish to pronounce. When, therefore, the clause, as originally reported, was put to vote, there were twenty-five votes in favour of it, and twenty-four against it. After this vote, a motion was made and carried, that it be *recommitted*. The next day, when the committee reported, and when some of the members still seemed unwilling to exclude all mention of *dipping*, Dr. Lightfoot remarked, that to say that *pouring* or *sprinkling* was *lawful*, would be "all one as saying, that it was *lawful* to use *bread and wine* in the Lord's Supper." He, therefore, moved that the clause in the "Directory" respecting the mode of baptism, be expressed thus:

"Then the minister is to demand the name of the child, which being told him, he is to say (calling the child by his name)—

"*I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"

"As he pronounceth these words, he is to baptize the child with water, which, for the manner of doing it, is not only *lawful*, but *sufficient*, and *most expedient* to be, by *pouring* or *sprinkling* of the water on the face of the child, without adding any other ceremony." This was carried. See *Lightfoot's Life*, prefixed to the first volume of his *Works*, (folio edition,) p. 4; compared with *Neale's History of the Puritans*, vol. ii. p. 106, 107, compared with the Appendix, No. II. (quarto edition,) where the "Directory," as finally passed, is given at full length.

We do not learn, precisely, either from Lightfoot's biographer, (who was no other than the indefatigable Strype,) or from Neal, by what vote the clause, as moved by Lightfoot was finally adopted; but Neal expressly tells us, that "the Directory passed the Assembly with *great unanimity*."

From this statement, it is evident, that the question which was carried in the Assembly, by a majority of *one*, was, not whether affusion or sprinkling was a *lawful* mode of baptism; but whether all mention of *dipping*, as *one* of the *lawful* modes should be *omitted*. *This*, in an early stage of the discussion, was carried, by a majority of *one* in the affirmative. But it would seem that the clause, as finally adopted, which certainly was far more decisive in favour of sprinkling or affusion, was passed "with *great unanimity*." At any rate, nothing can be more evident, than that the clause as it originally stood, being carried by one vote only, and afterwards, when recommitted, and so altered as to be *much stronger* in favour of sprinkling, and then adopted without difficulty, the common statement of this matter by our Baptist brethren is an entire misrepresentation.

THE END.

THE  
SINNER'S INABILITY

IS

NO EXCUSE

FOR

HIS IMPENITENCY

BY S. G. WINCHESTER.

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THE  
SINNER'S INABILITY, &c.

THE doctrines of grace have all, in their turn, been more or less subjected, by their opposers, to perversion and caricature. Their tendency to foster pride, to encourage sin, and even to excuse the sinner, is often urged as an argument against their truth, by those who have laboured in vain to controvert them successfully by Scripture quotation. The doctrine of human inability has not escaped this unwarranted and ruthless censure. This doctrine is by no means inconsistent with that which declares the sinner's *unwillingness*, to be the reason why he does not repent and believe in Christ. Both these doctrines are distinctly taught in the Scriptures, as appears from John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Compared with John v, 40. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." No language, it seems, could more clearly convey the idea, that sinners are both *unable* and *unwilling* to come to Christ, than that employed in the above quotations. Nor will it for a moment be alleged that He, whose language it is, was capable of teaching inconsistencies. It will hardly be contended that the inability spoken of in the first quotation, is nothing more or less than the unwillingness which is taught in the second; for this would be to confound things that are in themselves essentially different. Such an interpretation is trifling with Scripture, if there be any distinction at all between a man's *inability* to do a thing, and his *unwillingness* to do it. We are then, shut up to the conclusion, that the doctrine of *inability* is not inconsistent with that of *unwillingness*; that they are both true, and must be inculcated; and that the only question to be decided at present is, on which of these characteristics of a sinner, do the Scriptures charge his refusal to come to Christ? or, in other words, whether the sinner's choice to remain in his sins, is determined by a sense of his inability to forsake them, or by his unwillingness to do so? To an examination of this question the reader's attention is now invited.

It is no part of our present design, to argue at any length the subject of human inability, nor to enter into any metaphysical discussion of the nature of that inability, whether it be natural, or moral, or both. It may be proper, however, to remark that it is difficult to conceive how any form of expression could more satisfactorily teach the doctrine of some kind of inability,

than that used in John vi. 44, already quoted, and also in many other passages of Scripture; such, for example, as the following; "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither CAN he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." An inability of some kind is unquestionably taught here. And its reality and effectiveness cannot be diminished, nor affected at all, by any determination of the question, as to its nature. It is a maxim in philosophy that no more causes are to be admitted than are both true and sufficient to account for the effects; therefore, every text of Scripture which attributes the work of regeneration to the Holy Ghost, declares unequivocally the inability of the sinner to regenerate himself; for it is a contradiction to say that man can repent and believe in the exercise of his own power, and yet that he cannot do either, without divine assistance. Regeneration is compared in Scripture to the work of creation, and to the natural birth. "Ye must be born again." "Created anew in Christ Jesus," &c. The idea of self-regeneration, therefore, is as absurd as that of self-creation, or self-generation.

But we are met with another maxim, which is pressed with much zeal, but with little discretion. We are told that the obligation to obey any command, necessarily implies the existence of adequate ability in those commanded. This maxim we assent to, when properly applied. No man is under an obligation to create a world, or to annihilate what has been created. Nor is he morally bound to read a language he has never learned. This is common sense, and no one disputes the truth of the maxim, in itself considered. It is the application of the maxim to subjects beyond its reach that we object to. Those who apply it to the ability of repenting and loving God, entirely overlook the great change that has passed upon man, since the law was first given, and since the relation which the race sustains to God as the moral Governor was first constituted.

Man, during his probationary state in Adam, possessed the power of loving and obeying God; that is, we were viewed in Adam, as possessing this power, which we had not yet lost by our fall in him. But that we may not be embarrassed by the idea of non-existence as to the race, let us speak of Adam alone. His case will illustrate ours. For he acted in our behalf as well as his own, and whatever was his condition and character after the fall, are ours now. Adam before his fall had the power to love and obey God. By the fall he lost it. Was the command to love God revoked at the fall, or was it continued as a law, and subsequently repromulgated with great solemnity and awe? Now, rectitude is unchangeable. God is immutable. If

it were once Adam's duty to love and obey God, it will always be his duty, whatever change may have passed upon him. That change, unless made, or approved by God, can never affect His claims nor make that wrong which was once right. Adam lost his *ability*, but not his *obligation*, to love and obey. If a debtor squander his estate, he does not lose his obligation, though he does lose his ability to pay his creditor. We must learn to distinguish between the loss of obligation, and the loss of ability.

The maxim under consideration, teaches that obligation results from ability, where there is a command; and that ability is the measure of obligation. Will this maxim apply to the case before us? Whence arises our obligation to love and obey God? We apprehend that it flows from his perfections, and from the relation we sustain to him, as the subjects of his moral government. Now, as God is immutable, as his perfections are ever the same, and as our relation to him as the Moral Governor, remains unchanged, it follows that the source or ground of our obligation to love and obey him also remains unchanged; and the obligation itself is neither destroyed nor abridged. If this obligation were founded on any thing appertaining to us, as, for example, our ability to comply with it, it would be as liable to change as ourselves.

The command itself, to love God, does not originate our obligation to love him. It is a moral law, founded on the unchangeable fitness of things, and on the respective natures and relations of the two parties. The command embodies the obligation in a covenant form, with its conditions, making known to us the consequences of obedience and disobedience. It is utterly impossible that this obligation should ever be destroyed or weakened.

Again: what shall we say of the ability of those who are given up of God, to their own lusts; who are given over to believe a lie, and to work all uncleanness with greediness, or who have committed the unpardonable sin, so that they cannot be renewed again to repentance? Have such the requisite ability to change their own hearts, or to alter "their governing purpose?" If they have, it is not a hopeless case with those who are forsaken by God. They may repent, and change their hearts, and thus defeat the purpose of God to exclude them from heaven. This is shocking blasphemy. If, then, they have no such power, is their obligation cancelled, and their guilt removed? Certainly not. These are still bound by the law, although unable to obey it. The same remark will apply to devils. They are bound to love and obey God, else why are they kept in everlasting chains for disobedience? Are they

able to change their hearts and become saints? by no means; and yet their obligation and guilt remain undiminished. Yea, they possess as really as we do, what has been called "natural ability," that is, they have all the requisite physical powers, and are moral agents, and the subjects of moral law. Yet who will contend that they have the ability to love God, and thus to strip the law of its penal sanctions, which dooms them to eternal woe?

Let us take another view of this subject. It will be freely granted that a Christian has the same ability in kind and degree, as that which is claimed for the sinner. Yea, more, the sinner is unwilling to exercise his power, but the Christian has been made willing in the day of God's power. It is this willingness, according to the advocates of plenary ability, that distinguishes the Christian from the sinner. Now the command to Christians is "be ye holy," "be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." If this command supposes adequate ability, and Christians be willing to exert it, why are they not perfectly holy? Preachers are exhorted to be "*examples* to the flock." Let those who denounce the sinner for not exerting his ability, and becoming a Christian by his own strength, set them the example by exerting their own, and becoming perfectly holy. With the preacher, the case is exceedingly aggravated, because he is supposed to be willing as well as able, and yet continues mournfully imperfect. Until the preacher of such doctrines sets this example to his hearers, he lays himself open to the keen retort, "physician heal thyself;" and is liable to the charge of "binding heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laying them on men's shoulders; but he himself will not move them with one of his fingers." Matth. xxiii, 4. The apostle Paul was certainly willing to be entirely free from sin, and yet he complains of indwelling sin, and mourns over it as a body of death, from which he ardently desired deliverance. All the truly pious of every age, have lamented and bewailed the remains of inbred corruption; they have longed to be freed from its power, and cleansed from its pollution. It is with this conquered, but not eradicated enemy, that the inward conflict is carried on.

From what has now been said, the reader will doubtless have observed that the doctrine of adequate human ability to comply with the commands of God, leads ultimately and inevitably to the denial of original sin; perfectly consists with the doctrine of sinless perfection in this life; and is at irreconcilable variance with the uniform experience of both saints and sinners, and with the infallible word of God.

Having premised thus much, we shall, in the prosecution of

the subject of this tract, take for granted, that "no man CAN come to Christ, except the Father which has sent him, draw him." Our object shall now be to inquire whether a sense of this inability be the real and operative reason why a sinner does not love God, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is alleged that sinners often urge their inability as an excuse for their impenitency. This may be true, and yet the doctrine of inability be Scriptural notwithstanding. That no sinner ever sincerely and honestly believed himself excusable on that ground is abundantly manifest, from the nature of the case. If he disbelieved the doctrine of inability, he could not honestly plead it as an excuse. If he believed it to be a true doctrine, he could not persuade himself that God had revealed a truth which furnished a valid excuse for continuing in rebellion against him, and which disarmed the law of its penal sanctions. Sinners may, nevertheless, urge this excuse, but its fallacy is exposed by the consciousness of being influenced by a very different reason, in refusing to love God. One thing is certain; those who believe and preach the doctrine of plenary ability, are without this excuse at least, for not at once becoming perfectly holy. What other excuses they may urge, when pressed by this application of their own doctrine, to themselves, we leave them to say. It may be very properly asked, from whom have sinners learned that inability is an excuse for impenitency? Not from those who understandingly preach the doctrine; for by them it is declared to be man's sin; and the greater his inability, the greater his guilt. It is learned from those who argue against the doctrine, on the ground, that if it were true, it would release the sinner from all obligation to love and obey, &c. Such arguments have put into the minds and mouths of sinners, excuses, which their consciences would hinder them from deriving from the doctrine itself. But suppose it were true that the inculcation of this doctrine leads some men to rest in their sins with carnal security, is it a new thing that sinners should wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction? Is it an unheard of thing, that they should quote Scripture in justification of their own unchristian conduct? The use that sinners may make of any particular doctrine is no criterion by which to judge of its truth or falsity. This would indeed be erecting a new standard of truth and error. The doctrine of divine decrees, which many of the advocates of human ability strenuously maintain, is as liable to this perversion as the doctrine of human impotency; and has in fact, been as often and as pertinaciously thus perverted. But we apprehend that the teachers of both these doctrines are not justly chargeable with the sin so often laid at their door, of lulling the impenitent into awful se-

curity. With these convictions we are prepared to lay down the following proposition, as the burden of this discussion, and we shall attempt to demonstrate it by sundry considerations, namely :

*A sinner who refuses to love God, repent of his sins, and believe in Christ for salvation, IS WITHOUT EXCUSE, notwithstanding his inability.*

I. The sinner's inability whatever be its character, whether natural or moral or both, is his depravity, or arises from it. And the one can no more be regarded as an excuse for disobedience than the other. If that which hinders the sinner from obeying, be in itself sinful and inexcusable, the disobedience which results from it, is equally so. Those, therefore, who argue against the doctrine of inability, on the ground that its existence would excuse the sinner, beg the whole question, and really take for granted the very point in dispute. Let it then be borne in mind by the reader that the inability of man to love God is his sin. The Scriptures teach no other inability in accountable agents, than what consists in, or arises from the depravity of the heart. And to deny the one is to deny the other. The doctrine of inability is but another form of presenting the doctrine of original sin. Hence it will invariably be found that those who teach that man has full ability to love and obey God, are those who entertain unscriptural views of man's fallen state. And as these two doctrines must stand or fall together, so the guilt of original sin and of human inability must exist inseparably together. It would be useless to argue the doctrine of human inability with one who either denies that of original sin, or asserts the innocence of that estate whereinto man fell, whatever he may judge that estate to be. Some preachers as well as writers, doubtless more honest than discreet, in labouring to fasten guilt upon the sinner, for his impenitency and delay, have unwittingly adopted principles which tend to subvert the whole doctrine of sin both as to its existence and nature. In endeavouring to convict the sinner of an unwillingness to come to Christ, they have felt themselves embarrassed by an imaginary difficulty, which they supposed would be urged by the sinner as an excuse for his impenitency, namely, the inability of man to repent and love God; and instead of answering the objections of those whom they had undertaken to instruct and exhort, they sought to remove them by denying the doctrine on which they were supposed to be founded. Others, following in their train, and pressed by the evidence which the Bible and experience have furnished in support of the doctrine, have attempted to modify and improve the method of answering the objection of the sinner, by making a distinction, between na-

tural and moral inability, and by denying the one and holding to the other. Others again, following in the same track, but perhaps more reckless of consequences, or less able to foresee them, have pushed the matter still farther; for being pressed with the same objections on the score of moral inability, and being met with the argument that inability, whatever be its qualifying name, consists in the depravity of our nature, they have been driven to such exhibitions and explanations of the doctrine of original sin as amount to a virtual rejection of it. The process by which this result has been reached, is the argument I would urge in maintaining the position that inability consists in depravity and is therefore inexcusable. When the sinner pleads his inability to repent, as his excuse for neglecting it, he pleads his depravity; and in endeavouring to obviate his objections, I would as soon think of denying the one doctrine as the other, and no sooner. Here we might safely leave the subject without embarrassment, and the sinner without excuse; but as our object is not merely the inculcation of doctrine, but the practical enforcement of it, on the consciences of men, we shall proceed to elucidate still farther this subject, by other considerations.

II. A man's sense of inability to do an act, is not necessarily and invariably the reason why he *does not* perform it. In order to maintain the contrary it must be first shown that he *would* do it, if he *could*. To illustrate this, suppose I bid my servant to bring me a certain book from my library; and he peremptorily refuses. Now suppose the door of my library be locked, and there be no means of opening it, and if there were, no such book could be found in it. It is manifestly impossible to comply with my order. But a sense of this inability is surely not the reason why my servant does not comply. He is influenced by unwillingness; and is as really guilty of wilful disobedience, as if it had been fully in his power to have complied. My servant was conscious of no inability, and could not, therefore, have urged it as an excuse for his disobedience. Had he been willing, he would immediately have attempted to execute my command. It is manifest, therefore, that a sense of the inability of which he was utterly ignorant, could have formed no part of the motive which induced him to disobey. This supposed case is adduced merely to illustrate the position, that a man's sense of inability to do an act, is not necessarily his reason for not doing it. If the position be a correct one, it will apply equally to the case of the sinner. And if the sinner be ignorant of his inability to repent and love God, a sense of it cannot possibly constitute any part of the motive which induces him to continue in impenitency, and at enmity with God. And

if he were sensible of his inability, it would not induce him to choose a life of impenitency, if he were willing and desirous to be reconciled to God in the appointed way. Although the inability of the servant, in the supposed case, is very different in kind, from that of the sinner, yet of the mass of careless and impenitent sinners, it may be affirmed that experimentally they are as ignorant of its existence. And of all unconvicted sinners it may be affirmed, that they are as little influenced to remain such, by a sense of inability, as the servant was to disobey the order. If sinners were fully aware of their impotency, they would either seek help of God, or despair of salvation. But instead of either, they defer the work of repentance to a more convenient season. If this delay be accompanied by a purpose to seek divine aid when that convenient season shall have arrived, it discovers an ignorance of their utter inability to seek that aid effectually by their own strength. So that the delay of repentance is founded in the supposed possession of adequate ability, either to seek aright, by their own strength, the needed assistance, or to do the work without such assistance. In either case the refusal to repent and love God *now*, is not attributable to a sense of inability, and cannot, therefore, be excused on the ground of inability.

The sinner's ignorance of his helplessness and dependence, is the result of that blindness of mind, and darkening of the understanding which sin has brought upon him. He is blinded by the God of this world, and is ignorant of himself. It is the office of the Holy Ghost to convince men of sin, and to teach them their true character as impotent and dependent. Man's inability is his sin, and a conviction of sin, is a conviction of inability. Till thus enlightened and convicted, he presumes upon a supposed ability, and defers repentance to a future day. When a sinner is made sensible of his awful condition, as helpless and ruined and guilty, he is not disposed to throw himself, with calm indifference, upon the plea of inability as a justification of his impenitency. On the contrary, he is distressed and alarmed, and cries "Lord save, or I perish;" and he no more regards his helplessness as a release from obligation, than the pennyless debtor supposes his bond to be cancelled by his bankruptcy. We may, therefore, lay it down as an axiom, that no sinner will rely upon his inability as an excuse for impenitency, when he is brought by the Holy Spirit to be deeply sensible of that inability. And unless he be thus sensible of it, the excuse is hypocritical and insincere, and is condemned by his conscience as of no avail.

III. In support of our main proposition, it may be stated as incontrovertible, that every man can do more good and less evil



than he does. If this were not so, there could be no room for praise or dispraise among men: nor any for the exercise of justice, in the authority of the civil magistrate. Human laws would become a nullity, and rewards and punishments be ineffectual and without meaning. No man feels himself compelled to commit this or that particular sin, or to omit this or that particular duty. He is fully sensible of acting in the one case, and of neglecting to act in the other, with the most perfect freedom of choice. If this be true, nothing hinders men from doing more good and less evil than they do, but their own *will*. In the discharge of all duties men must do what they can, before they can be excused for not doing what they can not. This is so, even in cases where their inability is not sinful, and would be a just ground for acquittal before any court in heaven or on earth; much less can they be excused where their inability itself is sinful and inexcusable, as is the case with the sinner. For if men will not do what they can, it is *unwillingness*, and not a sense of *inability*, that hinders them from attempting it. A sinner is fully sensible that he can do many things that he ought to do, and leave undone much that he does. He can reform his external character. He can cease to profane the Lord's day, by business or amusement. He can regularly attend the sanctuary, and the social prayer meeting, when health and opportunity permit. He can dash from his lips the intoxicating bowl, and sign the pledge of total abstinence. He can order his words in truth and sincerity, and no longer deceive his neighbour by falsehood and prevarication. He can deal honestly and uprightly with his fellow men, and no longer extort from the widow and orphan their last, hard-earned pittance, and wring from their eyes the bitter tears of conscious and hopeless penury. He can aid in relieving the wants of the poor, and contribute to the funds of benevolent institutions. Yea, more, he can read and study the Scriptures diligently and habitually. He can retire at stated and frequent seasons, from the business and pleasures of the world, to meditate on the truths of revelation. He can avoid and break off from evil company, and abandon the haunts of vice and dissipation. He can consider his ways and reflect on his character, condition, hopes, and prospects beyond the grave. He can bend his knees in secret, and say "God be merciful to me, a miserable sinner!" Unless he does what he can, he must perish in his sins. Unless he does what he can, with what reason may he expect divine strength to enable him to do what he cannot by his own? If, then, he will not do what he can, he voluntarily hinders that from being done for him, which he cannot do himself. Let not the sinner, however, for a moment suppose that

by doing what he can, he merits divine assistance, or that his own exertions are the moving or meritorious cause of God's doing for him what he cannot do himself. For even after we have done all, we are still unprofitable servants. Our best works are not only destitute of merit, but have mingled with them so much sin, as justly to expose us to the divine displeasure. Hence, our services as well as our hearts, need to be cleansed in atoning blood.

If a sinner will not do what he can, it is a matter of indifference to him whether he be able to do more or not. He that will not do what he can, would not do what he can not, even if he could. He that will not give a penny when he can, would not give two if he could. Such an one, therefore, can find no refuge from the pursuit of conscience and justice, in his inability to love and obey God. He will be condemned out of his own mouth for not doing what he professed and felt himself able to do.

In further illustration of this point, it may be observed that sinners sometimes do what is commanded by human authority, while they refuse to do the same thing at the command of God. For example : Suppose it were made by law, the duty of every man to pray to God three times a day in secret, and twice in his family, if he have one ; and suppose the penalty of this law were death. Under a severe and faithful administration, would many be found to neglect this duty ? Now God commands men to pray without ceasing ; not that they are to do nothing else, but the import of the injunction is to pray regularly and habitually, without omitting or neglecting the duty. No particular time or place is designated, but both are left to be regulated by convenience and opportunity, and a prayerful frame of mind. With these advantages which might not be afforded by the supposed human law, why do men habitually neglect this duty, and violate the divine command ? It cannot be the want of ability to render it at least an external obedience, but a want of will ; for in the supposed case of a human law, such obedience would be rendered. It may be objected that prayer and all other religious duties which are performed through fear of human punishment, are not acceptable to God. That is true, and for this reason, among others, we trust that no such duties will ever be enjoined by civil enactments. Nevertheless, the supposed case clearly shows that the fear of man has more influence over sinners than the fear of God. God threatens with an awful and eternal death of the soul all prayerless and graceless sinners, yet they heed and fear it not. Here is a wilful, and not a constrained disregard of divine authority, and a practical defiance of divine power and wrath. I say a wilful disre-

gard, because no man is compelled to neglect prayer, or to violate God's commands.

As to the objection already noticed, that the performance of a duty thus extorted by the fear of punishment, would not be acceptable to God, it may be observed that if this be reason why it is not performed, it is an admission that unwillingness and not a sense of inability, is the real difficulty.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and if a sinner will not perform duty through fear how does he know that he would do it from love? The fear of man hinders a sinner from committing many iniquities publicly, as in the market place, and why does not the fear of God hinder him from committing the same sins in secret? The eye of God is as really upon him in the privacy of retirement, or in the secrecy of darkness, as the eye of man in the market place or in the street. Why then has not the fear of God at least as much influence as the fear of man? It is because he *will not* regard it, and be influenced by it. When sinners are exposed to danger, or about to die, they are often sensibly influenced by the fear of God's wrath, and are sometimes awfully alarmed at the apprehension of his vengeance. At such times they will pray and cry for mercy, and inquire what they must do to be saved. Perhaps some who read this tract, will, upon their death beds, give evidence that they *can* fear the Almighty, and tremble in the view of his displeasure, and cry to him for mercy. Why do they not *now* dread his anger, and pray to him with strong cries for mercy, even though it be through fear of his power? Is it because they *will not*, or *can not*? Let conscience answer the question. It must, therefore, be acknowledged that sinners *can* do more good, and avoid more evil than they are *willing* to do.

But it may be further objected, that, although a sinner should be influenced through fear of God, to pray to him and seek his mercy, yet that prayer is not repentance, nor is meditation faith. Grant it: Yet prayer and hearing the Gospel, are the ordained means of repentance and faith; without the use of which no man may expect to be blessed with either.

IV. This, however, leads us in the next place to remark, in support of our main proposition, that sinners are unwilling to use the external means of grace, to the extent of their acknowledged ability. God is pleased to establish these means, not from necessity, as is evident from his sometimes accomplishing the end without them; but it is in condescension to human weakness, and in order to make more manifest to mankind, the glory of his grace and power. In the use of these means, on the part of the sinner, God proposes to accomplish certain ends

of mercy towards him. God honours these means, and makes them of unspeakable importance, by making them the ordinary channels of his gracious communications. To a proper, diligent, and faithful use of them, he is pleased to annex the promise of ultimate success. Now, if the sinner be unwilling thus to employ the means of repentance and faith, he cannot, with any face, plead his inability as an excuse for impenitency and unbelief. A mean is that which comes between any two or more things, and by which they are connected. It is that which is used in order to an end. The means of grace come between the sinner's ability and his inability, and so connect them, when made efficacious, as to enable him to do what otherwise he could not. He must do what he can in the use of these means, in order to be enabled to do what he cannot of himself. To illustrate this: the husband man *cannot*, by merely willing or desiring it, nor by the exercise of any power he possesses, cause his fields to wave with the ripened grain. God alone can do this. But there are certain established means which come between and connect the husbandman's inability to store his garner with an abundant crop, and his realization of a luxuriant harvest; and in the proper use of which means, he obtains, what without them, he could never have secured. He must plough the soil, sow his seed, &c. and do all at the proper season and in the right manner. Annexed to the use of these means, there is the promise of success. "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Gen. viii. 22. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, but he which soweth abundantly shall reap abundantly." 2 Cor. ix. 6. 8. "For whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap." Gal. vi. 7. "He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Ps. cxxvi. 6.

Although the latter passages are used figuratively, for the purpose of teaching spiritual truths, yet the whole force of the figure depends upon its answering to the literal fact in nature, from which it is derived. They are designed to show the connexion between the means and the end, in spiritual things, by a comparison with that connexion which obtains in the natural world. The husbandman is as unable to give efficiency to the means when used, as he is to accomplish the end without the use of them. But suppose one who had neglected these means should be reprov'd for his poverty and indolence, and exhorted, as a matter of duty, to raise a crop for the comfort and support of his family, and instead of doing what he could, should fold his arms and say, "*I cannot cause the earth to*

bring forth grain ; I have no control over the process of vegetation ; could this be regarded as a valid apology for his poverty and indolence, although his declared inability be confessedly real ? No ; he is guilty of a wilful neglect of the appropriate means, and justly merits the wretchedness in which his voluntary negligence has involved him. Suppose, again, that this husbandman should contract and bind himself to raise a certain amount of grain within a given time, and neglecting to plough his ground and sow his seed, he should plead his inability to cause the earth to bring forth grain, as an excuse for his violation of the contract, before what court, in heaven or on earth, could his excuse be sustained ? How, then, shall the sinner be excused on the ground of inability, who neglects to use the appointed and stated means of grace ? It is written, “ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you,” “If thou seek Him he will be found of thee.” 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. 2 Chron. xv. 2. “Those that seek me early shall find me.” Prov. viii. 17. “I said not unto the seed of Jacob seek ye me in vain.” Isa. xlv. 19. See also Ps. ix. 10. lix. 32. If the sinner neglect to ask shall he be excused for not receiving ? If he neglect to seek shall he be excused for not finding ?

Reason and equity require that those who “plough iniquity and sow wickedness, should reap the same.” Job iv. 8. “If any man work not, neither should he eat.” 2 Thes. iii. 10. “They that sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind.” Hosea viii. 7. “Sow in righteousness and ye shall reap in mercy.” Heb. x. 12. “For he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, but he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh, reap corruption.” Gal. vi. 8. Hence we infer, that he who is unwilling to use the means in order to repentance would not repent, even if he could ; and is therefore inexcusable on the ground of inability.

Again : the Christian labours under an inability as well as the sinner ; but it is not always the same as to its object. For example : the Christian is enabled by divine grace, to pray and hear the gospel in the exercise of faith, but he is unable to make himself perfect, although commanded to be so. But the sinner, while he remains impenitent, is unable thus to pray and hear the gospel in faith. Now, the sinner is as really required, and as much expected to do what he can towards praying and hearing in faith, as the Christian is to do what he can towards being perfect. The sinner must pray and hear the gospel, in order that he may be enabled to pray and hear it in faith : “For faith cometh by hearing.” The Christian must pray and hear in faith, in order to become more and more conformed

to the divine image ; for he is sanctified by the truth, and in answer to the prayer of faith. The sinner need not expect to pray and hear in faith, if he will not pray and hear at all. And the Christian should not expect to grow in the divine life, if he will not use the means according to the grace that is given to him. God not only wisely adapts the means of grace to the proposed end, but he mercifully adapts them to our circumstances and nature. If the sinner be deaf, then hearing is not the means he is required to use ; but a diligent reading of the Scriptures, accompanied with prayer and meditation. If he be blind, or otherwise unable to read, and not deaf, then hearing and not reading is his appropriate means. They are adapted to our nature as weak, but rational creatures ; as ignorant, but intelligent beings. The Lord “draws us with the cords of a man,” Hosea xi. 4., that is with such cords as men are drawn with. He employs such means as are suited to men. He does not draw us with such cords as beasts are drawn with, nor seek to influence us by such means and with such power as he employs to move inanimate objects. The means of grace are within our reach, and adapted to our helplessness and dependence. And if the sinner will not use them, he deserves to perish, and can charge his destruction on none but himself. “O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.” It is great presumption in the sinner, if he expects God to deviate from his established and accustomed mode of saving men, in order to accommodate his perverseness and wilful negligence. God will be inquired of by sinners, to do for them what they can not do for themselves.

Everlasting life is an end to be gained, and the means of grace are the way to that end. We can not reach an end without passing over and thus employing the intermediate way that leads to it. If a man now in one place should be required, agreeably to his own engagement, to be in another, at an appointed time ; and if he should fail to be there, merely because he refused to employ the means of locomotion, and to pass over the intermediate space, his want of fidelity surely cannot be excused on the ground of his inability to be transplanted to the appointed place, while seated in his parlour. Neither can the sinner be excused on the ground of inability, who neglects to use the appointed means of obtaining eternal life. When Paul was about to be shipwrecked, the sailors meditated an escape from the vessel, but he said to the centurion and to the soldiers “except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved.” And yet a little before this, he had assured them on the authority of an angel of God, on whose testimony he declared his confident reliance, that “there should be no loss of any man’s

life among them but only of the ship." It was thus made certain that they should not be lost, and yet Paul rested their preservation upon the use of the means which, by divine direction, he appointed, namely, their all abiding in the ship. The means were in order to the end. According to the theory of some, the sailors might have replied that "as it is fixed and certain that we shall not be lost, we shall be preserved let us do what we may." But though their safety were certain, Paul made the use of the means essential to it. And such is the case in regard to sinners. Unless they will abide in the faithful use of the means of grace, their souls will be shipwrecked and lost forever. We, therefore, conclude that unless the sinner will do what he can in the matter of his salvation, he cannot be excused for failing to do whatever is required of him, though he be unable to do it of himself.

V. It is a reasonable requirement of every man that he should at least *try* to do his duty. The plea of inability comes with a very ill grace from those who have not attempted to do what they neglect on the ground of inability. It is a common saying that "no man knows how much he can do till he tries." Honest endeavours will test the extent of ability in all cases: and without such endeavours the plea of inability is founded in ignorance, and cannot be sincere. For it should ever be borne in mind, that only those would excuse themselves on this plea, who have neglected to do what all admit they can do; and it may be laid down as an axiom, that no man who has done and is still doing *all that he can* in the matter of his salvation, will ever regard his impenitence and unbelief as excusable on *any* grounds, although fully persuaded of his inability to repent and believe in his own strength. Hence, every sinner who would take refuge in this excuse, even were it a valid one, is still exposed to condemnation on the ground of having failed to do all that he could. The sinner, therefore, who, without endeavouring to do his duty, contents himself by saying "I can not do it," is obviously influenced by unwillingness and not by a sense of inability. If a shipwrecked voyager should refuse to make the necessary exertions to save himself, or to avail himself of the proffered assistance of others, we should say he was unwilling to be saved. It certainly could not be said that he perished because it was impossible to be saved, but because he would not endeavour to be saved.

But the sinner may be ready to say that he has again and again endeavoured to believe and give himself away to Christ. But let him try again and again. What is his difficulty? Does he still cherish some idol sin, or is he too wedded to the world? Is there something in Christ, or in his service that he does not

cordially approve? If so, he is unwilling to be a Christian. And he has been endeavouring to will against his will, and he need not be surprised that he has not succeeded. He has been endeavouring to give his whole heart to Christ, and at the same time to keep back a part of it. He has been endeavouring to do *impossibilities*. And yet such a sinner is excusing himself from duty on the ground of *inability*! But has a sinner endeavoured to give his whole heart to God, without attempting at the same time to keep back a part of it? If so, we say again, let him continue his endeavours. Let him never give over his exertions: for it may be that God designs that he should try a long while yet, in order to convince him of his helplessness and also of his stubborn unwillingness. His infinite wisdom may have adopted this as the most suitable and efficacious means of convincing him at last, that his own wicked heart has been the real and operative difficulty all the while. Or it may be that He will extend to him the necessary grace and strength at the next endeavour. But, after all, may not the sinner's endeavours have been rather to compromise the matter, and to bring down the terms of God to his own inclination and convenience, than to bring his own heart up to an honest compliance with those terms? This may account for their long strivings to repent and believe, of which some sinners speak. They will sometimes say, that for months and years they have been endeavouring to become Christians. But it is to be feared that for the most part they have rather been endeavouring to hold out against God, while labouring under the conviction of a guilty and uneasy conscience. For it is seldom the case that those who in good earnest and with the whole heart, set about the salvation of their souls, are long seeking without finding the desired blessing. God's ordinary mode of granting to sinners repentance unto life, is in answer to prayer, and as the result of sincere endeavours to obtain it. "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord." Jer. xxix. 12—14. "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." Isa. xlv. 19.

When Jacob sought to be reconciled to his brother Esau, whom he had offended, although he had no power over his brother's will or affections, yet he employed suitable means and made the necessary exertions, and said "I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; PERADVENTURE he will accept of me." Gen. xxxii. 20. Before the interview between these two brothers took place, Jacob encountered the Angel of the Covenant. He had



not sufficient power to overcome such an antagonist. But he tried his strength. He made what effort he could. And even his usual strength was diminished by the Angel touching the hollow of his thigh, and putting it out of joint. But still he wrestled with Him, and would not let him go till he blessed him. Though weak in himself, yet he prevailed.

When Jonah preached to the inhabitants of Nineveh, the King laid his robes aside "and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes, and caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout the city, that man and beast should be covered with sackcloth, and that the inhabitants should cry mightily unto God; yea, that they should turn, every one, from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands. For who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way: and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not." Jonah iii. 6—10. If the sinner will but try his strength, if he will but turn from his evil way, and cry mightily unto God, peradventure God will hear and bless him: for who can tell if God may not, while the sinner strives to go to Christ, draw him to the cross by his grace and power?

The various calls of God are frequent, long, and loud. Opportunities and means are afforded to the sinner, and God has not been wanting in suitable appeals to his hopes and fears. Line upon line, and precept upon precept, have been given him; and the tenderest solicitude for his eternal welfare, is manifested both by the providence of God and by the Gospel of his grace.

Those who will not try to do their duty, imagine many difficulties that have no existence in reality. "The slothful man saith there is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets." Prov. xxvi. 13. Mark ye, this is the excuse of a *slothful* man for the neglect of his duty. Others again are disposed to magnify every little difficulty into an insuperable obstacle. "The sluggard will not plough by reason of cold, therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing." Prov. xx. 4. Mark ye, it is the *sluggard* who *will not* plough. And will such an one excuse himself by saying that this field cannot yield a crop? How does he know it cannot, till he makes a proper trial? It certainly will not, if he neglect the appropriate means of culture.

The sinner is required to love God supremely. It is evident that he cannot love him while he hates him. No sinner hates God or loves sin unwillingly. In the indulgence of either of these affections, he does no violence to his inclinations, or to his free agency. Why then should he attempt to excuse him-

self on the ground of inability, so long as his will and inclination accord with it? As a sense of his helplessness is not the reason why he offends God, so neither is it a reason why he should continue to offend him. Will a sinner continue to rebel against God merely because he is helpless and entirely at his disposal? This should rather humble him in the dust, and lead him to submission and repentance at the foot of the cross, crying for mercy and grace to help him in his time of need. "Murmur not among yourselves; no man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." John vi. 43—44.

VI. The Scriptures uniformly represent the sinner's unwillingness, as the operative reason of his refusal to repent and believe in Christ. "Ye WILL NOT come unto me that ye might have life." On this broad fact are based the invitations, exhortations, warnings, and threatenings of the Gospel. In these we find an invariable appeal to the sinner's will. God reasons with the sinner. Christ calls him, waits to be gracious, and knocks at the door of his heart, till his head is wet with the dew and his locks with the drops of the night. He asks with lamentation "why WILL ye die?" He wept over Jerusalem in view of the awful doom that awaited its perverse and blinded inhabitants; and bewailed the obduracy of their hearts. "How often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings and ye WOULD NOT!" These appeals fasten conviction on the sinner's mind, that unwillingness keeps him from the Saviour.

It is the judgment of common sense, the conviction of conscience, and the doctrine of the Scriptures, that he who is unwilling to do his duty is blameworthy if he neglect it. If he will not do what is properly required of him, he is justly punishable. The mere fact of unwillingness, without regard to those influences which determine the will, is a just and sufficient ground of judgment in every case where it is concerned.

The reason assigned why the man with one talent did not improve it, was, not a sense of inability, but unwillingness. He is addressed "thou wicked and slothful servant." He was regardless and negligent of what was committed to his care, he made no effort, and manifested no desire to improve it. The sinner's talents are his natural faculties, his moral agency, his opportunities, the means of grace, together with the instructions and warnings which from time to time and in various ways, he receives. If these be misimproved he is guilty of wilful delinquency. But no one calls him *slothful* who does all he can towards his duty, whether he be able perfectly to perform it or not. No one calls him *wicked* who desires, and with corres-

ponding effort, endeavours to do well, whether he be fully able or not. If the man with one talent had shown a willingness to improve it, by making every suitable exertion to that end, he would never have been stigmatized as slothful and wicked, even though he had been unable to succeed.

Unwillingness on the part of the sinner, is, moreover, as real a barrier as inability: for they are in fact but different exhibitions of the same truth, and parts of the same depravity; and the one will as effectually keep him from Christ as the other. For it is as certain that he **WILL NOT** repent and believe in Christ, till made willing in the day of God's power, as that he **CANNOT**, till God works in him both to will and to do it. The truth is that, generally speaking, men are fully convinced neither of their inability nor their unwillingness. Hence some will say they would repent if they could; thus supposing themselves willing, but pleading inability as the obstacle. Others say they purpose to repent at a more convenient season, and plead some other excuse for refusing to do it *now*; thus supposing themselves both willing and able to do it now, if it were a convenient season. They suppose themselves able to repent, otherwise they would not purpose to do it at a future time; and they suppose themselves willing to repent *now*, otherwise they would plead no other excuse for neglecting it *now*, but a want of will; whereas they imagine or feign other hinderances to the immediate performance of the duty.

Those who were bidden to the marriage feast, refused to come, not because they supposed that they *could not*, but because they *would not*. One indeed did say "I cannot come." But why could he not? he had married a wife. But did this make him unable to come? He had spoken the truth, if he had said, I have married a wife and *will not* come. The others who were invited, excused themselves, one on the ground that he had bought a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it. He *would not* come. The other had bought a yoke of oxen, and wished to prove them, and he *would not* come. They were wedded to the things of this world. They loved the world more than God. They were *unwilling* to leave all and follow Christ. This parable of the supper is designed to illustrate the Gospel offer, and the rejection of it by sinners. And it is worthy of remark, that their refusal to come to the feast, is referred to unwillingness, and not to conscious inability. The conscience of a sinner may at times urge upon him the duty of repenting and believing, but his heart and will draw back, and rebel. And he may mistake the counsel of his inward monitor, for the inclination of his will. The sinner in rejecting Christ, is sensibly influenced by considerations which

appeal to his will. He objects to the terms of salvation as too rigid and self-denying. He is unwilling to give up the world, or to part with some favourite sin, which must be abjured in coming to Christ. Such considerations decide his preference to remain as he is. Yet they are but motives presented to his will, and by which it is influenced; and do not arise from any conscious inability. No sinner, therefore, can say with truth "I would be saved, but God will not save me." For this is what Christ says of the sinner, "How often WOULD I have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but YE WOULD NOT." Sinners are sometimes disposed to cast the blame upon God. The man with one talent attempted this by saying to his Lord, "I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed." But his Lord cast back upon him, the guilt of misimprovement, and stigmatized him as a wicked and slothful servant.

It is a mournful fact, and one strikingly illustrative of the point in hand, that sinners are contented with their inability. They are satisfied that it should be so. They are willingly what they are in this respect, "my people love to have it so." This inability excites within them no anxiety about eternity. It alarms no slumbering fears. It begets no dread despair. It extorts no piercing cry for help. It wrings from their eyes no tears of bitter penitence. Instead of mourning over it as their sin, they offer it as an apology for sin. Instead of being humbled in the dust and led to cry for mercy, some rely upon it as a license to continue in rebellion, and thus glory in their shame. Do you say that you *cannot* be holy? you *prefer* to be unholy. Do you say that you *cannot* forsake your sins? you *love* and *enjoy* them. Do you say that you *cannot* come to Christ? you *choose* to stay away. Sinners "*will not* frame their doings to turn unto the Lord." Hosea v. 4. They will not stir themselves up to lay hold on God. They will not attempt to stretch forth their withered hands at his bidding.

If the sinner supposes himself to be willing to repent and believe, we may address to him the language of Jeremiah, "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee." Jer. iv. 14. It is a willingness based upon inadmissible terms, and upon reservations irreconcilable with gospel sincerity. God is willing to give his blessing to all who are willing to receive it. If the sinner be willing, why is he not reconciled and blessed? Is it because adequate ability to repent is withheld? Then the substance of the sinner's excuse is a charge against God, "Why hast thou made me thus?" Rom. ix. 20. If the sinner is willing to be reconciled and yet continues to live at enmity with

God, it must be because God is unwilling; if so, the language of that sinner's heart is "why doth he yet find fault?" "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?"

Sinners are apt to confound a willingness to escape hell, with a willingness to come to Christ; and a desire to be happy, with a desire to be holy. But these things are widely different, the one from the other. This confusion of distinguishable desires, arises out of imperfect and erroneous views of the nature of heaven, and of its happiness and employments. It is said of sinners that they "hate knowledge and do not choose the fear of the Lord." Prov. i. 29.

Indeed when a sinner is made willing to come to Christ, he is not able of himself to follow him, and to hold on his way of faith. After he has received Christ Jesus the Lord, he needs continued help and grace, to walk in him. The spirit may be willing, but the flesh weak. Paul declared that to will was present with him, but how to perform that which is good, he found not. Rom. vii. 18. For the good he *would*, he *did* not, and the evil which he would not, that he did; verse 19. This he attributed to sin that still dwelt in him; verse 20. Hence he complains of a warfare between the law of his members, and the law of his (now renewed) mind; verse 23. "So that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. ix. 16. The apostle calls his inability his sin. Rom. vii. 20. And yet it was an inability which he could not remove: for he cries out "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" verse 24. He did not suppose that he could deliver himself, on the contrary he attributes to God his ability to serve Him with his mind. "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" verse 25. This indwelling sin which hindered him from doing the good he would, was not laid to Paul's charge for his condemnation, because he consented not to it, but delighted in the law of God after the inward man; verse 22. But in the case of an impenitent sinner, who serves God neither with his mind nor flesh, this inability is regarded as a sufficient ground of condemnation; and cannot, therefore, be named as his excuse for impenitency. Besides, it ought to be borne in mind, that sinners plead their inability as their *infirmity*, and not as their sin. They overlook the fact that their inability is their sin. Viewing inability in this light, they are not fully convinced of its existence; for a sinner is described in the third chapter of Revelation, verse 17, as saying "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," and yet as

‘Knowing not that he is wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.’ To plead inability as an infirmity, is to be ignorant of its criminality, and is only equalled in perverseness and folly by the plea of a murderer, who relies, for an escape from punishment, upon the excuse that his aversion to the man he has slain was unconquerable, and his inclination to take his life, was irresistible; a circumstance which enhances his guilt rather than extenuates his offence.

The design of this discussion has been to show that there is in the doctrine of human helplessness and dependence, no impeachment of the divine character and justice. David confesses and bewails his wilful transgressions, and his native depravity, in which latter this inability consists, in order that God might be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. Ps. li. 1—5. It was the further design of this discussion, thus to wrest from the sinner’s hand the feeble and unhallowed weapon with which he would contend against God and his government; and in love to the sinner, to tear away from beneath him the sandy foundation on which he stands, in self-justification, and in the wilful indulgence of vain, delusive, and destructive hopes of ultimate acquittal at the bar of God; and thus arouse him from the dream of a false security, before it be forever too late, and bring him, if possible, to the foot of the cross, without excuse, convicted and self-condemned, to look upon Him whom he had pierced, and mourn.

THE END.

THE

SABBATH AT HOME.

BY THE

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## THE SABBATH AT HOME.

IT is not proposed to dwell, in the following pages, upon the arguments that might be brought forward to prove that the Sabbath is a Divine institution, established and sanctified by the Creator on the seventh day, after all his works were finished, and renewed to Israel on the descent of the manna. Nor shall I attempt to show, from the Scriptures, that the Sabbath is a Christian institution, as well as a Jewish ordinance; or call your attention to the satisfactory reasons we have for observing, as holy time, the first day of the week, and not the seventh. No controversy will be maintained with any who object to the Sabbath as commonly acknowledged by Christians. He who sincerely seeks for instruction, has no need of such argument; he already believes the Sabbath is the Lord's, and that it is to be sanctified by a holy resting all the day.

The design of this Tract is to point out and illustrate the most profitable manner of spending that part of the Lord's day which is not employed in the public exercises of Divine worship.

That your family, in each of its members, may profitably spend *the Sabbath at home*,—

I. By Saturday evening have your worldly business arranged to keep the Sabbath.

Few families pursue their business or trade, the same on the Sabbath as on any other day. But there are many who do not keep it as a sacred rest. If they do not plough and sow; if the sound of the anvil and the saw is not heard in their shops; if they do not, with open doors, buy and sell, and get gain; there is another species of worldly business to which they do attend, which, though not so much noticed by others, properly belongs to the six days in which work may be done.

Such persons may be said to make arrangements, not to *keep*, but to *profane* the Sabbath. "This matter need not be attended to now, while other things press upon us—it may be postponed until Sunday. That journey must be performed—that plan laid with my neighbour—that errand accomplished *next Sabbath*, or it will interfere with the business of the week."

To persons who thus feel, and who can thus act, I do not propose to address myself; they do not desire information; they have no wish to be instructed how they may more profitably spend the Sabbath. They would like best to hear of some new plan of retaining the Christian name, while they drive on their own trades and find their own pleasures. No

argument would be more pleasing to them than one which might go to prove that because the Sabbath was made for *man*, therefore man may use the Sabbath according to his own pleasure. But to you, my readers, who I trust are desirous of being taught your duty, and are willing to be exhorted that you may enter upon its performance, I would say, on Saturday arrange your worldly business to keep the Sabbath. It must not be forgotten, that this is much more easily done in some families than in others. It depends upon the number of the household,—upon the occupation of the different members,—whether they all think alike on the sanctification of the Sabbath, and are disposed to unite in bringing their worldly affairs to such an issue, that they may have *all* the following day for holy rest. With some, Saturday evening is a time of more leisure than any other of the week; while with not a few, it is a time of more hurry and pressure of business,—collecting debts, paying bills, fulfilling promises of the shop or store, than will again be encountered until Saturday returns. The cares of the week will press us, until steadfastly resisted. This resistance ought to be made with holy resolution, and sufficiently early to secure the Sabbath from being profaned.

The arrangements of the shop, the labours of the farm, and the business of the office or counting house, must be closed on Saturday evening, or in vain we wake early the next morning to enjoy the Sabbath. Did we look no further than to success in this world's affairs, a maxim of prudence and economy would be, to bring our plans, as far as possible, to a close once every week. It promotes order in the transaction of business. It gives efficiency to our labours. We *finish* more, which is the same as saying we *do* more, than if our business were suffered to run on without interruption the year round. We must also take into account the vigour of both body and mind, which an entire day of rest from care and labour imparts. And who that reads his Bible, will think it strange for me to say, that the blessing of the Lord is upon him who sacredly regards the Sabbath? “If thou turn thy foot away from the Sabbath, [that is, do not impiously trample upon it,] from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasures, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Isa. lviii. 13, 14. What was the heritage of Jacob? The favour of God, with

the richest productions of the field, and an increase of every worldly possession.

We may appeal to observation. The influence of the Sabbath upon the *rich* is not so easily discerned. But among those, who, in a peculiar manner, receive day by day their daily bread, it may be seen. And unless I greatly err, it will be found, that those families who observe the Sabbath, and attend upon its public and private duties, with desire to be profited, have, in comparison with those who do not thus regard the day unto the Lord, more peace of mind, more family comforts, and are better prepared to meet the demands which every year brings against them. Can a man rob God and prosper? rob Him, who can withhold our common blessings, or, as he has threatened, can curse them after given! Mal. ii. 2. Then, from consideration of both temporal and spiritual interest, let the Sabbath be regarded as a day of holy rest from the morning to the evening. And that we may attain to this, let us previously arrange all that pertains to our respective occupations, that we may wait upon the Lord without distraction of mind.

Another matter that has an important bearing upon the sanctification of the Sabbath, you will permit me to mention. Though the institutions of Moses are not, as a system, binding upon Christians, yet from them we may often infer what is important in regard to the proper observance of that which is given us in their stead. Among other commands to Israel for the profitable keeping of the Sabbath, they were required to abstain, on the seventh day, from all work, except the preparation of their necessary food. How this command was to be understood we learn from Exod. xvi. 23. On the descent of manna, Moses said to the people, "To-morrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord; bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you, to be kept until the morning." I am not about to say, that no family observes the Christian Sabbath, who does not fulfil the letter of this command. But may I not safely say, that the more nearly it is observed, the more profitably the day may be spent? If our tables are provided for on Saturday; if we bake that which we must bake, and seethe that we must seethe, and lay them up for the morning, will not those members of the family, who attend public worship, have more time to devote to the reading of the Scriptures, to meditation, and other duties of Sabbath morning?

What shall we say of those whose lot it may be to remain at home part of the day? Why, it is commonly answered, that as they have nothing else to do, they may as well prepare

dinner for those at church. But have they nothing to do? Have they no Bible to read? No Scripture lessons to prepare for Sabbath School? No Catechism, that may be most conveniently committed to memory by them when left alone? Is meditation, and is prayer the duty of those only who are privileged with attending public worship? Have persons who labour in our families for hire, no need of one day of rest in seven? If *fasting*, as all ages and good men of every country have acknowledged, is promotive of the devotion of the heart, denying the appetite in some small degree cannot be injurious. And why should it be thought unreasonable that persons in our employment, and our children, who early notice the character of our religion, might receive some good impression, as to the nature of the Sabbath, by seeing us deny ourselves what on other days is innocent and right? I am not pleading that the Sabbath be made a day for afflicting our souls, but that we should not permit our sensual desires to interfere with our spiritual delight. On days of unusual political interest, we count it no sacrifice to be *deprived* of a regular meal, or to take of that which comes to hand, because our delight is elsewhere. Let the same interest be felt in the Sabbath, and we shall be equally loth to permit that, which might be done on Saturday, to interfere with our enjoyment and spiritual profit. If each family would, on the preceding day, prepare, as far as practicable, for their table on the Sabbath, would not much time be redeemed for the appropriate duties of the Lord's day?

To mention every thing that might, with advantage, be attended to on Saturday, bearing upon the Sabbath, would be to recount the events of each family—they all influence our profiting, though, when viewed separately, they seem hardly worthy of notice.

I have known the men of more than one family to spend the best part of Sabbath morning, in making such alterations in their carriage and harness as were necessary, in order to attend meeting; which changes might much better have been made the evening before.

In other households you will find the apparel appropriate to the Sabbath, must be subjected to certain emendations and improvements, before the family can be prepared for public worship. By this time the morning is gone, but the Sabbath of holy rest has not yet begun. How much more profitable, that all which pertains to our persons, "from a thread to a shoe-latchet," should be set in order before the Sabbath arrives, that as we have but one holy day in seven, we may enjoy it all.

A full answer with many, is, “If I do nothing worse than these, I shall have little cause for alarm;”—to which I will only reply,—This is not the language of one seeking to be instructed, and desiring to honour God. It is not the spirit of the fourth commandment, which is, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do ALL thy work: but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do ANY work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.” It is not according to the example and instruction of our pious fathers, who taught us that “the Sabbath is to be sanctified, by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God’s worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.”

II. That you may profitably spend the Sabbath, let all the members of your family, as far as practicable, be at home on Saturday evening, and there pass the following day.

This will promote peace of mind, of parents especially. If members of your household are from home, you know not to what dangers they are exposed, or into what temptations they may be led. But if they be with you, under the same roof, this anxiety is in a great degree prevented.

It conduces to the good order of a family, for all its members to be at home. If the parents are absent, there is danger of the house becoming a scene of noise and disorder, that does not well comport with the solemnity of the Sabbath. If there was nothing more to be said in favour of families never being deprived, on the Lord’s day, of their presiding members, we might reasonably plead, that much evil would be prevented by the restraint of their presence. But there are not negative advantages only; there are positive ones also, which shall soon be mentioned.

In every well ordered family, where industry and economy are found, there are certain duties assigned, by custom or common consent, to each member of the household. These are attended to by the persons on whom they devolve, during the week, much to the facilitating of business, and the prevention of trouble or confusion. Now if such be found a measure of expediency during days of labour, we may safely presume upon its utility when applied to the Sabbath. If it is important to save moments of *six* days, it cannot be less desirable to secure the remnants of *one* day. But if part of

your family are from home on Sabbath morning, a double portion of necessary duties devolves upon those who remain; and as the duties they are called to perform in the place of the absent members, are not their own regular share of domestic cares, much additional time and attention will be demanded properly to fulfil them. It requires scarcely a trial, to convince us that the *whole morning* may thus be lost, in performing what devolves upon others; and that when the hour of public worship arrives, the mind is hardly composed sufficiently to determine whether you can attend meeting or not.

In addition to the quietness and good order secured by the presence of the parents or heads of the family on the Sabbath, it is important that they be at home all the day, that their household may not be left without family instruction. We all know that the best children need frequently to be reminded of their books, and encouraged and aided in their lessons. If the parents are from home, little will probably be done in the reading of the Scriptures, or learning the Catechism. Besides, there is great danger that the children will be suffered to pass without examination, or any systematic instruction in the doctrines and duties of religion, if the heads of the family are not at home all the day. For the reason just given, there will be no lessons for catechising: the parents may very probably be from home at the stated hour for family instruction: or, when they return, may feel too much wearied to attend to the duty; so that there is no way of securing to the children that teaching which they must have, but for the parents to be at home on the Sabbath.

To secure the same desirable end, it is no less necessary that all the *children* spend the day in the bosom of the family. If they are not present, and put themselves in the way of instruction, they cannot be taught. For all the family to be at home on the Sabbath, is one of the best preservatives against temptation. Is it possible for young people of different households, to associate on the Lord's day, and not be led into the sin of light and vain conversation? Can the world be shut out of such company, no matter how strict the injunctions of parents, and sincere the resolutions of those going from home?

This leads us to speak of another matter, which ought not to be passed over, because it unavoidably, and to a degree of which many are not aware, interferes with the profitable sanctification of the Sabbath. I refer to *Sunday visiting*;—not that which commonly passes under the name, when several

members of one family go and spend the day with their friends, as they would any afternoon in the week. Surely, none calling themselves Christians, and acknowledging that we have a Christian Sabbath at all, can approve of such a manner of spending the day. Nor is allusion made to visits to the sick, put off from day to day, that they may be paid without loss of time on the Sabbath, crowding the room of the patient, and instead of conferring a kindness, often inflicting an injury of many days' continuance.

The custom to which I refer is different in character from both of these, but perhaps not less hurtful. It is the *connecting of visits with an attendance upon public worship*. I should be exceedingly sorry to wound the feelings of any one, whose age, or distance from meeting, may render it difficult both to go and return home the same day, without rest or refreshment. The duty of such is to accept of the kindness of their friends, either on Saturday night or after sermon on the Sabbath. Religion requires us to afford such entertainment to those who labour under disadvantages that do not lie upon us. But is it not very common for Christian families to form their plan for visiting their friends, not during the week, but on Saturday evening, to accompany them to meeting in the morning; or to go with them from public worship and spend the afternoon in their family? How many such visits are made profitable? In whose family does not the conversation become worldly and of little worth? In what visiting circle are the nature of religion, and the experience of the heart, the subjects upon which all unite profitably to pass the time? The difficulty with us all, of answering such questions without confusion, ought to lead us to ask, Is there not something wrong in such visits? When we engage in them, we are from our families. But home is our place on the Sabbath. We put ourselves in the way of temptation, before which, repeated trials have shown that we must fall. The family that receives the visit is deprived of as much of the Sabbath as we spend with them; for a cold family dinner, such as best adorns the Sabbath, is altogether out of character when our friends become guests; and to spend much time in reading even the Bible, while visitants are sitting by, would be thought strange indeed. The various conversation, the communicating and receiving of neighbourhood intelligence, leaves the minds neither of those who pay, nor of those who receive the visit, in a state properly to spend the remaining part of the Sabbath. While, therefore, it is easy to make

what we esteem duty a burden, and we may hastily lay down rules which a few weeks will show us are no aid in religion, but a Pharisaical hinderance, yet, between this and the opposite extreme, of making the Sabbath a day of sociability and feasting, there is a wide field. The difficulty of determining upon duty, lies in this;—Sunday visits are not wholly wrong; some of them are right; it would be sin *not* to visit the sick and dying. How then shall we determine when it is right, and when wrong, to visit on the Sabbath? What rule can we lay down? General rules are of little worth; each case has something peculiar in it, so that the mere letter of a law may be set aside. But let an enlightened conscience, governed by the fear of God, direct us. We are not to ask, What is fashionable? Do not many Christian families pay social visits on the Sabbath? Will it be considered inconsistent with my profession of religion to spend a few hours from home, or only twenty minutes with my friends at the next door?—Rather ask, Is it right? Shall I gain spiritual strength by doing so? Will my example be happy in its influence upon my children and others? Is this the way, that, above all, I would recommend to persons seriously asking, How may I most profitably spend the Sabbath day?

III. In order profitably to pass the Sabbath at home, we must imbibe and cherish the impression that it is a holy day.

It is in vain to form resolutions, until conscience be set about *her* work. Our promises will last only until some worldly enjoyment bribes us silently to set them aside. Public sentiment is of little weight in favour of the profitable observance of the Sabbath; because it is of every possible shade. This holy day may be spent almost as we please; the laws of the land, to save it from profanation, being, as in all times past, a dead letter; prevailing custom allowing of almost every kind of recreation, if not of labour. Each denomination of those calling themselves Christians, having their own views and claiming the indulgence of their own practice. While some are more strict, others will hardly admit that the Sabbath is more sacred than any other day. Spend the time as you please, you will be in character: you will be sustained. You may search the Scriptures, and engage with your family in pious conversation, and no one has a right to murmur. You may spend the day in idleness and sleep, or in conversation about worldly business: the professional man may arrange the papers and books of his office, ready against Monday morning; we may wander over the



fields, or visit our next door neighbours, or ride out in the afternoon, and who dare seriously complain ?

A store keeper may post his books ; another may load his wagon for market ; a printer may set his types ; young people may spend the day in reading novels ; I may go into my study and work problems in navigation, or for literary improvement, read Latin and Greek in heathen authors, and we shall none of us be disturbed ; we may quietly pursue our respective courses the year round. Spend the time as we may, we are still in character, and will be sustained by the popular voice. Besides, that influence which is derived from the regard we have for what others think or say of us, will not control us in the bosom of our own families. We are there withdrawn from public view. The more retired we are, the more independent we feel, of either the approbation or ridicule of others. Though a regard for the character of our families may influence us, in some considerable degree, to sanctify the Sabbath, while there is no inducement to the contrary ; yet when we most need it, such help fails us. Neither our own reputation, as respecters of religion, nor the influence we might exert for the honour and happiness of our families, will be sufficient to overcome strong temptation.

But let the mind once come under the control of the belief, that the Sabbath is the Lord's, and that it is to be observed in holy rest all the day, and we have advanced farther in the sanctification of the Sabbath, than if we had matured a score of rules, and solemnly bound ourselves to keep them every one.

Do we find it difficult to rise as early on that day as during the week, that with the morning we may commence our duties ? Let conscience speak, and we shall wake early. Let our love to God, and his service, only be as strong as our attachment to the things of the world, and no more of the Sabbath will be wasted in slumber, than of Monday morning. Men who labour through the week, contend for this indulgence ; that they are wearied and need rest : besides, that the Sabbath is given for rest. But, no reader of the Bible can say, that it is the rest of indolence and spiritual inactivity. The worship of God does not commonly demand the labours and exercise of the body ; the mind only is called into healthful action ; and this is also refreshing to the body. In answer to the plea, that being worn down with the cares of the week, and its toils, we may, consistently with duty, lie later on Sabbath morning than any other, it may be asked, Have we a right to expend our strength during the week, so as to unfit us for the duties of the Sabbath when they arrive ? If we found ourselves disinclined early to seek

the Lord, last Sabbath, are we not bound to guard against such languor, when this holy day shall again dawn? Is not duty plain, that we ought to relax our labours on Saturday, that we may not lose the most precious hours of the Lord's day? Were we *our own*, we might exercise our pleasure. But we are not. Man's chief end is, to glorify God, and enjoy him, in this world, as well as hereafter. Suppose you hire a man, to labour for you—you have a right to all his time; but you give him five days in the week for his own employment on condition that he will devote himself wholly to your work on the sixth. Has this man a right, so to arrange his business, and expend his strength, during the five days he labours for himself, that when the sixth day arrives, he cannot rise until late, nor commence his work until the morning be nearly past?

Again, there are many things about which we perhaps have no difficulty, as respects ourselves; we may perform them or not, on the Sabbath, without injury. But the influence we may exert upon others, is with every conscientious man a serious consideration. In cases of difficulty, how shall we determine what is right? Not by expediency, or custom, or inclination, or a spirit of independence. These cannot be safely trusted. Let us call to mind, that the Sabbath is the Lord's; and that we are bound to glorify him, both in our conduct and our influence; and we shall not probably find much difficulty in deciding at once, what it is our duty to do. The same rule will also apply to cases of doubt, in respect to ourselves. Our reputation, or interest, or feelings give us their counsel, while other considerations may be placed over against these. Neither the one nor the other affords us any certain aid in determining upon what is our duty. But if the fear of God rule in our hearts, and his holy day be very precious to us, and its honour dear, the question, before so perplexing, becomes a very plain one. What must I do, in the observance of the Sabbath, *to promote the glory of God?* If we will allow conscience to speak, her voice may be heard; if we attend to her admonitions, guided by the light of Scripture, we shall not commonly, we shall not often, be left in doubt what is duty. For example, you may feel much wearied with the exercises, public and private, of the morning; and the recreation of a walk for half an hour in the afternoon, would be very refreshing to your exhausted system. But there are considerations to be weighed against this. As to profit in the street, or upon the frequented road, that is out of the question. Equally vain would be the attempt to keep the thoughts from wandering upon all that tempts the eye

and ear. And then the effect that may result to others, must be taken into the account, and the light in which your conduct will be viewed, as connected with the sanctification of the Sabbath.

The question is now easily decided, because duty appears plain. A great advantage also, attending this manner of solving difficulties is, that the decision is final; there remains no cavilling, when the determination is once made, *in the fear of God*. If you wish to keep the Sabbath profitably, and with enjoyment to yourself and family, labour to attain to, and cultivate the impression, that it is the Lord's day, and, therefore, to be kept holy.

IV. Attendance, as far as practicable upon the public duties of religion, contributes much to the profitable observance of the Sabbath at home.

The language of Scripture would lead us to this. "Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, and holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings." Lev. xxiii. 3. The Sabbath at home is well united with the holy convocation of the people of God, in the public ordinances of religion. If we consult the history of the Church, we shall find this to have been the opinion of the pious in every age. The Jewish nation, Christians in the time of the apostles, and the professing people of God in all countries since their day, have weekly assembled themselves together.

Public worship promotes the observance of the Sabbath at home, by affording that instruction which is necessary to the proper performance of our duty. Though comparatively little time is spent on the Sabbath, in teaching publicly the doctrines of religion, and the duties that flow from them, yet there will be found a very great difference in the views of those who regularly hear the gospel, and of such as never enter a worshipping assembly. This does not wholly arise from the public instructions of the Sabbath,—those who hear the gospel are constrained to search for themselves, and to use other means to learn the duty which God requires of man. Among other things, they will soon learn that the Sabbath is to be sanctified, by a holy resting all the day, and that if they mean to do what is right, they must perform this duty also.

But we may come to a knowledge of our duty, and yet have no inclination to do what is required. We need to be exhorted and encouraged. This is enjoined upon those who preach the gospel. They are commanded, not only to reprove and rebuke, but also to exhort; to help such as are

discouraged, and to strengthen the feeble. And here, again, it will be found, that notwithstanding the multitude who hear the word preached, but observe not the Lord's day as a holy rest, they, who in any community sanctify it, are those who on that day attend public worship. I much question if a family, neglectful of public worship, can be found, that sanctifies the Sabbath at home.

Again, the assembling of ourselves together, regularly on the Sabbath, greatly contributes to preserve that holy day from the danger of being profaned. All persons feel the confinement of the Sabbath. Nature seems to demand some recreation, both of body and mind. This is afforded us in public worship. The preparing of ourselves to assemble,—the ride, or walk, if we live near;—the variety in the exercises of the sanctuary,—the reading, singing, prayers, and sermons, are exceedingly refreshing to such as have a heart to enjoy them. They send us home better prepared for spending profitably the remainder of the day, than if all the time had been passed in our own dwellings. The remark of one who was deprived of preaching an entire day, we have probably all found true in our own experience,—That a Sabbath without public worship, when we have all the time to spend in duties at home, is no gain to the reading of the Scriptures. For want of variety in our duties, we become languid, and profit but little.

Attendance upon public worship is favourable to a profitable spending of the Sabbath at home, because it promotes religion generally. It is in the house of God that we are taught what we must do to be saved, and how we are acceptably to serve our Creator. Parents and children are taught their relative duties, and are dismissed with pressing exhortation not to defer the paying of their vows. It is in the worshipping assembly, that the affections are moved, and interested for the glory of God. Here it is, that our consciences most closely press us with the important question, What must I do to work the works of God? In the ministry of reconciliation, dispensed to the assemblies of the Sabbath, sin is pointed out and reproved; negligence in duty reprimanded; the honour of religion defended; the sanctification of the Lord's day pleaded for; the feeble strengthened, and the wavering mind confirmed;—every Christian grace, in its order, becomes the subject of special consideration, and every duty, according to our station in life, is, with arguments to its immediate and constant performance, explained and pressed upon us.

Then, let every one, who would profitably observe the Sabbath *at home*, conscientiously and faithfully attend public worship. This will save him and his family from many temptations to profane the Lord's day, and will afford him instruction, strength, and encouragement for the performance of his duties.

V. Let the time not spent in public worship, be past at home in exercises becoming the sacredness of the Sabbath.

Parents will permit me here to remind them of the duties they owe their households. Not to suffer the day to pass without important instruction to their children. It may very properly, and indeed ought to be various in its character, to suit the youthful mind; but all bearing upon the spiritual welfare of both parents and children. After returning from meeting, make inquiry about the text; what subject was treated in the sermon; particularly if any thing was said to children or the younger members of the family: whether any thing sinful in them was pointed out, and any good thing recommended for them to do. How much better would be the influence, upon our families and ourselves, of this course, than what must arise from a critical spirit, which often, not only keeps possession of the heart while we hear, but dictates all that is said of the sermon after we have returned home.

Children ought to be taught their catechism on the Sabbath, and aided in their Sunday school lessons. The old Presbyterian method was, to devote Sabbath evening to instruction out of the Scriptures, and the reciting of the Shorter Catechism. A means of grace so important, ought not to be suffered by any family to fall into decay. It is of moment also, that not only in the conduct of the parents, the younger members may see the sacredness of the Lord's day, but that they should be instructed in the nature of the Sabbath; by whom it was appointed, and for what purposes; how it is to be sanctified; what we may do, and from what we must refrain. This would make children intelligent, and would stir up parents also to acquaint themselves more perfectly, through the aid of the excellent standards of our Church, and other sources of correct interpretation of the Scriptures, with what they may, from want of incentives to attention, but partially understand.

Children ought to receive, at times, that instruction which is exclusively *religious*; ought to be conversed with affectionately about their souls, and the truth prest home to their hearts. If this be attempted, in the hurry of business during the week, though the seed may prosper, yet it is not probable. The Sabbath is the most encouraging time. The mind of the

parent is then in a favourable state ; the solemnities of the day contribute much to success, and prepare the hearts of your children to receive some good impression. Those Sabbath evening exhortations, though without even apparent effect at first, will follow your children, when your anxiety can no more watch over them, and may lead them to salvation, after your souls have gone to enjoy it in glory.

*Reading* is an exercise that ought to be particularly attended to on the Sabbath. We would do well to converse intimately and constantly with pious men in their writings, when we are not called to other duties. The great variety of journals and semi-romances, with which the professedly religious presses teem, has, at least, a questionable effect upon intelligent and vital religion. If the Sabbath were more devoted to the study of such books as Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul*, Flavel on *Keeping the Heart*, Owen on the *Spirit*, and Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, we would *feel* in ourselves, and others would *see* in us an increase of grace, which it is to be feared we do not enjoy from the food prepared to our fastidious palates.

Above all, let the Bible be the book that is to be read on the Sabbath. The day is holy, the book is also holy. In the hurry of business through the week, we often feel that we are deprived of both enjoyment and profit in searching the Scriptures. But on the Lord's day we have leisure. All around us is quiet. The solemnities of the day give additional interest and sacredness to what we read. We can read much more at once than during the week, and profit by noticing the connexion of one passage with another. Many persons complain that they have little time to read, during the six days of labour. Such ought to devote, I was going to say, *all* the Sabbath, to the study of the Scriptures. This was very much the method of our fathers. As they had few books, the *Bible* claimed their attention on the Sabbath. And the nature of their religion, and their eminent piety, may well recommend to us their example.

Members of the same family ought, on the Sabbath, to converse together on the state of their souls. Much may be done for their comfort and the promotion of religion, by thus communing together. We may speak in public of experimental religion, make the exercises of others the subject of remark ; we may talk to Christians of other families about religion ; but if our children and members of our household never hear us speak of these things, when only our own little circle is around us, they will very readily infer that it is not a subject greatly interesting to us. That which pos-

sesses our hearts we love to dwell upon in conversation with our own family.

*Meditation*, though a difficult duty, is essentially necessary to a healthful state of mind, and is suited to no day more than to the Sabbath. The cares of the world are then shut out, and every thing seems to constrain us to turn our thoughts within.

*Prayer* is the duty of the Christian, the duty of every one, at all times. Our Saviour said, men ought always to pray and not to faint; and Paul exhorts us to pray without ceasing; praying always with all prayer. But there are certain times, when this duty can be performed with more profit, and in a manner more comforting to ourselves, than at others. Above all seasons, the Sabbath is appropriate for communion with God. And he who most frequently and devoutly converses with Jehovah on his mercy-seat, through Jesus Christ, on the Lord's day, will commune most with him during the week, will most profitably observe the Sabbath, and be most thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. He will not only enter into rest here on earth, but will daily become conformed to that better world, where there remaineth a Sabbath of rest to the people of God.

We must all admit that the sanctification of the Sabbath is an important part of practical religion. The cause of piety declines where the Sabbath is not remembered to be kept holy. But in what does the sanctification of the Lord's day chiefly consist? We have seen that it is in observing the day in our own dwellings. This secures the performance of all its public duties. In a pre-eminent sense, the Sabbath which God approves, is the *Sabbath at home*.

No separate argument is then called for to prove that it is the duty of all to promote the observance of the Lord's day. It is the common cause of every government, of good morals, and of religion. Let no one excuse himself from contributing his part to this good work. We may each aid much in the sanctification of the Sabbath. It is in the power of the humblest member of your family to do more to render the Lord's day profitable, than he can now believe. On the other hand, an entire household may be thrown into confusion, and compelled to waste the day, through the perversity or neglect only of a child. You have a servant in your employ, to whom certain duties are assigned, but he neglects on Saturday evening to perform them. Through his omission, the whole family may be thrown into confusion on Sabbath morning. One boy of five years old, who *will* play in the street, can disturb all the families of the neighbourhood. A

noisy child of three years can effectually prevent, either parent, brother, or sister, from profitably spending the Lord's day. A little girl was dressed for church,—she disobeyed her mother, and went out to play; her clothes were soon unfit to be seen in a worshipping assembly. The mother was fretted and distressed, and the child had to remain at home, while the parent went to meeting, not in a state of mind to be much profited by the exercises of the sanctuary. The sound of one axe, in cleaving as much wood as will make one fire, can annoy, throughout the fourth part of a village, all who wish to keep holy the Sabbath day, and to see it hallowed by others. What is more common, in cases of slight indisposition, or in the commencement of disease, to omit sending for the physician until Sabbath, thus compelling him to spend holy time, not in ministering to the relief of actual distress, but in sacrificing to sheer neglect, and contempt of the command of God, what ought to be *his* privilege, with all other men,—the undisturbed enjoyment, both public and private, of the Lord's day.

Thus we may in different ways, and various degrees, contribute to the sanctification of the Sabbath, or compel others, however reluctant, to spend the day without profit. This power is vested in no one exclusively, but in each member in particular. Each may contribute to the sanctification of the Sabbath; each may prevent the entire family from enjoying and profitably spending the day. Would we do good both to ourselves and others? Let us *every one* remember the Sabbath day *at home*, to keep it holy.

By this we may be aided in judging of our preparation for heaven. The Sabbath on earth is a type of the Sabbath above. If we find no delight in the holy duties of the day, as now enjoyed, and feel the sacrifice of sanctifying it to be too great, how can we hope to enjoy it in the purity and holiness of heaven? But if it is our delight, and its sacred retirement from worldly cares refreshes the soul, we can discern some degree of conformity to the inheritance of the saints in light. It is our duty and our privilege, then, to comfort ourselves with the expectation of yet enjoying an eternal Sabbath, where there are no temptations to profane it, no despisers of religion to interfere with its quiet sanctification—no ignorance, through which we may fall into sin, and thus impair our enjoyment,—no disinclination of mind to hold communion with God,—where no weariness in duty, or languor in devotion can make the season appear too long.