

A
DISSERTATION
ON THE
SCRIPTURAL QUALIFICATIONS
FOR
ADMISSION AND ACCESS
TO THE
CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS:
COMPRISING
SOME STRICTURES
ON
DR. HEMMENWAY'S DISCOURSE
CONCERNING THE CHURCH.


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And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

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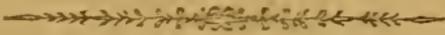
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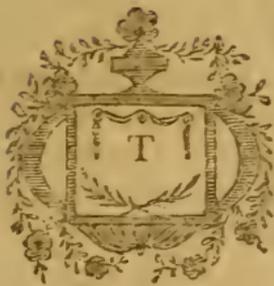


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DISSERTATION, &c.



INTRODUCTION.



HE first ministers and churches of New-England were unanimously agreed, that none ought to come to the table of the Lord, but the subjects of saving grace. This opinion universally prevailed, without the least opposition, until Mr. Stoddard published his discourse concerning the terms of communion, in which he maintained that the sacrament is a converting ordinance. Doctor Increase Mather, therefore, in his answer to Mr. Stoddard, calls his sentiment a *strange* doctrine. But the arguments and character of Mr. Stoddard eventually brought over many ministers and churches to his way of thinking. Among others, Mr. Edwards, his grand-son and colleague in the ministry, adopted his opinion, and, for a number of years, carried it
into

into practice, though never without having some hesitation and difficulty in his own mind. But at length, he totally renounced Mr. Stoddard's scheme, and published a masterly performance, in vindication of his own, and of the common opinion of the New-England churches. And ever since that publication, ministers and churches have generally been divided into Stoddardeans and Edwardeans, in respect of the sacramental controversy.

Here the dispute rested for many years ; and here perhaps it would have been well for the public if it had still rested. After two such able divines had amply discussed the subject, there was but little ground to expect, that much new light could be thrown upon it, by any who should resume the controversy. But Doctor Hemmenway has supposed that "*some further searchings and discoveries were still necessary,*" with respect to the right of admission and access to special ordinances. Accordingly, after mature deliberation, he has been pleased to favor the public with the fruits of his researches and discoveries respecting the qualifications for communion in the visible church. Though he does not directly attack Mr. Edwards, or any other author on that side of the question, yet he evidently means to refute the Edwardean, and to establish the Stoddardean doctrine. For, in the sequel of his piece, he professedly pleads the right and duty of unregenerate men to attend the Lord's supper ; and the right and duty of the church to admit such to that sacred ordinance. This is the point to which his whole Discourse concerning the Church ultimately tends. And this, like every other system of sentiments, depends upon a few fundamental propositions. If these be true, the scheme which he has built upon them is true, and must forever stand : But if these be false, the scheme which he has built upon them is false, and must eventually fall. Very
few

few men err, by reasoning wrong from true principles ; but multitudes err, by reasoning right from false ones. The only proper way, therefore, to refute any scheme of sentiments, is, to refute the principles upon which it is founded. And whenever these are fairly refuted, the scheme depending upon them is of course refuted ; for if the root be destroyed, the branches must die. Accordingly, I propose to examine the leading sentiments in Doctor Hemmenway's Discourse concerning the Church, and endeavor to show that they have no foundation in scripture or reason. And if I shall be able to make this appear, I trust the Doctor as well as the public will excuse me, if I should not exactly follow his path, nor spend time to remark upon every idea and argument contained in his Discourse.



CHAPTER I.

A definition of the Church.

JUST definitions are like just descriptions, which either prevent or put an end to disputes. Let a circle be described, and who can dispute whether it be a square or a triangle? Let a dove be described, and who can dispute whether it be a lark or a raven? So let a certain proposition be defined, and the definition will naturally convey to every person who understands it, a complete conviction either of its truth or its falsehood. But though definitions are better than arguments to settle a point, yet it is much easier to offer arguments than to give definitions. For a man may argue very plausibly about a point which he does not understand; and which, for that reason, it is out of his power to define. And to this cause perhaps it is chiefly owing, that so few disputes are brought to a decision. Men may continue to dispute so long as they neglect to define the real subjects in dispute. And here some who have undertaken to settle the sacramental controversy, have greatly failed. They have used some important terms and phrases, without pretending to define them; by which they have led themselves and their readers into great obscurity. It is true, indeed, most writers upon the terms of communion in the christian church, have considered the term Church of too much importance to pass wholly unexplained. But in explaining it, they have often palmed their own, instead of the scripture ideas, upon the minds of their readers. To avoid this mistake, we shall draw our definitions of the church from

from the pure source of divine revelation. The scripture uses the term church in three senses; which have some reference to the subject before us, and which, therefore, deserve to be distinctly considered.

1. The scripture sometimes uses the term church, to signify the whole number of mankind who shall finally be sanctified and saved. The Apostle, speaking of Christ's supremacy, Ephes. ii. 22, 23, says, "That God hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to *the church*." In the third chapter, he further says, "That God created all things by Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by *the church* the manifold wisdom of God." And in the next chapter but one he says again, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved *the church*, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify 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." In each of these passages, the Apostle uses the word church, to comprehend all the elect, who shall finally be brought to the kingdom of glory. And this is what is called the *universal invisible church*.

2. By the church, the scripture sometimes intends the whole number of God's *professing* people in all parts of the world. While the Jews were the only professing people in the world, they were called the church of God. Hence the Apostle, Heb. ii. 12, represents Christ as saying to Israel, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of *the church* will I sing praise unto thee." Of Moses it is said, "This is he that was in *the church* in the wilderness." In 1 Cor. xii. 28, the Apostle says, "God hath set some in *the church*, first apostles, sec-

ondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, &c." And speaking of himself as a persecutor, he says, "I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." The church here means God's professing people, or the *universal visible church*. But,

3. The church is more commonly used in the New-Testament, to signify a particular society of christians, who usually meet in one place to worship God, and enjoy the ordinances of the gospel. Thus we read of the church of God at Corinth, of the church of the Thessalonians, and of the seven churches of Asia. These were all congregational churches, or such small societies of christians as might conveniently come together for religious worship.

Now, it is easy to see that neither of these senses in which the word church is used in scripture, affords the least ground for that definition of the church which Doctor Hemmenway has given in the 9th and 10th pages of his book. After describing the church in various particulars, he comprises the whole in the following general definition. "*From the account which has been given of the church, and the several acceptations in which the word is used, it appears that persons of very different characters and descriptions are members. Some are departed saints. Some are inhabitants of this world; and of these some are infants; some are adult persons, and of both sexes; some are professors of christianity, others have not yet made a profession of their faith. And of professing christians, some are true saints, and belong both to the visible and invisible church; others are only credible professors; who though regular members of the visible church, are not living members of Christ's mystical body. And of those who belong to the visible church in its largest acceptation, some are, and some are not confirmed members, and in full communion. Other differences*

ences might be mentioned. But however, they are all subjects of the kingdom of heaven, members of the church, interested in the new covenant, entitled to peculiar privileges. They are all (in some sense) holy persons, the children and people of God ; and have some union or relation to Christ the head of the church, which those who are out of the church have not." The Doctor here takes some infants, and some adult persons, who have made no profession of religion, not only into the visible church, but into the covenant of grace, without any other authority than his own opinion. This seems, at least, to be taking too much for granted, upon a disputed subject.



CHAPTER II.

The covenant of grace considered.

NO writer, on the sacramental controversy, has made more use of the covenant of grace, or the new covenant, than Doctor Hemmenway. He has spent more than twenty pages in stating the covenant of grace, and in arguing from it. Nor is this strange, since he assures us, page 17, that this "covenant forms the church." If this be true, we cannot form just conceptions of the church, before we have formed just ideas of the covenant of grace. But, be this as it may, it is very certain, that a true statement of the covenant of grace would have a great tendency to settle the controversy about the nature of the church, and the proper qualifications of its members. It is very necessary, therefore, to consider the covenant of grace with particular attention, and to distinguish it from every other covenant, with which it has been too often blended.



S E C T. I.

The general nature of covenanting.

THERE is a wide distinction between covenants, declarations, and promises. A simple declaration creates no obligation, but only expresses the present intention of the mind. If a man declare today, in the presence of others, that he will go to a certain place tomorrow, this simple declaration lays him under

under no more obligation to go to the place mentioned, than if his intention had lain a secret in his own breast. If he alters his intention, he may perhaps be charged with fickleness, but not with falsehood. An absolute promise excites expectation, and of course creates obligation. When a man makes an absolute promise, he binds himself to the person to whom he makes it. And that person may either dissolve, or confirm his obligation to fulfil his engagement. A conditional promise is made upon the supposition of a certain contingency, and becomes binding, only in case that contingency happens. Suppose a man should promise to do a certain piece of work for his neighbour, provided he should procure assistance, or recover his health; in that case, the obligation to performance would depend entirely upon the taking place of the contingency, upon which it was made.

But a covenant is a mutual contract, stipulation, or agreement, between two or more parties, by which they bind themselves to each other, upon certain conditions. Every covenant requires the consent of the parties concerned. If a covenant be proposed by one party, but is rejected by the other, there is no covenant made, nor either party holden. Mutual consent is the only thing which gives sanction to a covenant. But after the parties have given their mutual consent, the covenant is confirmed, and neither of them can refuse a performance of the conditions, without a violation of their covenant engagements.

These are the peculiar properties, which distinguish a covenant from a mere promise, or a mere declaration; and which are essential to every species of covenanting, whether human or divine. A covenant between God and man is of the same general nature, as a covenant between man and man. God can no more enter into covenant with

men, without their personal consent, than they can enter into covenant with each other, without their personal consent. If we meet with any thing in scripture therefore, which is called a covenant, but which, at the same time, does not contain a mutual promise or engagement between two or more parties, we are obliged, by the nature of the case, to explain it in a figurative, rather than a literal sense. Thus the promise which God made to Noah, that he would never destroy the world again by a flood, is called in scripture a covenant, and the rainbow is represented as a token or seal of the covenant. But since we find this divine promise was made without any promise or consent on man's part, we are compelled to consider it as an absolute promise, and not as a proper or literal covenant. God often speaks after the manner of men, and uses words in a large or figurative sense, when the natural connections in which they stand, or the particular subject to which they are applied, will clearly determine their proper meaning.

But some, however, object against the placing of human and divine covenants upon the same foundation. They argue that God, who is a sovereign, has a right to take his creatures into covenant, without their previous consent. This is the sentiment of a very ingenious and elegant writer. Speaking upon the subject, he asks, "Has not God a right to enjoin such duties as his wisdom sees fit? Must he consult his creatures, to know what laws he may make for them? Was not the covenant in the plains of Moab, made with little ones, as well as with the men of Israel? With those who were not, as well as with those who were, then present? Are there not moral obligations which result from our rational nature, and from our place in the creation, as well as from our special covenant relation to God? Shall we conclude that all these obligations

tions are void, for want of our previous consent? To contract between man and man, who stand on the foot of equality, mutual consent is necessary: But God is a sovereign. When he promises us certain blessings, and enjoins particular duties, as conditions of the blessings, he takes us into covenant, whether we had previously consented or not.* The force of this reasoning depends on three propositions, the truth of which we will distinctly consider.

1. That God has a right to lay mankind under covenant obligation, by his own sovereign act.

2. That he has a right to bring mankind into covenant, without their consent. And,

3. That he brought some of the children of Israel into covenant, in this sovereign way.

1. Let us consider whether it be true, that God has a right to lay mankind under the obligations of a covenant, by his own sovereign act. It is readily allowed, that God has a right to give such laws and to grant such favors to men, as his infinite wisdom sees best. But the obligations which result from such acts of divine sovereignty, are totally different from the obligations which men lay upon themselves, by a covenant transaction. When they covenant with God, they *voluntarily* promise to obey his commands. And it is this voluntary promise, which creates the bond of the covenant. Though God has a right to command men to covenant, yet his command, without their consent, cannot lay them under covenant obligations. As God is not obliged to enter into covenant with his creatures, so his entering into covenant with them is an act of condescension. In this sense, he does not enter into covenant with his creatures, on the foot of equality. But though we admit his condescension, yet we deny his sovereignty, in his covenant transactions. When he condescends to covenant

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with

* Doctor Lathrop's Discourse in the American Preacher, page 58, 59.

with his creatures, he always covenants with them on the *equal* terms of mutual consent. For it is impossible, in the nature of things, that he should make a *covenant*, any more than a *promise*, for his creatures, by his own sovereign act.

2. Let us consider whether it be true, that God can bring mankind into covenant, without their consent. This is supposed in the reasoning above. "When God promises us certain blessings, and enjoins particular duties, as conditions of the blessings, he takes us into covenant, whether we had previously consented or not." The language of this proposition is, that when God proposes a covenant to men, he actually takes them into covenant, whether they accept or reject the proposal. This, we have just shown, is not within the province of divine sovereignty.

But we would further observe, if God takes men into covenant by the bare proposal of it, then he takes every person into covenant to whom he sends the gospel. For the gospel "promises certain blessings, and enjoins certain duties, as conditions of the blessings," to all to whom it is sent. But have all the Jews and Gentiles, who have heard and rejected the gospel, been taken into covenant? Have all the thieves, and drunkards, and deists, and atheists, who have heard the gospel in this land, been taken into covenant? If this be true, then they are all visible saints, and have a right of access and admission to special ordinances; and we ought to receive them to baptism and the Lord's supper. This consequence necessarily flows from the principle, that God takes men into covenant by proposing the covenant to them, whether they receive or reject the proposal. But if it be absurd to call and treat the openly vicious and profligate as visible saints; then it is equally absurd to suppose that God can bring mankind into covenant, without, and contra-

ry to, their own consent. It only remains to inquire,

3. Whether it be true, that God indeed took some of the children of Israel into covenant, who neither heard nor consented to the covenant. This is supposed. And the supposition is entirely built upon that noted passage in the xxixth of Deuteronomy. "Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath : But with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day." The plain literal meaning of this text of scripture is, that God entered into covenant with some of the Israelites, who neither heard nor consented to the covenant. But we cannot admit this literal sense of the passage, for various reasons.

1. Because it is contrary to the nature of things, that God should take men into covenant, without their knowledge and consent. This is evident from what has been said under the two last particulars. And whenever any passage of scripture, in its literal sense, contradicts the nature of things, we always suppose we ought to look out for some different meaning.

2. It appears from the preceding words, that God required all who were present to give their explicit consent to the covenant. "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God ; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood, unto the drawer of thy water : That thou shouldest *enter into covenant* with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day." According to the representation here, God proposed the covenant to the Israelites, and required them to give their explicit consent to it. And agreeably to the divine injunction, they all

all avouched the Lord to be their God, and to keep the covenant and the oath which he proposed to them. But why all this formality and solemnity, if there were no occasion for it? And there was no occasion for it, if God could have taken them into covenant without their knowledge and consent.

3. It appears, by a standing statute in Israel, that God meant to take that people into covenant, from generation to generation, by their own explicit consent. This statute is in Deut. xxxi. 9,—13. “And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose; thou shalt read this law before all Israel *in their hearing*. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may *hear*, and that they *may learn*, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that *their children, which have not known any thing, may hear*, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.” All the circumstances here mentioned naturally lead us to suppose, that this reading of the law was designed to give the adult an opportunity of renewing, and the youth an opportunity of entering into covenant with God. It was to be on the sabbatical year, which was devoted to religious duties. It was to be in a particular place appointed by God. And it was to be for the particular benefit of the children or youth. Such a reading of the law was calculated, in a peculiar manner, for covenanting. And no doubt it was appointed for the especial purpose

pose of giving every youth in Israel, from seven to thirteen years of age, an opportunity of making a publick and explicit covenant with God. Hence there is no reason to suppose that any of the Israelites, from Moses to Christ, were ever taken into covenant without their knowledge and consent.

4. If we understand the text under consideration in a literal sense, it will prove more than the advocates of the literal sense will be willing to admit. The plain literal declaration is, that God entered into covenant with him that was absent, as well as him that was present. And this will prove, that God may take *men* as well as *infans* into covenant without their knowledge and consent. But most, if not all the advocates for the literal sense, do not wish to extend the argument so far. All that they ever adduce it to prove is, that God may take *infans* into covenant, without their knowledge and consent. They generally suppose, that adult persons cannot be taken into covenant without, and much less contrary to, their own voluntary engagements. This is certainly Doctor Hemmenway's opinion: For he says, page 11, 12, " Though the proposals of the covenant are of important concernment to all mankind, especially to those, who have offers of divine grace made to them, *yet a rejected tender* of the covenant does not give one an interest in it. And though the call of the gospel lays a bond of duty on all to whom it is sent, *yet the bond of the covenant*, as the expression is commonly understood, properly lies only on those who have come under vows or engagements of obedience, either *by their own personal act*, or *by the restipulation of those who are authorised to act for them*. When those who are not under covenant bonds disobey the call of the gospel to them, *requiring their consent to its proposal*, they are guilty of refusing the covenant. But when those who are under covenant bonds violate them, they are guilty

guilty of perfidiously breaking the covenant. A circumstance which enhances their disobedience." The Doct̄r here supposes, that none but *infants*, who have some to *restipulate* for them, can be taken into covenant without consenting to the covenant. As to *adults*, who are capable of acting for themselves, he is clearly of the opinion, that nothing short of their own voluntary act, can bring them under the bond of the covenant. But if the text before us proves, that *infants* may be brought into covenant without their knowledge and consent, then it equally proves, that any *adult* persons may be laid under the bond of the covenant, without their consent. And if this be true, then God may now take all the Heathens on the face of the earth into covenant, without their knowing or embracing the gospel. But this sentiment is too gross for any to admit, and therefore the literal sense of the text we are considering, can by no means be adopted. This leads me to observe once more,

5. That when we are told God took the absent as well as present into covenant, the true and obvious meaning is, that he meant to propose the covenant to all, and to require all, as opportunity presented, to embrace it, and lay themselves under covenant obligations to obedience. God intended that the covenant he proposed to Israel in the plains of Moab, should be proposed to all that nation from time to time, and from age to age, just as Christ intended that the gospel which he commissioned his Apostles to preach to all the world, should eventually be preached to all nations on the face of the earth, before the end of time.

It now appears, we trust, that all covenants are of the same nature, and stand upon the same foundation; that they all require the mutual consent of the parties concerned; and that it is as inconceivable, that God should enter into covenant with
men,

men, without their personal consent, as that they should enter into covenant with each other, without their personal consent. We have dwelt the longer on the general nature of covenanting, because it seems to lie at the foundation of the present dispute. And if the observations we have made are just, they may throw light on the particular covenants to be considered in the following sections.



S E C T. II.

The covenant of grace precisely stated.

THE gospel promises eternal life to all who believe in the Mediator. This gracious proposal, which God makes to sinners, comprises all the essential properties of the covenant of grace. It concerns two parties. It requires the mutual consent of two parties. It contains a condition to be fulfilled on the one side, and a promise to be performed on the other. And both the promise and condition are founded in grace. When God makes this gracious proposal to sinners, he requires their immediate acceptance. But so long as they refuse to accept, they have no right to the blessing offered. For the covenant of grace, like all other covenants, must have the sanction of mutual consent, before it can mutually bind the parties concerned. The sinner must believe in Christ, before he can claim the promise of eternal life. But the first exercise of faith confirms the covenant, and gives the believer an infallible title to the kingdom of heaven. If he should lose his reason or his life the next moment after believing, he would be secure in the favor of God. This representation of the covenant of grace, perfectly accords with Christ's own representations

representations of it. He says, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Again he declares, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and *shall not come into condemnation.*" And again, in his last commission to the Apostles and to their successors in the ministry, he commands them to propose the covenant of grace to all, in these plain and comprehensive terms. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: But he that believeth not shall be damned." According to this infallible definition of the covenant of grace, it contains neither more nor less, than *the promise of God to save sinners, through faith in the Mediator.* And agreeably to this definition, every minister may preach, and every person may argue, without being exposed to error.



S E C T. III.

The covenant of grace distinguished from the covenant of redemption.

THE work of redemption was devised before the foundation of the world. The three sacred persons in the ever blessed Trinity, mutually agreed, that each of them should bear a distinct part in carrying into execution their wise and gracious purposes respecting man. And this eternal mutual compact or agreement between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is what we mean, and what is commonly understood, by the covenant of redemption. Now between this, and the covenant of grace, there is a wide difference. This will appear, if

if we compare them in a few particulars. The covenant of grace subsists between God and believers; but the covenant of redemption subsists between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The covenant of grace was made in time; but the covenant of redemption was made from eternity. Man has a part to perform in the covenant of grace; but man has no part to perform in the covenant of redemption. Besides, the covenant of grace is the fruit of the covenant of redemption. It was in consequence of the eternal purpose of the ever blessed Trinity to save sinners, and of the absolute certainty of Christ's fulfilling his part in the covenant of redemption, that God could, immediately after the fall, promise to save sinners, through faith in a Saviour to come. This great diversity between these two covenants, renders it highly necessary to keep them distinct in our own minds, and especially when we pretend to argue from either of them. But Doctor Hemmenway, as well as other writers upon the same subject, has unhappily blended them together. In the tenth page of his Discourse concerning the Church, he undertakes to give an accurate definition of the covenant of grace. It is this: "The new covenant," (which he afterwards expressly calls the covenant of grace) "the new covenant is a divine and gracious constitution respecting fallen man; founded in the mediation of Christ, and administered by him, according to which the church is formed and governed." This definition has not one feature of the covenant of grace; but bears an exact image of the covenant of redemption. In plain terms, it is the definition of the covenant of redemption, instead of the definition of the covenant of grace. The unhappy blending of these two covenants, will account for much of the obscurity, not to say inconsistency, which we find in the Doctor's reasonings, in the following parts of his Discourse.

S E C T. IV.

The covenant of Abraham, though founded on, yet distinct from, the covenant of grace.

THESE two covenants are so nearly and necessarily connected, that they are often considered as one and the same covenant. But if we carry in our minds the definition which has been given of the covenant of grace, we shall find that it does, by no means, apply to the covenant of Abraham. This shows, that there must be some distinction between the covenant which God made with Abraham in particular, and the covenant of grace which he makes with believers in general. And in treating the subject before us, it becomes very necessary to point out the peculiar properties of the covenant of Abraham, by which it is distinguished from the covenant of grace. What is commonly called the Abrahamic covenant, is summarily contained in the xviiith chapter of Genesis, from the first to the twenty first verse. Between this and the covenant of grace, several points of difference may be easily observed.

1. Faith is the condition of the covenant of grace ; but circumcision was the principal condition of the covenant of Abraham. When God proposed the covenant to him, he proposed circumcision as the condition of it. Verse 10, " This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee ; every man child among you shall be circumcised." This condition, peculiar to the covenant of Abraham, distinguishes it from the covenant of grace.

2. The covenant of grace respects the believer only ; but the covenant of Abraham chiefly and ultimately respected his posterity. So it is said,
verse

verse 7. "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, *and thy seed after thee*, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant." Agreeably to this representation, we find a number of very singular and important blessings, which God promised to bestow upon Abraham's seed as a fulfilment of his covenant with *him*. In particular,

1. God engaged to distinguish Isaac and his seed from Ishmael and his seed. So we read, verse 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st. "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed, and thou shalt call his name Isaac: And I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee; behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. *But my covenant will I establish with Isaac*, which Sarah shall bear unto thee." This promise has been visibly fulfilled from age to age, in the continued separation between the Jews and Ishmaelites.

2. God engaged in his covenant with Abraham, to give his seed in the line of Isaac, the land of Canaan for a perpetual possession. Verse 8. "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession." Agreeably to this article in the covenant, God did, at the time appointed, deliver the seed of Abraham from their bondage in Egypt, and carry them through the wilderness to the land of promise. When God appeared to Moses, and told him that he was about to deliver his people from their present burdens, and conduct them to a land flowing with milk and honey, he plainly intimates, that he was going to do this, in covenant faithfulness to Abraham. See

Exod. iii. 6,—17. And we find a similar representation of the matter in Deut. i. 8. vii. 7, 8, 9. “Go in and possess the land which the Lord sware to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them, and to their seed after them. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people : For ye were the fewest of all people : But because the Lord loved you, and *because he would keep the oath which he sware unto your fathers,* hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bond-men, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, *the faithful God, which keepeth covenant* and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.” This same divine faithfulness, Nehemiah also acknowledges in a devout address to God. Neh. ix. 7, 8. “Thou art the Lord God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham : And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him, to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words, for thou art righteous.” Such a donation of the land of Canaan to Abraham’s seed, clearly distinguishes the covenant which God made with him, from the covenant of grace, which extends to the believer only, without any respect to his present or future offspring.

3. God engaged, in his covenant with Abraham, to raise up the Messiah from one branch of his family. So the Apostle expressly tells us, Gal. iii. 16. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many : But as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”

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This article stipulated in the covenant, God faithfully fulfilled. For it is evident from the genealogy recorded by Matthew and Luke, that our Lord sprang from the line of Abraham. Here is another mark of distinction between the covenant of Abraham and the covenant of grace.

4. God promised to the father of the faithful, to keep up the visible church, and maintain a constant succession of pious men, in his family, until the appearance of the promised Messiah. Verse 7. "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; *to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee—And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*" Chap. xii. 3. Accordingly we find, that God did set up the church, and maintain a constant succession of pious men, in Abraham's family, until the appearance of the Son of God in the flesh. Simeon, Anna, and others, were waiting for the consolation of Israel, when Christ was born, and publickly devoted to God, according to his own institution. And after the Jews were cut off for unbelief, God continued the visible church, and made the spiritual seed of Abraham succeed in the place of his natural posterity, so as to fulfil the promise, that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. The blessings of Abraham have come upon the Gentiles, and we are now enjoying the happy effects of the divine faithfulness to Abraham. Thus it appears, that the covenant of Abraham ought to be considered as totally distinct from the covenant of grace.

S E C T. V.

The Sinai covenant, though founded on, yet distinct from, the covenant of grace.

SINCE writers on the sacramental controversy, have entertained very different opinions of the Sinai covenant, it seems proper to consider the nature of it, before we proceed to distinguish it from the covenant of grace. The point in dispute is, whether the Sinai covenant required the profession and exercise of grace, as the condition upon which divine favors were promised. Some suppose it required this, and some suppose it did not. A valuable writer, speaking of the *condition* upon which God promised his favor to Israel, says, "This was no other, than abstinence from servile work on the Sabbath; freedom from legal impurities and gross vices; an offering the sacrifices prescribed in the law; in a time of war, the depending on God alone for success, and not having recourse to horses, chariots, or alliance with idolatrous States; and in general, obedience to the *letter* of the law, even when it did not flow from a principle of faith and love. A temporal monarch claims from his subjects, only *outward* honor and obedience. God therefore, acting in the Sinai covenant, demanded from the Israelites no more." Doctor Hemmenway conveys the same idea, in the second paragraph of his book. "The Hebrew commonwealth was a kingdom of God, formed by a special covenant which God made with that people when he brought them out of Egypt. Jehovah was their Lawgiver, Judge and King. But this was an *earthly* theocracy *a kingdom of this world.*" But this sentiment must be given up, if it can be made to appear, that God did, in the Sinai covenant, require the Israelites, to

profess

profess and *exercise* internal holiness, as well as external obedience, as the condition of enjoying his promised favor. I beg the patience and attention of the reader, therefore, while I lay before him scripture evidence, that God required, and the Israelites made, a *credible profession of real godliness*, when they entered into the Sinai covenant.

1. This appears from the various accounts given us of their covenant transactions. The first account is in Exod. xxiv. 3,—8. “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people answered *with one voice*, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said, *will we do*. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons: And half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, *All that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient*. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, *Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words*.” The people here promise universal obedience to the divine commands. But the nature of their obedience will more fully appear, by another account of their entering into covenant, which is recorded in Deut. xxvii. 16, 17, 18. “This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: Thou shalt therefore keep and do them *with all thine heart, and with all thy soul*. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be *thy God*, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and

his commandments, and his judgments, and *to hearken to his voice*. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be *his people*, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep his commandments." In such a solemn and explicit manner, the Israelites professed to obey all the commands of God, *with all their heart, and with all their soul*. And the true meaning of these expressions, we find explained in the fifth and sixth chapters of Deuteronomy, where we read as follows. "And Moses called all the people, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep and do them. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it. Honor thy father and mother. Thou shalt not kill. Neither shalt thou commit adultery. Neither shalt thou steal. Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor. Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbor's wife. These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more." These are the ten commandments. And after Moses had delivered these, he is directed to come and say, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*. And these words which I command thee this day shall be *in thine heart*." After reading these passages in this connection, Can any one doubt, whether the Israelites made a public profession of real godliness? Did they not promise to pay *internal* as well as *external* obedience to all the divine commands? Did they

they not promise to love God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their might ? And could they promise more, or better obedience than this ? If a public profession of real religion be possible, it is certain, that the Israelites made such a profession, at mount Sinai.

2. If the Israelites fulfilled *their* engagements, then God promised, on his part, to be their God, and make them his peculiar people. The covenant engagements were mutual. God as much avouched them to be his people, as they avouched him to be their God. So says Moses. "The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be *his peculiar people*, as he hath promised thee." Accordingly God says, Exod. xix. 5, 6, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and *keep my covenant*, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people ; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me *a kingdom of priests*, and an holy nation." In various other places of scripture, God styles himself *their God*. This is a relative phrase. Accordingly Christ makes use of it, to express his own, and his disciples' relation to his Father. "I ascend to *my Father* and *your Father*, and to *my God* and *your God*." When God promises *to be a God* to a person or people, he means to comprise in the promise all spiritual blessings. In this sense he uses the expression, Rev. xx. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." And the Apostle gives the same turn to another divine promise. He says, speaking of the pious patriarchs, "If they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned : But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called *their God* : For he hath promised them a city." If we may understand the divine promise

to Israel in this comprehensive sense, then we may justly conclude, that it was made on no other condition, than their cordial obedience to the divine commands. God's promise to them explains their promise to him. If he engaged to be their God; they engaged to be his people. If he engaged to love them; they engaged to love him. If he engaged to bestow spiritual blessings on them; they engaged to yield true gratitude and obedience to him. These are the only terms upon which God could, consistently with his character, enter into covenant with them.

3. When the Israelites discovered, by their conduct, *that their hearts were not right with God*, they are charged with hypocrisy and breach of covenant. The Psalmist declares, "They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law. Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and *lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him*, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." If the covenant which they made with God, did not require their hearts to be right with him, then their hearts not being right with him, was no violation of the covenant. If they did not profess to be the friends of God; then their disaffection and disobedience was no work of hypocrisy. It is always sinful to be unfriendly and disobedient to God, but it is not always hypocritical. Those who have made no profession, are ready to allow that they are guilty of sin, but not of hypocrisy. We are no hypocrites, say they, for we never professed to love God, and be better than other men. But we never find the Israelites offering this excuse; and therefore may presume, that in their covenanting with God, they professed to give him *their hearts*.

4. When the people of God fell under his rebukes, they were required not only to reform, but to repent, in order to regain his favor. God was pleased

pleased to govern his chosen people by a special providence. While they continued obedient, he granted them outward prosperity ; but when they became disobedient, he chastised them with outward judgments. And when they were under the corrections of his hand, they had no encouragement of relief, without becoming truly penitent for their sins. We find this condition of forgiveness largely stated in the twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus, and especially in the 41st and 42d verses. "If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity ; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember ; and I will remember the land." Solomon prays for Israel, at the dedication of the temple, agreeably to the spirit of the Sinai covenant. He mentions the case of their falling under divine corrections for their sins, and prays for their deliverance, on no other condition, than their knowing and confessing the plague of their own hearts, or their returning to God by unfeigned repentance. And by the prophet Joel, God calls upon his people to repent in sincerity, in order to regain his forfeited favor. "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me *with all your heart*, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend *your heart*, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God : For he is gracious and merciful, and slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

But why should God insist on higher terms to regain, than to preserve his favor ? If his people were admitted into covenant without the profession of holiness, why could they not claim the blessings of the covenant, at any time, without such a profession ? But if he took them into covenant, on the
ground

ground of their credible profession of real holiness, then he might, with the greatest propriety, require a renewal of covenant and a profession of true repentance, before he pardoned their sins and granted them the tokens of his favor. Accordingly we find repeated instances of their renewing covenant, after great declensions, in order to obtain deliverance from divine judgments. See 2 Chron. xxix. 10. xxxiv. 23. Nehem. ix. 38. This shows that when they entered into the Sinai covenant, they professed to obey God *from the heart*.

5. The rites and ceremonies, which the Israelites were required to observe, carried in them the *profession* of true love to God. When they presented their peace-offerings and thank-offerings, they practically professed true gratitude to God. When they presented their sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, they practically professed real repentance and godly sorrow for sin. And when the high priest confessed over the scape-goat all the sins of the whole people, and then slew the other goat in sacrifice, this was a practical profession not only of repentance, but of faith in the blood of Christ. The passover was likewise a type of the divine Saviour, and could not be acceptably celebrated, without faith in the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In short, all the sacrifices, appointed under the law, were of such a nature, that none could offer them sincerely, without professing and exercising supreme love to God. And this is a clear evidence, that all who entered into the Sinai covenant, entered into it, under the profession and appearance of true friends to God, and were entitled to the divine favor, on no other condition, than the sincerity of their profession.

6. The Israelites were finally broken off from the Sinai covenant, by unbelief. This the apostle shows at large in the eleventh of Romans. But how
could

could they have been broken off by unbelief, if that covenant had not implied their profession of faith in the promised Messiah? If they had never professed to believe in a Saviour to come, then their rejecting him after he appeared, could have been no violation of their covenant obligations, nor consequently any just cause of their being cast out of covenant. But if they had publickly and solemnly professed to believe in the promised Messiah, then their visible rejection of Christ in the days of his flesh, was a visible evidence of their breach of covenant, and a sufficient ground for God to disown them, and cast them out of his vineyard. The manner, therefore, of their being cut off from the Sinai covenant clearly shows, that before they were cut off, they were considered and treated as true believers or real saints.

7. The Sinai covenant was not a mere external covenant, which required only external obedience, for, it was inconsistent with the nature and character of God to make such a covenant with his people. An earthly prince, whose authority extends only to the overt acts of the subject, may require mere external obedience; but God, whose authority reaches the heart, cannot require mere external obedience, without giving up his authority, and indulging his creatures in sin. If God had told his people, that he would be their governor, preserver, and benefactor, if they would pay him only external allegiance and homage, he would, at once, have given up his moral government over them, and indulged them in all the wickedness of their hearts. But could he have given them such an indulgence in wickedness, consistently with his perfect holiness, and infinite hatred of sin?

Again, if God had made a covenant with his people, to reward them for graceless obedience, he would have bound himself to *reward them for sin.*
All

All obedience must flow from the heart ; and therefore all obedience must either flow from a gracious or graceless heart. That obedience which flows from a gracious heart is holy obedience ; and that obedience which flows from a graceless heart is unholy or graceless obedience. If, therefore, God had promised to reward his people for mere external, graceless obedience, which flowed from a graceless heart, he would have promised to reward them for their iniquities. But if he could not indulge them in wickedness, consistently with his holiness, it was certainly still more inconsistent with his perfect rectitude, to *reward* them for sinning.

Again, if God had engaged to be a God and King to his people, without requiring them to obey him *from the heart*, he would have contradicted his own positive precept. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord : And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." This precept required internal holiness, and bound the Israelites to yield internal as well as external obedience to their Creator and Lawgiver. How was it possible, therefore, that God, in the Sinai covenant, should allow his people to yield him only external obedience, without dissolving the authority and obligation of his own law ?

Again, if the law of God required the Israelites to be perfectly holy, then it condemned them for every external action which flowed from a sinful heart. And so it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This means that eternal curse, which Christ came to remove. For it is immediately added, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Such a threatening did God denounce against every

ry transgressor of his holy and righteous law. If, therefore, he had promised in the Sinai covenant, to reward, with temporal prosperity, the mere external, graceless obedience of his people, he would have promised to bless them in time, and to punish them in eternity, for the same sinful conduct.

Once more, if God had engaged to be the God of his people, in the Sinai covenant, on condition of their mere external obedience, he would have acted in direct opposition to his own declarations concerning such obedience. God speaks of external obedience, or graceless duties, in the strongest terms of disapprobation. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's flesh; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol." "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." In these passages, God speaks the language of his heart, and expresses his real abhorrence of that outward homage which is destitute of inward respect. We may presume, therefore, that with such feelings he never required external, graceless obedience; or entered into covenant with his people, upon terms which his soul abhorred. And indeed, he expressly tells them so, by his prophet Jeremiah. "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Put your
your

your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices : But this thing commanded I them, saying, *Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people ;* and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you." This is God's own explanation of his own covenant. And according to this explanation, it required *internal* as well as external obedience, as the condition of both temporal and spiritual blessings.

I proceed to show, as I proposed, that this covenant was distinct from the covenant of grace ; or God's promise to save sinners, through faith in the Mediator. Though this might be argued from the various points of difference which have been mentioned, yet I shall suggest but only two considerations, which appear to be decisive on this head.

1. The covenant of grace existed about two thousand years *before* the Sinai covenant. God proposed the covenant of grace immediately after the fall. And many, in every age, from Adam to Moses, complied with it, and secured its spiritual and eternal blessings. Indeed Moses, and Aaron, and all the pious Israelites, who had lived in Egypt, entered into the covenant of grace before they came to mount Sinai. So that the Sinai covenant must have been distinct from the covenant of grace. Besides,

2. The covenant of grace has existed near two thousand years since the Sinai covenant was dissolved. The Apostle Paul, in his epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, largely proves, that the Mosaic dispensation ceased at the death of Christ. And Christ himself intimated, that this should be the consequence of his fulfilling the law. But the
covenant

covenant of grace has been in full force, ever since, as well as before, the abrogation of the Sinai covenant. These two considerations seem to put it beyond all doubt, that the Sinai covenant was distinct from the covenant of grace. The Sinai covenant was calculated for a particular people, time, and place; but the covenant of grace is calculated for all nations, times and places, from the fall of man to the day of judgment.

Before I conclude this chapter, I would make a few remarks upon what has been said, in order to illustrate more fully the covenants we have been considering, as well as the general subject, upon which we are professedly treating.

Remark 1. The foregoing observations may show us, why God owned and treated the Jews as his peculiar people, when they revolted from him, and became extremely corrupt. This was owing to his double relation to the seed of Abraham. In his covenant with Abraham, he engaged to preserve and bless his seed. And, therefore, notwithstanding they personally broke their covenant with him, yet he continued to distinguish them, with outward blessings, on their father's account. He often treated them better than *their* conduct, or *his* covenant relation to them required. Though he uniformly smiled on them when they were obedient, yet he did not uniformly punish them, when they were disobedient. He delayed, for many ages, to cut them off from his covenant after they had deserved to be cut off, and dispersed among the nations. This was not because he meant to reward their outward conduct and graceless duties; but because he meant to keep covenant with Abraham. While Abraham lived, he faithfully kept covenant with God. And since his death, God has faithfully fulfilled his covenant with him, by preserving and blessing his seed.

Remark

Remark 2. It appears from what has been said in this chapter, that the covenant of grace has always been the same. It is a covenant in which God engages to save sinners through faith in the Mediator. This covenant we have seen is founded on the covenant of redemption, and designed to carry it into execution, and therefore must remain the same, until the design of the covenant of redemption is completed. Accordingly the scripture represents men's being saved through faith in the Mediator, from the fall of Adam to the coming of Christ, and from the coming of Christ to the end of time. None of the covenants which we have been considering, had any tendency to alter the covenant of grace. The covenant of redemption was the foundation of the covenant of grace; and the covenant of grace was the foundation of the covenant of Abraham and of the Sinai covenant; and it is plain, that the covenant of grace could not be altered by a covenant upon which it was built, nor by those which were built upon it.

Remark 3. The preceding observations may teach us what we are to understand by the different DISPENSATIONS of the covenant of grace. Some seem to make no distinction between the covenant of grace, and its different dispensations, in different ages. The first dispensation commenced with Adam, the second with Abraham, the third with Moses, and the fourth with Christ. These different dispensations of the covenant of grace, are often mentioned, referred to, and reasoned from, without being explained. But, perhaps, it may be of service to explain them. As the covenant of grace has always been precisely the same, so there has been nothing in the covenant itself to distinguish it, from time to time, or to mark its different dispensations. These, therefore, must be certain things, which are distinct from the essence of the covenant, and which may be

be properly called its APPENDAGES. The covenant of grace, simply considered, requires only faith in the Mediator: But God has been pleased, at different times; to enjoin other duties besides faith in Christ, upon those who embrace the covenant of grace. And these duties may be called its appendages, as they are enjoined wholly on the ground of it. From Adam to Abraham the appendages of the covenant of grace were plain and simple, and such as naturally resulted from it. God required believers to offer sacrifices, to profess religion, to attend public worship, and to form churches or religious societies. These particulars, it is true, are not distinctly mentioned in the sacred history of those early times, but yet perhaps they may be fairly collected from it. Those before the flood certainly built altars, and offered sacrifices in public. The sons of God were distinguished from the sons and daughters of men. Hence it is natural to conclude, that they made a public profession of religion, formed churches, and worshipped God in a public and social manner: These, or similar duties, enjoined upon those who entered into the covenant of grace, were the appendages, by which its first dispensation was distinguished. In Abraham's day, another peculiar duty was added, which formed the second dispensation of the covenant of grace. This duty was the rite of circumcision. God required Abraham and his seed after him, from generation to generation, to circumcise their male children, at eight days old, and all their proselytes, whenever they admitted them to their own peculiar privileges. This divine institution continued to distinguish the second dispensation of the covenant of grace, until the days of Moses, when the third commenced. Then God made the Sinai covenant with the seed of Abraham, and gave them a large code of new laws, rites and ceremonies,

ceremonies, in addition to all the foregoing appendages of the covenant of grace. And as this illustrious dispensation was principally designed to prepare the way for the coming of Christ, so it continued until Christ appeared and made complete atonement for sin. Then the fourth and last dispensation of the covenant of grace commenced, and set aside all those appendages of it, which were typical of the promised Messiah, and which served to distinguish the seed of Abraham from the rest of the world. Instead of the sacrifices under the three first dispensations, instead of circumcision and the passover under the second dispensation, and instead of all the civil and ceremonial precepts under the third, Christ required his followers only to profess religion, to unite in religious societies, to submit to the ordinance of baptism, and to celebrate the memorials of his own death. These few plain and simple duties are the appendages of the covenant of grace, under its last and most perfect dispensation. Thus it appears that the different dispensations of the covenant of grace are not different modes, or forms, or articles of the covenant itself; but only different duties added to it, or founded upon it, which become binding in consequence of embracing the covenant. And these duties are properly termed appendages, because they have been added to and taken from the covenant, without making the least alteration in it.

This account of the appendages of the covenant of grace, seems to be fully confirmed by Doctor Hemmenway himself, who very justly mentions and describes the duties which are enjoined on believers in particular, in consequence of their embracing the covenant of grace. He says, page 11th, "Some precepts of the gospel are immediately directed to all to whom the call of the gospel is sent, and demand present obedience. *But others are immediately directed to those who are in or under the special*

tial bond of the covenant, and cannot be regularly obeyed by any but those who are first admitted into the number of God's people, by a restipulation or consent. When they have thus taken the bond of the covenant on them, there are *further duties* immediately enjoined, duties which *belong not* to those who are not in covenant *while such*, particularly *using the special ordinances*, which are *appropriated exclusively* to the church." Such duties can be no other than proper appendages of the covenant of grace, and ought to be considered in this light.

Remark 4. It appears from what has been said, that there is no propriety in arguing from one dispensation of the covenant of grace to another: Though the covenant of grace has always been the same, yet one dispensation of it has superseded another. Therefore, we cannot determine what are the peculiar duties of believers under the present dispensation of the covenant of grace, from what were the peculiar duties of believers under any of its former dispensations. Doctor Hemmenway has followed other writers in arguing from the former dispensations of the covenant of grace to the present, and endeavoured to prove what the peculiar duties of believers are under the present dispensation of the covenant of grace, from what they were under its former dispensations. But this mode of reasoning is by no means conclusive. It was the duty of believers under former dispensations of the covenant of grace, to offer sacrifices; But can we hence infer, that this is their duty now? It was the duty of believers under former dispensations of the covenant of grace, to circumcise their children and attend the passover; But does it hence follow, that those duties are still binding? Or can we justly conclude, that it is the duty of believers now to circumcise their children, or even to baptize them, because it *was once* their du-

ty to circumcise them? The truth is, we must learn the peculiar duties of believers under the present dispensation of the covenant of grace, from the dispensation itself, which enjoins all the peculiar duties which belong to it. If believers are now to baptize their children, as undoubtedly they are, it is not because they were once obliged to circumcise them. If believers are now to attend the Lord's supper, it is not because they were once obliged to attend the passover. The reasoning from the appendages of the covenant of grace, instead of the covenant itself, has been a fruitful source of error among christians. The Papists plead that there ought to be priests, and bishops, and a pope at the head of all, in the christian church, because there were the levites, the priests, and the high priest, in the Jewish church. The Episcopalians found their practice of wearing sacerdotal robes in the discharge of their ministerial office, on the custom of the Jewish clergy, in wearing robes for ornament and for beauty. And the congregationalists reason on the same ground, in support of the duty of unregenerate men to attend the christian sacraments. But all this reasoning is inconclusive, whether what they mean to prove by it be true or false. We have no right to argue from past appendages of the covenant of grace, which have been set aside, to the present appendages of it. The christian dispensation, which is allowed to be the freest from types and figures, plainly speaks for itself. And we ought to look into the clear dispensation of the gospel, in order to discover the peculiar duties of believers, at this day. By pursuing this method, we may, perhaps, avoid some of the darkness and confusion, which has attended the sacramental controversy in particular.

CHAPTER III.

None but real saints in the covenant of grace.

DOCTOR HEMMENWAY supposes, that not only true believers, but all who are baptized, are, in some sense, in the covenant of grace. But if we have given a just definition of the covenant of grace, then none can be in it but true believers. The covenant of grace, we have said, is "The promise of God to save sinners, on the condition of their believing in Christ." According to this definition, believing in Christ is the sole condition of the covenant of grace, and therefore all who believe in the Mediator, comply with the condition, and so are not partly, or in some sense, but completely in covenant with God. If faith is the condition of the covenant of grace, there can be no medium between being completely in and completely out of it. The believer is completely in it, and the unbeliever is completely out of it. The believer is entitled to all the blessings of it, and the unbeliever to none. All the promises of God are *in Christ*, yea and amen. Believers are *in Christ*, and therefore all the promises apply to them. Unbelievers are *out of Christ*, and strangers from the covenant of promise, and therefore have no title to covenant blessings.

The only way to avoid the force of this argument is to suppose, that men may be true believers in the sense of the covenant of grace, without being true saints, or the subjects of real holiness. But this supposition is contradicted by the whole tenor of scripture. It is said, "As many as received Christ, to

them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is said, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." It is said, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." And it is also said, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, *faith.*" These texts fully prove, that saving faith, which is the condition of the covenant of grace, is the fruit of the Spirit, and exercised by real saints only, or those who have been born of God. According to scripture, therefore, none but real saints are, in any sense, in the covenant of grace. Though sinners, who have never been renewed, may believe, in speculation, that the gospel is divine, that Christ is the only Saviour, that all who embrace him from the heart shall be saved ; and though they may profess to believe in Christ, and really hope to obtain eternal life, yet they are not in the covenant of grace, nor entitled to any of its blessings.



CHAPTER IV.

*None are required to profess religion but real saints,
who are in the covenant of grace.*

WE have shown, in the last chapter, that none but real saints are in covenant with God. We are now to inquire, whether he requires any but those who are in covenant with him, to make a public profession of religion. There is a distinction between moral and instituted duties. Moral duties result from the nature of things, and are binding previous to a divine command; but instituted duties derive their obligation from the expression of divine authority. Thus to love God is a moral duty, but *to profess to love him* is an instituted duty. In order, therefore, to determine who are bound to *profess* to love God, we must inquire on whom this duty is enjoined. And since saints are essentially different from sinners, it is natural to suppose, that God should require peculiar duties of saints, which are expressive of their peculiar obligations and affections. They have been made the subjects of his special grace. They have been admitted into covenant with him. They have devoted themselves to his service. And they truly feel a supreme affection and attachment to his character and interest. He may, therefore, with propriety, require them to express the genuine feelings of their hearts, by an open profession of real godliness.

Philip required the eunuch to profess saving faith, before he admitted him to baptism. And though this is a single instance of requiring a true believer to profess religion previous to baptism; yet since

Philip acted, in this instance, agreeably to Christ's last commission to his Apostles and their successors in the ministry, we may safely conclude, that all real saints are as much required to profess religion as to submit to the ordinance of baptism. And, indeed, these duties stand upon the same foundation, and are inseparably connected, in Christ's commission to his ministers. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This commission renders a public profession of religion a divine institution under the gospel. For it requires ministers to preach, and men to believe; and believers to profess their faith, and ministers to baptize them, on the ground of their profession.

Though God requires all where the gospel comes, to comply with the covenant of grace; yet so long as any neglect to comply, he does not require them to profess that they have complied. If God should require men to profess religion before they have it, he would require them to profess a falsehood. But since this is inconsistent with the divine character, we may be assured that none but the real subjects of grace are required to make a public profession of real godliness. God makes the same distinction in precepts as in promises. As he promises life to none but real saints; so he requires none but real saints to profess religion. If sinners suppose *they are real saints*, yet God does not promise them life on that supposition. So if any suppose they love God while they are destitute of love, yet God does not require them to profess the love of which they are destitute. As the promise in the one case, so the precept in the other, is given to saints only. The profession of religion is properly an appendage of the covenant of grace, and therefore is enjoined on those only who are in
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the covenant of grace. God's requisitions depend, not on the false opinions, but on the real characters of men. He requires only those who have religion, to profess religion, and distinguish themselves from the rest of the world. But I shall not enlarge on this point, since it has been abundantly proved by Mr. Edwards, and is freely acknowledged by Doctor Hemmenway. He says, page 20, "The belief of the heart is presupposed in the profession of the mouth. And a profession of faith which is a duty, goes before a right of admission to the special ordinances and privileges of external communion in an instituted church." And again, page 11, "Some precepts of the gospel are immediately directed to all to whom the call of the gospel is sent, and demand present obedience. But others are immediately directed to those who are in or under the special bond of the covenant." A public profession of religion properly belongs to this class of duties.



CHAPTER V.

Visible saints described.

IT is a given point, that all *visible saints* are proper subjects of special ordinances. If it could only be determined, therefore, who are visible saints, one part of the present controversy would be completely settled. But this has never been done; though it is probable, that all men have precisely the same ideas upon this subject. Different writers have described visible saints very differently. Doctor Hemmenway, indeed, differs from all who have gone before him in this dispute. He says, page 41, "It is *external*, and not *internal* holiness which forms the character of a visible saint, *as such*." Again, "It must be the visibility of that holiness which is *visible*, that is, of *external* holiness, which denominates a visible saint." According to this description, a visible saint is any person who bears the mere resemblance of a real saint. But the mere resemblance of an object, is never taken for the object itself. The picture of a dove is the resemblance of a dove, and the picture of a man is the resemblance of a man. But who ever took the picture of a dove, for a real dove? Or the picture of a man, for a real man? Should a person go into a painter's apartment, which is covered with pictures of rational and irrational creatures, would he say when he came out, that he had seen a multitude of men and animals? Though images bear a still nearer resemblance of certain objects, yet they are never supposed to be, the real objects, whose resemblance they bear. When Ce-
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far saw the statue of Alexander, did he imagine he saw Alexander himself? When the Papist bows before the image of Christ, does he take the image to be the real person, who expired on the cross?

Now a person who bears the mere resemblance of a faint, is no more a *visible* faint, than the image of a man is a *visible* man. We find men every where, who believe the Bible is the word of God, who attend public worship and family prayer, and who live externally sober, honest, exemplary lives. These men, in all these respects, bear the resemblance of real faints. But this resemblance does not constitute them *visible* faints. For all their orthodoxy and morality may be the fruit of mere education, or of a desire to appear well in the eyes of the world. And we have no reason to believe, that they are governed by any better motives than these, unless they give us some other evidence of real holiness. But if those who bear the mere resemblance of real faints *are not visible* faints, then the question still returns, Who are?

I answer, those who *appear to profess* real holiness. This all must allow. For however they may describe *visible* faints, yet they cannot believe any to be of this character, unless they appear, in their view, to be *real* faints. Of this there is a short and easy proof. Let any man, who has been considered as a *visible* faint, only exhibit clear evidence of being wholly destitute of real holiness, and he will immediately cease to be a *visible* faint. Judas was once a *visible* faint. All his fellow-disciples viewed him in this light. But did they view him so, after he had betrayed his Master? By no means. This instance of his conduct fully convinced them, that he was totally destitute of love to Christ, and immediately transformed him, in their view, from a *visible* faint to a *visible* sinner.

If it be true, that a *visible* saint is one who *appears to profess real holiness*, then it only remains to inquire who exhibit this appearance. And here it is evident, that none but those who exhibit a good life, a good creed, and a good profession, exhibit the appearance of real holiness. For,

1. Though a good life does not prove the heart to be good, yet a bad life proves the heart to be bad. Whoever, therefore, exhibits a vicious life, exhibits a vicious heart, which is totally inconsistent with the appearance of saving grace.

2. No man can appear to be a real saint, who does not appear to believe the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. Though the bare belief of these doctrines does not prove any man to be a saint, yet the denial of them proves him to be destitute of the love of the truth, which is inconsistent with real holiness. A good creed, therefore, is as necessary as a good life, in order to constitute a *visible* saint.

3. None can appear to be real saints, who do not profess to have that love which is the essence of true religion. Love is the fulfilling of the law. And love belongs to the heart. The heart, therefore, is the seat of all holy affections. But every man is best acquainted with his own heart, and if he is honest, can give us the best evidence of his inward views and feelings, by his own declaration. And this renders the profession of real holiness, or vital piety, absolutely necessary, in order to constitute a *visible* saint. A good life and a good confession of faith are only negative evidence of saving grace. But there ought to be some positive evidence that the heart is right with God. And this can be exhibited no otherwise, than by a profession of those exercises of heart, which constitute a real saint. For however moral and orthodox a man may appear; yet if he says that he has no love to God, no repentance

ance of sin, no delight in holiness, we have no right to say or believe that he is a real saint, and of consequence, he cannot be a *visible* saint. But if a man be moral and orthodox, and in addition to his good life and his good confession of faith, seriously declares, according to his best judgment of his own heart, that he loves God, hates sin, and delights in holiness, he then appears to be a real saint, which is precisely the same as a visible saint. Thus morality, orthodoxy, and a profession of that in which true holiness consists, constitute visible saints. And though some things, which Doctor Hemmenway says, seem to contradict this description of visible saints; yet he says other things, which perfectly agree with it and confirm it. These are his own words, page 62, 63. “If by a profession of godliness we mean such a profession as gives evidence of christian piety, as being the proper expression of the faith and holiness required in the gospel in order to salvation; this I think should be exhibited in order to admission into an instituted church. There should be a credible profession of assent to the foundation principles of the christian doctrine, of consent to the new covenant; and that without known hypocrisy or reserve. In a word, *a profession expressive of the faith, temper, and resolutions of a true christian*, as described in the gospel. If this be what is meant by those who require a profession of godliness, or saving faith as a term of christian communion; this is no more than what Mr. Stoddard has also declared as his steadfast persuasion.” This passage favours the sentiment advanced in the beginning of this chapter, *that probably all men have precisely the same idea of visible saints, as contrasted with real saints.* Though they may differ in their ideas of real saints, yet they must all agree, that *visible* saints are those who appear to be *real* saints.

CHAPTER VI.

The right of admission to full communion.

THE duty of admission, and the duty of access to special ordinances, are distinct duties, which require a distinct consideration. In this chapter, I shall confine myself to the duty of admission. And here the question is, Whether the church may admit any to communion, but such as appear to be real saints? I know some object against using the phrase, *appear to be saints*, as though it carried the idea, that the church may make their own fancy, instead of real evidence of grace, the rule of admission. But there seems to be no just ground for this objection. For, if the church are to judge of the qualifications of those whom they admit to communion, they are to judge according to *apparent* evidence. Evidence which they do not see, is no evidence to them. Supposing they are so blinded by prejudice, with respect to a certain person, that they cannot discover the evidence which he really exhibits of being a good man; yet so long as the blindness of *their* hearts prevents their seeing the goodness of *his*, they ought not to admit him to communion. Their first duty is to cast the beam out of their own eye, and impartially attend to the evidence of grace, which the proponent exhibits, and then receive him in the Lord as becometh saints. God has made it the duty of the church to admit those to special ordinances, who appear to be real saints. The church, therefore, must act according to the evidence of grace, which they discern in those who offer themselves for admission. If they appear

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to them to be real faints, they ought to admit them; but if they appear to them to be destitute of grace, they ought to reject them. God has given his rules to imperfect creatures. It is to be expected, therefore, that a church may, through inadvertence, prejudice, or partiality, admit some to communion, and debar others from it, whom they ought not. But yet their guilt will not consist in acting according to the evidence which they do see, but in not attending to the evidence which they might see. Their duty is to attend to evidence with impartiality, and to act according to it. And this shows that they must admit those, and only those, to communion, whom they think are real faints. They are not required to act on certainty, but on probability, because they cannot look into the hearts of men. They must have evidence enough to convince them, that the man whom they admit, is more likely to be a true believer than a false professor. No evidence short of probability, can justify them in admitting any person to full communion. If a Cashier must have any evidence, that each piece of money which he receives is genuine, then he must have evidence enough to convince him, that each piece is more likely to be genuine than counterfeit. Or if a Mustermaster must have any evidence, that each soldier whom he admits into the army is sound, then he must have evidence enough to convince him, that each soldier is more likely to be sound than unsound. These cases directly apply to the subject in hand. God requires the church to admit sound and none but sound believers to communion, so far as they are capable of judging, by the rules which he has given them to govern their conduct. It is their duty, therefore, to apply those rules to every particular person with candor; and to receive or reject him, accordingly as he appears to them, either qualified or unqualified for admission.

sion. They are not required to be infallible, but they are required to be honest. And to be honest, they must admit none to their christian fellowship, but those whom they charitably think are more likely to be friends, than enemies to God. But since this is one of the cardinal points in the present dispute, it may be proper to offer a few plain arguments to establish it.

ARGUMENT I.

None ought to be admitted into the visible church but such as appear qualified to promote the end of its institution.

The visible church is a religious society, founded on religious principles, and designed to promote religious purposes. Such a society God instituted immediately after the fall, and has preserved in the world, from age to age, to the present day. It appears from the nature of this society, as well as from the representations of it in scripture, that it is calculated to answer a variety of important ends. In particular, to distinguish the friends from the enemies of God; to display the beauty and importance of religion; and to propagate it among mankind to the latest generations. These valuable purposes are happily represented by a very sensible writer.*

“A visible church was established, in order to continue it, and carry it on successively throughout all ages. Had Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, only taught, and by miracles proved, religion to their cotemporaries; the benefits of their instructions would have reached but to a small part of mankind. Christianity must have been, in a great degree, sunk and forgot in a few ages. To prevent this, appears to have been one reason; why a visible church was instituted; to be like a city

* Bishop Butler.

city upon a hill, a standing memorial to the world of the duty which we owe to our Maker ; to call men continually, both by example and instruction, to attend to it ; and by the form of religion ever before their eyes, remind them of the reality ; to be the repository of the Oracles of God ; to hold up the light of Revelation in aid to that of nature, and propagate it throughout all generations to the end of the world."

Now, if the visible church be a society designed to answer these religious purposes, then it is easy to perceive who are properly qualified to be admitted as members of it. The ends for which any society is formed, naturally point out the proper qualifications of its members. A society for the promotion of learning, should be composed of men of learning. And for the same reason, a society for the promotion of religion, should be composed of men of religion. Saints love God, but sinners hate him. Saints love the cause of God, but sinners wish to destroy it. Saints love sinners, in one view, and hate them in another, but sinners are totally opposed to saints. This contrariety between saints and sinners is abundantly asserted in scripture. Solomon asserts, that "an unjust man is an abomination to the just ; and he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked." Christ forewarns his followers of the spirit of the world towards them. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own ; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you : If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." Agreeably

ably to this Paul declares, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." And again he says to the Galatians, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of the promise. But as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." Thus the whole world are divided into saints and sinners, who are diametrically opposed to each other. Saints are friends to God and to his kingdom; but sinners are opposed to God and to his kingdom, and to all who wish to promote it.

Now, if God instituted the visible church, to distinguish his friends from his enemies, to display the beauty and importance of religion, and to transmit it to the remotest ages, are sinners, who are totally opposed to all these designs, suitable persons to carry them into execution? Are they qualified to be admitted into this holy society, which requires all who belong to it, to be friends to God, to his cause, and to each other? How can the church, therefore, in faithfulness to God, or to themselves, admit those into *their* fellowship, and into *his* family, whom they verily think, according to the best evidence they are able to obtain, are perfect enemies to God, to religion, and to themselves? But perhaps it may be said, that it is out of the power of the church to exclude all persons of this character from their communion. But be it so; Is this any reason for admitting into their holy fellowship, those whom they suppose are of this character? Can an army always prevent spies from coming into their camp? But is this any reason for their admitting them, or neglecting to use all proper means to keep them out? The church, therefore, who have the right of admission, ought to adhere strictly to the divine rule, and admit none to communion in holy ordinances,

ordinances, but such as they suppose, in a judgment of charity, are hearty friends to the cause of religion, and engaged to carry into effect, the noble and gracious purposes for which they were formed into a religious society.

ARGUMENT II.

None ought to be admitted into the visible church, but those who appear to be interested in the covenant of grace.

The covenant of grace is the foundation of the visible church. This might be easily proved, were it not universally granted. It is by proposing the covenant of grace, and disposing men to comply with it, that God prepares the way, and forms the materials, for the visible church. The covenant of grace, is the promise of God to save sinners, through faith in the Mediator. And according to this view of the covenant of grace, it has been shown, that none comply with the condition of it, and become entitled to its blessings, but true believers. None but real saints, therefore, do, in the sight of God, belong to the church. To God, who sees the hearts of men, there is really but one church, which is composed of the subjects of grace. And though the visible church cannot see the hearts of men, yet they are to judge of their hearts, by the rules which God has given them to direct their judgment. And judging according to those rules, they ought to admit none to their communion, but such as they think God will admit to communion with himself.

So long as a church admits none to communion, but such as credibly profess to be interested in the covenant of grace, so long they are visibly built on the covenant of grace, and continue to be a visible church. But if they should totally lay aside this

rule of admission, and receive those to communion who do not profess to be interested in the covenant of grace, they would visibly go off from the covenant of grace, and cease to be a visible church. The real church of God is really built on the covenant of grace, and the visible church of God is visibly built on the covenant of grace. "*The covenant of grace forms the church.*" If these premises are granted, the natural conclusion is, that none but those who appear to be true believers, or who appear to be interested in the covenant of grace, ought to be admitted to special ordinances.

ARGUMENT III.

The scripture represents the Spirit of God as forming the materials for the visible church.

The prophecies in the Old Testament, which speak of the enlargement of the visible church in the gospel day, ascribe this happy effect to the sanctifying influences of the divine Spirit. So it is represented in the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah. "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." In the thirty-fifth chapter we find a similar prophecy. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as the hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: For in the wilderness shall *waters* break out, and *streams* in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a *pool*, and thirsty lands *springs of water*."

ter. And an high-way shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, *The way of holiness.*" The Prophet breaks out in a still bolder strain, in the fifty-fourth chapter. "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. *Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: Spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes: For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord.*" These prophecies ascribe the increase of the church, in the gospel day, to a divine influence on the hearts of men, by which they should be formed to holiness, and be disposed to devote themselves to God, by a public profession of religion.

The same event is foretold by the prophet Joel. "And it shall come to pass afterward, *That I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit, and it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered: For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.*" This prophecy was visibly fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when there was such a plentiful effusion of the Holy Ghost, in his miraculous and sanctifying influences. These surprising effects of the divine Spirit displeased the enemies of religion, who maliciously ascribed them to the influence of new wine. This gave occasion to Peter to explain the

truth, and to strike conviction into the minds of three thousand spectators. "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell in Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day: But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, &c. Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. 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. Then they that gladly received the word were baptized: And the same day there were added unto them three thousand souls. And the Lord added to the church daily *such as should be saved.*"

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Thus it appears, that God pours out his Spirit and converts sinners, in order to qualify them for admiffion into his vifible church. But why does he take this method to prepare them for fpecial ordinances, if they might be properly qualified, without his fpecial grace? If unregenerate men are proper materials to compofe the church of God, then it may be enlarged and built up, without the effufions of his Spirit. But, on the other hand, if the church be a fpiritual building, and to be built up with lively ftones, then it mult increafe or diminish, accordingly as God grants his Spirit in larger or fmallier meafures. And univerfal obfervation teaches us, that the church has always increafed by the beftowment, and diminished by the withdrawment, of the Spirit of God. This is a clear evidence, that faving grace is a neceffary qualification for communion, and that the church ought to give admiffion to none but fuch as they have reafon to believe, have been formed by the divine Spirit, for communion with God and his people. The materials for the temple were all prepared before they were brought together; and fo the materials for the vifible church fhould all be prepared, by the Spirit of God, before they are placed in his living temple. None are to be brought into the church in order to be prepared for it; but to be brought in, becaufe they are already prepared to beautify and ftrengthen this fpiritual building.

ARGUMENT IV.

The vifible church, from Adam to Chrift, was compofed of thofe who appeared to be real faints.

The account which the fcripture gives us of the world before the flood, naturally leads us to fuppofe, that there was then a vifible church. It is certain, there was then a vifible diftinction between

the sons of God, and the sons and daughters of men. This visible distinction probably arose from the practice of saints, in professing religion, and uniting together for the publick and social worship of God. And there is one circumstance related with respect to Cain, which favors this opinion. He is said to have been banished from the presence of the Lord. This probably means his excommunication from the visible church. We are told, that God visibly appeared to Adam, both before and after his fall. The same visible presence, it is natural to suppose, God would vouchsafe to Adam and his family when they appeared before him as a visible church. And while Cain continued a visible saint, he was admitted with the rest to enjoy the visible presence of God. But after he murdered Abel, and fell under the divine displeasure, he was cast out of the visible church, and of consequence, banished from the visible presence of the Lord. However, since there was a visible distinction between good men and bad before the flood, we may justly conclude, that there was then a visible church, and composed of visible saints. And as this church was formed under the immediate direction of God, it must be considered as a good pattern for succeeding ages to follow.

But we have more light respecting the visible church in the days of Moses. Then, it is allowed on all sides, that the seed of Abraham were formed into a visible church, agreeably to the divine institution. And we have shown, in treating on the Sinai covenant, that all the Israelites publicly professed to be the cordial friends of God. They avouched the Lord to be their God, and engaged to love him with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their might, and to express their love by obedience to all his laws, whether moral, civil, or ceremonial. By this public profession of godliness, they became visible saints, or appeared

to be the true friends of God. Accordingly God speaks of them in this light, and gives them the most endearing appellations. He calls them a kingdom of priests. "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." He calls them his portion. "For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." He calls them his treasure. "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure." He calls them a congregation of saints. "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints." He calls them converts. "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." Thus God speaks of the church of Israel according to their profession and appearance, and gives them all the peculiar and endearing titles which belong to real saints, who are the excellent of the earth.

But if the Jewish church, which Moses formed exactly according to the divine will, was composed of those who appeared to be real saints, then the natural conclusion is, that the Christian church ought to be composed of persons of the same character.

The visible church has always been the same, under every dispensation. The Christian church is only the Jewish church enlarged to take in believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews. When the gospel dispensation commenced, the church, like an old building, was taken down, and all the good materials in it, together with new ones, were put into the new building.

When Christ the promised Messiah appeared, he came to the Jews, his own peculiar people, and required them to receive him as their Lord and Saviour; but they, as a body, openly opposed and rejected him. Upon this they were cast out of the church of God, and the Gentiles taken in. The Jews were first invited to the gospel feast, but refused

fused to come ; and then the invitation was made to the poor, halt, and maimed Gentiles, who were in the high-ways and hedges. And all individuals, whether Jews or Gentiles, who cordially and publickly embraced the gospel, were admitted into the visible church. Hence it appears, that the church is the same under the gospel as under the law, whether composed of Jews, or Gentiles, or both. A kingdom is the same, whether composed of old or new subjects. And this is the very similitude which the Apostle uses to illustrate the sameness of the Jewish and Christian church, in Ephes. ii. 11—22. “ Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands ; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath *made both one*, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us ; (having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, for to make in himself *of twain one new man*, so making peace ; and that he might reconcile both unto God *in one body*, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby :) And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but *fellow-citizens with the saints*, and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and *Prophets*, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone ; *in whom* all the building, fitly framed together groweth unto an *holy temple*

temple in the Lord: *In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*"

The Apostle here shows that the Jewish and Christian church is the same, because it is built upon Christ, the same foundation; and because it is composed of the same visibly holy and pious characters.

This sentiment is more fully established by another passage in the eleventh of Romans, where the Apostle expressly declares, that the believing Gentiles are taken into the same church, from which the unbelieving Jews were broken off. "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid; but through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest *by faith*. Be not high minded, but fear."

By this train of reasoning, it fully appears, that the Christian church is only the Jewish church continued

tinued and enlarged to take in Gentiles. The visible church is the root, which once bare and nourished the Jews; which now bears and nourishes the Gentiles; and which will again bear and nourish the Jews. And if the church be the same, then the qualifications for admission into it must be the same. But we have labored to prove, that none were admitted into the Jewish church without a profession of real godliness, and therefore none ought to be admitted into the Christian church, without making the same profession. The visible church, from Adam to Christ, has been built on the same foundation, and composed of the same materials. It has always been a society of visible saints. None, therefore, ought to be admitted into the visible church at this day, but those who appear to be real saints. This is the rule of admission. This is the law of the house.

ARGUMENT V.

The Apostles admitted none into the church, but those who they supposed were true believers.

If we can determine whom the Apostles baptized, we may easily determine whom they admitted into the church; for they admitted no adult persons into the church, whom they had not previously admitted to baptism. The three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, were baptized *before* they were received into the church, or admitted to the fellowship of the Apostles in breaking of bread, or in partaking of the Lord's supper. There is nothing in the New Testament to lead us to suppose, that the Apostles ever admitted any person to the table of the Lord, *before* he was baptized. And it is allowed by all, who acknowledge baptism and the Lord's supper to be divine institutions, that men must be admitted to baptism, *before* they
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are admitted to the Lord's table. This being premised, let us now inquire whom the Apostles admitted to baptism. And if we look into their practice, we shall find they admitted no adult persons to this sacred ordinance, but those who professed to believe the gospel, or appeared to be real faints. They began their ministry according to Christ's direction on the day of Pentecost. Then Peter preached his first sermon. This discourse awakened three thousand, who earnestly inquired what they should do to be saved. Peter exhorted them to repent and believe. They complied with his exhortation, and gladly received the gospel. And after they had believed and professed their faith, they were immediately baptized. This account we have in the second chapter of Acts. In the eighth chapter we read, that Philip went down to Samaria, and preached the gospel there with great success. The consequence was, all who believed were baptized. Verse 12. "But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." In this same chapter we are told, that a certain eunuch, after hearing Philip expound the scripture and preach the gospel, desired to be baptized. Philip proposed the proper qualification for baptism. "If thou believest *with all thine heart*, thou mayest." The eunuch professed to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, in the gospel sense. And upon that profession of saving faith, Philip consented to baptize him according to his request. In the tenth chapter, we have another instance of baptism being administered to believers. Peter was divinely directed to go to Cornelius. Cornelius called his friends together to hear him preach. While Peter was preaching, the Holy Ghost fell upon the assembly in his miraculous and sanctifying influences.

ences. When Peter perceived this happy effect, he demanded, "Can any forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." In the next chapter Peter explains the principle upon which he baptized these Gentiles, in order to vindicate himself before the believing Jews, who complained of his conduct. "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted *repentance unto life*." This shows, that Peter baptized those persons, on the profession and appearance of their being real penitents or true believers. Paul likewise baptized Lydia on the same principle. For he says, "When she was baptized, she besought us, saying, *If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide with me.*"

Thus it appears by the practice of the Apostles, that they baptized no adult persons, but those who professed to *believe the gospel*; from which we might naturally conclude, that they admitted none to the table of Christ, but those whom *they judged* to be faithful to the Lord. But to evade this consequence, some people plead that the Apostles required only a *speculative* faith, or a bare assent to the gospel, in order to baptism. Let us examine this point. The Apostles baptized according to Christ's direction. And his direction is contained in the commission which he gave them to preach
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and to baptize. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." If the Apostles preached according to this commission, they preached *saving faith*. If they baptized according to this commission, they baptized those who professed the *saving faith* which they preached. And if they admitted none to baptism but those who professed *saving faith*, then it is very certain, that they baptized none but those whom *they judged* to be faithful to the Lord. Besides, the Apostles expressly tell those whom they baptized and admitted to special ordinances, that they look upon them as real saints, or the subjects of saving grace. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, styles them *beloved of God*. He calls the Corinthians, *the faithful in Christ Jesus, predestinated to holiness, and accepted in the beloved*. He tells the Philippians, that he *is confident* of this very thing, *that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Even as it is meet to think this of you all*. He writes to the Colossians in this form. *To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you; since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints; for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth*. He speaks with still stronger assurance, with respect to the Thessalonians. *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost*. The Apostle Peter addresses professors in general as the subjects of saving grace, and entitled to the kingdom

kingdom of heaven. *Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Christ; grace unto you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried in the fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*

Paul and Peter here speak to all professors of religion, as though they judged them to be faithful to the Lord. They address them, just as they would address those whom they supposed to be real saints. And they express that charity towards them, which they might properly express towards persons professing godliness. It is natural, therefore, to understand them as giving *their real opinion* of those whom they had baptized and admitted to special ordinances. But some insinuate that they are speaking only of the visible separation of Christians from Heathens, and call them holy, beloved, elected, sanctified, and saved, in allusion to the Jewish church, who were separated from other nations, and

on that account stiled a holy people, a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests. This objection refutes itself. For the Jewish church were all real saints by profession, as we trust has been sufficiently proved. And if this has been proved, then the description of the Jewish church being applied to the Christian is a clear demonstration, that the Apostles considered the professors of christianity as real saints. The allusion which the Apostles are supposed to have to the Jewish church, fixes the meaning of their expressions, and obliges us to understand them in their highest and best sense.

Now, if the Apostles admitted none to the christian sacraments, but such as *they supposed* were chosen of God, called to be saints, predestinated to holiness, and entitled to the heavenly inheritance, then we may justly conclude, that none, at this day, ought to be admitted into the church, but such as the church suppose are real saints. The Apostles were governed, in the admission of members, by the same rule, which is given to all their successors in the ministry. Their rule was Christ's commission. And Christ's commission is the only rule of ministers at this day. The Apostles have explained Christ's commission, by their practice. And their practice is an infallible guide, since they acted, in all their public conduct, under the immediate direction of the divine Spirit. This argument drawn from the practice of the Apostles absolutely settles the point, that the church ought to admit none to the table of the Lord, but such as *they suppose*, in a judgment of charity, are true believers, or the subjects of saving grace.

CHAPTER VII.

None but real saints ought to come to the Lord's supper.

IT is a practical question of great importance, whether any unconverted men ought to come to the table of the Lord? In order to determine this question, and make it appear, that none but real saints ought to come to the Lord's supper, I shall offer the following arguments.

ARGUMENT I.

None but real saints are required to profess religion.

Though God requires sinners to repent and believe the gospel; yet he does not require them to profess faith and repentance, before they have actually repented and believed in Christ. Unbelievers are required to *have* faith, but believers only are required to *profess* faith. In a word, none are required to profess religion, but those who have it. This, we trust, has been sufficiently proved in the preceding pages. But if only real saints ought to profess religion, then only real saints ought to come to the Lord's table. If it is granted that none but professors of religion ought to attend special ordinances. Doctor Hemmenway says, "The belief of the heart is presupposed in the profession of the mouth. And profession of faith which is *a duty*, goes *before* a right of admission to special ordinances." The argument here is plain, concise, and conclusive. None ought to make a profession of religion but real saints. None but professors of religion ought to come to the Lord's table. Therefore

fore none but real faints ought to come to that sacred ordinance.

ARGUMENT . II.

None ought to come to the Lord's supper, but those who are in the covenant of grace.

The duty of attending the sacrament, is a covenant duty. This we have endeavored to prove. And this Doctor Hemmenway expressly asserts. "The call of the gospel requires all who are favored with it to give a serious attention to its proposal, to receive the divine testimony on those sufficient evidences with which it is confirmed, and cordially consent to the gracious covenant which it reveals and offers to the children of men. When they have thus taken the bond of the covenant on them, there are further duties immediately enjoined, duties which belong not to those who are not in covenant, while such, particularly using the special ordinances, which are appropriated exclusively to the church." The Doctor here declares, that the duty of using special ordinances, is a duty enjoined on those, who, by cordially consenting to the covenant of grace, have taken the bond of the covenant upon them. And this declaration agrees with Christ's own representation. Speaking of the cup, he says, "This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many." And again, "This cup is the new testament in my blood." The new testament is the same as the new covenant; and the new covenant is the same as the covenant of grace. According to Christ's own account, therefore, the commemoration of his death, is a covenant duty, and belongs only to those who exercise faith in his blood, for the remission of sins. But if none are required to partake of the sacrament, but those who cordially comply with the covenant of grace, then it undeniably

nably follows, that none but real faints ought to come to the Lord's supper. If the premises here are granted, the consequence cannot be denied.

ARGUMENT III.

None ought to come to the communion table, but those who are qualified to enjoy communion there with Christ and his friends.

The sacrament was instituted for the benefit of those who are qualified to maintain communion with Christ and with his mystical members. Hence says the Apostle, "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? For we being many are one bread and one body: For we are all partakers of that one bread." Communion always involves the idea of union. There must be union to Christ, before there can be communion with him. And there must be union to christians, before there can be communion with them. Believers are united to Christ, as the branches are united to the vine. They are said to be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. They have all drunk into one spirit, that is, the spirit of Christ, and therefore, they are all members one of another. They are Christ's, and Christ is theirs. They rejoice in his glory, and he rejoices in their felicity. The language of his heart at his table is, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved."

Now, if none ought to come to the communion table, but those who are prepared to enjoy such intercourse and communion with Christ and his friends, then no unbelievers ought to come. They are destitute of that love, which is the foundation of union; and of that union, which is the foundation of communion. If they should come to the
 communion

communion table, they could enjoy no communion there with Christ and his friends. There is no form or comeliness in Christ, wherefore they should desire him. And there is no beauty in the excellent of the earth, wherefore they should love them. If an Egyptian, who was an enemy to Israel and to the God of Israel, was unqualified to celebrate the passover ; then, for the same reason, an unbeliever, who is an enemy to Christ and to his friends, is unqualified to appear at his table, and celebrate the memorials of his death.

ARGUMENT IV.

None ought to come to the Lord's supper, but those who have some good evidence of inward sanctification.

This might be easily proved. But there is no occasion for it. It is granted by writers in general, and by Doctor Hemmenway in particular. "It is granted, says he, that a man must have evidence in his own mind of inward sanctification, in order to his having a right to join himself to a church. I mean sufficient evidence to be a good reason for his doing so. And I grant also, that if none but true saints have such evidence as to furnish them with a sufficient reason for coming, then sanctifying grace is necessary as a solid foundation for a right of access."

God has given to every man, in his word, an infallible rule, by which he may ascertain his own character. He has described that love, that repentance, that faith, that submission, that obedience, and that happiness, which forms the essential distinction between saints and sinners. And it requires nothing but an impartial application of these marks to himself, in order to any person's forming a true judgment of his own character. Every good

man has such views and feelings as God has ascribed to saints. Every good man, therefore, may know, if he examines impartially, that he is a good man. It is true, a good man may be partial, and his partiality may lead him to form a false opinion of himself. But if he judges with impartiality, according to real evidence, he will naturally conclude his state to be good. For he has exercises of grace, and his exercises of grace are real evidence of his good estate. If he judges according to real evidence, therefore, he must judge that he is a real christian.

But a graceless person has no real evidence of grace. If he imagines, therefore, that he is a good man, he actually deceives himself. He not only judges without evidence, but contrary to evidence. For every graceless person has clear and full evidence of being destitute of grace. This is the truth; and being the truth with respect to himself, he not only may, but must know it, unless he deceives himself. But God has expressly forbidden self-deception. He has said, "Let no man deceive himself." He has said, "Be not deceived." And he has said, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." These cautions against self-deception, require men to examine the inward exercises of their own minds, and upon examination, to judge according to truth. And if they examine and judge according to God's direction, they never can suppose they are real saints, while destitute of saving grace.

But supposing a man is so negligent in examining, and so partial in judging of himself, as to think he is a real friend, while he is a real enemy to God; is it not his duty, in this case, to come to the table of the Lord? By no means. His self-deception gives him no right to come. The truth is, he does wrong, whether he comes or refrains from coming.

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“ He feedeth upon ashes ; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand ? ” He is in the case of Saul, who spared the best of the spoil, to sacrifice to the Lord. Saul said he had obeyed the divine will ; and it is possible that he really thought so. He might be so infatuated as to imagine, that his peculiar circumstances would justify him in acting contrary to the express command of God. But did his self-deception justify his conduct ? Saul was a wicked man, and therefore though he might follow the dictates of his own conscience from a wicked heart, yet he performed no duty in the sight of God. Paul tells us that he verily thought that he *ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But he had no reason to think so. He deceived himself. And therefore both Christ and his own conscience afterward condemned him for doing, with a wicked heart, what he supposed he ought to do. So a graceless person may verily think it is his duty to come to the Lord’s table ; but his thinking so does not make it his duty to come. Men are criminal when they act from a wicked heart, though they do not know, in the time of acting, that their heart is wicked. A self-deceived person, therefore, who thinks he is a good man without any real evidence, is in a most guilty and unhappy situation. He is under a moral necessity of acting contrary to his duty. His conscience tells him to appear and act as a saint. But his conscience is blinded by the blindness of his heart. This puts him under a moral necessity of destroying himself. But such a moral necessity affords him no ground of excuse. For, he might, at any time, if he would only be honest and impartial, discover his own character. This Paul might have done. The evidence in favor of christianity lay before him, and the temper of his

own mind was discernible. He might, therefore, have seen, at any time, that he was opposing the truth, and opposing it from the heart. So those who think that they *ought* to come to the table of the Lord, while in a graceless state, may, at any time, undeceive themselves, by honestly looking into their own hearts. Hence God makes no allowance for their self-deception. He forbids them to profess religion, and appear among his friends, while they are real enemies to both.

Graceless persons have no more right, through self-deception, to misapply the *commands*, than the *promises* of God. God has given promises of temporal and eternal good to saints. And if sinners apply these promises to themselves, yet God will not approve their conduct, nor bestow the promised blessings upon them. So if sinners apply the commands which God has given to saints, to profess religion, and attend the special ordinances of the gospel, to themselves; yet God will not approve their conduct, nor bless their attendance on duties which he has forbidden them to attend. Since, therefore, God commands none but *real* saints to attend special ordinances, and since none but real saints can have real evidence, that this command applies to them, it undeniably follows, that none but *real* saints can have a right of access to the sacrament of the Lord's supper.



CHAPTER VIII.

Doctor Hemmenway's Discourse concerning the Church more particularly examined.

WE have endeavoured, in the preceding chapters, to show the nature of the visible church, the foundation upon which it is built, the design of its institution, and the proper qualifications of its members. And if these points have been set in a true and clear light, it will be easy to perceive, that the leading principles of the Doctor's Discourse, have been virtually refuted. But to complete the work we have undertaken, we shall proceed to make a few Strictures on those particular parts of his elaborate performance, which wear the most unfavorable aspect on the visible church, and which are the most apparently calculated to mislead the multitude in matters of great practical importance.



S E C T. I.

The Doctor's notion of visible holiness examined.

HE represents the visible holiness, which constitutes a visible saint, as something wholly out of the mind, and totally distinct from holiness of heart. He says, page 27th, "There are two sorts of persons, who in scripture have the title of saints, and are really such in their kind, though in different senses. The one are subjects of *inward and invisible*, the other of *outward and visible* holiness. So a visible

ible faint is *really* as well as *visibly* one in some sense. He is really the subject of some kind of holiness, even that which is *visible, external and relative.*" In the 39th page, he says again, "A visible faint is the subject of that holiness, or faintship, which may be *seen or discerned* by the church. He is not only a visible person who is a faint, but it may be *seen* that he is a faint. This is not only visible to God, and his own conscience, but also to his *fellow christians.*" In the 41st page, he carries this idea as high as it can be carried. "If a visible faint be one *who may be seen to be a faint*, if visible holiness be holiness *which may be seen*, and whose reality may be *ascertained*, it is evident that it is *external and not internal* holiness which forms the character of a visible faint, as such. It is the visibility of *this*, and not of *inward* sanctification, which gives a right of admission into the visible church." A few plain and obvious remarks will set this notion of visible holiness in a proper light.

1. If visible holiness exists out of the mind, and may be seen by the bodily eye, then it is as easy for the church to distinguish *visible* saints from *visible* sinners, as to distinguish large men from small, or white objects from black. And if this be true, their duty is very plain; for they have only to open their eyes, or put on their spectacles, in order to know, with absolute certainty, whom they ought to treat as *real* faints, and receive to christian communion.

2. To say that visible holiness is something distinct from the mind, and to be seen by the bodily eye, is as contrary to the dictates of common sense, as to say that visible reason or visible love are objects of sight. When we say a man *appears* to be a man of reason, do we mean that either the sound of his voice, or the moving of his lips, is visible reason? Or when the spectators of Christ at the grave

grave of Lazarus cried out, "Behold! how he loved him!" did they mean that his groans and tears were visible love, in distinction from his real, inward affections? The truth is, visible holiness as well as visible reason and visible love are seated *in the mind*, and are no more perceivable by the bodily organs, than the mind itself. We see the *minds* of others, by their external actions. When we see them perform *external* actions, which we suppose flow from *internal* reason, we call them *rational* actions; or when we see them perform *external* actions, which we suppose flow from *internal* holiness, we call them *holy* or *virtuous* actions. It is no less absurd, therefore, to call that holy or virtuous, which is supposed to have no connection with the heart, than to call that rational, which is supposed to have no connection with reason.

3. If the Doctor's account of *visible* holiness be just, then we can have no evidence of the *internal* holiness of any person or being besides ourselves. *Visible* holiness has always been supposed to be the evidence of invisible, or real holiness. And the Doctor supposes this to be the case. For he says, "Whoever exhibits *external* holiness, exhibits *all the evidence* of *inward* sanctification which one man can discern in another." But this assertion cannot be true, if his description of visible holiness be a just description. For he asserts, in describing visible holiness, that it is a "holiness which may be *seen*, and whose *reality* may be *ascertained*, and that it is the *visibility* of *this*, and not of *inward* sanctification, which forms the character of a visible saint." According to this supposition, there may be the reality of *visible* holiness, where there is not the reality of *internal* holiness. Supposing then, that we should be able to ascertain the visible holiness of any of our fellow men, we could, by no means, infer from the visibility of their visible holiness, the reality

reality of their *internal* holiness. Or supposing we should be able to ascertain the visible holiness of the Supreme Being, we could, by no means, infer from the visibility of his visible holiness, the reality of his internal holiness, or supreme and universal benevolence. In short, it is impossible to conceive, that that holiness which exists out of the mind, which is visible to the bodily eye, and which has no connection with the exercises of the heart, should afford the least evidence of internal holiness in any person or being in the universe.

The visible holiness which the Doctor describes, as forming the character of a visible saint, seems very much to resemble the visible holiness, which belonged to times, places, persons, and things, under the Mosaic dispensation. Judea was a holy land; the temple was a holy place; its utensils were holy things; the priests and levites were holy persons; and the sabbaths, new moons, and festivals, were holy times. This sort of visible holiness the Doctor seems to have in his eye, while describing the visible holiness of visible saints. For, he often alludes to the visible holiness under the law. And other writers do the same, when describing visible saints. Doctor Lathrop, in particular, compares the visible holiness of believers under the gospel, with the visible holiness of times, places, and persons under the law. In explaining the Apostle's description of the church at Corinth, he says, "We cannot suppose, that, by this description, the Apostle intended to represent *all* the members of the Corinthian church to be *gracious, godly* persons: Many passages, in this and his second epistle to them, import that he thought otherwise; but these phrases rather signify, that they had been called out of the world, and separated from others, that they might be a peculiar people to God. *They were called to be holy.* The words, *sanctified, saints,*
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and holy, applied to bodies of men, are usually to be taken in the same general sense, as *christians, disciples, and brethren*; to express their *visible* relation and *professed* character, rather than a certain judgment concerning their habitual temper. The sabbath, the temple, its utensils, and the ground on which it stood, are called *holy*, and said to be *sanctified*, because they were separated from a common to a sacred use. The nation of the Jews, in which, at its best state, were great numbers of ungodly men, is called *holy*, as being separated from other nations for the service of the true God. Moses says, *Ye are a holy people to the Lord, a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests.* So the *Christian church* is called a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people."

If Doctor Lathrop and Doctor Hemmenway mean no more by visible holiness, than the visible holiness of the Jewish temple, priests, and levites, it will be readily granted, that such visible holiness may be clearly seen and easily ascertained, by the bodily eye. But we may observe, that such visible holiness has no *moral quality*, and therefore can exhibit no real evidence of inward sanctification in any person or being in whom it appears. The visible holiness of the Jewish priests consisted in their visible consecration, visible apparel, visible food, and visible employments. But did this visible holiness exhibit the least evidence of the inward sanctification of their hearts? The visible holiness, therefore, which the Doctor says forms the character of a visible saint, is no more an evidence of his real, internal holiness, than the food he eats or the clothes he wears.

Any author has a right to use words in what sense he pleases, provided he uniformly uses the same words in the same sense. Our author, therefore, had a right to call external actions, external circumstances,

cumstances, or an external separation from a common to a sacred use, external holiness. And then to say, that external holiness is a holiness which may be seen, and whose reality may be ascertained. But after saying this, what right he had to say, that "whoever exhibits such external holiness, exhibits all the evidence of *inward* sanctification which one man can discern in another," it is difficult to conceive. For, such external holiness is no more an evidence of inward sanctification, than external wickedness. And since this is the case, it is still more surprising, that he should plead for such external holiness as a proper and necessary qualification for an attendance on the special ordinances of the gospel. For if external holiness be no evidence of inward sanctification, then a person who is destitute of external holiness, may be as well qualified to come to the table of the Lord, as one who possesses it in the highest perfection. *If external visible* saints are *essentially* different from saints *in heart*, then a church composed of *such visible* saints, exhibits no more evidence of true holiness or real piety, than a church composed of *visible sinners*. Thus it appears, that the *visible holiness*, which the Doctor supposes forms the character of *visible saints*, and qualifies them for christian ordinances, has not the least foundation, either in scripture, reason, or common sense.



S E C T. II.

The Doctor's opinion, that visible saints, though destitute of grace, have a right in the sight of God as well as in the sight of men, to come to the table of the Lord, examined.

THIS sentiment the Doctor advances, in the 30th page of his Discourse. His language is plain
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and determinate. “ Now those who profess faith and consent to the gospel covenant without known hypocrisy, and behave externally agreeably to the rules of the gospel, are visible saints ; and have I conceive, an interest in the covenant not only *visibly*, that is *seemingly and in the account of men*, but are truly in it *in the sight of God*, so far that they have a covenant right of admission and access to the outward ordinances which Christ has instituted and given to his visible churches. This external holiness is the condition or qualification to which the covenant connects a right to these privileges. A visible saint is as truly a member of the visible church, and has a *divine right* to the visible privileges granted exclusively to it, as an *inward* saint is a member of the mystical church, and has a *divine right* to the invisible grace and blessings granted exclusively to it.”

The covenant of grace, as we have stated it, *is the promise of God to save sinners, through faith in the Mediator*. And if this be a just definition of the covenant of grace, then only true believers belong to it, and have a right to any of its peculiar blessings. Mere external holiness makes no man a saint in the sight of God, nor in the view of the covenant of grace. For this covenant promises divine favors to none but true believers.

That saving faith is the condition of the covenant of grace, the Doctor himself allows is not only his own, but the commonly received opinion. For he says, page 23d, “ The first act or qualification which has the promise of saving grace and the blessings of the covenant is, I think, generally held to be *true and living* faith, whereby we are united to Christ *in whom* all the promises are yea and amen. Faith therefore, with a sincere consent, or restipulation agreeable to the covenant proposal, seems to be *most properly* the condition of access to those blessings

ings which belong to its *invisible administration*." Again, speaking of the connection between covenant duties and privileges, he says, page 20th, 21st, "In the first place the order in which they are connected is to be noted. Thus in the order of nature the call of the gospel, accompanied with the influence of the Spirit, is a divine favor going before saving faith. Faith, whether we consider it as a duty, or a gift of God, precedes a saving union to, and interest in Christ, and justification and righteousness, with all those benefits which accompany or flow from it. The belief of the heart is presupposed in the profession of the mouth. And profession of faith which is a duty, goes before a right of admission to the special ordinances of *external communion in an instituted church*. If we confound the proper order in which gospel duties and blessings are connected, we shall entirely change the form and structure of the covenant."

It appears, by laying these observations together, that, according to the covenant of grace, faith goes before profession, and profession goes before a right of admission into the church. But if this be true, where is the right of access or admission, *before* faith? If "*a true and living faith*" be the condition of the covenant of grace, and if no visible saint, who is destitute of grace, can exercise such a true and living faith, then no such visible saint can be in the covenant of grace, or entitled to any of the blessings promised to believers. The Doctor, therefore, by allowing that saving faith is the condition of the covenant of grace, and must go before the right of admission to *external communion* in the church, has completely refuted his own peculiar notion, that visible saints, who are destitute of grace, have a right, *in the sight of God*, to the *outward* ordinances and blessings of the covenant.

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But, in order to avoid inconsistency, and to support his favorite opinion, he has entirely confounded the proper order in which gospel duties and blessings are connected, and thereby wholly changed the form and structure of the covenant. According to the proper order, faith goes before profession, and profession before admission; but according to his new arrangement, profession goes before faith, and entitles the professor, who is destitute of faith, to the *external* blessings of the covenant. And to justify this new and unnatural order, he distinguishes between the visible and invisible administration of the covenant. "But as this covenant, says he, page 28th, has a visible and invisible administration, so there is both a visible and invisible separation, dedication, and relation to God according to, *and by means* of the covenant." His idea seems to be this; according to the *invisible* administration of the covenant of grace, *invisible* or real holiness is the condition of enjoying spiritual and saving blessings; but according to the *visible* administration of the covenant of grace, *visible* holiness is the condition of enjoying *outward* or *visible* blessings. So that the invisible administration of the covenant of grace has one condition, and the visible administration of the covenant of grace has another condition. *Real internal* holiness is the condition of the *invisible* administration; but *external, visible, relative* holiness is the condition of the *visible* administration. Hence he says in the passage first cited under this head, "This *external* holiness is the condition or qualification to which the covenant connects these privileges," meaning the outward ordinances of the gospel.

Now this division of the covenant of grace into two administrations, visible and invisible, amounts to the same as the dividing of it into two covenants, external and internal. And this has been frequent-

ly done by other writers. Mr. Mather and others have maintained, that the covenant which entitles true believers to eternal life, is a covenant of grace, which requires saving faith; but the covenant which entitles visible believers to the outward ordinances of the gospel, is a visible, external, graceless covenant, which requires only *external, graceless* obedience. Had the Doctor maintained the existence of two such covenants, he would have been more consistent with himself, though, perhaps, not more consistent with the truth. But he has chosen to call the same covenant, considered in two respects, a visible and invisible covenant, requiring both visible and invisible conditions. This has created some obscurity in his reasonings upon the covenant of grace. But we will endeavour to make the truth appear.

His account of the *invisible* administration of the covenant of grace appears very plain and scriptural. The *invisible* administration, he says, requires faith, *a true and living faith*, as the condition of enjoying the *invisible* blessings promised. This we believe and approve. But where do we find, that the *external* administration of the covenant of grace requires only *external* holiness. Where do we find, that the external administration of the covenant of grace promises external favors to graceless obedience? Where do we find, that God views those who are destitute of inward sanctification as real saints? I know the Doctor tells us where he supposes all these things may be discovered. He mentions the Jewish church as exemplifying each of these particulars. In page 27th, he says, "The scripture terms those holy or saints who cannot with rational probability be judged, to be all subjects of internal sanctification. Thus the whole congregation of Israel are called an holy people." In page 29th, speaking of visible saints, he says, "Now such stand

stand in special relation to God as his visible covenant people. On this account they are termed *holy*, as being subjects of an *external federal* holiness. In this sense the congregation of Israel are termed an holy people, to whom pertained the adoption and the covenants. And instituted churches are composed of visible saints. And the children of believers are all federally holy." And again, in page 40th, he says, "The Jews were saints, or a holy people *outwardly and in the letter*; and as such were subjects of the *outward* ordinances and privileges of the church under the Old Testament." Thus the Doctor professedly draws his arguments in favor of *external* holiness, of *external* privileges, and of the *external* administration of the covenant of grace, from the Mosaic dispensation. And this, indeed, has always been the dernier resort of all who have written in favor of unconverted men's coming to the Christian sacraments. But the reader will please to recollect, that all arguments drawn from this source have been already refuted. For we have shown, by a variety of arguments, that the Sinai covenant required supreme love to God, and promised no blessings to Israel, upon any lower condition. The Jews, therefore, were called an holy people, because they professed to love God with all their hearts, and exhibited public evidence of being *internally* as well as *externally* holy. The condition of the Sinai covenant was not that visible, external holiness, which the Doctor always takes for granted; but real, internal holiness, which consists in supreme love to God, and universal benevolence to men. The Mosaic dispensation, therefore, gives no countenance to the distinction between the visible and invisible administration of the covenant of grace.

The Doctor appears to have been led to make this distinction, by mistaking the *appendages* of the covenant of grace, for the covenant itself. We have

endeavored to prove, that the Sinai covenant was a covenant added to, and founded on the covenant of grace. So that what the Doctor calls the *outward* or *visible* administration of the covenant of grace, is only an *appendage* to that original covenant. God has enjoined different duties on those in the covenant of grace, at different times. Before the flood, he required true believers to attend public worship, to offer sacrifices, and to make a public profession of religion. In the days of Moses, he required true believers not only to offer sacrifices and to make a public profession of religion, but also to obey a great number of laws given to them as a distinct and separate nation. Most of these appendages are repealed under the gospel, and God now requires believers, only to profess christianity, attend public worship, and observe the special ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. These peculiar duties are now the appendages of the covenant of grace, instead of offering sacrifices, performing circumcision, and observing the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation. And the difference between these appendages forms all the distinction there ever was between the different administrations of the covenant of grace. Indeed, all that we mean by the visible dispensation or administration of the covenant of grace, is, that in one age of the world, one set of duties has been enjoined on believers; and in another age of the world, another set of duties has been enjoined on them. These different sets of duties form the distinction between the administration of the covenant of grace, before the flood, after the flood, in the time of Moses, and in the days of Christ and of the Apostles. But these different sets of duties are all of such a kind, that they never have been, and never can be performed, without real holiness. And, therefore, what the Doctor calls the *visible* administration

tration of the covenant of grace requires real, internal holiness, as much as the *invisible* administration of it. So that his distinction between the *visible* and *invisible* administration of the covenant of grace, is not only groundless, but utterly fails of answering the sole purpose for which it was invented. Hence his notion, that visible saints, who are destitute of grace, have a right *in the sight of God*, as well as in the sight of men, to come to the table of the Lord, has not the least foundation in scripture.



S E C T. III.

The Doctor's opinion, that the church may admit those to communion, who they do not think are real saints, examined.

THE DOCTOR maintains this sentiment, in various parts of his Discourse. His words, in the 44th, page, are these. "I think it is not true to say *that* to be a *visible* saint is the same as to *appear* to be a *real* saint in the eye that beholds. *That* none ought to be admitted but those who *appear* and are *judged* to be *true* saints. *That* it is needful that a church have charity for one, or such a favorable notion of him, in order to their receiving him, or having a right or warrant to receive him." "Nor has God made it necessary for us, says he, page 94th, to *believe* that men are truly pious in order to its being our duty to admit them. We are allowed, nay, required to admit credible professors, be our opinion of them *what it may*."

The Doctor supposes this will sound like a paradox to some. And, therefore, to do him justice, we will, in the first place, consider what he has to say to explain and support his paradox. "The

of believers, says he, page 49th, are all reputed faints, and as such have a right of admiffion ; yet we are not *sure* that the greater part of them are inwardly fanctified from the womb, or even afterwards." We might, with propriety, deny that the infants of believers are to be reputed visible faints, until the Doctor offers more proof than he has yet offered, to support this assertion. But allowing, for the present, that they are all to be reputed visible faints, this is no argument to prove, that the church may repute those to be *visible* faints, who they do not believe are *real* faints. A man may be reputed honest by the public, whom I know to be dishonest. In that case, I may safely say he is reputed an honest man, though I know him to be of a different character ; because I mean to give the opinion of the public, and not my own. But I cannot safely say, that *I* repute him an honest man, when I neither think, nor judge, nor believe him to be honest. If the infants of believers, therefore, are to be reputed *visible* faints by the church, then the church ought to judge and believe them to be *real* faints.

The Doctor still further urges, page 41st, 42d, that it is *external* holiness, which forms the character of a visible faint, and gives the church a right to admit him. And this external holiness may appear, where there is no appearance of inward piety. "But, says he, if a visible faint be one who may be seen to be a faint, if visible holiness be holiness that may be seen, and whose reality may be ascertained, it is evident that it is *external*, and *not internal* holiness which forms the character of a visible faint, as such. Now, if inward holiness be not visible to the eye of man, then it cannot be the visibility of this which gives any one the title of a visible faint, and a right of admiffion. In short, if the notion of visibility has been rightly stated, if nothing is visible
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but what can be seen, and nothing can be seen unless there be light and evidence enough to *ascertain its real existence*; it seems plain that it is not *inward*, but *outward* holiness which can be seen in another, and which denominates him a visible saint." This sort of *external* holiness, which is totally distinct from inward sanctification, and which may be seen and ascertained by the bodily eye, we have already considered, if not refuted. But not to rely on our own arguments in this point, we will produce better from the Doctor himself, who, in explaining visible holiness, makes it to consist in something as *invisible* as *internal* piety. His title to the third section of his fourth chapter is this: "That a *credible profession* of christianity constitutes a visible saint." In the 53d page, he tells us the nature of external holiness. "The point now to be inquired into is, What is visible or external holiness, or wherein does it consist? Or what are those credible evidences of sanctifying grace which give a right of admission?" The words immediately following are these, and worthy of particular attention. "It has been observed, that outward holiness, or, (if any choose rather to call it) the *credible evidence* of inward sanctification, is a real character or qualification, and not the mere appearance of something whose reality is doubtful. *That* it gives those the denomination of saints in whom it is found. And that it comprehends all those *signs* of grace, which can be exhibited to, or discerned by the church. But this is not so to be understood, as if one were not a visible saint unless he should exhibit all *the signs* of inward sanctification, which the church are capable of discerning. *For some visible* saints give *much more evidence* of this than others. *Outward holiness* appears
IN VERY DIFFERENT DEGREES."

Here the bubble breaks and vanishes! Here the Doctor tells us, that he means precisely the same

thing by external holiness that every body else means. He says he means the *signs of grace*. He says he means the EVIDENCE of inward sanctification. And he says he means such EVIDENCE of inward sanctification as admits of various degrees of clearness. "OUTWARD HOLINESS APPEARS IN VERY DIFFERENT DEGREES." Now, if this be true, where is the force of his argument drawn from visible holiness, to prove that the church may admit those visible saints to communion, who they suppose are destitute of saving grace? If the church have evidence of *external* holiness, then they have the same evidence of *internal*. For *external* holiness, he says, is the evidence of *internal*. They cannot, indeed, have certainty of either, because *outward* holiness appears in all the different degrees of evidence that *inward* sanctification does. Accordingly, the Doctor himself concedes, that the church ought to ground their charity of those whom they admit to communion, *not upon external holiness itself*, but upon the *evidence* which external holiness affords of inward sanctification. He spends the whole of the second section of his fourth chapter, in explaining "the visibility of inward sanctification," and in showing how the judgment of charity is founded upon it. And, in the beginning of the section, he writes with great strength and perspicuity. I will cite a passage which merits peculiar attention and approbation. "As it is by means of light that outward objects are visible to the eye, so it is by means of *evidence* that the mind discovers what is truth, with respect to those objects about which it is occupied. Whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Though nothing is *properly* visible but what can be certainly seen, and so really exists; yet such are the relations and connections which things have among themselves. that we may, from the things which are *immediately* seen, be certain that
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other things exist, and that it is *probable, credible, or possible*, that other things are, or will be, of whose existence yet we cannot be sure. And though we cannot be certain of the reality of these, yet the *probability, credibility, or possibility* of them may be known and plainly perceived. As we have no certain evidence of the inward sanctification of another, no more can be discerned than fallible signs, which give us reason to *hope, or judge* it probable or credible, that such a one is a saint in heart. *This is all the visibility which grace has in the eye of charity.* And the JUDGMENT must KEEP PACE with the EVIDENCE on which it is grounded. Whoever exhibits *external holiness*, exhibits *all the evidence* of inward sanctification which one man can discern in another. And though this does not make it certain that the subject is a true saint, yet he is certainly a visible saint. And the rule of the gospel, according to which the judgment of charity is formed, requires that every visible saint be *reputed, received, and loved*, as a true disciple of Christ. When a man is admitted into the church as a visible saint, he is admitted as one *who gives credible evidence that he is a saint in heart*, and is by the rule of charitable judgment *so to be reputed.*"

These observations, we presume, the Doctor will allow to be just. But if these are just, then real holiness may be visible, and the church may and ought, in admitting members, to govern themselves agreeably to the *evidence* of it, which may be either possible, credible, or probable. Their judgment of charity must be grounded on the visibility of *grace*, and KEEP PACE with it. All they admit, they must admit on the *evidence of inward sanctification*; and of course, they must *receive, repute, and love* them as *true* disciples of Christ. But how they can receive, repute, and love any as *true* disciples of Christ, whom they do not judge nor believe to be
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so, still remains a paradox. In a word, if external holiness be nothing more than the evidence of inward sanctification; if external holiness admits of as many degrees of evidence as inward sanctification; and if the judgment of charity ought to keep pace with the evidence of inward sanctification, then the church ought to admit none to communion, but such as they as much believe are *real* as *visible* saints. They may be under a mistake with respect to their true characters, but yet they are no less certain of their *real*, than of their *visible* holiness.

The Doctor goes on to observe, in support of his favorite opinion, that taking visible saints collectively, there is a presumptive evidence, that each individual is an hypocrite. The church, therefore, after their strictest attention to the gospel rule of admission, have no ground to conclude that each individual is a real saint. We will give his argument in his own words and in its full strength, as we find it in page 45th, 46th. "It belongs not to the judgment of charity to determine *what degree of evidence external holiness affords of inward sanctification*. We know it leaves us in uncertainty: It does not exceed probability. But whether it amounts to a preponderant probability, I think cannot be known, unless we could know whether the greatest part of visible saints were sincere. If this were supposed, the probability would preponderate in favor of each particular person. There would be more reason to hope he is sincere, than to fear the contrary. But if it were supposed that the greatest part of visible saints are not sincere, the probability would preponderate against the several individuals. If we cannot know whether one is a visible saint, till we know whether there be a preponderant probability that he is sincere, I think we shall never be able to determine this till the day of judgment."

It is easy to observe here, that the church, in admitting members, are to judge of their characters, by the evidence which each individual exhibits of sincerity. Supposing, therefore, they may have reason to doubt of the sincerity of professors in general, yet they have no reason to doubt of the sincerity of one who gives clear and striking evidence of real piety. Though I know that mankind in general are given to falsehood, yet this gives me no ground to disbelieve a man who appears to speak the truth in simplicity. And though I know that one nation is given to intemperance, another to theft, and a third to robbery; yet I have no right to think that an individual of either of those nations is a drunkard, or a thief, or a robber, after he has exhibited personal evidence of being a virtuous and pious man. Were it supposed, then, that the greatest part of professors are insincere, yet the church may have more reason to think, that any individual whom they admit to communion is sincere than insincere, judging according to the evidence which he personally exhibits of sincerity. And the Doctor himself, after all, fully asserts and confirms this sentiment. In page 48th, he makes this ample concession. "Notwithstanding what has been said I grant that the evidences of sincerity which some exhibit, greatly overbalance whatever *in them* may have an unfavorable aspect. When judging of the character of a professor, we have, as the rule of charity requires, laid aside all presumptions and probabilities arising from the falling away of many in the day of temptation, (which might render the integrity of each individual suspected) and estimate his character merely from what is visible *in him*, it may be very plain, that he gives more evidence of sincerity than hypocrisy. And we might say *from what is visible in him*, it appears MOST PROBABLE that he is sincere. And I think none ought to be accounted

accounted visible saints *in whom* there is not VISIBLE PREPONDERANT grounds of hope." This whole passage we entirely approve, as fully coming up to the sentiment, which we have labored to establish. But how the Doctor's concession and assertion can be made to harmonize, we leave the reader to judge. He concedes, that none ought to be accounted *visible saints in whom* there is not *preponderant* grounds to *hope* they are sincere. But he asserts, that we never can have *preponderant* probability that any one is sincere, until the day of judgment.

There is one other consideration which the Doctor suggests, to confirm his opinion, that the church have a right to admit any visible saints to communion, let their judgment concerning their real piety be what it may. It is this. The church may be partial and judge favorably of some, and unfavorably of others, without proper evidence. "It is the *discernible qualification* of a person, says he, page 43d, and *not the discernment of the church*, nor the appearance he has in their eye, not the idea, or notion they may have of him, whether right or wrong; which constitutes a visible saint, and gives a right of admission. The reason why one appears, or seems to another to be such a person, may be prejudice, partiality, judging by a wrong rule. But can any think that our right to christian privileges depends upon these things? Whoever exhibits or holds up to view external holiness, or, which is the same thing, credible sufficient evidence according to the gospel that he ought to be charitably regarded and received for a true saint, such a one is a visible saint, and has a right of admission, however he may seem or appear to any. It is not the apprehension of others, but the qualification of the proponent, or the sufficient evidence in his favor, duly exhibited, which gives him a right. We must

not then confound the visibility of an object with the sense of the beholder, or with the apprehensions or judgment which he forms of it. If this be considered I think it is not true to say *that* to be a visible faint is the same as to appear a real faint in the eye that beholds. *That* none ought to be admitted but those who appear, and are judged to be true faints. *That* it is needful that the church have charity for one, or such a favorable opinion of him, in order to their receiving him, or having a right or warrant to receive him."

None suppose, a man's being a faint, or his giving evidence of being a faint, or his having a *passive* right of being received and treated as a faint, depends on the apprehension and judgment of the church. But yet *his passive* right to be admitted and treated as a faint, does not destroy the *positive* right of the church to judge and act for themselves, with respect to his admission. In this respect, every one who desires to be admitted to special ordinances, is subjected to the prejudice and partiality of the church. Their eyes may be evil and their bodies full of darkness. They are imperfect, and may judge with prejudice and partiality. But yet, imperfect as they are, God gives them the right of admission. And in the exercise of this right, they must see with their own eyes, and admit or reject according to their own judgment. In order to do their duty, therefore, they must admit none to communion, but such as *they judge* to be real faints.

Supposing there was a certain DECLARATION pointed out in scripture, as the only term of admission, then it might be justly said, that the church ought to admit all who make *this declaration*, let their private opinion of their sincerity be what it may. But since *no such declaration* is prescribed in scripture, the church are to judge of men's sincerity by credible, though fallible signs. And,
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judging by these signs, they must be inwardly convinced of the real piety of every one whom they admit to communion. If they are partial, they ought to lay aside their partiality. But whether partial or impartial, they must admit only those, who, in their judgment, are subjects of saving grace.

This will more fully appear, if we consider,

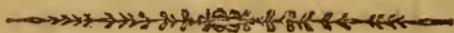
1. The church will be unfaithful to Christ, if they admit any to his table, who, they suppose, are his real enemies. The sacrament was appointed for his friends only; and they are required to admit his friends and only his friends to this sacred ordinance, so far as they are capable of judging by credible signs. They can never answer it to Christ, therefore, if they admit any to approach his table, who *they believe* are destitute of those *gracious* qualifications, which alone can render their attendance acceptable to God, and profitable to themselves.

2. All the members of the church are required to exercise mutual brotherly love. But how can they love as brethren, or feel mutually united in christian affection, unless they verily believe each other to be the real friends of Christ? The love of complacency must have holiness for its object. And where this object does not appear, this affection cannot be exercised. The Doctor allows, the church ought to exercise brotherly love toward each other, but seems to suppose they may do it on *his* principles. For he says, page 51st, "It may be thought that brotherly love could not rationally be required of, and exercised by christians towards any but such as give at least preponderant evidence that they are inwardly sanctified. But I ask, how can we possibly divine whether any one has such signs of grace as seldom fail, when we know not what they are, or whether any such signs are visible to us? *But the rule of charity is plain and certain.*

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Whoever exhibits *external* holiness is to be *repu ed, received, and loved* as a disciple of Christ for *his sake*. He has that mark of a disciple, which Christ has appointed as a criterion of those whom he would *have us love*, and treat as belonging to him." Here the Doctor still recurs to *external* holiness as the *plain* and *certain* rule of charity. But we have proved from himself, that this is nothing but the *evidence* of grace, and such an evidence too as admits of as many degrees of clearness or obscurity as grace itself. How then can this be a *plain* and *certain* rule of charity? There is no *plain* and *certain* rule of charity, unless there are *plain* and *certain* signs of grace. But he expressly says, all signs of grace are *fallible*, and *outward* holiness appears in *very different degrees*. And by saying these things, he has taken away every *plain* and *certain* rule of charity, his *visible, external* holiness not excepted. If he or any other person, therefore, exercises brotherly love towards a professor of religion, he must ground his affections, not on mere *visible, external* holiness, but on the *evidence* of real religion, or inward sanctification. This is the ground, and the only possible ground of true christian brotherly love. A church may treat a king, a magistrate, or a minister with great *outward* respect, for Christ's sake, or because he requires them to honor the king, to obey magistrates, and to count *them* worthy of double honor, who labor in word and doctrine; but they cannot exercise *brotherly love* towards kings, magistrates, or ministers, *for Christ's sake*, unless they view them as *true* saints, or *sincere* friends to Christ. If it be true, therefore, that the members of the church ought to exercise mutual brotherly love, then it is their indispensable duty to admit none to their communion, but such as *they suppose* are the real subjects of grace, or the proper objects of their *holy* complacency and delight. I have dwelt
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the longer on this point, because the denial of it appears to be one of the most dangerous mistakes in the Doctor's Discourse. For while he apparently grants all that Mr. Edwards pleads for as a term of admission, he strenuously endeavors, by this singular rule of charity, which arises from *external* holiness, to undermine the whole Edwardean scheme, and to open the doors of the church as wide as Mr. Stoddard.



S E C T. IV.

The Doctor's opinion, that men have a right to come to the sacrament, without viewing themselves as REAL saints, examined.

THE Doctor discusses this point in the fifth chapter of his Discourse. The title of the first section is this: "The right of access explained and distinguished; founded not in the reality but evidence of grace in the view of conscience.—*Assurance, certain evidence, prevailing persuasion, preponderating probability of grace not necessary.*" He allows, in the beginning of this section, that the right of Access is distinct from the right of Admission, and is to be resolved upon different grounds. And he further allows, that the question concerning the right of Access is more *difficult* to resolve upon *certain and safe* grounds, than the right of Admission. It seems, therefore, to be a matter of importance to examine this part of the controversy with particular care and precision.

The Doctor says the right of access "is not founded in the reality, but evidence of grace." Had he said this with respect to the right of admission, we should have no disposition to dispute his assertion.

tion. For we grant, that the church are to govern their conduct, in admitting members, not by the reality, but by the evidence of grace. But the right of access is of a different nature, and to be resolved upon a different principle. The church are bound to act agreeably to *external* evidence, but it is *internal* evidence, which binds the conscience of the proponents.

Let us now hear what the Doctor has to say in favor of his own sentiment. "It is to be remembered, says he, page 74th, 75th, that when we judge according to our rule, and the evidence we are to proceed upon, our judgment is morally and practically right, though the facts judged of should be really otherwise, than we take them to be. The evidence upon which we are to form our judgment in many cases is not infallible, and so leaves us uncertain what is the real truth of fact: But our judgment is certainly right and reasonable, if it be conformable to rule and evidence, whether it be conformable or not to the truth and reality of the thing. The practical judgment, or the dictate of conscience what we may or ought to do, may be right and sure, when the speculative judgment is doubtful or mistaken. Thus, there are many who doubt whether they are fit for the privileges of external communion with an instituted church, or entitled to them by a covenant grant; and yet the reasons persuading them to ask for admission, and attend the administration of special ordinances, may be such as their consciences, *when rightly informed*, must judge sufficient to warrant their coming. Their title to the privilege may be doubtful to the speculative judgment, because supported only by probable evidence. But their warrant to come and take, and use the privilege may be certain and evident to the practical judgment; because probable evidence is *certainly* a sufficient reason for us to determine our conduct by in numberless cases,

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and in this in particular. If they have so much evidence of their title as amounts to a sufficient reason for them to act upon, this is enough to put it out of doubt, that their conduct may and ought to be determined by it: That is, they have a right or warrant to act accordingly."

"This then we lay down as a principle or maxim. No man has a right or warrant to come into the church, who has not sufficient reason for doing so, in the view of his own mind; and whoever has such a reason has undoubtedly a warrant to come, whatever *doubts* he may have respecting his spiritual state, and whatever his state may be *supposed* to be. A good reason in view, is a good foundation, and the only foundation for the dictates of a right conscience that we have a warrant to do any thing. It is vain to imagine any deeper or more substantial foundation necessary." The substance and strength of this train of reasoning may be comprised in these three propositions.

1. Men ought to act, when they have a good reason for acting, in the view of a rightly informed conscience.

2. Men ought to come to the sacrament, when they have a good reason for doing so, in the view of a rightly informed conscience.

3. Some men, who are destitute of grace, ought to come to the sacrament, because they may have a good reason for doing so, in the view of a rightly informed conscience.

We will consider each of these propositions distinctly.

1. Men ought to act, when they have a good reason for acting, in the view of a rightly informed conscience. This is a plain and undeniable truth, which we freely and fully grant. Our conscience is the moral faculty, by which we discover moral objects, and by which we are capable of acting as
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moral agents. This faculty not only tells us what is right and what is wrong; but lays us under immediate obligations to pursue the one, and to refrain from the other. Conscience commands and forbids; approves and condemns. And all its dictates are sacred and inviolable. Men, therefore, are always obliged to act, when they have a good reason for acting, in the view of a rightly informed conscience.

2. Men ought to come to the sacrament, when they have a good reason for doing so, in the view of a rightly informed conscience. As this proposition is a fair and necessary consequence of the former, so the truth of it is equally plain and undeniable. We therefore readily adopt the Doctor's maxim, that "any man has a right or warrant to come into the church, who has a good reason for doing so, in the view of a rightly informed conscience." But yet,

3. We deny that any man, who is destitute of grace, can have a good reason for coming to the sacrament, in the view of a rightly informed conscience.

If no man, who is destitute of grace, can have *evidence of grace*, in the view of his own enlightened conscience; then no man, who is destitute of grace, can have a good reason, in the view of his own enlightened conscience, for coming to the Lord's supper. This the Doctor repeatedly and abundantly grants. He says, page 80th, "It appears, that all who know themselves to be unconverted have no right of access. Such are not visible saints in the view of their own conscience. They find not credible evidence of sanctifying grace, but know themselves to be graceless." Again, he says, page 77th, "It is granted that none have sufficient reasons and warrant for coming into the church in the judgment of conscience when *rightly informed*

but they who find credible marks or evidences of *sanctifying grace*." Again, he says, page 76th, "It is granted, that a man must have evidence in his own mind of inward sanctification, in order to his having a right to join himself to a church. I mean a sufficient evidence to be a good reason for his doing so. And I grant also, that if none but true saints have such evidence as to furnish them with a sufficient reason for coming, *then sanctifying grace is necessary as a solid foundation for a right of access*." He grants still further, page 74th, "If we judge the reasons prompting us to do any action, to be sufficient when they are not, our unreasonable judgment gives us no right to act according to it. It is an unfaithful guide, and ought to be corrected. It must be *the dictate of a right conscience*, discerning and approving the reasons for doing any thing to give us a right or warrant to do it." These are frank and ample concessions, which we wish the reader to retain, and therefore shall repeat them distinctly. The Doctor concedes,

1. That those who know themselves to be graceless, have no right of access.
2. That those who have not credible evidence of inward sanctification, have no right of access.
3. That those who have not credible evidence of inward sanctification, in the view of a rightly informed conscience, have no right of access.
4. That if a graceless person cannot have credible evidence, in the view of a rightly informed conscience, that he is the subject of real holiness, then sanctifying grace is necessary as a solid foundation for a right of access.

Now, it only remains to prove, that no graceless person can have credible evidence of sanctifying grace, in the view of a rightly informed conscience. And to proceed with clearness, it may be proper, in the first place, to fix the meaning of a rightly informed

formed conscience. This is a phrase which the Doctor often uses, and which is often used by other writers on moral subjects. It doubtless has some real meaning, which it seems necessary, in the present case, to ascertain.

The conscience itself is always good, and always ready to give a true verdict, when the evidence is good. And the evidence would always be good, if the partiality of the heart did not keep it out of sight. So that a man can never be in a situation in which he is under a natural necessity of judging or acting contrary to his duty. Conscience would always dictate duty, if the heart would only permit it to see all the evidence that might be seen. Conscience would always tell a man to act, when duty required him to act; and always forbid him to act, when duty required him to refrain from acting, if the heart did not conceal some of the evidence upon which duty depended. But the heart often conceals evidence from the conscience, by preventing it from taking a full view of the case, about which it is to determine. The prejudice or partiality in the heart of a Judge will conceal evidence from the view of his conscience. If he is prejudiced against the criminal at the bar, he will attend to all the circumstances against him, and either overlook, or slightly regard the circumstances in his favor. Or if he is partial in favor of the criminal, he will regard all the favorable, and disregard all the unfavorable circumstances, in his case. So if any man is reluctant to knowing his duty in a certain situation, he will search for evidence to make it appear that the thing proposed is not his duty; and on the other hand, turn away his eyes from all circumstances, which seem to make it appear that he ought to do what is required. But when the conscience judges upon partial evidence, where fuller evidence might be attained, then it is

not rightly informed, and therefore needs to be rectified. And the only way to rectify it, is, to lay aside all prejudice and partiality, and attend to all the evidence which the case will admit. But when the conscience is informed of *all* the evidence, which the case brought before it will admit, then it absolutely binds the person to follow its infallible dictates. And the person in following them will do his duty, even though the evidence upon which he acts should prove to be false. Thus the conscience of the Judge is rightly informed, when it is informed by the *best* evidence which the case brought before him will admit. And as the testimony of *credible* witnesses is the *best* evidence that any case brought before him will admit; so he has a right to determine according to the testimony of such witnesses, whether they speak the truth or not. His conscience requires him to seek the *best* evidence, and when he has found it, his conscience requires him to give sentence accordingly. Men are obliged to let conscience see the *best*, that is, *all the real* evidence, in every case of conscience, and then to act according as conscience, *thus rightly informed*, requires them to act. And when they act in this manner, they infallibly do their duty. We are now prepared to inquire, whether any graceless person can have *credible* evidence, in the view of a rightly informed conscience, that he is a real subject of saving grace. And here I would observe,

1. That a rightly informed conscience is the only proper judge of the nature of all the exercises of the heart. It is God's vicegerent within us. It will distinguish our affections. It will approve the good and condemn the bad. In a word, it will pass sentence upon all our moral exercises, without our leave. This the Doctor seems to allow, for he says, "Some men know that they are unconverted, because

cause they are not visible saints in the view of their own conscience." I observe,

2. That every graceless person is wholly destitute of the *evidence* of grace. He has no true love, no true repentance, no true faith, no true submission, no true joy. According to the best evidence, that is, the evidence of his own heart, he is totally destitute of grace. And if his conscience be *rightly informed*, that is, if his conscience attends to the real exercises of his heart, it will clearly discern and declare, that there is no appearance of *inward* sanctification. Besides,

3. Every graceless person has full positive evidence that he is graceless. He is not only destitute of holiness, but full of sin. Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart are evil, only evil continually. All his moral exercises are selfish, and displeasing to God. If he loves men, it is because he thinks that they love *him*. If he loves God, it is because he thinks that God loves *him*. If he avoids any sin, it is because he thinks *that* sin hurts *him*. If he performs any external duty, it is because he thinks it will do *him* good. If he ploughs, his ploughing is sin. If he prays, his prayers are an abomination to the Lord. So far, therefore, as his conscience is acquainted with the exercises of his heart it will condemn him. And if his conscience be rightly informed, and attends to all the evidence arising from the exercises of his heart, it will pronounce him a total enemy to God. No graceless person could be deceived, if his conscience were rightly informed. A rightly informed conscience would detect every hypocrite, and convince him that he is totally destitute of grace. All the self-deception which men labor under, respecting the state of their souls, is owing to the blindness of their hearts, which prevents their conscience from being rightly informed, and consequently from do-

ing its proper office. But when it is rightly informed, it will do its proper office, and destroy the false hopes of every graceless person. When Paul's conscience was enlightened, or rightly informed, it discovered to him the plague of his own heart, and destroyed all his false hopes. These observations, we trust, are sufficient to settle the point, that no graceless person can have *credible evidence*, in the view of his own *rightly informed* conscience, that he is the subject of true holiness or saving grace. And, therefore, we conclude, agreeably to the Doctor's concession, that "sanctifying grace is necessary as a solid foundation for a right of access to the Lord's table."



S E C T. V.

The Doctor's notion, that sinners have as good a right to partake of the sacrament, as to attend any other religious duties, examined.

WHAT he says to reduce the duty of attending the sacrament to a level with other religious duties, is contained in the second section of his seventh chapter. His arguments are all grounded on the principle, that some unregenerate men have a divine warrant to attend the Lord's supper. And if this were true, we grant, his conclusion would be just. But we have endeavored to show, that neither the word of God, nor a rightly informed conscience, allows unregenerate men to come to the sacrament. And perhaps, if the Doctor had only carried in his own mind some of his own observations, he would have wholly omitted this second section. He had very justly observed before, that "there is an order in duties," and therefore, that
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“the belief of the heart is *presupposed* in the profession of the mouth.” Though it is the duty of all unregenerate men to read and pray, to attend public worship, to repent and believe, and even to profess religion; yet there is *an order* in these duties, and some must be performed *before* others. All duties which imply *no profession* of grace, are more immediately binding, than those which carry this implication. A sinner, who has never experienced either sanctifying grace, or pardoning mercy, cannot with the least propriety, bless God for such saving benefits; but a child of God is bound to praise his heavenly Father, for such great and distinguishing favors, because he has actually received them. So, a sinner who is destitute of love to God, cannot, with the least propriety, profess supreme affection to him; but a saint who loves God supremely, may and ought to profess his supreme regard to his Maker. Hence the truth and importance of the Doctor’s remark, that “the belief of the heart is *presupposed* in the profession of the mouth.” And upon this ground it is, that Mr. Edwards, and those who embrace his opinion respecting the terms of communion, deny that sinners have as good a right to come to the sacrament, as to attend any other religious duties. The common duties of reading, praying, and attending public worship, imply no profession of inward sanctification; but the celebration of the sacrament necessarily involves a profession of love and union to Christ. This is the narrow of the point. But here the Doctor, instead of directly looking the difficulty in the face, flies off to another controverted subject, upon which he had been once and again refuted, and upon which Mr. Edwards, and some in his sentiments, have used a few unguarded expressions. They have allowed, we grant, “that it is *lawful*, and the *duty* of the unconverted to attend the means of conversion.” But were this true, the
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Doctor could not avail himself of it, to answer the argument of Mr. Edwards and his friends, against professing to love God, while destitute of grace. For if it were the duty of sinners, while in their sins, to attend the means of conversion, yet it would not hence follow, that it is their duty, while destitute of grace, to profess a falsehood. Lying, and especially in matters of religion, is a presumptuous sin. And this sin unconverted persons must commit, if they profess to be what they are not. Accordingly God charges them with swearing falsely, when they profess to love him, while destitute of love and every other gracious affection. This is the argument against placing the duty of attending the sacrament upon a level with other instituted duties. But supposing, as the Doctor insinuates, that it is not more criminal to attend the sacrament in a graceless manner, than to attend other duties so; yet he maintains that there is a difference between attending the sacrament and other duties, which bears hard against his own scheme. He expressly declares, that a person who knows himself to be graceless, has no right to approach the table of the Lord. To be consistent, therefore, he must declare, that a person who knows himself to be graceless, has no right to approach the house of the Lord, or attend any other duty. It concerns him, therefore, as much as his opponents, to point out the difference between the duty of attending the sacrament, and the duty of attending other divine institutions. The laboring oar is still his.

S E C T. VI.

The Doctor's opinion, that the sacrament is a converting ordinance, examined.

THE Doctor states this point so as to give it the most favorable aspect. "The question is, says he, page 117th, whether the Lord's supper be an instituted mean of conversion to such *rightful* communicants as are unconverted? All agree that the Lord's supper is not a converting ordinance to those who have *no* right or warrant to come to it. So the point of inquiry is, whether, if we admit the right and duty of some un sanctified men to come to the sacrament, we have reason to think it may be an instituted mean of their conversion?" Mr. Stoddard, in his Appeal to the Learned, says, page 17th, "That which I mean to shew is, That *some* un sanctified men have a right before God to the Lord's supper." And upon this ground he says again, page 23d, "All ordinances are for the *saving* good of those that are to be administered to. This ordinance is according to institution to be applied to visible saints, *though unconverted*, therefore it is for their *saving* good, and *consequently for their conversion*." By this it appears, that the Doctor very nearly agrees with Mr. Stoddard in stating the point; but however, he seems to be far less confident as to the truth of it, and speaks with great caution and reserve. "Upon the whole, says he, in the conclusion of his third section, though I pretend not positively to determine any thing *without more clear scriptural evidence*, yet I see not but the Lord's supper may be, *by the blessing of God*, the means of conversion to such *rightful* communicants as need converting grace: And that we may hope they will receive spiritual

spiritual benefit from it. And however, that there appears *no harm or danger in this opinion.*"

This is a very singular observation! After the Doctor has spent more than a hundred pages to pave the way for bringing out his supreme point in view, he finally hesitates to draw the conclusion from his own premises. The great subject of controversy between the Stoddardeans and Edwardeans as to terms of communion, rests upon this single question, *Whether the sacrament be a converting ordinance?* It is not, as Mr. Stoddard and Doctor Hemmenway both allow, whether the sacrament may, *by the blessing of God*, be the mean of conversion to sinners; but whether it is appointed, instituted, and ordained *for this purpose*. God has made use of the wickedness of the wicked to convert them; but he never appointed their wickedness as a converting ordinance. So God may have made use of the sacrament to convert some who come to it unconverted, but this is no evidence, that he appointed it as a converting ordinance. But if it be not a converting ordinance, why should the Doctor write a Book to prove, that unconverted men ought to attend it? Mr. Stoddard intimates very plainly, that he contended for the right and duty of unregenerate men's coming to the sacrament, because it was instituted for the saving benefit, that is, *the conversion* of those to whom it is to be administered. And on this supposition only, he viewed the sacramental controversy, as a subject of real importance. The Doctor, therefore, by his final concession, gives up all, which is of any consequence, in the dispute, and throws the weight of his own opinion into the opposite scale. For, if the Doctor, after studying the subject, and writing a long discourse upon it, cannot yet determine, whether the sacrament be a converting ordinance, who can? He has had the advantage of Mr. Stoddard's arguments, and of his
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own long, close, and penetrating attention to this single point, and yet, after all, cannot determine in *his own mind*, that the sacrament is a converting ordinance. The Doctor's uncertainty, under these circumstances, amounts to a violent presumption, that the sacrament is *not a converting ordinance*.

And, this, perhaps, will more fully appear, from what we have endeavored to establish in the preceding pages. We have shown, that no unconverted persons can be *rightful* communicants at the Lord's table. Hence the sole ground upon which the notion of the sacrament's being a converting ordinance is built, is taken away. And when the foundation is taken away, the superstructure must necessarily fall. God forbids all unconverted men to appear among his people, and to take his covenant into their mouth. And if they presume to come to the sacrament, which he instituted for the edification and comfort of the converted, they eat and drink judgment to themselves. There is, therefore, great harm and danger, in maintaining, that the sacrament is a converting ordinance. It is a dangerous delusion for the unconverted to believe, that they may come and take the children's bread, which God has forbidden them to take. Hence it highly concerns the leaders in the church, to be very cautious on this interesting point. If they make no difference between the *clean* and the *unclean*; but permit both to come promiscuously, and partake of holy things, they will not only render the table of the Lord contemptible, but justly expose themselves and others to the divine displeasure and rebuke.

S E C T. VII.

The Doctor's opinion, that baptized infants belong to the visible church, examined.

DOCTOR Watts and Mr. Edwards both observe, that the case of baptized infants has no connection with the dispute concerning the terms of communion. But those who maintain, that graceless persons have a right of access to special ordinances, have been extremely fond of connecting the case of baptized infants with this controversy. And Doctor Hemmenway, in particular, greatly insists on the church-membership of baptized infants, through his whole Discourse, and builds many of his arguments on this supposition. See page 7, 8, 9, 15, 23, 32, 33, 95, 100. I only refer to these passages, because they barely contain the Doctor's opinion, without a single argument to support it. But though he has neglected to support his opinion, yet since it is a very common opinion, and often employed as an argument against the sentiments which we have endeavored to establish, it may be proper to give it a fair and candid examination.

We grant, that God may sanctify some baptized infants ; and we will not deny that he has absolutely engaged to sanctify them all, if their parents faithfully discharge their covenant obligations ; but yet we cannot allow, that baptized infants, whether sanctified or un sanctified, belong to the visible church. For,

1. They cannot belong to it, by virtue of their own act. They can neither make, nor accept any proposals. They are unacquainted with the name, nature, and obligation of a covenant. They do not so much as know, that a visible church exists. Such weak and ignorant creatures, therefore, cannot belong

belong to the visible church, by virtue of their own act.

2. They cannot belong to it, by virtue of their parent's act. Believing parents may covenant with God *about* their infant seed, but *not for* them. They may engage to love them, to pray for them, to instruct them, to restrain them, and even to use every argument and motive which they can think of, to persuade and morally compel them to join to the visible church. But yet they cannot, by these or any other methods, lay them under covenant obligations, to profess that they love God, when they are conscious to themselves, that they have not the love of God in them. Believing parents may lay *themselves* under covenant obligations to God, to their fellow men, and to their children, by virtue of their own act. But their own act of covenanting for *themselves*, can never lay *their children* under covenant obligations, to read, or pray, or attend public worship, or make a public profession of religion, or perform any other duty, whatsoever. It is true, indeed, the baptized children of faithful parents are under superior obligations to religion. But their superior obligations wholly result from their superior advantages for light and instruction, and not from any covenant obligations laid upon them, by their parents. Covenanting is a personal act. And no person can lay any one under covenant obligation but himself. There is no possibility, therefore, of believing parents bringing their infant seed into a visible church, which is a voluntary society, formed by a voluntary compact.

3. Baptized infants cannot belong to the visible church, by virtue of God's act. Those who consider the infants of believers as belonging to the visible church, generally suppose that they are brought into it, by the sovereign act of God. They suppose God takes them into covenant with himself,

felf, and gives them a ftanding in the vifible church, by his own fovereign authority, without their knowledge or confent. This was the general opinion of the firft churches in New-England. "They agreed, That the children of the faithful are church members, with their parents; and that their baptifm was a feal of their being fo."* And this feems to be the opinion of many at this day. But, in ftating the nature of covenanting, we have endeavored to prove, that it lies not within the province even of divine fovereignty, to take any of the human race into covenant, without their own perfonal knowledge and confent. And if this be true, the undeniable confequence is, that no infants are brought into the vifible church, by the fovereign act of God. The elegant and ingenious Writer we have frequently had occafion to mention, fays indeed, that God has a fovereign right to take his reasonable creatures into covenant, whether they yield their confent or not. But he has faid nothing to fhew *how* a covenant can be made by one party, in oppofition to the confent of the other; nor *how* a divine command can conftitute a covenant obligation; nor *how* any perfon can be bound to fulfil a promife or engagement which he never made. And until thefe things are fhown, we fhall conclude, that it is as eafy to prove, that baptized infants are divines or philofophers, as to prove, that they are in covenant with God, and members of the vifible church. Now, if we have made it appear, that the infant feed of believing parents are not members of the vifible church, then Doctor Hemmenway's opinion on this head is completely refuted, and of confequence, all the arguments which he has drawn from it.

* Mather's Magnalia, page 19.

S E C T. VIII.

The Doctor's opinion, that persons may be admitted to partial communion in special ordinances, examined.

THE Doctor appears to be fond of this opinion, and seems to suppose, that it may settle the dispute about what is called the half-way communion. His own words will best convey his own ideas. "I find no warrant in the gospel, says he, page 33d, 34th, to *excommunicate* a *rightful* church-member, a serious and credible professor, of an unblamable life, because he has not such undoubting confidence in his own fitness to come to the table of the Lord, as he perhaps through mistake thinks would be necessary to warrant his so doing. Such therefore must, I think, be allowed to be rightful members, and as such entitled to special church privileges; though the scruples, doubts and mistakes they labor under unfit them for the privileges of full communion. Therefore though we have no concern with the *half-way covenant*, which some talk of, yet we dare not refuse to admit to *partial communion* orderly and rightful members, though by reason of their doubts, or mistakes, they should not appear actually fit to come to the Lord's supper to their comfort and edification."

Here it is obvious to remark,

1. That the Doctor takes for granted the main points from which he argues. He takes it for granted, that those who are baptized in infancy grow up members of the church; that they have no occasion for a *formal* admission; that they will continue members of the church, until they are formally excommunicated; and that they have a right to remain in doubt about the real state of their minds. By this easy way of taking things for granted, he very
I imperceptibly

imperceptibly raises up members in the church, who never came into it themselves, nor were ever brought into it by others. If all who have been baptized in infancy are members of the church, and if they have a right to remain in doubt of their good state, then we readily allow the strength of the Doctor's reasoning on this head. But we deny the premises, and therefore must deny the conclusion. We have endeavored to prove, that no infants can belong to the church, either by God's act, or their own act, or the act of their parents. And therefore we deny that any adult persons are members of the church, by virtue of infant baptism. In short, we deny all the points which the Doctor has taken for granted in this argument, and therefore look upon it as totally inconclusive.

2. There is no occasion to find a scripture warrant to excommunicate a rightful church-member, in order to refuse him partial communion. But before we can admit him to partial communion, we must find a scripture warrant to separate what God has joined together, namely, baptism and the Lord's supper. These ordinances, as they respect the adult, stand upon a level. And the qualifications for the one are the same as the qualifications for the other. Every adult person, therefore, who is qualified to receive baptism for himself or for his children, is equally qualified to partake of the Lord's supper. And should any person receive baptism for himself or for his children, and yet neglect to receive the sacrament, he would live in violation of Christ's dying command, for which he would deserve to be disciplined, and in case of visible impenitence, to be excommunicated by the church. As the Doctor refers his readers to the synod at Boston, and to the writings of Mr. John Allen, Mr. Richard Mather, and Mr. Jonathan Mitchel, for proof of his opinion; so I beg leave on the other side, to recommend

commend Mr. Cyprian Strong's Discourse against the half-way practice, as a clear vindication of the truth.



S E C T. IX.

The Doctor's opinion, that the Jewish church was a mere type of the Christian, examined.

THIS is a sentiment which many divines have adopted, and which many writers on the sacramental controversy have made great use of, to prove that graceless persons have a right to all the *external* ordinances of the gospel. Doctor Watts and Doctor Erskine, however, do not make this use of the sentiment, though they both adopt it. But Doctor Hemmenway maintains and improves it, as the foundation of his whole scheme. He says in the very second paragraph of his Discourse, "The Hebrew commonwealth was a kingdom of God, formed by a special covenant which he made with that people when he brought them out of Egypt. Jehovah was their Law-giver, Judge and King. But this was an earthly theocracy, a kingdom of *this world*, constituted and governed in this peculiar manner, that it might, *as a type*, represent the kingdom of heaven, *the gospel church*." Since the Doctor knew, that this sentiment is denied by those in opposition to him, he ought to have said something, at least, to support it. He has, however, presumed to take it for granted, and to build upon it, as though it had been clearly demonstrated. But we have taken a more slow, if not a more sure way, and labored to prove, that this sentiment has not the least foundation in scripture. And therefore we consider it as not only a groundless, but a very

hurtful sentiment. It leads many to imagine, that the Christian church is a very different society from what the New Testament represents it to be. It throws great obscurity over the sacramental controversy, and prevents a clear apprehension of the proper qualifications for the Christian sacraments. Accordingly, we have spent many pages in showing that the Jews were obliged to make as public and ample profession of real holiness as Christians under the gospel, in order to be admitted to special ordinances. And to what we have written upon this head we refer the reader for full satisfaction, respecting the character and design of the Jewish church.



S E C T. X.

A general view of the Doctor's Discourse.

HAVING distinctly considered some particular parts of the Doctor's publication, we shall now conclude with a few general observations upon the execution, design, and tendency of the whole.

I. Its execution is liable to some exceptions. Though the Doctor be a man of ingenuity, and capable of writing with accuracy and precision, yet, in the execution of this Discourse concerning the Church, he discovers some defects which are hardly veniable in a polemic writer. There is a certain obscurity of expression, obscurity of method, and obscurity of design, which runs through his whole performance, and which prevents the common and cursory reader from taking his ideas, and comprehending the real scheme of sentiments which he means to establish. This is the first defect.

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The second defect is want of proof. The sacramental subject is a scriptural subject. The design of the sacrament, and the proper qualifications for an attendance upon it, are to be learned from divine revelation. But the Doctor has not favored his readers with scriptural light upon this scriptural subject. He has taken most of his leading principles for granted. And when he argues, he draws very few arguments from the pure source of divine inspiration. This circumstance tends to lead his readers to build their faith on his bare opinion, instead of the more safe foundation of the word of God.

The third and greatest defect is inconsistency. Different parts of the Doctor's Discourse most evidently clash. In some parts he appears to be an Edwardean; but in other parts he appears to be a Stoddardean. In one place he freely grants, what in another place he fully denies. In one place he clearly proves, what in another place he labors to disprove. And before he comes to the conclusion, he virtually gives up his whole scheme. These assertions may be clearly made out from the remarks which have been made in these strictures, and from many passages in his Discourse, which have not been cited and examined.

Such defects I venture to mention, after reading and carefully examining the Doctor's Discourse; and, perhaps, I may venture to mention them, with as much propriety, as three associations of Ministers could venture to recommend his production before it was produced.

II. The general design of the Doctor's Discourse merits particular attention. He frankly declares in his title page, that his design is not only to remove the scruples, but *to reconcile* the differences of Christians. This we fully believe was his real intention; for it appears through his whole performance,

formance, and especially in his reconciling remarks. But such a laudable design ought to have been promoted by laudable means. No reconciliation of Christians on this important subject, can be either desirable or lasting, unless it be effected by the exhibition of light. The qualifications for communion at the Lord's table are prescribed in the Bible. Those who maintain the Bible qualifications are really in the right ; and those who maintain any different or lower qualifications are really in the wrong. There is no *middle way* between the contending parties. They must both, therefore, be brought to the standard of scripture. A clear explanation and proof of the scriptural qualifications for communion is the only method, to enlighten the ignorant, to convince the erroneous, to establish the wavering, and to bring all to a real union in sentiment upon this subject. Reconciling remarks often have an irreconciling tendency. Though they carry the appearance of modesty in the Remarker, yet they sometimes discover a different quality, and fasten the imputation of weakness as well as error, on both parties. The Doctor plainly intimates, that, in this case, they are wider apart, in appearance, than in reality. But Mr. Edwards was of a different opinion. He supposed they were wider apart in reality, than in appearance. He observed, therefore, that Mr. Stoddard maintained and granted in appearance, all that he contended for. But yet he supposed the scheme which Mr. Stoddard meant to adopt and maintain was very different from that which he believed and meant to defend. The Doctor, perhaps, may impute this opinion to Mr. Edwards's weakness ; but his own statement of the points of difference between the two opposite parties serves to confirm it. " All the difference, says he, with respect to *the rule of admission* I think is this. The one says none are to be admitted

mitted but *such as are judged* to be true saints, making *the judgment of the church* the foundation or condition of the proponent's right to admission. The other maintains, that those are to be admitted who give credible evidence that they are true saints in a judgment of charity. So with respect to *the rule of conscience*, determining a right of access. The one says that none may come but such as *judge* themselves to be saints in heart, or at least, that this is most probable. The other thinks that however men may suspect, and even have a prevailing fear that their hearts are not right; yet if they find this evidence of sincerity, that their hearts condemn them not of hypocrisy, their warrant is good, whether *the credit they give*, or *the confidence they have* in the reasons of their hope be more or less."

In answer to this statement of the subject in dispute, we beg leave to give our own.

As to the duty of admission, the Edwardeans maintain, that *the church* ought to receive none but such as give credible evidence of *saving grace*: On the other hand, the Stoddardeans maintain, that *the church* ought to receive such as give no evidence of *saving grace*.

And as to the duty of access, the Edwardeans maintain, that none ought to come, but such as *really are*, and *think* themselves to be, the subjects of *saving grace*: On the other hand, the Stoddardeans maintain, that such ought to come as *neither are*, nor *think* themselves to be, the subjects of *saving grace*.

If these two parties agree in practice, it is because the Edwardeans act upon the Stoddardean principles; or because the Stoddardeans act upon the Edwardean principles. And whether some of both parties do not contradict their principles in their practice, it may, perhaps, be worthy of serious consideration.

III. The general tendency of the Doctor's Discourse is the last thing to be considered. It appears, in the first place, to be designed and calculated to prevent people's attending to this controversy. It represents the dispute as of small practical importance. It insinuates that both parties are nearly agreed in opinion, and almost entirely agreed in practice. If this be true, common sense will lead all persons to conclude, that they have no great occasion of looking into the merits of the cause, but only of avoiding a perplexing, unprofitable controversy. They will take it for granted, that they may safely come to the sacrament, whether they are the subjects of grace or not; since the Doctor tells them, *if they only think they ought to come*, they will be accepted of God, and be in the use of those very means, which he appointed for their salvation. This leads me to observe,

In the second place, that he has so framed his Discourse from beginning to end, as to lead undiscerning readers to mistake *morality* for *religion*. He allows moralists to call their morality by the agreeable name of holiness. He assures them that their holiness is as real holiness, and as truly acceptable in the *sight of God*, as the inward sanctification of the best of saints. Yea, he assures them, that they are as real saints in their kind, as those who are born of the Spirit, and bear the moral image of God. It is true, indeed, he allows there is a distinction between the two kinds of real holiness, and the two kinds of real saints. But self-righteous persons will not easily discover this distinction in the Bible, which represents all persons who have the least spark of real holiness as the subjects of *saving grace*. This is an alarming consideration. No persons are in more danger of being self-deceived, than those of this description. And, therefore, every thing, which serves to increase their high opinion of their own external goodness,

ness, is extremely dangerous to their eternal interests. And this leads me to observe again,

That the Doctor's Discourse not only encourages moralists to mistake their morality for religion, but also encourages them, under this very mistake, to come to the table of the Lord. It represents Christ, in condescension to *self-deceived persons*, as appointing the sacrament for their particular and saving benefit. This is a most alluring motive to draw them into the church; and there, at the table of the Lord, to fix them down in a state of self-deception and carnal security, as long as they live.

One other observation will conclude my remarks. The Doctor's Discourse directly tends to destroy the appearance of religion in the visible church. He intimates, that it is a natural consequence of what he maintains, that those who were baptized in their infancy may be admitted to communion, without a public profession of religion. He uses the term *recognize* instead of *admit*, when speaking of those coming to special ordinances who were baptized in their infancy. If such persons are only to be *recognized* as members of the visible church, then it necessarily follows, that they have a right to all the external privileges of it, without a *formal* admission. This inference Mr. Williams has drawn from the church-membership of baptized infants, in a Dialogue which he has lately published, and republished. And this very Dialogue Doctor Hemmenway has, in connection with a number of truly great and respectable names, recommended to the public notice and perusal. Mr. Williams's Dialogue is wholly designed to carry the Doctor's real scheme into practice. Let us suppose, therefore, that our churches should act upon the Doctor's scheme, as Mr. Williams has explained it, and receive to their communion all sober persons, who were baptized in their infancy, without a public

lic profession of religion. Would not this practice bring many unqualified persons to the sacrament. Are there not sober Arians, sober Socinians, sober Universalists, sober Deists, and even sober Sceptics? Are such persons as these properly qualified to unite with the people of God, in commemorating the dying love of the Divine Redeemer? But what can exclude such from the table of the Lord, if no public profession of religion be required, in order to their *recognition* as members of the church in full communion? And when the church is composed of such unchristian characters, what appearance of religion will it exhibit to the world!

Though our venerable forefathers allowed, that baptized infants belong to the visible church, yet they would not admit even such, at adult age, to come to the sacrament, without a public relation of experiences, as well as a public profession of religion. Doctor Cotton Mather says, in his Memoirs of the Life of the reverend John Eliot, that “the churches of *New-England* have usually been very strict in their admission to *church-fellowship*, and required very signal demonstrations of a *repenting* and *believing* soul, before they thought men fit subjects to be intrusted with *the rights of the kingdom of Heaven*.”* He says, page 188, it was Mr. Eliot’s opinion, that “the subjects to be admitted to church-fellowship, ought to be such as a *trying charity*, or a *charitable trial*, should pronounce *regenerate*.” And again he says, that Mr. Eliot “could not comprehend, that a church-state can arise from any other *formal cause*, but the consent, concurrence, confederation of those concerned in it; he looked upon a relation unto a church, as not a *natural*, or a *violent*, but a *voluntary* thing, and so that it is to be entered no otherwise than by an holy

* Magnalia, B. iii. p. 197.

ly covenant, or as the scripture speaks, by *giving ourselves first unto the Lord, and then one unto another.*"

But we shall have the best evidence of the real opinion of our pious ancestors on the subject before us, from "the Answer of the Elders and other Messengers of the Churches, assembled at Boston, in the year 1662, to the Questions propounded to them, by order of the Honored General Court." In the fourth proposition of the answer to the first question, we have their opinion clearly stated, respecting the propriety of admitting persons to the Lord's table, by virtue of their infant church-membership. The fourth proposition says, "These adult persons are not therefore to be admitted to full communion, merely because they *are* and *continue* members, without such further qualifications as the Word of God requireth thereunto. In the Old Testament, though men did continue members of the church, yet for ceremonial uncleanness they were to be kept from full communion in holy things, Lev. vii. 20, 21. Num. ix 6, 7. and xix. 13—20. Yea, and the priests and levites in the Old Testament, had special charge committed to them, that men *should not partake in holy things*, unless duly qualified for the same, notwithstanding their *membership*, 2 Chron. xxiii. 19. Ezek. xxii. 26. and xlv. 7, 8, 9, 23. And therefore much more in these times, where moral fitness and spiritual qualifications are wanting, *membership alone*, is not sufficient for full communion. More was required to adult persons *eating the passover*, than mere MEMBERSHIP, therefore so there is now to the Lord's supper.*"

Though the first ministers in New-England, were great and good men, yet it appears from these quotations, that they adopted premises, from which they were afraid to draw the natural conclusions. But

Doctor

* Magnalia, B. v. p. 70.

Doctor Hemmenway and Mr. Williams are more consistent. They maintain, that baptized infants are members of the visible church, and therefore conclude, that when they arrive to adult years, they ought to be *recognized* as members in full communion, without any public profession of religion. But did many of their admirers see this to be the necessary consequence of their doctrine, respecting the church-membership of baptized infants, we presume, they would heartily reject it, as injurious both to the piety and purity of our churches. The Doctor, aware of this, but only once suggests his notion of recognition. And Mr. Williams, to save appearances, concedes that a public profession of religion may be admitted for a particular purpose.* But, however, he spends many pages to point out the expediency of laying the practice aside. Nor is he alone in this opinion. Many churches lay aside confessions of faith, and admit members without any public evidence of their belief of the essential doctrines of the gospel, and without any public evidence of their experimental acquaintance with religion. These are large strides towards that perfect liberty and catholicism, which the Doctor's Discourse, Mr. Williams's Dialogue, and the efforts of their respectable patrons, have a tendency to introduce into the present churches of Christ.

Is it not a very serious and important inquiry, Whether the church ought to open their arms so wide, as to take into their bosom, those who exhibit no appearance of religion, nor the least regard for the cause of God? If they lay aside a public profession of religion as a term of communion, they may expect to lose all brotherly love, all christian discipline, and all appearances of vital piety. And when they have lost all these distinguishing excellencies, they may expect to lose their influence
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* Dialogue, Boston Edition, page 36, 37.

over the minds of men, and fall under the reproach and contempt of the world. But on the other hand, if they steadfastly adhere to the directions of Christ and the example of our pious ancestors, in the admission of members, they may humbly hope, that God will visibly approve their fidelity, and add to their numbers daily such as shall be saved.

A M E N.



