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THEOLOGY

THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES
PART FOURTH

The Institutions of Christianity
by Richard Watson.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES:

Or, a View of the

EVIDENCES, DOCTRINES, MORALS, AND INSTITUTIONS

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

BY RICHARD WATSON.

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PART FOURTH.

THE INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER 1. — THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

THE Church of Christ, in its largest sense, consists of all who have been baptized in the name of Christ, and who thereby make a visible profession of faith in his Divine mission, and in all the doctrines taught by him and his inspired apostles. In a stricter sense, it consists of those who are vitally united to Christ, as the members of the body to the head, and who, being thus imbued with spiritual life, walk no longer “after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Taken in either view, it is a visible society, bound to observe the laws of Christ, its sole Head and Lord. Visible fellowship with this Church is the duty of all who profess faith in Christ; for in this, in part, consists that “confession of Christ before men,” on which so much stress is laid in the discourses of our Lord. It is obligatory on all who are convinced of the truth of Christianity to be baptized; and upon all thus baptized frequently to partake of the Lord’s Supper, in order to testify their continued faith in that great and distinguishing doctrine of the religion of Christ, the redemption of the world by the sacrificial effusion of his blood, both of which suppose union with his Church. The ends of this fellowship or association are, to proclaim our faith in the doctrine of Christ as Divine in its origin, and necessary to salvation; to offer public prayers and thanksgivings to God through Christ, as the sole Mediator; to hear God’s word explained and enforced; and to place ourselves under that discipline which consists in the enforcement of the laws of Christ, (which are the rules of the society called the Church,) upon the members, not merely by general exhortation, but by kind oversight, and personal injunction and admonition of its ministers. All these flow from the original obligation to avow our faith in Christ, and our love to him.

The Church of Christ being then a visible and permanent society, bound to observe certain rites, and to obey certain rules, the existence of government in it is necessarily supposed. All religious rites suppose ORDER, all order DIRECTION AND CONTROL, and these a DIRECTIVE AND

CONTROLLING POWER. Again, all laws are nugatory without enforcement, in the present mixed and imperfect state of society; and all enforcement supposes an EXECUTIVE. If baptism be the door of admission into the Church, some must judge of the fitness of candidates, and administrators of the rite must be appointed; if the Lord's Supper must be partaken of, the times and the mode are to be determined, the qualifications of communicants judged of, and the administration placed in suitable hands; if worship must be social and public, here again there must be an appointment of times, an order, and an administration: if the word of God is to be read and preached, then readers and preachers are necessary; if the continuance of any one in the fellowship of Christians be conditional upon good conduct, so that the parity and credit of the Church may be guarded, then the power of enforcing discipline must be lodged somewhere. Thus government flows necessarily from the very nature of the institution of the Christian Church: and since this institution has the authority of Christ and his apostles, it is not to be supposed that its government was left unprovided for; and if they have in fact made such a provision, it is no more a matter of mere option with Christians whether they will be subject to government in the Church, than it is optional with them to confess Christ by becoming its members.

The *nature* of this government, and the *persons* to whom it is committed, are both points which we must briefly examine by the light of the Holy Scriptures.

As to the first, it is wholly *spiritual*: — “My kingdom,” says our Lord, “is not of this world.” The Church is a society founded upon faith, and united by mutual love, for the personal edification of its members in holiness, and for the religious benefit of the world. The nature of its government is thus determined; — it is concerned only with spiritual objects. It cannot employ force to compel men into its pale; for the only door of the Church is faith, to which there can be no compulsion, — “he that *believeth* and is baptized” becomes a member. It cannot inflict pains and penalties upon the disobedient and refractory, like civil governments; for the only punitive discipline authorized in the New Testament, is comprised in “admonition,” “reproof,” “sharp rebukes,” and, finally, “excision from the society.” The last will be better understood if we consider the special relations in which true Christians stand to each other, and the duties resulting from them. They are members of one body, and are therefore bound to tenderness and sympathy; they are the conjoint instructors of others, and are therefore to

strive to be of “one judgment;” they are brethren, and they are to love one another *as such*, that is, with an affection more special than that general good will which they are commanded to bear to all mankind; they are therefore to seek the intimacy of friendly society among themselves, and, except in the ordinary and courteous intercourse of life, they are bound to keep themselves separate from the world; they are enjoined to do good unto all men, but “specially to them that are of the household of faith;” and they are forbidden “to eat” at the Lord’s table with immoral persons, that is, with those who, although they continue their Christian profession, dishonour it by their practice. With these relations of Christians to each other and to the world, and their correspondent duties before our minds, we may easily interpret the nature of that extreme discipline which is vested in the Church. “Persons who will not hear the Church” are to be held “as heathen men and publicans,” as those who are not members of it; that is, they are to be separated from it. and regarded as of “the world,” quite out of the range of the above-mentioned relations of Christians to each other, and their correspondent duties; but still, like “heathen men and publicans,” they are to be the objects of pity, and general benevolence. Nor is this extreme discipline to be hastily inflicted before “a first and second admonition,” nor before those who are “spiritual” have attempted “to restore a brother overtaken by a fault;” and when the “wicked person” is “put away,” still the door is to be kept open for his reception again upon repentance. The true excommunication of the Christian Church is therefore a merciful and considerate separation of an incorrigible offender from the body of Christians, without any infliction of civil pains or penalties. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye have received from us,” [2 Thessalonians 3:6](#). “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump,” [1 Corinthians 5:5](#). “But now I have written to you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such a one, no not to eat,” [1 Corinthians 5:11](#). This then is the moral discipline which is imperative upon the Church of Christ, and its government is criminally defective whenever it is not enforced. On the other hand, the disabilities and penalties which established Churches in different places have connected with these sentences of excommunication, have no countenance at all in Scripture, and are wholly inconsistent with the spiritual character and ends of the Christian association.

As to the second point, — the *persons* to whom the government of the Church is committed, it is necessary to consider the composition, so to speak, of the primitive Church, as stated in the New Testament.

A full enunciation of these offices we find in ~~4011~~ Ephesians 4:11: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Of these, the office of apostle is allowed by all to have been confined to those immediately commissioned by Christ to witness the fact of his miracles and of his resurrection from the dead, and to reveal the complete system of Christian doctrine and duty; confirming their extraordinary mission by miracles wrought by themselves. If by “prophets” we are to understand persons who foretold future events, then the office was, from its very nature, extraordinary, and the gift of prophecy has passed away with the other miraculous endowments of the first age of Christianity. If, with others, we understand that these prophets were extraordinary teachers raised up until the Churches were settled under permanent qualified instructors; still the office was temporary. The “evangelists” are generally understood to be assistants of the apostles, who acted under their especial authority and direction. Of this number were Timothy and Titus; and as the Apostle Paul directed them to ordain bishops in presbyters in the several Churches, but gave them no authority to ordain successors to themselves in their particular office as evangelists, it is clear that the evangelists must also be reckoned among the number of extraordinary and temporary ministers suited to the first age of Christianity. Whether by “pastors and teachers” two offices be meant, or one, has been disputed. The change in the mode of expression seems to favour the latter view, and so the text is interpreted by St. Jerome, and St. Augustine; but the point is of little consequence. A pastor was a teacher; although every teacher might not be a pastor; but in many cases be confined to the office of subordinate instruction, whether as an expounder of doctrine, a catechist, or even a more private instructor of those who as yet were unacquainted with the first principles of the Gospel of Christ. The term pastor implies the duties both of instruction and of government, of feeding and of ruling the flock of Christ; and, as the presbyters or bishops were ordained in the several Churches, both by the apostles and evangelists, and rules are left by St. Paul as to their appointment, there can be no doubt but that these are the “pastors” spoken of in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and that they were designed to be the

permanent ministers of the Church; and that with them both the government of the Church and the performance of its leading religious services were deposited. Deacons had the charge of the gifts and offerings for charitable purposes, although, as appears from Justin Martyr, not in every instance; for he speaks of the weekly oblations as being deposited with the chief minister, and distributed by him.

Whether bishops and presbyters be designations of the same office, or these appellatives express two distinct sacred orders, is a subject which has been controverted by Episcopalians and Presbyterians with much warmth; and whoever would fully enter into their arguments from Scripture and antiquity, must be referred to this controversy, which is too large to be here more than glanced at. The argument drawn by the Presbyterians from the promiscuous use of these terms in the New Testament, to prove that the same *order* of ministers is expressed by them, appears incontrovertible. When St. Paul, for instance, sends for the “elders,” or presbyters, of the Church of Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, he thus charges them, “Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,” or bishops. That here the elders or presbyters are called “bishops,” cannot be denied, and the very office assigned to them, to “*feed* the Church of God,” and the injunction, to “take heed to the *flock*,” show that the office of elder or presbyter is the same as that of “*pastor*” in the passage just quoted from the Epistle to the Ephesians. St. Paul directs Titus to “ordain elders (presbyters) in every city,” and then adds, as a directory of ordination, “a *bishop* must be blameless, &c,” plainly marking the same office by these two convertible appellations. “Bishops and deacons” are the only classes of ministers addressed in the Epistle to the Philippians; and if the presbyters were not understood to be included under the term “bishops,” the omission of any notice of this order of ministers is not to be accounted for. As the apostles, when not engaged in their own extraordinary vocation, appear to have filled the office of stated ministers in those Churches in which they occasionally resided for considerable periods of time, they sometimes called themselves presbyters. “The elder,” presbyter, “unto the elect lady,” ~~ROM~~ 2 John 1:1. “The elders (presbyters) which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder,” (presbyter,) and from what follows, the highest offices of teaching and government in the Church are represented as vested in the presbyters. “*Feed* the flock of God, which is among you, taking the *oversight* thereof.” There seems, therefore, to be the most conclusive evidence, from the New

Testament, that, after the extraordinary ministry vested in apostles, prophets, and evangelists, as mentioned by St. Paul, had ceased, the feeding and oversight, that is, the teaching and government of the Churches, devolved upon an order of men indiscriminately called “pastors,” “presbyters,” and “bishops,” the two latter names growing into most frequent use; and with this the testimony of the apostolical fathers, so far as their writings are acknowledged to be free from later interpolations, agrees.

It is not indeed to be doubted, that, at a very early period, in some instances probably from the time of the apostles themselves, a distinction arose between bishops and presbyters; and the whole strength of the cause of the Episcopalians lies in this fact. Still this gives not the least sanction to the notion of bishops being a superior *order* of ministers to presbyters, invested, in virtue of that order, and by Divine right, with powers of government both over presbyters and people, and possessing exclusively the authority of ordaining to the sacred offices of the Church. As little too will that ancient distinction be found to prove any thing in favour of diocesan episcopacy, which is of still later introduction.

Could it be made clear that the power of ordaining to the ministry was given to bishops to the exclusion of presbyters, that would indeed go far to prove the former a distinct and superior order of ministers in their original appointment. But there is no passage in the New Testament which gives this power at all to bishops, as thus distinguished from presbyters; while all the examples of ordination which it exhibits are confined to apostles, to evangelists, or to presbyters, in conjunction with them. St. Paul, in ^{<5006>}2 Timothy 1:6, says, “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands;” but in ^{<5014>}1 Timothy 4:14, he says, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the *presbytery*;” which two passages, referring, as they plainly do, to the same event, the setting apart of Timothy for the ministry, show that the presbytery were associated with St. Paul in the office of ordination, and farther prove that the exclusive assumption of this power, as by Divine right, by bishops. is an aggression upon the rights of presbyters, for which not only can no Scriptural authority be pleaded, but which is in direct opposition to it.

The early distinction made between bishops and presbyters may be easily accounted for, without allowing this assumed distinction of ORDER. In some of the Churches mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, the apostles

ordained several elders or presbyters, partly to supply the present need, and to provide for the future increase of believers, as it is observed by Clemens in his epistle. Another reason would also urge this: — Before the building of spacious edifices for the assemblies of the Christians living in one city, and in its neighbourhood, in common, their meetings for public worship must necessarily have been held in different houses or rooms obtained for the purpose; and to each assembly an elder would be requisite for the performance of worship. That these elders or presbyters had the power of government in the Churches cannot be denied, because it is expressly assigned *to them* in Scripture. It was inherent in their pastoral office; and “the elders that *rule* well,” were to be “counted worthy of double honour.” A number of elders, therefore, being ordained by the apostles to one Church, gave rise to the *cætus presbyterorum*, in which assembly the affairs of the Church were attended to, and measures taken for the spread of the Gospel, by the aid of the common counsel and efforts of the whole. This meeting of presbyters would naturally lead to the appointment, whether by seniority or by election, of one to preside over the proceedings of this assembly for the sake of order; and to him was given the title of *angel* of the Church, and *bishop* by way of eminence. The latter title came in time to be exclusively used of the presiding elder, because of that special *oversight* imposed upon him by his office, and which, as Churches were raised up in the neighbourhood of the larger cities, would also naturally be extended over them. Independently of his fellow presbyters, however, he did nothing.

The whole of this arrangement shows, that in those particulars in which they were left free by the Scriptures, the primitive Christians adopted that arrangement for the government of the Church which promised to render it most efficient for the maintenance of truth and piety; but they did not at this early period set up that unscriptural distinction of order between bishops and presbyters, which obtained afterward. Hence Jerome, even in the fourth century, contends against this doctrine, and says, that before there were parties in religion, Churches were governed *communi consilio presbyterorum*; but that afterward it became a universal practice, founded upon experience of its *expediency*, that one of the presbyters should be *chosen by the rest* to be the head, and that the care of the Church should be committed to him. He therefore exhorts presbyters to remember that they are subject by *the custom* of the Church to him that presides over them; and reminds bishops that they are greater than presbyters, rather by *custom*

than by the *appointment of the Lord*; and that the Church ought still to be governed in common. The testimony of antiquity also shows, that, after episcopacy had very greatly advanced its claims, the presbyters continued to be associated with the bishop in the management of the affairs of the Church.

Much light is thrown upon the constitution of the primitive Churches, by recollecting that they were formed very much upon the model of the Jewish synagogues. We have already seen that the mode of public worship in the primitive Church was taken from the synagogue service, and so also was its arrangement of offices. Each synagogue had its rulers, elders, or presbyters, of whom one was the angel of the Church, or minister of the synagogue, who superintended the public service; directed those that read the Scriptures, and offered up the prayers, and blessed the people. The president of the council of elders or rulers was called, by way of eminence, the “ruler of the synagogue;” and in some places, as ^{<44315>}Acts 13:15, we read of these “rulers” in the plural number; a sufficient proof that one was not elevated *in order* above the rest. The angel of the Church, and the minister of the synagogue, might be the same as he who was invested with the office of president; or these offices might be held by others of the elders. Lightfoot, indeed, states that the rulers in each synagogue were three, while the presbyters or elders were ten. To this council of grave and wise men, the affairs of the synagogue, both as to worship and discipline, were committed. In the synagogue they sat by themselves in a semicircle, and the people before them, face to face. This was the precise form in which the bishop and presbyters used to sit in the primitive Churches. The description of the worship of the synagogue by a Jewish rabbi, and that of the primitive Church by early Christian writers, presents an obvious correspondence. “The elders,” says Maimonides, “sit with their faces toward the people, and their backs to the place where the law is deposited; and all the people sit rank before rank; so the faces of all the people are toward the sanctuary, and toward the elders; and when the minister of the sanctuary standeth up to prayer, he standeth with his face toward the sanctuary, as do the rest of the people.” In the same order the first Christians sat with their faces toward the bishops and presbyters, first to hear the Scriptures read by the proper reader; “then,” says Justin Martyr, “the reader sitting down, the president of the assembly stands up and makes a sermon of instruction and exhortation; after this is ended, we all stand up to prayers; prayers being ended, the bread, wine, and water are all

brought forth; then the president again praying and praising to his utmost ability, the people testify their consent by saying, Amen.” (*Apol.* 2.) “Here we have the Scriptures read by one appointed for that purpose, as in the synagogue; after which follows the word of exhortation by the president of the assembly, who answers to the minister of the synagogue; after this, public prayers are performed by the same person; then the solemn acclamation of amen by the people, which was the undoubted practice of the synagogue.” (*Stillingfleet’s Irenicum.*) Ordination of presbyters or elders is also from the Jews. Their priests were not ordained, but succeeded to their office by birth; but the rulers and elders of the synagogue received ordination by imposition of hands and prayer.

Such was the model which the apostles followed in providing for the future regulation of the Churches they had raised up. They took it, not from the temple and its priesthood; for that was typical, and was then passing away. But they found in the institution of synagogues a plan admirably adapted to the simplicity and purity of Christianity, one to which some of the first converts in most places were accustomed, and which was capable of being applied to the new dispensation without danger of Judaizing. It secured the assembling of the people on the Sabbath, the reading of the Scriptures, the preaching of sermons, and the offering of public prayer and thanksgiving. It provided too for the government of the Church by a council of presbyters, ordained solemnly to their office by imposition of hands and prayer; and it allowed of that presidency of one presbyter chosen by the others, which was useful for order and for unity, and by which age, piety, and gifts might preserve their proper influence in the Church. The advance from this state of Scriptural episcopacy to episcopacy under another form was the work of a later age.

When the Gospel made its way into towns and villages, the concerns of the Christians in these places naturally fell under the cognizance and direction of the bishops of the neighbouring cities. Thus *diocesses* were gradually formed, comprehending districts of country, of different extent. These diocesses were originally called **παροικιαι**, *parishes*, and the word **διοικησις**, *diocess*, was not used in its modern sense till at least the fourth century; and when we find Ignatius describing it as the duty of a bishop, “to speak to each member of the Church separately, to seek out all by name, even the slaves of both sexes, and to advise every one of the flock in the affair of marriage,” diocesses, as one observes, must have been very limited, or the labour inconceivably great.

“As Christianity increased and overspread all parts, and especially the cities of the empire, it was found necessary yet farther to enlarge the episcopal office; and as there was commonly a bishop in every *great city*, so in the *metropolis*, (as the *Romans* called it,) the mother city of every *province*, (wherein they had courts of civil judicature,) there was an ARCHBISHOP or a METROPOLITAN, who had ecclesiastical jurisdiction over all the Churches within that province. He was superior to all the bishops within those limits; to him it belonged to *ordain* or to *ratify* the elections and ordinations of all the bishops within his province, insomuch that without his confirmation they were looked upon as null and void. Once at least every year he was to summon the bishops under him to a *synod*, to inquire into and direct the ecclesiastical affairs within that province; to inspect the lives and manners, the opinions and principles of his bishops; to admonish, reprove, and suspend them that were disorderly and irregular; if any controversies or contentions happened between any of them, he was to have the *hearing* and *determination* of them; and indeed no matter of *moment* was done within the whole province, without first consulting him in the case. When this office of *metropolitan* first began, I find not; only this we are sure of, that the council of *Nice*, settling the just rights and privileges of *metropolitan bishops*, speaks of them as a thing of *ancient date*, ushering in the *canon* with an ἀρχαία εθη κρατειτω, *Let ancient customs still take place*. The original of the *institution* seems to have been partly to comply with the people’s occasions, who oft resorted to the *metropolis* for despatch of their affairs, and so might fitly discharge their *civil* and *ecclesiastical* both at once; and partly because of the great confluence of people to that city: that the bishop of it might have pre-eminence above the rest, and the honour of the *Church* bear some proportion to that of the *state*.

“After this sprung up another *branch* of the episcopal office, as much superior to that of *metropolitans*, as theirs was to ordinary bishops; these were called PRIMATES and PATRIARCHS, and had jurisdiction over many provinces. For the understanding of this, it is necessary to know, that when Christianity came to be fully settled in the world, they contrived to model the external government of the Church, as near as might be, to the civil government of the *Roman* empire; the parallel is most exactly drawn by an *ingenious* person of our own nation; the sum of it is this: — The whole empire of *Rome* was divided into thirteen *diocesses*, (so they called those divisions,) these contained about *one hundred and twenty provinces*, and

every province several *cities*. Now, as in every city there was a *temporal* magistrate for the executing of justice, and keeping the peace, both for that city and the towns round about it; so was there also a *bishop* for spiritual order and government, whose jurisdiction was of like extent and latitude. In every province there was a proconsul or president, whose seat was usually at the *metropolis*, or chief city of the province; and hither all inferior cities came for judgment in matters of importance. And in proportion to this there was in the same city an *archbishop* or *metropolitan*, for matters of ecclesiastical concernment. Lastly, in every *diocess* the emperors had their *vicarii* or *lieutenants*, who dwelt in the principal city of the *diocess*, where all imperial *edicts* were published, and from whence they were sent abroad into the several provinces, and where was the chief *tribunal* where all causes not determinable elsewhere, were decided. And, to answer this, there was in the same city a *primate*, to whom the last determination of all appeals from all the provinces in differences of the *clergy*, and the sovereign care of all the diocess for sundry points of spiritual government, did belong. This, in short, is the sum of the account which that *learned* man gives of this matter. So that the *patriarch*, as superior to the *metropolitans*, was to have under his jurisdiction not any one single province, but a whole *diocess*, (in the old *Roman* notion of that word,) consisting of many *provinces*. To him belonged the ordination of all the *metropolitans* that were under him, as also the summoning them to councils, the *correcting* and reforming the misdemeanors they were guilty of; and from his judgment and sentence, in things properly within his cognizance, there lay no appeal. To this I shall only add what *Salmasius* has noted, that as the *diocess* that was governed by the *vicarius* had many *provinces* under it, so the *præfectus prætorio* had several *diocesses* under him: and in proportion to this, probable it was, that *patriarchs* were first brought in, who, if not superior to *primates* in jurisdiction and power, were yet in *honour*, by reason of the dignity of those cities where their sees were fixed, as at *Rome*, *Constantinople*, *Alexandria*, *Antioch*, and *Jerusalem*." (*Cave's Primitive Christianity*.)

Thus diocesan bishops, metropolitans, primates, patriarchs, and finally the pope, came in, which offices are considered as corruptions or improvements; as dictated by the necessities of the Church, or as instances of worldly ambition; as of Divine right, or from Satan; according to the different views of those who have written on such subjects. As to them all it may, however, be said, that, so far as they are pleaded for as of Divine

right, they have no support from the New Testament; and if they are placed upon the only ground on which they can be reasonably discussed, that of necessity and good polity, they must be tried by circumstances, and their claims of authority be so defined that it may be known how far they are compatible with those principles with which the New Testament abounds, although it contains no formal plan of Church government. The only Scriptural objection to episcopacy, as it is understood in modern times, is its assumption of superiority of *order*, of an exclusive right to govern the pastors as well as the flock, and to ordain to the Christian ministry. These exclusive powers are by the New Testament nowhere granted to bishops in distinction from presbyters. The government of pastors as well as people, was at first in the assembly of presbyters, who were individually accountable to that ruling body, and that whether they had a president or not. So also as to ordination; it was a right in each, although used by several together, for better security; and even when the presence of a bishop came to be thought necessary to the validity of ordination, the presbyters were not excluded.

As for the argument from the succession of bishops from the times of the apostles, could the fact be made out, it would only trace diocesan bishops to the bishops of parishes; those, to the bishops of single Churches; and bishops of a supposed superior order, to bishops who never thought themselves more than presiding presbyters, *primi inter pares*. This therefore would only show that an unscriptural assumption of distinct orders has been made, which that succession, if established, would refute. But the succession itself is imaginary. Even Epiphanius, a bishop of the fourth century, gives this account of things, “that the apostles were not able to settle all things at once. But according to the number of believers, and the qualifications for the different offices which those whom they found appeared to possess, they appointed in some places only a bishop and deacons; in others presbyters and deacons; in others a bishop, presbyters, and deacons:” — a statement fatal to the argument from succession. As for the pretended catalogues of bishops of the different Churches from the days of the apostles, exhibited by some ecclesiastical writers, they are filled up by forgeries and inventions of later times. Eusebius, more honest, begins his catalogue with declaring, that it is not easy to say who were the disciples of the apostles that were appointed to feed the Churches which they planted, excepting only those whom we read of in the writings of St. Paul.

Whether episcopacy may not be a matter of prudential regulation, is another question. We think it often may; and that Churches are quite at liberty to adopt this mode, provided they maintain St. Jerome's distinction, that "bishops are greater than presbyters rather by custom than by appointment of the Lord, and that still the Church ought to be governed in common," that is, by bishops and presbyters united. It was on this ground that Luther placed episcopacy, — as useful, though not of Divine right; it was by admitting this liberty in Churches, that Calvin and other divines of the Reformed Churches allowed episcopacy and diocesan Churches to be lawful, there being nothing to forbid such an arrangement in Scripture, when placed on the principle of expediency. Some divines of the English Church have chosen to defend its episcopacy wholly upon this ground, as alone tenable; and, admitting that it is safest to approach as near as possible to primitive practice, have proposed the restoration of presbyters as a senate to the bishop, the contraction of diocesses, the placing of bishops in all great towns, and the holding of provincial synods; — thus raising the presbyters to their original rank as the bishop's "*compresbyters*," as Cyprian himself calls them, both in government and in ordinations.

As to that kind of episcopacy which trenches upon no Scriptural principle, much depends upon circumstances, and the forms in which Christian Churches exist. When a Church composes but one congregation, the minister is unquestionably a Scriptural bishop; but he is, and can be, only bishop of the flock, *episcopus gregis*. Of this kind, it appears from the extract given above from Epiphanius, were some of the primitive Churches, existing, probably, in the smaller and more remote places. Where a number of presbyters were ordained to one Church, these would, in their common assembly, have the oversight and government of each other as well as of the people; and, in this their collective capacity, they would be *episcopi gregis et pastorum*. In this manner, episcopacy, as implying the oversight and government both of ministers and their flocks, exists in Presbyterian Churches, and in all others, by whatever name they are called, where ministers are subject to the discipline of assemblies of ministers who admit to the ministry by joint consent, and censure or remove those who are so appointed. When the ancient presbyteries elected a bishop, he might remain, as he appears to have done for some time, the mere president of the assembly of presbyters, and their organ of administration; or be constituted, as afterward, a distinct governing power, although assisted by the advice of his presbyters. He was then in person an *episcopus gregis et*

pastorum, and his official powers gave rise at length to the unfounded distinction of superior *order*. But abating this false principle, even diocesan episcopacy may be considered as in many possible associations of Churches throughout a province, or a whole country, as an arrangement in some circumstances of a wise and salutary nature. Nor do the evils which arose in the Church of Christ appear so attributable to this form of government as to that too intimate connection of the Church with the state, which gave to the former a political character, and took it from under the salutary control of public opinion, — an evil greatly increased by the subsequent destruction of religious liberty, and the coercive interferences of the civil magistrate.

At the same time, it may be very well questioned, whether any presbyters could lawfully surrender into the hands of a bishop their own rights of government and ordination without that security for their due administration which arises from the accountability of the administrator. That these are rights which it is not imperative upon the individual possessing them to exercise individually, appears to have the judgment of the earliest antiquity, because the assembly of presbyters, which was probably co-existent with the ordination of several presbyters to one Church by the apostles, necessarily placed the exercise of the office of each under the direction and control of all. When therefore a bishop was chosen by the presbyters, and invested with the government, and the power of granting orders, so long as the presbyters remained his counsel, and nothing was done but by their concurrence, they were still parties to the mode in which their own powers were exercised, and were justifiable in placing the administration in the hands of one, who was still dependent upon themselves. In this way they probably thought that their own powers might be most efficiently and usefully exercised. Provincial and national synods or councils, exercising a proper superintendence over bishops when made even more independent of their presbyters than was the case in the best periods of the primitive Church, might also, if meeting frequently and regularly, and as a part of an ecclesiastical system, afford the same security for good administration, and might justify the surrender of the exercise of their powers by the presbyters. But when that surrender was formerly made, or is at any time made now in the constitution of Churches, to bishops, or to those bearing a similar office however designated, without security and control, either by making that office temporary and elective, or by the constitution of synods or assemblies of the ministers of a large

and united body of Christians for the purpose of supreme government, an office is created which has not only no countenance in Scripture, that of a bishop independent of presbyters, but one which implies an unlawful surrender of those powers, on the part of the latter, with which they were invested, not for their own sakes, but for the benefit of the Church; and which they could have no authority to divest themselves of and to transfer, without retaining the power of counselling and controlling the party charged with the administration of them. In other words, presbyters have a right, under proper regulations, to appoint another to administer for them, or to consent to such an arrangement when they find it already existing, but they have no power to divest themselves of these rights and duties absolutely. If these principles be sound, modern episcopacy in many Churches, is objectionable in other respects than as it assumes an unscriptural distinction of order.

The following is a liberal concession on the subject of episcopacy from a strenuous defender of that form of government as it exists in the Church of England: —

“It is not contended that the bishops, priests, and deacons, of England, are at present precisely the same that bishops, presbyters, and deacons, were in Asia Minor seventeen hundred years ago. We only maintain that there have always been bishops, priests, and deacons, in the Christian Church, since the days of the apostles, with different powers and functions, it is allowed, in different countries and at different periods; but the general principles and duties which have respectively characterized these clerical orders, have been essentially the same at all times, and in all places; and the variations which they have undergone, have only been such as have ever belonged to all persons in public situations, whether civil or ecclesiastical, and which are indeed inseparable from every thing in which mankind are concerned in this transitory and fluctuating world.

“I have thought it right to take this general view of the ministerial office, and to make these observations upon the clerical orders subsisting in this kingdom, for the purpose of pointing out the foundation and principles of Church authority, and of showing that our ecclesiastical establishment is as nearly conformable, as change of circumstances will permit, to the practice of the primitive

Church. But, though I flatter myself that I have proved episcopacy to be an apostolical institution, yet I readily acknowledge that there is no precept in the New Testament which commands that every Church should be governed by bishops. No Church can exist without some government; but though there must be rules and orders for the proper discharge of the offices of public worship, though there must be fixed regulations concerning the appointment of ministers, and though a subordination among them is expedient in the highest degree, yet it does not follow that all these things must be precisely the same in every Christian country; they may vary with the other varying circumstances of human society, with the extent of a country, the manners of its inhabitants, the nature of its civil government, and many other peculiarities which might be specified. As it has not pleased our almighty Father to prescribe any particular form of civil government for the security of temporal comforts to his rational creatures, so neither has he prescribed any particular form of ecclesiastical polity as absolutely necessary to the attainment of eternal happiness. But he has, in the most explicit terms, enjoined obedience to all governors, whether civil or ecclesiastical, and whatever may be their denomination, as essential to the character of a true Christian. Thus the Gospel only lays down general principles, and leaves the application of them to men as free agents.” (*Bishop Tomline’s Elements.*)

Bishop Tomline, however, and the high Episcopalians of the Church of England, contend for an original distinction in the office and order of bishops and presbyters, in which notion they are contradicted by one who may be truly called the founder of the Church of England, Archbishop Cranmer, who says,

“The bishops and priests were at one time, and were not two things; but both one office in the beginning of Christ’s religion.” (*Stillingfleet’s Irenicum*, p. 392.)

On the subject of THE CHURCH itself, opinions as opposite or varying as possible have been held, down from that of the papists, who contend for its visible unity throughout the world under a visible head, to that of the Independents, who consider the universal Church as composed of congregational Churches, each perfect in itself, and entirely independent of every other.

The first opinion is manifestly contradicted by the language of the apostles, who, while they teach that there is but one Church, composed of believers throughout the world, think it not at all inconsistent with this to speak of “the Churches of Judea,” “of Achaia,” “the seven Churches of Asia,” “the Church at Ephesus,” &c. Among themselves the apostles had no common head; but planted Churches and gave directions for their government, in most cases without any apparent correspondence with each other. The popish doctrine is certainly not found in their writings, and so far were they from making provision for the government of this one supposed Church, by the appointment of one visible and exclusive head, that they provide for the future government of the respective Churches raised up by them, in a totally different manner, that is, by the ordination of ministers for each Church, who are indifferently called bishops, and presbyters, and pastors. The only unity of which they speak is the unity of the whole Church in Christ, the invisible Head, by faith; and the unity produced by “fervent love toward each other.” Nor has the popish doctrine of the visible unity of the Church any countenance from early antiquity. The best ecclesiastical historians have showed, that, through the greater part of the second century, “the Christian Churches were independent of each other. Each Christian assembly was a little state governed by its own laws, which were either enacted, or at least approved by the society. But in process of time, all the Churches of a province were formed into one large ecclesiastical body, which, like confederate states, assembled at certain times in order to deliberate about the common interests of the whole.” (*Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History*, cent. 2, chap. 2.) So far indeed this union of Churches appears to have been a wise and useful arrangement, although afterward it was carried to an injurious extreme, until finally it gave birth to the assumptions of the bishop of Rome, as universal bishop; a claim, however, which when most successful, was but partially submitted to, the Eastern Churches having always maintained their independence. No very large association of Churches of any kind existed till toward the close of the second century, which sufficiently refutes the papal argument from antiquity.

The independence of the early Christian Churches does not, however appear to have resembled that of the Churches which in modern times are called Independent. During the lives of the apostles and evangelists, they were certainly subject to their counsel and control, which proves that the independency of separate societies was not the first form of the Church. It

may, indeed, be allowed, that some of the smaller and more insulated Churches might, after the death of the apostles and evangelists, retain this form for some considerable time; but the larger Churches, in the chief cities, and those planted in populous neighbourhoods, had many presbyters, and as the members multiplied, they had several separate assemblies or congregations, yet all under the same common government. And when Churches were raised up in the neighbourhood of cities, the appointment of *chorepiscopi*, or country bishops, and of visiting presbyters, both acting under the presbytery of the city, with its bishop at its head, is sufficiently in proof, that the ancient Churches, especially the larger and more prosperous of them, existed in that form, which in modern times we should call a religious connection, subject to a common government. This appears to have arisen out of the very circumstance of the increase of the Church, through the zeal of the first Christians; and in the absence of all direction by the apostles, that every new society of believers raised should be formed into an independent Church, it was doubtless much more in the spirit of the very first discipline exercised by the apostles and evangelists, (when none of the Churches were independent, but remained under the government of those who had been chiefly instrumental in raising them up,) to place themselves under a common inspection, and to unite the weak with the strong, and the newly converted with those who were “in Christ before them.” There was also in this, greater security afforded both for the continuance of wholesome doctrine, and of godly discipline.

The persons appointed to feed and govern the Church of Christ being, then, as we have seen, those who are called “*pastors*,” a word which imports both *care* and *government*, two other subjects claim our attention, — the share which the body of the people have in their own government by their pastors, and the objects toward which the power of government, thus established, in the Church, is legitimately directed.

As to the first, some preliminary observations may be necessary.

1. When Churches are professedly connected with, and exclusively patronized and upheld by, the state, questions of ecclesiastical government arise, which are of greater perplexity and difficulty than when they are left upon their original ground, as voluntary and spiritual associations. The state will not exclusively recognize ministers without maintaining some control over their functions; and will not lend its aid to enforce the canons

of an established Church, without reserving to itself some right of appeal, or of interposition. Hence a contest between the civil and ecclesiastical powers often springs up, and one at least generally feels itself to be fettered by the other. When an established Church is perfectly tolerant, and the state allows freedom of dissent and separation from it without penalties, these evils are much mitigated. But it is not my design to consider a Church as at all allied with the state; but as deriving nothing from it except protection, and that general countenance which the influence of a government, professing Christianity and recognizing its laws, must afford.

2. The only view in which the sacred writers of the New Testament appear to have contemplated the Churches, was that of associations founded upon conviction of the truth of Christianity, and the obligatory nature of the commands of Christ. They considered the pastors as dependent for their support upon the free contributions of the people; and the people as bound to sustain, love, and obey them in all things lawful, that is, in all things agreeable to the doctrine they had received in the Scriptures, and, in things indifferent, to pay respectful deference to them. They enjoined it upon the pastors to “rule well,” “diligently,” and with fidelity, in executing the directions they had given them; — to silence all teachers of false doctrines, and their adherents; — to reprove unruly and immoral members of the Church, and, if incorrigible, to put them away. On the other hand, should any of their pastors or teachers err in doctrine, the people are enjoined not “to receive them,” to “turn away” from them, and not even to bid them “God speed.” The rule which forbids Christians “to eat,” that is, to communicate at the Lord’s table with an immoral “brother,” held, of course, good, when that brother was a pastor. Thus pastors were put by them under the influence of the public opinion of the Churches; and the remedy of separating from them, in manifest defections of doctrine and morals, was afforded to the sound members of a Church, should no power exist, able or inclined to silence the offending pastor and his party. In all this, principles were recognized, which, had they not been in future times lost sight of or violated, would have done much, perhaps every thing, to preserve some parts of the Church, at least, in soundness of faith, and purity of manners. A perfect religious liberty is always supposed by the apostles to exist among Christians; no compulsion of the civil power is anywhere assumed by them as the basis of their advices or directions; no binding of the members to one Church, without liberty to join another, by any ties but those involved in moral considerations, of sufficient weight,

however, to prevent the evils of faction and schism. It was this which created a natural and competent check upon the ministers of the Church; for being only sustained by the opinion of the Churches, they could not but have respect to it; and it was this which gave to the sound part of a fallen Church the advantage of renouncing, upon sufficient and well-weighed grounds, their communion with it, and of kindling up the light of a pure ministry and a holy discipline, by forming a separate association, bearing its testimony against errors in doctrine, and failures in practice. Nor is it to be conceived, that, had this simple principle of perfect religious liberty been left unviolated through subsequent ages, the Church could ever have become so corrupt, or with such difficulty and slowness have been recovered from its fall. This ancient Christian liberty has happily been restored in a few parts of Christendom.

3. In places where now the communion with particular Churches, as to human authority, is perfectly voluntary, and liberty of conscience is unfettered, it often happens that questions of Church government are argued on the assumption that the governing power in such Churches is of the same character, and tends to the same results, as where it is connected with civil influence, and is upheld by the power of the state.

Nothing can be more fallacious, and no instrument has been so powerful as this in the hands of the restless and factious, to delude the unwary. Those who possess the governing power in such Churches, are always under the influence of public opinion to an extent unfelt in establishments. They can enforce nothing felt to be oppressive to the members in general without dissolving the society itself; and their utmost power extends to excision from the body, which, unlike the sentences of excommunication in state Churches, is wholly unconnected with civil penalties. If, then, a resistance is created to any regulations among the major part of any such religious community, founded on a sense of their injurious operation, or to the manner of their enforcement; and if that feeling be the result of a settled conviction, and not the effervescence of temporary mistake and excitement, a change must necessarily ensue, or the body at large be disturbed or dissolved: if, on the other hand, this feeling be the work of a mere faction, partial tumults or separation may take place, and great moral evil may result to the factious parties, but the body will retain its communion, which will be a sufficient proof that the governing power has been the subject of ungrounded and uncharitable attack, since otherwise the people at large must have felt the evils of the general regulations or

administration complained of. The very terms often used in the grand controversy arising out of the struggle for the establishment of religious liberty with national and intolerant Churches, are not generally appropriate to such discussions as may arise in voluntary religious societies, although they are often employed, either carelessly or *ad captandum*, to serve the purposes of faction.

4. It is also an important general observation, that, in settling the government of a Church, there are pre-existent laws of Christ, which it is not in the option of any to receive or to reject. Under whatever form the governing power is arranged, it is so bound to execute all the rules left by Christ and his apostles, as to doctrine, worship, the sacraments, and discipline, honestly interpreted, that it is not at liberty to take that office, or to continue to exercise it, if by any restrictions imposed upon it, it is prevented from carrying these laws into effect. As in the state, so in the Church, government is an ordinance of God; and as it is imperative upon rulers in the state to be “a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well,” so also is it imperative upon the rulers of the Church to banish strange doctrines, to uphold God’s ordinances, to reprove and rebuke, and, finally, to put away evil doers. The spirit in which this is to be done is also prescribed. It is to be done in the spirit of meekness, and with long suffering; but the work must be done upon the responsibility of the pastors to Him who has commissioned them for this purpose; and they have a right to require from the people, that in this office and ministry they should not only not be obstructed, but affectionately and zealously aided, as ministering in these duties, sometimes painful, not for themselves, but for the good of the whole. With respect to the members of a Church, the same remark is applicable as to the members of a state. It is not matter of option with them whether they will be under government according to the laws of Christ or not, for that is imperative; government in both cases being of Divine appointment. They have, on the other hand, the right to full security, that they shall be governed by the laws of Christ; and they have a right too to establish as many guards against human infirmity and passion in those who are “set over them,” as may be prudently devised, provided these are not carried to such an extent as to be obstructive to the legitimate Scriptural discharge of their duties. The true view of the case appears to be, that the government of the Church is in its pastors, open to various modifications as to form; and that it is to be conducted with such a concurrence of the people, as shall constitute a sufficient guard against

abuse, and yet not prevent the legitimate and efficient exercise of pastoral duties, as these duties are stated in the Scriptures. This original authority in the pastors, and concurrent consent in the people, may be thus applied to particular cases: —

1. As to the ordination of ministers. If we consult the New Testament, this office was never conveyed by the people. The apostles were ordained by our Lord; the evangelists, by the apostles; the elders in every Church, both by apostles and evangelists. The passage which has been chiefly urged by those who would originate the ministry from the people, is ^{<44423>}Acts 14:23, where the historian, speaking of St. Paul and Barnabas, says, “And when they had ordained (χειροτονησαντες) elders in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord.” Here, because χειροτονεῖν originally signified to choose by way of suffrage, some have argued that these elders were appointed by the suffrages of the people. Long, however, before the time of St. Luke, this word was used for simple designation, without any reference to election by suffrages; and so it is employed by St. Luke himself in the same book, ^{<44041>}Acts 10:41, “Witnesses *foreappointed* of God.” where of course the suffrages of men are out of the question. It is also fatal to the argument drawn from the text, that the act implied in the word, whatever it might be, was not the act of the people, but that of Paul and Barnabas. Even the deacons, whose appointment is mentioned Acts 6, although “looked out” by the disciples as men of honest report, did not enter upon their office till solemnly “appointed” thereto by the apostles. Nothing is clearer in the New Testament, than that all the candidates for the ministry were judged of by those who had been placed in that office themselves, and received their appointment from them. Such too was the practice of the primitive Churches after the death of both apostles and evangelists. Presbyters, who during the life of the apostles had the power of ordination, (for they laid their hands upon Timothy,) continued to perform that office in discharge of one solemn part of their duty, to perpetuate the ministry, and to provide for the wants of the Churches. In the times of the apostles, who were endued with special gifts, the concurrence of the people was not, perhaps, always formally taken; but the directions to Timothy and Titus imply a reference to the judgment of the members of the Church, because from them only it could be learned whether the party fixed upon for ordination possessed those qualifications without which ordination was prohibited. When the Churches assumed a more regular form, “the people were always present at

ordinations, and ratified the action with their approbation and consent. To this end the bishop was wont before every ordination to publish the names of those who were to have holy orders conferred upon them, that so the people, who best knew their lives and conversation, might interpose if they had any thing material to object against them.” (*Cave’s Primitive Christianity*.) Sometimes also they nominated them by suffrages, and thus proposed them for ordination. The mode in which the people shall be made a concurrent party is matter of prudential regulation; but they had an early, and certainly a reasonable right to a voice in the appointment of their ministers, although the power of ordination was vested in ministers alone, to be exercised on their responsibility to Christ.

2. As to the laws by which the Church is to be governed. So far as they are manifestly laid down in the word of God, and not regulations judged to be subsidiary thereto, it is plain that the rulers of a Church are bound to execute them, and the people to obey them. They cannot be matter of compact on either side, except as the subject of a mutual and solemn engagement to defer to them without any modification or appeal to any other standard.

Every Church declares in some way, how it understands the doctrine and the disciplinary laws of Christ. This declaration as to doctrine, in modern times, is made by confessions or articles of faith, in which, if fundamental error is found, the evil rests upon the head of that Church collectively, and upon the members individually, every one of whom is bound to try all doctrines by the Holy Scriptures, and cannot support an acknowledged system of error without guilt. As to discipline, the manner in which a Church provides for public worship, the publication of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments, the instruction of the ignorant, the succour of the distressed, the admonition of the disorderly, and the excision of offenders, (which are all points on which the New Testament has issued express injunctions,) is its declaration of the manner in which it interprets those injunctions, which also it does on its own collective responsibility, and that of its members. If, however, we take for illustration of the subject before us, a Church at least substantially right in this its interpretation of doctrine, and of the laws of Christ as to general, and what we may call, for distinction’s sake, *moral* discipline; these are the first principles upon which this Church is founded. It is either an apostolic Church, which has retained primitive faith and discipline; or it has subsequently been collected into a new communion, on account of the fall

of other Churches; and has placed itself, according to its own conviction, upon the basis of primitive doctrine and discipline as found in the Scriptures. On this ground either the pastors and people met and united at first; or the people, converted to faith and holiness by the labours of one or more pastors, holding, as they believe, these Scriptural views, placed themselves under the guidance of these pastors, and thus formed themselves into a Church state, which was their act of accession to these principles. It is clear, therefore, that by this very act, they bind themselves to comply with the original terms of the communion into which they have entered, and that they have as to these doctrines, and as to these disciplinary laws of Christ, which are to be preached and enforced, no rights of control over ministers, which shall prevent the just exercise of their office in these respects. They have a right to such regulations and checks as shall secure, in the best possible way, the just and faithful exercise of that office, and the honest and impartial use of that power; but this is the limit of their right; and every system of suffrages, or popular concurrence, which, under pretence of guarding against abuse of ministerial authority, makes its exercise *absolutely* and in *all cases* dependent upon the consent of those over whom it extends, goes beyond that limit, and invades the right of pastoral government, which the New Testament has established. It brings, in a word, the laws of Christ into debate, which yet the members profess to have received as their rule; and it claims to put into commission those duties which pastors are charged by Christ personally to exercise. The Apostle Paul, had the incestuous person at Corinth denied the crime, and there had been any doubtfulness as to the fact, would unquestionably have taken the opinion of the elders of that Church and others upon that fact; but when it became a question whether the *laws* of Christ's discipline should be exercised or not, he did not feel himself concluded by the sense of the whole Corinthian Church. which was in favour of the offender continuing in communion with them; but he instantly reproved them for their laxity, and issued the sentence of excision, thereby showing that an obvious law of Christ was not to be subjected to the decision of a majority.

This view indeed supposes, that such a society, like almost all the Churches ever known, has admitted in the first instance, that the power of admission into the Church, of reproof, of exhortation, and of exclusion from it, subject to various guards against abuses, is in the pastors of a Church. There are some who have adopted a different opinion, supposing that the

power of administering the discipline of Christ must be conveyed by them to their ministers, and is to be wholly controlled by their suffrages; so that there is in these systems, not a provision of counsel against possible errors in the exercise of authority; not a guard against human infirmity or viciousness; not a reservation of right to determine upon the fitness of the cases to which the laws of Christ are applied; but a claim of co-administration as to these laws themselves, or rather an entire administration of them through the pastor, as a passive agent of their will. Those who adopt these views are bound to show that this is the state of things established in the New Testament. That it is not, appears plain from the very term “pastors,” which imports both care and government; mild and affectionate government indeed, but still government. Hence the office of shepherd is applied to describe the government of God, and the government of kings. It appears too, from other titles given, not merely to apostles, but to the presbyters they ordained and placed over the Churches. They are called *ηγουμενοι*, rulers; *επισκοποι*, overseers; *ωροεστωτες*, those who preside. They are commended for “ruling well;” and they are directed “to charge,” “to reprove,” “to rebuke,” “to watch,” “to silence,” “to put away.” The very “account” they must give to God, in connection with the discharge of these duties, shows that their office and responsibility was peculiar and personal, and much greater than that of any private member of the Church, which it could not be if they were the passive agents only in matters of doctrine and discipline of the will of the whole. To the double duty of *feeding* and exercising the *oversight* of the flock, a special reward is also promised when the “*Chief Shepherd* shall appear,” — a title of Christ, which shows that as the pastoral office of feeding and ruling is exercised by Christ supremely, so it is exercised by his ministers in both branches subordinately. Finally, the exhortations to Christians to “obey them that have the rule over them,” and to “submit” to them, and “to esteem them very highly for their works’ sake,” and to “remember them;” — all show that the ministerial office is not one of mere agency, under the absolute direction of the votes of the collected Church.

3. With respect to other disciplinary regulations, supposed by any religious society to be subsidiary to the great and Scriptural ends of Church communion, these appear to be matters of mutual agreement, and are capable of modification by the mutual consent of ministers and people, under their common responsibility to Christ, that they are done advisedly, with prayer, with reference to the edification of the Church, and so as not

to infringe upon, but to promote, the influence of the doctrines, duties, and spirit of the Gospel. The consent of the people to all such regulations, either tacitly by their adoption of them, or more expressly through any regular meetings of different officers, who may be regarded as acquainted with, and representing the sentiments of the whole; as also by the approval of those aged, wise, and from different causes, influential persons, who are to be found in all societies and who are always, whether in office or not, their natural guardians, guides, and representatives, is necessary to confidence and harmony, and a proper security for good and orderly government. It is thus that those to whom the government or well ordering of the Church is committed, and those upon whom their influence and Scriptural authority exert themselves, appear to be best brought into a state of harmony and mutual confidence; and that abundant security is afforded against all misrule, seeing that in a voluntary communion, and where perfect liberty exists for any member to unite himself to other Churches, or for any number of them to arrange themselves into a new community, subject however to the moral cautions of the New Testament against the schismatic spirit, it can never be the interest of those with whom the regulation of the affairs of a Church is lodged, voluntarily to adopt measures which can be generally felt to be onerous and injurious, nor is it practicable to persevere in them. In this method of bringing in the concurrence of the people, all assemblages of whole societies, or very large portions of them, are avoided, — a popular form of Church government, which, however it were modified so as best to accord with the Scriptural authority of ministers, could only be tolerable in very small isolated societies, and that in the times of their greatest simplicity and love. To raise into legislators and censors all the members of a Church the young, the ignorant, and the inexperienced, is to do them great injury. It is the sure way to foster debates, contentions, and self confidence, to open the door to intrigue and policy, to tempt forward and conceited men to become a kind of religious demagogues, and entirely to destroy the salutary influence of the aged, experienced and gifted members, by referring every decision to members and suffrages, and placing all that is good and venerable, and influential among the members themselves, at the feet of a democracy.

4. As to the power of admission into the Church, that is clearly with ministers, to whom the office of baptism is committed, by which the door is opened into the Church universal; and as there can be no visible communion kept up with the universal Church, except by communion with

some particular Church, the admission into that particular communion must be in the hands of ministers, because it is one of the duties of their office, made such by the Scripture itself, to enjoin this mode of confessing Christ, by assembling with his saints in worship, by submitting to discipline, and by “showing forth his death” at the Lord’s Supper. We have, however, already said, that the members of a Church, although they have no right to obstruct the just exercise of this power, have the right to prevent its being unworthily exercised; and their concurrence with the admission, tacit or declared, according to their usages, is an arrangement, supported by analogies, drawn from the New Testament, and from primitive antiquity. The expulsion of unworthy members, after admonition, devolves upon those to whom the administration of the sacraments, the signs of communion, is entrusted, and therefore upon ministers, for this reason, that as “shepherds” of the flock under the “Chief Shepherd,” they are charged to carry his laws into effect. These laws, it is neither with them nor with the people to modify; they are already declared by superior authority; but the determination of the facts of the case to which they are to be applied, is matter of mutual investigation and decision, in order to prevent an erring or an improper exercise of authority. That such investigation should take place, not before the assembled members of a society, but before proper and select tribunals, appears not only an obviously proper, but, in many respects, a necessary regulation.

The trial of unworthy ministers remains to be noticed, which, wherever a number of religious societies exist as one Church, having therefore many pastors, is manifestly most safely placed in the hands of those pastors themselves, and that not only because the official acts of censure and exclusion lie with them, but for other reasons also. It can scarcely happen that a minister should be under accusation, except in some very particular cases, but that, from his former influence, at least with a part of the people, some faction would be found to support him. In proportion to the ardour of this feeling, the other party would be excited to undue severity and bitterness. To try such a case before a whole society, there would not only be the same objection as in the case of private members; but the additional one, that parties would be more certainly formed, and be still more violent. If he must be arraigned then before some special tribunal, the most fitting is that of his brethren, provided that the parties accusing have the right to bring on such a trial upon exhibition of probable evidence, and to prosecute it without obstruction. In Churches whose ministers are thrown solely upon

the public opinion of the society, and exist as such only by their character, this is ordinarily a sufficient guard against the toleration of improper conduct; while it removes the trial from those whose excitement for or against the accused might on either side be unfavourable to fair and equitable decision, and to the peace of the Church.

The above remarks contain but a sketch of those principles of Church government which appear to be contained in, or to be suggested by, the New Testament. They still leave much liberty to Christians to adopt them in detail to the circumstances in which they are placed. The offices to be created; the meetings necessary for the management of the various affairs of the Church, spiritual and financial; the assembling of ministers in larger or smaller numbers for counsel, and for oversight of each other, and of the Churches to which they belong, are all matters of this kind, and are left to the suggestions of wisdom and piety. The extent to which distinct societies of Christians shall associate in one Church, under a common government, appears also to be a matter of prudence and of circumstances. In the primitive Church we see different societies in a city and its neighbourhood under the common government of the assembly of presbyters; and afterward these grew into provincial Churches, of greater or smaller extent. In modern times, we have similar associations in the form of national Churches, Episcopal or Presbyterian; and of Churches existing without any recognition of the state at all, and forming smaller or larger communities, from the union of a few societies, to the union of societies throughout a whole country; holding the same doctrines, practising the same modes of worship, and placing themselves under a common code of laws and a common government. But whatever be the form they take, they are bound to respect, and to model themselves by, the *principles* of Church communion and of Church discipline which are contained in the New Testament; and they will be fruitful in holiness and usefulness, so long as they conform to them, and so long as those forms of administration are conscientiously preferred which appear best adapted to preserve and to diffuse sound doctrine, Christian practice, spirituality, and charity. That discipline is defective and bad in itself, or it is ill administered, which does not accomplish these ends; and that is best which best promotes them.

The ENDS to which Church authority is legitimately directed remain to be briefly considered.

The first is the preservation and the publication of “sound *doctrine*.” Against false doctrines, and the men “of corrupt minds” who taught them, the sermons of Christ, and the writings of the apostles, abound in cautions; and since St. Paul lays it down as a rule, as to erring teachers, that their “mouths must be stopped,” this implies, that the power of declaring what sound doctrine is, and of silencing false teachers, was confided by the apostles to the future Church. By systematic writers this has been called *potestas δογματικη*; which, abused by the ambition of man forms no small part of that antichristian usurpation which characterizes the Church of Rome. Extravagant as are her claims, so that she brings in her traditions as of equal authority with the inspired writings, and denies to men the right of private judgment, and of trying her dogmas by the test of the Holy Scriptures; there is a sober sense in which this power may be taken. The great Protestant principle, that the Holy Scriptures are the only standard of doctrine; that the doctrines of every Church must be proved out of them; and that to this standard every individual member has the right of bringing them, in order to the confirmation of his own faith, must be held inviolate, if we would not see Divine authority displaced by human. Since, however, men may come to different conclusions upon the meaning of Scripture, it has been the practice from primitive times to declare the sense in which Scripture is understood by collective assemblies of ministers, and by the Churches united with them, in order to the enforcement of such interpretations upon Christians generally, by the influence of learning, piety, numbers, and solemn deliberation. The reference of the question respecting circumcision by the Church at Antioch to “the apostles and elders at Jerusalem,” is the first instance of this, though with this peculiarity, that, in this case, the decision was given under plenary inspiration. While one of the apostles lived, an appeal could be made to him in like manner when any doctrinal novelty sprung up in the Church. After their death, smaller or larger councils, composed of the public teachers of the Churches, were resorted to, that they might pronounce upon these differences of opinion, and by their authority confirm the faithful, and abash the propagators of error. Still later, four councils, called general, from the number of persons assembled in them from various parts of Christendom, have peculiar eminence. The council of Nice, in the fourth century, which condemned the Arian heresy, and formed that Scriptural and important formulary called the Nicene Creed; the council of Constantinople, held at the end of the same century, which condemned the errors of Macedonius, and asserted the Divinity and personality of the Holy

Ghost; and the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, about the middle of the fifth century, which censured the opinions of Nestorius and Eutyches. At Nice it was declared that the Son is truly God, of the same substance with the Father; at Constantinople, that the Holy Ghost is also truly God; at Ephesus, that the Divine nature was truly united to the human in Christ, in *one* person; at Chalcedon, that both natures remained *distinct*, and that the human nature was not lost or absorbed in the Divine. The decisions of these councils, both from their antiquity and from the manifest conformity of their decisions on these points to the Holy Scriptures, have been received to this day in what have been called the orthodox Churches, throughout the world. On general councils, the Romish Church has been divided as to the questions, whether infallibility resides in them, or in the pope, or in the pope when at their head. Protestants cut this matter short by acknowledging that they have erred, and may err, being composed of fallible men, and that they have no authority but as they manifestly agree with the Scriptures. To the above-mentioned councils they have in general always paid great deference, as affording confirmation of the plain and literal sense of Scripture on the points in question; but on no other ground. “Things ordained by general councils as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared they be taken out of Holy Scripture.” (*Twenty-first Article of the Church of England.*) The manner in which the respective Churches of the reformation declared their doctrinal interpretation of the Scriptures on the leading points of theology, was by confessions and articles of faith, and by the adoption of ancient or primitive creeds. With reference to this practice, no doubt it is, that the Church of England declares in her twentieth article, that “the Church hath authority in controversies of faith;” but qualifies the tenet by adding, “and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s word written;” in which there is a manifest recognition of the right of all who have God’s word in their hands, to make use of it in order to try what any Church “ordains,” as necessary to be believed. This authority of a Church in matters of doctrine appears then to be reduced to the following particulars, which, although directly opposed to the assumptions of the Church of Rome, are of great importance: —

1. To declare the sense in which it interprets the language of Scripture on all the leading doctrines of the Christian revelation; for to contend, as some have done, that no creeds or articles of faith are proper, but that belief in the Scriptures only ought to be required, would be to destroy all doctrinal

distinctions, since the most perverse interpreters of Scripture profess to believe the words of Scripture.

2. To require from all its members, with whom the right of private judgment is by all Protestant Churches left inviolate, to examine such declarations of faith professing to convey the sense of Scripture with modesty and proper respect to those grave and learned assemblies in which all these points have been weighed with deliberation; receiving them as guides to truth, not implicitly, it is true, but still with docility and humility. “Great weight and deference is due to such decisions, and every man that finds his own thoughts differ from them ought to examine the matter over again with much attention and care, freeing himself all he can from prejudice and obstinacy, with a just distrust of his own understanding, and an humble respect to the judgment of his superiors. This is due to the consideration of peace and union, and to that authority which the Church has to maintain it, but if, after all possible methods of inquiry, a man cannot master his thoughts, or make them agree with the public decisions, his conscience is not under bonds, since this authority is not absolute, nor grounded upon a promise of infallibility.” (*Burnet.*)

3. To silence within its own pale the preaching of all doctrines contrary to the received standards. On this every Church has a right to insist which sincerely believes that contrary doctrines to its own are fundamental or dangerous errors, and which is thereby bound both to keep its members from their contamination, and also to preserve them from those distractions and controversies to which the preaching of diverse doctrines by its ministers would inevitably lead. Nor is there any thing in the exercise of this authority contrary to Christian liberty, since the members of any communion, and especially the ministers, know beforehand the terms of fellowship with the Churches whose confessions of faith are thus made public; and because also, where conscience is unfettered by public law, they are neither prevented from enjoying their own opinions in peace, nor from propagating them in other assemblies.

The second end is, the forming of such *regulations* for the conduct of its ministers, officers, and members, as shall establish a common order for worship; facilitate the management of the affairs of the community, spiritual, economical, and financial; and give a right direction to the general conduct of the whole society. This in technical language is called *potestas διατακτική*, and consists in making *canons*, or *rules*, for those particular

matters which are not provided for in detail by the directions of Scripture. This power also, like the former, has been carried to a culpable excess in many Churches, so as to fill them with superstition, and in many respects to introduce an onerous system of observances, like that of Judaism, the yoke from which the Gospel has set us free. The simplicity of Christianity has thus been often destroyed, and the “doctrines of men” set up “as commandments of God.” At the same time, there is a sound sense in which this power in a Church must be admitted, and a deference to it bound upon the members. For, when the laws of Christ are both rightly understood and cordially admitted, the application of them to particular cases is still necessary; many regulations also are dictated by inference and by analogies, and often appear to be required by the *spirit* of the Gospel, for which there is no provision in the letter of Scripture. The obligation of public worship, for instance, is plainly stated; but the seasons of its observances its frequency, and the mode in which it is to be conducted, must be matter of special regulation, in order that all things may be done “decently and in order.” The observance of the Sabbath is binding; but particular rules guarding against such acts, as in the judgment of a Church are violations of the law of the Sabbath, are often necessary to direct the judgment and consciences of the body of the people. Baptism is to be administered; but the manner of this service may be prescribed by a Church, since the Scriptures have not determined it. So also as to the mode and the times of receiving the Lord’s Supper, in the same absence of inspired directions regulations must be agreed upon, that there may be, as nearly as edification requires, an undistracted uniformity of practice. Special festivals of commemoration and thanksgivings may also be appointed as fit occasions for the inculcation of particular truths, and moral duties, and for the special excitement of grateful affections. For although they are not particularly prescribed in Scripture, they are in manifest accordance with its spirit, and are sanctioned by many of the examples which it exhibits. Days of fasting and humiliation, for the same reasons, may be the subject of appointment; and beside the regular acts of public worship, private meetings of the members for mutual prayer and religious converse may also be found necessary. To these may be added, various plans for the instruction of children, the visitation and relief of the sick, and the introduction of the Gospel into neglected neighbourhoods, and its promotion in foreign lands. A considerable number of other regulations touching order, contributions, the repressing of particular vices which may

mark the spirit of the times, and the practice of particular duties, will also be found necessary.

The only legitimate ends, however, of all these directions and rules, are, the edification of the Church; the preservation of its practical purity; the establishment of an influential order and decorum in its services; and the promotion of its usefulness to the world. The general principles by which they are to be controlled, are the *spirituality*, *simplicity*, and *practical character* of Christianity; and the authority with which they are invested, is derived from piety, wisdom, and singleness of heart, in those who originate them, and from that docility and submissiveness of Christians to each other, which is enforced upon them in the New Testament. For although every Christian is exhorted to “try all things.” to “search the Scriptures,” and to exercise his best judgment, in matters which relate to doctrine, discipline, and practice, yet he is to do this in the spirit of a Christian; not with self-willedness, and self-confidence; not contemning the opinion and authority of others; not factiously and censoriously. This is his duty even where the most important subjects are in question; how much more then in things comparatively indifferent ought he to practise the apostolic rule: “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.”

The third end of Church government is the infliction and removal of censurers, a power (*potestas διακριτικη*) the abuse of which, and the extravagant lengths to which it has been carried, have led some wholly to deny it, or to treat it slightly; but which is nevertheless deposited with every Scriptural Church. Even associations much less solemn and spiritual in their character, have the power to put away their members, and to receive again, upon certain conditions, those who offend against their rules; and if the offence which called forth this expulsion be of a moral nature, the censure of a whole society, inflicted after due examination, comes with much greater weight, and is a much greater reproach and misfortune to the person who falls under it, than that of a private individual. In the case of a Christian Church, however, the proceeding connects itself with a higher than human authority. The members have separated from the world, and have placed themselves under the laws of Christ. They stand in a special relation to him, so long as they are faithful; they are objects of his care and love, as members of his own body; and to them, as such, great and numerous promises are made. To preserve them in this state of fidelity, to guard them from errors of doctrine and viciousness of practice, and thus to

prevent their separation from Christ, the Church with its ministry, its ordinances, and its discipline was established. He who becomes unfaithful in opposition to the influence of those edifying and conservatory means, forfeits the favour of Christ, even before he is deservedly separated from the Church; but when he is separated, put away, denied communion with the Church, he loses also the benefit of all those peculiar means of grace and salvation, and of those special influences and promises which Christ bestows upon the Church. He is not only thrown back upon common society with shame, stigmatized as an “evil worker,” by the solemn sentence of a religious tribunal; but becomes, so to speak, again a member of that incorporated and hostile society, THE WORLD, against which the exclusive and penal sentences of the word of God are directed. Where the sentence of excision by a Church is erring or vicious, as it may be in some cases, it cannot affect an innocent individual; he would remain, notwithstanding the sentence of men, a member of Christ’s invisible universal Church; but when it proceeds upon a just application of the laws of Christ, there can be no doubt of its ratification in heaven, although the door is left open to penitence and restoration.

In proportion, however, as a sober and serious Christian, having those views, wishes to keep up in his own mind, and in the minds of others, a proper sense of the weight and solemnity of Church censures when rightly administered, he will feel disgusted at those assumptions of control over the mercy and justice of God. which fallible men have in some Churches endeavoured to establish, and have too often exercised for the gratification of the worst passions. So because our Lord said to Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” and “whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” which is also said Matthew 18. 18, to all the apostles, “it came to be understood that the sentence of excommunication, by its own intrinsic authority, condemned to eternal punishment, that the excommunicated person could not be delivered from this condemnation, unless the Church gave him absolution; and that the Church had the power of absolving him upon the private confession of his fault, either by prescribing to him certain acts of penance, and works of charity, the performance of which was considered as a satisfaction for the sin which he had committed, or by applying to him the merits of some other person. And as in the progress of corruption, the whole power of the Church was supposed to be lodged in the pope, there flowed from him, at

his pleasure, indulgences or remissions of some parts of the penance, absolutions, and pardons, the possession of which was represented to Christians as essential to salvation, and the sale of which formed a most gainful traffic.”

As to the passage respecting the gift of the KEYS of the kingdom of heaven to Peter, from which these views affect to be derived, it is most naturally explained by the very apposite and obviously explanatory fact, that this apostle was the first preacher of the Gospel dispensation in its perfected form, both to the Jews at the day of pentecost, and afterward to the Gentiles. Bishop Horsley applies it only to the latter of these events, to which indeed it may principally, but not exclusively, refer.

“St. Peter’s custody of the keys was a temporary, not a perpetual authority: its object was not individuals, but the whole human race. The kingdom of heaven upon earth is the true Church of God. It is now therefore the Christian Church: formerly the Jewish Church was that kingdom. The true Church is represented in this text, as in many passages of Holy Writ, under the image of a walled city, to be entered only at the gates. Under the Mosaic economy these gates were shut, and particular persons only could obtain admittance, — Israelites by birth, or by legal incorporation. The locks of these gates were the rites of the Mosaic law, which obstructed the entrance of aliens. But, after our Lord’s ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, the keys of the city were given to St. Peter, by that vision which taught him, and authorized him to teach others, that all distinctions of one nation from another were at an end. By virtue of this special commission, the great apostle applied the key, pushed back the bolt of the lock, and threw the gates of the city open for the admission of the whole Gentile world, in the instance of Cornelius and his family.” (*Horsley’s Sermons.*)

When the same learned prelate would also refer the binding and loosing power mentioned in the above texts exclusively to Peter, he forgets that in the passage above referred to, ⁴⁰¹⁸¹⁸Matthew 18:18, it is given to all the apostles, “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” These expressions manifestly refer to the authoritative declaration of any thing to be obligatory, and its infraction to be sinful, and therefore subject to punishment, or the contrary; and the passage receives sufficient illustration

from the words of our Lord to his apostles, after his resurrection, when, after breathing upon them, he said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained,” ^{<4312>}John 20:22, 23. To qualify them for this authoritative declaration of what was *obligatory* upon men, or otherwise; and of the *terms* upon which sins are “remitted,” and the circumstances under which they are “retained;” they previously received the Holy Ghost, — a sufficient proof that this power was connected with the plenary inspiration of the apostles; and beyond those inspired men it could not extend, unless equally strong miraculous evidence of the same degree of inspiration were afforded by any others. The manner also in which the apostles exercised this power elucidates the subject. We have no instance at all of their forgiving the sins of any individuals; they merely *proclaimed* the terms of pardon, And we have no instance of their “retaining” the sins of any one, except by *declaring* them condemned by the laws of the Gospel, of which they were the preachers. They authoritatively explain in their writings the terms of forgiveness; they state as to duty what is obligatory, and what is not obligatory, upon Christians; they pronounce sinners of various kinds, impenitent and unbelieving, to be under God’s wrath; and they declare certain apostates to be put beyond forgiveness by their own act, not by apostolic excommunication; and thus they bind and loose, remit sins and retain them. The meaning of these passages is in this manner explained by the practice of the apostles themselves, and we may also see the reason why in Matthew xviii, a similar declaration stands connected with the censures of a *Church*: “Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church let him be unto thee as a heathen man and as a publican; verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

That here there may be a reference to a provision made among the Jews for settling questions of accusation and dispute by the elders of their synagogues, is probable; but it is also clear that our Lord looked forward to the establishment of his own Church, which was to displace the synagogue; and that there might be infallible rules to guide that Church in

its judgment on moral cases, he turns to the disciples, to whom the discourse is addressed, and says to them, “Whatsoever YE,” not the *Church*, “shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever YE shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Of the disciples then present the subsequent history leads us to conclude, that he principally meant that the apostles should be endued with this power, and that they were to be the inspired persons who were to furnish “the Church” with infallible rules of judgment, in all such cases of dispute and accusation. When, therefore, any Church rightly interprets these apostolic rules, and rightly applies them to particular cases, it then exercises a discipline which is not only approved, but is also confirmed, in heaven by the concurring dispensations of God, who respects his own inspirations in his apostles. The whole shows the careful and solemn manner in which all such investigations are to be conducted, and the serious effect of them. It is by the admonishing and putting away of offenders, that the Church bears its testimony against all sin before the world; and it is thus that she maintains a salutary influence over her members, by the well-grounded fear of those censures which, when Scripturally administered, are sanctioned by Christ its Head; and which, when they extend to excision from the body, and no error of judgment, or sinister intention, vitiates the proceeding, separate the offenders from that special grace of Christ which is promised to the faithful collected into a Church state, — a loss, an evil, and a danger, which nothing but repentance, humiliation, and a return to God and his people, can repair. For it is to be observed, that this part of discipline is an ordinance of Christ, not only for the maintenance of the character of his Churches, and the preservation of their influence in the world; but for the spiritual benefit of the offenders themselves. To this effect are the words of the Apostle Paul as to the immoral Corinthian, — “to deliver such a one to Satan, for the destruction of *the flesh*,” the dominion of his bodily appetites, “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” The practice of many of the ancient Churches was, in this respect, rigid; in several of the circumstances far too much so; and thus it assumed a severity much more appalling than in the apostolic times. It shows, however, how deeply the necessity of maintaining moral discipline was felt among them, and in substance, though not in every part of the mode, is worthy of remembrance.

“When disciples of Christ, who had dishonoured his religion by committing any gross immorality, or by relapsing into idolatry,

were cut off from the Church by the sentence of excommunication; they were kept, often for years, in a state of penance, however desirous to be re-admitted. They made a public confession of their faith, accompanied with the most humiliating expressions of grief. For some time they stood without the doors, while the Christians were employed in worship. Afterward they were allowed to enter; then to stand during a part of the service; then to remain during the whole: but they were not permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper, till a formal absolution was pronounced by the Church. The time of the penance was sometimes shortened, when the anguish of their mind, or any occasional distress of body, threatened the danger of their dying in that condition, or when those who were then suffering persecution, or other deserving members of the Church interceded for them, and became, by this intercession, in some measure, sureties for their future good behaviour. The duration of the penance, the acts required while it continued, and the manner of the absolution varied at different times. The matter was, from its nature, subject to much abuse; it was often taken under the cognizance of ancient councils; and a great part of their canons was employed in regulating the exercise of discipline." (*Hill's Lectures.*)

In concluding this chapter, it may be observed, that however difficult it may be, in some cases, to adjust modes of Church government, so that in the view of all, the principles of the New Testament may be fully recognized, and the ends for which Churches are collected may be effectually accomplished, this labour will always be greatly smoothed, by a steady regard, on each side, to *duties* as well as to *rights*. These are equally imperative upon ministers, upon subordinate officers, and upon the private members of every Church. Charity, candour, humility, public spirit, zeal, a forgiving spirit, and the desire, the strong desire, of unity and harmony, ought to pervade all, as well as a constant remembrance of the great and solemn truth, that Christ is the *Judge*, as well as the *Saviour* of his Churches. While the people are docile; obedient to the word of exhortation; willing to submit, "in the Lord," to those who "preside over them," and are charged to exercise Christ's discipline; and while ministers are "gentle among them," after the example of St. Paul, — a gentleness, however, which, in his case, winked at no evil, and kept back no truth, and compromised no principle, and spared no obstinate and incurable offender,

— while they feed the flock of Christ with sound doctrine, and are intent upon their edification, watching over them “as they that must give account,” and study, live, and labour, for no other ends, than to present that part of the Church committed to their care “perfect in Christ Jesus;” every Church will fall as it were naturally and without effort into its proper “order.” Pure and undefiled religion in Churches, like the first poetry, creates those subordinate rules by which it is, afterward, guarded and governed; and the best canons of both are those which are dictated by the fresh and primitive effusions of their own inspiration.

CHAPTER 2. — INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY — THE SACRAMENTS.

THE number of sacraments is held by all Protestants to be but two. — *Baptism*, and the *Lord's Supper*; because they find no other instituted in the New Testament, or practised in the early Church. The superstition of the Church of Rome has added no fewer than five to the number, — *Confirmation*, *penance*, *orders*, *matrimony*, and, *extreme unction*.

The word used by the Greek fathers for sacrament was *μυστήριον*. — In the New Testament this word always means, as Campbell has showed, either a secret, — something unknown till revealed; or the spiritual meaning of some emblem or type. In both these senses it is rendered *sacramentum* in the Vulgate translation, which shows that the latter word was formerly used in a large signification. As the Greek term was employed in the New Testament to express the hidden meaning of an external symbol, as in ~~Revelation~~ Revelation 1:20, “the *mystery* of the seven stars,” it was naturally applied by early Christians to the symbolical rite of the Lord's Supper; and as some of the most sacred and retired parts of the ancient heathen worship were called *mysteries*, from which all but the initiated were excluded, the use of the same term to designate that most sacred act of Christian worship, which was strictly confined to the approved members of the Church, was probably thought peculiarly appropriate. The Latin word *sacramentum*, in its largest sense, may signify a sacred ceremony; and is the appellation, also, of the military oath of fidelity taken by the Roman soldiers. For both these reasons, probably, the term *sacrament* was adopted by the Latin Christians. For the first, because of the peculiar sacredness of the Lord's Supper; and for the second, because of that engagement to be faithful to the commands of Christ, their heavenly Leader, which was implied in this ordinance, and impressed upon them by so sacred a solemnity. It was, perhaps, from the designation of this ordinance, by the term *sacramentum*, by the Christians whom Pliny examined as to their faith and modes of worship, that he thus expresses himself in his letter to the Emperor Trajan: — “From their affirmations I learned that the sum of all their offence, call it fault or error, was, that on a day fixed they used to assemble before sunrise, and sing together, in alternate responses, hymns to Christ, as a Deity; binding themselves by *the*

solemn engagements of an oath, not to commit any manner of wickedness," &c. — The term *sacrament* was also at an early period given to baptism, as well as to the Supper of the Lord, and is now confined among Protestants to these two ordinances only. The distinction between sacraments, and other religious rites, is well stated by Burnet. (*On the Articles.*)

“This difference is to be put between sacraments and other ritual actions; that whereas other rites are badges and distinctions by which Christians are known, a sacrament is more than a bare matter of form; as in the Old Testament, circumcision and propitiatory sacrifices were things of a different nature and order from all the other ritual precepts concerning their cleansings, the distinctions of days, places, and meats. These were, indeed, precepts given them of God; but they were not federal acts of renewing the covenant, or reconciling themselves to God. By circumcision they received the seal of the covenant, and were brought under the obligation of the whole law; they were made by it debtors to it; and when by their sins they had provoked God’s wrath, they were reconciled to him by their sacrifices, with which atonement was made, and so their sins were forgiven them; the nature and end of those was, to be federal acts, in the offering of which the Jews kept to their part of the covenant, and in the accepting of which God maintained it on his part; so we see a plain difference between these and a mere rite, which though commanded, yet must pass only for the badge of a profession, as the doing of it is an act of obedience to a Divine law. Now, in the new dispensation, though our Saviour has eased us of that *law of ordinances*, that *grievous yoke*, and those *beggarly elements*, which were laid upon the Jews; yet since we are still in the body subject to our senses, and to sensible things, he has appointed some federal actions to be both the visible stipulations and professions of our Christianity, and the conveyancers to us of the blessings of the Gospel.”

It is this view of the two sacraments, as federal acts, which sweeps away the five superstitious additions that the temerity of the Church of Rome has dared to elevate to the same rank of sacredness and importance.

As it is usual among men to confirm covenants by visible and solemn forms, and has been so from the most ancient times, so when almighty God was pleased to enter into covenant engagements with men, he condescended to the same methods of affording, on his part, sensible assurances of his fidelity, and to require the same from them. Thus,

circumcision was the sign and seal of the covenant with Abraham; and when the great covenant of grace was made in the Son of God with all nations, it was agreeable to this analogy to expect that he would institute some constantly-recurring visible sign, in confirmation of his mercy to us, which should encourage our reliance upon his promises, and have the force of a perpetual renewal of the covenant between the parties. Such is manifestly the character and ends both of the institution of baptism and the Lord's Supper; but as to the five additional sacraments of the Church of Rome, "they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God," (*Article 25th of the Church of England*,) and they stand in no direct connection with any covenant engagement entered into by him with his creatures. *Confirmation* rests on no Scriptural authority at all. *Penance*, if it mean any thing more than repentance, as equally unsanctioned by Scripture; and if it mean "repentance toward God," it is no more a sacrament than faith. *Orders*, or the ordination of ministers, is an apostolic command, but has in it no greater indication of a sacramental act than any other such command, — say the excommunication of obstinate sinners from the Church, which with just as good a reason might be elevated into a sacrament. *Marriage* appears to have been made by the papists a sacrament for this curious reason, that the Apostle Paul, when speaking of the love and union of husband and wife, and taking occasion from that to allude to the love of Christ to his Church, says, "This is a great *mystery*," which the Vulgate version translates, "SACRAMENTUM *hoc magnum est*:" thus they confound the large and the restricted sense of the word sacrament, and forget that the true "mystery" spoken of by the apostle, lies not in marriage, but in the union of Christ with his people, — "This is a great mystery, *but* I speak concerning Christ and the Church." If, however, the use of the word "mystery" in this passage by St. Paul, were sufficient to prove marriage a sacrament, then the calling of the Gentiles, as Beza observes, might be the eighth sacrament, since St. Paul terms that "a mystery," ~~400~~ Ephesians 1:9, which the Vulgate, in like manner translates by "*sacramentum*." The last of their sacraments is *extreme unction*, of which it is enough to say that it is nowhere prescribed in Scripture; and if it were, has clearly nothing in it of a sacramental character. The passage in St. James's Epistle to which they refer, cannot serve them at all; for the Romanists use extreme unction only when all hope of recovery is past, whereas the prayers and the anointing mentioned by St. James were resorted to in order to a miraculous cure, for life, and not for death. With them, therefore, extreme unction is called "the sacrament of the dying."

Of the nature of sacraments there are three leading views.

The first is that taken by the Church of Rome.

According to the doctrine of this Church, the sacraments contain the grace they signify, and confer grace, *ex opere operato*, by the work itself upon such as do not put an obstruction by mortal sin. “For these sensible and natural things,” it is declared, “work by the almighty power of God in the sacraments what they could not do by their own power.” Nor is any more necessary to this effect, than that the priests, “who make and consecrate the sacraments, have an *intention* of doing what the Church doth, and doth intend to do.” (*Conc. Trid. Can. 11.*) According therefore to this doctrine, the matter of the sacrament derives from the action of the priest, in pronouncing certain words, a Divine virtue, provided it be the intention of the priest to give to that matter such a Divine virtue, and this grace is conveyed to the soul of every person who receives it. Nor is it required of the person receiving a sacrament, that he should exercise any good disposition, or possess faith; for such is conceived to be the *physical virtue* of a sacrament, that, except when opposed by the obstacle of a mortal sin, the act of receiving it is alone sufficient for the experience of its efficacy. This is so capital an article of faith with the Romish Church, that the council of Trent anathematizes all who deny that grace is not conferred by the sacraments from the act itself of receiving them, and affirm that faith only in the Divine promises is sufficient to the obtaining of grace — “*Se quis dixerit, per ipsa nova legis sacramenta, ex opere operato, non conferri gratiam, sed solum fidem divinæ promissionis ad gratiam consequendam sufficere, anathema sit.*” (*Conc. Trid. Sess. vii, Can. 8.*) It is on this ground also, that the members of that Church argue the superiority of the sacraments of the New Testament to those of the Old; the latter having been effectual only *ex opere operantis*, from the piety and faith of the persons receiving them, while the former confer grace *ex opere operato*, from their own intrinsic virtue, and an immediate physical influence upon the mind of the receiver.

The first great objection to this statement is, that it has even no pretence of authority from Scripture, and grounds itself wholly upon the alleged traditions of the Church of Rome, which, in fact, are just what successive inventors of superstitious practices have thought proper to make them. The second is, that it is decidedly anti-scriptural; for as the only true notion of a sacrament is, that it is the sign and seal of a covenant; and as the saving

benefits of the covenant of grace are made expressly to depend upon a true faith; the condition of grace being made by the Church of Rome the act of receiving a sacrament independent of true faith, she impudently rejects the great condition of salvation as laid down in God's word, and sets up in its place another of an opposite kind by mere human authority. The third is, that it debases an ordinance of God from a rational service into a mere charm, disconnected with every mental exercise, and working its effect physically, and not morally. The fourth is its licentious tendency; for as a very large class of sins is by the Romish Church allowed to be venial, and nothing but a mortal sin can prevent the recipient of the sacrament from receiving the grace of God; men may live in the practice of all these venial offences, and consequently in an unrenewed habit of soul, and yet be assured of the Divine favour, and of eternal salvation; thus again boldly contradicting the whole tenor of the New Testament. — Finally, whatever privileges the sacraments are designed to confer, all of them are made by this doctrine to depend, not upon the state of the receiver's mind, but upon the "intention" of the administrator, who, if not intending to impart the physical virtue to the elements, renders the sacrament of no avail to the recipient, although he performs all the external acts of the ceremony.

The opposite opinion of this gross and unholy doctrine is that maintained by Socinus, and adopted generally by his followers: to which also the notions of some orthodox Protestants have too carelessly leaned. The view taken on the subject of the sacraments by such persons is, that they differ not *essentially* from other rites and ceremonies of religion; but that their peculiarity consists in their emblematic character, under which they represent what is spiritual and invisible, and are memorials of past events. Their sole use therefore is to cherish pious sentiments, by leading the mind to such meditations as are adapted to excite them. Some also add, that they are the badges of a Christian profession, and the instituted means by which Christians testify their faith in Christ.

The fault of the popish opinion is superstitious *excess*; the fault of the latter scheme is that of *defect*. The sacraments are emblematical; they are adapted to excite pious sentiments; they are memorials, at least the Lord's Supper bears this character; they are badges of profession; they are the appointed means for declaring our faith in Christ; and so far is this view superior to the popish doctrine, that it elevates the sacraments from the base and degrading character of a charm and incantation, to that of a

spiritual and reasonable service, and instead of making them substitutes for faith and good works, renders them subservient to both.

But if the sacraments are federal rites, that is, if they are covenant transactions, they must have a more extensive and a deeper import than this view of the subject conveys. If circumcision was “a token,” and a “seal” of the covenant by which God engaged to justify men by faith, then, as we shall subsequently show, since Christian baptism came in its place, it has precisely the same office; if the passover was a sign, a pledge or seal, and subsequently a memorial, then these characters will belong to the Lord’s Supper; the relation of which to the “New Testament,” or COVENANT, “in the blood” of our Saviour, is expressly stated by himself. What is the import of the terms *sign* and *seal* will be hereafter considered; but it is enough here to suggest them, to show that the second opinion above stated loses sight of these peculiarities, and is therefore defective.

The third opinion may be stated in the words of the formularies of several Protestant Churches.

The *Heidelberg Catechism* has the following question and reply: — “What are the sacraments?”

“They are holy visible *signs* and *seals*, ordained by God for this end, that he may more fully *declare* and *seal* by them the promise of his Gospel unto us; to wit, that not only unto all believers in general, but unto each of them in particular, he freely giveth remission of sins and life eternal, upon the account of that only sacrifice of Christ, which he accomplished upon the cross.”

The Church of England, in her Twenty-fifth Article, thus expresses herself:

—

“Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men’s profession, but rather they be sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God’s will toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.”

The Church of Scotland, in the one hundred and sixty-second Question of her Larger Catechism, asks,

“What is a sacrament?” and replies: —

“A sacrament is a holy ordinance, instituted by Christ in his Church, to signify, seal, and exhibit, unto those within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another; and to distinguish them from those that are without.”

In all these descriptions of a sacrament, terms are employed of just and weighty meaning, which will subsequently require notice. Generally, it may, however, here be observed, that they all assume that there is in this ordinance an express institution of God; that there is this essential difference between them and every other symbolical ceremony, that they are seals as well as signs, that is, that they afford pledges on the part of God of grace and salvation; that as a covenant has two parties, our external acts in receiving the sacraments are indications of certain states and dispositions of our mind with regard to God’s covenant, without which none can have a personal participation in its benefits, and so the sacrament is useless where these are not found; that there are words of institution; and a promise also by which the sign and the thing signified are connected together.

The covenant of which they are the seals, is that called by the *Heidelberg Catechism*, “the promise of the Gospel;” the import of which is, that God giveth freely to every one that believeth remission of sins, with all spiritual blessings, and “life eternal, upon the account of that only sacrifice of Christ which he accomplished upon the cross.”

As SIGNS, they are visible and symbolical expositions of what the Article of the Church of England, above quoted, calls “the grace of God,” and his “will,” that is, his “good will toward us;” or, according to the Church of Scotland, “significations of the benefits of his mediation;” that is, they exhibit to the senses, under appropriate emblems, the same benefits as are exhibited in another form in the doctrines and promises of the word of God, so that “the eye may affect and instruct the heart,” and that for the strong incitement of our faith, our desire, and our gratitude. It ought nevertheless to be remembered that they are not signs merely of the grace of God to us, but of our obligations to him; obligations, however, still flowing from the same grace, They are also SEALS. A seal is a confirming sign, or, according to theological language, there is in a sacrament a *signum significans*, and a *signum confirmans*; the former of which is said,

significare, to notify or to declare; the latter *obsignare*, to set one's seal to, to witness. As, therefore, the sacraments, when considered as *signs*, contain a declaration of the same doctrines and promises which the written word of God exhibits, but addressed by a significant emblem to the senses; so also as *seals*, or pledges, they confirm the same promises which are assured to us by God's own truth and faithfulness in his word, (which is the main ground of all affiance in his mercy,) and by his indwelling Spirit by which we are "sealed," and have in our hearts "the earnest" of our heavenly inheritance. This is done by an external and visible institution; so that God has added these ordinances to the promises of his word, not only to bring his merciful purpose toward us in Christ to mind, but constantly to assure us that those who believe in him shall be and are made partakers of his grace. These ordinances are a pledge to them, that Christ and his benefits are theirs, while they are required, at the same time, by faith, as well as by the visible sign, to signify their compliance with his covenant, which may be called "setting to their seal." "The sacraments are God's seals, as they are ordinances given by him for the confirmation of our faith that he would be our covenant God; and they are our seals, or we set our seal thereunto, when we visibly profess that we give up ourselves to him to be his people, and, in the exercise of a true faith, look to be partakers of the benefits which Christ hath purchased, according to the terms of the covenant." (*Dr. Ridgley.*)

The passage quoted from the Heidelberg Catechism has a clause which is of great importance in explaining the design of the sacraments. They are "visible signs and seals ordained by God for this end, that he may more fully declare, and seal by them the promise of his Gospel unto us, to wit, that not only unto all *believers in general, but to each of them in particular*, he freely giveth remission of sins and life eternal, upon the account of that only sacrifice of Christ, which he accomplished upon the cross." For it is to be remarked that the administration is to particular individuals separately, both in baptism and the Lord's Supper, — "Take, eat," "drink ye all of this;" so that the institution of the sign and seal of the covenant, and the acceptance of this sign and seal is a solemn transaction between God and each individual. From which it follows, that to *every one* to whom the sign is exhibited, a seal and pledge of the invisible grace is also given; and every individual who draws near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, does in *his own* person enter into God's covenant, and to him in particular that covenant stands firm. He renews it also in every

sacramental act, the repetition of which is appointed, and being authorized by a Divine and standing institution thus to put in his claim to the full grace of the covenant, he receives thereby continual assurances of the love and faithfulness of a God who changes not; but exhibits the *same* signs and pledges of the *same* covenant of grace, to the constant acceptance of every individual believer throughout all the ages of his Church, which is charged with the ministration of these sacred symbols of his mercy to mankind. This is an important and most encouraging circumstance.

CHAPTER 3. — THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE CHURCH — BAPTISM.

THE *obligation* of baptism rests upon the example of our Lord, who, by his disciples, baptized many that by his discourses and miracles were brought to profess faith in him as the Messiah; — upon his solemn command to his apostles after his resurrection, “Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,”

~~<128>~~ Matthew 28:19. And upon the practice of the apostles themselves, who thus showed that they did not understand baptism, like our Quakers, in a mystical sense. Thus St. Peter, in his sermon upon the day of pentecost, exhorts, “Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost,”

~~<428>~~ Acts 2:38.

As to this sacrament, which has occasioned endless and various controversies, three things require examination, — its NATURE; its SUBJECTS; and its MODE.

I. ITS NATURE. The Romanists, agreeably to their superstitious opinion as to the efficacy of sacraments, consider baptism administered by a priest having a good intention, as *of itself* applying the merits of Christ to the person baptized. According to them, baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation, and they therefore admit its validity when administered to a dying child by any person present, should there be no priest at hand. From this view of its efficacy arises their distinction between sins committed before and after baptism. The hereditary corruption of our nature, and all actual sins committed before baptism, are said to be entirely removed by it; so that if the most abandoned person were to receive it for the first time in the article of death, all his sins would be washed away. But all sins committed after baptism, and the infusion of that grace which is conveyed by the sacrament, must be expiated by penance. In this notion of regeneration, or the washing away of original sin by baptism, the Roman Church followed Augustine; but as he was a predestinarian, he was obliged to invent a distinction between those who are regenerated, and those who are predestinated to eternal life; so that, according to him, although all the baptized are freed from that corruption which is entailed upon mankind by Adam’s lapse, and experience a renovation of mind, none continue to walk

in that state but the predestinated. The Lutheran Church also places the efficacy of this sacrament in regeneration, by which faith is actually conveyed to the soul of an infant. The Church of England in her baptismal services has not departed entirely from the terms used by the Romish Church from which she separated. She speaks of those who are by nature “born in sin,” being made by baptism “the children of grace,” which are, however, words of equivocal import; and she gives thanks to God “that it hath pleased him to regenerate this infant with his Holy Spirit,” probably using the term regeneration in the same large sense as several of the ancient fathers, and not in its modern theological interpretation, which is more strict. However this be, a controversy has long existed in the English Church as to the real opinion of her founders on this point; one part of the clergy holding the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and the absolute necessity of baptism unto salvation; the other taking different views not only of the doctrine of Scripture, but also of the import of various expressions found in the articles, catechisms, and offices of the Church itself. The Quakers view baptism only as spiritual, and thus reject the rite altogether, as one of the “beggary elements” of former dispensations; while the Socinians regard it as a mere mode of professing the religion of Christ. Some of them indeed consider it as calculated to produce a moral effect upon those who submit to it, or who witness its administration; while others think it so entirely a ceremony of induction into the society of Christians from Judaism and paganism, as to be necessary only when such conversions take place, so that it might be wholly laid aside in Christian nations.

We have called baptism a federal transaction; an initiation into, and acceptance of, the covenant of grace, required of us by Christ as a visible expression and act of that faith in him which he has made a condition of that salvation. It is a point, however, of so much importance to establish the covenant character of this ordinance, and so much of the controversy as to the proper subjects of baptism depends upon it, that we may consider it somewhat at large.

That the covenant with Abraham, of which circumcision was made the sign and seal, ^{<01170>}Genesis 17:7, was the general covenant of grace, and not wholly, or even chiefly, a political and national covenant, may be satisfactorily established.

The first engagement in it was, that God would “greatly bless” Abraham; which promise, although it comprehended temporal blessings, referred, as we learn from St. Paul, more fully to the blessing of his justification by the imputation of his faith for righteousness, with all the spiritual advantages consequent upon the relation which was thus established between him and God, in time and eternity. The second promise in the covenant was, that he should be “the father of many nations,” which we are also taught by St. Paul to interpret more with reference to his spiritual seed, the followers of that faith whereof cometh justification, than to his natural descendants. “That the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to that which is by the law, but to that also which is by *the faith* of Abraham, who is the father of *us all*,” — of all believing Gentiles as well as Jews. The third stipulation in God’s covenant with the patriarch, was the gift of Abraham and to his seed of “the land of Canaan,” in which the temporal promise was manifestly but the type of the higher promise of a heavenly inheritance. Hence St. Paul says, “By *faith* he sojourned in the land of promise, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;” but this “faith” did not respect the fulfilment of the temporal promise; for St. Paul adds, “they looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God,” ^{<8119>}Hebrews 11:19. The next promise was, that God would always be “a God to Abraham and to his seed after him,” a promise which is connected with the highest spiritual blessings, such as the remission of sins, and the sanctification of our nature, as well as with a visible Church state. It is even used to express the felicitous state of the Church in heaven, ^{<6218>}Revelation 21:3. The final engagement in the Abrahamic covenant, was that in Abraham’s “seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed;” and this blessing, we are expressly taught by St. Paul, was nothing less than the justification of all nations, that is, of all believers in all nations, by faith in Christ: — “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen by faith, preached before the Gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they who are of faith, are blessed with believing Abraham,” they receive the same blessing, justification, by the same means, faith, ^{<8119>}Galatians 3:8, 9.

This covenant with Abraham, therefore, although it respected a natural seed, Isaac, from whom a numerous progeny was to spring; and an earthly inheritance provided for this issue, the land of Canaan; and a special covenant relation with the descendants of Isaac, through the line of Jacob, to whom Jehovah was to be “a God,” visibly and specially, and they a

visible and “peculiar people;” yet was, under all these temporal, earthly, and external advantages, but a higher and spiritual grace embodying itself under these circumstances, as types of a dispensation of salvation and eternal life, to all who should follow the faith of Abraham, whose justification before God was the pattern of the justification of every man, whether Jew or Gentile, in all ages.

Now, of this covenant, in its spiritual as well as in its temporal provisions, circumcision was most certainly the sacrament that is, the “sign” and the “seal;” for St. Paul thus explains the case: “And he received the SIGN of circumcision, a SEAL of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.” And as this right was enjoined upon Abraham’s posterity, so that every “uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin was not circumcised on the eighth day,” was to be “cut off from his people,” by the special judgment of God, and that because “he had broken God’s *covenant*,” ^{<0174>}Genesis 17:14, it therefore follows that this rite was a constant *publication* of God’s covenant of grace among the descendants of Abraham, and its repetition a continual *confirmation* of that covenant, on the part of God, to all practising it in that faith of which it was the ostensible expression.

As the covenant of grace made with Abraham was bound up with temporal promises and privileges, so circumcision was a sign and seal of the covenant in both its parts, — its spiritual and its temporal, its superior and inferior, provisions. The spiritual promises of the covenant continued unrestricted to all the descendants of Abraham, whether by Isaac or by Ishmael; and still lower down, to the descendants of Esau as well as to those of Jacob. Circumcision was practised among them all by virtue of its Divine institution at first; and was extended to their foreign servants, and to proselytes, as well as to their children; and wherever the sign of the covenant of grace was by Divine appointment, there it was as a *seal* of that covenant, to all who believingly used it; for we read of no restriction of its spiritual blessings, that is, its saving engagements, to one line of descent from Abraham only. But over the *temporal* branch of the covenant, and the *external* religious privileges arising out of it, God exercised a rightful sovereignty, and expressly restricted them first to the line of Isaac, and then to that of Jacob, with whose descendants he entered into special covenant by the ministry of Moses. The temporal blessings and external privileges comprised under general expressions in the covenant with Abraham, were explained and enlarged under that of Moses, while the

spiritual blessings remained unrestricted as before. This was probably the reason why circumcision was re-enacted under the law of Moses. It was a confirmation of the temporal blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, now, by a covenant of peculiarity, made over to them, while it was still recognized as a consuetudinary rite which had descended to them from their fathers, and as the sign and seal of the covenant of grace, made with Abraham and with all his descendants without exception. This double reference of circumcision, both to the authority of Moses and to that of the patriarchs, is found in the words of our Lord, ~~John~~ John 7:22: "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision, not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;" or, as it is better translated by Campbell, "Moses instituted circumcision among you, (not that it is from Moses, but from the patriarchs,) and ye circumcise on the Sabbath. If on the Sabbath a child receive circumcision, that the *law of Moses* may not be violated," &c.

From these observations, the controversy in the apostolic Churches respecting circumcision will derive much elucidation.

The covenant with Abraham prescribed circumcision as an act of faith in its promises, and a pledge [to perform its conditions] [on the part of his descendants.] But the object on which this faith rested, was "the seed of Abraham," in whom the nations of the earth were to be blessed: which seed, says St. Paul, "is Christ;" — Christ as promised, not yet come. When the Christ had come, so as fully to enter upon his redeeming offices, he could no longer be the object of faith, as still to come; and this leading promise of the covenant being accomplished, the sign and seal of it vanished away. Nor could circumcision be continued in *this view*, by any, without an implied denial that Jesus was the Christ, the expected seed of Abraham. Circumcision also as an institution of Moses, who continued it as the sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant both in its spiritual and temporal provisions, but with respect to the latter made it also the sign and seal of the restriction of its temporal blessings and peculiar religious privileges to the descendants of Israel, was terminated by the entrance of our Lord upon his office of Mediator, in which office all nations were to be blessed in him. The Mosaic edition of the covenant not only guaranteed the land of Canaan, but the peculiarity of the Israelites, as the people and visible Church of God to the exclusion of others, except by proselytism. But when our Lord commanded the Gospel to be preached to "all nations," and opened the gates of the "common salvation" to all, whether Gentiles or Jews, circumcision, as the sign of a covenant of peculiarity and religious

distinction, was done away also. It had not only no reason remaining, but the continuance of the rite involved the recognition of exclusive privileges which had been terminated by Christ.

This will explain the views of the Apostle Paul on this great question. He declares that in Christ there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision; that neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but “faith that worketh by love;” faith in the seed of Abraham already come and already engaged in his mediatorial and redeeming work, faith, by virtue of which the Gentiles came into the Church of Christ on the same terms as the Jews themselves, and were justified and saved. The doctrine of the non-necessity of circumcision he applies to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles, although he specially resists the attempts of the Judaizers to impose this rite upon the Gentile converts; in which he was supported by the decision of the Holy Spirit when the appeal upon this question was made to “the apostles and elders at Jerusalem,” from the Church at Antioch. At the same time it is clear that he takes two different views of the practice of circumcision, as it was continued among many of the first Christians. The first is that strong one which is expressed in ~~<RHD>~~Galatians 5:2-4, “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, *Christ shall profit you nothing*; for I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of *no effect* unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.” The second is that milder view which he himself must have had when he circumcised Timothy to render him more acceptable to the Jews; and which also appears to have led him to abstain from all allusion to this practice when writing his epistle to the believing Hebrews, although many, perhaps most of them, continued to circumcise their children, as did the Jewish Christians for a long time afterward. These different views of circumcision, held by the same person, may be explained by considering the different principles on which circumcision might be practised after it had become an obsolete ordinance.

1. It might be taken in the simple view of its first institution, as the sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant; and then it was to be condemned as involving a denial that Abraham’s seed, the Christ, had already come, since, upon his coming, every old covenant gave place to the new covenant introduced by him.

2. It might be practised and enjoined as the sign and seal of the Mosaic covenant, which was still the Abrahamic covenant with its spiritual

blessings, but with restriction of its temporal promises and special ecclesiastical privileges to the line of Jacob, with a law of observances which was obligatory upon all entering that covenant by circumcision. In that case it involved, in like manner, the notion of the continuance of an old covenant, after the establishment of the new; for thus St. Paul states the case in ^{<RB19>}Galatians 3:19, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions until THE SEED should come.” After that therefore it had no effect: — it had waxed old, and had vanished away.

3. Again: Circumcision might imply an obligation to observe all the ceremonial usages and the moral precepts of the Mosaic law, along with a general belief in the mission of Christ, as necessary to justification before God. This appears to have been the view of those among the Galatian Christians who submitted to circumcision, and of the Jewish teachers who enjoined it upon them; for St. Paul in that epistle constantly joins circumcision with legal observances, and as involving an obligation to do “the whole law,” in order to justification. “I testify again to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do THE WHOLE LAW: whosoever of you are *justified* by the law, ye are fallen from grace.” “Knowing that a man is not justified by the *works of the law*, but by the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,” ^{<RB16>}Galatians 2:16. To all persons therefore practising circumcision in this view, it was obvious that “Christ was become of none effect,” the very principle of justification by faith alone in him was renounced, even while his Divine mission was still admitted.

4. But there are two grounds on which circumcision may be conceived to have been *innocently*, though not wisely, practised among the Christian Jews. The first was that of preserving an ancient national distinction on which they valued themselves; and were a converted Jew in the present day disposed to perform that rite upon his children for this purpose only, renouncing in the act all consideration of it as a sign and seal of the old covenants, or as obliging to ceremonial acts in order to justification, no one would censure him with severity. It appears clear that it was under some such view that St. Paul circumcised Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess; he did it because of “the Jews which were in those quarters,” that is, because of their national prejudices, “for they knew that his father was a Greek.” The second was a lingering notion, that, even in the Christian Church, the Jews who believed would still retain some degree of eminence, some superior relation to God; a notion which, however unfounded, was not one which demanded direct rebuke, when it did not proudly refuse

spiritual communion with the converted Gentiles, but was held by men who “rejoiced that God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life.” These considerations may account for the silence of St. Paul on the subject of circumcision in his Epistle to the Hebrews. Some of them continued to practise that rite, but they were probably believers of the class just mentioned; for had he thought that the rite was continued among them on any principle which affected the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, he would no doubt have been equally prompt and fearless in pointing out that apostasy from Christ which was implied in it, as when he wrote to the Galatians.

Not only might circumcision be practised with views so opposite that one might be wholly innocent, although an infirmity of prejudice; the other such as would involve a rejection of the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ; but some other Jewish observances also stood in the same circumstances. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, a part of his writings from which we obtain the most information on these questions, grounds his “doubts” whether the members of that Church were not seeking to be “justified by the law,” upon their observing “days, and months, and times, and years.” Had he done more than “doubt,” he would have expressed himself more positively. He saw their danger on this point; he saw that they were taking steps to this fatal result, by such an observance of these “days,” &c, as had a strong leaning and dangerous approach to that dependence upon them for justification, which would destroy their faith in Christ’s solely sufficient sacrifice; but his very doubting, not of the fact of their being addicted to these observances, but of the *animus* with which they regarded them, supposes it possible, however dangerous this Jewish conformity might be, that they might be observed for reasons which would still consist with their entire reliance upon the merits of Christ for salvation. Even he himself, strongly as he resisted the imposition of this conformity to Jewish customs upon the converts to Christianity as a matter of necessity, yet in practice must have conformed to many of them, when no sacrifice of principle was understood; for, in order to gain the Jews, he became “as a Jew.”

From these observations, which have been somewhat digressive, we return to observe that not only was the Abrahamic covenant, of which circumcision was the sign and seal, a covenant of grace, but that when this covenant in its ancient form was done away in Christ, then the old sign and seal peculiar to that form was by consequence abolished. If then baptism be

not the initiatory sign and seal of the same covenant in its new and perfect form, as circumcision was of the old, this new covenant has no such initiatory rite or sacrament at all; since the Lord's Supper is not initiatory, but, like the sacrifices of old, is of regular and habitual observance. Several passages of Scripture, and the very nature of the ordinance of baptism, will, however, show that baptism is to the new covenant what circumcision was to the old, and took its place by the APPOINTMENT of Christ.

This may be argued from our Lord's commission to his apostles, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, 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," ^{<412819>}Matthew 28:19, 20. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," ^{<411615>}Mark 16:15, 16.

To understand the force of these words of our Lord, it must be observed, that the gate of "the common salvation" was only now for the first time going to be opened to the Gentile nations. He himself had declared that in his personal ministry he was not sent but to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and he had restricted his disciples in like manner, not only from ministering to the Gentiles, but from entering any city of the Samaritans. By what means therefore were "all nations" now to be brought into the Church of God, which from henceforth was most truly to be catholic or universal? Plainly, by baptizing them that believed the "good news," and accepted the terms of the new covenant. This is apparent from the very words; and thus was baptism expressly made the initiatory rite, by which believers of "all nations" were to be introduced into the Church and covenant of grace; an office in which it manifestly took the place of circumcision, which heretofore, even from the time of Abraham, had been the only initiatory rite into the same covenant. Moses re-enacted circumcision; our Lord not only does *not* re-enact it, but, on the contrary, he appoints *another* mode of entrance into the covenant in its new and perfected form, and that so expressly as to amount to a formal abrogation of the ancient sign, and the putting of baptism in its place. The same argument may be maintained from the words of our Lord to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." By the kingdom of God, our Lord, no doubt, in the highest sense, means the future state of felicity; but he uses this phrase to express the state of his Church on earth, which is the gate to that celestial kingdom; and generally indeed speaks of his Church on earth under this

mode of expression, rather than of the heavenly state. If then he declares that no one can “*enter*” into that Church but by being “born of water and of the Holy Spirit,” which heavenly gift followed upon baptism when received in true faith, he clearly makes baptism the mode of initiation into his Church in this passage as in the last quoted; and in both he assigns to it the same office as circumcision in the Church of the Old Testament, whether in its patriarchal or Mosaic form.

A farther proof that baptism has precisely the same federal and initiatory character as circumcision, and that it was instituted for the same ends, and in its place, is found in ~~51210~~ Colossians 2:10-12, “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power; 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*, buried with him in *baptism*,” &c. Here baptism is also made the initiatory rite of the new dispensation, that by which the Colossians were joined to Christ *in* whom they are said to be “*complete*;” and so certain is it that baptism has the same office and import now as circumcision formerly, — with this difference only, that the object of faith was then future, and now it is Christ *as come*, — that the apostle expressly calls baptism “*the circumcision of Christ*,” the circumcision instituted by him, which phrase he puts out of the reach of frivolous criticism, by adding exegetically, — “buried with him in *baptism*.” For unless the apostle here calls baptism “the circumcision of Christ,” he asserts that we “put off the body of the sins of the flesh,” that is, become new creatures by virtue of our Lord’s own personal circumcision; but if this be absurd, then the only reason for which he can call baptism “the circumcision of Christ,” or Christian circumcision, is, that it has taken the place of the Abrahamic circumcision, and fulfils the same office of introducing believing men into God’s covenant, and entitling them to the enjoyment of spiritual blessings.

But let us also quote ~~4887~~ Galatians 3:27-29, “For as many of you as have been baptized INTO Christ, have put on Christ; there is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus; and if ye are Christ’s,” by thus being “*baptized*,” and by “*putting on*” Christ, “then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

The argument here is also decisive. It cannot be denied that it was by circumcision believingly submitted to, that “strangers” or heathens, as well

as Jews, became the spiritual “*seed* of Abraham,” and “heirs” of the same spiritual and heavenly “*promises*.” But the same office in this passage is ascribed to baptism also believingly submitted to; and the conclusion is therefore inevitable. The same *covenant* character of each rite is here also strongly marked, as well as that the covenant is the same, although under a different mode of administration. In no other way could circumcision avail any thing under the Abrahamic covenant, than as it was that visible act by which God’s covenant to justify men by faith in the promised seed was accepted by them. It was therefore a part of a federal transaction; that outward act which he who offered a covenant engagement so gracious required as a solemn declaration of the acceptance of the covenanted grace upon the covenanted conditions. It was thus that the Abrahamic covenant was offered to the acceptance of all who heard it, and thus that they were to declare their acceptance of it. In the same manner there is a standing offer of the same covenant of mercy wherever the Gospel is preached. The “good news” which it contains is that of a promise, an engagement, a covenant on the part of God to remit sin, and to save all that believe in Christ. To the covenant in this new form he also requires a visible and formal act of acceptance, which act when expressive of the required faith makes us parties to the covenant, and entitles us through the faithfulness of God to its benefits. “He that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall be saved;” or, as in the passage before us, “As many of you as have been *baptized* into Christ, have put on Christ; and if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

We have the same view of baptism as an act of covenant acceptance, and as it relates to God’s gracious engagement to justify the ungodly by faith in his Son, in the often-quoted passage in ~~1~~ 1 Peter 3:20, “Which sometime were disobedient, when once 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 whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

When St. Peter calls baptism the “figure,” *αυτιτυπον*, the antitype of the transaction by which Noah and his family were saved from perishing with the ungodly and unbelieving world, he had doubtless in mind the *faith* of Noah, and that under the same view as the Apostle Paul, in Hebrews 11, “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which” act of faith

“he condemned the world, *and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith;*” an expression of the same import as if he had said, “by which act of faith he was justified before God.” It has been already explained in another place (Part ii, chap. xxii, p. 171) in what way Noah’s preparing of the ark, and his faith in the Divine promise of preservation, were indicative of his having that direct faith in the Christ to come, of which the Apostle Paul discourses in the eleventh of the Hebrews, as that which characterized “all the elders,” and by which they obtained their “good report” in the Church. His preservation and that of his family was so involved in the fulfilment of the more ancient promise respecting the seed of the woman, and the deliverance of man from the power of Satan, that we are warranted to conclude that his faith in the promise respecting his own deliverance from the deluge, was supported by his faith in that greater promise, which must have fallen to the ground had the whole race perished without exception. His building of the ark and entering into it with his family, are therefore considered by St. Paul as the visible expression of his faith in the ancient promises of God respecting Messiah; and for this reason baptism is called by St. Peter, without any allegory at all, but in the sobriety of fact “the *antitype*” of this transaction; the one exactly answering to the other, as an external expression of faith in the same objects and the same promises.

But the apostle does not rest in this general representation. He proceeds to express in a particular and most forcible manner, the nature of Christian baptism, — “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.” Now, whether we take the word *επερωτημα*, rendered in our translation “answer,” for a *demand* or *requirement*; or for the *answer* to a question or questions; or in the sense of *stipulation*; the general import of the passage is nearly the same. If the first, then the meaning of the apostle is, that baptism is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, not a mere external ceremony; but a rite which *demands* or *requires* something of us, in order to the attainment of a “good conscience.” What that is, we learn from the words of our Lord: it is faith in Christ: “He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved;” which faith is the reliance of a penitent upon the atonement of the Saviour, who thus submits with all gratitude and truth to the terms of the evangelical covenant. If we take the second sense, we must lay aside the notion of some lexicographers and commentator’s, who think that there is an allusion to the *ancient* practice of demanding of the candidates for baptism whether they renounced their sins, and the service of Satan, with

other questions of the same import; for, *ancient* as these questions may be, they are probably not so ancient as the time of the apostle. We know, however, from the instance of Philip and the eunuch, that there was an explicit *requirement* of *faith*, and as explicit an answer or confession: “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest; and he answered, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.” Every administration of baptism indeed implied this demand; and baptism, if we understand St. Peter to refer to this circumstance, was such an “answer” to the interrogations of the administrator, as expressed a true and evangelical faith. If we take the third rendering of “*stipulation*,” which has less to support it critically than either of the others, still as the profession of *faith* was a condition of baptism, that profession had the full force of a formal stipulation, since all true faith in Christ requires an entire subjection to him as Lord, as well as Saviour.

Upon this passage, however, a somewhat clearer light may be thrown, by understanding the word **επερωτημα** in the sense of that which *asks*, *requires*, *seeks*, something beyond itself. The verb from which it is derived signifies to ask or require; but **επερωτημα** occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; and but once in the version of the Seventy, ^{<20417>}Daniel 4:17, where, however, it is used so as to be fully illustrative of the meaning of St. Peter. Nebuchadnezzar was to be humbled by being driven from men to associate with the beasts of the field; and the vision in which this was represented concludes, “This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand, **το επερωτημα**, by the word of the Holy Ones, to the *intent* that the living may know, **ινα γνωσιν οι ζωντες**, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.” The Chaldaic word, like the Greek, is from a word which signifies to ask, to require, and may be equally expressed by the word *petitio*, which is the rendering of the Vulgate, or by *postulatum*. There was an *end*, an “*intent*,” for which the humbling of the Babylonian king was required “by the word of the Holy Ones” that, by the signal punishment of the greatest earthly monarch, “the living might know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.” In like manner baptism has an end, an “*intent*,” “not the putting away the filth of the flesh,” but obtaining “a good conscience toward God;” and it *requires*, *claims* this good conscience through that faith in Christ whereof cometh remission of sins, the cleansing of the “conscience from dead works,” and those supplies of supernatural aid by which, in future, men may “live in all good conscience before God.” It is thus that we see how St. Peter preserves the

correspondence between the act of Noah in preparing the ark as an act of faith by which he was justified, and the act of submitting to Christian baptism, which is also obviously an act of faith, in order to the remission of sins, or the obtaining a good conscience before God. This is farther strengthened by his immediately adding, “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:” a clause which our translators by the use of a parenthesis, connect with “baptism doth also now save us;” so that their meaning is. we are saved by baptism through the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and as he “rose again for our justification,” this sufficiently shows the true sense of the apostle, who, by our being “saved,” clearly means our being justified by faith.

The text, however, needs no parenthesis, and the true sense may be thus expressed: “The antitype to which water of the flood, baptism, doth now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but that which intently seeks *a good conscience* toward God, through faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” But however a particular word may be disposed of, the whole passage can only be consistently taken to teach us that baptism is the outward sign of our entrance into God’s covenant of mercy; and that when it is an act of true faith, it becomes an instrument of salvation, like that act of faith in Noah, by which, when moved with fear, he “prepared an ark to the saving of his house,” and survived the destruction of an unbelieving world.

From what has been said it will then follow, that the Abrahamic covenant and the Christian covenant is the same gracious engagement on the part of God to show mercy to man, and to bestow upon him eternal life, through faith in Christ as the true sacrifice for sin, differing only in circumstances; and that as the sign and seal of this covenant under the old dispensation was circumcision, under the new it is baptism, which has the same federal character, performs the same initiatory office, and is instituted by the same authority. For none could have authority to lay aside the appointed seal, but the being who first instituted it, who changed the form of the covenant itself, and who has in fact abrogated the old seal by the appointment of another, even baptism, which is made obligatory upon “all nations to whom the Gospel is preached, and is” to continue to “the end of the world.”

This argument is sufficiently extended to show that the Antipædobaptist writers have in vain endeavoured to prove that baptism has not been appointed in the room of circumcision; a point on which, indeed, they were

bound to employ all their strength; for the substitution of baptism for circumcision being established, one of their main objections to infant baptism, as we shall just now show, is rendered wholly nugatory.

But it is not enough, in stating the nature of the ordinance of Christian baptism, to consider it generally as an act by which man enters into God's covenant of grace. Under this general view several particulars are contained, which it is of great importance rightly to understand. Baptism, both as a *sign* and *seal*, presents an entire correspondence with the ancient rite of circumcision. Let it then be considered, —

1. As A SIGN. Under this view, circumcision indicated, by a visible and continued rite, the *placability* of God toward his sinful creatures, and held out the promise of justification, by faith alone, to every truly penitent offender. It went farther, and was the sign of sanctification, or the taking away the pollution of sin, “the superfluity of naughtiness,” as well as the pardon of actual offences, and thus was the visible emblem of a regenerate mind, and a renewed life. This will appear from the following passages: “For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision in that of the heart, in *the spirit*, and not in *the letter*, whose praise is not of men, but of God,” ^{<412>}Romans 2:28. “And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live,” ^{<430>}Deuteronomy 30:6. “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem,” ^{<404>}Jeremiah 4:3. It was the *sign* also of peculiar relation to God, as his people: “Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise, THEREFORE, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff necked,” ^{<410>}Deuteronomy 10:15, 16.

In all these respects, baptism, as a *sign* of the new covenant, corresponds to circumcision. Like that, its administration is a constant exhibition of the placability of God to man; like that, it is the initiatory rite into a covenant which promises pardon and salvation to a true faith, of which it is the outward profession; like that, it is the symbol of regeneration, the washing away of sin, and “the renewing of the Holy Ghost;” and like that, it is a sign of peculiar relation to God, Christians becoming, in consequence, “a chosen generation, a peculiar people,” — his “*Church*” on earth, as distinguished from “the world.” “For we,” says the apostle, “are the

circumcision,” we are that peculiar people and Church now, which was formerly distinguished by the sign of circumcision, “who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

But as a *sign* baptism is more than circumcision; because the covenant, under its new dispensation, was not only to offer pardon upon believing, deliverance from the bondage of fleshly appetites, and a peculiar spiritual relation to God, all which we find under the Old Testament; but also to bestow *the Holy Spirit*, in his FULNESS, upon all believers; and of this effusion of “the power from on high,” baptism was made the visible sign; and perhaps for this, among some other obvious reasons, was substituted for circumcision, because baptism *by effusion, or pouring*, (the New Testament mode of baptizing, as we shall afterward show,) was a natural symbol of this heavenly gift. The baptism of John had special reference to the Holy Spirit, which was not to be administered by him, but by Christ, who should come after him. This gift only honoured John’s baptism once, in the extraordinary case of our Lord; but it constantly followed upon the baptism administered by the apostles of Christ, after his ascension, and “the sending of the promise of the Father.” Then Peter said unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and *ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*,” ^{<4027>} Acts 2:17. “According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, which he *shed*,” or *poured out*, “on us abundantly through Jesus Christ.” For this reason Christianity is called “the ministration of the Spirit;” and so far is this from being confined to the miraculous gifts often bestowed in the first age of the Church, that it is made the standing and prominent test of true Christianity to “be led by the Spirit,” — “If ANY MAN have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Of this great new covenant blessing, baptism was therefore eminently the *sign*; and it represented “the *pouring out*” of the Spirit, “the *descending*” of the Spirit, the “falling” of the Spirit “upon men,” by the mode in which it was administered, the POURING of water FROM ABOVE upon the subjects baptized.

As a SEAL also, or *confirming* sign, baptism answers to circumcision. By the institution of the latter, A PLEDGE was constantly given by the Almighty to bestow the spiritual blessings of which the rite was the sign, pardon and sanctification through faith in the future seed of Abraham; peculiar relation to Him as “his people;” and the heavenly inheritance. Of the same blessings, baptism is also the pledge, along with that higher dispensation of

the Holy Spirit which it specially represents in emblem. Thus in baptism there is on the part of God a visible assurance of his faithfulness to his covenant stipulations. But it is *our seal* also; it is that act by which we make ourselves parties to the covenant, and thus “set to our seal, that God is true.” In this respect it binds US, as, in the other, GOD mercifully binds himself for the stronger assurance of our faith. We *pledge* ourselves to trust wholly in Christ for pardon and salvation, and to obey his laws; — “teaching them ‘to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:’” in that rite also we undergo a mystical death unto sin, a mystical separation from the world, which St. Paul calls being “buried with Christ in or by baptism;” and a mystical resurrection to newness of life, through Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Thus in circumcision, an obligation of faith in the promises made to Abraham, and an obligation to holiness of life, and to the observance of the Divine laws, was contracted; and Moses, therefore, in a passage above quoted, argues from that peculiar visible relation of the Israelites to God, produced by outward circumcision, to the duty of circumcising the heart: “The Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, ever, you above all people; circumcise THEREFORE: the foreskin of your heart,” ^{<051015>} Deuteronomy 10:15.

If then we bring all these considerations under one view, we shall find it sufficiently established that baptism is the sign and seal of the covenant of grace under its perfected dispensation; — that it is the grand initiatory act by which we enter into this covenant, in order to claim all its spiritual blessings, and to take upon ourselves all its obligations, — that it was appointed by Jesus Christ in a manner which plainly put it in the place of circumcision; — that it is now the means by which men become Abraham’s spiritual children, and heirs with him of the promise, which was the office of circumcision, until “the seed,” the Messiah, should come; — and that baptism is therefore expressly called by St. Paul, “the circumcision of Christ,” or Christian circumcision, in a sense which can only import that baptism has now taken the place of the Abrahamic rite.

The only objection of any plausibility which has been urged by Antipædobaptist writers against the substitution of baptism for circumcision, is thus stated by Mr. Booth: “If baptism succeeded in the place of circumcision, how came it that both of them were in full force at the same time, that is, from the commencement of John’s ministry to the death of Christ? For one thing to come in the room of another, and the latter to hold its place, is an odd kind of succession. Admitting the

succession pretended, how came it that Paul circumcised Timothy, after he had been baptized?" That circumcision was practised along with baptism from John the Baptist's ministry to the death of Christ may be very readily granted, without affecting the question; for baptism could not be made the sign and seal of the perfected covenant of grace, until that covenant was both perfected, and fully explained and proposed for acceptance, which did not take place until after "the blood of the everlasting covenant" was shed, and our Lord had opened its full import to the apostles who were to publish it "to all nations" after his resurrection. Accordingly we find that baptism was formally made the rite of initiation into this covenant for the first time, when our Lord gave commission to his disciples to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," — "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." John's baptism was upon profession of repentance, and faith in the speedy appearance of Him who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost, and fire; and our Lord's baptism by his disciples was administered to those Jews that believed on him, as the Messiah, all of whom, like the apostles, waited for a fuller development of his character and offices. For since the new covenant was not then fully perfected, it could not be proposed in any other way than to prepare them that believed in Christ, by its partial but increasing manifestation in the discourses of our Lord, for the full declaration both of its benefits and obligations; which declaration was not made until after his resurrection. Whatever the nature and intent of that baptism which our Lord by his disciples administered, might be, (a point on which we have no information,) like that of John, it looked to something yet to come, and was not certainly that baptism in the name "of the Father, of the Son; and of the Holy Ghost," which was afterward instituted as the standing initiatory rite into the Christian Church. As for the circumcision of Timothy, and the practice of that rite among many of the Hebrew believers, it has already been accounted for. If indeed the Baptist writers could show that the apostles sanctioned the practice of circumcision as a seal of the old covenant, either as it was Abrahamic or Mosaic, or both, then there would be some force in the argument, that one could not succeed the other, if both were continued under inspired authority. But we have the most decided testimony of the Apostle Paul against any such use of circumcision; and he makes it, when practised in that view, a total abnegation of Christ and the new covenant. It follows then, that, when circumcision was continued by any *connivance* of the apostles, — and certainly they did no more than *connive* at it, — it was practised upon

some grounds which did not regard it as the seal of any covenant, from national custom, or prejudice, a feeling to which the Apostle Paul himself yielded in the case of Timothy. He circumcised him, but not from any conviction of necessity, since he uniformly declared circumcision to have vanished away with that dispensation of the covenant of which it was the seal through the bringing in of a better hope.

We may here add, that an early father, Justin Martyr, takes the same view of the substitution of circumcision by Christian baptism: “We, Gentiles,” Justin observes, “have not received that circumcision according to the flesh, but that which is spiritual — and moreover, for indeed we were sinners, we have received this in *baptism*, through God’s mercy, and it is enjoined on all to receive it in like manner.”

II. The nature of baptism having been thus explained, we may proceed to consider its SUBJECTS.

That believers are the proper subjects of baptism, as they were of circumcision, is beyond dispute. As it would have been a monstrous perversion of circumcision to have administered it to any person, being of adult age, who did not believe in the true and living God, and in the expected “seed of Abraham,” in whom all nations were to be blessed; so is faith in Christ also an indispensable condition for baptism in all persons of mature age; and no minister is at liberty to take from the candidate the visible pledge of his acceptance of the terms of God’s covenant, unless he has been first taught its nature, promises, and obligations, and gives sufficient evidence of the reality of his faith, and the sincerity of his profession of obedience. Hence the administration of baptism was placed by our Lord only in the hands of those who were “to preach the Gospel,” that is, of those who were to declare God’s method of saving men “through faith in Christ,” and to teach them “to observe all things, whatsoever Christ had commanded them.” Circumcision was connected with teaching, and belief of the truth taught and so also is Christian baptism.

The question, however, which now requires consideration is, whether the infant children of believing parents are entitled to be made parties to the covenant of grace, by the act of their parents, and the administration of baptism?

In favour of infant baptism, the following arguments may be adduced. Some of them are more direct than others; but the reader will judge whether, taken all together, they do not establish this practice of the Church, continued to us from the earliest ages, upon the strongest basis of SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY.

1. As it has been established, that baptism was put by our Lord himself and his apostles in the room of circumcision, as an initiatory rite into the covenant of grace; and as the infant children of believers under the Old Testament were entitled to the covenant benefits of the latter ordinance, and the children of Christian believers are not expressly excluded from entering into the same covenant by baptism; the absence of such an explicit exclusion is sufficient proof of their title to baptism.

For if the covenant be the same in all its spiritual blessings, and an express change was made by our Lord in the *sign* and *seal* of that covenant, but no change at all in the *subjects* of it, no one can have a right to carry that change farther than the Lawgiver himself, and to exclude the children of believers from entering his covenant by baptism, when they had always been entitled to enter into it by circumcision. This is a censurable interference with the authority of God; a presumptuous attempt to fashion the new dispensation in this respect so as to conform it to a mere human opinion of fitness and propriety. For to say, that, because baptism is directed to be administered to believers when adults are spoken of, it follows that children who are not capable of personal faith are excluded from baptism, is only to argue in the same manner as if it were contended, that, because circumcision, when adults were the subjects, was only to be administered to believers, therefore infants were excluded from that ordinance, which is contrary to the fact. This argument will not certainly exclude them from baptism by way of inference, and by no act of the Maker and Mediator of the covenant are they shut out.

2. If it had been intended to exclude infants from entering into the new covenant by baptism, the absence of every prohibitory expression to this effect in the New Testament, must have been misleading to all men; and especially to the Jewish believers.

Baptism was no new ordinance when our Lord instituted it, though he gave to it a particular designation. It was in his practice to adapt, in several instances, what he found already established, to the uses of his religion. "A

parable, for instance, was a Jewish mode of teaching. — Who taught by parables equal to Jesus Christ? And what is the most distinguished and appropriate rite of his religion, but a service grafted on a passover custom among the Jews of his day? It was not ordained by Moses, that a part of the bread they had used in the passover should be the last thing they ate after that supper; yet this our Lord took as he found it, and converted it into a memorial of his body. The ‘cup of blessing’ has no authority whatever from the original institution; yet this our Lord found in use, and adopted as a memorial of his blood: — taken together, these elements form one commemoration of his death. Probability, arising to rational certainty, therefore, would lead us to infer, that whatever rite Jesus appointed as the ordinance of admission into the community of his followers, he would also adopt from some service already existing — from some token familiar among the people of his nation.

“In fact, we know that ‘*divers baptisms*’ existed under the law, and we have every reason to believe, that the admission of proselytes into the profession of Judaism, was really and truly marked by a *washing* with water in a ritual and ceremonial manner. I have always understood that Maimonides is perfectly correct when he says, ‘*In all ages, when a heathen (or a stranger by nation) was willing to enter into the covenant of Israel, and gather himself under the wings of the majesty of God, and take upon himself the yoke of the law — he must be first circumcised, and secondly BAPTIZED, and thirdly, bring a sacrifice; or if the party were a woman, then she must be first BAPTIZED, and secondly bring a sacrifice.*’ He adds, ‘*At this present time when (the temple being destroyed) there is no sacrificing, a stranger must be first circumcised, and secondly BAPTIZED.*’

“Dr. Gill, indeed, in his *Dissertation on Jewish Proselyte Baptism*, has ventured the assertion, that ‘there is no mention made of any rite or custom of admitting Jewish proselytes by *baptism*, in any writings or records before the time of John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles; nor in any age after them, for the first three or four hundred years; or, however, before the writing of the *Talmuds*.’ But the learned doctor has not condescended to understand the evidence of this fact. It does not rest on the testimony of Jewish records solely; it was in circulation among the heathen, as we learn from the clear and demonstrative testimony of Epictetus, who has

these words: (he is blaming those who assume the profession of philosophy without acting up to it:) ‘Why do you call yourself a Stoic? Why do you deceive the multitude? Why do you pretend to be a *Greek* when you are a *Jew*? a *Syrian*? an *Egyptian*? And when we see any one wavering, we are wont to say, This is not a *Jew*, but acts one. But when he assumes the sentiments of one who hath been *baptized* and *circumcised*, then he both really is, and is called a *Jew*. Thus we, falsifying our profession, are *Jews* in name, but in reality something else.’

“This practice then of the *Jews*, — *proselyte baptism* — was so notorious to the heathen in Italy and in Greece, that it furnished this philosopher with an object of comparison. Now, Epictetus lived to be very old: he is placed by Dr. Lardner, A.D. 109, by Le Clerc, A.D. 104. He could not be less than sixty years of age when he wrote this; and he might obtain his information thirty or forty years earlier, which brings it up to the time of the apostles. Those who could think that the *Jews* could institute *proselyte baptism* at the very moment when the Christians were practising *baptism* as an initiatory rite, are not to be envied for the correctness of their judgment. The rite certainly dates much earlier, probably many ages. I see no reason for disputing the assertion of Maimonides, notwithstanding Dr. Gill’s rash and fallacious language on the subject.” (*Facts and Evidences on the Subject of Baptism.*)

This baptism of proselytes, as Lightfoot has fully showed, was a baptism of *families*, and comprehended their infant children; and the rite was a symbol of their being washed from the pollution of idolatry. Very different indeed in the extent of its import and office was Christian baptism to the Jewish baptisms, nevertheless, this shows that the *Jews* were familiar with the rite as it extended to children, in cases of conversions from idolatry; and, as far at least as the converts from paganism to Christianity were concerned, they could not but understand Christian baptism to extend to the infant children of Gentile proselytes, unless there had been, what we nowhere find in the discourses of Christ and the writings of the apostles, *an express exception* of them. — In like manner, their own practice of infant circumcision must have misled them; for if they were taught that baptism was the initiatory seal of the Christian covenant, and had taken the place of circumcision, which St. Paul had informed them was “a seal of the righteousness, which is by faith,” how should they have understood that their children were no

longer to be taken into covenant with God, as under their own former religion, unless they had been told that this exclusion of children from all covenant relation to God, was one of those *peculiarities* of the Christian dispensation in which it differed from the religion of the patriarchs and Moses? This was surely a great change; a change which must have made great impression upon a serious and affectionate Jewish parent, who could now no longer covenant with God for his children, or place his children in a special covenant relation to the Lord of the whole earth; a change indeed so great, — a placing of the children of Christian parents in so inferior, and, so to speak, *outcast* a condition in comparison of the children of believing Jews, while the Abrahamic covenant remained in force, — that not only, in order to prevent mistake, did it require an express enunciation, but in the nature of the thing it must have given rise to so many objections, or at least inquiries, that explanations of the reason of this peculiarity might naturally be expected to occur in the writings of the apostles, and especially in those of St. Paul. On the contrary, the very phraseology of these inspired men, when touching the subject of the children of believers only incidentally, was calculated to confirm the ancient practice, in opposition to what we are told is the true doctrine of the Gospel upon this point. For instance, how could the Jews have understood the words of Peter at the pentecost, but as calling both upon them and their children, to be baptized? — “Repent and be baptized, for the promise is unto you and to your children.” For that both are included, may be proved, says a sensible writer, by considering,

“1. The resemblance between this promise, and that in ~~Gen~~ Genesis 17:7, ‘To be a God unto thee, and unto thy seed after thee.’ The resemblance between these two lies in two things: (1.) Each stands connected with an ordinance, by which persons were to be admitted into Church fellowship; the one by circumcision, the other by baptism. (2.) Both agree in phraseology; the one is, ‘to thee and thy seed;’ the other is, ‘to you and your children.’ Now, every one knows that the word *seed* means children; and that *children* means seed; and that they are precisely the same. From these two strongly resembling features, viz. their connection with a similar ordinance, and the sameness of the phraseology, I infer, that the subjects expressed in each are the very same. And as it is certain that parents and infants were intended by the one; it must be equally certain that both are intended by the other.

“**2.** The sense in which the speaker must have understood the sentence in question: ‘The promise is to you, and to your children.’ In order to know this, we must consider who the speaker was, and from what source he received his religious knowledge. The apostle was a Jew. He knew that he himself had been admitted in infancy, and that it was the ordinary practice of the Church to admit infants to membership. And he likewise knew, that in this they acted on the authority of that place, where God promises to Abraham, ‘to be a God unto him, and unto his seed.’ Now, if the apostle knew all this, in what sense could he understand the term *children*, as distinguished from their parents? I have said that **τεκνα**, children, and **σπερμα**, seed, mean the same thing. And as the apostle well knew that the term *seed* intended infants, though not mere infants only; and that infants were circumcised and received into the Church as being the seed, what else could he understand by the term *children*, when mentioned with their parents? Those who will have the apostle to mean, by the term *children* ‘adult posterity’ only, have this infelicity attending them, that they understand the term differently from all other men; and they attribute to the apostle a sense of the word which to him must have been the most forced and unfamiliar.

“**3.** In what sense his hearers must have understood him, when he said, ‘The promise is to you, and to your children.’

“The context informs us, that many of St. Peter’s hearers, as he himself was, were Jews. They had been accustomed for many hundred years to receive infants by circumcision into the Church; and this they did, as before observed, because God had promised to be a God to Abraham and to his seed. They had understood this promise to mean parents and their infant offspring, and this idea was become familiar by the practice of many centuries. What then must have been their views, when one of their own community says to them, ‘The promise is to you and to your children?’ If their practice of receiving infants was founded on a promise exactly similar, as it was, how could they possibly understand him, but as meaning the same thing, since he himself used the same mode of speech? This must have been the case, unless we admit this absurdity, that they understood him in a sense to which they had never been accustomed.

“How idle a thing it is, in a Baptist, to come with a lexicon in his hand, to inform us that **τεκνῶν**, children, means posterity! Certainly it does, and so includes the youngest infants.

“But the Baptists will have it, that **τεκνῶν**, children, in this place, means only *adult posterity*. And if so, the Jews to whom he spoke, unless they understood St. Peter in a way in which it was morally impossible they should, would infallibly have understood him wrong. Certainly, all men, when acting freely, will understand words in that way which is most familiar to them; and nothing could be more so to the Jews, than to understand such a speech as Peter’s to mean adults and infants.

“We should more certainly come at the truth, if, instead of idly criticising, we could fancy ourselves Jews, and in the habit of circumcising infants, and receiving them into the Church; and then could we imagine one of our own nation and religion to address us in the very language of Peter in this text, ‘The promise is to you and to your children;’ let us ask ourselves whether we could ever suppose him to mean adult posterity only!” (*Edwards on Baptism.*)

To this we may add that St. Paul calls the children of believers *holy*, separated to God, and standing therefore in a peculiar relation to him, ^{<4074>}1 Corinthians 7:14; a mode of speech which would also have been wholly unintelligible at least to a Jew, unless by some rite of Christianity children were made sharers in its covenanted mercies.

The practice of the Jews, and the very language of the apostles, so naturally leading therefore to a misunderstanding of this sacrament, if infant baptism be not a Christian rite, and that in respect of its subjects themselves, it was the more necessary that some notice of the exclusion of infants from the Christian covenant should have been given by way of guard. And as we find no intimation of this prohibitory kind, we may confidently conclude that it was never the design of Christ to restrict this ordinance to adults only.

3. Infant children are DECLARED BY CHRIST to be members of his Church.

That they were made members of God’s Church in the family of Abraham, and among the Jews, cannot be denied. They were made so by circumcision, which was not that carnal and merely political rite which

many Baptist writers in contradiction to the Scriptures make it, but was, as we have seen, the seal of a spiritual covenant, comprehending engagements to bestow the remission of sins and all its consequent blessings in this life, and, in another, the heavenly Canaan. Among these blessings was that special relation, which consisted in becoming a visible and peculiar people of God, his CHURCH. This was contained in that engagement of the covenant, “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people;” a promise, which, however connected with temporal advantages, was, in its highest and most emphatic sense, wholly spiritual. Circumcision was therefore a *religious*, and not a mere political rite, because the covenant, of which it was the seal, was in its most ample sense spiritual. If therefore we had no direct authority from the words of Christ to declare the infant children of believers *competent* to become the members of his Church, the two circumstances, — that the Church of God, which has always been one Church in all ages, and into which the Gentiles are now introduced, formerly admitted infants to membership by circumcision, — and that the *mode* of initiation into it only has been changed, and not the *subjects*, (of which we have no intimation,) would themselves prove that baptism admits into the Christian Church both believing parents and their children, as circumcision admitted both. The same Church remains; for “the olive tree” is not destroyed; the natural branches only are broken off, and the Gentiles grafted in, and “partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree,” that is, of all the spiritual blessings and privileges heretofore enjoyed by the Jews, in consequence of their relation to God as his Church. But among these spiritual privileges and blessings, was the right of placing their children in covenant with God; the membership of the Jews comprehended both children and adults; and the grafting in of the Gentiles, so as to partake of the same “root and fatness,” will therefore include a right to put their children also into the covenant, so that they as well as adults may become members of Christ’s Church, have God to be “their God,” and be acknowledged by him, in the special sense of the terms of the covenant, to be his “people.”

But we have our Lord’s direct testimony to this point, and that in two remarkable passages, ^{<1947>}Luke 9:47, 48, “And Jesus took a child and set him by him, and he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me; for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.” We grant that this is an instance of teaching by parabolic action. The intention

of Christ was to impress the necessity of humility and teachableness upon his disciples, and to afford a promise, to those who should receive them in his name, of that special grace which was implied in receiving himself. But then, were there not a correspondence of circumstances between the child taken by Jesus in his arms, and the disciples compared to this child, there would be no force, no propriety, in the action, and the same truth might have been as forcibly stated without any action of this kind at all. Let then these correspondences be remarked in order to estimate the amount of their meaning. The humility and docility of the true disciple corresponded with the same dispositions in a young child; and the “receiving a disciple in *the name*” of Christ corresponds with the receiving of a child in *the name* of Christ, which can only mean the receiving of each with kindness, on account of *a religious relation* between each and Christ, which religious relation can only be well interpreted of *a Church relation*. This is farther confirmed by the next point of correspondence, the *identity* of Christ both with the disciple and the child, “Whosoever shall receive this child in my name *receiveth me*;” but such an identity of Christ with his disciple stands wholly upon their relation to him as members of his mystical “body, the Church.” It is in this respect only that they are “one with him;” and there can be no identity of Christ with “little children” but by virtue of the same relation, that is, as they are *members* of his mystical body, the Church; of which *membership*, baptism is now, as circumcision was then, the initiatory rite. That was the relation in which the very child he then took up in his arms stood to him by virtue of its circumcision; it was a member of his Old Testament Church; but, as he is speaking of the disciples as the future teachers of his perfected covenant, and their reception in his name under that character, he manifestly glances at the Church relationship of children to him to be established by the baptism to be instituted in his perfect dispensation.

This is, however, expressed still more explicitly in ~~10:14~~ Mark 10:14. “But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God: — and he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” Here the children spoken of are “little children,” of so tender an age, that our Lord “took them up in his arms.” The purpose for which they were brought was not, as some of the Baptist writers would suggest, that Christ should heal them of diseases, for though St. Mark says, “They brought young children to Christ that he might *touch* them,” this is

explained by St. Matthew, who says, “that he should put his hands upon them, and pray;” and even in the statement of St. ^{<41016>}Mark 10:16, it is not said that our Lord healed them, but “put his hands upon them, and *blessed* them;” which clearly enough shows that this was the purpose for which they were brought by their parents to Christ. Nor is there any evidence that it was the practice among the Jews, for common unofficial persons to put their hands upon the heads of those for whom they prayed. The parents here appear to have been among those who believed Christ to be a prophet, “*that Prophet,*” or the Messiah; and on that account earnestly desired his prayers for their children, and his *official* blessing upon them. That official blessing, — the blessing which he was authorized and empowered to bestow by virtue of his Messiahship, — he was so ready, we might say so anxious, to bestow upon them, that he was “*much displeased*” with his disciples who “rebuked them that brought them,” and gave a command which was to be in force in all future time, — “Suffer the little children to come unto me,” in order to receive my official blessing; “for of such is the kingdom of God.” The first evasive criticism of the Baptist writers is, that the phrase “of such,” means of such like, that is, of adults being of a child-like disposition; a criticism which takes away all meaning from the words of our Lord. For what kind of reason was it to offer for permitting children to come to Christ to receive his blessing, that persons not children, but who were of a child-like disposition, were the subjects of the kingdom of God? The absurdity of this is its own refutation, since the reason for children being permitted to come, must be found in themselves, and not in others. The second attempt to evade the argument from this passage is, to understand “the kingdom of God,” or “the kingdom of heaven,” as St. Matthew has it, exclusively of the heavenly state. We gladly admit, in opposition to the Calvinistic Baptists, that all children, dying before actual sin committed, are admitted into heaven through the merits of Christ; but for this very reason it follows that infants are proper subjects to be introduced into his Church on earth. The phrases, “the kingdom of God,” and “the kingdom of heaven,” are, however, more frequently used by our Lord to denote the Church in this present world, than in its state of glory; and since all the children brought to Christ to receive his blessing were not likely to die in their infancy, it could not be affirmed, that “of such is the kingdom of heaven,” if that be understood to mean the state of future happiness exclusively. As children, they might all be members of the Church on earth; but not all *as children*, members of the Church in heaven, seeing they might live to become adult, and be cast away. Thus, therefore,

if children are expressly declared to be members of Christ's Church, then are they proper subjects of baptism, which is the initiatory rite into every portion of that Church which is visible.

But let this case be more particularly considered.

Take it that by "the kingdom of God," or "of heaven," our Lord means the glorified state of his Church; it must be granted that none can enter into heaven who are not redeemed by Christ, and who do not stand in a vital relation to him as members of his mystical body, or otherwise we should place human and fallen beings in that heavenly state who are unconnected with Christ as their Redeemer, and un-cleansed by him as the sanctifier of his redeemed. Now, this relation must exist on earth, before it can exist in heaven; or else we assign the work of sanctifying the fallen nature of man to a future state, which is contrary to the Scriptures. If infants, therefore, are thus redeemed and sanctified in their nature, and are before death made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light;" so that in this world they are placed in the same relation to Christ as an adult believer, who derives sanctifying influence from him, they are therefore the members of his Church, — they partake the grace of the covenant, and are comprehended in that promise of the covenant, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." In other words, they are made members of Christ's Church, and are entitled to be recognized as such by the administration of the visible sign of initiation into some visible branch of it. If it be asked, "Of what import then is baptism to children, if as infants they already stand in a favourable relation to Christ?" the answer is, that it is of the same import as circumcision was to Abraham, which was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised:" it confirmed all the promises of the covenant of grace to him, and made the Church of God *visible* to men. It is of the same import as baptism to the eunuch, who had faith already, and a willingness to submit to the rite before it was administered to him. He stood at that moment in the condition, not of a *candidate* for introduction into the Church, but of an *accepted* candidate; he was *virtually* a member, although not *formally so*, and his baptism was not merely a sign of his faith, but a *confirming* sign of God's covenant relation to him as a pardoned and accepted man, and gave him a security for the continuance and increase of the grace of the covenant, as he was prepared to receive it. In like manner, in the case of all *truly believing* adults applying for baptism, their relation to Christ is not that of mere candidates for membership with his Church, but that of

accepted candidates, standing already in a vital relation to him, but about to receive the seal which was to confirm that grace, and its increase in the ordinance itself, and in future time. Thus this *previous* relation of infants to Christ, as accepted by him, is an argument for their baptism, not against it, seeing it is by that they are visibly recognized as the formal members of his Church, and have the full grace of the covenant confirmed and sealed to them, with increase of grace as they are fitted to receive it, beside the advantage of visible connection with the Church, and of that obligation which is taken upon themselves by their parents to train, them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In both views then, “of such is the kingdom of God,” — members of his Church on earth, and of his Church in heaven, if they die in infancy, for the one is necessarily involved in the other. No one can be of the kingdom of God in heaven, who does not stand in a vital sanctifying relation to Christ as the head of his mystical body, the Church, on earth; and no one can be of the kingdom of God on earth, a member of his true Church, and die in that relation, without entering that state of glory to which his adoption on earth makes him an heir, through Christ.

4. The argument from apostolic practice next offers itself. That practice was to baptize the *houses* of them that believed.

The impugners of infant baptism are pleased to argue much from the absence of all express mention of the baptism of infants in the New Testament. This however is easily accounted for, when it is considered that if, as we have proved, baptism took the place of circumcision, the baptism of infants was so much a matter of course, as to call for no remark. The argument from silence on this subject is one which least of all the Baptists ought to dwell upon, since, as we have seen, if it had been intended to exclude children from the privilege of being placed in covenant with God, which privilege they unquestionably enjoyed under the Old Testament, this extraordinary alteration, which could not but produce remark, required to be particularly noted, both to account for it to the mind of an affectionate Jewish parent, and to guard against that mistake into which we shall just now show Christians from the earliest times fell, since they administered baptism to infants. It may farther be observed, that, as to the Acts of the Apostles, the events narrated there did not require the express mention of the baptism of infants, as an act separate from the baptism of adults. That which called for the administration of baptism at that period, as now, when

the Gospel is preached in a heathen land, was the believing of adult persons, not the case of persons already believing, bringing their children for baptism. On the supposition that baptism was administered to the children of the parents who thus believed, at the same time as themselves, and in consequence of their believing, it may be asked how the fact could be more naturally expressed, when it was not intended to speak of infant baptism *doctrinally* or *distinctly*, than that such a one was baptized, “and all his *house*;” just as a similar fact would be distinctly recorded by a modern missionary writing to a Church at home practising infant baptism, and having no controversy on the subject in his eye, by saying that he baptized such a heathen, at such a place, with all his *family*.

For, without going into any criticism on the Greek term rendered *house*, it cannot be denied that, like the old English word employed in our translation, and also like the word *family*, it must be understood to comprehend either the children only, to the exclusion of the domestics, or both.

If we take the instances of the baptism of whole “houses,” as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, they must be understood as marking the common mode of proceeding among the first preachers of the Gospel when the head or heads of family believed, or as insulated and peculiar instances. If the former, which, from what may be called the matter-of-course manner in which the cases are mentioned, is most probable, then innumerable instances must have occurred of the baptizing of houses or families, just as many in fact as there were of the conversion of heads of families in the apostolic age. That the majority of these houses must have included infant children is therefore certain, and it follows that the apostles practised infant baptism.

But let the cases of the baptism of *houses* mentioned in the New Testament be put in the most favourable light for the purpose of the Baptists; that is, let them be considered as insulated and peculiar, and not *instances* of apostolic procedure in all cases where the heads of families were converted to the faith, still the Baptist is obliged to assume that neither in the house of the Philippian jailer, nor in that of Lydia, nor in that of Stephanas, were there any infants at all, since, if there were, they were comprehended in the *whole* houses which were baptized upon the believing of their respective heads. This at least is improbable, and no intimation of this peculiarity is given in the history.

The Baptist writers, however, think that they can prove that all the persons included in these houses were adults; and that the means of showing this from the Scriptures is an instance of “the care of Providence watching over the sacred cause of adult baptism;” thus absurdly assuming that even if this point could be made out, the whole controversy is terminated, when, in fact, this is but an auxiliary argument of very inferior importance to those above mentioned. But let us examine their supposed proofs. “With respect to the jailer,” they tell us that “we are expressly assured, that the apostles spoke the word of the Lord to all that were in his house;” which we grant must principally, although not of necessity exclusively, refer to those who were of sufficient age to understand their discourse. And “that he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house;” from which the inference is, that none but adult hearers, and adult believers, were in this case baptized. If so, then there could be no infant children in the house; which, as the jailer appears from his activity to have been a man in the vigour of life, and not aged, is at least far from being certain. But if it be a *proof* in this case that there were no infant children in the jailer’s family, that it is said, he believed and *all his house*; this is not the only believing family mentioned in Scripture from which infants must be excluded. For, to say nothing of the houses of Lydia and Stephanas, the nobleman at Capernaum is said to have believed “and *all his house*,” ^{<3063>}John 4:53; so that we are to conclude that there were no infant children in this house also, although his sick son is not said to be his only offspring, and that son is called by him a *child*, the diminutive term **ωαιδιον** being used. Again, Cornelius is said, ^{<4402>}Acts 10:2, to be “one that feared God, and *all his house*.” Infant children therefore must be excluded from his family also; and also from that of Crispus, who is said to have “believed on the Lord with *all his house*;” which *house* appears, from what immediately follows, to have been baptized. These instances make it much more probable that the phrases “fearing God with all his house,” and “believing with all his house,” include young children under the believing adults, whose religious profession they would follow, and whose sentiments they would imbibe, so that they might be called a Christian family, and that so many houses or families should have been constituted only of adult persons, to the entire exclusion of children of tender years. In the case of the jailer’s house, however, the Baptist argument manifestly halts; for it is not said, that they only to whom the word of the Lord was spoken were baptized; nor that they only who “believed” and “rejoiced” with the jailer were baptized. The account of the baptism is given in a separate verse, and in different phrase: “And he took

them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he *and all his*," all belonging to him, "straightway;" where there is no limitation of the persons who were baptized to the adults only by any terms which designate them as persons "hearing" or "believing."

The next instance is that of Lydia. The words of the writer of the Acts are "Who when she was baptized, and her *house*." The great difficulty with the Baptists is, to make a house for Lydia without any children at all, young or old. This, however, cannot be proved from the term itself, since the same word is that commonly used in the Scripture to include children residing at home with their parents: "One that ruleth well his own *house*, having his *children* in subjection with all gravity." It is however conjectured, first, that she had come a trading voyage, from Thyatira to Philippi, to sell purple; as if a woman of Thyatira might not be settled in business at Philippi as a seller of this article. Then, as if to mark more strikingly the hopelessness of the attempt to torture this passage to favour an opinion, "her house" is made to consist of journeymen dyers, "employed in preparing the purple she sold;" which, however, is a notion at variance with the former; for if she was on a mere trading voyage, if she had brought her purple goods from Thyatira to Philippi to sell, she most probably brought them ready dyed, and would have no need of a dying establishment. To complete the whole, these journeymen dyers, although not a word is said of their conversion, nor even of their existence, in the whole story, are raised into "the brethren," (a term which manifestly denotes the members of the Philippian Church,) whom Paul and Silas are said to have seen and comforted in the house of Lydia, before they departed!

All, however, that the history states is, that "the Lord opened Lydia's heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." and that she was therefore "baptized and her house." From this house no one has the least authority to exclude children, even young children, since there is nothing in the history to warrant the above mentioned conjectures, and the word is in Scripture used expressly to include them. All is perfectly gratuitous on the part of the Baptists; but, while there is nothing to sanction the manner in which they deal with this text, there is a circumstance strongly confirmatory of the probability that the house of Lydia, according to the natural import of the word rendered house or family, contained children, and that in an infantile state. This is, that in all the other instances in which adults are mentioned as having been baptized

along with the head of a family, they are mentioned as “hearing,” and “believing,” or in some terms which amount to this. Cornelius had called together “his kinsmen and near friends;” and while Peter spake, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them *which heard the word,*” “and he commanded them to be baptized.” So the adults in the house of the jailer at Philippi were persons to whom “the word of the Lord” was spoken; and although nothing is said of the faith of any but the jailer himself, — for the words are more properly rendered, “and he, believing in God, rejoiced with all his house,” — yet is the joy which appears to have been felt by the adult part of his house, as well as by himself, to be attributed to their faith. Now, as it does not appear that the apostles, although they baptized infant children, baptized unbelieving adult servants because their masters or mistresses believed, and yet the *house* of Lydia were baptized along with herself, when no mention at all is made of the Lord “opening the heart” of these adult domestics, nor of their believing, the fair inference is, that “the house” of Lydia means her children only, and that being of immature years they were baptized with their mother according to the common custom of the Jews, to baptize the children of proselyted Gentiles along with their parents, from which practice Christian baptism appears to have been taken.

The third instance is that of “the house of Stephanas,” mentioned by St. Paul, ~~<40116>~~ 1 Corinthians 1:16, as having been baptized by himself. This family also, it is argued, must have been all adults, because they are said in the same epistle, ~~<46165>~~ 1 Corinthians 16:15, to have “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,” and farther, because they were persons who took “*a lead*” in the affairs of the Church, the Corinthians being exhorted to “submit themselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth.” To understand this passage rightly, it is however necessary to observe, that Stephanas, the head of this family, had been sent by the Church of Corinth to St. Paul at Ephesus, along with Fortunatus and Achaicus. In the absence of the head of the family, the apostle commends “the house,” the family of Stephanas to the regard of the Corinthian believers, and perhaps also the houses of the two other brethren who had come with him; for in several MSS. marked by Griesbach, and in some of the versions, the text reads, “Ye know the house of Stephanas and Fortunatus,” and one reads also, “and of Achaicus.” By the house or family of Stephanas, the apostle must mean his children, or, along with them, his near relations dwelling together in the same family; for, since they are commended for their hospitality to the saints, servants, who have no power

to show hospitality, are of course excluded. But, in the absence of the head of the family, it is very improbable that the apostle should exhort the Corinthian Church to “submit,” ecclesiastically, to the wife, sons, daughters, and near relations of Stephanas, and, if the reading of Griesbach’s MSS. be followed, to the family of Fortunatus, and that of Achaicus also. In respect of government, therefore, they cannot be supposed “to have had a *lead* in the Church,” according to the Baptist notion, and especially as the heads of these families were absent. They were however the oldest Christian families in Corinth, the house of Stephanas at least being called “the first fruits of Achaia,” and eminently distinguished for “addicting themselves,” *setting themselves on system*, to the work of ministering to the saints, that is, of communicating to the poor saints; entertaining stranger Christians, which was an important branch of practical duty in the primitive Church, that in every place those who professed Christ might be kept out of the society of idolaters; and receiving the ministers of Christ. On these accounts the apostle commends them to the especial regard of the Corinthian Church, and exhorts “**ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑποτασθε τοῖς τοιούτοις**, that you range yourselves under and co-operate with them, and with every one,” also, “who helpeth with us, and laboureth;” the military metaphor contained in **εταξάν** in the preceding verse being here carried forward. These families were the oldest Christians in Corinth; and as they were foremost in every good word and work, they were not only to be commended, but the rest were to be exhorted to serve under them as leaders in these works of charity. This appears to be the obvious sense of this otherwise obscure passage. But in this, or indeed in any other sense which can be given to it, it proves no more than that there were adult persons in the family of Stephanas, his wife, and sons, and daughters, who were distinguished for their charity and hospitality. Still it is to be remembered, that the baptism of the oldest of the children took place several years before. The house of Stephanas “was the first fruits of Achaia,” in which St. Paul began to preach not later than A.D. 51, while this epistle could not be written earlier at least than A.D. 57, and might be later. Six or eight years, taken from the age of the sons and daughters of Stephanas, might bring the oldest to the state of early youth, and as to the younger branches, would descend to the term of infancy, properly so called. Still farther, all that the apostle affirms of the benevolence and hospitality of the family of Stephanas is perfectly consistent with a part of his children being still very young when he wrote the epistle. An equal commendation for hospitality and charity might be given in the present day,

with perfect propriety, to many pious families, several members of which are still in a state of infancy. It was sufficient to warrant the use of such expressions as those of the apostle, that there were in these Corinthian families a few adults, whose conduct gave a decided character to the whole "house." Thus the arguments used to prove that in these three instances of family baptism, there were no young children, are evidently very unsatisfactory; and they leave us to the conclusion, which perhaps all would come to in reading the sacred history, were they quite free from the bias of a theory, that "houses," or "families," as in the commonly received import of the term, must be understood to comprise children of all ages, unless some explicit note of the contrary appears, which is not the case in any of the instances in question.

5. The last argument may be drawn from the antiquity of the practice of infant baptism.

If the baptism of the infant children of believers was not practised by the apostles and by the primitive Churches, when and where did the practice commence? To this question the Baptist writers can give no answer. It is an innovation, according to them, not upon the *circumstances* of a sacrament, but upon its *essential principle*; and yet its introduction produced no struggle; was never noticed by any general or provincial council; and excited no controversy! This itself is strong presumptive proof of its *early* antiquity. On the other hand, we can point out the only ancient writer who opposed infant baptism. This was Tertullian, who lived late in the second century; but his very opposition to the practice proves, that that practice was more ancient than himself; and the principles on which he impugns it, farther show that it was so. He regarded this sacrament superstitiously; he appended to it the *trine* immersion in the name of each of the persons of the trinity; he gives it gravely as a reason why infants should not be baptized, that Christ says, "Suffer the little children to *come* unto me," therefore they must stay till they are able to come, that is, till they are grown up; "and he would prohibit the unmarried, and all in a widowed state, from baptism, because of the temptations to which they may be liable." The whole of this is solved by adverting to that notion of the efficacy of this sacrament in taking away all *previous* sins, which then began to prevail, so that an inducement was held out for delaying baptism as long as possible, till at length, in many cases, it was postponed to the article of death, under the belief that the dying who received this sacrament were the more secure of salvation. Tertullian, accordingly, with all his zeal,

allowed that infants ought to be baptized *if their lives be in danger*, and thus evidently shows that his opposition to the baptism of infants in ordinary, rested upon a very different principle from that of the modern Antipædobaptists. Amidst all his arguments against this practice, Tertullian, however, never ventures upon one which would have been most to his purpose, and which might most forcibly have been urged had not baptism been administered to infants by the apostles and their immediate successors. That argument would have been the *novelty* of the practice, which he never asserts, and which, as he lived so early, he might have proved, had he had any ground for it. On the contrary, Justin Martyr, and Irenæus, in the second century, and Origen in the beginning of the third, expressly mention infant baptism as the practice of their times, and, by the latter, this is assigned to apostolic injunction. Fidus, an African bishop, applied to Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, to know, not whether infants were to be baptized, but whether their baptism might take place before the eighth day after their birth, that being the day on which circumcision was performed by the law of Moses. This question was considered in an African synod, held A.D. 254, at which sixty-six bishops were present, and “it was unanimously decreed, ‘that it was not necessary to defer baptism to that day; and that the grace of God, or baptism, should be given to all, and especially to infants.’” This decision was communicated in a letter, from Cyprian to Fidus. (*Cyp. Ep.* 59.) We trace the practice also downward. In the fourth century, Ambrose says, that “infants who are baptized, are reformed from wickedness to the primitive state of their nature;” (*Comment. in Lucam*, c. 10;) and at the end of that century, the famous controversy took place between Augustine and Pelagius concerning original sin, in which the uniform practice of baptizing infants from the days of the apostles was admitted by both parties, although they assigned different reasons for it. So little indeed were Tertullian’s absurdities regarded, that he appears to have been quite forgotten by this time; for Augustine says he never heard of any Christian, catholic or sectary, who taught any other doctrine than that infants are to be baptized. (*De Pecc. Mor.* cap. 6.) Infant baptism is not mentioned in the canons of any council; nor is it insisted upon as an object of faith in any creed; and thence we infer that it was a point not controverted at any period of the ancient Church, and we know that it was the practice in all established Churches. Wall says, that Peter Bruis, a Frenchman, who lived about the year 1030, whose followers were called Petrobrussians, was the first Antipædobaptist teacher who had a regular congregation. (*Hist.* part. 2, c. 7.) The Anabaptists of

Germany took their rise in the beginning of the fifteenth century; but it does not appear that there was any congregation of Anabaptists in England, till the year 1640. (*Bishop Tomline's Elements.*) That a practice which can be traced up to the very first periods of the Church, and has been, till within very modern times, its uncontradicted practice, should have a lower authority than apostolic usage and appointment, may be pronounced impossible. It is not like one of those trifling, though somewhat superstitious, additions, which even in very early times began to be made to the sacraments; on the contrary, it involves a principle so important as to alter the very nature of the sacrament itself. For if personal faith be an essential requisite of baptism in all cases; if baptism be a visible declaration of this, and is vicious without it; then infant baptism was an innovation of so serious a nature, that it must have attracted attention, and provoked controversy, which would have led, if not to the suppression of the error, yet to a diversity of practice in the ancient Churches, which in point of fact did not exist, Tertullian himself allowing infant baptism in extreme cases.

The BENEFITS of this sacrament require to be briefly exhibited. Baptism introduces the adult believer into the covenant of grace, and the Church of Christ; and is the seal, the pledge, to him on the part of God, of the fulfilment of all its provisions, in time and in eternity; while, on his part, he takes upon himself the obligations of steadfast faith and obedience.

To the infant child, it is a visible reception into the same covenant and Church, — a pledge of acceptance through Christ, — the bestowment of a title to all the grace of the covenant as circumstances may require, and as the mind of the child may be capable, or made capable, of receiving it; and as it may be sought in future life by prayer, when the period of reason and moral choice shall arrive. It conveys also the present “blessing” of Christ, of which we are assured by his taking children in his arms, and blessing them; which blessing cannot be merely nominal, but must be substantial and efficacious. It secures, too, the gift of the Holy Spirit, in those secret spiritual influences, by which the actual regeneration of those children who die in infancy is effected; and which are a *seed of life* in those who are spared, to prepare them for instruction in the word of God, as they are taught it by parental care, to incline their will and affections to good, and to begin and maintain in them the war against inward and outward evil, so that they may be Divinely assisted, as reason strengthens, to make their calling and election sure. In a word, it is, both as to infants and to adults,

the sign and pledge of that inward grace, which, although modified in its operations by the difference of their circumstances, has respect to, and flows from, a covenant relation to each of the three *persons* in whose one name they are baptized, — acceptance by the FATHER, — union with CHRIST as the head of his mystical body, the Church, — and “the communion of the HOLY GHOST.” To these advantages must be added the respect which God bears to the believing act of the parents, and to their solemn prayers on the occasion, in both which the child is interested; as well as in that solemn engagement of the parents, which the right necessarily implies, to bring up their child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

To the parents it is a benefit also. It assures them that God will not only be their God; but “the God of their seed after them;” it thus gives them, as the Israelites of old, the right to covenant with God for their “little ones,” and it is a consoling pledge that their dying, infant offspring shall be saved; since he who says, “Suffer little children to come unto me,” has added, “for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” They are reminded by it also of the necessity of acquainting themselves with God’s covenant, that they may diligently teach it to their children; and that as they have covenanted with God for their children, they are bound thereby to enforce the covenant conditions upon them as they come to years, — by *example*, as well as by education; by *prayer*, as well as by profession of the name of Christ.

III. The MODE of baptism remains to be considered.

Although the manner in which the element of water is applied in baptism is but a circumstance of this sacrament, it will not be a matter of surprise to those who reflect upon the proneness of men to attach undue importance to comparative trifles, that it has produced so much controversy. The question as to the proper *subjects* of baptism is one which is to be respected for its importance; that as to the *mode* has occupied more time, and excited greater feeling, than it is in any view entitled to. It cannot, however, be passed over, because the advocates for immersion are often very troublesome to their fellow Christians, unsettle weak minds, and sometimes, perhaps, from their zeal for a form, endanger their own spirituality. Against the doctrine that the only legitimate mode of baptizing is by immersion, we may first observe that there are several strong *presumptions*.

1. It is not probable, that if immersion were the only allowable mode of baptism, it should not have been expressly enjoined.
2. It is not probable, that in a religion designed to be universal, a mode of administering this ordinance should be obligatory, the practice of which is ill adapted to so many climates, where it would either be exceedingly harsh to immerse the candidates, male and female, strong and feeble, in water; or, in some places, as in the higher latitudes, for a greater part of the year, impossible. Even if immersion were in fact the original mode of baptizing in the name of Christ, these reasons make it improbable that no accommodation of the form should take place, without vitiating the ordinance. This some of the stricter Baptists assert, although they themselves depart from the primitive mode of partaking of the Lord's Supper, in accommodation to the customs of their country.
3. It is still more unlikely, that in a religion of mercy there should be no consideration of health and life in the administration of an ordinance of salvation, since it is certain that in countries where cold bathing is little practised, great risk of both is often incurred, especially in the case of women and delicate persons of either sex, and fatal effects do sometimes occur.
4. It is also exceedingly improbable, that in such circumstances of climate, and the unfrequent use of the bath, a mode of baptizing should have been appointed, which, from the shivering, the sobbing, and other bodily uneasiness produced, should distract the thoughts, and unfit the mind for a collected performance of a religious and solemn act of devotion.
5. It is highly improbable that the three thousand converts at the pentecost, who, let it be observed, were baptized on the same day, were all baptized by immersion; or that the jailer and "all his" were baptized in the same manner *in the night*, although the Baptists have invented "a tank or bath in the prison at Philippi" for that purpose.

Finally, it is most of all improbable, that a religion like the Christian, so scrupulously delicate, should have enjoined the immersion of women by men, and in the presence of men. In an after age, when immersion came into fashion, baptisteries, and rooms for women, and changes of garments, and other auxiliaries to this practice came into use, because they were found necessary to decency; but there could be no such conveniences in the first instance; and accordingly we read of none. With all the arrangements

of modern times, baptism by immersion is not a decent practice; there is not a female, perhaps, who submits to it, who has not a great previous struggle with her delicacy; but that, at a time when no such accommodations could be had as have since been found necessary, such a ceremony should have been constantly performing wherever the apostles and first preachers went, and that at pools and rivers in the presence of many spectators, and they sometimes unbelievers and scoffers, is a thing not rationally credible.

We grant that the practice of immersion is ancient, and so are many other superstitious appendages to baptism, which were adopted under the notion of making the rite more emblematical and impressive. We not only trace immersion to the second century, but immersion three times, anointing with oil, signing with the sign of the cross, imposition of hands, exorcism, eating milk and honey, putting on of white garments, all connected with baptism, and first mentioned by Tertullian; the invention of men like himself, who with much genius and eloquence had little judgment, and were superstitious to a degree worthy of the darkest ages which followed. It was this authority for immersion which led Wall, and other writers on the side of infant baptism, to surrender the point to the Antipædobaptists, and to conclude that immersion was the apostolic practice. Several national Churches, too, like our own, swayed by the same authority, are favourable to immersion, although they do not think it binding, and generally practise effusion or sprinkling.

Neither Tertullian nor Cyprian was, however, so strenuous for immersion as to deny the validity of baptism by aspersion or effusion. In cases of sickness or weakness they only sprinkled water upon the face, which we suppose no modern Baptist would allow. Clinic baptism too, or the baptism of the sick in bed, by aspersion, is allowed by Cyprian to be valid; so that “if the persons recover they need not be baptized by immersion.” (Epist. 69.) Gennadius of Marseilles, in the fifth century, says that baptism was administered in the Gallic Church, in his time, indifferently by immersion or by sprinkling. In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas says, “that baptism may be given, not only by immersion, but also by effusion of water or sprinkling with it.” And Erasmus affirms, (Epist. 76,) that in his time it was the custom to sprinkle infants in Holland, and to dip them in England. Of these two modes, one only was primitive and apostolic. Which that was we shall just now consider. At present it is only necessary to observe, that immersion is not the only mode which can plead

antiquity in its favour; and that, as the *superstition* of antiquity appears to have gone most in favour of baptism by immersion, this is a circumstance which affords a strong presumption, that it was one of those additions to the ancient rite which superstition originated. This may be made out almost to a moral certainty, without referring at all to the argument from Scripture. The “*ancient Christians,*” the “*primitive Christians,*” as they are called by the advocates of immersion, that is, Christians of about the age of Tertullian and Cyprian, and a little downward, — whose practice of immersion is used as an argument to prove that mode only to have had apostolic sanction, — baptized the candidates *NAKED*. Thus Wall in his History of Baptism: “The ancient Christians, when they were baptized by immersion, were all baptized *naked*, whether they were men, women, or children. They thought it better represented the putting off of 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.” This is an instance of the manner in which they affected to *improve* the emblematical character of the ordinance. Robinson also, in his History of Baptism, states the same thing: “Let it be observed that the primitive Christians baptized *naked*. There is no ancient historical fact better authenticated than this” “They, however,” says Wall, “took great care for preserving the modesty of any woman who was to be baptized. None but women came near till her body was in the water; then the priest came, and putting her head also under the water, he departed and left her to the women.” NOW, if antiquity be pleaded as a proof that immersion was the really *primitive* mode of baptizing, it must be pleaded in favour of the gross and offensive circumstance of baptizing naked, which was considered of as much importance as the other; and then we may safely leave it for any one to say whether he really believes that the three thousand persons mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles were baptized *naked*? and whether when St. Paul baptized Lydia, she was put into the water naked by her women, and that the apostle then hastened “to put her head under water also, using the form of baptism, and retired, leaving her to the women” to take her away to dress? Immersion, with all its appendages, dipping three times, nakedness, unction, the eating of milk and honey, exorcism, &c, bears manifest marks of that disposition to *improve* upon God’s ordinances, for which even the close of the second century was remarkable, and which laid the foundation of that general corruption which so speedily followed.

But we proceed to the New Testament itself, and deny that a single clear case of baptism by immersion can be produced from it.

The word itself, as it has been often shown, proves nothing. The verb, with its derivatives, signifies to dip the hand into a dish, ^{<41523>}Matthew 26:23; to stain a vesture with blood, ^{<61913>}Revelation 19:13; to wet the body with dew, ^{<7043>}Daniel 4:33; to paint or smear the face with colours; to stain the hand by pressing a substance; to be overwhelmed in the waters as a sunken ship; to be drowned by falling into water; to sink, in the neuter sense; to immerse totally; to plunge up to the neck; to be immersed up to the middle; to be drunken with wine; to be dyed, tinged, and imbued; to wash by effusion of water; to pour water upon the hands, or any other part of the body; to sprinkle. A word then of such large application affords a good proof for sprinkling, or partial dipping, or washing with water, as for immersion in it. The controversy on this accommodating word has been carried on to weariness; and if even the advocates of immersion could prove, what they have not been able to do, that plunging is the *primary* meaning of the term, they would gain nothing, since, in Scripture, it is notoriously used to express other applications of water. The Jews had “divers baptisms” in their service; but these *washings* of the body in or with water, were not immersions, and in some instances they were mere *sprinklings*. The Pharisees “baptized before they ate,” but this baptism was “the washing of hands,” which in eastern countries is done by servants *pouring* water over them, and not by *dipping*: — “Here is Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who *poured water on the hands* of Elijah,” ^{<12180>}2 Kings 3:11; that is, who acted as his servant. In the same manner the feet were washed: “Thou gavest me no water *upon*, **επι**, my feet,” ^{<10744>}Luke 7:44. Again, the Pharisees are said to have held the “washing” or baptism “of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables,” not certainly for the sake of cleanliness, (for all people hold the washing or baptism of such utensils for this purpose,) but from superstitious notions of purification. Now, as “sprinkling” is prescribed in the law of Moses, and was familiar to the Jews, as the mode of purification from uncleanness, as in the case of the sprinkling of the water of separation, Num. 19:19, it is for this reason much more probable that the baptism of these vessels was effected by sprinkling, than by either pouring or immersion. But that they were not immersed, at least not the whole of them, may be easily made to appear; and if “baptism” as to any of these utensils does not signify immersion, the argument from the use of the word must be abandoned. Suppose, then, the pots, cups, and brazen vessels, to

have been baptized by immersion; the “beds” or couches used to recline upon at their meals, which they ate in an accumbent posture, couches which were constructed for three or five persons each to lie down upon, must certainly have been exempted from the operation of a “baptism” by dipping, which was probably practised, like the “baptism” of their hands, before every meal. The word is also used by the LXX, in ^{<2743>}Daniel 4:33, where Nebuchadnezzar is said to have been wet with the dew of heaven, which was plainly effected, not by his immersion in dew, but by its descent upon him. Finally, it occurs in ^{<6102>}1 Corinthians 10:2, “And were *baptized* unto Moses in the *cloud* and in the *sea*,” where also immersion is out of the case. The Israelites were not immersed in the sea, for they went through it, “as on *dry land*;” and they were not immersed in the cloud, which was above them. In this case, if the spray of the sea is referred to, or the descent of rain from the cloud, they were baptized by sprinkling, or at most by pouring; and that there is an allusion to the latter circumstance, is made almost certain by a passage in the song of Deborah, and other expressions in the Psalms, which speak of “rain,” and the “pouring out of water,” and “droppings” from the “cloud” which directed the march of the Jews in the wilderness. Whatever, therefore, the *primary* meaning of the verb “to baptize” may be, is a question of no importance on one side or the other. Leaving the mode of administering baptism, as a religious rite, out of the question, it is used, generally, at least in the New Testament, not to express immersion in water, but for the act of pouring or sprinkling it; and that baptism, when spoken of as a religious rite, is to be understood as administered by immersion, no satisfactory instance can be adduced.

The baptism of John is the first instance usually adduced in proof of this practice: — The multitudes who went out to him were “baptized of him IN Jordan;” they were therefore *immersed*.

To say nothing here of the laborious, and apparently impossible task imposed upon John, of plunging the multitudes, who flocked to him day by day, into the river; and the indecency of the whole proceeding when women were also concerned; it is plain that the principal object of the evangelist, in making this statement, was to point out the *place* where John exercised his ministry and baptized, and not to describe the mode; if the latter is at all referred to, it must be acknowledged that this was incidental to the other design. Now it so happens that we have a passage which relates to John’s baptism, and which can only be fairly interpreted by referring to HIS MODE OF BAPTIZING, as the FIRST consideration; a passage

too, which John himself uttered at the very time he was baptizing “in Jordan.” “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” Our translators, in this passage, aware of the absurdity of translating the preposition *εν*, *in*, have properly rendered it *with*; but the advocates of immersion do not stumble at trifles, and boldly rush into the absurdity of Campbell’s translation “I indeed baptize you *in* water, he will baptize you *in* the Holy Ghost and fire.” Unfortunately for this translation, we have not only the utter senselessness of the phrases *baptized*, *plunged* in the Holy Ghost, and *plunged* in fire to set against it; but also the very history of the completion of this prophetic declaration, and that not only as to the *fact* that Christ did indeed baptize his disciples with the Holy Ghost and with fire, but also as to the *mode* in which this baptism was effected: “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of *fire*, and it SAT UPON each of them. And they were all filled with THE HOLY GHOST.” Thus the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire was a descent UPON, and not an immersion INTO. With this too agree all the accounts of the baptism of the Holy Spirit: they are all *from above*, like the *pouring out* or *shedding* of water upon the head; nor is there any expression in Scripture which bears the most remote resemblance to *immersing*, *plunging* in the Holy Ghost. When our Lord received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, “the Spirit of God DESCENDED like a dove, and LIGHTED upon him.” When Cornelius and his family received the same gift, “the Holy Ghost FELL on all them which heard the word;” “and they of the circumcision that believed were astonished, because that on the Gentiles *also* was Poured OUT the gift of the Holy Ghost,” which, as the words imply, had been in like manner “*poured out* on them.” The common phrase, to “*receive*” the Holy Ghost, is also inconsistent with the idea of being *immersed*, *plunged* into the Holy Ghost; and finally, when St Paul connects the baptism with water, and the baptism with the Holy Ghost together, as in the words of John the Baptist just quoted, he expresses the mode of the baptism of the Spirit in the same manner: “According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which HE SHED ON US abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour,” <GRK> Titus 3:5, 6. That the mode therefore in which John baptized was by *pouring water upon* his disciples, may be concluded from his using the same word to express the *pouring out* the *descent*, of the Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus. For if baptism necessarily means immersion, and John baptized by immersion, then did not Jesus *baptize* his disciples with the Holy Ghost. He

might *bestow* it upon them, but he did not *baptize* them with it, according to the Immersionists, since he only “*poured* it upon them,” “*shed* it upon them,” caused it “to *fall* upon them;” none of which, according to them, is baptism. It follows, therefore, that the prediction of John was never fulfilled, because, in their sense of baptizing, none of the disciples of Jesus mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles ever received the Holy Ghost but by *effusion*. This is the dilemma into which they put themselves. They must allow that baptism is not in this passage used for immersion; or they must deny that Jesus ever did *baptize* with the Holy Ghost.

To baptize “in Jordan,” does not then signify to plunge in the river of Jordan. John made the neighbourhood of Jordan the principal place of his ministry. Either at the fountains of some favoured district, or at some river, baptize he must because of the multitudes who came to his baptism, in a country deficient in springs, and of water in general; but there are several ways of understanding the phrase “in Jordan,” which give a sufficiently good sense, and involve no contradiction to the words of John himself, who makes his baptism an *effusion* of water, to answer to the *effusion* of the Holy Spirit, as administered by Jesus. It may be taken as a note of *place*, not of mode. “In Jordan,” therefore, the expression of St. Matthew, is, in St. John, “IN Bethabara, beyond,” or situate on, “Jordan, *where* John was baptizing;” and this seems all that the expression was intended to mark, and is the sense to be preferred. It is thus equivalent to “*at* Jordan,” “*at* Bethabara, situate on Jordan;” *at* being a frequent sense of **εἰς**. Or it may signify that the water of Jordan was made use of by John for baptizing, however it might be applied; for we should think it no violent mode of expression to say that we washed ourselves *in* a river, although we should mean, not that we plunged ourselves into it, but merely that we took up the water in our hands, and applied it in the way of effusion. Or it may be taken to express his baptizing *in the bed* of the river, into which he must have descended with the baptized, in order to take up the water with his hand, or with some small vessel, as represented in ancient bas-reliefs, to pour it out upon them. This would be the position of any baptizer using a river at all accessible by a shelving bank; and when within the bed of the stream, he might as truly be said to be *in* the river, when mere *place* was the principal thing to be pointed out, as if he had been immersed in the water. The Jordan in this respect is rather remarkable, having, according to Maundrell, an outermost bank formed by its occasional “swellings.” The remark of this traveller is. “After having descended *the outermost bank*,

you go *a furlong* upon a level strand, before you come to the immediate bank of the river.” Any of these views of the import of the phrases “in Jordan,” “in the river of Jordan,” used plainly with intention to point out the *place* where John exercised his ministry, will sufficiently explain them, without involving us in the inextricable difficulties which embarrass the theory, that John baptized only by immersion. To go indeed to a river to baptize, would, in such countries as our own, where water for the mere purpose of effusion may readily be obtained out of cisterns, pumps, &c, very naturally suggest to the simple reader, that the reason for John’s choice of a river was, that it afforded the means of immersion. But in those countries the case was different. Springs, as we have said, were scarce, and the water for domestic purposes had to be fetched daily by the women in pitchers from the nearest rivers and fountains, which rendered the domestic supply scanty, and of course valuable. But even if this reason did not exist, baptism in rivers would not, as a matter of course, imply immersion. Of this we have an instance in the customs of the people of Mesopotamia, mentioned in the *Journal of Wolfe*, the missionary. This sect of Christians call themselves “the followers of St. John the Baptist, who was a follower of Christ.” Among many other questions, Mr. Wolfe inquired of one of them respecting their mode of baptism, and was answered, “The priests or bishop baptize children thirty days old. They take the child to the banks of the *river*; a relative or friend holds the child near the surface of the water, while the priest *sprinkles* the element upon the child, and with prayers they name the child.” (*Journal*, vol. ii, p. 311.) Mr. Wolfe asks, “Why do they baptize in rivers?” Answer: “Because St. John the Baptist baptized in the river Jordan.” The same account was given afterward by one of their bishops or high priests: “They carry the children, after thirty days, to the river, the priest says a prayer, the godfather takes the child to the river, while the priest *sprinkles* it with water.” Thus we have in modern times *river* baptism without immersion; and among the Syrian Christians, though immersion is used, it does not take place till after the true baptismal rite, pouring water upon the child in the name of the trinity, has been performed.

The second proof adduced by the Immersionists is taken from the baptism of our Lord, who is said, ^{<0B16>}Matthew 3:16, “to have gone up straightway *out* of the water.” Here, however, the preposition used signifies *from*, and **ανεβη απο του υδατος**, is simply “he went up *from* the water.” We grant that this might have been properly said in whatever way the baptism had

been previously performed; but then it certainly in itself affords no argument on which to build the notion of the immersion of our Saviour.

The great passage of the Immersionists, however, is ~~<4038>~~ Acts 8:38, 39: “And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him; and when they were come up *out of* the water,” &c. This is relied upon as a decisive proof of the *immersion* and *emersion* of the eunuch. If so, however, it proves too much; for nothing is said of the eunuch which is not said of Philip, “They went down BOTH *into* the water,” — “And when THEY were come up out of the water;” — and so Philip must have immersed himself as well as the eunuch. Nor will the prepositions determine the case; they would have been employed properly had Philip and the eunuch gone *into* the water by partial or by entire immersion, and therefore come *out of* it on dry land; and with equal propriety, and according to the habitual use of the same prepositions by Greek writers, they would express going *to* the water, without going *into* it, and returning *from* it, and not *out of* it, for εἰς is spoken of place, and properly signifies *at*, or it indicates motion toward a certain *limit*, and, for any thing that appears to the contrary in the history of the eunuch’s baptism, that *limit* may just as well be placed at the nearest verge of the water as in the middle of it. Thus the LXX say, ~~<2304>~~ Isaiah 26:2, “The king sent Rabshakeh from Lachish, εἰς, to Jerusalem,” certainly not *into* it, for the city was not captured. The sons of the prophets “came εἰς, to Jordan to cut wood,” ~~<1204>~~ 2 Kings 6:4. They did not, we suppose, go *into* the water to perform that work. Peter was bid to “go, εἰς, to the sea, and cast a hook,” not surely to go *into* the sea; and our Lord, ~~<4010>~~ Matthew 5:1, “went up, εἰς, to a mountain,” but not *into* it. The corresponding preposition ἐκ, which signifies, when used of place, *from, out of*, must be measured by the meaning of εἰς. When εἰς means *into*, then ἐκ means *out of*; but when it means simply *to*, then ἐκ can express no more than *from*. Thus this passage is nothing to the purpose of the Immersionists.

The next proof relied upon in favour of immersion is, ~~<4012>~~ John 3:22, 23: “After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them and baptized; and John also was baptizing in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was *much water* there, and they came and were baptized.” The Immersionists can see no reason for either Jesus or John baptizing where there was *much water*, but that they plunged their converts. The true reason for this has however been already given. Where

could the multitudes who came for baptism be assembled? Clearly, not in houses. The preaching was in the fields; and since the rite which was to follow a ministry which made such an impression, and drew together such crowds, was baptism, the necessity of the case must lead the Baptist to Jordan or to some other district where, if a river was wanting, fountains at least existed. The necessity was equal in this case, whether the mode of baptism were that of aspersion, of pouring, or of immersion.

The Baptists, however, have magnified Ænon, which signifies *the fountain of On*, into a place of “many and great waters.” Unfortunately, however, no such powerful fountain, sending out many streams of water fit for plunging multitudes into, has ever been found by travellers, although the country has been often visited; and certainly if its streams had been of the copious and remarkable character assigned to them, they could not have vanished. It rather appears, however, that the “much water,” or “many waters,” in the text, refers rather to the whole tract of country, than to the fountain of ON itself; because it appears to be given by the evangelist as the reason why Jesus and his disciples came into the same neighbourhood to baptize. Different baptisms were administered, and therefore in different places. The baptism administered by Jesus at this time was one of multitudes; this appears from the remark of one of John’s disciples to his Master: “He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and ALL MEN *come to him*.” The place or places, too, where Jesus baptized, although in the same district, could not be very near, since John’s disciple mentions the multitudes who came to be baptized by Jesus, or rather by his disciples, as a piece of information; and thus we find a reason for the mention of the much water, or many waters, with reference to the district of country itself, and not to the single fountain of On. The tract had probably many fountains in it, which, as being a peculiarity in a country not generally so distinguished, would lead to the use of the expression, “much water,” although not one of these fountains or wells might be sufficient to allow of the plunging of numbers of people, and probably was not. Indeed if the disciples of Jesus baptized by immersion, the Immersionists are much more concerned to discover “much water,” “many waters,” “large and deep streams,” somewhere else in the district than at Ænon; because it is plain from the narrative, that the number of candidates for John’s baptism had greatly fallen off at that time, and that the people now generally flocked to Christ. Hence the remark of John, verse 30, when his disciples had informed him that Jesus was

baptizing in the neighbourhood, and that “all men came to him,” — “He must increase, I must decrease.” Hence also the observation of the evangelist in the first verse of the next chapter, “The Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized *more disciples* than John.”

As these instances all so plainly fail to serve the cause of immersion, we need not dwell upon the others. The improbability of three thousand persons being immersed on the day of pentecost, has been already mentioned. The baptism of Saul, of Lydia, of the Philippian jailer, and of the family of Cornelius, are all instances of house baptism, and, for that reason, are still less likely to have been by plunging. The Immersionists, indeed, invent “tanks,” or “baths,” for this purpose, in all these houses; but, as nothing of the kind appears on the face of the history, or is even incidentally suggested, suppositions prove nothing.

Thus all the presumptions before mentioned, against the practice of immersion, lie full against it, without any relief from the Scriptures themselves. Not one instance can be shown of that practice from the New Testament; while, so far as baptism was emblematical of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of immersion wholly destroys its significancy. In fact, if the true mode of baptism be immersion only, then must we wholly give up the phrase, the *baptism* of the Holy Spirit, which in any other mode than that of *pouring* out was never administered.

The only argument left for the advocates of immersion is the supposed allusion to the mode of baptism contained in the words of St. Paul, ~~<SRB>~~Romans 6:3, 4: “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.” It is necessary, however, to quote the next verses also, which are dependent upon the foregoing, “For if we have been PLANTED together,” still by baptism, “in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is CRUCIFIED with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin,” ~~<SRB>~~Romans 5:5-7. Why then do not the advocates of immersion go forward to these verses, so inseparably connected with those they are so ready to quote, and show us a resemblance, not only between baptism by immersion, and being buried with Christ; but also between immersion, and being “planted with Christ?”

If the allusion of the apostle is to the planting of a young tree in the earth, there is clearly but a very partial, not a total immersion in the case; and if it be to GRAFTING a branch upon a tree, the resemblance is still more imperfect. Still farther, as the apostle in the same connection speaks of our being “CRUCIFIED with Christ,” and that also by baptism, why do they not show us how immersion in water resembles the nailing of a body to a cross?

But this striking and important text is not to be explained by a fancied resemblance between a burial, as they choose to call it, of the body in water, and the burial of Christ; as if a dip or a plunge could have any resemblance to that separation from the living, and that laying aside of a body in the sepulchre, which burial implies. This forced thought darkens and enervates the whole passage, instead of bringing forth its powerful sentiments into clearer view. The manifest object of the apostle in the whole of this part of his epistle, was to show, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he had just been establishing, could not, in any true believer, lead to licentiousness of life. “What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we that are DEAD to sin, live any longer therein? The reason then which is given by the apostle why true believers CANNOT continue in sin, is, that they are “DEAD to sin,” which is his answer to the objection. Now, this mystical death to sin he proceeds to attribute to the INSTRUMENTALITY of baptism, taking it to be an act of that faith in Christ of which it was the external expression; and then he immediately runs into a favourite comparison, which under various forms occurs in his writings, sometimes accompanied with the same allusion to baptism, and sometimes referring only to “faith” as the instrument, — a comparison between the mystical death, burial, and resurrection of believers, and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This is the comparison of the text; not a comparison between our mystical death and baptism; nor between baptism, and the death and burial of Christ; either of which lay wide of the apostle’s intention. Baptism, as an act of faith, is, in fact, expressly made, not a *figure* of the effects which follow, as stated in the text, but *the means* of effecting them. “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his *death*?” we enter by this means into the experience of its efficacy in effecting a mystical death in us; in other words, WE DIE with him, or as it is expressed in verse 6, “Our old man is *crucified with him*.” Still farther, “by baptism,” **δια του βαπτισματος**, *through*, or

by means of, baptism, “we are BURIED with him;” we not only die to sin and the world, but we are separated wholly from it, as the body of Christ was separated from the living world, when laid in the sepulchre; the connection between sin and the world and us is completely broken, as those who are buried and put out of sight are no longer reckoned among men; nay, as the slave (for the apostle brings in this figure also) is by death and burial wholly put out of the power of his former master, so, “that we should not *serve* sin; for he that is dead is *freed* from sin.” But we also mystically RISE with him; “that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,” having new connections, new habits, new enjoyments, and new hopes. We have a similar passage in ⁵¹⁰²²Colossians 2:12, and it has a similar interpretation: “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.” In the preceding verse the apostle had been speaking of the mystical DEATH of Christians under the phrase, “*putting off the body of the sins of the flesh;*” then, as in his Epistle to the Romans, he adds our mystical BURIAL with Christ, which is a heightened representation of death, and then also, our RISING again with Christ. Here too all these three effects are attributed to baptism as the means. We *put off the body* of sins “by the circumcision of Christ,” that is, as we have seen, by Christian circumcision or baptism; we are *buried* with him by baptism **εν** being obviously used here, like **δι**α, to denote the instrument; and by baptism we *rise* with him into a new life.

Now, to institute a comparison between a mode of baptism and the burial of Christ, wholly destroys the meaning of the passage; for how can the apostle speak of baptism as an *emblem* of Christ’s burial, when he argues from it as the instrument of our *death* unto sin, and separation from it by a mystical burial? Nor is baptism here made use of as the emblem of our own spiritual death, burial, and resurrection. As an emblem, even immersion, though it might put forth a clumsy type of burial and rising again, is wanting in not being emblematical of DEATH; and yet all three, our mystical *death*, *burial*, and *rising again*, are distinctly spoken of, and must all be found represented in some TYPE. But the TYPE made use of by the apostle is manifestly not baptism, but the death, the burial, and the resurrection of our Lord; and in this view he pursues this bold and impressive figure to even the verge of allegory, in the succeeding verses: “For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall

also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God; LIKEWISE reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In the absence therefore of all proof, that, in any instance found in the New Testament, baptism was administered by immersion; with so many presumptions against that indecent practice as have been stated; with the decisive evidence also of a *designed* correspondence between the baptism, *the pouring out*, of the Holy Spirit, and the baptism, *the pouring out*, of water; we may conclude, with confidence, that the latter was the apostolic mode of administering that ordinance; and that first washing, and then immersion, were introduced later, toward the latter end of the second century, along with several other superstitious additions to this important sacrament, originating in that “will worship” which presumed to destroy the simplicity of God’s ordinances, under pretence^{fi} of rendering them more emblematical and impressive. Even if immersion had been the original mode of baptizing, we should, in the absence of any command on the subject, direct or implied, have thought the Church at liberty to accommodate the manner of applying water to the body in the name of the trinity, in which the essence of the rite consists, to different climates and manners; but it is satisfactory to discover that all the attempts made to impose upon Christians a practice repulsive to the feelings, dangerous to the health, and offensive to delicacy is destitute of all Scriptural authority, and of really primitive practice.

CHAPTER 4. — THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE CHURCH — THE LORD’S SUPPER.

THE agreement and difference between baptism and the Lord’s Supper are well stated by the Church of Scotland in its catechism: “The sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper agree, in that the author of both is God; the spiritual part of both is Christ and his benefits; both are seals of the same covenant; to be dispensed by ministers of the Gospel, and none other; and to be continued in the Church of Christ until his second coming.” “These sacraments differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once with water, — and that even to infants; whereas the Lord’s Supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.”

As baptism was substituted for circumcision, so the Lord’s Supper was put by our Saviour in the place of the passover; and was instituted immediately after celebrating that ordinance for the last time with his disciples. The passover was an eminent type of our Lord’s sacrifice and of its benefits; and since he was about to fulfil that symbolical rite which from age to age had continued to exhibit it to the faith and hope of ancient saints, it could have no place under the new dispensation. Christ in person became the true passover; and a new rite was necessary to commemorate the spiritual deliverance of men, and to convey and confirm its benefits. The circumstances of its institution are explanatory of its nature and design.

On the night when the first born of Egypt were slain, the children of Israel were commanded to take a lamb for every house, to kill it, and to sprinkle the blood upon the posts of their doors, so that the destroying angel might *pass over* the houses of all who had attended to this injunction. Not only were the first-born children thus preserved alive, but the effect was the deliverance of the whole nation from their bondage in Egypt, and their becoming the visible Church and people of God by virtue of a special covenant. In commemoration of these events, the feast of the passover was made annual, and at that time all the males of Judea assembled before the Lord in Jerusalem; a lamb was provided for every house; the blood was poured under the altar by the priests, and the lamb was eaten by the people

in their tents or houses. At this domestic and religious feast, every master of a family took the cup of thanksgiving, and gave thanks with his family to the God of Israel. As soon, therefore, as our Lord, acting as the master of his family, the disciples, had finished this the usual paschal ceremony, he proceeded to a new and distinct action: “He took bread,” the bread then on the table, “and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it to them. saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper,” the cup with the wine which had been used in the paschal supper, “saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you;” or as it is expressed by St. Matthew, “And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

That this was the institution of a standing rite, and not a temporary action to be confined to the disciples then present with him, is made certain from ~~<6112>~~1 Corinthians 11:23-26: “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” From these words we learn,

1. That St. Paul received a special revelation as to this ordinance, which must have had a higher object than the mere commemoration of an historical fact, and must be supposed to have been made for the purpose of enjoining it upon him to establish this rite in the Churches raised up by him, and of enabling him rightly to understand its authority and purport, where he found it already appointed by the first founders of the first Churches.
2. That the command of Christ, “This do in remembrance of me,” which was originally given to the disciples present with Christ at the last passover, is laid by St. Paul upon the Corinthians.
3. That he regarded the Lord’s Supper as a rite to be “*often*” celebrated, and that in all future time until the Lord himself should

“come” to judge the world. The perpetual obligation of this ordinance cannot therefore be reasonably disputed.

Of the nature of this great and affecting rite of Christianity, different and very opposite opinions have been formed, arising partly from the elliptical and figurative modes of expression adopted by Christ at its institution; but more especially from the influence of superstition upon some, and the extreme of affected rationalism upon others.

The first is the monstrous theory of the Church of Rome, as contradictory to the Holy Scriptures, whose words it professes to receive in their literal meaning, as it is revolting to the senses and reason of mankind.

“It is conceived that the words, ‘This is my body; this is my blood,’ are to be understood in their most literal sense; that when Jesus pronounced these words, he changed, by his almighty power, the bread upon the table into his body, and the wine into his blood, and really delivered his body and blood into the hands of his apostles; and that at all times when the Lord’s Supper is administered, the priest, by pronouncing these words with a good intention, has the power of making a similar change. This change is known by the name of transubstantiation; the propriety of which name is conceived to consist in this, that although the bread and wine are not changed in figure, taste, weight, or any other accident, it is believed that the substance of them is completely destroyed; that in place of it, the substance of the body and blood of Christ, although clothed with all the sensible properties of bread and wine, is truly present; and that the persons who receive what has been consecrated by pronouncing these words, do not receive bread and wine, but literally partake of the body and blood of Christ, and really eat his flesh, and drink his blood. It is farther conceived, that the bread and wine thus changed, are presented by the priest to God; and he receives the name of priest, because in laying them upon the altar he offers to God a sacrifice, which, although it be distinguished from all others by being without the shedding of blood, is a true propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the dead and of the living, — the body and blood of Christ, which were presented on the cross, again presented in the sacrifice of the mass. It is conceived, that the materials of this sacrifice, being truly the body and blood of Christ, possess an intrinsic virtue, which does not

depend upon the disposition of him who receives them, but operates immediately upon all who do not obstruct the operation by a mortal sin. Hence it is accounted of great importance for the salvation of the sick and dying, that parts of these materials should be sent to them; and it is understood that the practice of partaking in private of a small portion of what the priest has thus transubstantiated, is, in all respects, as proper and salutary as joining with others in the Lord's Supper. It is farther conceived, that as the bread and wine, when converted into the [body and] blood of Christ, are a natural object of reverence and adoration to Christians, it is highly proper to worship them upon the altar; and that it is expedient to carry them about in solemn procession, that they may receive the homage of all who meet them. What had been transubstantiated was therefore lifted up for the purpose of receiving adoration, both when it was shown to the people at the altar, and when it was carried about. Hence arose that expression in the Church of Rome, the elevation of the host, *elevatio hostiæ*. But, as the wine in being carried about was exposed to accidents inconsistent with the veneration due to the body and blood of Christ, it became customary to send only the bread; and, in order to satisfy those who for this reason did not receive the wine, they were taught that, as the bread was changed into the body of Christ, they partook by concomitancy of the blood with the body. In process of time, the people were not allowed to partake of the cup; and it was said, that when Jesus spake these words, 'Drink ye all of it,' he was addressing himself only to his apostles, so that his command was fulfilled when the priests, the successors of the apostles, drank of the cup, although the people were excluded. And thus the last part of this system conspired with the first in exalting the clergy very far above the laity. For the same persons who had the power of changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and who presented what they had thus made, as a sacrifice for the sins of others, enjoyed the partaking of the cup, while communion in one kind only was permitted to the people." (*Bishop Tomline on the Articles.*)

So violently are these notions opposed to the common sense of mankind, that the ground to which the Romish writers have always been driven in their defence, is the authority of their Church, and the necessity of implicit

faith in its interpretations of Scripture; principles which shut out the use of Scripture entirely, and open the door to every heresy and fanatical folly. But for the ignorance and superstition of Europe during the middle ages, this monstrous perversion of a sacred rite could not have been effected, and even then it was not established as an article of faith without many struggles. Almost all writers on the Protestant controversy will furnish a sufficient confutation of this capital attempt to impose upon the credulity of mankind; and to them, should it need any refutation, the reader may be referred.

The mind of Luther so powerful to throw off dogmas which had nothing but human authority to support them, was, as to the sacrament, held in the bonds of early association. He concluded that the body and blood of Christ are really present in the Lord's Supper; but, aware of the absurdities and self-contradictions of transubstantiation, he laid hold of a doctrine which some writers, in the Romish Church itself, had continued to prefer to the papal dogma above stated. This was designated by the term *consubstantiation*, which allows that the bread and wine remain the same after consecration as before. Thus he escapes the absurdity of contradicting the very senses of men. It was held, however, by Luther, that though the bread and wine remain unchanged, yet that, *together with them*, the body and blood of Christ are *literally* received by the communicants. Some of his immediate followers did not, however, admit more on this point, than that the body and blood of Christ were really present in the sacrament; but that the manner of that presence was an inexplicable mystery. Yet, in some important respects, Luther and the Consubstantialists wholly escaped the errors of the Church of Rome as to this sacrament. They denied that it was a sacrifice; and that the presence of the body and blood of Christ gave to it any physical virtue acting independently of the disposition of the receiver; and that it rendered the elements the objects of adoration. Their error, therefore, may be considered rather of a speculative than of a practical nature; and was adopted probably in deference to what was conceived to be the literal meaning of the words of Christ when the Lord's Supper was instituted.

A third view was held by some of Luther's contemporaries, which has been thus described: "Carlostadt, a professor with Luther in the university of Wittenberg, and Zuinglius, a native of Switzerland, the founder of the Reformed Churches, or those Protestant Churches which are not Lutheran, taught that the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are the signs of the

absent body and blood of Christ; that when Jesus said, ‘This is my body, This is my blood,’ he used a figure exactly of the same kind with that, by which, according to the abbreviations continually practised in ordinary speech, the sign is often put for the thing signified. As this figure is common, so there were two circumstances which would prevent the apostles from misunderstanding it, when used in the institution of the Lord’s Supper. The one was, that they saw the body of Jesus then alive, and therefore could not suppose that they were eating it. The other was, that they had just been partaking of a Jewish festival, in the institution of which the very same figure has been used. For in the night in which the children of Israel escaped out of Egypt, God said of the lamb which he commanded every house to eat and slay, ‘It is the Lord’s passover,’ ^{<2121>}Exodus 12:11; not meaning that it was the action of the Lord passing over every house, but the token and pledge of that action. It is admitted by all Christians, that there is such a figure used in one part of the institution. When our Lord says, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood,’ none suppose him to mean the cup is the covenant, but all believe that he means to call it the memorial, or the sign, or the seal of the covenant. If it be understood, that, agreeably to the analogy of language, he uses a similar figure when he says, ‘This is my body,’ and that he means nothing more than, ‘This is the sign of my body,’ we are delivered from all the absurdities implied in the literal interpretation, to which the Roman Catholics think it necessary to adhere. We give the words a more natural interpretation than the Lutherans do, who consider, ‘This is my body,’ as intended to express a proposition which is totally different, ‘My body is with this;’ and we escape from the difficulties in which they are involved by their forced interpretation.

“Farther, by this method of interpretation, there is no ground left for that adoration which the Church of Rome pays to the bread and wine; for they are only the signs of that which is believed to be absent. There is no ground for accounting the Lord’s Supper to the dishonour of ‘the High Priest of our profession,’ a new sacrifice presented by an earthly priest; for the bread and wine are only the memorials of that sacrifice which was once offered on the cross. And, lastly, this interpretation destroys the popish idea of a physical virtue in the Lord’s Supper; for if the bread and wine are signs of what is absent, their use must be to excite the remembrance of it; but this is a use which cannot possibly exist with regard to any, but

those whose minds are thereby put into a proper frame; and therefore the Lord's Supper becomes, instead of a charm, a mental exercise, and the efficacy of it arises not *ex opere operato*, but *ex opere operantis*.”

With much truth, this opinion falls short of the whole truth, and therefore it has been made the basis of that view of the Lord's Supper which reduces it to a mere religious commemoration of the death of Christ, with this addition, that it has a *natural fitness* to produce salutary emotions, to possess our minds with religious reflections, and to strengthen virtuous resolutions. Some divines of the Church of England, and the Socinians generally, have adopted, and endeavoured to defend, this interpretation.

The fourth opinion is that of the Reformed Churches, and was taught with great success by Calvin. It has been thus well epitomized by Dr. Hill: —

“He knew that former attempts to reconcile the systems of Luther and Zuinglius had proved fruitless. But he saw the importance of uniting Protestants upon a point, with respect to which they agreed in condemning the errors of the Church of Rome; and his zeal in renewing the attempt was probably quickened by the sincere friendship which he entertained for Melancthon, who was the successor of Luther, while he himself had succeeded Zuinglius in conducting the reformation in Switzerland. He thought that the system of Zuinglius did not come up to the force of the expressions used in Scripture; and, although he did not approve of the manner in which the Lutherans explain these expressions, it appeared to him that there was a sense in which the full significancy of them might be preserved, and a great part of the Lutheran language might continue to be used. As he agreed with Zuinglius, in thinking that the bread and wine were the signs of the body and blood of Christ, which were not locally present, he renounced both transubstantiation and consubstantiation. He agreed farther with Zuinglius, in thinking that the use of these signs, being a memorial of the sacrifice once offered on the cross, was intended to produce a moral effect. But he taught, that to all who remember the death of Christ in a proper manner, Christ, by the use of these signs, is spiritually present, — present to their minds, and he considered this spiritual presence as giving a significancy, that goes far beyond the Socinian sense, to these words of Paul: ‘The cup of blessing which

we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' It is not the blessing pronounced which makes any change upon the cup; but to all who join with becoming affection in the thanksgiving then uttered in the name of the congregation, Christ is spiritually present, so that they may emphatically be said to partake, **κοινωνεῖν, μετεχειν**, of his body and blood; because his body and blood being spiritually present, convey the same nourishment to their souls, the same quickening to the spiritual life, as bread and wine do to the natural life. Hence Calvin was led to connect the discourse in John 6, with the Lord's Supper; not in that literal sense which is agreeable to popish and Lutheran ideas, as if the body of Christ was really eaten, and his blood really drunk by any; but in a sense agreeable to the expression of our Lord in the conclusion of that discourse, 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life;' that is, when I say to you, 'Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him; he shall live by me, for my flesh is meat indeed,' you are to understand these words, not in a literal but in a spiritual sense. The spiritual sense adopted by the Socinians is barely this, that the doctrine of Christ is the food of the soul, by cherishing a life of virtue here, and the hope of a glorious life hereafter. The Calvinists think, that into the full meaning of the figure used in these words, there enter not merely the exhortations and instructions which a belief of the Gospel affords, but also that union between Christ and his people which is the consequence of faith, and that communication of grace and strength by which they are quickened in well doing, and prepared for the discharge of every duty.

“According to this system, the full benefit of the Lord's Supper is peculiar to those who partake worthily. For while all who eat the bread and drink the wine may be said to show the Lord's death, and may also receive some devout impressions, they only to whom Jesus is spiritually present share in that spiritual nourishment which arises from partaking of his body and blood. According to this system, eating and drinking unworthily has a farther sense than enters into the Socinian system; and it becomes the duty of every Christian to examine himself, not only with regard to his knowledge, but also with regard to his general conduct, before he

eats of that bread and drinks of that cup. It becomes also the duty of those who have the inspection of Christian societies, to exclude from this ordinance persons, of whom there is every reason to believe that they are strangers to the sentiments which it presupposes, and without which none are prepared for holding that communion with Jesus which it implies.” (*Theological Lectures.*)

With this view the doctrine of the Church of England seems mainly to agree, except that we may perhaps perceive in her services a few expressions somewhat favourable to the views of Luther and Melancthon, whose authority had great weight with Archbishop Cranmer. This, however, appears only in certain phrases; for the twenty-eighth article declares with sufficient plainness, that “the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper only after a *heavenly* and *spiritual* manner; and the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is faith.” “Some of our early English reformers,” says Bishop Tomline, “were Lutherans, and consequently they were at first disposed to lean toward consubstantiation; but they seem soon to have discovered their error, for in the articles of 1552, it is expressly said. ‘A faithful man ought not either to believe or openly confess the real and bodily presence, as they term it, of Christ’s flesh and blood in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.’ This part of the article was omitted in 1562. probably with a view to give less offence to those who maintained the corporal presence, and to comprehend as many as possible in the established Church.” (*Exposition of the Articles.*) The article as it now stands, and not particular expressions in the liturgy must however be taken to be the opinion of the Church of England upon this point, and it substantially agrees with the New Testament.

The SACRAMENTAL character of this ordinance is the first point to be established, in order to a true conception of its nature and import. It is more than a commemorative rite, it is commemorative sacramentally; in other words, it is a commemorative sign and seal of the covenant of our redemption.

The first proof of this may be deduced from our Lord’s words used in the institution of the ordinance: “This is my body, this is my blood,” are words which show a most intimate connection between the elements, and that which was represented by them, the *sacrificial* offering of the body and blood of Christ, as the price of our redemption; they were the signs of what was “given *for us*,” surrendered to death in our room and stead, that we

might have the benefit of liberation from eternal death. Again, "This is the New Testament," or covenant, "in my blood." The covenant itself was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is therefore called by St. Paul, "the blood of the everlasting covenant;" and the cup had so intimate a connection with that covenant, as to represent it and the means of its establishment, or of its acquiring validity, — the shedding of the blood of our Saviour. It is clear, therefore, that the rite of the Lord's Supper is a *covenant* rite, and consequently a sacrament; a visible sign and seal on the part of Him who made the covenant, that it was established in, and ratified by, the sacrificial death of Christ.

As it bears this covenant or sacramental character on the part of the Institutor, so also on the part of the recipients. They were all to eat the bread in "remembrance" of Christ; in remembrance, certainly, of his death in particular; yet not as a mere historical event, but of his death as *sacrificial*; and therefore the commemoration was to be on their part an acknowledgment of the doctrine of the vicarious and propitiatory nature of the death of Christ, and an act of faith in it. Then as to the cup, they were commanded to drink of it, for a reason also particularly given, "FOR this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins:" the recognition, therefore, implied in the act, was not merely that Christ's blood was shed; but that it was shed as the blood of "the new covenant," and for "the remission of sins;" a recognition which could only take place in consequence of "faith in his blood," as the blood of atonement. Again, says St. Paul, as taught by the particular revelation he received as to the Lord's Supper, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do *show* or publish the Lord's death until he come;" which publication of his death was not the mere declaration of the fact of "the Lord's death," but of his death according to the apostolic doctrine, as the true propitiation for sin, the benefits of which were to be received by faith. Thus then we see in the Lord's Supper the visible token and pledge of a covenant of mercy in the blood of Christ, exhibited by God its author; and on the part of man a visible acknowledgment of this covenant so ratified by the sacrifice of Christ, and an act of entire faith in its truth and efficacy in order to the remission of sins, and the conferring of all other spiritual benefits. As a SIGN, it exhibits,

1. The infinite love of God, to the world, who gave "his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

2. The love of Christ, who “died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”
3. The extreme nature of his sufferings, which were unto *death*.
4. The vicarious and sacrificial character of that death, as a sin offering and a propitiation; in virtue of which only, a covenant of grace was entered into with man by the offended God.
5. The benefits derived from it through believing, “remission of sins;” and the nourishment of the soul in spiritual life and vigour, by virtue of a vital “communion” with Christ, so that it is advanced and perfected in holiness, “until he come” to confer upon his disciples the covenanted blessing of eternal life.

As a SEAL it is a constant assurance, on the part of God, of the continuance of this covenant of redemption in full undiminished force from age to age; it is a pledge to every penitent who believes in Christ, and receives this sacrament in profession of his entire reliance upon the merits of Christ’s passion for forgiveness, that he is an object of merciful regard and acceptance; there is in it also, as to every one who thus believes and is accepted, a constant exhibition of Christ as the spiritual food of the soul, to be received by faith, that he may grow thereby; and a renewed assurance of the bestowment of the full grace of the new covenant, in the accomplishment of all its promises, both in this life and in that which is to come. In every celebration, the *sign* of all these gracious acts, provisions, and hopes, is exhibited, and God condescends thus to repeat his *pledges* of faithfulness and love to the Church of Christ, purchased by his blood. The members of that Church, on the other hand, renew their acceptance of, and reliance upon, the new covenant; they publish their faith in Christ; they glory in his *cross*, his sacrificial though shameful death, as the wisdom of God, and the power of God; they feast upon the true passover victim by their faith, and they do this with *joy and thanksgiving*, on account of a greater deliverance than that of the Israelites from Egypt, of which they are the subjects. It was this predominance of thanksgiving in celebrating this hallowed rite, which at so early a period of the Church attached to the Lord’s Supper the title of “*The Eucharist*.”

We may conclude this view by a few general observations.

1. The very nature of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper excludes from participating in it not only open unbelievers, but all who reject the doctrine of the atonement made by the vicarious death of Christ for "the remission of sins." Such persons have indeed tacitly acknowledged this, by reducing the rite to a mere commemoration of the fact of Christ's death, and of those virtues of humility, benevolence, and patience, which his sufferings called forth. If, therefore, the Lord's Supper be in truth much more than this; if it recognize the sacrificial character of Christ's death, and the doctrine of "faith in his blood," as necessary to our salvation, this is "an altar of which they have no right to eat" who reject these doctrines; and from the Lord's table all such persons ought to be repelled by ministers, whenever, from compliance with custom, or other motives, they would approach it.
2. It is equally evident that when there is no evidence in persons of true repentance for sin, and of desire for salvation, according to the terms of the Gospel, they are disqualified from partaking at "the table of the Lord." They eat and drink unworthily, and fall therefore into "condemnation." The whole act is indeed on their part an act of bold profanation or of hypocrisy; they profess by this act to repent, and have no sorrow for sin; they profess to seek deliverance from its guilt and power, and yet remain willingly under its bondage; they profess to trust in Christ's death for pardon, and are utterly unconcerned respecting either; they profess to feed upon Christ, and hunger and thirst after nothing but the world; they place before themselves the sufferings of Christ; but when they "look upon him whom they have pierced," they do not "mourn because of him," and they grossly offend the all-present Majesty of heaven, by thus making light of Christ, and "grieving the Holy Spirit."
3. It is a part of Christian discipline in every religious society to prevent such persons from communicating with the Church. They are expressly excluded by apostolic authority, as well as by the original institution of this sacrament, which was confined to Christ's disciples, and ministers would "partake of other men's sins," if knowingly they were to admit to the Supper of the Lord those who in their spirit and lives deny him.
4. On the other hand, the table of the Lord is not to be surrounded with superstitious terrors. All are welcome there who truly love Christ, and all who sincerely desire to love, serve, and obey him. All truly penitent persons; all who feel the burden of their sins, and are willing to renounce

them; all who take Christ as the sole foundation of their hope, and are ready to commit their eternal interests to the merits of his sacrifice and intercession, are to be encouraged to “draw near with faith, and to take this holy sacrament to their comfort.” In it God visibly exhibits and confirms his covenant to them, and he invites them to become parties to it, by the act of their receiving the elements of the sacrament *in faith*.

5. For the frequency of celebrating this ordinance we have no rule in the New Testament. The early Christians observed it every Sabbath, and exclusion from it was considered a severe sentence of the Church, when only temporary. The expression of the apostle, “as *often* as ye eat this bread,” intimates that the practice of communion was frequent; and perhaps the general custom in this country of a monthly administration, will come up to the spirit of the ancient institution. That it was designed, like the passover, to be an annual celebration only, has no evidence from Scripture, and is contradicted by the most ancient practice.

6. The habitual neglect of this ordinance by persons who profess a true faith in Christ, is highly censurable. We speak not now of Quakers and Mystics, who reject it altogether, in the face of the letter of their Bibles; but of many who seldom or never communicate, principally from habits of inattention to an obligation which they do not profess to deny. In this case a plain command of Christ is violated, though not perhaps with direct intention; and the benefit of that singularly affecting mean of grace is lost, in which our Saviour renews to us the pledges of his love, repeats the promises of his covenant, and calls for invigorated exercises of our faith, only to feed us the more richly with the bread that comes down from heaven. If a peculiar condemnation falls upon them who partake “unworthily,” then a peculiar blessing must follow from partaking worthily; and it therefore becomes the duty of every minister to explain the obligation, and to show the advantages of this sacrament, and earnestly to enforce its regular observance upon all those who give satisfactory evidence of “repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

FOOTNOTES

^{ft1} Baptism, as an emblem, points out, 1. The washing away of the guilt and pollution of sin. 2. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit. In Scripture it is made an emblem of these two, and of these only. Some of the superstitions above alluded to sin therefore by *excess*: but immersion sins by *defect*. It retains the emblematical character of the rite as to the washing away of sin; but it *loses it entirely as to the gift of the Holy Ghost*; and, beyond the washing away of sin, is an emblem of nothing for which we have any Scriptural authority to make it emblematical. Immersion, therefore, as distinct from every other mode of applying water to the body, means nothing. To say that it figures our spiritual death and resurrection, has, we have seen, no authority from the texts used to prove it; and to make a sudden pop under water to be emblematical of burial, is as far-fetched a conceit as any which adorns the Emblems of Quarles, without any portion of the ingenuity.