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*The Benefits annexed to a Participation in the
two Christian Sacraments, of Baptism and
the Lord's Supper, considered,*

IN

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCXXVI.

AT THE

LECTURE

FOUNDED BY

THE LATE REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M. A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

BY

WILLIAM VAUX, B. D.

DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF
CANTERBURY, AND LATE FELLOW OF
BALLIOL COLLEGE.

OXFORD,

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1826.

TO THE
MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,
CHARLES,
BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE,
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,
PRIMATE OF ALL ENGLAND,
AND
METROPOLITAN.

MY LORD,

IN seeking a patron for the Volume now presented to your GRACE, it was natural that I should address myself to one, to whom, though already under deep obligations, I had found, by experience, that it was not painful to be a debtor. There seemed too to be a propriety in placing under your GRACE's protection a course of Sermons, preached before that body, to my connection with which I primarily owe my introduction to your GRACE, and the distinguished honour of an ap-

pointment as one of your Domestic Chaplains.

For the readiness with which my request to that effect was acceded to, I have now to renew my acknowledgments; and publicly to express my sense of your GRACE's kindness and condescension, in permitting the following Work to appear under the sanction of a name, which cannot but ensure it a favourable reception, in the first instance, from those, whose judgment must finally decide upon its merits.

With unfeigned sentiments of duty and respect,

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your GRACE's

most obliged

and most obedient servant,

WILLIAM VAUX.

October 6, 1826.

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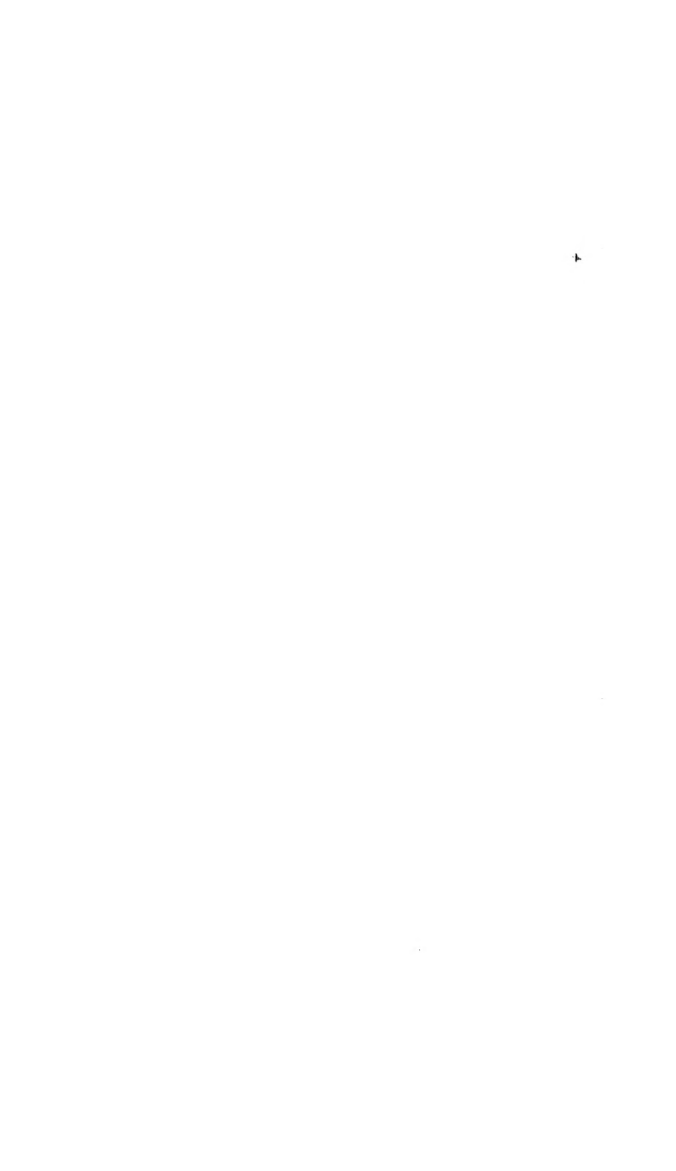
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Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.



EXTRACT
FROM
THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT
OF THE LATE
REV. JOHN BAMPTON,
CANON OF SALISBURY.

— “ I give and bequeath my Lands and Estates to
“ the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the University
“ of Oxford for ever, to have and to hold all and sin-
“ gular the said Lands or Estates upon trust, and to the
“ intents and purposes hereinafter mentioned ; that is to
“ say, I will and appoint that the Vice-Chancellor of
“ the University of Oxford for the time being shall take
“ and receive all the rents, issues, and profits thereof,
“ and (after all taxes, reparations, and necessary dedue-
“ tions made) that he pay all the remainder to the en-
“ dowment of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be
“ established for ever in the said University, and to be
“ performed in the manner following :

“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the first Tuesday in
“ Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly chosen by the Heads
“ of Colleges only, and by no others, in the room adjoin-
“ ing to the Printing-House, between the hours of ten in
“ the morning and two in the afternoon, to preach eight
“ Divinity Lecture Sermons, the year following, at St.

“ Mary’s in Oxford, between the commencement of the
 “ last month in Lent Term, and the end of the third
 “ week in Act Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight Divinity
 “ Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon either of the
 “ following Subjects—to confirm and establish the Chris-
 “ tian Faith, and to confute all heretics and schismatics—
 “ —upon the divine authority of the holy Scriptures—
 “ upon the authority of the writings of the primitive
 “ Fathers, as to the faith and practice of the primitive
 “ Church—upon the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour
 “ Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity of the Holy Ghost—
 “ upon the Articles of the Christian Faith, as compre-
 “ hended in the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight Divinity
 “ Lecture Sermons shall be always printed, within two
 “ months after they are preached, and one copy shall
 “ be given to the Chancellor of the University, and one
 “ copy to the Head of every College, and one copy to
 “ the Mayor of the city of Oxford, and one copy to be
 “ put into the Bodleian Library; and the expense of
 “ printing them shall be paid out of the revenue of the
 “ Land or Estates given for establishing the Divinity
 “ Lecture Sermons; and the Preacher shall not be paid,
 “ nor be entitled to the revenue, before they are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall be
 “ qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons, un-
 “ less he hath taken the degree of Master of Arts at
 “ least, in one of the two Universities of Oxford or Cam-
 “ bridge; and that the same person shall never preach
 “ the Divinity Lecture Sermons twice.”

LECTURE I.

2 PETER i. 4.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.

THE importance attached to the general doctrine of the sacraments is sufficiently manifested by the extent and variety of the controversies respecting them. They have, to adopt the language of Hooker, been “more diversely interpreted and disputed “of than any other parts of religion be- “sides^a ;” and scarcely a point of Christian doctrine has escaped being drawn into the collateral investigations to which the discussion of the sacraments has led.

If some of the questions thus raised may seem to be in themselves of little moment, this will seldom be found to be the case, in reference either to the points of doctrine on which they bear, or the discussions out of

^a Ecclesiastical Polity, book V. c. 57.

which they have arisen. For it is to be observed, that as the place occupied by the sacraments in the religion of the Gospel, rendered the general doctrine concerning them familiar to all the professors of Christianity; so their very prominence pointed them out, as ready tests, by which every novelty in religion might be tried as it appeared. And hence it became indispensable for every projector of alteration or improvement, either to shew that his ideas corresponded with the existing doctrine of the sacraments; or to demonstrate the necessity of remoulding that doctrine according to his ideas. So that the many controversies, which apparently embarrass the subject, are in fairness to be taken, not as any real evidence that the doctrine concerning them is in fact doubtful, but as very valuable testimony to their efficiency, in respect of one important purpose of their institution; the maintenance of the truth and consistency of the religion itself, of which they form a part.

Abstracted indeed from this their relative value, it cannot be denied, that some of the

questions that have been mooted concerning them have been alike captious and unimportant; little interesting in themselves, and but little affecting the holy ordinances, with which they have, unfortunately, been connected. But on the other hand, among the questions directly bearing upon the doctrine of the sacraments, some are on their own account well worthy of our serious attention. And among these, the most important are undoubtedly those which respect the benefits annexed to their use and administration.

To ascertain the reality, and define the nature of the benefits so annexed to the two sacraments universally recognized by the Christian church, will be the object of the course of Lectures upon which we are entering; in which the particular question to be treated may be thus expressed:

What are the benefits of which we become partakers, either as concomitant with, or immediately consequent upon, our participation in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper?

The order of investigation into the sub-

ject thus proposed, will lead me to inquire, first, whether any, and secondly, what benefits are so annexed. Under the first of these heads, I shall briefly, and by way of preliminary, consider the presumptions in favour of some; under the second, I shall review in more detail the evidence in favour of the particular benefits contended for.

The divine appointment and general obligation of both sacraments will throughout the inquiry be taken for granted. They have indeed, with exceptions hardly worth noticing, been universally admitted by the great body of believers. At all events the questions to be agitated have in fact no place among those who deny or doubt such appointment. They can only exist among persons, who, admitting the divine institution, differ as to the nature and intent of the ordinances.

Of the two principal heads, into which the inquiry thus divides itself, neither can be justly deemed irrelevant, or unnecessary. To what end, it may indeed be asked, should we inquire whether any benefits are to be expected from the observances in question.

when we possess the means, if they have a real existence, of defining specifically what they are? Why should we be detained in the pursuit and weighing of probable arguments upon a point, which may, as it would appear, be at once decided by direct and conclusive evidence?

To these questions, however, the answer is not difficult. In strictness, perhaps, the proposed preliminary inquiry might safely be dispensed with. But the object of all practical and really valuable discussion on subjects of religion, is the reception, no less than the truth of the doctrines under consideration. And to this in the present case obstacles oppose themselves, in the shape of objections, not so much to the particulars insisted upon in the sacraments, or to the evidence to be produced in favour of the specific benefits contended for, as to the general notion of any such annexation of benefits to outward observances, and to the undue exaltation of external and positive religion apparently consequent upon their admission. These, it is obvious, are only to be met by arguments tending to shew ge-

generally the real importance of externals ; and upon grounds which may manifest the antecedent probabilities in favour of some such annexation of benefits to the Christian sacraments.

The consideration of these, indeed, might under any circumstances be a not unappropriate introduction to our more particular inquiry ; but in the actual state of the question, in which the unreasonableness of the general expectation is not unfrequently assumed, if not as a sufficient answer to what may be urged on the opposite side, yet as a satisfactory excuse for declining altogether any serious investigation of the subject, some notice of them seems almost unavoidable. The conclusions at which we may hence arrive, will, it is confessed, furnish but presumptive arguments in favour of the annexation of benefits to the sacraments : but where a stand is made against the admission of any, it is important to shew how strong that presumption is ; and therefore, though the main object of our present undertaking is to ascertain and to establish the specific benefits, an inquiry into the an-

tedent probabilities in favour of some, cannot fairly be deemed either useless or inexpedient. To this then I shall in the first instance proceed.

The inquiry itself into the probabilities of the case, it is to be observed, supposes, that there is nothing impossible in the thing itself; nothing at all events sufficient to decide at once the question, against the admission of such benefits. Nor is there any thing of the kind alleged. It clearly is not impossible, that to the institutions in question God should attach specific blessings: whether he has done so, or not, is the point to be examined.

Now the probabilities, if any, in favour of the existence of such benefits, must arise from the consistency of the expectation to which they refer, either with the general reason of mankind deduced from our experience independent of revelation, or with our more particular experience under systems confessedly divine in their origin. That expectation cannot be deemed unreasonable, nor the thing itself to which it relates improbable, which falls in, on the one

hand, with the universal practice of mankind; or, on the other, with the previous instances of divine interposition of which we possess authentic records. Still less can it be so deemed, should it be found in a like correspondence with both of these.

It will therefore be my first business, and the particular object of the present Lecture, to shew, that the expectation of benefits from the sacraments is thus consistent with our experience, both general in nature, and particular in revelation; and that in both it has a real foundation.

That external religion has, universally, both in revelation and in systems independent of it, made a part of the service paid to the Supreme Being, is an undeniable fact. It constituted the very essence of that service in the pagan superstitions; and in every æra of revelation antecedent to the promulgation of Christianity, it occupied an important station. From the introduction of our first parents into the garden of Eden, to the birth of Him, who came to restore us to the blissful seats forfeited by their transgression, revelation proposes to our

view the observance of external religion as no less indispensable to him, who under its various dispensations was desirous of *fulfilling all righteousness*, than an obedience to the moral law itself.

It is unnecessary, as it would be endless, to dwell in any detail on the instances of the importance attached to externals in the Gentile superstitions; and our limits will allow us but an imperfect reference to the authority of revelation itself upon the point. A very cursory glance, however, at the volume of the Old Testament, will be sufficient to satisfy us generally, of the value set upon externals in the earlier dispensations of God's will.

The most important trial to which man was ever subjected, the result of which has been attended with the most momentous consequences, and which was in effect the very cardinal point upon which the whole future fortunes of the race of man, and the dispensation of redemption itself were suspended, was made in a precept of external religion. By the breach of the commandment, in a matter of outward observance,

sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and in the consequences of that breach originated the occasion for the display of wisdom and goodness made in the incarnation of the Son of God; which but for this had been unnecessary.

Again, the most important information which after the entrance of transgression revelation could afford to mankind, the assurance of the existence within our reach of a means of propitiating the divine favour, was first given in the institution of sacrifice.

On the establishment of the covenant with Abraham, again, an external rite was made the very test and sign of adoption into the church of God; and so peremptorily was its observance, even in that early period, enforced, that the *uncircumcised man child* was declared to be *cut off from his people*, to have *broken the covenant*^b.

And, lastly, upon their observance of a burdensome ritual depended the prosperity of the Israelites, both individual and national. Individually, they owed their very

^b Gen. xvii. 14.

existence, as members of the chosen flock, to their early initiation by circumcision, and the continuance of their communion in the privileges to which circumcision admitted them, to their persevering observance of the varied rites, by which they continually testified their adherence to their religion, renewed their covenant with God, and received the assurance of his continued favour to them. Their national welfare is in like manner repeatedly declared to be contingent on their punctual observance of the ceremonial of the law in all its details. An adhesion to the external and positive injunctions of the Lawgiver was to be with the Israelites, as it was with our first parents, the test of their hearts being right with God; the evidence of a disposition to obey, in the one case, their great Creator, in the other, their beneficent Protector and King, simply. Their faith in his veracity, on the one hand, in the commination of punishment, on the other, in the promise of blessings, was to be in both instances tried by their reverence for his external institutions. To neglect the services, by which the outward disposi-

tion of their hearts was to be visibly displayed, was in both instances to be the prelude to the sure ruin of *the despisers*^c.

Upon the general importance attached to external services both in nature and revelation, it is therefore needless to dwell further. Suffice it to observe, that as from the universality of the existence of external rites in natural systems, we infer the reasonableness of such services as they appeared to minds unenlightened by revelation; so from their similar presence, and the stress laid upon them in the revealed dispensations of God's will, we obtain a divine sanction to the conclusions of a merely human wisdom.

But the reasonableness of the service of externals, as deduced from the fact of their universal observance, being admitted; an inquiry into the grounds of the respect thus universally paid to them will lead us to results of yet higher importance, in reference to our main undertaking. For if we now inquire, what gave to externals, whether in nature or revelation, their most real

^c Acts xiii. 41.

importance in the eyes of those by whom they were observed ; we shall find, that in both cases it was the expectation of benefits, either direct or implied. Without some anticipation of advantage to result from their observance, they would neither have obtained that universal reverence, which they have every where procured independently of revelation ; nor that ready acquiescence, which, chiefly on that very account, follows our conviction, that they are imposed by a divine authority.

It will therefore be desirable to inquire, on what footing the expectation in both cases stands ; how far it is justified in the religion of nature, and how far it is confirmed or extended in revelation. In the considerations to which this inquiry will lead us, we may hope to find a safe foundation for the anticipation of some benefits from the sacraments themselves ; but we shall at all events be furnishing the most effectual antidote to prepossessions against the admission of any. For as these can only justifiably arise from an idea, either of the unreasonableness of the thing, or its incon-

sistency with the known methods of Providence ; they will be fitly answered by a correct statement of the grounds of human practice, and the course of the divine procedure.

External religion then, of which the Christian sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper evidently form a part, may be divided into two great branches ; that which is offered to the Supreme Being by the free choice and voluntary submission of his creatures, and that which is paid to him in discharge of an obligation expressly laid on them by him. From the former of these, however natural, and apparently congenital to the mind of man, it may be in some of its expressions, no other benefit to the individual offering it can safely be asserted, than that which is looked for in every self suggested act of piety, by which men hope to conciliate the object of their worship, and to secure to themselves such blessings as are adapted to their individual needs. In themselves they do no more than testify to the right intention and good disposition of him who offers them ; and the hope of a

beneficial return rests only upon that internal conviction, so universally prevalent, that *with such sacrifices God is well pleased*. Inasmuch indeed as they are offered in a religious frame of mind, and with an actual desire of doing that, which the offerer is persuaded is acceptable to God, such acts of voluntary piety have a real worth; and though destitute of merit, in the theological sense of the word, may without arrogance look for a corresponding recompense of reward from Him, who *accepteth* the works of every man *according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not*^d.

Whatever further advantages, however, beyond the comfort derived from such pious expectations as the fitness of the service itself may seem to justify, may accrue from such observances, they must have some other foundation than the religious disposition and virtuous confidence of the worshipper; and they can rest on no other than the express appointment of Him, to whom the service is directed. A very general impres-

^d 2 Cor. viii. 12.

sion of the necessity of some such appointment, indeed, to give efficacy even to those observances, which might otherwise have been suspected to have had their origin in the suggestions of a natural piety, may be traced in the universal prevalence of traditions, even among nations unenlightened by revelation, referring the commencement of such observances to the appointment of some person, who from his rank, or his character, or some peculiar circumstances of his life, was supposed to speak authoritatively on divine subjects, or to have enjoyed the privilege of a more direct and personal communication with the Deity, than is vouchsafed to mankind in general. Without some sanction of this sort, even natural reason seems to have felt a deficiency in its best intentioned services.

When done indeed in obedience to a divine command, they obtain a new character; they come under the head of duties; a larger presumption of benefit is by consequence justified; and an ampler basis afforded upon which the confidence of the pious worshipper may rest. As no act of

natural piety is performed without the hope of some reward, so no act done in conformity with the revealed will of God is done without at least the tacit conviction, that his goodness is pledged to a corresponding return. The doing his will carries with it an assurance of his favour ; nor can we reconcile it with our notions of his benevolence or his equity, that he should lay his commands upon us, without an intention of rewarding our obedience. And, in this respect, the nature of the precept makes no difference at all. Our obedience to his law, whether manifested in our adherence to the moral code, considered as emanating from him, or in the observance of external appointments originating in and sanctioned by his revelation, seems equally to imply, as a correlative, a return of favour from him, proportioned to the sincerity of our performances, and the temper in which they are performed. Nay, it would seem but natural to expect, that where a duty of merely positive obligation is peremptorily enforced, its performance should be attended with some special benefit to him who discharges

the obligation. And the want of any definite promise, were none such annexed to the injunction, would afford as little reason for doubting, that some appropriate advantage would in such a case be the result of obedience, as our ignorance of the specific enjoyments of a life to come, would, on the principles of natural religion, justify our entertaining doubts of a future reward to the righteous. In proportion indeed as the natural reason of such a duty were less apparent, would the presumption be the stronger, that compensation would in some other way be made for its deficiency in this respect, by the authority that imposed the obligation. We may the more forcibly insist upon the probability of some annexed benefit, inasmuch as in itself it is productive of none.

That some benefit therefore to the partaker should be the result of a conscientious participation in the Christian sacraments would thus seem to be the unforced conclusion of our reason, applied to the subject of external religion; the unavoidable inference from the simple fact of their divine appoint-

ment. So much so, indeed, that if none such were declared in words, or apparent from the circumstances of institution, had we no other basis on which to ground our expectation of such benefits, than the inferences to be drawn from the reason of the thing, and the acknowledged feelings and sentiments of mankind, the expectation itself could not be deemed unreasonable. Their existence would be the most probable supposition.

But the general inferences thus deduced from the very nature of external religion, whether voluntary or appointed, receive a powerful confirmation from the particular history of revelation in the Old Testament. In the successive epochs of that history, the appropriation of particular benefits to particular ordinances, marks and measures the growing importance attached to outward services. In many cases, the specific benefit, of which the observance was intended to be the occasion, is expressly declared. Upon these it is unnecessary, as it would indeed be impossible, to dwell in any detail. That to the various sacrifices under the Law

(whatever may be thought of the earlier instances of sacrificial services) peculiar blessings were attached, unattainable without their use; that to circumcision was appended the admission into the covenant of grace, both Abrahamic and Levitical; to the observance of the passover, and the peculiar institutions of the Mosaic economy, the continuance in the fellowship and communion of the Jewish church, and the benefits consequent thereupon; these are facts which cannot be disputed, and the force of which cannot be evaded. I have already noted the indispensable necessity of circumcision declared in its first appointment: let me, in corroboration of the inferences deducible from the consideration of that institution, observe upon a single but very remarkable provision, by which the importance of the passover is perhaps yet more strikingly evinced. As by the former alone could admittance to the Jewish church be obtained, so on the punctual observance of the latter depended the very continuance of the Israelites in the society of God's chosen people: and its celebration was so anxiously

and peremptorily enforced, that what would have seemed to be a legitimate excuse from it altogether, was only allowed to operate as a temporary suspension of the observance; a second passover being provided for those, who by unavoidable necessity were prevented from joining in the first^e. Every step indeed in the history of externals under the Law serves to illustrate their importance, and strengthen the presumption of benefits to be derived from their observance. The severity of the penalties, by which they were guarded from contempt, is a not unworthy argument in favour of some countervailing benefit from their use, proportioned to the risk to be incurred in their abuse or neglect. Where great mischiefs, of which we are not without striking examples, resulted even from an involuntary profanation^f, that great and corresponding advantages should accrue from a reverent observance of the rites, would seem to be but

^e Numb. ix. 6—13.

^f Lev. x. 1, 2. combined with 9, 10. 1 Sam. v. vi.
2 Sam. vi. 6, 7.

the natural dictate of an equal and compensative justice.

And thus it would appear, that as from the universal adoption of outward rites of worship, both in nature and revelation, we before concluded generally that neither the service of externals, nor the expectation of advantage from its celebration, was unreasonable in itself, or inconsistent with the divine arrangements; so our more particular appeal to the uses made of such appointments in revelation, and our experience of God's dealings with his people in various stages of their history, are in full accordance with our former anticipations. We find the hopes of nature, originating, we will suppose, in the suggestions of a voluntary piety, strengthened by the definite assurance of benefits in the declared will of God; and expectations, grounded upon the mere supposition of a divine appointment, confirmed by the experience of an actual revelation.

So far, indeed, from the analogy of revealed religion being against the expectation of such an annexation of benefits to the external appointments of Christianity, our

experience of former dispensations might raise a just presumption in favour of a similar annexation to like appointments, if such there should be found, in the religion of the Gospel. And should our future and more particular inquiry incline us to attribute such efficacy to the Christian sacraments, our admission of that efficacy need not at all events be embarrassed by the apprehension of any incongruity, which might hence discover itself, between the several portions of the divine administration made known to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

It would indeed be carrying the argument from presumption and analogy too far, were we to infer positively, from the annexation of benefits to external observances in former revelations, their like annexation in the religion of the Gospel. It would be a weak inference, that could hence alone be drawn, in favour of externals themselves, for whatever purposes we may conceive them to have been appointed. There might be good reason for declining to have recourse to expedients in the latter dispensation, which

were wisely and beneficially resorted to in the former. What was suited to the one might be incompatible with the other; or the abuses, to which the provisions of a former system had led, might be a sufficient warning against the introduction of similar arrangements into the new religion.

But then, on the other hand, their adoption into Christianity, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, is to be allowed its due weight on the opposite side of the balance. And in forming our estimate of these, two points connected with the sacraments of the Gospel seem to claim an especial regard: first, the nature of the religion of which they were to form a part; and secondly, the strong feeling of the abuse to which such institutions had been already liable, under which Jesus Christ appointed them.

In reference to the former of these, it is to be observed, that

The primary object of our Lord's coming on earth, of his clothing himself in our mortal flesh, and humbling himself to death upon the cross, was undoubtedly *the taking*

away sin by the sacrifice of himself[§]. A further object was to secure to mankind, thus reconciled to God, greater facilities both of knowing and doing their duty ; the one, by the communication of new and important revelations of the will of God ; the other, by the assurance of new and extraordinary assistances in the performance of what was enjoined. For the former purpose, the word of the everlasting Gospel, for the latter, the influences of the Spirit of God, were to be freely and graciously vouchsafed : the one, directing us in the way of life ; the other, enabling us to pursue it : the one, to teach ; the other, to give efficacy to instruction.

In the provision thus made for the relief of our infirmities, the supply of our wants, and the support of our weakness, every important object of the revelation would appear to have been fulfilled. With an atonement for transgression made and revealed to us, with the volume of God's word laid open before us, and his Spirit ever ready to assist and direct us, we might seem to be

§ Heb. x. 26.

amply stored with all things necessary for our salvation, and for the attainment of the great end of our being; the promised happiness of a future and eternal state. It cannot have been without reason, that any addition was made to such a religion. Some important end the further appointment of the sacraments must have had. And such an end it is impossible to assign, as will not imply some benefit to result from a participation in them, corresponding to the place they occupy in the system. They cannot, like the earliest appointment of external religion, by which our first parents were put to trial, be intended as mere tests of obedience, though even that would not necessarily affect the expectation of benefit from their observance. For the trial of obedience (though incidentally they may still serve that purpose also) external appointments could no longer be necessary, when the whole moral code being grafted upon Christianity, (with the superadded obligation arising out of the known injunction of a superior,) the neglect of the rule of life, deducible from the principles of an

enlightened reason, has been itself made an act of disobedience to a divine command. Some other object of their appointment must therefore be sought. And in a religion of grace and mercy, a religion which takes credit to itself for the abolition of a burdensome ceremonial, and every other provision of which is obviously for the benefit of those to whom it is proposed, we can come to no other conclusion, than that the sacraments also are channels of favour to those who are invited and enjoined to partake in them. As it must have been for some important purpose that they were introduced at all into a religion, in every other respect essentially spiritual; so it must have been in some way for the benefit of the partakers in them, that they were introduced into a religion, of which grace and mercy are the most distinguishing features.

So much would seem to follow from the very nature of the religion of which the sacraments form a part. But the consideration of the very peculiar feeling under which they were appointed in it, adds strength to the conclusions derived from

the spiritual character of Christianity itself. For it is of the utmost importance to a fair view of the subject to observe, that it was with a full and declared sense of the inefficiency of mere outward observances, with a deep feeling of the abuses to which an excessive reverence for them had led in Judaism, and with an anxiety, constantly discernible, and openly manifested on many remarkable occasions, to draw off the minds of men from an attention to a mere ritual service, to the observance of the weightier matters of the Law, that our Saviour appointed the two external ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to be perpetually and peremptorily observed by all the members of his church.

In proportion as the acknowledged abuse of such institutions under the Mosaic dispensation, would have been a just reason for avoiding their enactment in a subsequent system, is their introduction into the religion of the Gospel the more remarkable. It would seem to afford the last confirmation of our inferences from the universality of their appointment in former systems of

revelation, that some great objects of all real religion are in fact unattainable without them. It would seem to imply, that the benefits to be derived from their due observance were such, as to surmount every scruple which the experience of their abuse was calculated to excite.

It may, however, in reference to our observations under the last head be urged, and not without some appearance of truth, that the necessity and beneficial tendency of such appointments may be made manifest, without the intervention of such an annexation of benefits to a participation in them, as the inquiry in which we are engaged seems to suppose in the Christian sacraments. External observances, it may be said, are the natural and obvious bands of every visible society; and as such their appointment even in Christianity may have been indispensable.

In this view it was that the Christian sacraments presented themselves to the mind of St. Austin^b. Without outward ceremo-

^b Epist. liv. (al. cxviii.) ad Januarium : sive lib. i. ad inquisit. Januar. §. 1. Augustin. Op. Bened. vol. ii. col. 124.

nies of some sort, especially without some open and visible acts of initiation into the society, and of continuance in its communion, the Christian society of the church of God could not have subsisted. By these it is bound together; and the wisdom and mercy of God is shewn in the selection of such, as are, to use the expression of the same father, “so few in number, so easy
“ of observance, and so excellent in signifi-
“ cation.”

This is indeed most true; but then the very admission of this, as the primary end of the appointment of the Christian sacraments, would seem to carry with it every thing that in the present stage of our inquiry we could desire. It does not indeed determine precisely, what the benefits are, of which the sacraments become the channels to individuals; but it implies of necessity that they are communicative of some. (It settles the question, whether *any*.) For what is it that constitutes the inducement by which men are led to desire admission into any society, whether secular or religious? what but the expectation of per-

sonal privileges or advantages, peculiar to the society, and communicable to the members of it? It is the promise of these, that in merely secular societies renders an admission into them the object of our pursuit; it is the assurance of these, which in the church of God leads men to press into it. It cannot be for the sake of aggrandizing a body, with which, till their connection with it is established, they have nothing in common, but for the sake of the personal advantage they hope to reap from the connection, that they are anxious to form it. When in it indeed, the prosperity of the body, as such, has its influence, and becomes an object to the members; and we may trace in the apostolic Epistles abundant evidence, that such an interest in the welfare of the Redeemer's church was presumed to exist in the minds of believersⁱ. But the exhortations to enter into it, we may also observe, are altogether personal; founded on the promise of the Holy Ghost, of the remission of sins, of life eternal; in short, upon the

ⁱ See preliminary remarks in bishop Butler's 1st Sermon on Human Nature.

assurance of God's special favour to the professors of the faith of Christ, and the members of his mystic body. And if, to partake of the benefits for which a society was instituted, it be indispensable to become and to continue members of it ; and if it be by peculiar and appropriate rites alone that men can be first admitted into the society, and afterwards retain and keep up their connection with it ; then to the observance of those rites may be not improperly attributed the conveyance of benefits, which can only be obtained through their instrumentality.

Upon the whole, therefore, that benefits, corresponding to the place they occupy in the Christian system, should be the result of a participation in the sacraments would seem to be the probable conclusion, both from our general experience in nature, and our particular experience in revelation. If our former observations have gone no further than to obviate prejudices against the admission of any, the latter may perhaps be considered as establishing a presumption in favour of some.

The more particular inquiry, what these

benefits are, will be the subject of future discussion. But before we part, I wish to make one observation, with which I will for the present conclude.

The principal points of real interest in the doctrine of the sacraments, are those which relate, first, to the benefits annexed to their observance; and secondly, to the qualifications for an effectual participation in them. It is into the nature and reality of the benefits, that we are about to inquire; and this inquiry, as it does not of necessity involve the consideration of the conditions upon which their enjoyment rests, so the limits of my undertaking will prevent my pursuing this part of the subject.

The two things are indeed distinct in nature, and capable of a distinct consideration. Yet the exclusive prosecution of the particular inquiry, to which we are of necessity confined, is liable to one inconvenience, which I am desirous of meeting, as far as it is possible, in the very outset. For it is not easy, the question of qualification being omitted or deferred, to insist upon the certainty of the benefits to be expected,

without the appearance, at least, of making their enjoyment unconditional. Nor is this, in truth, in any other way to be avoided, than by the constant recollection, that whatever benefits we may find justly attributable to a participation in the sacraments, are to be deemed so attributable only to a worthy participation in them; it being obvious, that however unquestionable the benefits themselves may be, if the person be not qualified to receive them, they are to him as if they were not. The reality of the benefits will no more confer this qualification, than the most ample rent-roll will give a right to a temporal estate. That will depend upon the validity of the title, in other words, upon the qualifications of the claimant.

The establishment of the benefits indeed, if not an indispensable preliminary, is essential to give a real interest to any inquiry touching the qualifications for enjoying them; and to this object will my efforts in the following course be directed. But if the nature of my undertaking confines me to the consideration of one part only of the

subject, let it not be inferred, that I am therefore insensible to the value of the other. Rather let it be considered, that the firmer the basis upon which the benefits themselves rest, the more important will the conditions of their enjoyment appear ; and the more serious the obligation on the sincere disciple of his Lord, to use his best endeavours in fitting himself for their reception.

LECTURE II.

MATT. xxviii. 19.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them.

THE order of investigation proposed in these Lectures referred us to two principal heads of inquiry ; first, whether any benefits are in fact annexed to a due participation in the Christian sacraments ; and secondly, what those benefits are ?

That benefits, real and important, though as yet undefined, were to be expected from such a participation, was the conclusion to which we were led, as the result of our inquiry under the first head, in my last discourse. The line of argument then pursued, did not indeed attempt more, than the establishment of a strong presumption in favour of that expectation ; it was both calculated and intended, rather to smooth the way for future investigation, by the removal of prejudices hostile to a fair inquiry, than to ex-

hibit the just grounds, on which the assertion of the actual benefits annexed to the sacraments must ultimately rest.

It will now be my object to shew, that the antecedent presumption thus raised is sustained by the fact of the case; and to confirm our conclusion, that some benefits are so annexed, by pointing out specifically what they are.

In the pursuance of this object, the mode of proceeding, which first suggests itself, is to take up the consideration of the sacraments in that particular point of view, in which we were led to contemplate them in the conclusion of the preceding Lecture, and in which they presented themselves to the mind of St. Austin; namely, as the appointed observances by which the visible society of the Redeemer's church is maintained and bound together. As rites of initiation into the society, and continuance in it, their federal character is undeniable: and from this alone, antecedently to any more particular information we may possess upon the subject, might at once be inferred generally, a reciprocation of blessings and

duties between the parties to the covenant. In taking upon us the obligations, we become entitled to the benefits of our engagement; in performing our part of a covenant of grace, we establish a claim to the promises made in it. And where both the establishment and the continuance of such a federal connection, as is implied in our becoming members of a peculiar society, depend upon the performance of distinct and specific acts, testifying in the one instance our admission, and in the other our continuance in the society, it is plainly by the performance of these acts, so appropriated, that we become entitled to the advantages resulting from the connection.

Such indeed would be the case in the most general way of reasoning, and in reference to societies the entrance to which is purely voluntary: but the inference is yet more forcible, where, as in the case of the Christian church, an obligation to enter into the society exists; and where, especial promises being made to those who enter in and adhere to it, both the act of admission, and the discharge of any special obligations,

incumbent upon the members as such, assume the character of pledges, assuring them of the promised benefits. Nor will it, as has been already observed, avail in opposition to this, to contend, that the primary object of the appointment of the sacraments was the maintenance of the society itself, rather than the conveyance of benefits to its members. For admitting the fact, still the Christian church must, like every other association of individuals, be considered as established ultimately, not for the furtherance and aggrandizement of the abstract body, but for the benefit of the members composing it ; and it would therefore be manifestly unjustifiable, to limit the uses of the sacraments to their efficacy in relation to the former object only. Whatever is indeed the end of the society, to the attainment of that end must all acts done in reference to it after their capacity conduce ; whether this be, as in the case of merely voluntary and secular associations, the advancement of some temporal interest of the members, or, as in the case of the church of Christ, the promotion of their

spiritual welfare in time and in eternity. Of whatever benefits, therefore, we might by a diligent study of the written word, and just inferences from it, assure ourselves that the church itself was the depository; of these we might safely assume generally, that she dispensed them through the medium of the sacraments.

But further, from the admitted character of the sacraments, as rites of initiation and communion, and previously to the consideration of any more peculiar and distinctive character, which they may severally possess in themselves, or of any thing explicitly revealed concerning them, we might perhaps advance a step further, and assign to each particular graces, corresponding to this their original idea, and their particular place in the Christian system. In this view, to baptism would naturally belong the collation of whatever privileges might result from the simple fact of our admission into the society; to the Lord's Supper, on the other hand, might be appropriated the conveyance, or the renewed assurance, of the benefits accruing from our continuance in it.

And a knowledge of the distinctive peculiarities of the religion would be all that would be requisite, to enable us to discriminate and assign with certainty to each its proper and peculiar graces.

It is not from any doubt of the evidence, or the validity, of the conclusions deducible from this view of the subject, that I decline adopting it as the basis of our investigation. To the line of argument thus opened I may again have occasion to refer; nor, because I am in this stage of our inquiry unwilling to insist further upon it, shall I scrupulously reject all assistance to be derived from the more obvious inferences to which it readily leads. I decline it as the groundwork, first, because this method of pursuing the inquiry would, in exact proportion to the precision with which our conclusions should be drawn, have an appearance of abstractedness, which, in inquiries directed to subjects of practical importance, should as much as possible be avoided: and secondly, because the account of the sacraments to be derived from this source alone, from the simple consideration

of the observances themselves, as rites of initiation and communion, and the character of the religion of which they form a part, would be almost necessarily defective in some very material points. From such a method of proceeding indeed the more general conclusions, to which we have alluded, would be deduced with sufficient ease and clearness; but from it any more particular knowledge of the benefits, which they might severally be intended to signify, or calculated to procure to the partakers in them, would, it seems, with less certainty, or less facility, be obtained.

It would not indeed follow as a matter of course, from the mere fact of their being rites of initiation and communion, that any such peculiar or appropriate benefits belonged to them. We could readily conceive a mode of admission, which should in itself signify no more than that we were admitted, and a mode of communion, which should express nothing but the continuance of our connection with the society as members. But, on the other hand, if the rites themselves actually established do possess any

appropriate significancy, either natural or conventional ; as it would be repugnant to all our ideas upon the subject to suppose that this had no influence in their selection ; so it would be strange, if, from the consideration of that significancy, no light should be thrown upon the intent of their appointment, and the particular character of the benefits they are severally designed to convey.

Again, if many points concerning them are matter of distinct and express revelation, it would be absurd to rest our conclusions on mere arguments of inference, however forcible in themselves ; such reasonings, though often indispensable in the absence of more direct proof, being, where that proof is to be had, rather gratifying from their ingenuity, or from the evidence they afford of the general harmony of the system, than such as a prudent theologian would employ as the foundation of the doctrines they support.

Reserving to myself, therefore, the right of recurring, as may hereafter seem fit, to the topic of argument thus opened ; I shall

for the present content myself with drawing from the original and indefeasible character of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as rites of initiation and communion, the general inference, that they are, as such, essentially communicative of the benefits accruing to the members of the society from their aggregation to it ; for the more particular discrimination and appropriation of these benefits, I shall have recourse to what may be severally learnt concerning them, either from the nature of the rites themselves, combined with the history and circumstances of their appointment ; or, as to some it may appear, yet more directly, from the manner in which they are spoken of in the Scriptures of the New Testament : whether by the apostles, as the authorized administrators of the rites already established, or by our Lord himself, or his forerunner, in anticipation of their appointment.

Now in determining the nature of any external observance, the first thing that seems to suggest itself for consideration is its natural significancy. For though it were possible, that, for the purposes it was

intended to serve, it might be, in many respects, matter of indifference what particular action were selected; yet, if in the one preferred there should be found any natural propriety of signification, some probability at least, however low, would exist, that it was selected with an intentional reference to that its natural meaning. More especially when we reflect, that in the case of the Christian sacraments the choice was made by a wisdom, remarkable even in its most trivial works, for the refinement, if I may so speak, with which its various arrangements are at the same time adapted to their own particular ends, and made to bear upon the remoter parts of the system; it seems impossible to imagine, that though of innumerable acts, by which men might have been initiated into the Christian church, or have maintained their connection with it, any one would have answered the single and simple purpose thus assigned to it, the one actually selected was not the fittest and the best. And if, in the particular action preferred, we can trace the reason of the preference in any peculiar pro-

priety of meaning, we cannot refuse to admit the consideration of this, as of importance in determining the character of the rite we are investigating. Our first inquiry therefore will be into the natural meaning of the particular action enjoined in each sacrament ; what idea it is primarily calculated to convey.

Closely connected with this, is the consideration of the history and circumstances of their appointment, and especially of the words of institution, by which the natural significancy of the action is more accurately defined and limited to the particular purposes of the rite established : and to this therefore our attention will in the next place be directed.

In corroboration of the conclusions drawn from the natural significancy of the rite, thus limited by the words of institution, an appeal to the conventional significancy of the action will not be out of place. By the conventional significancy, I understand, not only that which we find either universally or very generally existing in different ages and different countries ; (in which cases its

analogy to the natural signification is almost necessarily obvious :) but that which has in any particular place, or among any particular people, been prevalent, and of which the origin, though perhaps the connecting steps may be no longer traceable, was probably in every case owing to a like analogy. Of the one sort are the joining of hands in token of friendship, almost universal ; the slaying of a victim in confirmation of a league, very generally prevalent ; of the latter, are the custom of anointing, as a mode of designation or appointment to particular offices ; or the putting the hand under the thigh, as a form of binding or giving force to an oath ; which seem to have been confined to eastern nations, and the latter to very remote antiquity. The most universally prevalent and most intelligible of these, cannot be said to be significant of that for which it is used, in the same degree or in the same sense that washing signifies purification, or eating nourishment and festivity, that a gift in itself of little value is expressive of gratitude, that tears denote sorrow, smiles joy,

embracing affection, or the turning away of the head aversion or disgust. The last have by nature that which the others enjoy by convention only. And if, in addition to their natural significancy, we find reason to insist upon any further meaning of the actions which constitute the Christian sacraments, it will not be indifferent to the success of our inquiry, whether or not our conclusions are supported by a conventional use of such actions in other religions, corresponding to that we claim for them in the Christian church.

The nature of the rites themselves, and the inferences fairly to be drawn from their natural or conventional significancy, being ascertained, I shall proceed to the consideration of the language of Scripture concerning them; on which subject I must however premise an observation or two. It cannot of course be expected, that in a course of Sermons like the present I should enter into a full discussion of every text, even of the New Testament, in which a reference, real or supposed, is made to the sacraments, or to doctrines immediately connected with

them. But the limited nature of my undertaking will enable me to confine my notice to those, which either directly assert, or by very obvious inference imply, some benefit to be derived from their use. These are contained, either in the Gospels, giving an account of the discourses of our Lord and his forerunner, and in which the references are of necessity anticipative; or in the historical narration of the proceedings of the apostles in the Acts; or lastly, in the apostolical Epistles themselves.

Now inasmuch as some obscurity is almost unavoidably attached to anticipative declarations, concerning a rite to be instituted, which disappears when the rite is established and practically carried into effect; it seems advisable to begin our investigation of the scriptural notices of each sacrament with those passages, from which we may ascertain the sense in which it was received by its original and authorized administrators; and with the information thence derived, to proceed to the consideration of the references made to it by way of anticipation. From a review of the man-

ner in which the sacraments are spoken of or alluded to in the Acts of the Apostles, I shall therefore pass to the examination of the apostolical Epistles; and from these, return, as it were, to the Gospels, in order to collect from them the confirmation or the qualification of our previous inferences. By taking them in this order no disparagement is intended to the last in the series; while some advantage is anticipated from thus coming to the consideration of the more obscure passages with the assistance of the light reflected from the more evident.

Beyond the conclusions to be derived from these sources, it is not my intention to pursue the inquiry. Confirmations of the views taken I may perhaps notice, as occasion may incidentally arise; and some collateral questions I may perhaps touch upon, (either by the way or in the conclusion of the course;) but the main object in view being the establishment of that portion of the doctrine of the sacraments which relates to the benefits to be derived from their administration, to this I shall, as far as possible, confine myself.

First then, of the nature of the rite of Baptism; of the natural significancy of the action which constitutes its material part, and of the limitation of that significancy to its particular purposes by the words of institution, and the history and immediate circumstances of its appointment.

Now that the action, which constitutes the material part of the sacrament of Baptism does possess a natural and appropriate significancy, one, which words may limit, restrict, or qualify, but cannot altogether destroy, it would be trifling to make question. The act of washing has, and must, till nature itself suffer change, continue to have, one obvious meaning, that of purifying. From defilement of some sort, it is either the actual purifier, or the incontrovertible sign and token of purification. When commanded to wash, independently of any collateral signification of the command, it must be, that by washing we may be made clean; and that Christian Baptism, consisting in a material washing of water, refers to purification of some sort, may therefore be assumed as a fundamental

position in our inquiry ; a position, that can only be shaken by denying the natural significancy of actions the most plainly significant.

The special character of the purification intended in Baptism, cannot however be determined from the natural significancy of the action alone. This must be sought in the history and circumstances of its appointment, and the relation it bears to the system of which it forms a part. In reference to the former of these it is, that the language of our Lord, and his declarations concerning it at the time of institution, come next under consideration. To this therefore, which constitutes the second head of inquiry, namely, how the natural significancy of the material action of Baptism is limited by the words of institution, and the declarations of our Lord concerning it at the time of establishing the rite, I now proceed.

These, as exhibited by St. Matthew, are as follows : *Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy*

Ghost : and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world^a. The parallel text of St. Mark runs thus : *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*^b.

Now the intention of our Lord to establish a real and material Baptism of water being admitted, the first thing that strikes us in reference to that Baptism is, that the very words of institution forbid our resting in that alone ; and force upon us a spiritual interpretation of the purification to be conveyed by the outward act of washing. For whether the command, to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be considered, according to the uniform practice of the church, as establishing an invariable formulary, to be perpetually used in the administration of the rite ; or only as pointing out in whose name the new Baptism, with whatever form of words it might be celebrated, was actually to be administered ; it would be alike incongruous to imagine, that the impurity to be thus

^a Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

^b Mark xvi. 15, 16.

got rid of, was to be removed by a mere bodily *putting away of the filth of the flesh*^c. To do this, it were no more effectual to wash in that holy name, than to wash without it.

But a merely corporal cleansing being thus excluded, we are inevitably led to a spiritual interpretation of the washing enjoined, and to an inquiry, what was the inward defilement of which the outward rite aptly represents the removal? And in determining this question also, the words of institution alone will afford us important aid. For whatever that spiritual defilement may be, for the removal of which the waters of Christian Baptism were appointed, the command, to *baptize all nations*, clearly implies, that it was one to which all mankind were at that time liable; while the annexed promise of the Redeemer, that he would be with those whom he authorized to administer the rite *even unto the end of the world*, implies that it was one, which to the end of time would require to be removed.

Now the existence of one such impurity,

^c 1 Peter iii. 21.

inherent in man's nature, and therefore universal and permanent, is, we know, a fundamental fact in the faith of a Christian; and can only be denied, by calling into question one of the most important and distinguishing doctrines of true religion. The stain of sin confessedly adheres to all mankind; introduced by the offence of Adam, it has vitiated his whole progeny; and we inherit from him, independently of our own actual transgressions, a nature corrupted and prone to ill, and as such, impure and unfit for heaven and happiness. And no other spiritual stain of like universality existing, to this, it might fairly be presumed, that a rite expressive of purification, and of universal and perpetual obligation, in a religion essentially spiritual, and recognizing the existence of the evil, was intended to refer. And this becomes yet more probable, when we reflect, that without any especial reference to the notion of the impurity of sin, to obviate generally the evils resulting from the transgression of the first Adam, was one declared purpose of the incarnation of the second.

But what seems to put it beyond doubt, so far as the words of institution are concerned, that the stain of sin, original or actual, is that of which Christian Baptism either effects or represents the purification, is the declaration of our Lord accompanying the institution, and recorded by St. Mark, that *he who believeth and is baptized shall be saved*. That salvation is here, in the direct and obvious construction of the words, attributed to Baptism, is undeniable: nor do the attempts which have been made to weaken or evade the force of this text, appear to have impaired the value of its testimony on this particular point. It does not at least seem to me, that the freest admission of the importance of faith, as a requisite for Baptism, or the condition of receiving the benefits annexed to it, can at all affect the just claims of Baptism itself, when rightly administered. It will after all be correct to say of Baptism, that it saves us, though it should be made manifest that it does so, only upon the supposition of our possessing the requisite qualifications; whether of faith, or of repentance, or whatever

else may be necessary to fit us for a due and availing reception of the sacrament. Into the examination of this question, however, I do not on the present occasion feel called upon to enter. Without controverting the necessity of belief in competent subjects to give efficacy to the outward administration of the rite, I may be permitted to take the words in their direct and obvious meaning, as declaring that to Baptism, salvation of some sort is in some way annexed ; and then the only question will be, to what the salvation spoken of by our Lord refers. And here again, the removal of mere danger to the body being inconceivable as the end of the institution, we are of necessity led to the expectation of some spiritual benefit, as the distinguishing feature of the salvation alluded to ; that is, to salvation from sin ; the great and permanent benefit of the manifestation of Him, who came on earth to save sinners ; the special inducement held out by our Lord himself^d to repentance and acceptance of the Gospel ; the only real evil

^d Luke xxiii. 47.

and danger to which an immortal spirit is exposed. And this salvation implying, not only a liberation from the penalties of actual transgression, but the removal of every obstacle to our final happiness, must include the abolition of that stain of original guilt by which the nature of man has since the Fall been rendered, without some such deliverance or purification, unfitted for, and incapable of, the spiritual reward of righteousness. The inference from the nature of the action of Baptism might perhaps seem to point more especially to the removal of the taint of original sin; that from the words of St. Mark, to the forgiveness of actual offences; but as any purification would be imperfect, which left the stain of actual transgression adhering to us, so no salvation would be complete, which left us still burdened with the load of hereditary enmity to God.

Spiritual purification, therefore, consisting in the remission of sin, and including, not only the forgiveness of actual transgression, but deliverance from the effects of hereditary corruption, may safely be consi-

dered as the primary benefit and grace of Christian Baptism, as deduced from the natural significancy of the rite, the words of institution, and the peculiar character of the religion of which it forms a part.

These conclusions, we may now observe, derive important confirmation from the consideration of the conventional character and meaning of the rite in other religions. In these, the idea most immediately connected with the various external washings and sprinklings, universally prevalent among the nations of antiquity, was that of the removal of moral stains and disqualifications, whether real or imaginary. As applied to this purpose, their use was so familiar both to Jewish and Roman minds, that it was employed by Pilate, to efface the stain he was about to incur by an act of deliberate injustice; and for similar purposes it was appointed in the various legal ablutions of the Mosaic economy, and resorted to under almost every system of Gentile superstition. On such occasions it was clearly in every case typical, or representative of some other change than a mere bodily cleansing; that

is, of an internal purification, which the person was supposed to undergo, and which the external washing only signified; agreeing in this with the character we have assigned to Christian Baptism.

But more especially was the external act of washing conventionally applied, to represent and signify the purification required in the convert to any new religious system, or mode of worship; and under this idea Baptism became an almost universal rite of initiation into all religions. And it clearly became so, in every case, on a twofold assumption; first, that till some purification had taken place, the parties were unfit for the society, to which they craved admission; and secondly, that such purification was conveyed to them by the Baptism administered at their reception. And this idea of spiritual purgation it retained, in the remarkable instance of its administration to Gentile proselytes to Judaism. Here it was, evidently, not properly the rite of initiation, for this was circumcision; but preparatory to this an external washing was required of the converts, indicative of the

putting off the impurities contracted in their state of heathenism ; and which, unremoved, were, in the eyes of natural born Jews, an insurmountable obstacle to their reception of the rite of circumcision, and their actual admission into the Jewish church. Now this purification, limited, as it was, and referring, as it did, to a merely imaginary defilement, was plainly, though conveyed by the outward act of Baptism, itself, in the idea at least of those who administered it, internal and spiritual ; agreeing in this with our view of Christian Baptism. And it may be observed, that the use thus made of Baptism, in the case of Gentile converts under the Jewish law, not only falls in with that which we have assigned to Christian Baptism ; but that the absence of any similar rite, in the case of the initiation of the infant Jew himself into the religion of his Fathers, while it is continued to every individual admitted into the Christian church, is upon like principles to be accounted for. The washing of Jewish proselytes had reference to the imaginary defilement of their heathen state

alone ; and therefore had no place among the children of those who were born under the covenant. The removal of whatever in the native Jew required abscission was aptly typified by the initiation of circumcision. But the stain removed by Christian Baptism being real, permanent, and hereditary, even in those who descend from Christian parents, the reiteration of that Baptism takes place of necessity, even among those, who, from their parentage, on Jewish ideas, might seem free from defilement. The child of the Christian, no less than his parent, requires, even in infancy, to be purified from the stain of original sin, and if Baptism be deferred, from the guilt of actual transgression.

The correspondence of the conventional significancy of the rite, with that for which we have already contended, thus adds force to the conclusions previously deduced from the very nature of the material action, and the words and circumstances of institution.

These conclusions, so far as the inquiry has hitherto been carried, have been as follows : from the consideration of the action

itself we have inferred, that the primary intent and object of Baptism is purification ; which purification, from the very words of institution, appears to be spiritual ; and from the nature of the religion to which it is introductory, a purification from the defilement of sin. From the words of St. Mark, apparently accompanying the appointment, or certainly immediately referring to it, it farther appears, that the concomitant, or consequence of Baptism, is salvation, Christian salvation ; that is, salvation from sin, and by implication the remission of its penalties.

In the direct results thus arrived at from the sources of information hitherto referred to, we might be content to rest satisfied, as of themselves furnishing abundant reason for the assignation of specific and important benefits to a participation in the sacrament. No higher or more intelligible benefits are indeed to be looked for than a purification from the stain, and a liberation from the penalties of sin. But it would neither be doing justice to the method of investigation pursued, nor to the claims of Baptism itself,

as deduced from the views of its nature and efficacy already opened, were we to omit, even in this first stage of our inquiry, to notice two other inferences hardly less important, or less certain, than those on which we have already insisted. Though not so immediately flowing from the consideration of the sacrament in the point of view in which we have hitherto regarded it; they are in fact inseparably connected with the results already obtained, and indispensable to a full apprehension of the benefits arising out of the administration of the rite. I allude to the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the restoration of our title to eternal life; of which, the one would seem to be the necessary concomitant of the spiritual purification typified in Baptism; the other, the immediate consequence of the pardon conveyed in it.

The first of them, indeed, the gift of the Holy Ghost, would appear to follow irresistibly from the fact once admitted, that a spiritual purification is conveyed in the washing of Baptism. For the working of this effect, being, upon the fundamental princi-

ples of the religion of the Gospel, the office of the holy Spirit alone, if the effect be produced, the presence of the Spirit, as its proper agent, seems to be undeniable. And when we reflect upon the familiar use of water in other parts of Scripture, to signify and figure the Spirit and its operations^e, we are hence led to acknowledge an additional propriety in the selection of the rite, in its aptitude, not only to represent the benefit conveyed, but to typify the mode of effecting it.

With respect again to our restoration, in Baptism, to the title to eternal life forfeited by the transgression of our first parents, we may observe, that the pardon of the guilt, and the removal of the stain of sin, being in effect the blotting out and effacing of the sole cause of enmity between man and his Maker, reconciliation to God, and a re-admission to our original title to immortality, are the natural and necessary consequences of that pardon and removal. Without indeed the assurance of that *eternal life*

^e See Mede, Disc. XVII. on Tit. iii. 5. p. 62. Works, edit. 1672.

so expressly characterized as *the gift of God through Jesus Christ*^f, redemption itself, though it might free us from the dark cloud of apprehension which overhung the prospect of futurity in a state of nature, would have been little entitled to the rapturous acknowledgments, with which the fulfilment of its prophetic annunciation in the Old Testament was justly hailed by the inspired promulgators of the New.

As completing the pardon of sin itself, and supplying a deficiency, which, had it really existed, would have rendered that first act of divine mercy ineffectual (so far as man himself is concerned) to its highest and noblest purposes, the restoration of our title to eternal life claims a place by the side of the pardon of sin, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, among the primary and positive benefits annexed to a participation in the ordinance of Baptism : and the three things deserve to be jointly considered, as the first-fruits of that reconciliation to God, which, having been achieved for his church

^f Romans vi. 23.

in the sacrifice of Christ, is applied to the members of his mystic body, through the medium of the rite, by which they are first made partakers in the holy relationship, established between the members and the head.

The proper proof indeed of the two latter inferences will be found in a subsequent division of our inquiry. It is not on indirect arguments alone, that any doctrine of real importance to the investigation undertaken in these Lectures will be suffered ultimately to rest. Yet the notice of them even here may not be without its use. The harmony of doctrine arising from the mutual connection and dependance on each other of the several parts of revelation, is not merely a gratifying topic of Christian meditation, but is the test to which we involuntarily, and almost unconsciously, subject the justice and propriety of the particular conclusions by which it is illustrated. The same feeling that induces us to look with diffidence on any interpretations of Scripture or elucidations of its doctrine, which stand at first sight opposed, either

to the analogy of faith, or the general tenor of the sacred writings, disposes us, on the other hand, to receive with confidence the results of our particular investigations, when found in coincidence with what is already established. In tracing therefore from time to time, though with brevity, the various ramifications of the system, and pointing out, as we go on, how one doctrine branches out of, or is connected with, another, we are in fact preparing the way for the reception, if not for the proof, of our positions. That proof, so far as respects the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the restoration of our title to eternal life in Baptism, will, I trust, be abundantly supplied, as we proceed in our examination of the more direct testimony of Scripture upon the subject before us. But the prosecution of this must be deferred, till we again meet; when the passages in the Acts of the Apostles, in which the benefits resulting from the administration of Baptism are mentioned or alluded to, will be brought under consideration.

LECTURE III.

ACTS ii. 38, 39.

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

FROM the consideration of the nature of the rite of Baptism, and the words and circumstances of institution, I now pass to an examination of the general language of the New Testament, with respect to the benefits annexed to the ordinance. The limits of my undertaking will however necessarily confine me to the consideration of the more remarkable passages, and those which bear most directly upon the particular point of the benefits annexed to a participation in the rite.

The passages worthy of notice, in this point of view, are of two sorts; those which

expressly name, or clearly allude to the particular benefits to be expected; and those which, without precisely defining, imply the existence of some benefit, as the result of a participation in the sacrament. Though the former of these will claim our more especial regard, some notice of the latter, as occasion may present itself, will be found desirable; not only as affording support and confirmation to our particular inferences, but as strengthening the conclusions to which we were formerly led from the consideration of the nature and intent of external appointments in religion in general. A review of such passages, as occur to our purpose in the Acts of the Apostles, will, in accordance with the method proposed in my last, be the subject of the present Lecture.

Among these, the first which presents itself in the narrative, and perhaps, all things considered, the most important in the book itself, is the answer given by St. Peter, in the words of my text, to the anxious inquiry of the abashed and conscience-struck multitude, who had witnessed the miracu-

lous effects of the first visible descent of the Holy Ghost, and been present at St. Peter's discourse to them immediately following it. At the hearing of his forcible appeal, being *pricked in their hearts*, they address the apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* To which St. Peter answers in the words of my text, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call^a.* And in consequence, we are told, that *they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls^b.*

The corroboration of our previous views deducible from these words of St. Peter, and the accompanying narrative of St. Luke, is of the highest importance. Not only are our former conclusions, with respect to the purification conveyed in Baptism, and the

^a Acts ii. 37, 38, 39.

^b Acts ii. 41.

salvation which accompanies it, confirmed by the direct assertion, that by it, or in it, is given the remission of sins; but we further derive from them a clear and explicit declaration of that which we have hitherto gathered, less directly, from the special character of that purification, and the fundamental principles of the religion itself; namely, that to Baptism is annexed the promise of the Holy Ghost; who here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, is thus brought before us, as the agent, by whose sole operation every spiritual benefit is actually and immediately conveyed to the faithful. And these two most important benefits are, in the words of the apostle, so closely connected with the administration of the rite, that to evade or invalidate the force of this text, would seem at first sight to be a hopeless endeavour.

Two objections have however been raised to the interpretation thus given to the passage, and to the doctrine raised upon it: the one respecting the nature of the gift of the Holy Ghost here alluded to by St. Peter; the other, the connection asserted

between both the remission of sin and that gift, and the observance of Baptism. The consideration of the former of these will not long detain us; the discussion of the latter, of necessity involving some consideration, both of the context and of the adaptation of the language of the apostle to the particular purpose of his address, will make a larger demand upon your attention, than might seem justifiable in the consideration of an objection only, were the passage itself, out of which the discussion arises, of less importance than it is, or the points of discussion themselves less interesting to the main object of our inquiry.

It is then objected to our interpretation, so far as it respects the nature of the gift of the Holy Ghost alluded to by St. Peter, that the gift here spoken of was not the ordinary grace or benefit, which we would hence endeavour to attach to the perpetual administration of Baptism in the church; but that extraordinary and visible effusion of the Spirit, of which the first effects had just been witnessed, and which appears on other occasions to have accompanied, ex-

clusively, the early preaching and ministrations of the apostles themselves.

But admitting this to have been the more immediate and apparent allusion of the apostle, yet, that it was not confined to that, seems evident from his declaration, that *the promise* (clearly in part at least, of the gift of the Holy Ghost, mentioned immediately before) was *to them, and to their children, and to all that were afar off*, however distant in time or place. Now to whatever this promise may allude, that it cannot refer to the extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghost, first exhibited on the day of Pentecost, is plain ; unless, which we know to be absurd, it be maintained, that such visible effusion of the Spirit has been the constant attendant upon Baptism ever since.

It is indeed evident from the whole narration, (though a fitter opportunity will presently occur for the discussion of that question,) that the gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was itself but the sign, and the earnest of that outpouring of the Spirit, which was to distinguish the

kingdom of the Messiah from every preceding dispensation. It being otherwise impossible to apply, even to that first and extraordinary effusion of the Spirit, the words of Joel, in which St. Peter had, in his previous address to the multitude, declared that it was predicted^c. For the Spirit there spoken of was to be poured out *upon all flesh*; whereas the miraculous and visible gifts, were, we know, confined to the very earliest age of the church.

The other objection to our interpretation respects the justice of the inference, by which we connect the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, with Baptism: in opposition to which it is sometimes contended, that both the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, are to be considered as the consequences, not of Baptism, but of the repentance which in the dis-

^c “ It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God,
“ I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your
“ sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your
“ young men shall see visions, and your old men shall
“ dream dreams: and on my servants and on my hand-
“ maids I will pour out in those days of my Spirit.”
Joel ii. 28, 29. as quoted in Acts ii. 17, 18.

course of St. Peter is mentioned as accompanying or preceding it. And in support of this interpretation of the passage, so far at least as regards the remission of sins, St. Peter's exhortation to the multitude, in the next chapter, is urged; in which he entreats them to *repent, and be converted, that their sins may be blotted out*^d. In this latter passage it is argued, that not only Baptism is not alluded to, but that the remission of sins, apparently attributed to Baptism conjointly with repentance in the former exhortation, is so directly assigned, as the consequence of repentance and conversion only, as to exclude Baptism altogether from any participation in the work.

The principles upon which both these passages, as well as some others of a similar description, are to be explained, being the same, I shall, in endeavouring to give an answer to the objection, consider them together.

In the first place then we may observe, that, while in the words of my text the re-

^d Acts iii. 19.

mission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, are seemingly made to depend upon repentance and baptism jointly, there is nothing in the form of words used by St. Peter at the gate of the temple, though specifically calling for repentance and conversion only, which can justly be deemed exclusive of Baptism. As well might it be contended, that the words of Ananias to St. Paul, *Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins*^e, were inconsistent with the repentance required in the exhortations of St. Peter before us, as that one of these exhortations, because it omits to notice, is subversive of the claims of Baptism. Both in the words of Ananias to St. Paul, and in the address of St. Peter to the multitude after the cure of the impotent man, certain things are unquestionably called for in reference to a particular effect; but in neither, in such a manner as to preclude the necessity or the utility of any other simultaneous or concurrent agency. In the one, Baptism, in the other, repentance only, is mentioned;

^e Acts xxii. 16.

but in neither in such a way as to forbid the intervention of the other. And the fair inference from both passages, and allowing to each its due weight, would seem to be, that the two, as stated in St. Peter's first address, *Repent, and be baptized*, ought to go together; and by their joint operation and efficacy, procure to him, who so unites them, the benefits in other passages indifferently attributed to either. More cannot fairly be deduced, from a comparison of the words used by him with each other in the two cases, than that in his first discourse the apostle has more fully enumerated what is only partially stated in his second: and it is therefore manifestly idle to attempt, from a consideration of the form of expression only, the subversion of the interpretation already put upon the passage.

But if, from the form of expression used by St. Peter, no valid objection can be raised to that interpretation, as little can any such objection be deduced from a consideration of the object of the apostle's discourse.

This was undoubtedly to induce his hearers to embrace the faith to which he was

commissioned to make disciples ; and to be baptized, as the appointed mode of admission into the church of the Redeemer.

It is in reference to this end of his preaching, that both the blessings propounded, and the repentance called for, are introduced into his discourse: the one, constituting in fact the real inducement in every case to adopt the religion of the Gospel ; the other, being in the case of those whom the Apostle addressed, an indispensable preliminary to that adoption. The very foundation of a call to a new mode of faith or worship, must plainly be laid in an exposition of the benefits attending its profession. And a clear statement of these, upon the supposition that no obstacle presented itself to our acceptance of the offer, would of itself suffice, not only to draw attention to the invitation, but, if adequate, to ensure our assent to it. And the exhortation to Baptism, combining with an invitation to accept the mercies of the Gospel, the offer of a visible pledge of our admission to them ; an assurance from a competent authority, that our entrance into the

Christian society should be attended with such results, would be all that would naturally, in the first instance, be required to give efficacy to that invitation. In other words, the authenticity of his commission being established, the whole business of the Evangelist would have been despatched in the exhortation to St. Paul, *Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins*: or in that part of St. Peter's address to the assembled multitude on the day of Pentecost, in which he calls upon them, *to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins*, and that they might *receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*: the mention of the latter being probably in this particular instance superadded to that of the former benefit, in consequence of the particular situation of the parties, in reference to the great miracle which had immediately preceded his appeal to them.

Such would have been the state of things, in the supposable case of no other obstacle presenting itself to the preaching, or the acceptance, of the Gospel, than that which would arise from the necessity of satisfying

those, to whom it was proposed, of the reality and importance of the benefits resulting from their admission to the church of Christ. And had the invitation to Christianity called for no more from those to whom it was addressed, than the acceptance of the benefits annexed to the profession of the truth; there would, under the circumstances of authority with which it was promulgated, have been little difficulty in persuading men to embrace its offers; they would have been anxious for admission into a society, in which such advantages were to be found, and have hastened to the Baptism, by which they were to be secured.

But in the acceptance of Christianity was in fact included the abandonment of all former systems, on which a reliance had hitherto been placed. And, powerful as were the inducements held out, to lead men to a serious consideration of the authority and evidence of that Gospel, which offered such transcendent blessings to the converts; they could only ultimately and effectually operate upon those, to whom they were proposed, by producing a great change in all

their previous sentiments with respect to religion. In the very call to Christianity, the imperfection, nay the nullity, of every other scheme of reconciliation to God is implied. And till a conviction of this takes place, the saving truths of the Gospel are proposed, not only to unwilling, but to obdurate ears. It was its apparent inconsistency with the fancied perfection of the Mosaic institutions, which was, we know from the apostolical writings, the chief obstacle to a full reception of the doctrine of Jesus Christ among the Jews; the great impediment to its progress among many, who would otherwise have *pressed into the kingdom of God*. And a similar attachment, in the philosopher to his sect, in the unlettered heathen to his native superstition, exerted a no less powerful influence in opposition to Christianity among the Gentiles. Hence it was, that the preaching of repentance became, both to Jew and Gentile, a necessary part of the apostolical exhortations. Hence it was, that every inducement held out to Baptism, as the immediate introduction to the benefits of the Christian

covenant, operated in fact, as a call to that repentance, without which no man would come to Baptism. And hence it is, that in the exhortation of Peter in my text, as well as some other passages of like import, the blessings really promised to an adoption of the faith, have the appearance of being made the results of the repentance, which prepares the way for it. But though every argument for the acceptance of the Gospel, is, *pro tanto*, an argument for the repentance which must precede it; and in this qualified sense the benefits in question may, in a popular way of speaking, be said to be promised to repentance itself; yet to contend for more than this, is plainly to confound the end with the steps necessary to its attainment.

The close connection of the two things sufficiently accounts for the almost indifferent mention, or omission, of either, in the discourse of the Apostles, as the circumstances of the case may seem to have required. For though the promises are indeed properly made, not to the repentance, which prepares the mind for the reception

of the faith, but to the actual acceptance of the offers made, and our actual admission by Baptism into the church; the distinction, though correct, is often of little importance in practice. In the exhortations to the one, the other is in every case either implicitly contained, or obviously supposed. Thus, in St. Peter's address at the beautiful gate of the temple, *Repent and be converted*, Baptism, the immediate object, is supposed; in that of Ananias to St. Paul, *Be baptized and wash away thy sins*, repentance, the preliminary step to accepting the benefit, had clearly gone before. And both having reference ultimately to our admission to the church of Christ, the one is, in fact, a direct exhortation to come in, the other, to lay aside every impediment to our entrance.

In this view of the subject, so far is the variety of address adopted on different occasions by the Apostle from throwing any doubt upon the propriety of the interpretation of his words, for which I have contended in the particular case before us, that it does in fact in no degree affect it; and the question raised in the objection, whe-

ther it be more agreeable to reason and Scripture, to attribute to repentance or to Baptism the promises contained in the text, may perhaps appear to be in truth a question, whether the prize in the race is to be considered as obtained by reaching the goal, or by running so as to reach it ; or whether a child is rewarded for knowing and saying his lesson, having learnt it ; or for so learning, that he knows, and is ready to say it. At all events it is clear, that in whatever degree the repentance called for may conduce to the attainment of the benefits in question, they are altogether unattainable, but through the medium of that sacrament, upon our participation in which our claim to the privileges of the Christian church is ultimately founded.

It will doubtless have been observed, that I have, throughout this discussion, considered the repentance called for by St. Peter as special, and referring rather to the change of mind and views as to the authority of particular religions, which must precede the adoption of a new mode of faith, than to that moral change, that turning from sin to

holiness of life, to which, from the circumstances of our own more immediate situation, it is usually referred.

We are so much, I may almost say so exclusively, accustomed to the latter signification, that we are apt to overlook this its earlier and more appropriate use by the first preachers of Christianity. Exhortations to repent indeed, though founded in all cases on the same leading idea of a change in the mind, as constituting the essence of repentance, will of necessity vary in their meaning as applied to persons in different situations, and requiring a different change. The distinction, in this respect, between proselytes and professed Christians is obvious. As applied to the former, repentance would seem to consist in the simple act of turning in heart and affections from the old to the new religion ; as applied to the latter, it is clearly a growing grace, an improving habit ; one which we must constantly labour to perfect, and in the advancement of which we must be employed to our dying day. But even in reference to proselytes to the religion, the

repentance called for will vary with the diversity of obstacles, which the particular situation or character of individuals may oppose to the reception of the truth. In some, dissoluteness of life, in some, pride, in some, indifference, will be the impediment to be surmounted; and with respect to which a change must take place in the mind of the convert. And in almost all, as more especially in the case before us, attachment to a previous system will exert a commanding and hostile influence. The particular meaning therefore of that exhortation to repentance, which is addressed to all, the particular point in which change is called for, must in every case be determined by the peculiar circumstances of the parties, and their situation in reference to the object in view.

Now the attribution of the special meaning we have given to the exhortation, in the two texts we have been considering, is supported by the following reasons deduced from the circumstances and situation of the parties. First, that it is not naturally to be supposed, that a single exhortation of

the Apostle, though enforced with the authority of the most convincing miracles, could suddenly have produced that moral change of mind and heart, implied in the idea of repentance, in its most comprehensive sense.

Secondly, that to suppose such an effect to have been produced by the immediate operation of the Spirit would be a gratuitous assumption; and therefore, though the possibility of such an exertion of divine power be not denied, not to be taken for granted unnecessarily.

Thirdly, that to the restricted meaning, for which we contend, alone, does the whole tenor of the Apostle's address in both instances lead us. Neither in the previous discourse of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, nor in his address to the people after the cure of the impotent man at the temple, is to be found any direct and proper reference to repentance from sin, as such, or to the evil consequences of persevering in it. In the Epistles of the same Apostle, which is well worthy of remark, addressed to those who had already *tasted of the hea-*

venly gift, and embraced the word of life ; he is large, (almost, I should say, to the exclusion of any other topic,) on the importance of holiness of life, and conduct corresponding to their Christian profession. In the one, the burden of his exhortation is, that having been *born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible*, they should *purify their souls in obeying the truth, and lay aside all malice, guile, hypocrisies, and evil speakings^f*; in the other, that *having all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue*, they should *neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ^g*. But in the discourses before us this great topic of Christian exhortation is hardly touched upon^h; the points he is there arguing are, that *God had made*

^f 1 Peter i. 22, 23. ii. 1.

^g 2 Peter i. 3. 8.

^h The only apparent allusion to it is in the last verse of chap. iii. where he tells them, that “unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” Acts iii. 26.

*that same Jesus whom they had crucified both Lord and Christⁱ, that the things which God before had shewn by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he had so fulfilled^k. And these assertions being directly contrary, both to the prejudices of his hearers, and to the comments they were in the habit of receiving from the doctors of their law, it was with reference to these that he calls for change; for repentance and conversion; exhorting them to *save themselves from that untoward generation^l*, in whose fellowship and communion they had hitherto walked, and join themselves to the new family of God, and the church of the firstborn.*

And the objections which have been raised to our original interpretation of the passage being thus removed, we may safely adopt the conclusions to which it plainly leads us; and from it assert, as unquestionable benefits of Christian Baptism, the remission of sin, already deduced from the very nature of the observance, and the

ⁱ Acts ii. 36.

^k Acts iii. 18.

^l Acts ii. 40.

words of institution ; and the gift of the Holy Ghost, already inferred from the fundamental principles of the religion, of which the ordinance itself forms a part.

The next important passage bearing upon our inquiry is to be found in the eighth chapter ; in which the gift of the Holy Ghost, which we have been endeavouring to connect with the rite of Baptism, is apparently declared to be wholly independent of it. It is indeed, as it appears to me, the passage, from which the conjunction of the Holy Ghost with Baptism may be most plausibly controverted. It occurs in the narrative of the visitation of the new made converts in Samaria by Peter and John, under the direction of the Apostles at Jerusalem ; when they laid hands on those who had already received the word and been baptized ; and *prayed that they might receive the Holy Ghost : for as yet*, adds the historian, and it is to these words that our attention is attracted, *he had fallen upon none of them ; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus* ^m.

^m Acts viii. 14, 15, 16.

But, if I mistake not, there is here no reference to the ordinary gift of the Spirit ; for which alone we contend, as connected with Baptism. For it plainly appears by what follows, that the *falling of the holy Spirit upon them* here spoken of, refers to that visible and sensible manifestation of the gift, with which it pleased God to give evidence of his being with the first promulgators of his religion ; and which had not yet been exhibited to the Samaritan converts. That it was a visible effusion of the Spirit, which was here granted, is evident from the effect produced on Simon Magus, when he *saw*ⁿ it. But to deny that the Holy Ghost had been given to the converts at their Baptism, because he was not on that occasion thus given, would lead to a denial of his ever being given in any other than this extraordinary manner ; and hence to a denial of all spiritual influence since the apostolic times, or indeed in the absence of the Apostles themselves.

The fact seems to be, that this visible

ⁿ Acts viii. 18.

manifestation of God's favour to these early converts in Samaria, was in exact harmony with the first miraculous effusion on the day of Pentecost. No one, who has read in the Gospel of St. John, that the blessed Jesus, in giving his Apostles their great commission, *breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost*^o, can for a moment suppose that they were without the enjoyment of the benefit, thus apparently conveyed to them, till the outward manifestation of God's presence with them was made, in the first visible descent of the Spirit, subsequent to our Lord's exaltation. They were indeed to suspend the exercise of their apostolic function, they were not to make disciples, they were neither to preach nor to baptize, till *endued with power from on high*; till the promise of the Father should be sensibly confirmed to them, in a manner analogous to that, by which the mission of the Son himself had been ratified at his baptism by John; which should satisfy them, that *they were sent as he was*

^o John xx. 22.

sent^p; and which should carry to those also, to whom they were to preach, the evidence that God was with them. Nor did they do so. Yet it is observable, that one very important act they in the mean time did, which we cannot suppose to have been done without the concurrence of that Spirit, who was promised to be their *guide into all truth*. I allude to the nomination of a successor to Judas Iscariot; in which, upon any interpretation of the gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, which would suppose that till then the Apostles were without his assistance and direction, they would appear to have acted in defiance of their Lord's instructions: but in which, according to the view now suggested, there will be no real anomaly.

The visible demonstration of the Spirit, in its first exhibition on the day of Pentecost, corresponded to its subsequent manifestations. It was in every case an external evidence vouchsafed to the new converts, or to those in whose presence it took place.

That evidence may not always have been afforded for the same purposes, nay it clearly was not so. In the case of its descent upon the Apostles themselves, it was to them the seal of their apostleship; the signal from on high, which they had previously been instructed to look for, that from that time they were to enter on the execution of their office: and so they received it. Peter immediately, and then for the first time, preaching Christ Jesus to the assembled multitude. To the assembled multitude it was, what they had so often asked from the blessed Jesus himself, *a sign from heaven*⁹ of the Almighty's favour and presence with the apostles. In the case of Cornelius, upon which I shall say more presently, it was to Peter, when combined with the revelation already made to him, in the vision of clean and unclean meats, a sign and conclusive evidence, that the Gentiles also were to be admitted to the covenanted mercies of the Gospel. In the case of the Samaritan converts, and of others, who after Baptism re-

⁹ Luke xi. 16.

ceived a visible manifestation of the Spirit, at the prayer and with the imposition of the hands of the Apostles ; it would seem, that more than one important purpose was answered, and each, wholly independent of that gracious and ordinary gift of the Spirit, which we claim for Baptism itself.

It was for instance of the highest importance to the new converts to be assured, that those who had hitherto preached to them, (the fugitives from the persecution carrying on at Jerusalem,) were not insulated teachers, but indeed the members of an extended community, under the rule and guidance of persons, yet more highly favoured of God, than those from whom they had already received their admission to the church ; and that they also should have that external and sensible confirmation of the divine commission of the Apostles, which, they had probably been already taught, had been afforded to the first converts on the day of Pentecost.

It was a confirmation to them of the promises made, and the doctrines promulgated to them by their first teachers.

It was further probably of the highest importance towards the maintenance of a due subordination in the church itself, that its superior rulers should be able, in its early establishment, and that with visible demonstration of God's agency by them, to effect that for the converts, which the inferior teachers could not pretend to. And a tendency to similar, though we pretend not to equal effects, may be observed in the apostolic rite of confirmation, as it is still administered in the church.

Now with these views of the purposes, for which the visible and extraordinary effusion of the Spirit was vouchsafed to the primitive Christians, the annexation of the ordinary gift to Baptism in no way interferes: and the gift of the Spirit spoken of in the text, being manifestly that visible and extraordinary effusion peculiar to the apostolic times and apparently vouchsafed in the presence of the Apostles only, we cannot conclude, that, because in their absence the Holy Ghost had not been thus given, the converts had not received his gracious and ordinary influence in Baptism,

according to the promises in other passages annexed to the rite.

Were it the object of the present course to take a full view of the doctrine of the sacraments, the baptism of the eunuch by Philip would next present some important topics of discussion. But the necessity of compression forbids my doing more than to notice the valuable testimony borne in it to water Baptism ; and the confirmation it affords us of the fact, that no inference, in opposition to doctrines established upon other grounds, can safely be drawn from omissions on the record, in any particular instance, of particular points however apparently important. For if so, then was repentance not required of the eunuch, for it certainly is not mentioned. But it is undoubtedly implied, in the very act of acceptance of the new religion : nor was it possible for the eunuch to come to Baptism without that conviction of the truth, however produced, which in itself must include repentance, in its only applicable sense, when spoken of as an universal qualification for admission to the Christian church. The

passage too, I cannot but add, strongly confirms the general importance of Baptism itself, and of the results to be anticipated from it; it being inconceivable, that the eunuch should have expressed the anxiety he does to be baptized, but for the stress which had been laid upon it by Philip, or for the deductions of his own mind from Philip's preaching.

We come now to a very important transaction, the Baptism of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, twice narrated in the Acts; once by Luke in his character of historian^r, and once by St. Paul himself in his speech to the Jewish people at Jerusalem^s.

It is valuable to us on many accounts: first, as the consideration of the circumstances, under which St. Paul was baptized at all, strengthens our opinion of the indispensable necessity of Baptism, and confirms the general presumption, that some important benefit is annexed to its administration; and secondly, as it distinctly recognizes two of the benefits to which we have already laid claim as conferred in the rite.

^r Acts ix. 3—18.

^s Acts xxii. 6—16.

If in any case Baptism could have been dispensed with, it would seem to have been in that of St. Paul. Brought to repentance and converted, by a remarkable miracle, and the direct interposition of the Almighty, declared to be a vessel chosen of God himself, having received his knowledge of the Gospel he was to teach, by revelation, and not by the teaching of others^t, he might seem to be already *no whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles*^u themselves, to be nothing wanting in the fulness of his Christian calling, and to have little needed that formal initiation, by which less favoured persons received their admission to the holy society, of which he was already destined to be so eminent a support. But we find the fact to be otherwise. He could not, it appears, though in other respects fully enlightened from above, legitimately preach Christ, till he was himself a member of Christ's body; and even he could no otherwise become a member, and be partaker of the advantages accruing from that

^t Gal. i. 11, 12. Ephes. iii. 3.

^u 2 Cor. xi. 5.

relationship, than through the medium of that Baptism, which the head of the body had instituted.

The value of the passage before us, is not however confined to the testimony it bears to the general importance and necessity of Baptism. So far indeed as we have hitherto considered it, that necessity may seem to have reference rather to the inviolability of the constitution of the Christian church, than to the provision made in it to meet the exigences of the individual members of the body. But the whole account of the transaction, as delivered both by St. Paul himself and his historian, leads us further, to a distinct recognition of the actual benefits conveyed in it to individuals. If from the general narrative we are justified in inferring its necessity, as the rite of introduction to the Christian church; from the speech of Paul himself to the people at Jerusalem, we fairly deduce the fact, that it is at least the instrumental means by which a freedom from the impurity of sin is conveyed to the believer. St. Paul tells us, that the words of Ananias to him were,

Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord^x. And from the account given by St. Luke we may fairly infer, that the gift of the Holy Ghost was to be an accompanying benefit. For Ananias, having declared the purport of his coming to him as twofold^y; first, that he should receive his sight; and secondly, that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost; we find immediately that there fell from his eyes scales, and that he was baptized^z; the one, the outward sign of the miraculous restoration of his powers of seeing; the other, as it would appear, the well understood and acknowledged pledge and assurance of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The last passage in the Acts of the Apostles, to which I shall specially refer you, is the account of the baptism of Cornelius; a transaction contributing not a little to the support of our previous conclusions in two particulars; first, in reference to the importance and indispensability of the rite itself; and secondly, in respect to the true

^x Acts xxii. 16.

^y Acts ix. 17.

^z Acts ix. 18.

notion of that extraordinary and visible effusion of the Holy Ghost, which characterized the apostolic era.

On these two points the language of St. Peter, after the descent of the Holy Ghost on Cornelius and his friends, seems conclusive. If the miraculous effusion of the Spirit conveyed to him on whom it fell the full benefits of the Christian profession, what need of any thing further? If Baptism conferred no additional benefit, why should it be, as it appears to have been, on such an occasion, first in the thoughts of the Apostle? Why does he so immediately seize upon this divine testimony to the faith of Cornelius, as a convincing and conclusive argument for the Baptism of these Gentile converts? Had not Baptism by water been by him deemed essential to the Christian proselyte, would he not rather have at once congratulated Cornelius and his friends on their visible aggregation to the number of the faithful? And is not his not doing so a sufficient proof, that the object of this extraordinary manifestation of the Spirit was distinct from and independent of that,

which we assign to its ordinary operations? It was an irresistible testimony of God's approbation of what was going on, and as such was immediately recognized by St. Peter: but, while we have the authority of an Apostle for the *diversity of the operations* of the Spirit, we can see no reason, as there is clearly no necessity, to suppose, that the one interferes with the other, that the extraordinary supersede the necessity, or even neutralize the effect of his ordinary influences. If indeed a spiritual washing away of sin be, as we have contended, one proper grace of Baptism, we can well understand the importance of that rite, even to those who had already received the external testimony of the Holy Ghost. But were we still unable, from any thing that had occurred in our previous inquiry, to assign to Baptism its peculiar and distinguishing graces; we should nevertheless be entitled, from the narrative before us, considered in itself, to assert, that some great benefit was inseparable from, and unattainable without it; since but for this, the anxiety of St. Peter, that these Gentile converts, who had re-

ceived the Holy Ghost, should be baptized, would be unexplained and inexplicable.

But, further, we learn from St. Peter's own defence of his conduct on this occasion to his brethren at Jerusalem, that it was this testimony of the gift of the Holy Ghost, conferred upon the Gentiles, as it had been originally upon the Apostles themselves, that swayed his mind, and convinced him, that the will of God was, that between them and the Gentiles there should no longer be any division. And therefore it seems he baptized them. Why? Why, but because without Baptism a division would still have existed, the Gentiles would not without it have been admitted to the Christian fellowship of the Apostles and believing Jews: Baptism was the sign and the pledge, the occasion and the moment of admission into the Christian society, and to the benefits attending that admission.

These are the principal passages in the Acts of the Apostles, to which, as bearing on the subject of inquiry, the limits prescribed to our undertaking permit me to refer. Some others, did the time allow, might

be noticed, as adding a collateral testimony to the conclusions already arrived at, or confirming indirectly some points of doctrine, assumed or insisted upon, in our previous inquiry. But upon these I forbear to dwell. The object of this discourse, and of the selection of texts made in it, has been attained, if, on the one hand, the general expectation of benefits appropriate to Baptism has been strengthened, by the obvious tenor of the passages brought under examination; and if, on the other, our particular conclusions have been confirmed, as we trust they have been, by the distinct and specific assignment, in the cases referred to, of the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, as the ordinary concomitants, or immediate result of a participation in the rite. The further prosecution of our inquiry into the language of the New Testament upon the subject must be postponed till next we meet, when I shall proceed to an examination of the apostolical Epistles.

LECTURE IV.

1 COR. vi. 11.

But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

THE passages in the apostolical Epistles which will come under examination in the present Lecture, may, like those we have already considered in the Acts of the Apostles, be distributed into two classes; the one, comprehending those texts from which the annexation of distinct and specific benefits to Christian Baptism may be deduced, and our more particular inferences from the nature of the rite and the words of institution strengthened; the other, comprising those from which the annexation of some benefit to the appointment may be anticipated, and our more general inferences from the character of external observances, both in nature and revelation, confirmed.

The number of passages to be considered, is not however so great, as to make such an actual distribution necessary to facilitate their examination ; nor need any confusion be apprehended from taking them as they occur in each Epistle : though, for the sake of some obvious advantages accruing from an observance of the chronological order of their composition, I shall consider the Epistles of St. Paul in the order assigned to them by bishop Pearson ^a.

According to this arrangement, the first passage which occurs bearing very directly upon the benefits annexed to Baptism, is that which I have chosen for my text, from the first Epistle to the Corinthians. It is, independently of the interest it derives from its early occurrence, one of the most important in the New Testament. In it St. Paul, while remonstrating with those to whom he is writing, on the perpetration of certain offences, which, if persevered in, will, he says, exclude them from the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven ^b, presses

^a In his *Annales Paulini*.

^b 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

upon them, as an inducement to a contrary practice, the consideration that they had been *washed, sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God^c*.

I proceed therefore, in the first place, to assign my reasons for maintaining, that the washing here spoken of is the washing of Christian Baptism; and secondly, to point out the important confirmation, on that supposition afforded by the text to our former inferences.

Now had St. Paul, in the discourse which introduces the passage, been adverting to the moral impurity contracted by the commission of the sins enumerated in the preceding verses, it might have been a fair inference, that in the washing mentioned in the text, he alluded generally to the removal of that impurity, which the abandonment of the sins, by which it was contracted, would in the ordinary use of language imply. But the point of view, in which he has been considering the offences in ques-

^c 1 Cor. vi. 11.

tion, has not been in reference to the defilement of the man here, but to his exclusion from the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven hereafter; from the final benefit, in another world, of his Christian profession upon earth. *Know ye not, he says, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God*^d. The direct and natural method of pursuing his exhortation here, following up the metaphor he had already adopted, would have been, “but to that inheritance you have a claim, do not therefore forfeit it.” And this is the implied conclusion, and that to which the passage, as it now stands, carries us, if we interpret the washing mentioned in the text of Baptism; in which, as the rite of admission to the Christian church, is given the claim to that inheritance, against the

^d 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

loss of which the Apostle is here cautioning his readers. This interpretation, therefore, so far falls in with the argument of the Apostle. But again, this washing itself is either literal or figurative. If it be taken literally, we know of no washing of Christian converts, to which St. Paul can allude, but that in the waters of Baptism: if taken in a figurative sense, we in like manner know of no other figurative washing, as applied to believers, but that which spiritually accompanies the same material washing. In that indeed we have already found by the example of St. Paul himself, that sins are washed away^c: and we are to remember, that in point of fact, those to whom he writes had been baptized.

This being then the most natural and obvious sense of the word in the passage before us, let us consider its suitableness in other respects to the particular place in which we find it; how far it is in agreement with the other assertions of the text. Now we find in close connection with the

^c Acts xxii. 16.

washing spoken of, both sanctification and justification; and this washing, sanctification and justification are, either severally or collectively, said to have been effected, *in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Here the real difficulty is, to separate what are so obviously joined together. Let us however make the attempt; and omitting for the present all notice of the *washing* spoken of in the text, let us consider, in what sense we may be said to have been *sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Sanctification may, scripturally, be put for one of two things; either for that separation from common use or common life, by which either men or things may, we know, be dedicated to the more especial service of God; or, for that operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart of man, by which believers are inwardly strengthened and supported in the discharge of their duty, drawn off from the service of sin, and protected from the influence of the contrary spirit of evil. As applied in the first sense, we might be

sanctified *in the name of the Lord Jesus* by an external dedication to him ; as applied in the second, we should be more directly said to be *sanctified by the Spirit of our God*. Nothing here, be it remembered, would seem to prevent, what the general tenor of Scripture certainly admits as possible, the union of the two, so that the external and internal sanctification should go together.

In like manner we may scripturally be said to be justified, or counted righteous, or as free from sin ; either, because we are placed in a situation in which the penalties of sin will not be exacted, on account of something exterior to ourselves of which we are allowed the benefit, as in the case of a free pardon ; or because such a change is internally produced in us, as enables us to take the benefit of a pardon, conditional, we will suppose, on our personal acknowledgment of the justice of the sentence before impending over us. The first of these, in reference to sin, might be the consequence of our admission into external covenant with God ; and we might, in that sense, be *justified in the name of the Lord Jesus* : the

second might be the result of the spiritual influence, operating on the heart, by which we were enabled to lay hold of the benefit; and in that sense, we might not improperly be said to be *justified by the Spirit of our God*. And these two senses of justification, might, as we before observed of sanctification, without contradiction meet in the same person.

Now the first and most obvious sense of washing, as applied to Christian converts, being the material washing of Baptism, the question is, whether there is any thing in the two notions of sanctification and justification, here found in close connection with washing, or in the circumstances predicated of them, collectively or severally, namely, of their being effected *in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*, that should prevent our referring the passage in which they thus stand connected to Christian Baptism; whether such an union of the three would be hostile to our former conclusions with respect to that sacrament, or in agreement with them.

I think the latter; and for the following

reasons. First, because we have already deduced from the words of institution, the fact of a spiritual purification taking place in it; which spiritual purification, so far as it respects the cleansing operation of the Spirit on the heart of the believer, corresponds with one of the notions of sanctification. In like manner, we have found salvation attached to the rite by our Lord himself in its original appointment, and so much of this as consists in the remission of sin, the pardon of the sinner, or the being put in the situation of pardoned sinners, corresponds with one of the notions of justification.

Again, that the washing of Baptism has a discriminating effect, that by it the believers in Christ are distinguished and separated from the rest of the world, and more immediately dedicated to God, can only be questioned by denying, either the peculiarity of that society which is in the New Testament so constantly opposed to the world, or the fact, that Baptism is the rite of admission into that society. But considered in this point of view, it clearly

sanctifies in the other sense of sanctification.

Further, if the Holy Ghost be the agent, by whom such an effect is produced in our minds, as enables us to lay hold upon and secure the pardon freely offered us in the Gospel; and if the Holy Ghost be, as we trust has been already satisfactorily shewn, given in or with Baptism by water, then have we every reason to consider the justification mentioned by St. Paul in the passage before us, to be, when taken in its second sense no less than in its first, the concomitant of Baptism.

It seems idle, therefore, to separate what, as the words stand, are naturally joined together: and the whole passage may fairly be taken, as affording a very valuable confirmation of the chief inferences already deduced, in favour of the annexation of specific and important benefits to Christian Baptism. Indeed the language of St. Paul, in this his first marked allusion to that sacrament, corresponds in a very observable manner with that of St. Peter, in his first exhortation to the assembled multitude on

the day of Pentecost : *Repent and be baptized*, says St. Peter^f, (i. e. in the language of St. Paul, *be washed*,) *every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins*, (in the language of St. Paul, *that you may be justified*,) *and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*, (or in the words of St. Paul, *be sanctified*.)

And this interpretation of the washing here spoken of, it must be again observed, exactly adapts itself to the argument of the Apostle. For Baptism, being the introduction into the Christian society, does, in that sense, give a claim to the *inheritance of the kingdom of God*; and hence he may well forewarn those, who have been *washed, sanctified, and justified*, not to forfeit, as they may do, their *inheritance*.

With so much of the inference drawn from the preceding passage, as relates to the connection between the gift of the holy Spirit and the washing of Baptism, the language of St. Paul in the next passage to be considered very exactly harmonizes. In the

^f Acts ii. 38.

thirteenth verse of the twelfth chapter of this Epistle, he asserts, that *by one Spirit we have been baptized into one body*^g. An attempt has indeed been made, to infer from this text a Baptism of the Spirit, distinct from and independent of Baptism by water. But a Baptism by water being admitted at all, the supposition of a Baptism by the Spirit independent of this, would be inconsistent with the stress laid by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians^h, on the oneness of Baptism in the Christian church, as a motive to unity between Jew and Gentile in it. For his argument in that Epistle would be destitute of all force, if the external and the internal Baptism were not identical in time, or concomitant in operation; if the Jew might have received the former, the Gentile the latter Baptism; the one, a Baptism of water only, the other, a Baptism of the Spirit.

The truth is, that St. Paul's position in the passage more immediately before us, is not exactly what it may appear to be, when the words are taken as above, alone, and

^g 1 Cor. xii. 13.

^h Ephes. iv. 5.

without reference to the context. His assertion in point of fact respects, not the spiritual character of Christian Baptism in opposition to a material Baptism, but the mode in which that Baptism becomes a Baptism into one body, namely, by the operation of one Spirit. It is upon the unity of the body, into which we are baptized, as the result of the oneness of the Spirit, by which the effect of Baptism is produced, that he is discoursing. And what renders the testimony thus borne to the concomitancy of the gift of the Spirit with Baptism, peculiarly valuable to our purpose is, that it occurs in the course of a discussion, not upon Baptism, but upon the operations of the Spirit ; which, it seems, would have been incomplete without some reference to its agency in the sacraments.

Towards the close of this Epistle a passage occurs, which has much perplexed the commentators on the New Testament. I allude to St. Paul's mention of certain persons as having been *baptized for the dead*ⁱ. Into the particular meaning of the expres-

ⁱ 1 Cor. xv. 29.

sion, I do not inquire ; but from the manner in which the practice is alluded to, I do feel entitled to contend, that some important benefit, and that, intimately connected with our hopes of eternal life, was in the earliest and purest age of the church, and by the admission of St. Paul, looked for from Baptism. It might indeed, from the line of argument pursued by the Apostle, be not improbably conjectured, that that benefit consisted in the implanting of the seed of a new life ; to which there is also an apparent allusion in the early part of St. Peter's first Epistle^k. For St. Paul's appeal to the Corinthians rests altogether on the necessity of the resurrection to give effect to the Baptism of which he speaks : he contends, that the resurrection must take place, unless that Baptism was vain and unprofitable ; a supposition which he obviously considers to be too absurd to need either comment or refutation. But whether or not this be admitted as a just description of the specific grace referred to by St. Paul on the occasion in question, as annexed to

^k 1 Pet. i. 23.

the observance; that some substantial benefit was anticipated from it, must, it would seem, be conceded to a fair consideration of his words.

In the next passage I shall quote, from the Epistle to the Galatians, a new and important result of Baptism is obtained: *Ye are all*, says St. Paul to those to whom he is writing, *the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ: for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*¹.

That in Baptism, therefore, we are made the children of God, and admitted to the privileges of that filiation, is the distinct and intelligible doctrine of St. Paul. It has indeed been endeavoured to refer this to faith alone. But the answer already given to a similar attempt to appropriate to repentance the promises made to Baptism, in St. Peter's address to the multitude on the day of Pentecost, will, it would appear, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to the present case also.

That without faith in Christ, the consequence or the motive of that repentance,

¹ Gal. iii. 26, 27.

by which they were led to abandon Judaism and idolatry for the religion of the Gospel, no adult person (and these it is whom St. Paul is addressing) would in those early ages of Christianity have been baptized in his name, is sufficiently evident. But that it is through Baptism, in which we *put on Christ*, that we actually become the *children of God*, appears not less clearly from the very form of words used, and the obvious construction of the sentence, in which it is asserted. The having been baptized is the reason assigned for our filiation. And the difficulties which have been raised, with respect to this the simplest interpretation of this and other passages, in which our being born to God in Baptism is asserted or implied, in truth have their origin, not in any serious doubt as to the construction of the places in question, but in some supposed inconsistency of its admission with other parts of Christian doctrine. The whole question respecting regeneration, has been of late so fully, and in the work of a learned prelate^m

^m Bishop Bethel, in his *General View of the doctrine of Regeneration in Baptism*. Rivingtons. 8vo. 1821. a

of the sister university, so satisfactorily discussed, that I have no wish to revive the controversy concerning it. I will only observe, in reference to the passage more immediately before us, that the whole reasoning in the latter part of the chapter in which the text occurs, and in the beginning of the next, turns upon the incontrovertible certainty of that filiation and adoption, of which those who embrace the religion of Jesus Christ receive the assurance ; without reference to the internal qualification, which may be necessary to reap the ultimate benefit of their adoption. The *putting on Christ*, in the passage before us, though apparently a cognate expression to that in the Epistle to the Ephesians, of *putting on the new man*ⁿ, has reference in reality to an entirely different view of the subject. In the

work, which, having been put forth when the storm of controversy on the subject was nearly blown over, has obtained perhaps less notice than it deserved ; but which cannot be too strongly recommended to those, who wish to obtain clear and just ideas upon the whole question, for the soundness of its statements, and the candour and ability with which they are enforced.

ⁿ Ephes. iv. 24.

Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul is insisting upon the necessity of a practical conformity to the holy precepts of the Gospel, as the proper consequence of our vocation in Christ. In the Epistle to the Galatians, he is urging the inconsistency of the profession of the Gospel with the opposite profession of Judaism. In the one, he is speaking of the federal effect of Baptism ; in the other, of its legitimate result, in the conduct of him who receives it.

And this view of St. Paul's argument and object here, derives strength from the whole tenor of this Epistle ; and especially from the course of his reasoning in the beginning of the fifth chapter ; where he asserts, that *Christ can profit nothing to him who is circumcised*^o ; not, you will observe, to him who is in other respects a bad Christian, that is supposed ; but to him who joins himself externally to a profession contrary to his Baptism. So, in the declaration immediately following, *Christ is become of none effect to you who seek justification by the*

^o Gal. v. 2.

law, ye are fallen from grace^p. Here, again, the fault expressed, is not in the internal failure, the badness of the man's life, but in the external falling off from the profession of the Gospel, implied in the recurrence to a mode of conciliating the divine favour, inconsistent with it.

The gift of the Holy Ghost in Baptism is yet further confirmed by the following passage in the second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians : *Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*^q.

Baptism is not indeed here expressly named; but if the following reasoning be correct, *the earnest of the Spirit* here mentioned, can have no other reference. It is

^p Gal. v. 4.

^q 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. Compare two corresponding passages, one in the same Epistle, the other in that to the Ephesians : *Now he, that hath wrought for us the same thing, is God; who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. v. 5. *In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, till the redemption of the purchased possession*, Ephes. i. 13, 14.

observed by the learned Dodwell, that the idea of the Holy Spirit, as an earnest, is taken from the Roman law; in which law, he adds, the earnest had always relation to some agreement entered into, of the fulfilment of which it was the pledge. But, what is more important to our present purpose, he further asserts, that an earnest strictly and properly refers to the time, in which we first enter into covenant. *Propria porro arrha temporis illius, quo primo fœdus inimus*^r. If therefore we enter into

^r Dodwell, Diss. Cypr. XIII. p. 443. I subjoin the whole passage, though Dodwell's object, as I have said, is rather different from mine. He is arguing, "omne
" hoc baptismi negotium pactum esse quoddam fidelium
" cum Deo;" concluding, "externa ea solemnia, quibus
" in societatem Christianorum politicam ascribimur, ea
" fœderis esse solemnia. Quis autem illud dubitet, bap-
" tismi esse proprium officium, ut per illum sacris Chri-
" stianorum initiemur, et in propriam ascribamur Christi-
" anorum societatem?" He then adds, by way of confirm-
ation of the *federal* character thus assigned to Bap-
tism; "Convenit præterea quod qui confertur in Chris-
" tianorum baptismo Spiritus," is ἀρραβὼν ("quæ et *ar-*
" *rha* scriptoribus Romanis) in Novo Testamento appel-
" latur. Erat enim in jure Romano *arrha* pactorum pro-
" pria, præcipue nuptialium.—Propria porro *arrha* est,
" temporis illius quo primo fœdus inimus. Inde sequi-

covenant with God in Baptism, it is then that the Holy Spirit, spoken of in the text, must be given. Dodwell indeed argues, from the certainty of the Holy Spirit's being given in Baptism, and from its being here denominated an *earnest*, that Baptism is a federal act. I have reversed his argument, assuming from the character of Baptism, as an initiatory rite, that which he wished to prove, to prove that which he assumed. But the premise in either case being admitted, the conclusion is equally certain.

Passing over some texts in the earlier part of the Epistle to the Romans, which in a more comprehensive survey of the doctrine of Baptism would demand our attention, we come in the sixth chapter to a passage, in which express mention is made of the sacrament, and results of the highest importance distinctly attributed to its administration.

“tur ut de alia Spiritus collatione, præterquam baptismati, nequeat intelligi.” *Dodwell, Diss. Cypr. XIII. §. 21. ut sup.* Dodwell's assumption here is all in our favour. He clearly thought, that as to the fact of the collation of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, there could be no doubt.

How, says the Apostle, shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized unto 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. For if we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection^s.

The value of this passage, in reference to our immediate inquiry, consists in the clear testimony it bears to the fact, that in Baptism are communicated to us the benefits of Christ's death. The occasion of its introduction by St. Paul is indeed essentially practical; and the use he makes of the doctrine asserted in it, is to enforce the cultivation of Christian purity and holiness of life, as alone consistent with our Christian profession.

But then the whole of his reasoning, in the chapter before us, and the very argu-

^s Rom. vi. 2—5.

ment by which he endeavours to evince the necessity of a practice consonant to our profession, proceed upon the supposition, that we have been admitted to its benefits; and this admission he directly asserts to have taken place in Baptism.

He argues thus. Death was the acknowledged penalty of sin. Christ, by dying for us in his human nature, paid it. By being baptized unto him, we are buried with him; or, in other words, baptized into his death; and the benefit of his death, already undergone for all men, is conveyed to us individually. We are, in consequence of that Baptism, considered as having ourselves died, and as having thereby paid the penalty of sin. Therefore we are now freed from it. *For he that is dead*, (or rather, perhaps, has died,) *is freed* (or more intelligibly, perhaps, and more literally, is justified) *from sin*^t. But the main object of the dispensation is unattained, if we, who have been thus buried, as it were, with Christ, and justified by being made partakers in

^t Rom. vi. 7.

the benefits of his death, continue in, or return to, the practice of wickedness. For our mystical liberation from our state of bondage to sin was intended to work a moral effect; which effect is frustrated, if we do not walk in newness of life, following him in the likeness of his resurrection, as we have in that of his death. The latter is indispensable to our deriving ultimate benefit from the former. To what purpose indeed should we be baptized for the attainment of a remission of previous sin, only to plunge into immoralities, not less fatal to our hopes of happiness, than those, from the effects of which we sought liberation in Baptism?

Now from this statement of the course of his argument, it is clear, that St. Paul *assumes the certainty* of the benefits resulting from Baptism. Upon this certainty, and upon the inconsistency of a life of vicious indulgence, as contradictory to the very purpose for which we were baptized, is his whole reasoning founded. But then this very assumption, on the part of St. Paul, would have been preposterous, could any

doubt of its legitimacy have been started by those to whom it was addressed; if it had not been, at the time in which he wrote, the received and current doctrine of the church of Christ. But this again being admitted, the confirmation of our inferences with respect to Baptism, to be derived from the use made of the doctrine in the Apostle's argument, is too obvious to need further illustration.

One remark however I cannot help making, by the way, upon the information conveyed to us in the chapter, from which the passage we have been considering, is taken.

The great obstacle, in the minds of many fair and well-intentioned persons, against allowing to Baptism the communication of the benefits, of which it is asserted to be the channel, seems to be the difficulty they have in conceiving, that those, to whom the gifts of grace have been once communicated, should ever forfeit their advantage, and ultimately fail in obtaining the great object, for which they were conceded to them. But whether arising from, and communicated in Baptism, or at any other time;

whether the gift of God accompanying his ordinance, or conferred by him independently of it ; still the doctrine of St. Paul, both in the chapter before us, and in other parts of this Epistle, plainly is, that those who have once possessed such advantages may forfeit them : that however and whenever we suppose the facts to take place, and whatever specific interpretation we may give to the language used to express them ; we may *have died*, and been *crucified with Christ*, we may have been united to him, as the branches of the vine to the parent stock ; and yet we may both lose the benefit of his death and crucifixion, and experience the fate of unfruitful branches, be hewn off, and cast into the fire.

One other text in the Epistle to the Romans I shall mention, from which it has been attempted to subvert the inference deduced from the passage already cited from the Epistle to the Galatians, that in Baptism we are made the children of God ; and hence to weaken the claim of spiritual benefits apparently appropriated to the ordinance. In the eighth chapter, St. Paul tells

us, that *as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*^u; to the apparent exclusion of all other claimants to that title. But in truth, our baptismal privileges are unaffected by this declaration of the Apostle; though it serves to point out the conditions, on which alone we can really and effectually enjoy them. They who are baptized receive *the first-fruits of the Spirit*^x, but whether they will be led by it, is another question. They may *resist*^y, they may *grieve*^z, they may *quench*^a it; they may *do it despite*^b. On the other hand, they may *stir it up*^c, they may *walk in*^d it, they may be *led by*^e it. In one case they will be disobedient sons, unworthy of the name; in the other, true and worthy children, deserving of their filiation, and the name they bear; and as such they will be treated now, and acknowledged hereafter, by their Almighty Father; as *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*^f. In such good and faith-

^u Rom. viii. 14.^x Rom. viii. 23.^y Acts vii. 51.^z Ephes. iv. 30.^a 1 Thess. v. 19.^b Heb. x. 29.^c 2 Tim. i. 6.^d Gal. v. 16.^e Rom. viii. 14. Gal. v. 18.^f Rom. viii. 17.

ful sons, *the Spirit of adoption*, given to them in their Baptism, *bears witness with their own Spirit, that they are indeed the children of God^s*, and produces in them a well-grounded confidence in their state of favour with him; confirms to them their right as such, and disposes them to its exercise, in crying to him from whom they derive it, *Abba, Father*. The passage is altogether practical and hortatory, and therefore not to be too nicely examined, with a view to the exposition of other than practical doctrine. And its plain intent in that view is, to enforce the necessity of holiness from our holy profession; and perhaps to warn us against a dependance upon our external admission to the privileges of the Gospel, without corresponding conduct: but then, it is to be observed, that this very caution supposes the reality of that on which the abuse is founded; the existence of privileges which may be abused.

The whole of St. Paul's argument in his Epistle to the Ephesians, and his method of

pursuing it, though I can but briefly allude to them, are highly illustrative of the view taken of the absolute excellency of the benefits annexed to Baptism. It is impossible to set higher than he does, in the three first chapters, the advantages which the Gentiles derived from their simple aggregation to the church of Christ; and, what is important to us, it is from this exhibition of their Christian privileges, that here, as elsewhere, he draws his chief arguments in favour of a holy life. The certainty of that *adoption* in Christ, to which they had been *predestinated*^h, the fact of their having been *sealed by the Holy Spirit which is the earnest of our inheritance*ⁱ, *unto the day of redemption*^k, of their having received *grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ*^l; the reality of the change they had already experienced from being the *children of wrath*^m, and *dead in sins*ⁿ, to a *new life in Christ*^o as *dear children*^p, from being *dark-*

^h Ephes. i. 5.ⁱ Ephes. i. 13, 14.^k Ephes. iv. 30.^l Ephes. iv. 7.^m Ephes. ii. 3.ⁿ Ephes. ii. 1, 5.^o Ephes. ii. 5.^p Ephes. v. 1.

ness, to being *light in the Lord*^q; these are the points which are presupposed as the very foundation of the apostolical exhortation throughout the Epistle. That they should henceforth live accordingly, that, abandoning their relation to Adam, and cherishing their new relationship with Christ, they should *put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*^r; this is the end and object of his appeal. In all this, though, except perhaps in reference to their being *sealed*, and having received *the earnest*, the allusion to Baptism is rather implied than expressed, the tenor of the Apostle's argument supposes the converts generally to have received those graces, which we have endeavoured from other sources of proof to shew are given in Baptism; and to that extent his argument must be considered as corroborative of our inferences.

But towards the close of the Epistle, a

^q Ephes. v. 8.

^r Ephes. iv. 22, 23, 24.

passage incidentally occurs, more directly bearing upon our particular inquiry. Exhorting husbands to *love their wives*, he proposes to them, as the pattern of their conduct, the example of Christ; who *also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*^s.

That St. Paul here alludes to Baptism, hardly admits of a doubt. The words of St. Austin clearly imply, that in his time none existed. He puts the question in the course of a discussion on another subject, *Quid est Baptismus Christi?* and gives as an unexceptionable answer, *Lavacrum aquæ in Verbo*; adding by way of comment, *Tolle aquam, non est Baptismus; tolle Verbum non est Baptismus*^t. And the allusion being ad-

^s Ephes. v. 25, 26.

^t St. Augustin's testimony will perhaps appear more decided, if the context, in which the above passage stands, be considered. The quotation given in the text occurs in a

mitted, the value of the passage, in reference to the inquiry in which we are engaged, arises from the clear testimony it affords to the efficacy of Baptism, in more than one essential point. That purification takes place in it, is plainly asserted; and looking at the words as they stand connected, sanctification appears no less plainly to be the concomitant, or the immediate consequence, of that purification.

discussion of the question, how it can be rightly said in John iv. that Jesus both baptized and did not baptize. To this St. Augustine replies, “ baptizabat, quia ipse
 “ mundabat; non baptizabat, quia ipse non tinguebat.
 “ Præbebant discipuli ministerium corporis, præbebat
 “ ille adjutorium majestatis.” After some remarks, not of importance, he goes on, “ Sed forte ait aliquis, bapti-
 “ zabat quidem Christus in Spiritu, non in corpore.
 “ Quasi vero alterius dono, quam illius, quisquam etiam
 “ sacramento corporalis et visibilis baptismatis imbuatur.
 “ Vis nôsse, quia ipse baptizat, non solum Spiritu, sed
 “ etiam aqua? Audi Apostolum: Sicut Christus, inquit,
 “ dilexit ecclesiam, et seipsum tradidit pro ea, mundans
 “ eam lavacro aquæ in Verbo, ut exhiberet ipse sibi glo-
 “ riosam ecclesiam, non habentem maculam aut rugam,
 “ aut aliquid hujusmodi. Mundans eam: unde? Lava-
 “ cro aquæ in Verbo. Quid est Baptismus Christi? La-
 “ vacerum aquæ in Verbo. Tolle aquam, non est Baptis-
 “ mus: tolle Verbum, non est Baptismus.” *Augustini Tractat. XV. in Johann. Evangel. §§. 3, 4. Op. Bened.*
vol. III. part. 2. col. 408.

These benefits, asserted in the text to be of so great importance, either in themselves, or in the further consequences to which they lead, that Jesus Christ is represented as having *given himself*, in order to secure them to his church, are, it seems, conveyed to the individual members of his body through the instrumentality of that Baptism, by which they are admitted to the church. And the importance of that Baptism is further manifested by its being introduced upon an occasion, in which, for every purpose of the Apostle's argument, the simple mention of Christ's having given himself for his church would seem to have sufficed; as it most undoubtedly would, had not the provision of an instrumental means of assuring us of the individual application to ourselves, of the benefits procured by the sacrifice of the Redeemer, supplied us with an accumulative evidence of that love, which it was the object of the Apostle to exalt to the utmost, as furnishing the standard, by which the most important of the domestic affections was henceforth to be measured; and the con-

duct of Christian husbands towards *the wives of their bosom*^u to be regulated.

Of the next passage claiming our attention, though, had it occurred in an earlier stage of our inquiry, it would have supplied abundant matter of discussion, my notice must of necessity be brief. In the second chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians, we have the following declaration of St. Paul to those to whom he is writing: *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, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses*^x.

The value of this passage, so far as regards the direct testimony borne in it, to

^u Deut. xiii. 6. xxviii. 54.

^x Coloss. ii. 10—13.

the annexation of benefits to Baptism, arises from the confirmation it gives to the fact previously ascertained from the Epistle to the Romans^y, that in Baptism are communicated to us the benefits of Christ's death; consisting, as appears from the context, in a liberation from sin, and a restoration to the hopes of eternal life. Whether indeed the latter verses should be directly connected with Baptism, as they are in our translation, in which the Greek words ἐν ᾧ being translated *wherein*, refer what follows to Baptism as its antecedent; or whether they might have been more fitly referred, as in the preceding verse 11. to Jesus Christ himself, may be doubted; but the point is not very important, the ultimate conclusion being in either case the same. In the one, Baptism will be directly asserted, to confer the principle of a new life, and the forgiveness of sins; in the other, we must infer, that these, being conferred upon us by our union with Christ, are given in Baptism, because in conformity with the declaration of

^y Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5. vid. sup.

St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians^z, it is in Baptism that our union with him is effected. Then it is that we *put on Christ*. Either of these conclusions would be in exact agreement with our inferences from other passages in the Epistles of the same Apostle.

The introduction of the mention of circumcision, as it occurs in this text, might lead us to a discussion by no means foreign to our inquiry, and to which we have been already invited by some other passages, which the necessity of compression has obliged me to leave unnoticed, as to the nature and results of the correspondence implied in it between circumcision and Baptism. The same necessity will however now confine me to a single observation, arising out of that relation. It is a distinguishing character of circumcision, that it is the seal of a covenant. And in this the correspondence between it and Baptism is obvious and undeniable. What I wish then to observe, in reference to this idea as ap-

^z Gal. iii. 26, 27.

plied to Baptism, is, that the true notion of a seal is that of an outward and material mark, or sign, of something inward and spiritual intended; namely, of the mental assent to, and ratification of the instrument to which it is affixed. In a beneficial contract, we may add, it is the visible pledge and security to the party receiving it, of the permanency and immutability of that goodwill, which the party conferring the benefit had at the time of executing the deed. And in this sense it is, that the outward part of the administration of Baptism becomes to us a pledge of all the benefits resulting from our reconciliation to God, declared and exhibited to us in the sacrament. Nor can we conceive the possibility of such a sign being established between God and man, without the simultaneous assurance and conviction, that it is given us as a pledge, on which we may rely with unbounded and unhesitating confidence, in the truth and goodness of Him, who granted it, for the fulfilment of the engagements to which it refers.

I pass on to the consideration of the only

two remaining passages in the Epistles, which from their importance call for more especial notice.

Of these, the first is the celebrated text in the Epistle to Titus: *When the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man was manifested, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but 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: that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life*^a.

The doctrine conveyed in these words of the Apostle, so exactly corresponds with what we have already inferred as to the benefits annexed to Baptism, that, upon the supposition of the washing spoken of in the text alluding to that sacrament, there is not perhaps a single passage in the New Testament, from which a stronger or more direct confirmation of our previous conclusions can be drawn. St. Paul here speaks of a renewal

^a Titus iii. 4—7.

of the Holy Ghost accompanying a washing of regeneration. Now we have found in various texts, both of the Acts and Epistles, already produced and examined, that the gift of the Holy Ghost is the constant attendant upon, or direct consequence of, Christian Baptism; that he is the agent, by whom the beneficial effects resulting from the administration of the appointed rite, are immediately conveyed, and rendered effectual to the disciple. We are further, and more particularly taught, in the Epistle to the Galatians^b, that in Baptism we *put on Christ*, and are thereby made *the children of God*; from whence it follows, that Christian Baptism is a Baptism of regeneration; the time and the occasion of our new birth to God, of our becoming his adopted sons, and joint heirs with the only begotten in the kingdom of his and our Father. Again, it is stated in the text, that by the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost there spoken of, we have been *saved*; an assertion corresponding with the like as-

^b Gal. iii. 26, 27.

surances conveyed by our Lord's declaration in the Gospel of St. Mark, with respect to Baptism, viz. that *he who believeth and is baptized shall be saved*^c. And lastly, the particular effects or concomitants of the salvation thus procured, the direct and immediate consequences assigned to the renewal of the Holy Ghost, either singly or in connection with the washing of regeneration, are, *that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life*. Now these again are consequences, namely, justification, and a title to the inheritance of life, which have been already shewn to be benefits attending on Christian Baptism.

This exact correspondence between the two, naturally leads us to interpret *the washing* mentioned in the text, of Christian Baptism; nor am I aware of a single passage in the New Testament, in which washing, in a religious sense, and as applied to believers, has any other meaning. We know, as has been already observed^d, of no literal

^c Mark xvi. 16.

^d Sup. rem. on 1 Cor. vi. 11.

washing of Christian converts, but that of Baptism.

Nor, till the controversy on regeneration arose, does it appear that this interpretation was ever questioned by any considerable or respectable portion of the Christian church. The Socinians indeed rejected it, and some of the Remonstrants, as Limborch^e and Episcopius^f; though not all of these, for Grotius^g interprets the passage of Baptism; but the Lutheran church^h, Calvinⁱ, and, I need not say, almost all the writers of our own church agree with Grotius.

It is indeed true, that Baptism, not being expressly mentioned, our conclusion from the correspondence observed, is, strictly speaking, only presumptive; and it will

^e Theolog. Christian. lib. V. cap. 66. §. xxvi. and cap. 67. §. vii.

^f Respons. ad Quæst. Theolog. lxiv. in resp. ad Quæst. xxxvii. Episcop. Op. vol. I. p. 35. b. edit. 1678.

^g Annotat. ad Tit. iii. 5.

^h Catechism. Min. in respons. ad Quæst. *Qui potest aqua tam magnas res efficere?* p. 331. lib. Symbol. Eccl. Evang. edit. Tittman. 8vo. 1817. Catechism. Maj. p. 468. ut sup.

ⁱ Instit. lib. IV. cap. 15. §. 2.

therefore be not unimportant to notice the confirmation it receives, from a consideration of the context, and the occasion of the introduction of the passage by St. Paul.

He is stating to Titus on what points it became him to be earnest in exhortation. To corroborate his own argument for the necessity of a holy life on the part of the professors of Christianity, he alludes to the great change which had taken place in their religious state, in consequence of their conversion to the faith of the Gospel ; and hints to Titus, that before the revelation of Jesus Christ, even themselves had been *foolish, disobedient, deceived, the servants of divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another*^k. But now they were in a different situation. They had embraced the salvation offered them, and had become Christians, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost. And the argument plainly is, that disobedience, and the service of divers lusts, would be inconsistent with their new

^k Titus iii. 3.

profession, and their change of state in reference to God. To interpret the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost, of that change only, which is internally effected in the heart, would render the passage inapplicable to St. Paul's argument. His language would then be, *Live a holy life, because your hearts are changed, and you now look with abhorrence on your former way of living*;—a very nugatory exhortation. Whereas, his real argument is, *You have been admitted to the privileges of the Gospel, your former sins have been washed away, you have been adopted into the family of God, and have received the earnest of the Spirit*;—*go on accordingly; be no more disobedient, maintain good works, submit yourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.* Let it not however be supposed, from my insisting upon this as the true intent of the passage in question, that I am desirous of raising a doubt as to the necessity of a change of heart, in turning from the service of the world to the service of God; what I contend

for is, that neither St. Paul, nor any reasonable person, would lay the foundation of an exhortation to holiness on the fact of *that change having taken place* : and that his exhortation implying that some great and beneficial change had been experienced by them, we can only refer his language to that change of state in reference to God, which takes place at our adoption to be his children in Baptism : a change, we may add, which had undoubtedly been undergone both by Titus and St. Paul himself.

We seem therefore justly entitled to claim from the passage in question, the confirmation of those previous views of the benefits annexed to the sacrament, which, in the absence of more direct proof, might have been safely derived from it alone. These are, as has been observed, the assurance of salvation, justification, of our being born again, and of our receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit in its administration. Upon these points its testimony is clear and distinct.

There remains but one passage directly referring to Baptism, to which upon the

present occasion I deem it necessary to call your attention. It is that, in which St. Peter, having incidentally alluded to the saving of Noah in the ark, by water, observes, that *the like figure to this, even Baptism, doth now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*¹.

After what has been already said, perhaps the chief value of this passage, in reference to that part of the doctrine of Baptism with which we are more immediately concerned, is its clear statement of the circumstances, under which the sacrament will be efficacious to its ultimate end—final salvation: viz. when accompanied by a good conscience towards God. This is indeed so strongly and unequivocally declared, that, but for the express allusion to water, and to our being *saved by water*, as corresponding to the saving of Noah, the same sort of question might here be raised, which we have had to meet elsewhere; as to whether

¹ 1 Peter iii. 21.

true Christian Baptism does not consist in *the answer of a good conscience*, or rather, perhaps, in the engagement to keep a good conscience towards God, and not in washing of water at all: more especially the words, *not the putting away the filth of the flesh*, being taken into consideration. But the mention of the salvation of Noah by water, as that to which the Baptism, which saves us, corresponds, is conclusive as to a material and water Baptism being intended by St. Peter: and the introduction of the answer of a good conscience is to be taken, rather as a caution against resting in the mere outward act, than as intended to derogate from the necessity of that act. Indeed it is clear, that the Baptism here spoken of, must be one, in which the filth of the flesh is removed; or the mistake, against which St. Peter's observation is directed, could never have existed. And Christian Baptism being one, the necessity of a good conscience towards God must be taken, not as superseding that washing, which may be considered as literally removing the filth of the flesh; but as con-

jointly with it making up that Baptism, which saveth us, who in it have, according to the similar expression in the Epistle to the Hebrews, *our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*^m.

Inasmuch then as the passage declares the necessity of a Baptism, not to be confined in its interpretation to a mere outward washing, it confirms our earliest inference from the very nature of the rite, and its adoption into a spiritual religion, that by it must be conveyed to them who rightly use it, a purification, not corporal but spiritual; i. e. from the defilement of sin. Inasmuch as it declares, that this Baptism *saveth us*, it falls in with the early declaration of our Lord, that *he, which believeth and is baptized, shall be saved*: the belief, in the one case, as the engagement to keep a good conscience, in the other, being the indispensable requisites to give effect to the outward washing with which they are conjoined:—the one as that, without which

^m Heb. x. 22.

the being baptized at all would be absurd ; the other, that, without which no ultimate benefit is held out to a participation in the ordinance.

I will add, that as in other passages we are said by Baptism to be made partakers of the benefits accruing from the death of Christ, so here we seem to have the more especial assurance of those, which spring from his resurrection. The one indeed follow from the other in the natural order insisted upon by St. Paul, where he says, that *Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*ⁿ; he died, i. e. to pay the penalty, he rose to plead the payment for the remission of our sins. The expression may have a twofold meaning, either that Baptism saves us, through the application of the benefit of Christ's resurrection, without which, we are taught, *our faith is vain*^o; or more precisely perhaps, in reference to the context and the doctrine of Baptism already set forth, it saves us, as it is itself figuratively a resur-

ⁿ Rom. iv. 25.

^o 1 Cor. xv. 14.

rection to a new life. And while the general tendency of the passage, as of the entire Epistle of which it forms a part, is to enforce on Christians the necessity of a life corresponding to the great privileges and benefits to which they have been admitted ; it plainly falls in, not only with the more particular declarations with respect to Baptism, to which we have already adverted, but with the whole system of mercy revealed to us in the Gospel ; of which it is one conspicuous feature, that in it the goodness of God appears, as providing beforehand, and admitting us at once to many benefits of the covenant of grace ; and calling upon us to qualify ourselves afterwards for the full enjoyment of its ulterior blessings, by our conduct subsequent to our admission to those early privileges.

The extent to which this discourse has already reached, forbids my insisting on any additional corroboration of our views, which might be obtained from the prosecution of our examination, in reference to some texts, indirectly bearing upon our inquiry, which I have hitherto omitted to notice. Nor is

it perhaps necessary. If those views appear, from what has been said, to be in themselves correct, and supported by a sufficient evidence, both direct and collateral ; it cannot be required of us, as it would be manifestly impossible, to adduce every circumstance of confirmation, by which their propriety might be illustrated.

And having so long trespassed on your time, in the examination of the Apostolical Epistles, I will defer to our next meeting the consideration of such passages in the Gospels, as may appear calculated to throw light upon the subject under investigation ; in full confidence that the result of an inquiry into the tendency of the anticipative allusions of our Lord and his forerunner to Baptism, will be found in agreement with the conclusions drawn from the sources of information already referred to.

LECTURE V.

MATT. iii. 11.

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.

FROM the consideration of the words and circumstances of institution, and from our review of those passages in the Acts and apostolical Epistles, in which the benefits of the instituted rite of Baptism are directly spoken of, or plainly alluded to, I now pass to the examination of some passages in the Gospels, in which the rite itself, or the benefits accruing from it, are referred to by our Lord himself, or his precursor, in the way of anticipation. And with the help of the results derived from our previous inquiry, I trust that any uncertainty, which might otherwise attach to the interpretation of such anticipative references, will be obviated, and that we shall thus be enabled to derive from the Word of Life himself, some

further confirmation of the views already taken of his institution.

The first passage in the Gospels, in which the Baptism of our Lord is spoken of, is that of my text; in which John the Baptist contrasts the Baptism of the Messiah with his own, in one very essential point; and a point bearing very directly upon the subject of inquiry in these Lectures. *I*, says he to the Pharisees and Sadducees who had come to his baptism, *baptize you with water, unto repentance; but he who cometh after me is mightier than I; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*^a.

A distinction between the Baptism of John the Baptist and that of Jesus Christ is here plainly intimated. The words are not merely a general expression on the part of John, of his own inferiority to him, who should come after him, but a specific declaration of one point of marked inferiority; namely, in the intention and efficacy of their respective baptisms. The one, that

^a Matthew iii. 11.

of John, was a baptism of preparation and repentance, an outward or symbolical representation of that spiritual or internal purification, which those who came to it confessed they needed, to prepare and fit them for the new life they were to lead, in the kingdom of God about to be established. But of itself, it conveyed no grace or benefit to the receiver; it was a manifestation, on his part, of a disposition of mind adapted to the reception of the doctrines of the Gospel; but it was not a pledge, on the part of God, of any promises to man: by it the Holy Ghost was not given, nor any new or extraordinary assistances afforded to the discharge of duty. This was reserved for the Baptism of the Messiah. He was to baptize with the Holy Ghost. His baptism was indeed, like that of John, to be a baptism of repentance; but it was to be more than that: it was to be a baptism of admission and initiation into a better covenant; into that kingdom, the approach of which John preached, and for which his baptism did but prepare the way.

Now were this the first, or the only information we possessed upon the subject, it would perhaps be difficult to infer with certainty from the passage before us, either the fact, that the Baptism of the Messiah was to be a true water Baptism; or, that such water Baptism was to be accompanied with the gift of the Holy Ghost. It might then with some plausibility be urged, that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, here spoken of, referred, either to that ordinary influence of the Spirit, which under the gracious dispensation of the Messiah should be shed upon the hearts of believers generally; or else, to that special and visible descent of the Holy Ghost, in which, by signs of fire accompanying it, God gave outward witness to the extraordinary effusion of his Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and on other occasions recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. And this interpretation would find support in the very form of words used by John the Baptist to enounce his doctrine; and which were, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, forcibly recalled to the memory of Peter, by the descent of

the Holy Ghost, on Cornelius and his household ; *I baptize with water, but he with the Holy Ghost and with fire.*

Such, we will allow, might have been our conclusion, antecedently to our knowledge of the actual institution of Baptism, and of the records of the sense in which it was understood and practised by the Apostles of our Lord. But such an interpretation of the words of the Baptist is inconsistent with the facts of the case. The Baptism actually established by the Messiah we know to be a material Baptism of water ; and we may therefore with confidence receive and make use of this declaration of John, as announcing by anticipation those effects of that Baptism, by which it was to be preeminently distinguished from his own : namely, by the efflux of the Spirit on those who received it. And the expression *with fire*, though not insignificant, when referred to the Pentecostal descent of the Spirit, may perhaps with greater probability be taken, as intended to exhibit more strongly the contrast between a Baptism which represented the good disposition

only of him who came to it, and one, which conveyed to him who partook of it inward and spiritual blessings: the one, being no more than a superficial, though symbolical, cleansing of the body; the other, through the agency of the Holy Spirit going with it, exerting a penetrating and searching influence on the heart.

It seems unnecessary to note the parallel texts in St. Mark and St. Luke; but a passage in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel should not be omitted; because unconnected with the instituted rite, it would seem perhaps, like the preceding, to anticipate, on the part of John the Baptist, a Baptism of the Holy Ghost consequent upon the advent of the Messiah, to the exclusion of water Baptism. The Baptist says, *He who sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost*^b. But to this passage the same observations apply, which

^b John i. 33.

were made upon the one just considered. The two Baptisms of our Lord and of his forerunner are indeed strongly contrasted, and without the knowledge of the instituted rite, the interpretation we now oppose would be at least as probable, as that for which we contend. But with the reality of the thing clearly set forth, anticipative allusions must be made to correspond; and therefore this, like the former passage, must in consistency be interpreted of that gift of the Holy Ghost, which has been already shewn to accompany the water Baptism established by Jesus Christ.

The other parts of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, contain, with the exception of the history of institution, no direct and undoubted reference to the benefits annexed to Baptism; though I am unwilling to pass over altogether a very probable conjecture of the learned Mede, with respect to our Lord's own Baptism by John, and which, if admitted, will corroborate in no small degree two important points of doctrine already asserted; namely, that in Baptism we receive the gift of

the Spirit, and are made the sons of God. He is arguing, that the Holy Spirit accompanies water Baptism ; which effect of Baptism, he says, “ was represented by that vision at our Saviour’s Baptism, of the Holy Ghost’s descending upon him, as he came out of the water, in the similitude of a dove : for I suppose,” he adds, “ that in that Baptism of his, the mystery of all our Baptisms was visibly acted : and that God says to every one truly baptized, as he said to him, (in a proportionable sense,) Thou art my son, in whom I am well pleased ^c.”

I do not however insist upon the certainty of this, any more than on an allusion, as it appears to me, to Baptism, in our Lord’s declaration to Peter, that *if he wash him not, he has no part in him*^d ; such re-

^c Mede, Disc. XVII. on Tit. iii. 5. p. 62. Op. edit. 1672. Erasmus has something of the same idea, in reference to the gift of the Holy Ghost in Baptism, in his paraphrase on Mark i. 10. “ Expressum est in Domino corporali typo, quid fiat spiritualiter in omnibus, qui sincerâ fide suscipiunt Baptismum Evangelicum. Corpus aquâ tinguitur, sed mens invisibili gratiâ perungitur.”

^d John xiii. 8.

ferences, however plausible, being unsafely alleged in support of doctrine: though they may afford a pleasing and not unjustifiable topic of religious meditation.

But in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel, a passage occurs of greater importance; not only as it bears upon the more immediate subject of these Lectures, but from its having been a fundamental text referred to in the controversy, which so long disturbed the church of England, concerning baptismal regeneration. To our more immediate consideration it presents itself, as a text, from which, should it be found to refer to Baptism, the confirmation of previous conclusions perhaps, rather than the suggestion of new benefits, is fairly to be expected, and to this I shall confine myself in the use I shall have occasion to make of it. It is the last insulated text, relating to Baptism, to which your attention will be called; and I confess that it has been no slight inducement to me to persevere in the order of inquiry with which we at first set out, that it does thus bring us to the investigation of this celebrated

passage, armed with all the more direct information which the rest of the New Testament is able to supply on the subject of inquiry. And as the Gospel in which it stands is acknowledged on all hands to have been, chronologically, among the latest, if not the very last, of the Scriptures promulgated; so, by deferring its consideration, we really come to its perusal, as those came for whom it was originally written: to whom the other parts of the New Testament and the general doctrines of revelation must have been familiar, when they received the words of inspiration from St. John.

The passage occurs in the memorable dialogue between our Lord and Nicodemus; and the particular expression, which attracts our attention in an inquiry into the effects and benefits of Baptism, is contained in our Lord's assertion, that *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*^e.

Now for the right understanding of

^e John iii. 5.

these words, we are of necessity carried back to the consideration of the narrative in which they occur, the connection in which they stand, and the occasion on which they were delivered.

It is, I think, sufficiently obvious, that something more than it fell in with the object of St. John to record, must have taken place between our Saviour and Nicodemus, previously to our Lord's uttering the words in question; and it seems from the context most probable, that the particular subject under discussion, or upon which Nicodemus had been seeking information, was, either the nature of the kingdom of heaven, the approach of which had already been announced both by our Lord and his forerunner, or the mode of admission, or the qualifications for admission into it. To these points, it is evident, that our Lord's declaration would seem, upon the face of it, to refer.

As to the nature of the kingdom itself, it may be observed, that the expression, *the kingdom of heaven*, was universally understood by the learned Jews, as signifying that

dispensation of things, which should follow the revelation of the Messiah : and the familiar use of the phrase for that purpose has been referred to the language of the prophet Daniel^f. It signifies little to our present inquiry, that the Jews, mostly, if not universally, mistook in understanding it of a visible establishment of a temporal government only ; because that error will in no way affect the question under consideration. We may however remark, that to a certain point their interpretation was a correct one ; namely, that the expression, both in Daniel and in the New Testament, does refer to the actual establishment of Messiah's kingdom : and that it is only inasmuch as the preaching of the Gospel was to be contemporary with, and to form a part of the administration of that kingdom, that the times of such preaching, and indeed the whole state of Christianity on earth, have received the same name, metonymically. The kingdom of heaven, under the personal rule of the Messiah, exalted to

^f Daniel ii. 44.

his mediatorial throne in his human nature, as the reward of his humiliation on earth, seems to have been established on the resurrection of our Lord ; when, and not before, *all power was given him*, as the Messiah, that is, the Son of man, *both in heaven and earth*^g; as his actual inauguration seems to have taken place upon his ascent into heaven. Till then the approach of the kingdom was preached ; and, both by the Baptist and our Saviour himself, was declared to be near at hand^h. Afterwards, those commissioned by him announced its actual establishment, and called upon Jew and Gentile to enter in and submit themselves to it. And this kingdom of the Messiah thus established, though for convenience it may, as respects two different periods of its existence, be considered as consisting of two parts, or regarded in a two-fold point of view, as militant on earth, or as triumphant in heaven, is never spoken of in Scripture but as one kingdom, extending

^g Matt. xxviii. 18.

^h Matt. iii. 2. iv. 17. x. 7. and the parallel passages of Mark and Luke.

from our Lord's exaltation to the final consummation, when he shall *deliver it up to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all*¹. And it is of consequence to note this, because some of the difficulties, which in later times have perplexed this subject, owe their origin to the confined view, which would limit the meaning of the expression to the future state of believers in heaven. But that no interpretation of the expression, which confines it to the state of glory only, can be admissible, is plain from this one simple consideration, that of a kingdom, not to begin at least upon earth, it could hardly, under any circumstances, have been predicated by either Jesus Christ or John the Baptist, that it was *at hand*; nor for such a kingdom could John be said to prepare the way, more properly, than the Apostles of our Lord, or their successors in the ministry, even to this day.

Of this kingdom therefore it cannot be doubted, that our Saviour, both in the passage before us, and on various other occa-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 24.

sions where the like expression occurs, spoke; and the point, about which Nicodemus seems to have been anxious, and upon which the information communicated by our Lord was calculated to afford him satisfaction, was clearly, the terms of admission into the kingdom: what manner of persons, how qualified, and by what means, were to obtain an entrance into it. For this anxiety, however intimated, it seems to have been, which must have led to the remarkable declaration of our Lord under consideration.

Now into the kingdom to be established by the Messiah, it was, if we may believe the most learned investigators of Jewish antiquities, the universal opinion of their doctors, that, as the children of Abraham, all natural born Jews would have a right and claim to admission. And the prevalence of this idea, at the time of which we are speaking, seems to be confirmed to us, by what John the Baptist says to those, to whom he is preaching the kingdom as nigh at hand. For he evidently warns them against some false notions, which they had, of their pri-

vileges as the children of Abraham. And though many such false notions no doubt existed among them, yet the particular one, which bore upon the matter of his address to them, and to which he must therefore be presumed more especially to allude, was this unfounded conceit of their claim, as the natural descendants of the father of the faithful, to an admission to that kingdom, which John came to announce.

John, indeed, beyond his disallowal of the claim, goes no further than to insist upon the necessity of that repentance, which was the main feature of his preaching, to prepare them for a future admission to the kingdom. He does not explain to them the qualifications actually required, in opposition to those on which they erroneously built; he does not even insist upon their receiving his own Baptism, as an indispensable preliminary to their admission. His words, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand*^k, are obviously contrasted with those of St. Peter, after another and a dif-

^k Matt. iii. 2.

ferent Baptism had been appointed, as the rite of admission into the kingdom already established, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*¹. It is only with regard to any claim of his Jewish hearers, as the sons of Abraham, to the future kingdom, that John is precise; asserting the power of God, to raise up children unto Abraham from the very stones on which they trod^m; and hence inferring the groundlessness of their expectations.

But his very denial of the claim proves that it existed in the minds of those whom he addressed; and the supposition, that some such view of the privileges of their natural birth, as the Baptist here controverts, had been urged by Nicodemus in his discourse with our Saviour, seems to be the most natural way of accounting for our Lord's first declaration, that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*ⁿ. For as the suggestion of the Phari-

¹ Acts ii. 38.

^m Matt. iii. 9.

ⁿ John iii. 3. I adhere to the translation in the text,

sees, that, being already the sons of Abraham, they needed nothing further to qualify them for the approaching kingdom, drew from John the Baptist his memorable declaration of the inefficiency of that filiation on which they relied ; so a like suggestion, on the part of Nicodemus, seems to have drawn from our Lord, not a mere negation of the supposed efficacy of their natural birth, but an assertion of what was really essential to their admission to the kingdom. For the attainment of that blessing, our Saviour tells Nicodemus, that their natural birth, by descent from Abraham, was insufficient ; because, *unless born again, they could not see the kingdom of God.*

At this assertion Nicodemus was not a little surprised ; and expresses his astonishment in a manner, which leads our Lord to repeat and illustrate what he had before

in preference to that in the margin of our Bibles, because it more immediately connects itself with Nicodemus's difficulty as to a man's being born again from his mother's womb. For though, to be born *from above*, in one already enjoying life, would carry with it the general idea of a *second* birth, yet it does not appear how it would imply a *second birth from the womb.*

said, of the necessity of a new, or second birth.

And here I cannot but observe, that the method frequently resorted to, to account for Nicodemus's dulness of apprehension with respect to these words of our Saviour, appears to me to be wholly inadequate. It is very commonly assumed, that it was not the idea of the new birth itself, but of the necessity of that new birth to the Israelites, to those who were already of the family of God, that alone staggered him. But though I doubt not, and have indeed presumed upon the existence of this feeling in the mind of Nicodemus, as leading to the first declaration of our Lord, I can discover nothing of it in the subsequent narrative. His difficulty, with respect to that declaration, seems plainly to have been in the thing itself. He either had no notion, or at the time he did not advert to it, of any figurative meaning of our Saviour's words ; and therefore puzzled himself with the idea of a man's literally entering for a second time into his mother's womb, in order to be born again. And our Lord's reply seems to be

entirely directed to the removal of this obstacle ; namely, his truly Jewish blindness in following the letter of the word. Nicodemus neither suggests that he well understood the necessity of a new birth to some, but had hitherto considered it as unnecessary to the descendants of Abraham ; nor does our Saviour's illustration of his previous assertion tend to set him right upon this his imagined error. Whatever other difficulties might press upon the mind of the ruler of the Jews, in the reception of our Lord's implied doctrine, the one directly intimated by his words, and that which the reply of our Saviour is calculated to meet, is the difficulty of the thing itself. Thus in answer to the objection of Nicodemus, intimated in his question, *How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born^o?* our Saviour replies, by informing him, that no such thing was intended, but a new birth of water and of the Spirit; *Except, says he, a man be born of water, and*

^o John iii. 4.

of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God^p.

But by this apparently slight change of the wording of his original proposition, a new and important light was in fact thrown upon his meaning; and the mind of Nicodemus was carried back to that new birth, which the proselytes from Gentilism were supposed to receive, in the customary rite of washing in water, to which previously to circumcision such persons were subjected.

And had the acknowledgment of the necessity of such a second birth, been all that was required of the Jewish teacher, no further difficulty would probably have remained; his fancy of the exclusive preference to be given to his nation in the new kingdom, or of their natural rights, as the children of the faithful, had been refuted by the declaration, that no one, no, not even of the seed of Abraham, could *see that kingdom*, except he were *born again*. His gross blunder, as to the literal meaning of the second birth, would seemingly have been ob-

^p John iii. 5.

viated by our Lord's subsequent apparent reference to that figurative use of the expression, of which he could not have been altogether ignorant. But this reference itself was clogged with a circumstance, which still held Nicodemus in suspense. Not a birth of water only, but a birth of the Spirit was required, and here was a new difficulty. Had our Lord contented himself with asserting the necessity of being born of water only, he would indeed have sufficiently rectified the error of Nicodemus in his literal interpretation of his former words, and have put him in the right road to their truer sense. But he would then still have left him, with such a view of the Christian new birth, as, interpreted with Jewish feelings, would probably have led him no further than to conclude, that some formal rite of external washing was to be the mode of initiation into the kingdom of the Messiah. But by the addition of a new birth of the Spirit also, the mind of Nicodemus was directed, though, from what follows, it would appear, at the time ineffectually, not to the traditionary customs and

unauthorized notions of the Jewish doctors only, but to that renewal of men's hearts by the pouring forth of the Spirit, which, according to the prophet Joel, was to accompany, or follow, the Baptism of the Messiah.

To this there was nothing analogous in that regeneration, to which the proselytes from Gentilism were admitted; and hence, even after the pains taken by our Lord, to elucidate the silent working of the spiritual birth, which was to accompany the birth of water, Nicodemus still expresses his wonder, *how these things should be*¹. Yet, unless we are to suppose, that the intimations of the prophets were to have no effect till the fulfilment of their predictions, and that their sole object was the ultimate verification of the claims of those, who should pretend to the office of the Messiah; some understanding in these matters might fairly have been expected of a *master in Israel*, and he might justly be subjected to the marked, though mild, reproof of our Lord,

¹ John iii. 9.

for his ignorance in *these things*[†]. It cannot be supposed, that that rebuke was addressed to him, for a mere want of information as to their traditionary regulations; indeed it follows the expression of his difficulties with respect to the spiritual birth; the true ground of our Lord's censure was, undoubtedly, his want of real understanding in the law he taught; his slowness of heart to comprehend all that the prophets had written, his ignorance of what had been already revealed, and consequent incapacity to receive higher knowledge[‡].

It may indeed be admitted, that till the evidence of the thing itself, in the actual establishment of Baptism, confirmed and elucidated the anticipative reference to it, it was not likely to be fully understood. Still, when directed by our Lord's second statement of the nature of the new birth required of him who should enter his kingdom, to the recognition of such a birth, as the idea of being born of water would suggest to a learned Pharisee; and enlight-

[†] John iii. 10.

[‡] John iii. 12.

ened as to the spiritual significancy of that birth, by our Lord's further observations on the hidden operation of the Spirit ; even Nicodemus, one would think, could ultimately be led to no other conclusion, than that into the kingdom of God, about to be established by Jesus Christ, admission would be given by a rite of Baptism, agreeing in some points with a similar observance of human origin, already practised in reconciling heathen proselytes to the Jewish church, but by a rite of far higher dignity, inasmuch as, emanating from God, it should be accompanied with the grant of the Spirit, to be poured forth on those who should receive it ; and of obligation far more extensive, inasmuch as it would be indispensable, not only to Gentile converts, and strangers to the elder covenant, but to the descendants of Abraham themselves ; to those, who were already under a previous dispensation of grace ; in order to enable them to lay claim to the benefits of the new and better covenant, foretold by their prophets, and now in the fulness of time about to be revealed.

And to a like conclusion should we, it would seem, be led, to whom the experience of the fact of the establishment of a rite of external Baptism, as the mode of admission into the fellowship of Christ's religion, supplies what was wanting to Nicodemus. To nothing else in the religion, as we are experimentally acquainted with it, can the language of our Lord, if, so far as we have gone, it has been rightly interpreted, be referred. We know of no other mode of initiation into the religion of the Gospel, but that of Baptism; and the indispensability of that initiation being declared by our Saviour at the time of instituting the sacrament, in terms not less impressive than those employed by him in his conference with Nicodemus, with respect to the new birth of water and of the Spirit, and being yet farther confirmed, by the uniform practice and plain tenor of the language of the Apostles; we are, independently of any collateral reasoning on the subject, unavoidably led to the conclusion, that it was with reference to Baptism that our Lord spake, when he declared the necessity of a new

birth of water and of the Spirit, to those who sought an entrance into his kingdom.

But are then the assertions of our Lord, on this occasion, in other respects in agreement with the doctrine of Baptism as actually established by Him? Is the being born of water and of the Spirit an apt delineation of its effects, as already deduced from the nature of the institution, or from the language used with respect to it in other parts of the New Testament?

First, as applied to Baptism in its character of a rite of initiation, no expression seems more appropriately descriptive of the change, which takes place in passing from one religion to another, or more consistent with the universal language of mankind, than that which characterizes it as a new birth. The essence of the new birth, indeed, the thing signified by it, when stripped of its metaphorical dress, is the change of situation and relation, implied in passing from one state of being to another; from the life of the womb to the life of the world; from the life of heathenism to the life of Judaism; from Judaism itself to

Christianity ; generally, from any state to another, in which the change is presumed to be beneficial, and real, or fancied, privileges are the result of the new situation in which we are placed. That this beneficial change attends our introduction into Christianity cannot be made a question ; in it we pass from a state of alienation to a state of favour with God ; from being the children of wrath, we become the children of grace ; from being out of covenant, we are brought under a covenant of mercy. That these are effects of Baptism, considered simply as the rite of initiation into Christianity, and prior to any special declarations concerning the rite itself, is evident. But,

Secondly, in reference to the express language of the New Testament upon the subject of Baptism itself, we find the general idea of its being a new birth to those who partake in it confirmed, not only by those more general passages, in which we are said to die, and to receive a new life in it^t ; but by the express assertion,

^t Rom. vi. Coloss. ii. &c.

that in it, by putting on Christ we are made the sons of God^u; and the declaration of St. Paul to Titus, that we are saved by a washing of regeneration^x.

Thirdly, The new birth spoken of by our Lord to Nicodemus, is characterized as a new birth, not of water only, but of water and of the Spirit; and this, again, falls in with the various passages already referred to, in which the gift of the Holy Ghost is spoken of, as the consequence, or the concomitant of the established rite of Baptism; and more especially with the assertion of St. Paul to the Corinthians, that it is by the efficacy of the Spirit that we are baptized into the body of Christ^y.

In concluding therefore, that, in the words we have been considering, our Lord bore testimony to the efficacy of that Baptism he was hereafter to establish, we are supported by the coincidence between his statement of the necessity of being born again, and the doctrine of Baptism delivered in other parts of the New Testament; and we might therefore at once claim from

^u Gal. iii. 26, 27. ^x Tit. iii. 5. ^y 1 Cor. xii. 13.

the passage the confirmation of our views on those points, on which it fairly touches.

Objections have however been raised against the interpretation of the text contended for. Into the examination of such of these as are built upon the assumed improbability of some doctrinal results of that interpretation; on the magnitude, for instance, of the blessings compared with the facility of the conditions on which they hang, or, on the supposed peremptoriness of their annexation to the sacrament, I do not feel myself called upon to enter in this place; but upon two objections, against the application of the text itself, a few words seem desirable; more especially, as the notice of them may lead to some views, confirmatory, if not of the conclusions themselves already drawn from it, yet of the propriety of the mode in which those conclusions have been drawn.

The objections are, first, that Baptism itself was not instituted at the time of our Lord's declaration to Nicodemus; and hence it is concluded, that he could not have alluded to it: and secondly, that

Baptism is not named in it ; and therefore, that of the certainty of the allusion we cannot be assured. The former of these, if it had not been urged by grave and learned persons, might seem hardly deserving of a serious answer. Why no allusion should be made to something future, we can discover, neither in the form of enunciation, nor in the subject-matter of the proposition. Speaking of a kingdom, though not yet *come*, yet certainly *nigh at hand*, there could surely be no impropriety in our Lord's declaring, for the satisfaction of one disposed to enter into it, the terms of admission.

With respect to the second objection, that Baptism itself is not expressly mentioned, (in spite of the difficulty of accounting for the introduction of water at all, on any other supposition than that of an allusion to a real washing of some sort,) must be admitted ; but this will not alone suffice to exclude any allusion to it, if the allusion itself be intelligible. Now that this is the case, on the supposition of Baptism being intended, may I think be justly

argued from the impression which the words are calculated to make, in the first instance, on any one, to whom the practice of Baptism is familiar. If there be nothing in the thing itself, there is surely nothing in the form of the expression, which should induce *us* to look for any other reference.

That without the key thus supplied, it would not of necessity convey the idea, is nothing to the purpose; for with whatever view the language may have been held to Nicodemus, it is undoubtedly recorded for our instruction.

This, if I mistake not, is a point not sufficiently attended to. The narrative of this interview with Nicodemus occurs in the Gospel of St. John. It is confessed that this Gospel was composed chiefly to supply deficiencies in the preceding ones; and especially upon the great points of the divinity and incarnation of our Lord. It therefore naturally contains the memorial of many acts and miracles and discourses of our Lord, especially adapted to that purpose, not mentioned by the former Evangelists.

This was natural: but what I wish to notice more particularly is, that with whatever particular view his Gospel was composed, St. John seems in its preparation to have taken occasion to mention many things, which, now that the religion had been some time established, and its doctrines were familiar to the disciples, were become intelligible or interesting; but which, if proposed to view in the earlier accounts of our Lord's teaching, would have been incomprehensible, and perhaps revolting. I will not say that there are no instances of similar memorials in the first Evangelists: but that, which occurs occasionally in them, is continually observable in St. John. In addition to texts more obviously prophetic, there are many doctrinal passages, besides the one before us, of which the interpretation must be sought in a mode of reasoning similar to that by which we infer the adaptation of the prophecy to the event; and which could have conveyed but very indistinct notions, if any, of their meaning, at the time they were delivered. Take, for instance, the

declaration in this very conference with Nicodemus, that *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life*^z. To us this remarkable passage, apart from its prophetic use, and considered simply as a just description of the manner and the effects of Christ's death, has a plain and obvious meaning: but it must, I think, be admitted, that it would have been no easy matter, at the time it was delivered, for the best instructed scribe to discover in this allusion the Saviour of the world, suffering upon the cross for the sins of men, and becoming the means of salvation to all, who should in faith look to him for help. Still less we know was his further assertion, that, *when lifted up from the earth, he should draw all men to him*^a, understood by those to whom it was addressed. And the same may be observed of many other passages, the more particular notice of which would be here out of place.

^z John iii. 14, 15.

^a John xii. 32.

But, as I have observed, the particular points to which I would attract your notice, are, the frequency of these passages in John, compared with the other Evangelists; and the space they occupy in that part of his Gospel which contains matter peculiar to him. And that for this reason; that I think they justify, as applied to the discourses of our Lord recorded by him generally, the mode of interpretation for which I am contending in the passage before us. It is not for a particular occasion, but as throwing light upon the whole body of St. John's Gospel, that I would insist upon it. It is, I think, a peculiar and distinguishable feature of many of our Lord's sayings recorded by the beloved disciple, even of those which refer to points of doctrine, that they required the existence of something future to render them intelligible; and that of course, when made, they were as unintelligible, as they would be still, if separated from the key of the event.

But they are fully intelligible to us for whom they were written, because we pos-

sess the key, which those to whom they were spoken, wanted. And this seems to be a sufficient and satisfactory answer to the objection, which would preclude our interpretation of our Lord's language, as referring to Baptism, on the ground of Baptism itself not being expressly mentioned in it.

But further, and in reference to the admitted design of St. John, to supply deficiencies on remarkable points of doctrine. It does not appear from any thing recorded by the Apostles, or delivered down by the tradition of the church, that the doctrine of a spiritual regeneration, or renovation only, was encumbered with any difficulties, which should have made it important to preserve the memorial of our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus. Supposing our Lord to mean only that a great change of heart and life was necessary for an ultimately effectual admission to the kingdom of heaven, there seems to have been little necessity for recalling to mind, and preserving in the Evangelical history, the particular metaphor which puzzled the master in

Israel. We obtain no new information from it, nor can it be said to aid us in the acceptance or the comprehension of a doctrine so familiar to us, as to run through every page of the Gospel. The spiritual change of regeneration, in the sense of those who would disconnect it from Baptism, has no difficulty in it. No difficulty, I mean, to them who admit the Christian doctrine of the agency of the Holy Ghost. Whereas, on the supposition that the outward sign, as well as the internal agency is here referred to, the passage has an obvious and important use, in providing against that separation of the two, and consequent depreciation of our Saviour's ordinance, which has, we now know historically and experimentally, been the result of an exclusive attention to either. And the reason is obvious, why, in agreement with what has been already observed, the record of this discourse is not to be found in the writings of the preceding Evangelists. Till Baptism and the doctrines connected with it were fully understood, and practically familiar to the Christian converts, the ex-

pressions used by our Lord to Nicodemus, with respect to that institution, would probably have had no other effect, than to awaken superstitious or enthusiastic fancies, which even the knowledge of the truth has not been able at all times to exclude from the church of Christ. Or, to have laid so great a stress on a birth of water, as well as of the Spirit, before this connection was practically made known, might have been as perplexing, as it is now consolatory. With the information we possess of the establishment of the sacrament, and of its administration by the Apostles, the anticipative notice of it by our Lord serves only to enhance our estimate of the value of his institution : and his use of the language, which staggered Nicodemus, is to us accounted for by the fact, that more was ultimately meant, than He at that time thought fit to reveal. But if Baptism be not intended, the passage, and that touching on a point very nearly concerning us, our admission to the kingdom of heaven, still continues, and without any apparent reason, as mysterious to us, as it was to

him. A solitary instance, we may observe, of such obscurity in our Lord's teaching; if we except a similar passage in the sixth chapter of the same Evangelist, in which it is in like manner disputed, whether the reference is to the Lord's Supper; and to which we shall have occasion hereafter to advert.

Our conclusion therefore in favour of the application of the passage to the sacrament remains unshaken; and we may safely make use of the declaration of our Lord to Nicodemus, with respect to a new birth of water and of the Spirit, as referring to Christian Baptism, and confirming by the coincidence of the doctrine enforced in it, the inferences deduced from other sources, with respect to the indispensability of the rite itself, as the mode of initiation into the Christian church, and the concomitant gift of the Spirit in its administration; while at the same time it gives a peculiar interest to the assertion of the Apostle, that in Baptism we are made *the children of God*^b, by the adoption of the

^b Gal. iii. 26, 27.

metaphor by our Lord himself, to express the change of state, in reference to our heavenly Father, which we undergo on our admission to his church.

And having thus completed so much of our inquiry, as relates more especially to Baptism, it may not be inexpedient to sum up the results arrived at, before we proceed to a like examination in reference to the Lord's Supper.

From the consideration of the rite itself, and the words and circumstances of institution, combined with the essential character of the religion of which it forms a part, we have inferred, that in Baptism is conveyed a spiritual purification, consisting in a discharge from the guilt, and a remission of the penalties of sin ; effected by the operation of the Holy Spirit, placing us in a state of salvation, and restoring to us our original title to eternal life.

From the manner in which it is mentioned, or referred to in the Acts of the Apostles, we have obtained the confirmation of so much of our inferences, as respects the spiritual purification conveyed in Bap-

tism, the remission of sin implied in it, and the gift of the Holy Ghost accompanying the rite.

From the language of the apostolical Epistles we have derived a like confirmation of our preceding conclusions, with the addition of some important benefits, directly, or by easy inference, to be connected with Baptism. Such are the assertion of sanctification and justification, as the concomitants of the rite^c; of the Holy Spirit's being the agent, by whom, through Baptism, we are incorporated into the body of Christ's church^d; that in it we are made the sons of God, and by consequence, heirs of eternal life, in the kingdom of our Father^e; that in it we receive the earnest of the Spirit^f; and that in it are communicated to us the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection^g.

And, lastly, from the anticipative references to the rite, both by our Lord and his forerunner, we derive the further and con-

^c 1 Cor. vi. 11. Ephes. v. 25, 26. ^d 1 Cor. xii. 13.

^e Gal. iii. 26, 27. Tit. iii. 5, 6, 7.

^f 2 Cor. ii. 21, 22. v. 5. Ephes. i. 13, 14.

^g Rom. vi. 4, 5. Coloss. ii. 11, 12. 1 Pet. iii. 21.

firmed assurance, that by Baptism alone we enter into the kingdom of God, are born to him, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

If, for the purpose of a more distinct apprehension of the benefits annexed to the sacrament, we endeavour to reduce them to more distinct heads, we shall find, that the fundamental grace of Christian Baptism, from which all the others flow, and to which they may be referred, as their source, is the remission of sin, original and actual. For by this the great and only obstacle to the exertion of God's goodness towards us being removed, we are at once placed in a state of reconciliation, and become capable of whatever further benefits he may graciously confer upon us. Of these, the next, and most important, are undoubtedly the continued grant of that Spirit, by which we can alone afterwards be preserved from sin; and the restoration of our title to eternal life, which seems to be the unavoidable result of the removal of that which brought death into the world. And in these, perhaps, the direct and present benefits of Baptism may be considered as fully stated.

If in the several passages to which I have drawn your attention, these benefits are propounded to us under such various forms of metaphor and expression ; if from them it appears, that in Baptism *we put on Christ*, are *made the sons of God*, members of Christ's mystic body, and *heirs* with him in the kingdom of his Father ; that in it we are turned *from darkness to light*, from being *the children of wrath*, and *dead in trespasses and sins*, we become the *children of grace*, and *are made alive to righteousness* ; to what purpose in truth are we so described, to what end are all these glorious metaphors employed ? for what, but to give us a more complete assurance of the substantial benefits we derive from our admission to the peculiar favour of God in Baptism, by the multiplicity of the descriptions necessary for the comprehensive enumeration of our Christian privileges ?

On a subject, so accordant with the feelings, and so worthy the contemplation of the believer, it would be both easy and grateful to dilate. But the prosecution of the views hence arising may safely be left to

your private meditations. Having brought to a close our more particular inquiry with respect to Baptism, I shall proceed, in my next Lecture, to a similar investigation of the benefits annexed to a participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

LECTURE VI.

MATT. xxvi. 26.

Take, eat ; this is my body.

IN conformity with the plan originally laid down, I now proceed to an inquiry into the benefits annexed to the reception of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, so far as they are deducible from a consideration of the nature of the rite itself, and the language of the New Testament concerning it. This, though it will be conducted in a similar manner, will not detain us so long in its prosecution, as that in which we have been already engaged with respect to Baptism ; the number of texts, clearly applicable to the Lord's Supper, being few in comparison with those in which Baptism is alluded to.

In admitting this comparative scantiness of materials, as supplied by direct texts bearing upon the subject of investigation, let it not however be supposed, that we are

putting to hazard any essential part of Christian doctrine. It has been already observed, in reference to both sacraments, that actions, being in their own nature significant, in great measure explain themselves; and we may add, that the more remarkable the action, the greater will be the force with which its natural or conventional significancy, if any can be fairly and undoubtedly affixed to it, will operate and declare itself. And the action constituting the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, being, when viewed in connection with the words and circumstances of institution, most remarkable and significant, it needed perhaps, even less than Baptism, the assistance of additional declarations, explanatory of the purport of the rite.

But further, if we turn our thoughts back upon the former part of this inquiry, we may remember, that scarcely one of the texts, which were brought to bear upon the doctrine of Baptism, was originally intended as an explanation of the rite; they were almost all incidental notices of an observance, the general meaning of which was

evidently supposed to be familiar to those, to whom they were addressed. The number of texts occurring in the New Testament relative to it, arises not from the wish, or the necessity, of explanation on the subject of the sacrament itself, but from the circumstance of the history contained in the Acts being a history of proselytism, and the apostolical Epistles being addressed to new made converts to the faith. Hence the repeated calls in the one, both upon Jew and Gentile, to be baptized, as the well understood mode of admission to the church of Christ; and hence also the mention, where it occurs, of the motives to be baptized, grounded, from the necessity of the case, on the benefits to be derived from Baptism. Hence too in the other, the constant reference to the benefits, of which the baptized persons had been made partakers, or to which they had secured a claim, as the great inducement to a life of Christian holiness: supplying us with a great variety of texts, in which allusion is made to the sacrament, on a participation in which that claim was established. But the case of the

Lord's Supper is a little different. While the outward part of the rite is by nature not less significant, and, combined with the circumstances which give it a conventional meaning, perhaps even more so than that of Baptism; the incidental references to it are much fewer, and of a very different character. There is not, either in the Acts or the whole range of the Epistles, a single direct exhortation to partake of it; while there is, we know, at least one very important warning against its abuse, and rectification of errors, which had found their way into its administration. The converts were exhorted to be baptized, as the indispensable method of admission into the Christian society. It was concluded, that, when baptized, they would conform to the religion which they had adopted; and in the natural course of things become partakers in a rite, like the Lord's Supper, appointed for the perpetual use and benefit of the members of the church.

In the character of the incidental notices of the two sacraments, indeed, we may trace yet further a corresponding difference, aris-

ing out of the nature of things, and the different ends of the two appointments. It was, for instance, generally, a more obvious and natural appeal to those, of whom *baptized* persons was a description no less proper, than *circumcised* was of the Jews, not to disgrace the faith they had professed in Baptism, than not to act inconsistently with their participation in the body and blood of their Lord. The latter might, as indeed we find it did^a, become, occasionally, the more prevailing topic of exhortation; but it would not be the ordinary resource, nor do we find it so. And the general appeals, in which Baptism was naturally in the first instance resorted to, being necessarily more frequent than the particular occasions, for which a reference to the Lord's Supper would be most appropriate and effectual; this would, of itself, sufficiently account for the notices of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament being fewer, than those of Baptism.

Hence we shall find, that the significancy

^a 1 Cor. x.

of the outward action, the language made use of by our Lord in its institution, and the circumstances attending its first appointment, will be, in the case of the Lord's Supper, even more important in determining the nature of the benefits resulting from its use and administration, than we found them in the case of Baptism. While the texts, to which we shall subsequently have occasion to refer, though fewer in number, will be, I should hope, not less clear in their application, nor less determinate in their language.

The primary significancy of the action, in the case of the Lord's Supper, is sufficiently obvious. Eating and drinking, whatever be the viands, can be naturally significant but of one thing, the refreshment of him who participates in them. And eating and drinking together, can convey to the mind, whether naturally or conventionally, but one idea, that of a feast; it matters not for the present of what character; it may be commemorative, it may be federative, it may be simply expressive of general satisfaction or rejoicing for benefits, or blessings,

of the possession of which the partakers in the feast are conscious, and which they have a delight in manifesting openly to others. These are the natural and usual motives of such celebrations, and some of these might therefore be not unreasonably presumed to have influenced, in the appointment of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

But the specific character of the feast, cannot, it is plain, be determined from considerations so general, either alone or principally. This must be ascertained from the declarations of the Founder, or the special circumstances, under which it was appointed. Generally however, and previously to the particular examination of these, we may observe, that the institution of a religious festival directs us at once to look for some spiritual end of the institution ; that it would be inconsistent in any case, and impossible in that before us, to imagine, that a rite, enjoined by the Founder of the religion, and peremptorily enforced upon all who should embrace it, should have reference to the support of our outward frame only, or to the mere bodily gratification

consequent upon eating and drinking : some further object, and that of a spiritual nature, seems indispensable to give its due importance to an institution professedly divine.

With the leading idea, therefore, always present to our minds, that the rite we are investigating is of the nature of a feast, and with the recollection, that it was instituted for spiritual purposes, let us proceed to ascertain more precisely, from the words and circumstances of institution, the specific character of the sacrament ; the more immediate end for which it was ordained ; and the particular benefits flowing from its celebration.

The words of institution, as they are very remarkable, so they have been particularly handed down to us, not only by three of the Evangelists, in the regular course of their narratives in the Gospels, but by the Apostle Paul, in correcting some errors of administration into which the Corinthian converts had fallen.

It will be advisable, though generally familiar to us, to state them with such parti-

cularity, as may enable us to make use of the whole information conveyed by them. For though there is no substantial difference in their accounts, yet in different parts of their narration some are more explicit than others. I will therefore go through the statement of St. Matthew, as the first occurring, and as coming from an eyewitness of the transaction; and point out, as we go on, any additional or explanatory circumstances detailed to us by the other sacred historians.

St. Matthew says, that *as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body*^b; to which St. Luke adds, *which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me*^c. St. Paul agrees with St. Luke, except in substituting *which is broken*^d, for *which is given for you*.

St. Matthew goes on, *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*

^b Matt. xxvi. 26.

^c Luke xxii. 19.

^d 1 Cor. xi. 24.

new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins^e.

St. Luke varies the latter expression a little, making it, *This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you*^f. A variation recognized by St. Paul, who has, *This cup is the new testament in my blood*; omitting any mention of the end for which that blood was to be shed, but with the addition, *This do ye, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me*^g. St. Mark subjoins to his narration, that *they all drank of it*^h; and St. Paul adds the important information, that *as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do shew the Lord's death till he come*ⁱ.

Before we proceed to the more particular consideration of the words of our Lord on this occasion, let me briefly advert to a circumstance attending the celebration of the rite, which seems to afford a not unimportant confirmation of the conclusion already deduced from the religious character

^e Matt. xxvi. 27, 28.

^f Luke xxii. 20.

^g 1 Cor. xi. 25.

^h Mark xiv. 23.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

of the festival; namely, that the conveyance of some spiritual benefit, aptly represented by the refreshment taken in at our mouths, must be the purport of such an institution. The same conclusion, it would seem, presses itself upon us, when we consider, in what the actual feast (without for the present referring to any symbolic meaning of the elements) consists, in the distribution, that is, and joint participation, of small portions of bread and wine only; a mode of feasting, which however well calculated, as being made on the most excellent things of their kind, to represent the refreshment accompanying festive celebrations, would of itself constitute but a very indifferent entertainment. From the outward matter of the feast, therefore, and the mode of its celebration, no less than from the religious character of the appointment, we are led to a spiritual understanding of the rite, and consequently, to its being the channel, if of any, of spiritual benefits.

To return to the words of institution. From these we learn, first, that the feast was to be commemorative of Him who

founded it. It was to be done in remembrance, or for a remembrance, or memorial, of Him. This last some have interpreted of a memorial offering to God of Christ's body in the sacrament; and without intending, or in fact really giving any countenance to the errors of the Romish church in the sacrifice of the mass, have in consequence considered the Eucharist as the Christian sacrifice; and as succeeding, in that sense, to the sacrifices of the Law. They have supposed, that as the efficacy and the meaning of the Levitical sacrifices was to be deduced from the anticipative reference to the sacrifice of Christ following, of which they were in various degrees the types and the representations, so under the Christian system the Lord's Supper, deriving its meaning from the commemorative reference contained in it to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, was to be considered as corresponding in nature to the sacrifices of the Law. Though in the one the commemoration was made in bloody, in the other, in unbloody symbols, yet the object referred to was in both the same; the

one indeed looking forward, the other looking back, but both, after their capacity, representing to men, and presenting to God, in a material service, the one sacrifice of Christ. Some parts of this theory are undoubtedly very plausible, and the ingenuity and zeal which have been shewn in its support by men, not less distinguished for piety than for learning and acuteness, are calculated to operate powerfully in its favour. The very refinement however of the interpretation of various passages of Scripture adduced in its support, and the depreciation of the sacrifice of the cross itself, which by the confession of its most strenuous advocates has in the rounding of the theory been almost unavoidably made a part of it^k, can, I think, hardly fail to impress the mind of any one, who reads the controversies respecting it without prejudice, with a feeling of unsatisfactoriness; and, if it be permitted to speak of an individual experience, the

^k See Johnson's *Unbloody Sacrifice*, Part I. chap. 2. §. 1. and Part II. Introduction : and Brett's *True Scripture Account of the Nature and Benefits of the Holy Eucharist*, in answer to Hoadley. 1736.—pp. 59—76.

theory, which when first stated commends itself by its simplicity and seemingly well founded analogy, becomes doubtful, in proportion as we follow up the proofs by which its certainty is to be established.

But whatever may be thought of the theory, which would refer the commemoration of the death of Christ in the sacrament to God, that it was to have the effect of a publication of that death to man, sufficiently appears from the addition made to his account of the rite by St. Paul, that *as oft as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew the Lord's death till he come* : where the Greek word translated *shew*, signifies more definitely, *to publish*, or *to announce* ; to make known, that is, to man, not to bring into remembrance before God.

From this assertion of St. Paul, it further appears, that the special circumstance of memorial in the Lord's Supper is the death of the Founder ; a point of no little importance, if we reflect on the many other illustrious circumstances of his manifestation, which would seem to have presented themselves, and which the wisdom of man has in

subsequent periods of the history of the church selected for religious commemoration on stated days. Overlooking all these, his miraculous birth, his glorious Baptism, his transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension, we are commanded to keep up a continual memory of his *death*, till his coming again.

This is remarkable ; but what follows is yet more so. The matter of this spiritual and commemorative festival, from bread and wine on the table, takes, in the hands of Jesus Christ, the name, at least, of his body and blood ; on which those, who thus commemorate the death of their Lord, are commanded to feed.

But yet further ; the reason that his body is to be thus feasted upon, he declares to be, that it was *given and broken*, or to be given and broken, for them ; the reason that by them his blood was to be drunk, is, that that blood was *shed*, or to be shed, for them and for many ; while, again, the reason of this blood-shedding itself, is stated by him to be *the remission of sins*. And lastly, he says of this his blood, that it is *the blood of the new testament, or covenant* ; and of

the cup, that it is the new testament, or covenant, in his blood.

Now of a rite thus instituted by our Lord no explanation ought to be received as satisfactory, which does not account for, and agree with, these various particulars, asserted of it by himself. It cannot therefore, as has been contended by Hoadley and his followers, be a sufficient account of the observance, to consider it as a simple memorial, or bare act of commemoration, though in that idea we were to include (what in any just sense of the words would most assuredly not have been included in it by Hoadley,) the fullest acknowledgment and the most grateful remembrance of the atonement made by the blood-shedding of Christ: because this would still leave unexplained some of the most remarkable assertions of our Lord respecting it. Not to mention the difficulty, with which the Hoadleian theory is encumbered, of making that the prominent, if not the sole purpose of the appointment, which is not even alluded to by St. Matthew or St. Mark in their accounts of the institution.

Considered, indeed, in the light of a mere festive commemoration, both the matter and the mode of the feast (the symbolic meaning of the bread and wine being by this supposition excluded) would, as has been already observed, be alike unintelligible and capricious, contradictory to all experience of such celebrations, and little befitting the dignity of the occasion. I will not press the difficulty, on this hypothesis, of accounting satisfactorily for the selection of our Lord's death, as the topic of mutual gratulation; because his death, being in fact upon any supposition the necessary step towards his exaltation, and, in the view of those who chiefly maintain the Hoadleian hypothesis, the seal of his divine mission, as an act of martyrdom evincing the truth of his pretensions¹, though the selection may appear

¹ See Hoadley, *Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*. He thus paraphrases part of the words of institution: "Upon this account I now call this
"cup, i. e. this wine, *my blood of the new covenant*, as
"it is to be drunk by you hereafter in remembrance of
"my blood, shed by me, *in testimony to the truth of all*
"that I have declared as the will or covenant of God." p. 20. edit. 1735. So again: "I style this cup, or this

strange, it would not be wholly unaccountable.

But, in truth, though to exclude such a grateful commemoration of what Jesus Christ has done for us from being one important end of the appointment of the Eucharist, would be not less inconsistent with the whole account of the institution, than to assign it as *the* end; still it is impossible to advert to our Lord's own declarations concerning it, without feeling, that it cannot be for the mere purpose of keeping up a grateful recollection even of the death of Christ, that the festival of the Lord's Supper was instituted. For to whatever ultimate end of the rite such language may point, it cannot be, that for the commemoration of the Founder alone, or even to keep up the memory of his death, we should be commanded to eat his body, or to drink his blood, by whatever symbolical substitu-

“ wine, *the new covenant in my blood*, because you are
“ hereafter thus to drink wine in a religious remembrance
“ of *my blood, in, or through which, after it shall be shed,*
“ *this new covenant will be confirmed, as a seal, or testi-*
“ *mony, to the truth of it.*” p. 21. *ibid.*

tion the celebration of such a feast may have been facilitated to us.

Now that in some sense, and to some purpose, we are indeed to eat of the body and drink of the blood of Christ, appears, not only upon the face of our Lord's injunction, *Take, eat ; this is my body. This cup is my blood of the new testament, drink ye all of it*; but is the very fundamental point, to which our attention is recalled by the occasional mention of the institution by St. Paul: it being the neglect or the perversion of this part of the institution, which is presupposed, as the very ground of his remonstrance to the Corinthians, which introduces it. Their having so celebrated the Lord's Supper, as not to *discern* in it *the Lord's body*^m, is the very abuse of which he complains, and to the correction of which his repetition of the original terms, in which the rite was instituted, is directed.

Indeed, the very way of giving the name of his body and blood to the elements, (the

^m 1 Cor. xi. 29.

fancies of transubstantiation and its cognate absurdities being exploded,) seems to imply two things: first, the necessity of a participation of his body and blood in some sense; and, secondly, the substitution of a symbolical for a literal participation. We cannot discover any reason, why, if the bread and wine do not represent his body and blood, they should have the names given them; still less can we conceive, why they should be made to represent them, but for the necessity of some, and the impossibility of a literal feeding on the body of Christ. The benefits of redemption might surely have been commemorated, and abundant thanks been offered in a religious festival, without the introduction of so strange a circumstance; had not that circumstance, for some reason, which it will be our next endeavour to ascertain, been essential and indispensable to some other end of the rite.

That reason must, it seems, if any where, be found, in the consideration of the purposes which a literal feeding would have served, and in reference to which it might,

if possible, have been enjoined. Let us therefore inquire, to what end a literal participation in the body and blood of Christ might have been appointed; what purpose might have been answered by such an institution, could it have been carried into effect? For this, whatever it may be, must, it seems, be that, for the attainment of which a symbolical and possible, was substituted for a literal and impossible, participation.

In determining this question, but little aid can be derived from the natural significance of the action. Apart from any conventional meaning attached to such eating and drinking, the only inference that could be legitimately drawn from such an appointment would be, that by a participation in the body and blood of Christ, (mere bodily refreshment being by the religious character of the observance excluded,) some spiritual nourishment, to be conveyed to the soul of the partaker, was signified. But to signify this, the form of language adopted would appear to be not less unnecessary, than the thing itself would be repulsive to

our natural feelings. On this supposition, the introduction of any mention of the body and blood of the Redeemer is not only superfluous, but really inconsistent with the assumed object of the rite. For the idea of spiritual nourishment alone, would have been at least as aptly and fully conveyed by a participation in the bread and wine of the Sacrament in their proper nature, as when invested with the symbolical character attached to them by the words of institution.

To some conventional meaning of the action we are therefore compelled to have recourse; and to an inquiry, to what circumstances of known institutions such an appointment may be presumed to refer; to what occasions of religious eating and drinking, the command, to eat of the body and drink of the blood of the Redeemer, would in any probable degree correspond? And here we shall not be long to seek. For on this inquiry, if I mistake not, ample light is thrown by that portion of the words of institution, in which our Lord more particularly characterizes the spiritual food offered

to us in the Sacrament: and in which he declares, that it is on his body, *broken and given for us*, that we are to feed; of his blood, *shed for us, and for the remission of sins*, that we are to drink. It is under the idea conveyed to us by his body *given*, and his blood *shed for us*, therefore, that we are to contemplate the injunction of our Lord, to feast upon them. And this contemplation carries us at once to that view of his death, which furnishes us with a ready key to the whole force of his expressions. For without insisting, as might nevertheless with great justice be done, on the philologicalⁿ propriety of the terms employed, as applied to sacrifice; when we know from other incontestible sources, that the death of the Redeemer was in fact a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; when we further know, that the assertion of that sacrifice is a fundamental and characteristic doctrine of the religion he came to teach, the very corner-stone of the whole Christian scheme of redemption; to what,

ⁿ See Bishop Cleaver's Sermon at St. Mary's, Nov. 25, 1787. p. 8.

but to that sacrifice, made in his own person on the cross, can we, with even an appearance of plausibility, refer the expression of his *body broken and given*, or his *blood shed for us, and for the remission of sins*?

It is therefore of his body, as offered and sacrificed for us upon the cross, that he enjoins us to eat; it is of his blood, as poured out in atonement of transgression, that we are commanded to drink, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. To what purpose, it will be asked, and how are we, by this interpretation of his language, advanced in the understanding of his ordinance? For an answer to this it is, that we must now have recourse to the known and accustomed accompaniments of sacrifice, both Gentile and Levitical.

It was then the invariable practice in the celebration of that universal rite, that those who desired to be made partakers in the sacrifice should feast in common upon a part of the victim offered. It does not appear very certain upon what principle this universal custom was founded; but the effect intended,

whether imaginary, as in the case of heathen sacrifices, or real, so far as they were effectual, in those of the Levitical Law, was the communication of the benefits, supposed to accrue from the offering, to the parties partaking of the feast. And the idea of the necessity of some accompanying feast became so prevalent, that under the law of Moses a peace-offering^o was annexed to those sacrifices, which, being themselves wholly consumed, were unable to furnish the matter of the feast which should have followed. On this point it is needless to accumulate evidence, which those who wish for will find amply supplied in the learned treatise of Cudworth^p, or in the expositions of the same doctrine by Warburton^q and bishop

o “Peace-offerings were ever annexed to the burnt-offerings, that were *for any particular persons*, and *not* offerings *for the whole congregation*.” Mede, Works, 1672. p. 255, note. The reason of the distinction seems to be, that *the congregation itself* (and no one was in this case authorized to represent it) *could not*, in fact, have partaken of the peace-offering.

p A Discourse concerning the true Notion of the Lord's Supper.

q A Discourse concerning the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Cleaver^r, or in Spencer's celebrated work on the Ritual Laws of the Hebrews. But the fact being admitted, we may easily apprehend, that there could be no incongruity in the idea, and there would be some ground of expectation, that the sacrifice of Christ should be made available to those who sought to be partakers in its benefits, in a like or corresponding manner. And therefore the command of our Lord, to eat his body, *broken and given* for us, to drink his blood, *shed for the remission of sins*, would, if literally taken, find in the conventional meaning of the action a just interpretation of its import.

I have said, that the command of our Lord, to eat his body and to drink his blood, even if literally taken, would, upon the grounds laid down, find in the conventional meaning of the action a just interpretation of its import. But then, again, such a literal eating and drinking of the body and blood of the crucified Redeemer of the world would be in fact as impossible,

^r Three Sermons on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, 1787 and 1790.

as in imagination it is repulsive to our natural sentiments; it would be not less contradictory to the verity of Christ's body, now glorified in heaven, than abhorrent from all feelings of humanity. And therefore it was, that, to alleviate the anxiety which the literal command might have excited, and render possible that which literally was incapable of being carried into effect, in the very moment of giving the command, a substitution was made of a symbolical for a literal feeding, and bread and wine made the perpetual representations of that body, which was ere long to ascend into heaven.

Here then all becomes intelligible. Now we understand why it was, that a participation in the body and blood of our Lord was necessary; and why it was, that for a literal and impossible, was substituted a symbolic and possible celebration of the feast. The one secured to him, who should participate in it, the benefit of that sacrifice, of which it was an essential appendage; the other secured the possibility of

such a participation to all, who should then and for ever *name the name of Christ*^s.

In this view of the rite we perceive the propriety of St. Paul's declaration, that in it we announce the death of our Lord : and we hence understand, why the annunciation and the contemplation of that death in the Sacrament should be a matter of congratulation to the church of Christ. We should have little cause to rejoice in the death of our Lord, considered as a mere martyr to truth ; though we might in consequence venerate his memory, and feel grateful for such an instance of his disinterested love to us. But viewed in its true light, as the great sacrifice of atonement and peace, a very different foundation for mutual congratulation is laid, and the propriety of commemorating the death of our Lord, as an eucharistic service, becomes at once apparent. And hence too we derive, with clearness and facility, the most important benefits annexed to a participation

^s 2 Tim. ii. 19.

in the rite. For hence, if the previous reasoning be correct, it inevitably follows, that in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, all the benefits of that sacrifice, of which it is an inseparable appendage, are communicated to the faithful participant.

These it is hardly necessary to enumerate in detail. They all branch out of that one, which it was the particular object of the sacrifice to secure; reconciliation to God in the pardon of sin. From this may be derived all the consequential benefits of that reconciliation, and of the state of favour in which it places us. But the consideration of these we will for the present defer: there being another view of the Sacrament, to which, as furnishing an answer to a particular objection to the idea of the Lord's Supper already given, and laying additional grounds for the expectation of benefits from its celebration, I am desirous of first calling your attention.

The objection alluded to arises from the difficulty, which, on the idea of the Lord's Supper being a feast upon a sacrifice, presents itself, in the command to partake in the

blood of the victim ; a point so strictly and forcibly prohibited, not only in the sacrificial enactments, but in the domestic regulations, of the Law of Moses. Such a command would indeed, under any circumstances, have been not a little offensive to Jewish feelings ; (and salvation, we are to recollect, was to be first preached to the Jews ;) but it must have been especially so, in reference to the blood of a sacrifice.

But if we look to the probable reasons of that prohibition in the Law of Moses, we may perhaps find the difficulty, even as it respects the eating of blood as a part of a religious festival, considerably lightened, and a consideration of the occasions, on which a participation in the very blood of victims offered in sacrifice, though prohibited in the Levitical Law, was customary throughout the ancient world, may lead us to some new and additional views of the rite, distinct from, though not inconsistent with, its more direct and obvious character of a festival.

The prohibition of eating blood, both to the descendants of Noah, and to the Israel-

ites in particular, considered in the light of a moral or economical regulation, has been variously accounted for. It has been commonly referred to the desire of checking the tendency to shedding blood at all, and more especially, as far as respected the Israelites, in some wanton and cruel circumstances, by which the nations around them had outraged nature itself for the gratification of their appetites. But, as a part of religion, or of religious service strictly so called, it had, independently of any reference to a contrary practice of the heathen, to which it has also been supposed to allude ^t, a special significance in the revelation of Moses, regarded, not as an insulated scheme of religious polity, but as part of an extensive system, comprehending the whole series of God's dispensations from the beginning to the end of time. It was a fundamental position of that system, in obvious, though in the earlier ages not understood reference, to the death of the Redeemer; that *without shedding of blood there*

^t See Spencer de Leg. Hebræor. Ritual. in Diss. de Act. xv. 20. ad fin. lib. II.

was no remission^u of sin ; that *the life was in the blood*^x, and that this was to be reserved from all profane uses, *to make atonement for souls*^y. It was contemplated as the most holy part of every sacrifice, and was commanded to be poured out before the Lord at his altar. The value and the importance attached to the shedding of blood, was, in consistence with these views of its efficacy and holiness, to be impressed upon the mind by every possible circumstance, which would add to its effect. Hence the Israelites were strictly forbidden to make it a part of their ordinary food ; even the blood of animals killed for their daily sustenance was to be looked upon as something sacred ; and the symbolic purchase of their souls and seed of life in its highest sense, was no longer to be profaned to any common use, or to the gratification of a mere animal appetite^z. Till the great sacrifice was completed, and *the blood of Christ*,

^u Heb. ix. 22.

^x Gen. ix. 4. Lev. xvii. 11. 14. Deut. xii. 23.

^y Lev. xvii. ut sup. Deut. xii. 27.

^z Lev. xvii. passim. Deut. xii. 16—27.

as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot^a, was poured out in real expiation of the sins of the world ; the idea of a peculiar sanctity was attached to whatever might, however remotely, typify that precious blood-shedding. How far this remarkable prohibition may have operated, in leading the minds of the more intellectual worshippers to the apprehension of some spiritual significance of the observance, it would be vain to inquire. Intimations of the futility of a reliance on the blood of bulls and of goats are indeed to be found in the Prophets, but that by a mere declaration of the inefficiency of these, as a means of reconciliation, the worshippers should be enabled to look forward to another and a better blood-shedding, of which these were but types and shadows, may reasonably be doubted. Nor was it requisite that they should. It was sufficient for every essential purpose, if the rite, which tried their obedience, should, in its proper season, appear to have been further intended, as a type of something more

^a 1 Pet. i. 19.

important. And thus the prohibition of blood unquestionably appears to us. Interpreted with the knowledge which we possess, we have no difficulty in referring it to the blood-shedding of Christ; and this reference at once frees us from any embarrassment with respect to the language of our Lord, in the institution of the Eucharist. Whatever difficulties the eating of blood may have presented to Jewish minds before the offering of the sacrifice of Christ, they vanish when considered in reference to that offering once made. The prohibition may to the Israelites have had its meaning and effect, in the mystic reverence thus thrown around the blood itself, and the indistinct apprehension of something spiritual, to which it might be supposed to allude. By us it may well be understood, as announcing in fact the inefficiency of those sacrifices, in which the eating of blood was forbidden. They could not give life, and therefore a participation in that, which was the life, or typified it, could make no part of the service. But when the real and effectual sacrifice of Christ was offered, a participation in the

wine, as representing his blood, was as appropriately enjoined, as the blood itself was in the legal and typical sacrifices prohibited. And the essential difference between the two could not be more strongly marked, than by the introduction of a circumstance, implying that we have that life through him, which the former appointments were incapable of affording ; that in the Lord's Supper we partake of a truly life-giving sacrifice.

But, as I have observed, another view of the sacrament presents itself, not inconsistent with, yet distinct from the notion, under which we have hitherto considered it, as a feast upon a sacrifice ; and in which the propriety of the particular injunction, as to which a difficulty is raised, will be yet further apparent.

The participation in the blood of the victims offered, nay, sometimes, in that of beasts slain without the special circumstances of sacrifice, nay, yet further and more remarkably, sometimes, in human blood drawn from the living subject, had its own conventional meaning among the rites of the ancient world ; and though prohibited

to the Jews, was common among the people who surrounded them. It was indeed so generally diffused among the heathen nations of antiquity, that it possessed little short of a natural significancy. It was the almost universal mode of binding together, in mutual compacts, covenants, or associations, those who together partook of the blood of the victim; and it was not only the universal, but the most sacred and obligatory bond of such covenants. And it is seemingly to this use of the rite, that our Saviour refers, when he speaks of the cup as *the blood of the new covenant*, or *the new covenant in his blood*. His blood, shed for the remission of sins, was to be made effectual to a yet further purpose, and to become, in a symbolical participation, the bond and the token of our Christian fellowship, and of the new covenant entered into with us by God. The prescription of drinking blood, in this sense, contained nothing in itself revolting from the feelings of human nature; for it was, as has been observed, the most solemn and accustomed rite, appropriated to such occasions; and with the

Jews themselves it could have needed no other sanction, than that, which he must have had the power of giving, who should have ventured to propose the abrogation, in its minutest circumstance, of any part of the Mosaic ritual. In other words, even their scruples would have given way to the authority of him, whom they should have recognized as their expected Messiah ; and though unable to persuade them of the rightful claim of Jesus to this title, yet it is only on the ground of his possessing it, that we call upon them to pay attention to his words. And with respect to ourselves, we may observe further, that the interpretation thus given to the drinking the blood of Christ in the Sacrament, falls in with those various passages of the New Testament, in which the blood-shedding of Christ is spoken of as the ratification of a covenant, and distinctly called, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, *the blood of the covenant*, and *the blood of the everlasting covenant* ^b.

And thus, perhaps, the participation in

^b Heb. x. 29. xiii. 20.

the bread, as the symbolic representation of the body of Christ, might be not improperly regarded, as the festive part of the rite, strictly so called, and in which the victim was fed upon; while the participation of the cup might be considered as a federal act, not inappropriate to the occasion of the feast. This would remove the only important difficulty, that of feasting on blood; the thing most strenuously forbidden in the Law. But, perhaps, even this is unnecessary, and may be looked upon as too much of a refinement.

There is, however, it must be observed, upon any supposition, a distinct office assignable to the bread, no less than the wine in the Sacrament; and one, closely adapted to the idea of the festive participation in the victim being confined to that part of the rite, which consists in eating bread, as the body of our Lord. I allude to the communion, or identity, established between the Redeemer and the redeemed; the general notion of which pervades the language of the New Testament, and of which the celebration of the Eucharist is a most ob-

vious symbolical representation. Indeed I cannot help thinking, that the universal practice of feeding on the victim, as a part of the rite of sacrifice, was founded chiefly, if not entirely, upon this very idea of identifying the person sacrificing with the thing sacrificed. Now this was done in the Jewish sacrifices by eating of the body of the victim only : and as the Israelites by eating of the victim only partook of the mystic sacrifices of atonement and redemption under the Law, so may we be presumed in the bread of the Eucharist, considered as the body of Christ, to partake of and to become identified with the Redeemer himself. And though I am far from contending for this as the necessary interpretation of the rite, yet falling in as it does with the view on which we have insisted, it is perhaps not undeserving of consideration. If it be accepted, as supplemental to that view, the result of the whole would be, that by eating in the Lord's Supper, we are more especially made partakers in the sacrifice ; by drinking, we more especially bind ourselves to the covenant made for us in Christ ; and

the twofold view, thus presented to us of the Sacrament, exactly corresponds with the twofold idea of the death of Christ familiar to us in Scripture, as a sacrifice for sin, and as the ratification of a covenant.

The inferences already drawn from the general character of the rite, as a feast upon a sacrifice, might be not a little strengthened by the more particular consideration of that sacrifice of the Law, by which the death of Christ was most exactly and remarkably typified; and to which our attention is drawn by the time of appointment of the Eucharist. It was at the season of the Paschal solemnity, perhaps after the actual celebration of the Paschal Supper, and with a direct allusion to it in his declaration, that *with desire he had desired to eat that passover with them*^c, that our Lord established the holy Communion. From hence alone a presumption might arise, that the one rite was in some way connected with the other; but this I mention only by the way, forbearing to dwell upon

^c Luke xxii. 15.

it in this place, because a fitter opportunity will hereafter occur of estimating the value of the presumption, when we come to the consideration of the passages, in the apostolical Epistles, bearing upon the subject before us.

For the present I shall conclude with some brief remarks on the light thrown upon the general subject of inquiry, by what has been observed in the present Lecture.

From the primary view taken of the nature of the rite, founded upon its conventional significancy as illustrated by the words and circumstances of institution, the special character of the benefits conferred in it, the great object of our solicitude, may, it seems, without difficulty be deduced. If the sacrament of the Lord's Supper be rightly considered as a feast upon a sacrifice, it will follow, that in it are communicated generally to the participants all the benefits of that sacrifice, of which they become partakers in its due celebration. And the sacrifice of Christ, being a sacrifice of atonement and peace-offering, pardon of sin and reconciliation to God, would seem to be

the immediate fruits of a participation in it, the primary and fundamental benefit annexed to the ordinance; while our restoration to the hope of eternal life, and the assurance of the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable us to secure the verification of our hope, would seem to be the necessary consequence of the reconciliation thus effected.

In looking to the detail of the feast, we find these conclusions not a little strengthened by the more particular circumstances of its celebration. In the notion of feeding upon the body of Christ, seems to be implied and signified that personal identification with him, by which, as members of the same body, we become entitled to partake of *his fulness*^d; of the graces of that Spirit which was poured out on him without measure^e, and of that life which we are expressly said to have in him^f. But more especially in the introduction of so new a circumstance into a sacrificial observance, as that of drink-

^d John i. 16. Ephes. iv. 13.

^e John iii. 34.

^f 1 John v. 11.

ing the blood of the victim, do we find an additional and special assurance of the reality of our title to eternal life ; signified by our participation in that, which having been considered as the life, and as such forbidden in the Levitical sacrifices, is, on the other hand, especially and appropriately enjoined to those, who are restored to the hope of immortality by the sacrifice of Him, through whose blood a real and effectual atonement was made for the sins of the world, and the sole obstacle to the enjoyment of our original and eternal inheritance removed.

These inferences, derived from the consideration of the rite, in its character of a feast upon a sacrifice, are again yet further confirmed by our Lord's declaration, in reference to the cup, that it is *the blood of a covenant*, directing us at once to recognize in it, the occasion and the mode of our confirming and applying to ourselves that federal relation with our Maker, ratified in the blood of Christ, and by which we become, on the fulfilment of our part of the engagement, entitled to all the benefits secured to us in it, on the part of God. These

it is no further necessary to enumerate: they are comprised in the general promises, by which we are led to embrace the religion of the Redeemer; and fall in with those, which we have already deduced from our previous consideration of the rite.

Of these benefits, in its general character of a federal act, no less than in that of a feast upon the sacrifice, by which they are more especially purchased and secured to us, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the obvious pledge, on the part of him who calls us to it; as it is, correspondently, a declaration, on our part, of our acceptance of the offers of the Gospel, on the conditions to which that acceptance binds us; the conditions of faith in the merits and obedience to the law of our Redeemer. May the sincerity of our endeavours to fulfill our part of the compact be found in harmony with our assurance, that the promises of God made to us in Christ, and visibly propounded to us in his ordinances, will never fail: so shall we be enabled to celebrate, with a real feeling of its excellency, the feast to which we are invited; and to re-

joice, individually, in the personal application to ourselves of those benefits, of which the Sacrament is the guarantee to all faithful communicants.

LECTURE VII.

1 COR. X. 16.

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?

THE progress of our inquiry into the benefits annexed to a participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, so far as they may be deduced from the consideration of the nature of the rite itself, and the words and circumstances by which its natural significancy was more especially limited and defined in its institution, seems to have led us to the following conclusions :

First, and generally, that the rite itself is of the nature of a feast ; and therefore primarily intended to nourish and support, or to represent nourishment and support ; and that, making part of a religious service, the nourishment represented by it must be spiritual : that the specific character of the feast is that of a feast upon a sacrifice ; and

that therefore the benefits derived from a participation in it, must be the communication of the beneficial results accruing from the sacrifice to which it refers, or is appendant.

Secondly, and more particularly, that it is, in fact, a feast upon the body and blood of Christ, symbolically represented by the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and considered as the sacrifice of atonement, redemption, and peace-offering for the whole race of mankind; communicating to those, who faithfully partake of it, under this idea and in conformity with the injunction of their Lord, remission of sin and all other benefits of his passion.

It has further appeared, that by the symbolical union effected by a participation in the holy elements, is expressed and cemented that communion and identity, in many important respects, between the Redeemer and the redeemed, the head and the members of his church, spoken of by our Lord himself, and so often alluded to in the writings of his Apostles, and by which we become partakers of *his fulness*;

receiving, according to our capacities, the gracious influences of that Spirit, which was poured out on him in his human nature *without measure*; and the communication of the principle of that eternal life, which we shall hereafter enjoy with him in heaven.

Lastly, we have observed, that the participation in the wine of the Sacrament has probably a yet further meaning, suggested indeed by the expressions used by our Lord himself in giving the cup, that of binding us, by the most solemn federal rite of antiquity, to the observance of the new covenant ratified in the blood of Jesus Christ, and by consequence assuring to us the communication of all the benefits resulting from the covenant, to which we are thus made parties.

It is to an inquiry, how far these ideas of the nature and benefits of the institution are in accordance with what we may elsewhere in the New Testament learn respecting the rite; how far they may be confirmed, or of what extension they may be capable, from the incidental notices of it to be found in the apostolical writings, or in

the anticipative references to it in the Gospels, that I now proceed.

I pass over those passages in the Acts of the Apostles, in which, under the expression of *breaking bread*^a, the Lord's Supper is probably alluded to; not from any doubts in my own mind with respect to the allusion, in some at least of the places alleged, but because the passages themselves contain little bearing upon our immediate inquiry. They neither illustrate the nature of the rite, nor suggest any thing with respect to the benefits resulting from its celebration. The utmost use that we could make of them, would be to confirm that part of our primary view of the sacraments, which contemplated the institution of the Lord's Supper, as the rite of communion in the reli-

^a Acts ii. 42. 46. xx. 7. 11. Tertullian *seems* to understand Acts xxvii. 35. of the Lord's Supper. Speaking of St. Paul, he says, "In navi coram omnibus *Eucharistiam* "*fecit.*" De Orat. cap. xxiv. But the allusion to the Lord's Supper is not quite certain. The old Syriac translates Acts ii. 42. and xx. 7. *breaking the Eucharist*. See Dr. A. Clarke's Discourse on the Holy Eucharist, pp. 74. 76. Waterland, Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist, chap. I. and Griesbach, notice only the former of these texts, in reference to the Syriac.

gion of the Redeemer. We may observe too, by the way, that upon the supposition of these passages alluding to the Eucharist, they furnish an irrefragable testimony to the frequency with which the rite was administered, and of the importance attached to it from the beginning, as an indispensable part of the religious service of the converts.

Except in these passages, the Lord's Supper does not seem to be alluded to in the Acts of the Apostles; and I therefore proceed at once to the Epistles, in which the first, and perhaps the most important passage in the whole New Testament, bearing upon our particular investigation, occurs in the tenth chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. It is valuable, not only for the doctrine it contains, but for the early date of the Epistle; from which it appears, that abuses, sufficient to call for the animadversion of the Apostle, had in that early era grown up in the celebration of the rite: a proof at once of its importance, and of the attention it had attracted.

The passage itself is as follows: *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^b? That the Lord's Supper is here spoken of cannot be made a question, but for the elucidation of the doctrine contained or implied in the passage, and in order to enable us to derive from it the support which it is capable of affording to the views of the sacrament already taken, a brief survey of St. Paul's argument, in the chapter in which it occurs, and in some preceding ones, will be found desirable.

The occasion of its introduction by St. Paul was this. In the seventh chapter of the Epistle, he begins to deliver to his Corinthian readers his judgment on sundry particulars, concerning which they had written to consult him: and in the eighth comes to the question concerning the eating of things offered in sacrifice to idols. In this chapter he shortly decides, that, though we may know an idol to be nothing,

^b 1 Cor. x. 16.

yet that in charity we must not let our knowledge *become a stumblingblock to them that are weak*^c, nor lead them to transgress by acting in opposition to their conscience, though unreasonably scrupulous, or even erroneous.

In the ninth chapter he continues to urge the restraint, which in charity to others we ought often to put on our own actions, though otherwise justifiable; and to illustrate what ought in such cases to be our conduct by his own example: shewing, that the liberty he had, as an Apostle, he did not use to the uttermost, neither eating nor drinking at their expense, nor, like St. Peter and other of the Apostles, *leading about a wife*^d to be chargeable to them: but, on the contrary, accommodating himself even to the prejudices of all men, if innocent in themselves, that so he *might save some*^e; and subjecting himself to mortification, self-denial, and restraints of various kinds, to which nothing but charity, and his earnest desire of advancing the salva-

^c 1 Cor. viii. 9. ^d 1 Cor. ix. 5. ^e 1 Cor. ix. 22.

tion of others, bound him. To a similar line of conduct, in matters in any way affecting their brethren, he by implication exhorts them ; observing, that in the exercise of this sort of self-control in the use of things innocent or indifferent, no more was required of them, as the followers of Christ contending for a heavenly prize, than they were accustomed to see practised, for the attainment of a far inferior object, by those who strove for the mastery in their secular games.

In the tenth chapter he resumes and pursues further his argument concerning things offered to idols. Hitherto he had spoken of the want of charity, manifested in doing that which might *make a brother to offend*^f ; he now begins to urge the possible danger to themselves of the conduct, which he had as yet condemned on the score of charity only : reminding them, that while in the security of their conscience they ventured to partake in feasts, so closely connected with an idolatrous service,

^f 1 Cor. viii. 13.

they might indeed be in more danger than they seemed to suspect, of falling into the idolatry, from which, in the strength of their persuasion of the nothingness of an idol^g, they flattered themselves they were altogether free. This danger he places in the fact of such eating being, in itself, and abstracted from the knowledge, which might render it innocent in them, an overt act of idolatry. He observes, that with reference to the offence, in this case, it was not always enough, even for Christians, to *know*, *that an idol is nothing*; for that in this respect our freedom, in consequence of our participation in the ordinances of the Gospel, cannot be greater than that of the Israelites in the desert, who had been *baptized* by an analogous baptism *unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*^h; and who had figuratively *eaten the same spiritual meat, and drank the same spiritual drink*ⁱ with those, who now had part in the Christian sacraments; but with whom, notwithstanding,

^g 1 Cor. viii. 4. x. 19.

^h 1 Cor. x. 2.

ⁱ 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.

God was not well pleased^k on this very account; namely, their having partaken in an idolatrous festival. For the sole act of idolatry, objected to the Israelites on the occasion alluded to by St. Paul, is that they *sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play*^l. And from the narrative of the transaction in Exodus, it seems fair to infer, that many of them did this, with as little *conscience of an idol*^m, that is, with as little intention of doing honour to the idol, as the Corinthians themselves in their participation of the feasts, following, or accompanying the heathen sacrifices. For though some of them might, not improbably, be parties to the offerings made to the golden calf, as such; yet the greater part seem from the context to have considered the sacrifice as in reality offered to the Lord: according to the very words of Aaron, inviting them to it, *To-morrow is a feast to the Lord*ⁿ. With these then the overt act of idolatry was, as in the case of those to

^k 1 Cor. x. 5.

^m 1 Cor. viii. 7. x. 28, 29.

^l 1 Cor. x. 7.

ⁿ Exod. xxxii. 6.

whom St. Paul is writing, in the sitting down to eat of that, which had in fact been offered to an idol. And as this virtual idolatry had, in the case of the Israelites, been so severely punished; so St. Paul would insinuate, that a similar self-indulgence, on the part of the Corinthians, could not be safe.

Having thus pressed upon them the breach of charity, as it respected others, and the danger of falling unconsciously into idolatry and sin, as it respected themselves, St. Paul next proceeds to argue yet further against the eating of things offered to idols, from its inconsistency with a participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; a topic of argument of no little weight under any circumstances, but particularly forcible, when addressed to those, who, like the primitive Christians, were in the habit of a far more frequent celebration of the Sacrament than we are accustomed to; and whose practical sense of its importance may be presumed to have been in some degree proportioned to that frequency.

Now the whole force of the Apostle's reasoning in this part of his Epistle, rests upon the assumed and admitted analogy between *the bread which we break*, and *the cup of blessing which we bless*, in the Eucharist, and the idol feasts, from which he would dissuade his readers. The table of the Lord and the table of devils, the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils, the communion implied in the one and the communion implied in the other, these are severally compared, and their total dissonance asserted. But in what sense were the idol feasts in question a means or an occasion of communion with devils? Surely by being celebrated on that, which had to devils been offered. In what like sense was the Lord's Supper the means or the occasion of an opposite communion? Surely by being celebrated, not indeed literally on the actual victim of the sacrifice to which it referred, but on the symbolical representation of it, the bread and wine, conventionally representing the body of Christ broken, and the blood of Christ shed for the sins of the world, and offered to God.

One can hardly conceive a stronger confirmation, than is thus afforded to the view of the nature of the sacrament, deduced from the words and circumstances of institution ; nor, by consequence, of the benefits resulting from its due administration. Whatever advantage was supposed by the heathen to accrue from the observance of those rites, by which, as they imagined, their false deities were propitiated ; whatever benefits *Israel after the flesh* °, the natural descendants of Abraham, were permitted to look for from the due observance of the appointed sacrifices of the Law ; such, or analogous to these, must, if there be force and consistency in the argument of St. Paul, be the blessings conferred in the holy communion of the body and blood of Christ. If the sacrifices of the Law, when rightly celebrated, conveyed to him, who ate at the altar, the benefits which it was the object of the Levitical institutions to secure, after their capacity, to the partakers in them ; much more should that holy rite,

° 1 Cor. x. 18.

of which the feasts which followed those sacrifices were but the types, convey to the faithful communicant pardon of sin and reconciliation to God, the real and undoubted purchase of that one all-sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the world, made in the body of Jesus Christ upon the cross, and to which the feast of the Lord's Supper was by its very institution appendant.

But in addition to the support, which we derive generally from the passage, of our original notion of the rite, as a feast upon a sacrifice, and of the benefits accruing from its celebration, under that idea; we further obtain from the language of St. Paul on this occasion, a direct and important confirmation of the more particular and subordinate view taken of the sacrament, as a rite of union and communion with our Redeemer; as the occasion, and instrumentally the means, of our closer connection with him, and, by consequence, of our participation in the benefits implied, or guaranteed to us, in that union. By eating of that bread which is *the communion of his*

body, and by drinking of that cup, which is *the communion of his blood*, we are made one with him and he with us, we dwell in him and he in us; and inasmuch as we are elsewhere taught, that he dwells in us by his Spirit, and that in him alone we have life, we hence obtain the confirmed assurance of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and of the continuance of our restored claim to life, as the further and concomitant benefits of our participation in the sacrament.

The account of the institution of the Eucharist given by St. Paul in the following chapter, has been already noticed in connection with the evangelical narratives; and the principal points, in reference to which it bears on the particular subject of these Lectures, already touched upon. The occasion of its introduction, however, and the manner in which the ordinance itself is spoken of by the Apostle, suggest one or two observations, not wholly uninteresting to the inquiry in which we are engaged. From the danger attached by St. Paul to an unworthy reception of the sacrament,—that of being guilty of the body

and blood of the Lord, we may fairly infer some corresponding benefit from a due participation in it, equivalent at least to the risk incurred; and if the danger on the one hand be a just measure of the advantages on the other, we are, by the strong language of the Apostle in reference to the evils consequent upon a contempt of the sacrament, precluded from setting a low estimate upon the corresponding blessings annexed to a reverent reception. Again, from the particular charge brought against the Corinthians of *not discerning the Lord's body* ^p, we infer irresistibly, that the elements were not intended to be virtually what they were apparently, mere bread and wine; and to this extent the passage confirms our former inference, that they have a spiritual, or supernatural signification. And lastly, we may observe, that though the death of our Lord, as a mere fact, might be announced and commemorated by any form of outward celebration, yet that in any propriety of expression, eating

and drinking could in no known sense exhibit the death of a person, except that death were a sacrifice, and the eating and drinking spoken of a participation in it: and so far the observation of St. Paul, that *as often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew the Lord's death till he come*⁹, though incidental to his narration of the appointment of the ordinance, tends to illustrate and confirm the view taken of the fundamental character of the rite.

The next passage, in which apparent reference is made to the Lord's Supper, and a direct and important benefit asserted of our participation in it, occurs in the twelfth chapter of this Epistle; in the thirteenth verse of which it is said, that *we have been all made to drink into one Spirit*.

My reason for understanding this of the Lord's Supper will not require many words of explanation. St. Paul has been, and is, speaking of the unity of the Spirit itself in a great diversity of operations; that it

⁹ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

is one and the same Spirit that worketh in all the members of Christ's body, the church, and to various purposes. In illustration of this he says, that *by one Spirit are we all* (or, *we have all been*) *baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and we have all been made to drink into one Spirit*^r.

Now in the first clause of the verse Baptism is plainly brought forward, as an instance of one operation of the Spirit; and it is, I think, equally evident, that the drinking of the Spirit in the following clause is intended, not for a repetition of the same, but for an additional illustration. It would clearly be to no purpose to say, that it was one Spirit that acted in both cases, if, in reality, the acts themselves were the same; it is the very diversity of the actions, which constitutes the applicability of the instances alleged to the purpose for which they are brought forward by St. Paul; namely, the assertion of the unity of the Spirit in these various opera-

^r 1 Cor. xii. 13.

tions. And this being admitted, it seems vain to seek for any other interpretation of the drinking of the Spirit, than that which refers it to the Eucharist; for, not to dwell upon the mere propriety of expression, we know of nothing in the religion, which would here bear a juxta-position with Baptism, but the other sacrament. And the justice of this reference being acknowledged, we derive from the passage a further and not unimportant confirmation of the reality of one essential benefit, already contended for in the Lord's Supper, namely, of the gift of the Holy Spirit concomitant with its administration.

There is one other passage in this Epistle, from which some valuable inferences in confirmation of our previous doctrine may, I think, fairly be deduced.

I have already observed, that the time of appointment and other circumstances attending the institution of the Eucharist, almost necessarily connect it with the paschal solemnities of the Levitical Law. The very essence of that celebration consisted in the feast, which was made upon a lamb al-

ready offered to God with all the forms of sacrifice at his altar; and it is on a similar feast upon the sacred elements, as the representatives of *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, (of which the paschal victim was the type,) that we have insisted, as being the true notion of the Lord's Supper. So far they clearly correspond. But an assertion of St. Paul, in the fifth chapter of this Epistle, removes every doubt as to a connection, which we have hitherto contended for only as highly probable.

Christ, says he, our Passover is crucified for us, therefore let us keep the feast^s.

Now I do not contend, that in the feast here spoken of there is any allusion to the Lord's Supper; on the contrary, it is plain from the whole context, that the feast, to which we are here invited by the Apostle on *the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*^t, is a life of holiness corresponding to the profession of a Christian, and for which the expurgation of *the old leaven of malice and wickedness*^u is indispensable. But

^s 1 Cor. v. 7.

^t 1 Cor. v. 8.

^u Ibid.

the very fundamental fact, upon which, as literally true, the exhortation of the Apostle is founded, namely, that Christ is indeed *our*, that is, the Christian *Passover*, of itself seems to imply the celebration of some feast upon him, as our Passover, analogous to the paschal supper. For the Jewish passover, to which reference is here made, consisting of two parts, of the sacrificial offering of a lamb, and of a feast following on the lamb offered; so also ought the Christian passover, which is here compared with it. But *Christ crucified for us* corresponding to the lamb offered, on him we ought to *keep the feast*. And on him we do in fact feast, thereby fulfilling the other part of the paschal ceremony, if the Eucharist be, as we have contended, a real festival, celebrated upon bread and wine, symbolically substituted for and representing that body and blood, on which it would be not less impossible in fact, than repulsive in theory, for us to feed. But if this be denied of the Lord's Supper, we shall in vain look elsewhere for that completion of the comparison, to which we are naturally led by the

assertion of St. Paul; and the Christian passover will be deficient, in what was apparently the most essential part of the ordinance with which it is compared. Reject the notion of the Lord's Supper as a feast upon the sacrifice of Christ, and Christ will be but half our passover; admit it, and the celebration of the holy Communion is as exact a fulfilment of the type of the paschal supper, as the death of Christ was of the offering of the paschal lamb.

Other allusions to the Lord's Supper, which may be found, or fancied, in other parts of the Epistles, are too doubtful, or of too little moment in reference to the inquiry before us, to justify our dwelling on them; and I therefore pass at once to the only passage in the Gospels, in which the holy Communion appears to be directly referred to by way of anticipation. I allude to the remarkable words in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, in which our Lord asserts the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, says he, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and

drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day^x.

In the discussion of this celebrated passage my chief object will be to shew, that the Lord's Supper is indeed probably alluded to in it ; the consequences, on that supposition resulting from it, in confirmation or extension of our previous inferences, will be, I trust, too obvious to require any special developement.

I am indeed well aware, that in undertaking to shew, that in the chapter in question our Lord does at all allude to the sacrament of the Eucharist, I shall be opposed to many names of great and deserved authority in the church ; and to many eminent writers of our own communion. Yet I should hope that their number is not so great, nor the influence of their names so overpowering, but that the question still lies open to investigation, without danger of incurring the reproach (for such I should esteem it) of endeavouring to revive, or give counte-

^x John vi. 53, 54.

nance to an exploded or untenable hypothesis. Some brief remarks upon the state of the question, so far as authorities are concerned, may perhaps be a not unfit introduction to the proposed examination of the passage.

With respect to the testimony of the early Fathers, (I speak of those commonly called apostolical,) Ignatius is the only one, with respect to whom a doubt can arise; and the supposed reference to this chapter, in his Epistle to the Romans^y, though strongly urged by Johnson and Brett, is much too obscure and uncertain, to enable us to determine any thing from it, as to the application of the words in debate to the Eucharist. With regard to those of a later date, Johnson^z claims them for, Waterland^a against, and Lampe^b, though himself hostile

^y Ignat. ad Rom. cap. vii. p. 40. edit. T. Smith, Oxon. 1709. Whether Ignatius here refers to the Eucharist at all is doubtful; much more so, whether he so refers in connection with John vi.

^z Unbloody Sacrifice, Part I. chap. ii. §. 5.

^a Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist, chap. vi.

^b Comment. Evang. secundum Joann. cap. vi. 51. not. f. p. 256. vol. II. Lampe says, “Negari nequit, Pa-

to the application of the passage to the Sacrament, inclines to allow the Fathers to be in favour of it.

The Romanists are divided; but the main inducement of those, who deny its application to the Lord's Supper, seems to be, the strong testimony it would bear to the necessity of a communion in both kinds: as, on the other hand, the chief reason for rejecting it, among foreign protestants at least, seems to have been the dread of exalting too highly the external rite, and of falling into the papistical error of the *opus operatum*.

Among our own writers, indeed, this latter motive has had an extensive influence, especially with the more early ones. And in the beginning and middle of the last century, to this was added a certain desire of rationalizing the Christian doctrine, which may be observed, not only among professed Socinians, but among those, who in most points were far removed from the suspicion of favouring Socinian tenets.

“trum maximum numerum nostrum locum de sacramentali manducatione intellexisse.”

On the other hand, there has been not a little difference of opinion among those, who agreed in the general idea, that the words in question might fairly be considered as referring, in some sense, to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Many, for instance, seem to have thought, that though the real intent of our Saviour, throughout the chapter, was only to impress upon his hearers the necessity of embracing with firm faith the doctrine, of which the efficacy of his death and blood-shedding formed a part ; yet that he might, though without distinct or purposed allusion, have had in his thoughts the celebration of that then future rite, by which believers were afterwards openly and visibly to testify their adherence to him.

Others again have gone so far as to allow, that the passage may indeed be applied to the illustration of the doctrine of the Eucharist ; although they have been unwilling to admit, that in its delivery by our Saviour, there was any intention of such an application of his words. These have laid much stress on the circumstance of the Sacrament

not being at that time instituted ; and from this fact have drawn two inferences of very unequal solidity : the one, not easily impeachable, that the words of our Lord could not have been understood of the holy Communion by those to whom they were addressed ; the other, scarcely tenable, that, because not then so understood, they could not consistently, at any future time, be applied to the direct interpretation of the instituted rite.

And, lastly, there have been others, who, admitting that the allusion was unintelligible at the time, have nevertheless not hesitated to consider the words uttered by our Lord, as originally intended by him to refer primarily and most directly to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper ; in the allusion to a subsequent appointment perceiving no other difficulty, than may be found in many similar declarations of our Lord recorded by the same Evangelist.

With none of these will the view of the passage about to be proposed exactly coincide. My own idea is, that in the words, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and*

drink his blood, ye have no life in you, our Lord intended to assert, primarily and directly, the necessity of a participation in the sacrifice, which he was to offer for the life of the world; of which participation the feeding on the victim slain, was, in reference to other sacrifices, the usual and recognized method: and that, secondarily, or by implication, he meant to declare the future necessity of partaking in that rite, which, when instituted and carried into effect, should remove the difficulty, which so severely shocked the minds and feelings of his hearers at the time. Against this interpretation of the passage, I am aware of no objection, which does not in truth lie, not so much against the interpretation itself, as it respects the words of our Lord, or the context in which they are found, as against the particular notion of the Sacrament on which it proceeds, and which has hitherto been maintained in these Lectures.

But the probability or improbability of the interpretation will be best ascertained, by an examination of the circumstances which led to our Lord's declaration.

Now the passage itself occurs in the course of a very remarkable dialogue between our blessed Lord and the Galilean multitude, which had followed him, after the miraculous distribution of the loaves and fishes, from the desert to Capernaum: and is introduced by a reference to that transaction.

The effect of that miracle was peculiar: it was the first and the only one that provoked, from any considerable assemblage of the Jewish people, any very direct acknowledgment of Jesus Christ, as their expected Messiah: in consequence of it, those who saw the miracle, declared, *This is of a truth that prophet which should come into the world^c.*

The similarity of the particular exertion of power on that occasion to the miraculous feeding of their fathers in the wilderness, seems to have been the circumstance which produced this effect upon them, and led them to the conclusion, that he, who exhibited it, was the *prophet, like unto himself*,

^c John vi. 14.

whom Moses had taught them to expect. This, we are to observe, was the first and immediate effect of the miracle on those in whose presence it was performed. But in the interval between its performance and their finding our Lord at Capernaum, difficulties had arisen in, or been suggested to, their minds ; or, at all events, a method had been found of extenuating the mighty work which they had witnessed, in comparison with that wrought by Moses in the presence of their forefathers. Unless indeed, which from our Lord's first words to them seems not improbable, they had followed him in the hope, that he would prove his equality with Moses, by a like continuous grant of supernatural sustenance. Be this however as it may, it is evidently to this test that they seem willing to submit our Lord's pretensions, when, in demanding of him a sign, they suggest the gift of manna in the wilderness^d, as that which would furnish a good example of the sort of sign that they desired, and of which they were ready to acknowledge the validity.

^d John vi. 30, 31.

In answer to this our Lord, omitting any notice of the pretended reason for which they sought a sign, endeavours to turn their attention from the carnal benefit, which was their real object, to the spiritual blessings to be obtained from his manifestation to the world; from the food, which they sought for the sustenance of their bodies upon earth, to the true bread, which was to nourish them to everlasting life; and which, like that given to their fathers by Moses, or rather by God through Moses, he declares to them, had come down from heaven in his person.

It is at this assertion of his having come down from heaven, and not at any thing that he had hitherto said of the bread of life, that their first murmurs are excited; nor could they comprehend, how he, whom they considered as *the son of Joseph, whose father and mother they knew*^c, could be said to have so come down.

This difficulty Jesus Christ seems to admit by his declaration, that the belief of it

^c John vi. 42.

required a faith, which was the gift of God, and could not be had without his gracious interference ; for *no man could come to him, except the Father drew him*^f. But so far from suggesting, or attempting any explanation of what he had before said, he goes on to enforce his previous doctrine, and the further necessity of that faith, which their incredulity had impressed upon his mind, by the reiteration and extension of his former words. *He that believeth on me*, says he, *hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life*^g : the bread, that is, by which everlasting life is sustained, but which can only be itself procured through the medium of faith in me. *Your fathers did*, indeed, *eat of bread from heaven, the manna in the wilderness*, but that was for the sustenance of their bodies only in the present life ; and they died. *This is the bread, which also, like that, cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die, but live for ever*^h.

Now it is particularly to be observed,

^f John vi. 44.

^g John vi. 47, 48.

^h John vi. 49, 50, 51.

that, up to this point, his repeated assertion, that he was himself the bread of life on which they were to feed, seems not to have produced any remarkable effect on the minds of his hearers: whatever force or meaning they attached to the expression, they evidently took no offence at it. Nor from any thing which has as yet been considered, I am quite ready to admit, could any allusion to the Sacrament be legitimately sustained. So far, no more could fairly be inferred by us from the words of our Lord, than was perhaps supposed by his immediate hearers, that, in some way, he was to be the author and support of life, to those who should believe on him. And the facility with which his previous language may be adapted to this view of the subject has led many to maintain, that the sole design of Jesus Christ, throughout the chapter before us, was to impress upon his hearers the necessity of a spiritual feeding on him; and peremptorily to exclude any reference to the Lord's Supper, in that part of his discourse which we have yet to examine, because hitherto there are no traces

of any intentional reference to it. This method of argument, however, besides being in itself inconclusive, proceeds (it may be said, I hope, without offence) upon a mistaken view of the sort of connection traceable between the several parts of our Lord's discourse on this occasion.

The truth is, he seems to have gone on throughout the conference which we are considering, after his usual custom ; following up the ideas, which severally and successively suggested themselves to his own mind out of the previous observations, or reasonings of himself, or others ; nor are we ordinarily to seek for any closer connection between the different parts of his discourses, than the knowledge of this habit will supply. It is the not attending to this, that has involved the consideration of the whole chapter in unnecessary difficulties. The first object of our Lord, in his dialogue with the Galilean Jews, unquestionably is, to withdraw their attention from the grosser conceptions of his character and office, which attracted their carnal minds, to a more spiritual contemplation of the benefits to be

procured, by embracing the offers of salvation and eternal life, which he came to make to the world. But this view of his mission, proposed to them under the idea (suggested by the great miracle which had gone before) of eating the bread of life, leads to that of feeding on him, as that bread, in a spiritual sense; and the idea of feeding upon him, in its fullest signification, gradually developing itself, leads him yet further, in the prospect of the great sacrifice which he was about to offer, and by which the eternal life he has been speaking of, was in fact to be purchased for them, to the idea of feeding on the sacrifice,—on that flesh, which he was to give for the life of the world. *I*, says he, again taking up and repeating the expression he had previously used, *I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread, which I will give*ⁱ, is

ⁱ δώσω. The bread, that he *will* give, implies some *future* food;—something different from that on which they might then feed. But even then, in the sense of those who contend for a spiritual feeding by faith on his doctrine, exclusively, they might have so fed; what was to follow therefore was something different from that;—i. e.

my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world^k.

At this statement we read that the Jews strove among themselves, saying, *How shall this man give us his flesh to eat*^l?

Now it is remarkable, that upon this expression of their astonishment, our Lord, so far from softening, or in any degree relaxing the force of his previous declarations, seems by what follows rather to aggravate the difficulty which already embarrassed his hearers. Without furnishing any clue to the interpretation of his language, he thus proceeds; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are*

the flesh of his sacrifice, under the symbols of bread and wine.

^k John vi. 51.

^l John vi. 52.

dead ; he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever^m.

If obstacles existed to the reception of his doctrine before, they are any thing but removed by this supplementary declaration. An additional circumstance, not of difficulty only, but of horror, of a nature the most repulsive to all their habits and feelings, is introduced by the repeated mention of blood, as an article of food. Further, the life which they were to derive from this revolting banquet, is compared to that which the Son himself receives from his intimate connection with the Father. While the idea of a merely figurative and spiritual interpretation of his words, is opposed by the comparison of the food offered them, with that material manna, on which their fathers had been fed in the wilderness.

We need not be surprised, that a declaration so extraordinary should have excited their astonishment, or that a proposition so offensive to their habitual feelings and pre-

^m John vi. 53—58.

judices, should have caused the defection of a part of his followers; that *from that time, many of his disciples should have gone back, and walked no more with him*". The difficulties, which at the time presented themselves to the reception of his doctrine, were such, as would seem surmountable by nothing less than that faith in him, (the gift of his Father,) as possessing indeed *the words*, however in this instance incomprehensible, *of eternal life*^o, which, as appears from what follows, sustained on this very occasion the twelve in their adherence to him. Ignorant, as they probably yet were, of the fundamental fact, upon which the propriety of our Lord's expressions rested; the fact, that Jesus Christ was to be a real sacrifice of atonement and peace-offering to God; they wanted the first clue to their just interpretation. Ignorant, yet further, of the nature of the feast, by a participation in which the benefits of that sacrifice were to be communicated to the faithful; had they touched upon the confines of a right inter-

ⁿ John vi. 66.

^o John vi. 68.

pretation of his words, as referring to a sacrifice of some sort, they would still have been confounded at the notion of such a participation in the very body of Jesus.

Nor even to us, apart from the information which we derive from the institution of the Lord's Supper, does it seem possible to give a satisfactory account of the language of our Lord. Independently of the total want of any propriety in the expression, and the absence of any legitimate analogy, by which the use of such a metaphor might be vindicated, neither faith in the merits of Christ, nor the reception and meditation of his saving doctrine, (the usual resources of those who resist the application of the passage to the Sacrament,) can be accepted, as the thing intended by feeding on him; unless we are also prepared to admit, that the life which the Son hath in the Father^p, is by faith, or meditation only. No purely spiritual feeding again, however interpreted, would seem to correspond with the repeated notice of the ma-

^p John vi. 57.

terial manna, on which their fathers had fed. Nor, lastly, can any interpretation of the words of our Lord be fairly considered as adequate to the occasion, which confounds under one idea what he has so obviously separated, by the distinct mention of his body and blood, four several times in the course of as many successive verses. It is inconceivable, that they should be thus mentioned, if they had not severally some distinct and appropriate reference. And what that reference should be, if all allusion to the Eucharist be rejected, it is impossible in the whole range of Scripture, in the history or the tradition of the church, to discover.

On the other hand, admit that reference, and all becomes clear and easy. Admit that our Lord's allusion in the former part of his conference with the Galilean multitude was to the life-giving sacrifice, which he was to offer for the sins of the world; and that in his subsequent discourse he was led, naturally and progressively, to the contemplation of that festival, by which the benefits of that sacrifice were to be com-

municated to the believers in him ; and we are well able to apply and account for every circumstance asserted by him, of himself, as the bread of life which came down from heaven, of his body and blood, as *meat indeed, and drink indeed*^q, and the occasion of *life for ever*^r to those who should partake in them.

The reality then of the reference to the Lord's Supper being so far established, it would remain for us to inquire, in what degree the doctrine of the Sacrament itself, as already deduced from other sources, is affected by the expressions used concerning it in this remarkable passage. The result of this inquiry has, however, of necessity, been in great measure anticipated in the previous discussion.

The most important assertions of our Lord, with respect to eating his flesh and drinking his blood, are, that by so doing we obtain eternal life, and the assurance of our resurrection^s; that we dwell in him, and he in us^t. These assertions are in exact

^q John vi. 55.

^s John vi. 54.

^r John vi. 58.

^t John vi. 56.

agreement with those previous notions, which we have obtained upon the subject of the Lord's Supper, from the consideration of the words and circumstances of institution, and the manner in which it is spoken of in the writings of St. Paul.

From them we have inferred, that as by eating the bread and drinking the wine of the Sacrament, we are admitted to the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ, to the pardon of sin, reconciliation to God, the assurance of spiritual assistance here, and of everlasting life and happiness hereafter ; so these very benefits appear to be conveyed to us in great measure, under the notion of our being, symbolically, and to all essential purposes, united to, and identified with him ; of our being made one with him, by eating of that bread and drinking of that wine, which are the communion of his body and blood : that as, by the implied interchange and intercommunion of properties consequent upon this union of the Redeemer with the redeemed, we alike participate in the sufferings of his crucified, and the exaltation of his glorified body ; in his

subjection to death, and in his triumph over it ; so, from it we derive that assurance of a blessed resurrection, which is the direct consequence of the merciful and stupendous dispensation, by which he has been made *sin for us*, by dying upon the cross ; and we, *the righteousness of God in him*, by the efficacy of his resurrection to our justification ^u.

To these views of the efficacy of the Eucharist the passage in question adds nothing ; though from its consistency with them it corroborates their correctness, and by the peremptoriness of its language gives confidence to our former conclusions : the real value of the passage consists, not in any novelty of information conveyed in it, but in its correspondence with what is already established. Strong indeed as the presumption hence arising may appear, of an intended reference to the holy Sacrament in these words of our Lord, it must after all be remembered, that that presumption cannot safely be carried beyond

^u 2 Cor. v. 21. Rom. iv. 25.

a high degree of probability. And as in cases of this sort no circumstance can be deemed indifferent, or unimportant, which is of real moment in adjusting the balance of probability, I shall, I trust, be excused in again briefly adverting to a topic of argument, to which I have already had recourse, in considering the evidence supplied by the Gospel of St. John with respect to Baptism; and which seems not less applicable to the question before us. I allude to the peculiar circumstances, under which the record of the conference of our Lord with the Galilean multitude has been preserved to us.

It occurs in that Gospel, which (with one only exception perhaps) is allowed to have been the latest written of the books of the New Testament; and the especial object of which is said to have been the confirmation of the received doctrines of the church against some heretical novelties, which had gained a footing in it, by an appeal to those hitherto unpublished discourses of our Lord, of which St. John was the surviving depositary. In this point of view, though

no new doctrine, not already deducible from the words of inspiration, was perhaps to be looked for, any important allusions of our blessed Lord to matters bearing upon established points of faith, might fairly be expected to find a place. Now the great doctrines most fully illustrated by St. John are, undoubtedly, the divinity of our Lord, and the sacrifice of atonement offered by him for sin : upon these he is large. But whatever was peculiar to Christianity, also, naturally came in his way ; and to this we probably owe the notices of the two sacraments, in the third and sixth chapters of his Gospel. It does not seem probable, that the object of the former of these was merely to insist upon the necessity of a metaphorical new birth ; or of the latter, to magnify the benefits to be derived from a metaphorical feeding upon Christ. The laying so great a stress upon these expressions would indeed have been wholly unaccountable, had they not obtained importance from their being attached to something real. Nor can we in either case guess at any reason, why Jesus Christ

should have left Nicodemus and the Galilean Jews, nay his own chosen disciples, in the dark as to his real meaning; except upon the supposition, that the time was not yet come for the full explanation of his intentions. Now this was the case, upon the supposition of his alluding to the Sacraments, but was not the case upon any other suggested hypothesis. If in the third chapter of St. John our Lord refers to Baptism, the temporary obscurity of his language is at once accounted for: while at the same time we perceive, that it might safely be left to the actual establishment of the rite, to remove difficulties, which, though they might perplex, could not essentially mislead Nicodemus, but upon which it was not possible perhaps, in consistence with the general objects of our Lord's mission, to give him full satisfaction at the time. If, on the other hand, he only speaks in a highly figurative strain of a change of life and heart, we can see no reason for his persevering in the use of a metaphor, which confounded him to whom it was addressed, but who would have had little or no difficulty in understanding

or admitting the necessity of reformation and repentance from dead works, the inability of man to *renew a right spirit* within himself, or the consequent indispensability of a divine interference to effect it. The marked adherence, under such circumstances, to the particular form of expression, would seem wholly unaccountable.

So again, if in the sixth chapter of the Evangelist our Saviour alludes to his own sacrifice upon the cross, and the means of participating in the benefits of it by a sacramental feeding on his flesh and blood, then we can well understand, why upon a sacrifice not yet offered, on a rite not yet established, his expressions partook of the obscurity of that yet *hidden mystery*. But upon the supposition, that no more was intended than the necessity of faith in him as their Messiah, or of accepting and pondering the doctrine which he delivered to them, we are totally at a loss to conceive why he should here again, as in his discourse with Nicodemus, attach so much importance to a mere metaphor; why, so far from explaining it at the time even to his

disciples, he tells them, that hard as his words then seemed to them, an additional circumstance of difficulty existed in the fact, that he, on whom they were to feed, was ere long to ascend into heaven : a fact, be it observed, of which the revelation at that particular moment was so little called for, that we cannot but think that it was made for the express purpose of convincing them, that his words had a hidden meaning, which they were not yet qualified to comprehend.

In contending for the sacramental interpretation of both passages, the order of investigation pursued in these Lectures makes me at least so far a disinterested advocate, that, if their support be taken away, the more solid foundations of the doctrine for which I have contended, will, I trust, remain unshaken and unimpaired.

To sum up what has been said of the Lord's Supper, it would appear, that as the great object of the rite is the making us partakers in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered upon the cross, so the benefits conveyed by it must primarily be sought under

that idea. That in this view the remission of sin stands preeminent. But in the peculiar circumstances of the rite itself, we are enabled to distinguish and appropriate yet further the communication of especial benefits to the participators in it. In the communion of Christ's body asserted and typified in it, is implied the communication of the advantages derivable from the intimate connection established between the Redeemer and the redeemed; more especially of that spirit, which is inseparably united with him, and of that life, which we have in him, as he has in the Father. In our communion in the wine of the Sacrament, is yet further expressed our participation in a truly life-giving sacrifice; and the continual renewal of that covenant established with us in his blood, and to which we are originally admitted in Baptism.

In both sacraments alike we are indeed thus led to contemplate, as the fundamental benefits of their observance, the two most distinguishing and immediate blessings of Christianity itself; the forgiveness of sin, and the gift of the Holy Spirit; conducing

alike to the final result of the whole dispensation, eternal life for the faithful adherents to the truth.

On the several and more particular appropriation of these, and on some collateral points of interest, I shall make some observations in my next and concluding Lecture.

LECTURE VIII.

2 PETER i. 4.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.

THE object of the inquiry instituted in the present course of Lectures, has been to ascertain the reality, and point out the nature of the benefits, annexed to the due administration of the two Christian sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

For this purpose, the presumptions in favour of the annexation of some such benefits to the appointments in question was first stated; so far, at least, as to meet any repugnance to the consideration of the more direct proofs of the particular things contended for, from the assumed unreasonableness of the admission of any. That the expectation of some advantage from their celebration was not unreasonable, we inferred from the respect universally paid to externals, even in systems apparently unin-

fluenced by revelation : that a like expectation would be not inconsistent with the methods of a higher wisdom, we inferred from our experience of the course of the divine procedure under former dispensations. And as the mere fact of the appointment of external services in a religion confessedly divine, would thus, under any circumstances, justify the expectation of benefit from their due observance ; so, in the particular case before us, that expectation was not a little heightened, by the consideration of the spiritual nature of the religion, of which the Christian sacraments form a part, and the peculiar circumstances of their original establishment.

In turning our attention more directly to the object of their appointment, one obvious end of their institution at once presented itself ; in their character of rites of initiation and communion, they are naturally the very bands and supports of that visible community of faithful persons, to which it was the will of the Founder of the religion, that all his followers should be, externally as well as spiritually, united But the church

of God itself, so far as its members are concerned, could have been instituted only for the benefit of the individuals composing it. If no advantage resulted from our aggregation to it, we should in vain be invited to enter in. Again, of whatever benefits we might hope to become partakers through the medium of the society, of these the rite by which we are admitted into it, and the rite or rites by which we declare and keep up our communion with it, must be allowed to be, at least, the primary occasion. I say the rite or rites, because, though the rite of initiation can in nature be but one, the rites of communion, as in Judaism, may be many. But, whether few or many, the immediate result of their observance can be no other, than a title to participate in the privileges, which that communion confers. Such was the case with the various observances of the Mosaic institution, and such must be the case, not only in the Christian, but in every conceivable form of society, whether secular or religious, whether founded upon the voluntary agreement of the parties composing it, or upon the enactments of a superior

power. And therefore, of whatever benefits the church of Christ, as such, has the exclusive dispensation, of these we naturally and of course become partakers, through the medium of those rites, if any, by which we first establish, and afterwards keep up our connection with the society.

Accordingly, we might hence with safety and facility arrive at some general conclusions, with respect, not only to the reality and nature, but the particular distribution of the benefits accruing from the establishment of that connection. For the benefits themselves are either immediate or consequent. They result from our admission into, or from our continuance in the society. Of the former, Baptism, of the latter, the Lord's Supper, might be considered as the channel of conveyance.

But for the more express determination and appropriation of the benefits in question, a less abstract, and therefore perhaps a more eligible, mode of proceeding presented itself, in the investigation of the nature of the observances themselves, and the language of the New Testament concerning

them. In the prosecution of this we have been led to inquire, first, into the natural significancy of the rites, and secondly, into that significancy, as limited by the words and circumstances of institution, or more fully developed in the conventional meaning attributed to them, in corresponding observances of other religions; we have further considered the language of Jesus Christ himself respecting them, at the time of appointment, and of his Apostles, as the first authorized administrators of the rites; and lastly, we have referred to the anticipative declarations of our Lord and his forerunner on the subject, previous to their actual institution.

The result of this inquiry, which was terminated in my last discourse, has been, I would hope, the establishment of the following propositions.

First with respect to Baptism.

That the nature of the rite itself, considered as a religious observance, implies that it conveys to him, who rightly partakes of it, a spiritual purification; a purification determined by the very nature of the reli-

gion to consist in a removal of the stain, and consequent remission of the penalties of sin.

But the spiritual work thus signified in the very action of Baptism, being, upon the fundamental principles of the religion, referable to no other agent than the Spirit of God, a concomitant gift of the Holy Ghost seems to be indispensable, to effect the purification thus announced in the establishment of the rite itself: while, again, the express declaration of Jesus Christ, accompanying his institution, that *he who is baptized shall be saved*^a, points out, as its no less certain consequence, our restoration to that eternal life, the title to which was forfeited by the transgression of Adam.

And these conclusions, from the nature of the rite, the language of our Lord at the time of its appointment, and the character of the religion of which it forms a part, being confirmed by the direct assertion, no less than the implied meaning, of various texts adduced in the course of our more

^a Mark xvi. 16.

particular investigation of the language of the New Testament, we may safely challenge, as the unquestionable benefits of our participation in Christian Baptism, the three things already mentioned ; viz. the remission of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the restoration to the hope of eternal life.

But the examination of the Scriptures of the New Testament, to which we had recourse for the confirmation or the rectification of our earlier inferences from the nature of the rite, and the words and circumstances of institution, while it corroborated the conclusions already drawn, opened upon us new views or new descriptions of benefits, agreeing with these, or flowing from them.

Thus it appeared from the comparison instituted, and the correspondence asserted by St. Paul, between Baptism and Circumcision, that the former, like the latter, may justly be considered as of the nature of a seal to a covenant ; implying the ratification on the one part, and the acceptance on the other, of the promises made in the engage-

ment to which it refers; in a beneficial contract, like that of the Gospel, holding out a pledge and assurance to the party to be benefited, of the faithfulness of Him, who voluntarily establishes the covenant.

Thus it further appeared, that in Baptism we are made members of that mystic body of which Jesus Christ is the head; and, as such, entitled to every benefit resulting from our identification with Him, with whom we are buried in Baptism, with whom we are bound to rise from sin to righteousness of life here, and with whom, if we so rise on earth, we shall ultimately rise to the fruition of everlasting glory in heaven.

Thus it appeared again, that by putting on Christ in Baptism we assume a new character, being made *the children of God by faith in him*; a change of state operated by the Holy Spirit then given us, *whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; and the natural consequence of the removal of that stain and stumblingblock of sin, which had put enmity between man and his Maker, alienated us from the state of friendship in which we

originally stood with our heavenly Father, and interrupted the communication of his favour to us.

Lastly, it appeared, that, as the result of this our new filiation, no less than of the pardon of sin and removal of impediments which must precede it, we become in Baptism *joint heirs with Christ* in the eternal life, the title to which is restored to us in that sacrament.

These, indeed, and other inferences of a like nature, deducible from the various passages in which allusion is made to Baptism in the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists, are properly to be considered, rather as descriptions of the general state of favour with God, in which our coming under covenant places us, than as directly pointing out the particular benefits conferred. They add however fresh weight to our assurance of the solidity of our previous conclusions. For the glorious titles we are in them taught to assume, of the sons of God, the members of Christ's mystic body, and joint heirs with him in his kingdom, would be tantalizing and unmeaning, but for the real benefits of

pardon, grace, and eternal life, inseparably connected with those relationships, the investiture to which is, as it were, given us in the Sacrament.

With respect to the Lord's Supper we arrived at the following results :

That the nature of the rite, combined with its appointment as a religious service, implies, first, the conveyance of spiritual support and nutriment ; and secondly, the present operation of Him, to whose sole agency every spiritual work is throughout the New Testament attributed.

That the consideration of its conventional significancy, supported by the direct language of St. Paul in reference to the established rite, implies, as the immediate end and purpose of the institution, a participation in the benefits of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross ; which benefits, reduced to their simple statement, appear to be, the remission of sin, and, concurrent with this, reconciliation to God, and restoration to his favour.

But further, the notion of feeding upon Christ, combined with the language of St.

Paul in reference to the communion of his body, seems to intimate a more immediate and personal union with Jesus Christ, as the result of that communion, than would perhaps at first sight seem to flow from the idea of the Sacrament, as a feast upon a sacrifice ; and hence a more direct assurance of the benefits attendant upon that union ; including, of necessity, a participation, after our capacity, of that Spirit, which was given to Him without measure upon earth, and which he now dispenses to the members of his mystic body from the seat of his glory in heaven ; and the communication of that principle of life eternal, which he has in himself, and which we enjoy through him.

Lastly, the more particular consideration of the rite, in connection with some remarkable passages of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the blood of Jesus Christ is spoken of, led us to look upon it in the light of the ratification of a new, or the renewal of a former covenant ; and by consequence, as the pledge and the assurance to those who

participate in it, of the benefits guaranteed to the parties included in the covenant to which it refers.

And so far, as in Baptism, so in the Lord's Supper, the remission of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the restoration to our title to eternal life, seem to be the direct and positive benefits secured to us ; as they are the distinctive inducements to embrace the religion of the Gospel ; and the results of the rite, by which we maintain our connection with the church of Christ, seem to be identical with those of that, by which we are admitted into it. Of these, pardon of sin may in both be considered as the primary and fundamental benefit conveyed ; the gift of the Holy Ghost as its necessary and inseparable concomitant ; and the assurance of our restoration to life eternal as its implied and certain consequence.

The results thus arrived at however, though legitimately deduced, and in themselves perhaps unobjectionable, may appear to some hardly to fulfil the expectation

raised in the commencement of the course. From that, it may be said, we were led to look for a more discriminate appropriation of benefits to each, than the prosecution of the inquiry has as yet appeared to justify. And of the benefits themselves it may perhaps be contended, that they cannot properly be considered as the result of a participation in the sacraments ; being in truth rather the fundamental blessings and promises of Christianity itself.

Upon these two points I am therefore desirous of offering a few observations.

And first, with respect to the discrimination and appropriation of benefits, I would remark, that the apparent identity of benefits above exhibited is not in fact so absolute, as to preclude a just discrimination, or more peculiar appropriation to either sacrament. A difference between them in this respect is not only discernible, but well deserving of notice, as pointing out the wisdom of the arrangement by which they were severally selected for their particular offices. For though the benefits may be substantially the same, they will be found

to vary in some degree in character, in reference to the different circumstances of the sacraments themselves, and the places which they severally occupy in the Christian system.

The consideration indeed of a single point connected with their administration, that the one was to be once, the other often celebrated, would of itself lead us to expect a corresponding diversity in the results to be obtained from their observance. The effect of the one ought, it would seem, to be permanent and abiding; of the other, it would be sufficient that its beneficial operation should endure till its efficacy were renewed by a repetition of the celebration. Let us briefly examine how far such a difference is really perceptible, in relation to what we have considered as the common benefits, of which each is, after its capacity, the guarantee;—whether a clear and intelligible distinction, even in what is apparently common to both, may not be traced between them.

And first, of the remission of sin. This is evidently twofold, and to be complete

must include the removal, both of the hereditary stain derived from the offence of Adam, and of the guilt contracted by actual transgression. Now the first of these is the sole and peculiar province of Baptism; nor can the Lord's Supper in any other sense be said to have any share in it, than as, in its character of an act of communion, it perpetually witnesses to our continuance in that state of covenanted favour, in which Baptism places us. And this benefit, it is to be observed, is permanent and abiding; needing nothing to its completion, and incapable of forfeiture, except, perhaps, by such an apostasy from the faith, as would imply an abandonment of our Christian privileges. And so far the remission conveyed in Baptism corresponds with the singleness of the rite. Secondly, with respect to actual sin. Here again, there is no difficulty in the supposition of a conveyance of a free and full pardon for the past, on the acceptance of the conditions on which we enter into covenant. The only doubt can be, as to its efficacy in reference to subsequent transgression: to

which there is some difficulty in supposing that the pardon conveyed in Baptism should apply directly. But even in reference to the growing offences of believers, one permanent effect may unquestionably be attributed to it. As it places us in a favourable state, removing the burden of hereditary guilt, and bringing us within the terms of a gracious covenant, it lays a firm foundation for future benefits, and prepares the way for the further exercise of the divine goodness in the pardon of subsequent offences.

Were indeed the effect of our first aggregation to the Christian church in Baptism such, that those, who once received the benefit of it, could by no future error, or omission of duty, forfeit their advantages, or become entangled in the difficulties ensuing from a breach of contract, so long as the connection thus established continued unbroken; it would clearly be by a figure of speech only, that the remission of sin could be attributed to any subsequent act of religion. Were we by that first act of admission to the religion, not

only healed for the past, but rendered invulnerable for the future, any further observance, as the channel of forgiveness, would be unnecessary and superfluous. But no *such* prospective virtue being asserted of Baptism, while the propensity to sin and the liability to forfeit our claims to the inheritance of heaven, remain, even in those who have been *washed, sanctified, and justified*; some observance, by which a no less firm and satisfactory assurance should be given of the forgiveness of our actual sins after Baptism, than was furnished in it of our previous transgressions, seems to have been indispensable to the completion of the gracious system of the Gospel. And this we find in the other sacrament. In the Lord's Supper is continually renewed that application of the merits and benefits of Christ's death and sacrifice, by which the offence of sin is done away, and we are reinstated in the favour of our heavenly Father. While of original sin and of actual sin before Baptism, the stain is effaced in that sacrament; the impediments to our final enjoyment of the redemption pur-

chased for us perpetually springing up, are removed in the reiterated administration of the Eucharist.

But further, a like difference of operation may be traced, in reference both to the gift of the Holy Spirit, and to the assurance of life eternal, which we have contended for, as the inseparable concomitant and consequence of a due participation in both sacraments. It is Baptism which gives us the first assurance of the divine interposition in our favour, and dispenses to us those gifts of grace, which are described as *the earnest* of the Spirit. Our absolute title to a continuance of this first gift, grounded upon the reconciliation effected in Baptism, can, like the pardon of sin simultaneously conveyed, be forfeited by apostasy alone. Yet, inasmuch as all sin is so contrary to his holy influence, that the language of the New Testament supposes it possible, that the Spirit may be not only *resisted*^b, but *quenched*^c; and since experience as well as Scripture attests the fact,

^b Acts vii. 51.

^c 1 Thess. v. 19.

that *there is no man that sinneth not*^d; it is of no little importance to us, that in the pledge of renewed reconciliation to God afforded us in the Lord's Supper, we have a concurrent assurance, that in that heavenly feast we may continually *drink of the Spirit*^e: that the same holy Being, of whom we are spiritually born in Baptism, in the Lord's Supper spiritually sustains and feeds us. And a similar course of reasoning would be applicable to the consideration of that *life and immortality, brought to light*^f by Jesus Christ, confirmed to us in Baptism, and of which the assurance is renewed to us in the celebration of the holy communion. In the one we receive life, and are as it were born from the dead; in the other, the waste of that life is repaired, and the diseases and interruptions of our spiritual health, brought on by sin, are continually, and to the faithful communicant effectually, remedied and restored.

So that a difference in the results of

^d 1 Kings viii. 46. 2 Chron. vi. 36.

^e 1 Cor. xii. 13.

^f 2 Tim. i. 10.

their administration, not absolute indeed, nor such as to affect that efficacy which they possess in common, but sufficient to justify the distinction made between the sacraments, and the assertion of appropriate benefits to each, seems plainly discernible.

But the view thus taken of the sacraments, may, as we have observed, be further objected against, as unsatisfactory; inasmuch as the benefits asserted, so far from being the exclusive and peculiar results of a participation in those holy rites, are in fact the general consequences attributable to our acceptance of the faith, and our perseverance in the religion of which they form a part. But in truth no other benefits than those, which it is the great aim and object of the religion itself to secure to its professors, could on any rational principles be looked for, as the result of the observances by which we are initiated into Christianity, and by which we keep up our connection with it. There would in fact be an inconsistency in any such expectation. For it is from their being pledges to us of the fulfil-

ment of the gracious and peculiar promises of the revelation, that they derive their real value and highest importance. They would be unworthy of the place they hold, and unfitted for the very purpose of their institution, as the distinguishing rites of the religion to which they are attached, were any inferior, or indeed any other benefits, than those which it is the express aim of the revelation to secure to its adherents, the proper object of the appointment of the sacraments.

Neither the want of sufficient discrimination in the assignment of the benefits common to both sacraments, nor the admitted fact, that the benefits themselves, so far from being the exclusive and peculiar results of our participation in them, may, in another point of view, be with justice considered as the fundamental blessings and promises of Christianity itself, can therefore fairly be urged against the conclusions at which we have arrived, in comparison with the expectations with which we set out; and in vindicating to Baptism and the Lord's Supper the communication of the

benefits for which we have contended, we may hope to have succeeded in the attainment of the great object we had in view from the beginning, that of shewing, that those benefits were real, important, and appropriate. And in assigning the benefits common to both, no less than in the particular adjudication to each, we seem to be alike justified, by the more abstract consideration of the nature of such observances in general, the particular consideration of the specific rites enjoined, the declarations of the Founder at the time of institution, and the language of his Apostles subsequent to it, and the anticipative allusions of Himself and his forerunner, prior to their appointment.

To two classes of persons, however, our conclusions, admitting that they come up to the expectation raised concerning them, will perhaps on other grounds appear unsatisfactory: to the one, they may seem to fall short of that efficacy, which they are accustomed to concede to the sacraments; to the other, they may, on the contrary, appear to favour a more infallible operation

and effect of the sacraments, than the whole tenor of Scripture or the doctrine of our church will justify.

By the first of these it may be objected to us, that a system, which refers the primary benefit of Baptism to the washing away the stain of hereditary guilt, and the primary benefit of the Lord's Supper to the making us partakers in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, for the expiation of actual and growing offences, cannot be said to come up to the language of our public formularies, in speaking of the inward and spiritual grace annexed to each; by which we are led to conceive and acknowledge some special act of the Holy Spirit upon the participator in the sacrament, peculiar to it, and exhibited on no other occasion. Some feeling of this sort is not unlikely to prevail with those, who have rather adopted the language, than considered the real intent of certain expressions, used in the Catechism of our church. Without controverting the fact of such an exertion of spiritual influence in either sacrament, I would only remark, that while, if it have a real existence,

it is not inconsistent with the view taken in the preceding inquiry, its expectation, so far as the Catechism is concerned, seems to be built upon an erroneous interpretation of the language employed. With respect to this, we may observe with Balguy, that the mistake originates in a misapprehension of the meaning of the term *grace*; which men, attending rather to the familiar use, than to the particular application of the word, are apt to understand, here as often elsewhere, “to signify the assistance of God’s holy Spirit. But the compilers of our Catechism had no such meaning. They meant only a favour or benefit. Thus the word is frequently used in many parts of the Liturgy,” and “had more been intended by it in this place, the expression of *spiritual* grace would have been a tautology §.” Besides that the proper grace of both sacraments is afterwards described in language, not indeed in any way inconsistent with the supposition of such a gift of the Holy Spirit, concomitant with their

§ Balguy, Charge VII. On the Sacraments, p. 297. edit. 8vo. 1785.

administration, as we have all along contended for ; but certainly in a manner, exclusive of the supposition, that it consists in any such peculiar operation of the Spirit as is supposed in the objection : of the one, the benefit is more especially stated to be *a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness ;* of the other, *the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.*

On the other hand, the difficulties which present themselves to the reception of our doctrine, from its appearing to favour a more infallible operation of the sacraments, than can be justified by Scripture, or the language of our own church, seem to arise from a similar misapprehension of the *thing* contended for ; and from the supposition, that the peremptory assertion of the benefits attributed to a participation in the sacraments can be supported upon no other ground, than on that of the existence of some necessary and physical, though mysterious and incomprehensible union, between the grace or benefit communicated,

and the outward rite by which it is conveyed; involving in it all the practical errors resulting from the scholastic theory of the *opus operatum*. But such an alligation of grace to the outward act, forms in truth no part of the doctrine which we have been endeavouring to establish. No other connection between the grace or benefit conferred, and the material action by which it is consigned, is necessarily implied in any thing hitherto laid down, with respect to the reality and certainty of the benefits insisted upon, than that, of which innumerable examples may be cited both from the Old Testament and the New. In both of these a material sign, or action, is constantly made the pledge of benefits conferred, or of wonders wrought, not by the sign itself, or by any virtue, so far as we can discern, inherent in it, but by the will of God exerted according to his promise, on occasions, and in a manner, pointed out and determined by himself. For this, it clearly is not necessary to contend for any thing like a physical union between the grace and the sign, by which its conveyance is evidenced; and

in the supposition of a concomitancy of operation there is no other difficulty, than that, which may arise in the proof of the reality and certainty of the effect produced. Upon this proof it is that we have been hitherto engaged: and strictly speaking, the effect for which we have contended, as accruing from the sacraments, is not the actual transmission of the benefits, which is the work of God himself, but the assurance given us in them, that the benefits, to which they relate, shall be undoubtedly conveyed to us.

It cannot indeed be denied, that in upholding the certainty and efficacy with which the sacraments operate for the benefit of those who rightly receive them, there is always danger, lest, the qualifications necessary for a worthy participation being overlooked, it should be supposed, that that efficacy enabled them to triumph over every obstacle, which the vanity or the waywardness of man's nature can oppose to them. And were the consequences of the mere performance of an outward act, or of being made the objects of an external rite, so insisted upon, that without reference to

the state of mind of the partaker, it should be inferred, that pardon of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and restoration to the hope of eternal life, should, of necessity, and in every case, follow a participation in the rite, we might well revolt at a conclusion so contradictory to the whole spirit and tendency of revealed religion.

But in the assertion of the efficacy of the sacraments no such absurdity is involved. They work indeed, after their capacity, and in such a sense as such language can reasonably be applied to them, according to his ordinance who established them; but, like every other of his subordinate agents, it is in their proper sphere, and on subjects capable of receiving their influences. On these they as certainly operate, as the fire in melting ice; and as certainly do not operate on subjects unfitted for their reception, as the same fire would in vain attempt to liquefy the diamond.

In truth, the objection thus raised against the efficacy of the sacraments may with equal justice be urged against every part of religion, in which it is possible for a nomi-

nal performance of duty to take place, while the heart is uninterested, or the thoughts otherwise engaged. It has in fact equal force, or rather is equally deficient in force, when applied to prayer, as when applied to the sacraments of the Gospel. The promises made to prayer cannot be gainsaid; its efficacy cannot be doubted; yet who maintains that the mere repetition of a form of words upon our knees, while our heart is far away, ensures to him, who thus affects to discharge the duty, a return of the benefits guaranteed to prayer itself. Those benefits, whether in the grant, or in the refusal, of the matter of our petitions, infallibly attend the real performance of the duty; nor has any theologian yet ventured to limit the efficacy of genuine devotion, from the fear of giving encouragement to its counterfeit. The cases are precisely similar. Our confidence in both rests upon the divine promises. These may be clearer in the one than in the other, more distinctly expressed, as the duty itself is more frequently inculcated; but if their certainty can in both cases be ascertained, and this is matter of

previous inquiry, it is upon that certainty that our confidence in both cases reposes.

As no one indeed seriously believes, that from any mock service he can derive those benefits which are promised to the reality; the obvious caution to be observed, in treating points of Christian doctrine and duty, which are open to misrepresentation, such as has been alluded to, is not to abate of the certainty of the promises, but to insist upon the qualifications necessary to fit us for their fulfilment. To take another instance. The very fundamental assumption of the Christian system, that upon which the whole superadded structure rests, the love of God for those whom he interfered to redeem, can be maintained, in its universality, on no other footing, than a like attention to the circumstances of those in whose favour it is exerted. It is one thing to assert the universality of that love, it is another, to maintain, that, under whatever circumstances, we are, in the same sense and to the same degree, the objects of it. The one is an encouragement to reliance on his goodness; the other, to indifference

in our own conduct. The one promotes righteousness in the assurance of his favour; the other, unrestrained wickedness in an unjustifiable confidence in his desire, that *all men may be saved*^h.

In asserting therefore that love of God to his creatures, which is the sole basis of all our hopes in his mercy, no less than that prevalency of prayer, our assurance of which rests on the declaration of the word of truth himselfⁱ, the same caution is required, as in maintaining the efficacy of the sacraments, which he has instituted as *pledges of his love*. To derive benefit from his universal good-will to his creation, his creatures must submit to his government, and conform to his laws; to entitle themselves to the blessings of redemption, they must accept the terms, and abide by the engagements under which they are offered; to receive the benefits annexed to prayer, they must offer their devotions from the heart; to reap the fruits of their outward participation in the sacraments, they must bring to the celebration the requisite qualifications.

^h 1 Tim. ii. 4.

ⁱ John xvi. 23, 24.

But in the stress thus laid upon the qualifications necessary for a beneficial participation in the sacraments, do we not open the door to another objection to our system, from the incompatibility of the ground thus taken with the administration of Baptism to infants? I trust not; though I must of necessity be brief in assigning my reasons for that trust.

With the general merits of the controversy respecting infant Baptism, we have nothing to do; I am only concerned to shew, that the practice is not in any degree inconsistent with the doctrine that has been maintained on the subject of qualification, nor that doctrine with it. Assuming it to be fitting that infants should be baptized, it is, indeed, obvious, that, so far as the qualification of the parties is concerned, that propriety must rest on other grounds than those, on which the administration of the sacrament is justified in the case of adults. It is not because they believe that they are baptized; but because they are brought to Baptism by those who do. Here then the question, so far as our doctrine of the necessity of

qualification to benefit by the sacraments may be affected by it, is simply, what qualifications for such a rite an infant has or can have.

For the determination of this question we must revert to the promises: these are, as I have more than once observed, when stripped of the various metaphors in which they are expressed in the New Testament, remission of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the conveyance of a title to eternal life. Remission of sin, in the case of an infant, and previous to actual transgression, can only refer to the abolition of that enmity, which attaches to every descendant of Adam; but for this, which is a pure grant of favour, on the part of God, to those who are admitted into the church of his Son, no other qualification seems necessary than that, which is supposed in every human being born into the world, namely, our being obnoxious to the penalties from which we are freed in Baptism. Where no obstacle is presented to the extension of a favour, which the party to whom it is offered is capable of receiving, and of which he stands

in need, we can conceive no reason for a suspension of the grant, on the part of him who is willing to concede it ; and what the obstacle in this case should be, it is quite impossible to discover.

As little can we discern any impediment to their being made partakers of the gift of the Holy Ghost. How, and to what extent this takes place, it were vain to ask ; but it would be not a little presumptuous in us, who, except in its fruits, are unable to discern the operation of the Holy Spirit in ourselves and in adults, to question his influence, because undiscoverable to us in the case of infants. It were surely wiser to conclude, that those, who are on no account to be forbidden to come to their Saviour, receive, after their capacity, the blessings which he came to procure for all ; blessings, more especially, to the enjoyment of which, however little we may be able to comprehend their operation, we can as little comprehend any real hinderance.

With respect to the assurance of eternal life, there is yet less difficulty ; the blessing itself being rather consequential than im-

mediate ; the result of the removal of that obstruction, which, since the fall, had barred our entrance into the state, for which we were originally created.

Let it be remembered, that we are not defending infant Baptism, but vindicating our own statement with respect to the efficacy of the sacraments, from the heavy charge, if it could be substantiated, of being inconsistent with that, which we deem established on too firm a basis, for any views of doctrine, at variance with it, to be capable of maintaining their ground. It is not infant Baptism to which we are attempting to lend an inefficient and uncalled-for support ; but our own doctrine, from which we are desirous of removing a burden, which, if left upon it, would overlay and oppress it.

But, in truth, that doctrine, as we see, stands clear of the difficulty in which it is attempted to involve it ; and we may safely assert the necessity of some qualifications, to enable the participator in the sacraments to reap the benefits annexed to them, without risking the cause of infant Bap-

tism, or weakening our confidence in the reality of the benefits held out in those sacred ordinances.

Upon the whole then, the difficulties which present themselves to the reception of the doctrine maintained in these Lectures, are not such as to affect its proof; or to lead us to any distressing doubt of the correctness of our conclusions. The benefits annexed to the sacraments appear to be both real and substantial, worthy of their Author, and in harmony with the general spirit of the religion of which they form a part. Devested of the various metaphors in which they are at different times expressed, they have appeared to consist, essentially, in the communication of pardon of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and our restoration to the final object of our hopes, the inheritance of life eternal. Of these they equally, though with an appropriate reference to the places they occupy in the Christian system, convey to us the assurance. The one, in the guarantee of such blessings and graces as are indispensable even to an incipient believer: the other, of

such as are required by the more advanced professor. In the one, accordingly, the removal of the stain and guilt of sin antecedent to our entrance into covenant, is the most immediate object of the purification symbolized in it. In the other, the application of the merits of Christ's passion to obviate the effects of our daily growing transgressions, constitutes the peculiar feature of the remission obtained in it. In the one we receive the *earnest*, in the other we continually invigorate ourselves with fresh draughts of *the Spirit*. In the one the promise of life is restored, and its first principle communicated; in the other that promise is continually renewed, and the principle more effectually called into action.

In the selection of the rites themselves, for the purposes for which they were designed, we trace a great propriety. This is obvious, generally, in the choice of a rite of purification, as the introduction into the society; of a festive rite, as the means of declaring and keeping up our connection with it.

More particularly, and bearing in mind the *universality* of the precept to be baptized, it was fitting that the remission of sin should, in the first instance, be declared to us by a ceremonial observance, referring rather to the stain attaching to the very idea of sin, and to an impurity easily understood as inheritable, than to the notion of guilt, not so easily applicable to any thing but personal delinquency. It was, on the other hand, equally fitting, that the pardon of subsequent offences should be announced, in a rite calculated to awaken the sense of guilt, which attaches to wilful transgression. And as to the attainment of the former object Baptism was more especially adapted, so to the latter purpose the sacrament of the Eucharist, as a rite of communion, seems to be not less wisely suited; fixing our attention, as it does, upon the great sacrifice of atonement, not only for original guilt, but for the actual sins of men; and by the frequency of its repetition, standing to us in the place of the reiterated trespass offerings and varied sacrifices of the Jewish law.

It was fitting too, in reference to the new life, on which we enter in taking upon us the profession of Christianity, that we should be, as newborn children, cleansed from the impurities adhering to us from the condition in which we were born. And to this the washing of Christian Baptism has been thought, by the learned Mede^k and others, to refer.

It was equally fitting, in reference to the support of the life thus given us, that some spiritual food should be provided, by which the waste of that life should be supplied; that some medicine should exist, by which the interruptions of our spiritual health should be removed. And thus we find the Lord's Supper, as the bread of life, conveying support and nourishment to those who stand; as the feast upon a sacrifice, supplying the means of restoration to those who fall.

Lastly, with respect to the federal character of the sacraments. If, in reference

^k See Ezek. xvi. 4, 5. and Mede, Disc. XVII. p. 63. Works. 1672.

to the covenant entered into at Baptism, the peculiar propriety of the rite by which it is established, is seen, rather in its relation to the effects of our admission, than to the idea of covenanting itself, (for the seal of Baptism does not, any more than that of circumcision, contain any direct allusion to the notion of covenanting,) in the rite by which the covenant is from time to time renewed, and its breaches repaired, a manifest propriety is discoverable; inasmuch as one specific object of the Lord's Supper is to make us partakers in the blood of the holy Victim, whose death was the ratification of the covenant.

It remains only to offer some brief remarks on the conduct of the inquiry in which we have been engaged. It has been my object throughout, to establish rather than to subvert; to state, affirmatively, what appeared to me to be the true design of the sacraments, so far as the benefits exhibited in them is concerned, rather than to point out the imperfections of other systems, or even to meet objections, which, with various degrees of plausibility, may

undoubtedly be urged against the particular view taken. Upon the utility of such statements opinions will probably vary ; but it has long appeared to me, that the advantage of direct and positive notions has been too often abandoned, for the sake of that accuracy, which, in guarding the enunciation of the truth from error, frequently leaves upon the mind indistinct and negative ideas only, upon questions of real importance. And the consequence of this, in reference to the subject we have been treating, has been, not merely the prevalence of a low and inadequate estimate of the just value of the sacraments ; but the frustration in a great degree of that moral effect, which their due administration is eminently calculated to produce. For this, the importance of well defined notions of their meaning and intent, and of a steady conviction of the reality of the benefits resulting from them, is obvious and undeniable. We shall come to their celebration with feelings, in great measure proportioned to the liveliness of our apprehension of the benefits to be expected in it ; as we look

upon the service, as a mere act of obedience, or as the appointed means of securing to ourselves especial blessings; and our hearts will be beneficially or otherwise affected by the observance itself, according as it does or does not present to our contemplation, and force upon us the recollection of those momentous doctrines, to which it bears a particular relation.

The sacraments have often been described, and perhaps a little overrated, as the means of conveying to the gross minds of the multitude, through the medium of sensible representations, information with respect to spiritual things, which would with less facility be imparted by the language of words. I question, whether in such statements justice has been done to them; or whether indeed, in any stage of society, it can truly be said, that the language of signs is really more expressive or intelligible than that of words. I can hardly conceive the former being resorted to, except where recourse to the latter is impossible. But, though for the communication of instruction, the language of sym-

bols would appear to be alike inconvenient and defective, for other purposes it possesses advantages, in which the civilized and the well-instructed may participate with the ignorant and the rude. Though inferior, as a channel of information simply, it may excel, in the power of impressing upon the mind the information, which may have reached it from other quarters ; and the administration of a rite, or the taking part in a ceremony, of which we know the intent, may more effectually revive the impressions, which that information was calculated to excite, than any verbal repetition of the information itself.

And it is in this, perhaps, that the moral efficacy of the sacraments is most clearly discernible ; in their power, that is, of recalling to the mind, and presenting to its meditation, as it were, in a tangible form, the most important doctrines of the religion of the Gospel ;—the universality of that corruption, from the effects of which Baptism in the first instance frees us,—the not less universal efficacy of that atonement, the be-

nefit of which is communicated to us in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

But then to produce this effect, distinct and lively apprehensions of the nature and intent of the sacraments themselves, and of the benefits annexed to their observance, are indispensable.

Upon these therefore I have insisted; and if to this has been of necessity sacrificed, that interest which might have been derived from a more controversial mode of treating the subject, the practical result, at which it has been my great object to arrive, must, if necessary, be pleaded as my excuse. It was chiefly with a view to the practical consequences of the discussion, that the subject itself was chosen; and the end of the selection will be fully answered, if the unadorned statement, which has been attempted, of the reality and nature of the benefits in question, and of the positive evidence on which our confidence in their certainty may rest, should be in any mind productive of a more implicit and satisfactory reliance on the goodness, which is pledged to us in

both sacraments; of a more grateful and impressive sense of the reconciliation vouchsafed, and the obligations imposed upon us, in the one; and of a more frequent and hearty recurrence to the other, as the acknowledged and effectual means, of applying to ourselves, individually, the benefits of that sacrifice, once offered on the cross for the sins of all; of renewing the covenant entered into at our Baptism; and of restoring ourselves to that state of favour, from which by our negligence or our wilfulness we may have subsequently declined.

THE END.

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