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Mode and Subjects of Baptism

EXAMINED,

IN

SEVEN SERMONS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A Brief History of the Baptists.

BY DANIEL MERRILL, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN SEDGWICK.

Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth? NICODEMUS. JOHN vii. 51.

Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. JESUS CHRIST.

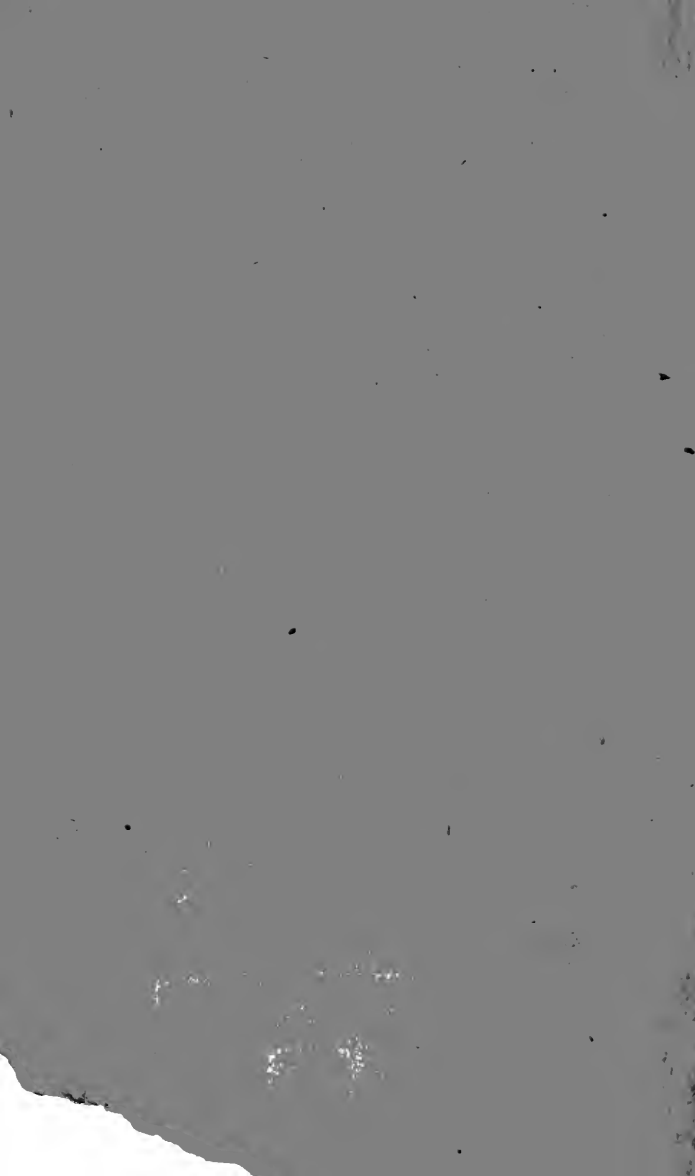
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1805.





TO THE READER.

Fellow Traveller to Eternity.

YOU and I are the offspring of God. The period of our return to him swiftly approaches. Then the motive I have had in writing, and which you shall have had in reading, will both be known. How, and how far the following pages will affect my present and future life, is with the LORD. How far they shall affect thine, is also with HIM. One thing is certain: the truth of what I have written will be soon known. You are willing to know it now, provided you know the value of the gospel, and possess an heart humbled by its doctrines.

Reader, be not offended at what I have written, till you be sure it is false. Do thyself no harm. Read, consider, compare every part, and the whole, with divine truth, in such a manner and spirit, as shall yield thee a pleasing reflection in the world to come.

If the subject, as here presented, be true,
it is a serious truth. If an error, it is a
serious one. It nearly concerns the king-
dom of EMMANUEL, to whose pleasure and
mercy the whole is cheerfully resigned,

By, Reader,

Thy Servant,

For Jesus' sake,

THE AUTHOR.

SEDGWICK. }
Dec. 27, 1804. }

The Mode and Subjects of Baptism.

SERMON

MATTHEW xxviii. 19, 20.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

IT hath pleased the Father of Mercies to bestow on fallen man a revelation from heaven. In it is contained the scheme of grace, which brings life and immortality to light. It shows the way by which to escape the wrath to come, and to find the favour of God. All scripture is given by his inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Till the human heart be humbled, in measure, man feels not his need of divine teaching; nor will he make the scriptures the man of his counsel. But, my brethren, and people, it is doubtless the case, that many of you possess a willingness to have your principles and practice squared by the word and testimony of Jesus Christ. My text contains some of the last words of our great High-Priest. It is the general orders which he gave his first apostles, and left for the instruction, practice and comfort of all their successors, to the end of the world. In the verse which precedes my text, Christ informs us, that all power in heaven and in earth is given unto him. His words, therefore, are clothed with authority. May we hear, and fear, and be obedient. Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say unto the King of Zion, What dost thou?

So far as we be Christians, all that is necessary to enforce obedience is, to know what Christ would have us to do. Perhaps not a passage in all the oracles of truth contains more extensive instruction than do the words of my text. The commands are exceedingly broad; the Baptismal Institution comprehends all obedient disciples; and the comforting promise is durable as the world.

In my text, Christ Jesus, the Head of the church and Lord of all, constituted his present and succeeding disciples to be apostles unto all nations. It contains their commission, and general and particular orders. In it they are directed——

I. To go and disciple all nations.

II. To baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

III. He directs these newly constituted apostles, and all their successors, to teach their baptized disciples to observe all things whatsoever he had given in commandment.

Lastly. For their encouragement and comfort, he adds, And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world: Amen.

I suppose it will be expedient, and with me it is an indispensable duty, that I lay each of these propositions as fairly and as fully before you as I can. But I shall not observe the order in which they lie in my text; which is as I have just stated them. For I have many things to say unto you, in agreement with my text, but fear that you are not, all of you, able to bear them now. We shall therefore begin with the

II. Which contains Christ's command to baptize, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, those who shall be discipled of all nations.

Nor do I purpose to call your attention, at this time, to the whole which is implied in this proposition. But what I purpose is, to define a few words which appertain to the ordinance, and then collect the scripture account of baptism, with some other texts, which may throw light upon the subject. Afterwards, in discourses which may follow, I may produce evidence, that my definition of baptism is accurate and just; and show how the apostles and primitive Christians understood this matter, and how they practised. When this is done, it will be easily seen, what is the out-

ward and visible part of baptism; and then the purport, end and design of the institution may call for some attention.

Before I proceed to open, illustrate and confirm these particulars, I have several things to say unto you. For I wish you to attend to the subject without partiality and without hypocrisy. I pray God to remove darkness and all prejudice from your minds, that you may, indeed, come to the law and to the testimony of Jesus Christ in this matter.

You will consider me as under the strongest worldly inducements to continue to believe and practise as I have heretofore done; for should I, after mature consideration, be constrained to believe and practise differently, you will be released from all legal obligations to afford me any farther support; my relations will, the most of them, probably be greatly shocked, and displeas'd, at the report; many, whom I highly value as Christians, and numbers of them zealous preachers of the gospel, will, it may be, consider me as lost, and worse than lost, to the church and world: and, besides this, multitudes will, no doubt, say all manner of evil against me. All this being true, with a thousand other connected smaller evils, and nothing of a worldly nature in prospect, save what is contained in the promise of Jesus Christ, you cannot but conclude that I shall proceed no farther in this matter than I am oblig'd to, in following the Lamb of God whithersoever he goeth.

Having said thus much with respect to myself; I will still add, that, should a change in my belief and practice, respecting the subject on hand, bring me to a more full belief and practice of the truth, I shall, on the whole, be a gainer. But, should a change take place, and I be called to sustain all the evils which I may calculate upon, and after all be plung'd myself into a hurtful and bewildering error, surely all the meek and lowly in heart would rather commiserate than revile me.

Another thing I would mention to you, so that the subject may, if it possibly can, meet your minds without prejudice. You ought not to fix your judgments, nor found your belief, upon the arguments or confessions of great and good men, any farther than such arguments and confessions are conform'd with the scriptures of truth. Should we hearken to what the greatest and best of men have confessed and affirm'd of the subject which we are about to consider, and

have our belief and practice corresponding with what they have written, the matter would, most evidently, go against what we have, in time past, both believed and practised. For they have very generally, or very many of them, if not all of them, confessed, or affirmed, however their practice may have been, that immersion was the mode practised by the apostles and primitive church. This I purpose to prove to you in its proper place.

What I have more to add, before I proceed to the main business, is, to state a few plain truths.

1. Baptism is a positive institution, about which we can know nothing, as to its being a Christian ordinance, but from what Christ, and those inspired by his Spirit, have taught us.

2. All which we are required to believe and practise, with respect to the Christian ordinance of baptism, is declared to us by Jesus Christ and his forerunner and apostles.

3. When Jesus Christ first instituted the ordinance of baptism, he, no doubt, delivered his mind so clearly and fully upon the subject, that his immediate disciples and apostles understood and practised as he would have them.

4. Every thing which hath, by the precepts and commandments of men, been added since, is distinct from the ordinance, and makes no part of it.

5. No man, or body of men, have any more authority to add to this ordinance, or to diminish from it, than they have to institute a new one and call it Christ's.

6. Whenever, and wherever, this ordinance is so changed, as to lose the intent of the Institutor, then and there the ordinance is lost, and becomes no Christian ordinance at all.

Having laid these preparatory observations, remarks and plain truths before you, we proceed to consider the subject now on hand, which is—

Christ's command to baptize, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, those who shall be discipled of all nations.

What is proposed for the present discourse is—

1. To define a few words which appertain to the ordinance of baptism. Then—

2. To collect the scripture account of baptism, together with some other texts, which may throw light upon the subject. Afterwards, in some following discourses, we may—

3. Produce evidence, that my definition of baptism is accurate and just. Then show—

4. How the apostles and primitive church understood this matter, and how they practised: When this is done, it will be easily seen—

5. What is the outward and visible part of Christian baptism. Then—

Lastly. The purport, end and design of the baptismal institution may call for our attention.

Agreeably to what is proposed, we are—

1. To define a few words which appertain to the ordinance of baptism. These are—

1. *Baptisterion*, Greek; *baptisterium* and *lavacrum*, Latin; a font, a bath, a washing place, a vessel to wash the body in; English.

2. *Baptisma* and *baptismos*, Greek; *Baptisma* and *Lotio*, also, *ablutia saura*, Latin; baptism, washing, sacred, ceremonial washing; English.

3. *Baptistēs*, Greek; *baptista*, Latin; one who dips, a baptist; English.

4. *Baptizō*, Greek; *baptizo*, *mergo*, *lavo*, Latin; to baptize, to dip all over, to wash; English.

5. *Lauō*, Greek; *lavo*, Latin; to wash, to rinse, to bathe; English.

2. We are to collect the scripture account of baptism, together with some other texts which may throw light upon the subject.

We will begin with those passages which speak of the baptism of John.

1. *Matth.* iii. 5, 6, 7. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, &c.

2. Verse 11. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, &c.

3. Verses 13, 14, 15, 16. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptized of him: but John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and, comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness: then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.

4. *Math. xxi. 25, 26, 27.* The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we should say, From heaven, he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But, if we shall say of men, we fear the people, for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus and said, We cannot tell, &c.

5. *Mark i. 4, 5.* John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

6. Verses 8, 9, 10. I indeed have baptized you with water—And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan, and straightway coming up out of the water, &c.

7. *Mark xi. 30.* The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

8. *Luke iii. 3.* And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

9. Verses 7, 8. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers—bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.

10. Verse 12. Then came also publicans to be baptized.

11. Verse 16. I indeed baptize you with water.

12. Verse 21. Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also, being baptized, &c.

13. *Luke vii. 29, 30.* And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

14. *Luke xx. 4.* The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

15. *John i. 25, 26.* Why baptizest thou, then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water.

16. Verse 28. Beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

17. Verse 31. That he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

18. Verse 33. He that sent me to baptize with water.

19. *John* iii. 23. And John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized.

20. *John* iv. 1. The Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John.

21. *John* x. 40. Beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized.

22. *AAs* i. 5. John truly baptized with water.

23. Verse 22. Beginning from the baptism of John.

24. *AAs* x. 37. After the baptism which John preached.

25. *AAs* xi. 16. John indeed baptized with water.

26. *AAs* xiii. 24. When John had first preached, before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people.

27. *AAs* xviii. 25. He (Apollos) spake and taught, diligently, the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

28. *AAs* xix. 3, 4. Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

We will next turn our attention to those texts which mention Christ's baptism.

1. *Matth.* xxviii. 19. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

2. *Mark* xvi. 15, 16. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.

3. *John* iii. 5. Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, &c.

4. Verse 22. After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there tarried with them and baptized.

5. Verse 26. Behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

6. *John* iv. 1, 2. When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.)

7. *AAs* iii. 38. 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 gift of the Holy Ghost.

8. *Acts* ii. 41. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.

9. *Acts* viii. 12, 13. 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. Then Simon himself believed also, and when he was baptized, &c.

10. *Acts* viii. 16. Only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

11. Verses 36, 37, 38, 39. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still. And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, &c.

12. *Acts* ix. 18. And he (Saul) arose, and was baptized.

13. *Acts* x. 47, 48. Can any man 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.

14. *Acts* xvi. 15. And when she (Lydia) was baptized, and her household.

15. Verse 33. And was baptized, he (the jailor) and all his, straightway.

16. *Acts* xviii. 8. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized.

17. *Acts* xix. 5. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

18. *Acts* xxii. 19. And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

19. *Rom.* vi. 3, 4. Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

20. *1 Cor. i. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.* Were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: Besides, I know not whether I baptized any other; for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

21. *1 Cor. vi. 11.* But ye are washed.

22. *1 Cor. 12, 13.* For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.*

23. *1 Cor. xv. 29.* Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead?

24. *Gal. iii. 27.* For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.

25. *Eph. iv. 5.* One baptism.

26. *Eph. v. 26.* That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

27. *Col. ii. 12.* Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him.

28. *Titus iii. 5.* According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

29. *Heb. vi. 2.* The doctrine of baptisms †

30. *Heb. x. 22.* Our bodies washed with pure water.

31. *1 Peter iii. 21.* The like figure wherunto even baptism doth now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.)

These, I believe, are all the texts in the New Testament which have a plain and obvious reference to either the baptism of John or of Christ. They afford us the sum of all the knowledge which we can have of either the mode or subjects of Christian baptism. What these passages say, we may believe: what they do not countenance, we may not believe. I will now set before you those passages where washing is mentioned, and the Greek words which are used.

1. *Matth. vi. 17.* But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and (*nipsai*) wash thy face.

* This intends, as some suppose, the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

† It is not certain that this hath any reference to Christian baptism. If it have, it must refer not to that only. See DODDRICE in loc.

2. *Matth.* xv. 2. Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they (*nīptontai*) wash not their hands when they eat bread.

3. *Matth.* xxvii. 24. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and (*apēnīpsato*) washed his hands.

4. *Mark* vii. 2. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say with (*anīptois*) un-washen hands.

5. Verse 3. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they (*nīpsōntai*) wash their hands oft, they eat not, &c.

6. Verse 4. When they come from the market, except they (*baptisōntai*) wash, they eat not; and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the (*baptismous*) washings of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.

7. Verse 5. But eat bread with (*anīptois*) un-washen hands.

8. Verse 8. For, laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the (*baptismous*) washing of pots and cups.

9. *Luke* v. 2. And they (*apeplunan*) were washing their nets.

10. *Luke* vii. 38. And stood at his feet, behind him, weeping, and began (*brechein*) to wash his feet.

11. Verse 44. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she (*ebrexe*) hath washed my feet with tears.

12. *Luke* xi. 38. And when the Pharisees saw it, that he had not first (*ebaptisthē*) washed before dinner.

13. *John* ix. 7. And said unto him, Go, and (*nīpsai*) wash in the pool of Siloam;—he went his way therefore and (*enīpsato*) washed.

14. Verse 15. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight: he said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I (*enīpsamēn*) washed and do see.

15. *John* xiii. 5. After that he poured water into a basin, and began (*nīptein*) to wash the disciples' feet.

16. Verse 6. And Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou (*nīpteis*) wash my feet?

17. Verse 8. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never (*nipfēs*) wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I (*nipfo*) wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

18. Verse 10. Jesus saith to him, He that is (*oleloumenos*) washed, needeth not save (*nipfēsthai*) to wash his feet, &c.

19. Verse 14. If I then, your Lord and Master (*enipōsa*) have washed your feet, ye also ought (*niptein*) to wash one another's feet.

20. Acts ix. 37. And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died, whom when they had (*ioufantes*) washed.

21. Acts xvi. 33. And he took them the same hour of the night, and (*eloufen*) washed their stripes.

22. Acts xxii. 16. And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and (*apouloufai*) wash away thy sins.

23. 1 Cor. vi. 11. But such were some of you, but ye (*apelousagthē*) are washed.

24. Eph. v. 26. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with (*loutrō*) the washing of water by the word.

25. 1 Tim. v. 10. If she (*enipfen*) have washed the saints' feet.

26. Titus iii. 5. By the (*loutrou*) washing of regeneration.

27. Heb. ix. 10. Which stood only in meats and drinks, and (*diaphorais baptismois*) divers washings.

28. Heb. x. 22. Having our bodies (*leloumenoi*) washed with pure water.

29. 2 Peter ii. 22. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb—and the sow that (*loufamenē*) was washed, &c.

30. Rev. i. 5. Unto him that loved us and (*loufanii*) washed us from our sins in his own blood.

31. 1 Rev. vii. 14. These are they who came out of great tribulation, and (*epلمان*) have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.*

Those passages which make mention of SPRINKLING, with the Greek words used, now call for your attention.

1. Heb. ix. 13. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer (*rantizousa*) sprinkling the unclean, &c.

* *Plunō* properly signifies to wash clothes; as *louō*, the body; and *nipō*, the face and hands.

2. Verſe 19. He (Moſes) took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and ſcarlet wool, and hyſſop, and (*errantiſe*) ſprinkled both the book and all the people.

3. *Heb. x. 22.* Having our hearts (*errantiſimoi*) ſprinkled from an evil conſcience.

4. *Heb. xi. 28.* Through faith he kept the paſſover and the (*proſchuſin*) ſprinkling of blood.

5. *Heb. xii. 24.* And to the blood of (*rantiſmou*) ſprinkling.

6. *1 Peter i. 2.* And to the (*rantiſmon*) ſprinkling of the blood of Jeſus Chriſt.

Laſtly. You will now give attention for a moment to thoſe paſſages of ſcripture where the word *DIP* is mentioned.

1. *Luke xvi. 24.* That he may (*bapſē*) dip his finger in water.

2. *Matth. xxvi. 23.* And he answered and ſaid, He that (*embapſas*) dippeth his hand with me in the diſh.

3. *Mark xiv. 20.* And he answered and ſaid unto them, It is one of the twelve that (*embaptomenos*) dippeth with me in the diſh.

4. *John xiii. 26.* And he answered, He it is to whom I ſhall give a ſop when I have (*bapſas*) dipped it; and when he had (*embapſas*) dipped the ſop, &c.

5. *Rev. xix. 13.* And he was clothed with a veſture (*bebammenon*) dipped in blood.

A few remarks on what we have paſſed over will cloſe the preſent diſcourſe.

1. We ſee that all the words which appertain to the ordinance of baptiſm, ſignify the ſame which they would provided immersion were the ſcripture mode.

2. We ſee that the ſubject of baptiſm is very repeatedly mentioned in the New Teſtament. It is brought to view expreſſly in about threeſcore paſſages.

3. Whenever baptiſm is mentioned, and neither the word *baptizō* nor *baptiſmos* is uſed, the word ſubſtituted plainly intimates that bathing, or waſhing the body all over, is the mode; for this is the ſignification of *louō*, which is the word, and the only word, which the ſcriptures employ in the room of *baptizō*.

4. Whenever *baptizō* or *baptiſmos* is tranſlated waſhing, a ceremonial and not a common waſhing is manifeſtly intended.

5. We find that in all the places where sprinkling is mentioned, the original words, *rhantizō* and *proschufni*, are very different from *baptizō* and *baptifmos*.

6. You will please to observe, that wherever we find, through the New-Testament, the word, to dip, it is from the same theme whence *baptizō* comes.

7. We see that every thing looks as though *immersion* might be the *mode*; and, as for *sprinkling*, there is, to say the least, nothing which *looks* like it.

SERMON II.

MATTHEW xxviii. 19, 20.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

THE business which we are now upon depends very much upon the definitions of certain words, and principally upon the definition of the word *baptize*, and upon the certain evidence of such definition or definitions being accurate and just. For we can no otherwise understand what God the Lord saith unto us, than by knowing the import of the words by which he is pleased to communicate his will. The great Teacher who came from God, hath doubtless communicated his mind so explicitly that the humble in heart may know the common matters which relate to faith and practice. If we devoutly search the scriptures, and seek wisdom as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, God will make us to understand knowledge, and to serve him with acceptable practice. The Spirit of the Lord hath most certainly chosen acceptable words, words of definite meaning. We are to search out their signification, and to be obedient. I cannot judge of their signification for you, nor can I answer for the judgment which you shall make up, nor can you for me.

I am by my office obliged to exhibit, so far as I can, all those divine truths which relate to faith and practice. I am obliged to believe and practise according to the best light which I can gather, or have in any way afforded me. You are under similar obligations.

Whilst we proceed, I wish you to believe fully two things; one is, that truth, if believed and practised, will not, on the whole, harm you. The other is, that the most sure way to acquire truth is, to be of a humble and obedient mind, ready to receive the truth. For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.

In the preceding discourse, we attended to the definition of certain words which appertain to the ordinance of baptism; and then collected the scripture account of baptism, together with some other texts which are supposed to throw light upon the subject under consideration. In this discourse we are—

3. To produce the more direct evidence that my definitions of baptism and to baptize are accurate and just.

The definition which I gave of baptism was, a *washing*, a *sacred*, a *ceremonial* washing. I will now add to this definition, that it is immersion, or dipping one all over in water.

The definition which I gave of the word *baptizō* is, to dip all over, to wash. I will also add, that the word signifies, to wash the body, or any thing, all over. What I mean is, that these are the signification of the words *baptisma* and *baptizō*, which are rendered baptism, and, to baptize.

I am now to produce evidence, that this is a just and accurate definition of the words.

You will observe, that this is quite different from the *subjects* of baptism; that is another subject, which must be attended to in its place.

The evidence which I have to offer, in order to fix precisely the just sense and meaning of the words *baptism* and to *baptize*, is contained in the following facts. The

1st. Comprises what the Greek Lexicon, Concordance, and two English Dictionaries, testify of the words.

Schrevelius's Lexicon testifies, the import of *baptism* is *lotio*, washing. Also that to *baptize* signifies to *wash*, to put under water, or under any other liquid thing; to sink, dip in, duck or plunge over head, to immerse.

Butterworth's Concordance says, baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, instituted by Jesus Christ, whereby a professed believer in Christ is, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, immersed in and covered with water, and then raised up out of it, as a sign of his fellowship with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection, and a sign of his own death to sin, and resurrection to newness of life here, and to life eternal hereafter. The same Concordance defines the word to baptize, thus—to dip, immerse, or plunge.

Entick's Dictionary says, that—*Baptism* is a sacrament that admits into the church.—*Baptizer*, one who christens,

or dips.—*Baptistry*, the place of baptizing at, a font.—*Baptize*, to christen, plunge, overwhelm.—*Baptized*, admitted to baptism, dipt, &c.

Bailey's Dictionary, speaking of baptism, or rather the place in which persons were baptized, says, *Baptistry* is either the place or vessel in which persons are baptized. In ancient times, this being performed by immersion, the persons so initiated went into a river and were plunged; but in the time of Constantine the Great, chapels or places on purpose to baptize in, were built in great cities, which was performed in the eastern and warmer countries by dipping the persons; but in process of time, in the western and colder countries, sprinkling was substituted in place of dipping; which was the origin of our fonts in churches.

2. I will repeat some of the attendant or circumstantial facts, which have relation to the ordinance of baptism, that you may look at them, and judge for yourselves, whether the preceding definitions appear just.

John baptized in the river Jordan.

He was baptizing in Enon, because there was much water there.

The name of the place, where baptism was administered, is *baptisterion*, or *baptistry*, which signifies a place in which to wash the body all over.

Baptism signifies to dip, plunge, immerse, or wash the body all over in water.

Baptizer signifies one who dips, plunges, or washes the body all over in water.

To baptize signifies to plunge under water, to dip, or to wash the body all over.

To be baptized is to be plunged, immersed, or washed all over in water.

Does this whole matter, taking so many of the words, and some circumstances, and finding them all so well agreeing together, help you, in any degree, to the definition of the word *baptize*? Supposing these things be facts, and you had never had any prejudice for, or against, the word baptize, would you be able to gather the meaning of it from what hath been said?

There is an objection starting in the minds of some of you, which should be now obviated, lest it prejudice your minds from the truth.

The objection is, Do not the words signify some other things, as well as those which have been mentioned?

Ans. - I have thought they did: but I have searched in several dictionaries, and read many authors upon the words, yet have not found one dictionary which has given a definition of the words different from what I have given; nor one author who has been able to show, that the true meaning of the words is any otherwise than what I have mentioned. Besides, the very course of argumentation which Dr. LATHROP, Mr. CLEVELAND and others have taken, by which to prove that *baptizō* hath some other signification than to dip, immerse, to bury or overwhelm, is an implicit confession that they were not able to prove any such thing. It is also a strong presumptive argument, that no different signification can be found.

Their argument is this: *Baptō* signifies, in one instance, in the Old Testament, to wet with the dew of heaven. *Baptizō* is the offspring of *baptō*, and consequently may be taken in the same sense. This argument is of the same weight with the following: My father believes in sprinkling, as being baptism; I am his offspring, and consequently I believe the same; when the fact is, I am largely convinced that it is no such thing. Would gentlemen employ such an argument, did not their cause labour? Such an argument, when it stands, as it does, at the front of all their supposed evidence, is an implicit confession that they cannot prove what they wish to.*

This matter will have farther attention in another place.

* Since writing the above, I have met with *Cole's Latin Dictionary*, which gives one English of *baptizo*, to *sprinkle*. It hath, indeed, been matter of no little surprize, that all modern dictionary compilers have not given one definition of the word baptize, to sprinkle; for it, indeed, is one signification, which the practice of many Christians, for two or three hundred years past, has given to the word.

Had all lexicons, and all dictionaries, for the two last centuries, bore unired testimony, that one sense of the word *baptizō* was to sprinkle, it would not have been half so unaccountable as it now is that they have so generally retained the ancient and primitive significations, and refused to adopt the modern one, which prejudice, convenience and modern practice have given to it. Indeed, could a thousand modern lexicons and dictionaries be found, which should say, to *sprinkle* is one sense in which *baptizō* is used, it would all come to nothing, unless they should testify that this is one of its ancient and primitive significations: and even then,

3. The words *baptifmos* and *baptizō* have two, and only two, translations in the New-Testament. These two are, *baptifm* and *wafhing*. They are very generally rendered, *baptifm*, or to *baptize*. This is their usual translation. But feveral times in *Mark*, *Luke*, and in the Epiftle to the *Hebrews*, they are rendered *wafhing*. As the wafhing of pots, and cups, and brazen veffels and tables, or feats on which they reclined, when they ate meat; and *diaphorois baptifmois* in Hebrew is rendered *divers wafhings*.

In the law given by Mofes, the people were, on many occasions, to bathe their bodies, and wafh their clothes in water; and alfo to put their pots and cups and brazen veffels into water, that they might be cleaned from ceremonial uncleanness. To thefe legal ceremonies the Pharifees had added traditional ones, which were, no doubt, obferved in the fame manner as thofe appointed by the Lord. If fo, then the wafhing of pots, &c. in *Mark*, was putting them into water, as the command was to do, *Levit. xi. 32*. The divers wafhings in *Heb. ix. 10*. were ceremonial wafhings, or bathings, in which the body was wafhed, or dipped. *Numb. xix. 19*. This being the cafe, does not this matter go to confirm, or determine, what is the definition of baptifm?

4. We will now mention a few noted witneffes, who have given their testimony as to the meaning of the word *baptizō*.

Calvin, a very warm oppofer of the Baptifts, fhall, as a witnefs in this caufe, fpeak firft. His testimony is, "Howbeit, the very word of baptizing fignifieth to dip."

Zanchius, as brought forward by the Rev. Mr. Butterworth, fhall be my next witnefs. He fays, *baptizō* is to immerfe, plunge under, to overwhelm in water.

I could quote, or bring forward, a multitude of witneffes, and all from our own order, the Pedobaptifts, to prove the fame point. But in the mouth of two or three witneffes, if they be good ones, every word fhall be eftablifhed. We will therefore produce but one more; that fhall be good

it would come to no more than this, that the word is lefs determinate, than it is now fupposed to be. Could they do this, it would be ftill nothing, unlefs they prove the fcriptures ufe it in this fenfe, which they cannot do. But if they could, it would not be fully to their point, unlefs they can fhew that it is thus ufed in application to the ordinance.

Dr. Owen. "For the original and natural signification of it (*baptizō*) signifies to dip, to plunge."*

5. I will mention to you a Greek word, which Paul repeatedly uses, as signifying the same thing as *baptizō*, and where he means the same thing, namely, baptism.

In 1 *Cor.* vi. 11. Paul, speaking to the Corinthians of divers kinds of vile sinners, says, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed," &c.

Eph. v. 26. That he might sanctify and cleanse it (the church) with the *washing* of water, by the word.

Heb. x. 22. Let us draw near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our *bodies washed* with pure water.

The Pedobaptists acknowledge that *washing*, in these texts, means *baptism*, and I know not that any of them deny it. Baptism and washing appear to be used as synonymous words, or as words signifying the same thing. If this be the case, then the two words, *baptizō* and *louō*, which are translated, one to baptize, and the other to wash, mean the same thing, and are thus intended by the Apostle. Then, provided we can determine what *louō* means, we can also determine what is the signification of *baptizō*. This word, *louō*, signifies to wash, and to bathe the body in water; for thus it is generally if not universally used, and from it is *loutron*, a bath, or place to wash the body in. Besides, the word *louō* is never used in the New-Testament, nor any where else, to my knowledge, to signify either sprinkling or common washing. Its appropriate sense appears to be, bathing, or washing, any thing all over; as you may see, *Acts* ix. 37. and xvi. 33; 2 *Peter* ii. 22; which are the only places where I recollect the word *louō* is used, save where the ordinance of baptism appears to be referred to. This being the case, the matter appears just as it would, provided the ordinance included the bathing of the body in water. This is letting scripture interpret itself; and the interpretation which it gives is, baptism is bathing, or washing the body in water. This, therefore, may help you a little towards determining in your minds what is the signification of *baptizō*. For *louō* is repeatedly used in scripture, as importing the same mode of washing which is commanded in the ordinance of baptism.

* Ancient Dialogue.

6. Paul's description of the mode of baptizing, or of what is done to those who are baptized, may afford you farther light upon the subject.

Paul brings this matter up to the Roman and Colossian Christians, as a matter well known to them. To the former he says, *Rom.* vi. 4. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. To the other he says, *Col.* ii. 12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Upon these texts, Dr. Doddridge has the following note. "It seems the part of candour to confess, that here is an allusion to baptism by immersion, as was most usual in these early times." Here the good doctor says, "as was most usual:" this I shall, by and by, explain to you.

In the mean time, you will please to pay due attention to what was done to those who were baptized, and which appears to be familiar to the Roman and Colossian Christians. The Apostle makes no remarks, and explains nothing to them, but speaks to them as though they would and did well understand what he meant, when he said, "We are buried with him by baptism into death;" and, "Buried with him in baptism." It is plain fact, that Paul thus speaks, and it also appears, very plainly, that he had no apprehension but that he should be understood.

Bishop Hoadly's declaration appears to be much in point: 'If baptism,' says he, 'had been THEN, *i. e.* in the apostles' days, 'performed as it is NOW among us, we should never have so much as heard of this form of expression, of dying and rising again in this rite.'*

These things I have thought it my duty to lay before you, that I might assist you, by a number of plain facts, to form a judgment, each one for himself, what the meaning of baptism is, and what the word to *baptize* signifies.

I have still more light upon this subject, and shall, in the next discourse, lay it within your view. It will perhaps be, to some of you, more convincing than any thing which I have as yet exhibited. But previously I will make one observation, and it is this: all the evidence which we

have been exhibiting, we have on one side of the question ; and, if I mistake not, none on the other to counteract it : for, if my memory and judgment be correct, the wisest and best of men, of our own denomination, have asserted, that these things are so. I do not say that all good men have ; but the most learned have, and some who have appeared very pious.

But you will say, Why have they not practised differently, if they have thus believed ? I am not answerable for their practice ; but, if the Lord will, I shall, ere long, give you the reasons which they assign.

I shall only add, for the present, two or three consequences, and then leave the subject for your consideration.

1. The Baptists have, against our practice, and for theirs, that kind of evidence which is, perhaps, in all cases but the present, considered the most unequivocal and certain. This evidence is given in by a cloud of witnesses, who, whilst they are bearing their testimony, condemn themselves every sentence they utter. If these men, who are confessed by both sides to be both pious and learned, may be believed, the cause will most certainly be determined against us ; for there was never a clearer case. They unitedly testify that the scripture mode of baptism is immersion, but omit the practice. In this they condemn themselves.

2. The scripture sense, and, for aught appears, the only sense, of baptism, is, dipping, immersion, burying in water, being overwhelmed, and the like.

3. We are brought to this dilemma, either to commence Baptists, as to the mode, or do as our fathers have done, confess the truth in theory, and neglect it in practice.

SERMON III.

MATTHEW xxviii. 19, 20.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

MEN, brethren, and fathers, we are still upon a very important subject—a subject which highly concerns us as Christians—a subject in which our feelings, our reputation, and our peace too, may not be a little concerned. Many things, not to say every thing, call upon us not to go too fast; and, at the same time, obedience to our common Lord forbids all backwardness, in pursuing where his truth and Spirit lead us.

All which I request of you is, with candour hear, with readiness obey, what truth shall dictate.

Should we, after long and serious deliberation, be obliged to believe and practise differently from what we have heretofore done, we shall be much exposed to two things: one is, to be reviled; the other, to revile again. What we shall need is, patience to bear the one, and grace that we may avoid the other.

Perhaps human nature is more inclined to nothing than to an overbearing spirit. It is perfectly consonant with human nature to make ourselves, and not the scriptures, the standard of both faith and practice. The natural consequence of this is censure against all who dare to think, or act, as we do not. To guard you against unreasonable and common prejudice, I will, for your consideration, suggest a thought, which we may do well to remember; and it is this: many, who shall believe and practise as we have long done, may be as honest and faithful as we then were. This being true, the following consequence is plain, that the line of conduct which the Baptists ought to have practised, in months and years past, towards us, the same, if we be Baptists, will it become us to pursue with relation to others. It

requires not much foresight to discover, that we shall need much of that wisdom which is profitable to direct.

Whilst it may be indispensable with us to use every prudent mean to diffuse that light which God may graciously afford us, it will be our wisdom to do every thing in such a manner as not to heighten, but, if possible, to lower, the prejudices of good people.

Whilst you, my dear friends and people, know that light chafeth away the darkness, and that truth will ultimately prevail against every error; I solicit your candour and prayerful attention, that error may not be retained, or prevail against any of us, to our wounding.

Our attention hath already been called to the definition of a number of words, which relate to the ordinance of baptism, to the scripture account of baptism, together with some other texts, which were supposed to throw light upon the subject, and also to some evidence in support of the given definitions. As the great question turns upon what is commanded, and as that cannot be otherwise known than by making sure the import of the words used, we shall therefore search for additional light and certainty, by inquiring—

4. How the apostles and primitive Christians understood this matter, and how they practised.

If this can be made plain, then, perhaps, your mind will be satisfied, and your judgments made up.

I proceed to lay the evidence before you.

There appears no necessity of spending time to produce evidence that the apostles understood the matter to be as I have proved to you that it was: for they, no doubt, understood the words which Christ spake, and the commands which he gave; besides, if the apostles and primitive church practised thus, it is evident that they thus understood it; for doubtless they, especially the apostles, were honest men, and practised as they understood Jesus Christ to have directed them.

I will here make two observations to you; and I wish you to remember them.

The first is, no person should, especially in important matters, make up his judgment, that any particular subject is true, till he has evidence of its truth.

The other is, the best proof which the nature of any case admits of, may and ought to be considered as evidence, and

so received by us, as to those things we are called to believe and practise.

There are different degrees of evidence: the highest kind produces knowledge. When the evidence is small, it produces a weak and dubious belief. But where it is such that, on supposition the thing be true, the evidence could not be greater than it is, there we are obliged to yield our assent, and we do violence to our reason if we will not believe.

The evidence, which we have with respect to the practice of the apostles in the matter of baptizing, differs in degree, and, in some measure, in kind, from the evidence which we have respecting the practice of the church in later ages as to the same matter. But if we have, with respect to the practice of both, the best evidence which the different cases admit of, we are under obligation to believe the evidence good, and the facts true which are supported by it.

We have much the same kind of evidence with respect to the practice of the apostles, which we have as to the practice of the church for many ages after them. Mr. Baxter, bishop Hoadly, and others, testify, that the apostolic practice was, immersion. We have, moreover, as to their practice, a much higher kind of evidence. In support of their practice, I shall produce the best kind of evidence, and afterwards, whilst speaking of the practice of the church in succeeding ages, may occasionally bring forward some of the other kind of evidence, in support of the apostles' practice.

As to the practice of the apostles, in the administration of baptism, I observe, we have in the scriptures four distinct sources of evidence. The

1st. Is this. When baptism is mentioned by the disciples and apostles, and the common word is not used, they uniformly employ one particular word, and this word is of very determinate signification, and expresses the bathing, or washing, of the body in water, as *Heb. x. 22*: Having our bodies (*leloumenci*) washed with pure water. *Acts xxii. 16*. Arise and be baptized, and (*apolousai*) wash away thy sins. *1 Cor. vi. 11*. But ye are (*apolousajihē*) washed. By the determinate signification of this word, their practice appears to be immersion.

2. The apostles were commanded to dip, immerse, or plunge all over in water, the persons whom they admitted to this ordinance. This is evident from the determinate

signification of the word to baptize. Says the command, Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c. We have before proved what is the signification of this word, and consequently what Christ commanded his disciples, when he sent them to baptize.

I do not now say that the apostles immersed any; but this is what I say, they were commanded thus to do. I leave it for you to determine, whether they did, or whether they did not.

3. I observe to you, that the New-Testament, wherever it speaks of the apostles baptizing any, says they immersed them, or dipt them all over in water. For this is the plain, literal and common, if not the only signification of the word. I still leave it with you to determine whether the apostles did, or did not, practise thus.

Left some of you may have forgotten what I have before proved to you, and consequently entertain some doubt whether baptism may not sometimes signify the application of water in a different way; we will make two or three observations.

1. The plain, literal and common signification of the word is to immerse, overwhelm, dip, or to plunge all over.

2. There appears to be no evidence that it is ever used so much as once, in any part of the Bible, to signify the application of water in any other sense. Even in those passages where I have in time past supposed that the meaning might be, and probably was, *washing* without immersion, the sense appears to be putting into water or immersion, and not what we commonly understand by the word *washing*. Of this you may be convinced by considering the treatment to which the Jews were accustomed with respect to those vessels which were ceremonially unclean. They were to baptize them, or put them into water, as you may see, *Levit. xi. 32.* "And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean; whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack; *whatsoever vessel* it be, wherein any work is done, it must be *put into water*, and it shall be unclean until the even; so it shall be cleansed."

3. I will observe to you that it would most visibly be a reflection upon the great Teacher who came from God, to suppose that he should, when appointing a positive insti-

tution, use words aside from their plain and commonly received sense, that too without giving any intimation of his using the words in any sense differing from the common, especially when he was setting up a new institution, about which his most faithful followers could, in all succeeding generations, know nothing but from the words used in and about the institution. Does not all this appear plain and reasonable?

Now the Bible in the plain, literal and common-sense of the words which it uses, says, the apostles dipt, plunged or immersed all such as they admitted to baptism. You will judge for yourselves whether the apostles practised thus, or whether they did not.

4. The practice of the apostles is farther illustrated and confirmed by what Paul tells the Roman and Colossian Christians, with respect to what took place when they received the ordinance of baptism. He says to the former, "We are buried with him by baptism into death:" To the other he says, "Buried with him *in* baptism." Paul speaks of this matter as a thing perfectly understood by Christians in his time, and used it as an argument to promote their weanedness from the world, and growth in sanctification. But have you not either passed over these and similar passages, without noticing them, or considered them rather hard to be understood? But how easy is it to understand them, provided the apostles practised as the scriptures say they did! I still leave it with you to determine for yourselves how the apostles practised.

This is the best evidence which the nature of the subject admits. This matter, the apostles' practice, was transacted many ages since. We have the testimony of the scriptures as to what it was; this is evidence enough: however, we shall occasionally add the testimony of men.

We shall now attend to the practice of the church, and discover, if we can, how it was for ages after the apostles. The best evidence which this part of my subject admits is that of human testimony.* I by no means rest the merit

* Christ's promise to his apostles, to their successors, and to the Church may assure us that the ordinance of baptism, by which his people should be distinguished from the world, would ever continue. Therefore could we know what the church hath always practised, especially that part of it which hath been most separate from the world, then their practice would afford a strong argument in favour of what the institution intended.

of the cause on this evidence. At the same time, it may weaken the prejudices of some, and be a mean of confirming others in the belief of the truth.

It appears so plain a case that we can hardly refuse assent to it, that as the church hath for a series of ages practised, so have they believed. When we shall see what their practice hath been, we shall the more easily concede that their belief hath been similar.

What is now before us is to produce and to receive evidence relative to the practice of the primitive church. It is the following:—

1. This evidence consists in the united testimony of both those who practised the administration of the ordinance by immersion, and those who used sprinkling, and called it baptizing.

Mosheim, a very noted church historian, and not very friendly to the Baptists, bears direct testimony that John, Christ's forerunner, and the church in the first ages of Christianity, practised immersion as the mode of baptizing. The following you may take as a sample of his evidence. "The exhortations of this respectable messenger (John) were not without effect, and those who, moved by his solemn admonition, had formed the resolution of correcting their evil dispositions and amending their lives, were initiated into the kingdom of the Redeemer by the ceremony of immersion, or baptism."*

Speaking of the church in the second century, he says, "The persons that were to be baptized, after they had repeated the creed, confessed and renounced their sins, and particularly the devil in his pompous allurements, were immersed under water, and received into Christ's kingdom by a solemn invocation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the *express command* of our blessed Lord.†

The Doctor speaking of some inferior sects of the seventeenth century, and particularly of a sect called Collegiants, says, "Those adult persons, that desire to be baptized; receive the sacrament of baptism according to the ancient and primitive manner of celebrating that institution, even by *immersion*."‡

Mr. Bailey, in his Etymological English Dictionary, says, "In ancient times, this (baptism) being performed by im-

* Century I. chap. iii. sect. 3. † Cent. II. part ii. chap. v. sect. 12.

‡ Vol. v. p. 488.

merſion, the perſons ſo initiated went into a river, &c. and were plunged.”

John Calvin, in his *Inſtitutions*, Book IV. chap. xv. ſect. 19, ſays, “It is certain that the manner of dipping was uſed of the old church.”

Here are three ſubſtantial witneſſes. Theſe might be ſufficient, ſeeing there is not one to be found who will, or dares, give direct and poſitive teſtimony againſt the truth of what theſe affirm. But ſince there are an hoſt who ſtand ready to give in their teſtimony, even againſt their own practice, we will hear what two more of them will teſtify relative to the important cauſe now on trial.

Theſe two ſhall be Dr. Cave and the famous Mr. Baxter.

Dr. Cave, a great ſearcher into antiquity, ſays, “That the party baptized was wholly immerſed, or put under water, which was the *common, conſtant, and univerſal* cuſtom of thoſe times; whereby they did ſignificantly expreſs the great end and effects of baptiſm, repreſenting Chriſt’s death, burial and reſurrection, and, in conformity thereto, our dying unto ſin, the deſtruction of its power, and our reſurrection to a new courſe of life,” &c.*

Moſt remarkable is the teſtimony which Mr. Baxter gives to this truth, in the following words: “It is commonly confeſſed by us to the Baptiſts, (as our commentators declare) that in the apoſtles’ time, the baptized were dipped over head in water, and this ſignifieth their profeſſion both of believing the burial and reſurrection of Chriſt, and of their own dying unto ſin, and living, or riſing again to newneſs of life, or being buried and riſen again with Chriſt, as the apoſtle expoundeth baptiſm, Col. ii. 12, and Rom. iv. 6. And though (ſaith he) we have thought it lawful to diſuſe the manner of dipping and to uſe leſs water, yet we preſume not to change the uſe and ſignification of it; ſo then he that ſignally profeſſes to die and riſe again in baptiſm with Chriſt, doth *ſignally* profeſs *ſaving faith* and *repentance*; but *this* do all they that are baptized according to the apoſtolic practice.”†

As theſe witneſſes teſtify, ſo do all learned and pious men who have critically attended to this ſubject, and afterwards given in any direct and poſitive evidence upon the matter.

* Ten Letters. † Ibid.

2. The evidence as to the practice of the primitive church, consists in the testimony of men to this truth, that the church did for thirteen hundred years practise immersion, some extreme cases excepted.

The only evidence which I purpose to give in support of this for the present, is the testimony of the author of *Ten Letters* to Bishop Hoadly upon the mode and subjects of baptism, and the confession of Dr. Lathrop that it was even so.

The author of the *Letters* asserts that this was the practice of the church for thirteen hundred years after the commencement of the Christian era. Dr. Lathrop assents that this was the fact; as you may see, by reading his four sermons on baptism, where he gives these letters a particular attention, and is supposed to assent, where he makes no objection.

3. All the churches in Europe, Asia and Africa, ever have done, and do now, practise immersion, save those who are now, or have been, under the jurisdiction of the Pontiffs of Rome.

The same witnesses who bore their testimony to the last particular, give in their evidence in support of this, and in the same way; the one asserting the fact, the other assenting that it is even so.

4. The very reasons which have been given and which are still given to justify the contrary practice, are a plain confession that immersion, or burying the subjects under water, was the practice of the apostles and primitive church in the ordinance of baptism, and what Christ commanded to be done.

The reasons which are alleged why sprinkling may be substituted for immersion, are, the want of health, in some instances where they suppose baptism to be necessary; the weakness of constitution with respect to some, and the coldness of climate with respect to many, and as to all in northern climes in the wintry season. Here is a silent acknowledgment, that it is not the institution, that it is not the permission of Christ, but mere accidental and local circumstances, which make it lawful to lay by the command of Christ, and to receive in its stead the precepts and commandments of men.

Mr. Bailey says, in his Dictionary, that baptism was performed in the eastern and warmer countries by dipping

the persons all over; but in process of time, in the western and colder countries, sprinkling was substituted in the place of dipping.

Dr. Lathrop in his sermons implicitly confesses the following extracts to be both true and genuine.

Mr. Baxter, in his *Paraphrase on the New-Testament*, observes on Matth. iii. 6. "We grant that baptism then was by washing the whole body; and did not the difference of our cold country, as to that hot one, teach us to remember, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice,' it should be so here."

The author of the *Letters to Bishop Hoadly*, in the twenty-third page, writes thus: "Mr. Baxter, we have already seen, excuses the matter by the coldness of our climate. Calvin, the celebrated reformer of Geneva, observes in his Exposition of Acts viii. 38, 'We see here what was the baptismal rite among the ancients, for they plunged the whole body in the water.' Now it is the custom for the minister to sprinkle only the body or head, and he too excuses this sprinkling, but how, I cannot well recollect, not having his book at hand."

Bishop Burnet though he thus describes the primitive baptism, "With no other garments but that might serve to cover nature, they at first laid them down, as a man is laid in the grave, and then they said these words, I baptize, or wash, thee in the name, &c. Then they raised them up again, and clean garments were put upon them; from whence came the phrases of being baptized into Christ's death, of being buried with him by baptism into death, of our being risen with Christ, and of our putting on the Lord Jesus Christ; of putting off the old man, and putting on the new,"—and though he justly observes that sacraments are positive precepts, which are to be measured only by the institution, in which there is not room left for us to carry them any farther;—yet forgetting his own measure of the institution, viz. the party baptized was laid down in the water, as a man is laid in the grave, he says, "The danger in cold climates may be a very good reason for changing the form of baptism to sprinkling."*

I propose for the present to note but one quotation more, and that shall be in the words of Dr. Wall, as quoted in the *Letters*. The Doctor in giving the reasons why, in

* Burnet's Exposition of the Thirty-nine articles.

Queen Elizabeth's reign, the custom of dipping was laid aside, observes, "It being allowed to weak children to be baptized by affusion, many found ladies and gentlemen first, and then, by degrees, the common people, would obtain the favour of the priest to have their children pass for weak children, too tender to endure dipping in the water."* Now,

6. It may be easy for you to gather what is the outward and visible part of the ordinance of baptism.

It is to immerse proper subjects in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This is the outward and visible part of baptism, the scriptures being judge; this literal and plain meaning of the command being judge; the practice of the apostles being judge; the practice of the church for more than a thousand years being judge; and even if we appeal to those who refuse to practise thus, they add their testimony, that it is what was commanded. They pretend not to say that any new command hath been given, or that the old one hath ever been changed. What shall we say to these things!!!

I conclude by submitting a question, and a few inferences, for your consideration.

The question is, If immersion be from heaven, and sprinkling from men, by what authority do we continue the practice?

The inferences are—

1. We, who call ourselves Pedobaptists, are as a house divided against itself. To say the least, we appear thus. Our champions will look us in the face, and assure us, that the Baptists have plain scripture for their mode, and yet we have a right to choose on the score of convenience, &c. what mode is pleasing to us. Thus say Calvin, Hoadly, Owen, and others: whilst in their practice they have been, in this instance, like the servant who knew, but did not his lord's will. These good men have confessed rather too much for the credit of their practice, and our comfort while copying it. Many, however, have risen up in defence of our fathers' practice and ours. They invent many ingenious hypotheses to prove it from heaven, but not one affords a solid conclusion which shows it to be so.

2. According to the light which for the present appears, we cannot but conclude that our definitions of baptism and

to baptize are scriptural, accurate and just. If we will do the will of God, we must practise what he commands.

3. It appears that it is not left with us to choose what mode we will practise in administering or in receiving the ordinance of baptism; for we find but one mode to it: and we must practise this, or none. We may sprinkle a person in the name of the Father, &c. and we may wash the face, or any part of a person, in the same sacred name; but it is not possible to baptize a person in this way; for sprinkling, or any small, partial washing never was, is not now, nor ever will be, what the scriptures mean by Christian baptism.

4. That a person must be greatly unacquainted with the plain, literal, scripture account of baptism, or extremely prejudiced, not to say perverse, to affirm that the Bible says nothing about immersion, or burying in water for baptizing. For it speaks of this mode, and of no other, in the application of water as a gospel ordinance.

The Baptists have for their mode the broad *basis* of *scripture*, antiquity, and the uninterrupted, and somewhat universal practice of the church.

5. It appears that for well-informed Pedobaptists to oppose the Baptists, as to their mode of baptizing, is very great wickedness. For the Baptists have the advantage of plain and express scripture on their side, and the learned, critical and candid Pedobaptists know it.

Ignorance is the best and only excuse which we can make for ourselves for any opposition which we have made against the ancient and primitive mode which the Baptists have practised in the administration of the ordinance. Our contention in this matter hath not been against the Baptists merely, but it hath been against their Lord and ours.

Dr. Lathrop appears generously to grant the truth, that immersion is scripture baptism, and only contends that sprinkling be also allowed; which every candid mind would readily do, were there one text of scripture to support it.

6. No true Christian; if he knew what he did, would ever make light of immersion, which the Lord commands, and the Baptists practise, as the mode of baptizing, or, more strictly, as baptism itself.

SERMON IV.

MATTHEW xxviii. 19, 20.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

WHILST discoursing to you upon these words, I have, as I suppose, proved to you what is the outward and visible part of baptism. You have, to appearance, given a serious and solemn attention, and, I hope, a candid one, to what hath been said.

All which I ask of you in this matter is, that you in the spirit of meekness hear the whole, and then judge and practise in such a manner as you cannot refuse to do, without doing violence to your reason, and without disobedience to the command of Heaven.

Some of you may be afraid of discord; but whence, I pray you, will discord arise among brethren? Will a candid, prayerful and self-denying attention to truth cause this feared discord? Hath truth a tendency to produce discord among the faithful followers of the Lamb of God? I know that once, when Christ preached the doctrines of the cross, multitudes of professing disciples went back, and followed no more with him. I hope it will not be thus with any of you. But, my brethren, however it may be with any of you, one thing is clear—I ought, I must declare to you, so fast as I profitably can, all those truths of God which appear necessary to build you up in sound faith and holy practice.

As I have said before, so say I unto you again, that all which I ask of you is, to give truth a candid hearing, and yield your assent, when facts are plainly proved.

Nothing should, by me, be thought too much to be done, to clear away from your minds the darkness of prejudice, together with any erroneous belief and practice which you

may have imbibed, in part, by my means. I shall, therefore, in this discourse, after having attended to the purport, end or design of baptism, answer some objections, which may for the present obstruct the force of truth.

Before we proceed to the particular business of this discourse, you will, if you please, attend for a minute to a few questions and their answers.

1. Is it not a plain case, that it is my duty to deliver to you the whole counsel of God, according to the best light it may please him to afford me?

2. Is it not equally plain, that your duty is to yield, not to me, but to the truths which I deliver, an obedient ear?

3. Should you, from an uncandid and prejudiced mind, refuse to be converted by the truth, will the fault be mine?

4. Should I exhibit full evidence, as to the subject on hand, and exhibit that evidence clearly too, or should it be that I have done this, and yet great difficulties should arise, will you be justified should you lay the blame to me?

5. Should I teach you the truth, and produce all the evidence which you can ask for, and you should, all, like faithful Christians, believe it, where or whence will arise any difficulty among us? Should any of you refuse to believe, will you charge your difficulties to my account?

6. Are not all of you determined that you will hear candidly, and believe upon evidence?

You will please to give a Christian and judicious answer to each of these questions, and let your practice be conformed with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having laid before you the principal part of the facts and evidence, which I intended, as to the visible and outward part of baptism, now—

Lastly. The purport, end and design of the Baptismal Institution may call for some attention.

The purport, end or design of this Christian ordinance, or institution, appears to be—

1. For a dividing line between the kingdom of our Lord, and the kingdoms of this world.

John was Christ's forerunner: he was sent before his face to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just: to make ready a people prepared for the Lord;* and that Christ should be made

* Luke i. 17.

manifest to Israel, therefore, says John, and I come baptizing with water.* John's mission comprehended a double purpose, to make ready a people, prepared for the Lord, and to manifest Him unto Israel. The people which he instrumentally made ready, and prepared to receive the Lord, he baptized; and it appears from his rejecting many of the Pharisees and Sadducees, that he intentionally baptized none other.† The whole discourse which he had with them, *Matt. iii. 7* to *12*, is good evidence that he admitted none to baptism but such as brought forth visible fruits of repentance. Such persons he admitted among that people which he was making ready for the Lord. This people were, when prepared, to compose that kingdom, or the beginning of that kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, and which is an everlasting kingdom, which shall stand forever; *Daniel ii. 44.* and *vii. 27.* This kingdom Christ calls the kingdom of heaven, and says, it is not of this world.

It appears to be this kingdom, which was now at hand, almost ready to be set up, of which Christ speaks to Nicodemus, when he says, *John iii. 5.* Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

All this does, for substance, meet the sentiment of Baptists and Pedobaptists on this subject. Both suppose, that none can belong to this kingdom without being born of water, or baptized. Both suppose that men may professedly, or visibly, belong to this kingdom, without being born of the Spirit: but, perhaps, neither the Baptists, nor Pedobaptists, would say, that any do, strictly speaking, belong to this kingdom, except they have been born of water and of the Spirit. Our Lord saith, Verily, verily, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. If a man cannot enter into this kingdom but in this way, he cannot belong to it in any other.

Both sides grant, that baptism, or to be born of water, is the only way of admittance into this kingdom. They are not so well agreed as to what it is to be born of water, whe her it be to be sprinkled, washed, or immersed. Concerning this matter you must judge for yourselves.

This being a given point, that the design of baptism is, at it should be for a dividing line between that kingdom,

* *John i. 31.*† *Matt. iii. 7.*

which the God of heaven was to set up in the latter day, and this world, I would suggest for your consideration—Which draws the line of separation most clearly between this kingdom and all other kingdoms on earth; to enter it by being sprinkled; or by being visibly and actually buried in water, and rising as it were from the dead, to join this kingdom?

I will also suggest one thing more for your consideration: Which hath the most direct and natural tendency to cause Christ's kingdom to appear to be, as it really is, not of this world? To have almost all admitted into it, in infancy, and so in unbelief, and all by sprinkling, or by a little water put upon the face, and the greater part of them living in open wickedness, or manifest unbelief, and unnoticed by the church to which they are supposed to belong; or, to have none admitted but professed believers, and these admitted in a way which significantly says, that they turn their backs upon the world; yea, that they are dead to the world, and are risen with Christ. I only suggest this for your consideration. I hope to attend to it in its place, but not to-day.

2. The purport, end or design of baptism appears to be for a manifestation, that the subjects of it have forsaken all, yea, their own lives, for Christ's sake and the gospel.

How can this be more visibly manifested, than by being buried with him in baptism? How can a man more visibly forsake all, than he does when buried? How can any one more manifestly forsake his own life for another, than by voluntarily submitting himself into the hands of another to be buried alive?

Is not this agreeable to what Christ saith, Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple?

3. It appears to be for a representation of our being washed from our sins in the blood of the Lamb.

John, the revelator, saith, speaking of Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." This is a figurative expression, showing at once the procuring cause, the blood of Christ, and the gracious effect, our souls purged from dead works to serve the Living God. Can any natural sign represent this more fully, than does baptism, in which our bodies are washed with pure water?

4. The purport, end or design of this Christian ordinance appears to be for the promotion of piety in individuals, and purity in the church.

What can have a stronger tendency to move the heart of a Christian to piety and weanedness from the world, than has the institution of baptism? Seeing at every remembrance of it, he is put in mind, how Christ died *for sin*, and how every one who hath believed and been baptized, has by the ordinance signally died *to sin*, been buried from the world, and raised again to newness of life. Hath not this ordinance also an equally strong tendency to preserve the purity of the church, should it be administered as we have proved it ought to be, by immersion only? And should another thing be found to be true, that visible believers only should be admitted to it, what a world of unbelievers would this shut out of the church! How differently would the professed church of Jesus Christ appear from what it now does!

If my information be correct, every natural born subject of the crown of England is, according to the laws of their national church, to be baptized, and immediately considered as a member of the church. This is, indeed, consistent, if all the parents have, in any past period, been profelyted to the Christian religion, and if baptism have come into the place of circumcision, and to be administered to children and infants, as that was.

Not only so, but probably nine-tenths of the inhabitants of New-England, if not of our nation, belong to the church, according to the professed belief of the Pedobaptists. Upon the same principle I presume that more than three-fourths of all the adults in this and the neighbouring towns belong to the church, and have, if the principle be according to the gospel, a right to require admittance to the Lord's Supper, and baptism for their children. Then, upon the same principle, would their children be members of the church, and entitled to all the privileges of God's house, as they come to years, and nothing short of gross immorality could justify their exclusion. Does this look as though Christ's kingdom were not of this world?

5. The purport, end or design of baptism appears to be well described by Dr. Goodwin, in the following words: "The eminent thing signified and represented in baptism is,

not singly the blood of Christ, as it *washes* us from our sins, but there is a further representation therein of Christ's death, burial and resurrection, in the baptized: and this is not in a bare conformity to Christ, but is a representation of a communion with Christ in his death and resurrection; therefore it is said, We are buried with him in baptism, and wherein we are risen with him, &c. And moreover, here it is that the answer of a good conscience, which is made the inward effect of this ordinance, 1 *Peter* iii. 21, is there also attributed to Christ's resurrection, as the thing signified and represented in baptism; and as the cause of that answer of a good conscience, even baptism doth now save us, as it is a figure of salvation by Christ."

6. The purport, end or design of the ordinance appears to be to point out, or shadow forth; the forgiveness or remission of sins, and the being cleansed from them. Hence the propriety of scripture expressions, which are like the following: The baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, *Mark* i. 4. Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, *Acts* xxii. 16. Here it is worthy of the critical reader's notice, that the word translated, *wash away*, is *apolousai*, which signifies to wash clean, or to wash out a stain, as well as to wash away. It is also worthy to be observed, that the word *louō*, whence this is derived, is the only word, or theme, save *baptizō*, which, in the New-Testament, signifies to wash the body. This being well considered, it cannot be doubted, but baptism is a most significant representation of the remission of sin, or cleansing from it.

Lastly. The purport, end and design of the ordinance of baptism appears to be, for an open and manifest declaration that those who receive it, do heartily, and of a ready mind, put on Christ, enter into his service, receive him to be their Prophet, Priest and King, and covenant to be for him, and for him only. Accordingly it is said, As many as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ: They have put on his name, his self-denying profession, his suffering, despised, but glorious cause.

Is the purport, end and design of baptism as hath been now stated? then the mode is immersion; and those who change the *ordinance* from *dipping* to *sprinkling*, and apply it to unbelievers, *pervert* the *ordinance*, lose its import, and make it quite another thing. This we have, for years, ignorantly done.

We will now attend to the arguments, which the late Rev. John Cleaveland hath left us in support of *sprinkling*, as being authentic baptism. This Mr. Cleaveland was, and I believe justly too, esteemed as one of the most pious and faithful servants of Christ. Whilst I was favoured with a personal acquaintance with him, he stood very high in my estimation, for his unaffected piety, and fervent simplicity, as a preacher of the everlasting gospel. I still retain the same opinion of the good man. But great and good men are not always wise. In any instance where their wisdom hath failed them, we should be careful how we follow. The Bereans would not take Paul for a guide, without first bringing him to the standard of divine truth. The Bereans were justified. Should we treat Mr. C. in the same way, he could not, and I am inclined to think, he would not, though he were living, condemn us. I might let his works and arguments in support of sprinkling, *scilicet*, were it not, that some of you, my people, and perhaps others, may by them, in one particular, be kept from beholding Christ, as in an open glass.

The good man's object was, to prove that baptism by sprinkling is authentic, or is scriptural; or that sprinkling is baptism.

I will now lay before you his supposed strong arguments by which he supports the validity of sprinkling for baptizing. After stating the principles of the Baptists, as to the ordinance now considering, his

1st. Argument is, "Their learned men know that the word *baptizō* in *Luke* xi. 38, and *baptismous* in *Mark* vii. 2—5, are used to signify the same as *niptō* is, i. e. proper washing, or making clean by the application of water, in cases that do not necessarily require dipping as the mode of washing." The answer to this is: That neither the learned men among the Baptists, nor the learned among any other class of men, know any such thing. Besides, *baptisḥē*, in *Luke*, and *baptismous*, in *Mark*, have reference to, and mean, a ceremonial, a religious, or rather, as may be more properly called in these instances, a superstitious washing. What is meant by a ceremonial washing, you may see by looking into the ceremonial law: *Levit.* xi. 32, and in *Numb.* xix. 19, where you will find that this ceremonial washing was, to put into water, or to bathe one's flesh in water. You hence see that these two passages, with which Mr. Cleave-

land lays the foundation of his support of sprinkling for baptism, utterly fail him, and come in as auxiliaries to confirm immersion as the only scripture baptism. I will not say that *nip̄tō* is never used to signify ceremonial washing, and so intend the washing, or putting the hands into water, (*pugnē*) with abundance of exactness, as Dr. Doddridge expounds it, or up to the elbows, as L'Enfant renders it. But one thing is evident to all who will examine the texts, and compare them with the ceremonial washings of the ceremonial law, in conformity with which the Jewish doctors meant to have their traditional ceremonies, that *baptizō* and *baptismos* are not used in the sense in which *nip̄tō* generally is. In every point of view, Mr. Cleaveland's texts utterly fail him, and go to destroy the custom or tradition he brought them to support. Besides, I do not find that *baptizō* is used, in any place, for washing the hands, or for washing or dipping a part of the body, or any other thing. Mr. Cleaveland's

2d. Argument is built upon *Hebrews ix. 10.* where the Apostle speaks of (*diaphorais baptismois*) divers washings. Here, where the Apostle is speaking of divers ceremonial washings, or bathings, Mr. Cleaveland, without the least possible evidence, concludes the Apostle means divers sprinklings.

The same answer which was given to the first argument belongs to this, as Mr. Cleaveland has produced no evidence, that (*baptismois*) washings, or bathings, means sprinklings, save that in the 13th and 21st verses. The Apostle makes use of the word sprinkle, when speaking of the application of blood, and speaking of the unclean, says, they are *rantizēd*, and adds, almost all things are by the law purged, *cathērizēd*, not *baptizēd*, with blood. It is not a little surprising that a man of Mr. Cleaveland's good sense should say, and that Dr. Lathrop, and other men of erudition, should follow him, in saying, these different sprinklings, in the 13th and 21st verses, refer to *baptismois*, when, had they looked three words farther, they would have found them to be, *kai dikaiōmasti surkos*, the liberal English of which is, "The ordinances of God concerning the ceremonial rites of bloody sacrifices!" Had they looked into their Greek testaments, they might, with ease, have seen that their argument would not bear examination. Surely, had these gentlemen had the right of the question, they never would have compelled

the Apostle to explain by the sprinkling of blood, what he meant by bathings or washings with water. Perhaps a more forced exposition of scripture is seldom heard. Besides, the Apostle told them, by placing what is translated, carnal ordinances, between divers washing in the 10th, and sprinkling in the 13th and 21st verses, that he intended no such thing as they supposed. If I mistake not, Mr. C's.

3d. Argument is an attempt to prove that *baptō* and *baptizō* are used to signify something more than to dip, put into water, &c. When the good man brought forward his argument he forgot—&c.—which belongs to his quotation from Dr. Gale, and which includes immersion and overwhelming, and which comprises the whole which Mr. C. has proved that *baptizō* signifies. But, waving his forgetfulness, we will attend to what he says. All which he appears to do here is, to show that *baptō*, or *baptizō*, are used to wash, dip and wet with sprinkling the dew from heaven, and to overwhelm. That is, *baptō* signifies to dip, put into water, wet with the dew of heaven, &c. and *baptizō* signifies to dip, put into water and overwhelm. What is the consequence? According to Mr. C. it is this: Because *baptō* is sometimes used to signify one's being wet with the distilling dew of heaven, &c. therefore *baptizō* signifies the same thing: Because *baptō* signifies in one place to wash without dipping, therefore *baptizō* signifies to wash without dipping; and because *baptō* is sometimes used to signify to colour, or stain, by aspersion, or the like, therefore *baptizō* is used in the same sense; therefore sprinkling is authentic baptism. What evidence, I pray you, my hearers, is there in all this? Yes, what show or appearance of evidence is there in all this? Would ten thousand such arguments afford you the least conviction, or gain your assent, where you had a cent to lose?

Every person of sense, who is acquainted with the Greek, would, generally speaking, allow Mr. C's. premises, that *baptō*, in different places, signifies the application of water in different ways; and that *baptizō* sometimes signifies overwhelming. But no person, who understands the matter, will allow his conclusion, for it hath no connexion with the premises.

His argument, in plain English, is this: The verb to wet, sometimes signifies to sprinkle, as in a heavy dew we say it sprinkles, or wets; the verb to overwhelm, sometimes signi-

fies to cover all over with water, as is the beach, by the flowing of the tide. Of consequence, to overwhelm is to sprinkle; therefore to sprinkle is authentic overwhelming, or baptism. The fallacy of this argument is easily detected, and with the same ease may any one, who knows the different significations of *baptō* and *baptizō*, uncover the fallacy and complete inconclusiveness of Mr. C's. argument.

The plain truth is, he hath done his side a disservice, for by searching he hath found, and implicitly acknowledges, though not intentionally, and (I suppose) without knowing it, that no instance can be found where *baptizō* signifieth the application of water by sprinkling, or any other way, which does not imply overwhelming, or washing, that is, a ceremonial washing, which is bathing, or putting into water. But—

4. There is another argument upon which Mr. Cleave-land chiefly dwells, and upon which he appears greatly to rest the defence of his whole cause. It is his strong hold against immersion, and for sprinkling; and it is this: Baptism with water, or baptism as a Christian ordinance, is to signify Christ's baptizing with the Holy Ghost. I have no where found that he hath proved that this is the great and principal thing which baptism signifies; nor do I by any means obtain conviction that the mode of baptizing is to be determined, with certainty, from this particular thing, even should it be granted that one important design of baptism is to signify Christ's baptizing with the Holy Ghost. But, as Mr. C. seems to depend upon the strength of this argument more than he does upon the strength of any other, we will grant for the present, that baptism with water was appointed particularly, if not mainly, to set forth the mode in which Christ baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

Now the great question is, In what manner or mode, by sprinkling or overwhelming, did Christ Jesus baptize with the Holy Ghost? Mr. C. in his treatise, replies abundantly, by sprinkling, certainly. We will put this subject to the test, by instancing the most remarkable season which ever was, in which Christ, in a most remarkable, public and astonishing degree was baptizing with the Holy Ghost. I presume were Mr. C. now alive he could not, with any face of propriety, object against taking a sample for the whole, the most remarkable instance which ever hath been, and, perhaps, which ever will be exhibited of Christ's baptizing

with the Holy Ghost. I am willing to submit the strong argument of Mr. C. to this great sample of Christ's baptizing with the Holy Ghost. Are not all you, my hearers, willing to leave the weight of his argument to such a decision? I am persuaded you all say, Yes.

We will then bring his argument to the proposed test.

The instance which we will take, for surely it is the most astonishing one, is that which Christ foretold, as related, Acts i. 5. "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." The accomplishment of this prediction and promise we have related in the four first verses of the next chapter. It is thus: When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there was a sound from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Here was truly a wonderful instance of Christ's baptizing with the Holy Ghost.

Here 1. All the house was filled with the sound, wind or Spirit from heaven. 2. Cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 3. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

We here see that they were all overwhelmed; for all the house, where they were sitting, was filled; and not only were they all overwhelmed, but they were also filled.

It is left with you to determine, what becomes of Mr. C's. argument, upon which he lays so much stress, and of which he speaks with so much confidence, and not unfrequently with an air of triumph. Is there a word about sprinkling in any part of it? or is there any thing which looks like it? Does it not look considerably like immersion, or overwhelming? At least, does it not favour immersion, or overwhelming, as much as it does sprinkling? If so, then it proves nothing for sprinkling. It is left with you to determine which side it favours.

It is possible, however, that some of you may suppose, that Mr. C. might intend *that* baptism, if it may be so called, which the Holy Ghost ministers, when it creates the soul anew. To this supposition, I will just observe, "The wind bloweth (saith Christ) where it listeth, and thou hearest

the found thereof, but canst not tell *whence* it cometh, or *whither* it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Would it not be extreme folly to suppose that water baptism represents the *operations* of the Spirit, when none can know whence it cometh, or whither it goeth? It may represent the effect of the Spirit's operations, and it is called, a being born, not sprinkled, of the Spirit.

5. In reading Mr. C's. defence of sprinkling, as being authentic baptism, I noticed but one more distinct argument, and it is this:

"*Niptō, baptizō, louō, brechō, plunō, or apoplunō*, all signify to wash." The conclusion which he draws from this is, in short, the following: To baptize is not to immerse, but to sprinkle. I see no connexion between his premise and conclusion. Besides, Mr. C. tell us, page 80, that the Jews, by adhering to the tradition of the elders, observed the washing of hands, and divers other things, as a religious ceremony. Now, if all the words which Mr. C. mentions, signify to wash, and yet some of them signify common washing, and another, and that *baptizō*, signifies ceremonial washing, and that be to put into water, as is the case, what does his argument prove? It proves just nothing to his point. Had he proved, what he hath not even attempted, that they all signify the same kind of washing, and that the washing signified was not immersion, but sprinkling only, then his conclusion would have followed, that sprinkling is baptism.

If the above arguments will not support Mr. Cleaveland's theory, it must all come down; for they are the substance, if not all the arguments, which he hath adduced, and I presume better cannot be found.

I thought to have taken Dr. Lathrop's arguments upon the same subject, into consideration: but upon re-examining them I find there is no material dissimilarity between his and Mr. C's.; they therefore both stand or fall together. A word or two may be here added.

Dr. Lathrop assures us that Cyprian, who wrote within about one hundred and fifty years of the apostles, speaking of sprinkling, says, "In the sacrament of salvation (that is baptism) when *necessity compels*, the shortest ways of transacting divine matters do, by God's grace, confer the whole benefit." The Doctor adds, "The ancients *practised immersion*."*

* Pages 24, 25.

By this quotation of the Doctor's from Cyprian, and confession of his own, being put together, it appears at once that all his preceding arguments are erroneous; for Cyprian does not intimate that sprinkling was from heaven, but says it was from necessity. Besides, his calling baptism the sacrament of salvation, shows us the error, whence the necessity of sprinkling came, namely, a belief that the ordinance of baptism was necessary to salvation. This being the case, and it also being true, as the Doctor acknowledges, that the ancients practised immersion, save when necessity compelled, as they erroneously supposed, the consequence is fairly this, that immersion is from heaven, the ancients being judges; and that sprinkling is from men, from necessity, or rather from error.

I thought to have added no more upon the Doctor's mode of Christian baptism. However, one argument ought to be taken out of his hands, lest it misguide some of his readers. He tells us that *baptizō*, in Mark vii. and Luke xi. is used to signify the application of water to the hands. The only answer needed is, It is not thus said, in Mark, or Luke, or in any other part of the Bible. When the Doctor shall re-examine the passages, he will probably see the mistake.

Will gentlemen, and Christians too, forever contend against *immersion*, the institution of heaven, and for *sprinkling*, which hath nothing but *error* and *convenience* for its support!

SERMON V.

MATTHEW xxviii. 19, 20.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

I HAVE confidence in you, brethren, that ye will keep the ordinances, as I shall deliver them to you, and prove them to be from the word of the Lord.

One thing I would still know of you, my brethren, whether you, like the more noble Bereans, will receive the word with readiness, searching the scriptures daily, that you may know the truth of what you hear.

You will bear in mind, that whosoever loveth father or mother, house or lands, wife or children, more than Christ, is not worthy of him. If, through affection for any of these, you should refuse to obey Christ, it will be too evident that you love them more than you do him, and so are not worthy of him.

Should you love any erroneous belief and practice more than you do the truths of Christ, you will, so far as you manifest it, prove that you are not worthy of him.

Should you despise me for delivering and vindicating the truths of Christ to you, you will at the same time despise him. You will therefore give good heed to what you say, and to what you do in this matter; for if it be of God, it will stand, and none can overthrow it. It is hoped none of you will be found fighting against God.

This discourse may contain a review of what we have passed over, together with some application. In my first discourse to you on the subject, which we have still before us, the following are the principal things to which we attended.

I. I proposed a number of plain truths, considered to be as first principles, for your attention.

1. Baptism is a positive institution, about which we can know nothing, as to its being a Christian ordinance, but

from what Christ, and those inspired by his Spirit, have taught us.

2. All which we are required to believe and practise, with respect to the Christian ordinance of baptism, is declared to us by Jesus Christ, and by his forerunner and apostles.

3. When Jesus Christ first instituted the ordinance of baptism, he no doubt delivered his mind so clearly and fully upon the subject, that his disciples and immediate followers understood and practised as he would have them.

4. Every thing which hath, by the precepts and commandments of men, been added since, is aside from the ordinance, and makes no part of it.

5. No man, nor body of men, hath any more authority to add to or diminish from this ordinance, than they have to institute a new one and call it Christ's.

6. Whenever, and wherever, the ordinance of baptism is so changed as to lose the intent of the institution, then and there the ordinance is lost, and becomes no Christian ordinance at all.

II. I defined for your information a number of words which appertain to the ordinance of baptism.

We found all these to be just as we might expect to have found them, provided immersion be baptism, or the mode in which it is administered.

Baptisterion, a place in which to wash the body. *Baptism*, immersion, or dipping one all over in water. *Baptizō* signifies to dip, or wash, the body all over in water. *Louō* (a word several times used in reference to, or signifying the same, as baptism) is, to wash, to rinse, to bathe, &c. Then

III. I set before you all the texts in the New-Testament which relate either to the baptism of John, or to that of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the next place, I proposed for your meditation the passages of scripture where washing is mentioned, and the Greek words which are used. I then called your attention to those passages in which sprinkling is mentioned, and to the Greek words which are made use of. Lastly, I read to you those scriptures where to dip is mentioned, and also the Greek words which are rendered to dip.

In not one of the places, where the ordinance of baptism is brought to view, do we find one word about sprinkling, or any thing which looks like it. In every place, where to dip is mentioned, we find a near relation to baptism; every

word which is used, coming from the same *root* or theme, from which *baptizō* comes.

As to the word *wash*, we find no relation between the words which signify to wash, and those which signify to baptize, save in those few instances where the meaning is to wash the body, or put into water, or wash a thing all over. When we come to the Greek words which signify to sprinkle, we find no similarity, or likeness, between them and the word to baptize.

In all the places where baptizing is mentioned, not a word is used which looks like sprinkling; where sprinkling is mentioned, there is not a word used which appears like baptism.

In my next discourse, I produced my evidence, that my definitions of baptism and to baptize were accurate and just. I dwelt largely upon this evidence, for the merit of the whole subject depends greatly, if not entirely, upon the determinate meaning of the words, which our Lord used in the institution of the ordinance, and when speaking of it. When we know the determinate signification of his words, we know what he says, and what we ought to understand by the words which he uses. The evidence which I produced, was, in short, the following.

1. The Greek Lexicon, Butterworth's Concordance, Bailey's and Entick's Dictionaries, bear their united testimony, that the plain, literal, and common, if not universal, signification of the words *baptism* and *to baptize*, is immersion and to immerse, bury in water, to dip, or to plunge, a person all over in water. Here are four learned and positive witnesses to the same thing. Indeed, they give no other signification, save it be to wash, which we have seen intends a ceremonial washing, which is to put into water, or to bathe.

2. I repeated some of the attendant or circumstantial facts, which have relation to the ordinance of baptism. John baptized in the river Jordan. He was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was *much water* there. The word *baptistry* signifies a place in which to wash the body all over. *Baptism* signifies to dip, to plunge, immerse, or to wash the body all over in water. *Baptizer* signifies one who dips, plunges, or washes the body all over in water. *To baptize* signifies to immerse, plunge under water, or under any other liquid thing, or to dip, or to put into water. To be

baptized is to be plunged, immersed, or washed all over in water.

These things being true, is it not easy to determine what the ordinance of baptism signifies?

3. The words *baptismos* and *baptizō* have two, and only two, translations in the New-Testament. These two are *baptism* and *washing*. Where their meaning is washing, or where they are thus translated, it is a ceremonial washing, which is to put into water, or bathe the flesh in water, as you may see, *Levit. xi. 32. Numb. xix. 19.* When they are translated *baptism*, or to *baptize*, the thing intended is the baptism of water, of fire, of sufferings, or of the Holy Ghost.

4. I brought forward several noted witnesses, to bear their united testimony, that I had given a just definition of the word *baptizō*: these were, John Calvin, Zanchius, and Dr. Owen.

In the next place I mentioned to you that Paul repeatedly uses the word *louō*, where he means the same thing as where he uses the word *baptizō*; that he uses these words as signifying the same thing. Whereas, *louō* signifies to wash and to bathe the body in water, and consequently *baptizō* means the same.

Lastly. I brought forward Paul's exposition of the word *baptism*, and showed you, that he expounds it, as being buried with Christ in baptism, or immersion.

In my discourse, which I next preached to you, I produced evidence, that the apostles and primitive Christians, not only understood the matter as I have described it, but practised accordingly.

In support of the apostle's practice, I observed, that the word *louō*, of determinate signification, which they used to signify their practice, or what was done by them in baptism, determines or fixes their practice to be immersion. I farther observed, that they were commanded to practise baptism, or to baptize, as I have described it; and that the scriptures testify, that they thus did; and also that the apostle's say, the mode of baptizing in their day was, by burying the subjects, in baptism.

For witnesses that the primitive church practised immersion, we have Mosheim, Bailey, Calvin, Baxter, and many others, all agreeing in this one point, that the mode of baptizing, or baptism itself, among the ancients, was immersion.

We have also evidence that the church thus practised, for thirteen hundred years, some extreme cases excepted. Moreover we have evidence that all the church, in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa, save that part of it, which is now, or hath been, under the bewildering power of the popes, do now, and ever have, practised immersion.

Besides all this, the very reasons which the Pedobaptists assign, why they have laid aside immersion, shew that sprinkling is not commanded by the Lord, but is taught by the precepts of men.

You see we have an ocean of witnesses and evidence against us; and all, or nighly so, from our own denomination of Christians. What a world of evidence might we reasonably expect that the Baptists would be able to bring for themselves and against us and our practice, would we hear them, when our own side bring so much against their own practice and for the Baptists! Besides, this evidence appears to stand in its full force against us, there being no opposite evidence to weaken its force. Indeed we are, in this matter, much like criminals, who plead, at least the leaders of them, guilty to the whole indictment. However, some have made a full plea of not guilty, but in part. At the same time, numbers of them, in their plea, have convicted themselves of being guilty throughout.

In the last discourse, after holding to your view the purport, end and design of baptism, I examined one of their pleas of, not guilty. But what evidence did the good man give of his innocence? Can the largest stretch of charity allow more than this, *he knew not what he did?* Was truth ever brought to such straits as to require to be supported by such arguments?

APPLICATION.

FROM a review of the whole subject, the following appear to flow as necessary consequences.

1. Whether we allow immersion to be the scripture mode of baptism, and the only one which it requires, or not; one thing is clear, that we have as much evidence of its being so, as we could have, on supposition that it were.

The scriptures declare, in various ways, that this is the mode, and mention no other. The scriptures expound themselves to mean immersion, or burying.

We find not a single trace, in all the scriptures, where the ordinance is spoken of, of any thing short of immersion being mentioned.

Good men, who are skilful in the true import of words, have agreed, that the plain, literal and accurate meaning of the word, to baptize, is to immerse or bury in water, &c. Nor have any been able to show that in any part of God's word it hath any opposite meaning or application.

The church of Jesus Christ have, in all ages, understood the matter of baptism as I have explained it. We must, however, except, for the last three or five hundred years, many of those branches of the church, which have been, or are now, under the jurisdiction of the church of Rome. The purport, end and design of baptism also intimate to us, that this is the manner of baptizing.

Indeed, if there be any words in the Greek language by which the Lord of the Baptismal Institution could have told us what he intended, the words used do this. For there are no two words in the language, or, at least, none which have come to our knowledge, which so literally, so uniformly, and so expressly, signify to immerse, or wash, or bathe the body in water; as do the words *baptizō* and *louō*. Hence, if immersion be baptism, the Lord, if I may so say, could not have told us of it in the New-Testament, if the words, chosen by the Holy Ghost, do not afford this information. If baptism be immersion, then the two most suitable words have been chosen to express it; but if sprinkling be baptism, two words which were farther from the point could not have been found. We find no instance, in the Bible, where they are thus used. In short, no two words, which mention the application of water in any way, are farther from the idea of sprinkling, than are those two which are used when baptism is intended. It therefore appears, that whilst we have used sprinkling for baptism, we have departed from the plain and primitive import of the words used, as far as we could without a complete omission of water. None can be at a farther remove from the instituted, scripture baptism, than we have been, without denying it in whole.

2. Error is very insinuating and deceiving. Surely it hath proved thus in the subject of sprinkling.

Cyprian, who wrote within about a hundred and fifty years of the apostles, speaking of sprinkling, says, as quoted

by Dr. Lathrop, "In the sacrament of *salvation*, (i. e. baptism) when *necessity compels*, the shortest ways of transacting divine matters, do, by God's grace, confer the whole benefit." Here we see the origin of sprinkling for baptism.

It was an early error in the church, that baptism was necessary to salvation. Hence, when it was judged, that life would be endangered by immersion, the person must either lose his life by baptism, or lose his soul for want of being baptized, or some other mode must be invented. Or, if the sick person was nighly dying, he must be baptized without immersion, or probably lose his soul, before he could be conveyed where the ordinance might be administered. Under these circumstances, man's fruitful invention devised sprinkling as a substitute for baptism. Here is the origin of sprinkling, as the ancients have told us.

In process of time, sound ladies and gentlewomen wished to have sprinkling substituted for baptism in their behalf; afterwards others, till at last, it became a general custom in many of the European nations. In the mean time, the Baptists, and many others, objected against the practice, as being contrary from the command of Christ. Hence arose the necessity of defending it, or else having it considered as a departure from the faith. Matters being thus, the invention of many was in full exercise to defend sprinkling, as being of divine origin. A number of ceremonial rites of the Levitical law were pressed into this service; several passages of the New-Testament were wrested from their natural meaning to a forced interpretation; and out of the motley mixture were formed what were styled *arguments*; but such arguments can stand no longer than while prejudice lives to support them.

However, the most disagreeable part is, a good number of very pious and learned men have been carried away in this whirlpool of deception. Their being deceived has deceived others; and we are, or have been, among the deceived.

3. Sprinkling is not from heaven, but of men. This too, if I mistake not, by the fully and fairly implied concession of those, who have written in its defence.

If from heaven, why, in the first place, use it only when necessity compelled! as was supposed to save souls from hell? If from heaven, why, afterwards, use it only in cases

of less urgent necessity? If from heaven, why bring in the coldness of the country as an excuse for using it? If from heaven, why not mentioned in the institution of the ordinance, or in some passage where mention is made of baptism, or in some other place in all the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles? If from heaven, why not intimated as being so, by those who first introduced it? If sprinkling be from heaven, why so many *inconclusive* arguments in its support? Is the word of God deficient in this particular, and hath it revealed what cannot be supported by it? If from heaven, why not commanded, enjoined, required, or so much as once hinted, as being a mode of a gospel ordinance, in any part of that revelation which we have received from heaven?

4. Another consequence is, That the scripture mode of baptism is immersion, and for aught we know, the only mode, and necessary to the administration of the ordinance.

This is the plain, literal, scripture sense of baptism; therefore this is the plain, literal, scripture mode. The scriptures mention no other mode; therefore this may be, and is, for aught appears, the only scripture mode.

5. From what we have gone over, one thing appears certain: That Christ never commanded any of his followers to administer any gospel ordinance by sprinkling, and, at the same time, to say, *I baptize*. For to do thus would be to command them to do *one thing*, and to say that they did *another*.

To *sprinkle* is to *rantize*, which hath no visible connexion with baptism. To say, Christ commanded his disciples to rantize, and, at the same time, to say, We baptize, is what no Christian would, knowingly, be willing to say. This would, if I mistake not, be making Christ the minister of sin. But what I have long, implicitly, though ignorantly, done, others may still do.

6. Another consequence is, custom hath great influence upon the human mind. It surely hath upon us. For, even after we have full evidence that sprinkling, for baptism, is not from heaven, but was the offspring of error, and fostered by the dark ages of Papistical usurpation, we are hardly persuaded to renounce it. But, my brethren, my expectation is, that after you have searched your Bibles through and through, and find nothing of it there, you will give it up.

Should the Lord inquire of us, why we substitute sprinkling for baptizing, and say unto us, Whence is this substitution, from heaven, or of men? Would there not be great reasonings among us what answer to return? Should we say, From heaven; he might reply, How do you prove it? Should we say, Of men, then might he ask, Why do you practise it?

7. Another consequence is, we have the same kind of evidence, and perhaps more of it, that baptism is to be administered by immersion, or dipping, or putting into water, than we have to support any other gospel precept, or practice. The evidence which we have, in either case, is the signification of the words which are used to point out the thing to be believed, or practised.

Were it not for the influence of habit, or custom, you would as readily and naturally conclude, from the very words used, that immersion, or dipping, or washing the body in water, was the meaning of baptism, as that a religious eating of bread, and drinking of wine, in commemoration of our dying Lord, was the way to observe the Lord's supper.

8. We appear to be brought to this dilemma: We must either embrace the tradition of the elders, for the rule of one part of our practice; or we must no more sprinkle, and call it baptism.

9. Another consequence is, Those, who first introduced sprinkling for baptizing, had no more right so to do, than they had to institute a new rite, or ordinance, and call it Christ's.

What authority have we to follow their erroneous and hurtful practice?

10. We have another consequence worthy of consideration, and it is this: The Christian ordinance of baptism is a most solemn and significant ordinance, and of very high importance.

I speak not of the visible, or actual, administration of it, in particular; for I never saw it administered, as Christ hath delivered it to his people: But I refer to the purport, end and design of it. It is, among many other things, the great dividing line, which Heaven hath appointed to be drawn between the visible kingdom of Immanuel, and the men of this world. Doubtless there are a large number who belong to Christ's invisible kingdom, who are not,

strictly speaking, or regularly, in his kingdom visibly, having not submitted to this ordinance, which is the great and important line of distinction.

11. It appears that we are, truly, in a trying state. We must depart, in one instance, from a long habit, or continue to do as we have done, and yet not be able to vindicate, by the scriptures of truth, our own conduct.

Lastly. We come, at length, to the answer of this old and difficult and perplexing question: Where, and when, did the religious sect, called Baptists, arise? The answer is, plainly, this. They arose in Judea, at the time when John came, preaching in the wilderness the baptism of repentance. I mention this consequence with considerable assurance, because the New-Testament abundantly favours it, and no man is able to contradict me. Should any attempt it, he will fail for want of evidence. I should, not long since, have been gratified, could I have found their origin any where in the dark ages of Popery, or at the commencement of the reformation, among the famous enthusiasts of Germany, Holland, Switzerland, or Westphalia. But, after having long pursued the perplexing research, I found their *origin*, where I least of all expected it, in Enon and Jordan.

A few questions are now to close the present subject.

1. Is not immersion the scripture baptism?
2. Is sprinkling a mode of baptizing warranted by scripture? If so, where?
3. Are Old-Testament rites to explain New-Testament ordinances? Is Moses to correct what Christ hath left incomplete? Is it so?
4. Will Christ approve of that practice of men, which so changes his positive institution, as to lose, greatly to lose, the purport, end and design of it?
5. Was it ever right, and is it now, for men to change what Christ hath commanded to be in perpetual observation? Did the supposed *extreme cases* justify this change at first, and will trifling inconveniences justify us now?
6. Will it be wise and safe for us continually to forsake the commandment of Christ for the precepts of men?
7. Do you, my brethren, or can you, blame me for wishing you to keep the ordinances of Christ as he hath delivered them to the saints?

8. Should I have manifested myself your friend, or Christ's, if, after having found such a precious, new and old *treasure* in his word, as is the Christian ordinance of baptism, I had not ventured my life, or in other words, my reputation, my ease, my property, and my every worldly consideration, to bring it forth to your view and acceptance, that you might more fully walk in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless?

One request, my brethren, I pray you to grant me, and it is this: Search the scriptures devoutly, and follow me so far as I follow Jesus Christ, your Lord and mine.

SERMON VI.

MATTHEW xxviii. 19, 20.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

I HAVE already observed to you that Christ Jesus, the Head of the church, and Lord of all, was now constituting his present and succeeding disciples to be apostles unto all nations. My text is their commission, and general and particular orders. In it they are directed—

I. To go and disciple all nations.

II. To baptize them in the name of the Father, &c.

III. He directs these newly constituted apostles, and all their successors, to teach their baptized disciples to observe all things whatsoever he had given in commandment.

Lastly. For their encouragement and comfort, he adds, And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

What I purposed to say to you, particularly, upon the second proposition, I have said. I now recur to the

I. Which contains Christ's command to *his disciples* to go and *disciple* all nations.

I have already showed you what baptism is, and the design of it. I am now, if the Lord will, to lay open what is commanded to be done before baptism be administered, also the evidence which the Lord may afford me to prove to you that my instruction is of him.

Your feelings, my brethren and people, have no doubt been highly wrought up, whilst I have opened before you one of the laws of Christ's kingdom amongst men. I have still more things to say unto you respecting the rules and regulations of this kingdom. I pray the Lord, that your minds may be so prepared to hear, that you may not forsake me and flee, as many of Christ's professed friends did,

when he preached on a subject which greatly crossed their prejudices and carnal expectations.

Your busy minds, no doubt, will, before you are aware, be inquiring what great and good men, in our days and in the days of our fathers, have said and thought of these things; but we should look farther back than to our forefathers. The man Christ Jesus, and his inspired prophets and apostles, should be the men of our counsel. Should I speak according to these, you may hearken to me with safety; if contrary, convict me by the word and testimony of Jesus Christ; for I appeal to these, for by them I ought to be judged.

One request, my hearers, I pray you to grant me; namely—Lay prejudice aside, and let scripture, reason and common sense be heard for a few minutes.

Surely you must consider my case more trying than any of yours. For it is, perhaps, as difficult for me to combat my own prejudices and carnal feelings, as it is for any of you to contend with his: Besides this, I have to look your prejudices in the face, while I venture to bring any of your old practices to the scriptures for trial. Yes, more than all this, I have many trials to encounter, which you have not, nor can have.

I should not have made the attempt to bring our former practice to the standard for trial, had not my difficulties been so great, that I durst proceed no farther, without proving my works. One of my practices hath been weighed in the balance, and is found wanting. I am now, if my heart deceive me not, willing to lead another of my works, or the subjects on which some of my works have been, to the bar for trial. If this shall be found of wood, hay or stubble, may the fire of truth burn it up, and may the fire of love cause me to rejoice while it shall be consuming.

The proposition which will bring this other of my works to the trial, is—

Christ commands his ministers to go and disciple all nations. I have engaged to be one of these ministers. The command is, therefore, binding upon me. I have gone forth, that I might obey. The great thing to be determined is, whether I have understood what it is to disciple, or to make disciples, and have practised accordingly.

The important question to be decided is just this: If I disciple any of you who are parents, do I, as a necessary consequence, disciple all your children and households?

The only difficulty, in this question, relates to children and households. What it is to disciple the master of a family, is a thing in which Christians generally agree.

I ought just to remark to you, that *matheteusate*, to teach, is, in its literal and genuine sense, to disciple, or so to teach as to make disciples.

To bring the question before you as fully as I can, I wish you, each one of you, to fix his attention upon some one family in this town, in which family not a Christian is to be found. If each one have his mind fixed upon such a Christless household, I will now put the question:—

Suppose I, instrumentally, disciple the father of this family, do I, as a certain consequence, make disciples of the whole family?

Before you determine the question, it may be well to fix in your minds what a disciple is. Let the scriptures speak. The *disciples* were called Christians first at Antioch, Acts xi. 26. The commission which Christ gave to the first ministers, and to all succeeding ones, as recorded Mark xvi. 15, 16, is, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that *believeth*, &c. Here a believer is the same as a *disciple*. Here we see a disciple, in the sense of my text, is a believer, a believer in Christ, a Christian. This is the idea which the New-Testament, from beginning to end, gives us of a disciple. There is, however, mention made of disciples, who were so but by profession, or who were visible disciples only; not having the love of God in them.

Now try the question with respect to both sorts of these disciples.

Suppose I, instrumentally, disciple the father of a Christless family, do I, as a necessary consequence, make Christians of all in his house? You will please to make up your minds, on this question, decidedly.

Suppose again, that I, instrumentally, disciple the father of a Christless family, do I, as a necessary consequence, make *visible* disciples of all his family? Let your minds be clearly determined as to the answer.

Once more; suppose I, by delivering the Lord's message, convert, or make a disciple of the father of a Christless

family, do I, of necessary consequence, make any one of his household besides himself a disciple?*

Let scripture, let reason, let common sense, let any thing speak, which will speak the truth, and determine these questions. Consider, take advice, and speak your minds.

Can you suppose, or can you not, that to make a father of a family a disciple, his wife, his servants, and his children, are all disciples of course, or of necessary consequence?

Is not this a clear case? and yet the great and momentous subject before us turns altogether upon the answer of this question.

If discipling the father of a family renders all his household disciples, they are all subjects of baptism, they have the scripture qualification for it; if it do not, then they have not the qualification which my text requires to be in those who are baptized.

You will judge for yourselves whether households do thus become disciples; as for the rest, the scriptures determine: if they be disciples, they are to be baptized; if not, they are not to be.

I know what your answer must be, for by incontestable facts, in this town, the discipling of a father of a family does not disciple his household; it does not even make them visible disciples, or give them even the appearance of being so.

The following is for evidence, that persons must be made disciples before they are baptized.

1. John made his hearers disciples before he baptized them. He required, in order for baptism, that they should bring forth fruits meet for, or as evidence of, repentance, Matt. iii. 8. and Luke iii. 8.

2. Christ's disciples baptized none but such as were made disciples first, John iv. 1, 2.

3. Christ, in my text, gives no liberty to baptize any but such as are first disciplined. Yes, he commands his ministers to disciple before they baptize.

The account which Mark gives us of the Apostles' commission, and of the Baptismal Institution, is confirming evidence in this matter, xvith chapter, 15th and 16th verses: Preach the gospel to every creature: He that believeth

* Prejudice may reply, You are to disciple the household by baptizing them. This contradicts my text, that says, disciple them first.

and is baptized,' &c. Here believing is put before baptism. The way adopted by some to avoid the force of this text is, if they be baptized, say they, no matter when, before or after believing. This way of getting clear of the difficulty appears neither wise nor candid; for it injures the plain meaning of the text, and makes Matthew's and Mark's account of the commission to disagree.

What remains are a number of plain truths, facts and consequences, which have a more near or remote relation with the subject on hand, and may serve to throw light upon it.

In the FIRST place, we may take notice of two particulars, which perhaps have not been sufficiently noticed.

One is, the ceremonial law, and the covenant of circumcision which was annexed to it, appear to be disannulled and past away.

The following may make this matter plain: The disannulling or abolishing of the law we see, Heb. vii. 18. There is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. Also Gal. iii. 19, Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. What seed this is, to whom the promise was made, we are told in the 16th verse of the same chapter, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made: He saith not to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." We hence see, that Christ was the seed to whom the promises were made, and that the law (the ceremonial law) was added because of transgressions, till the seed, i. e. Christ, should come. It is hence plain, that the ceremonial law was to continue no longer than till Christ came.

The covenant of circumcision appears to be annexed to this law. For says Jesus Christ, John vii. 23, If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken, are ye angry at me? &c.

That this covenant of circumcision, or the Sinai covenant, which includes it, hath passed away, or is disannulled, see Heb. viii. 13. 'In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old: now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away.'

Besides, circumcision is evidently a very important part of that law, which is disannulled; for, saith Paul to the Ga-

latians, chap. v. 2, 3. If ye be *circumcised* Christ shall *profit* you *nothing*. For I testify again, says he, to every man that is *circumcised*, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

It is hence plain, that the ceremonial law is no longer binding; and that the covenant of circumcision, which was incorporated with it, hath vanished away.

The other particular is this; the promises which were made to Abraham and his seed, were not made to him in *circumcision*, but in *uncircumcision*; and the covenant which was confirmed of God to Abraham in Christ, was while he was in *uncircumcision*, and about twenty-four years before the *covenant of circumcision* was given. *Rom.* iv. 8, 9, 10. — *Gal.* iii. 16, 17. — *Gen.* xii. 3, 4, 7, and xvii. 10, 17.

Moreover, when Paul speaks of the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ, he points out the exact year when this was made known or confirmed with Abraham, as though he had a foresight, as certainly the Holy Ghost had, of the contention which should be long continued for want of judiciously understanding what covenant should be disannulled, and what covenant the law could not disannul. He tells us, *Gal.* iii. 17, that this covenant, which cannot be made void, was four hundred and thirty years before the law; whereas the covenant of circumcision was about four hundred and six years before the law, with which circumcision was united.

Seeing matters are thus, what, I pray you, my hearers, have we to do with the covenant of circumcision? If we keep it, Christ shall profit us nothing; if we observe something which we substitute in its place, Christ may profit us as little in such observance.

I know it will be asked, Is not the church the same now that it was in Abraham's day? I answer, yes, and the same that it was in Noah's, Enoch's and Adam's, and the same that it ever will be. It will be asked again, Is not the covenant the same which it was in Abraham's time? Yes, the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ is unchangeably the same; but the covenant of circumcision which God made with Abraham, renewed with Isaac and Jacob, and solemnized with Israel in the wilderness, (*Deut.* xxix. 10, 11, 12, 13,) is far from being the covenant, the *new covenant*, which God makes with the house of Israel in our day. The covenant of circumcision was, more than 1700 years ago, decaying, waxing old, and ready to

vanish away. But you will again say, Is not the church composed of parents and children, and of households, now, as it was in Abraham's day? Let Paul answer how it was (as touching the gospel) in Abraham's day and after. *Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8.* 'They are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they that are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Just so now. The children of God, the children of the promise are counted for the seed, and compose the church; and of those who appear thus should the visible church be made up, and of none else. But, if by the question be meant, Does not church-membership descend from parents to children, and from masters to servants, as it appears to have done under the old covenant of circumcision? The answer is, The New-Testament no where acknowledges, nor does it know, any thing about a church thus made up. It would that all good men would consent to take New-Testament directions and examples by which to constitute and guide New-Testament churches.

But it will be asked once more, Hath not baptism come into the place of circumcision, and to be applied to similar subjects? *Answer.* Circumcision was a positive institution, and so is baptism. Abraham and the Israelites knew nothing to whom circumcision should be administered, but as they received direction from the Divine Institutor; just so it is with respect to the administration of baptism. The Christians at Antioch, the Elders at Jerusalem, the church of Galatia, and Paul and Barnabas, knew nothing of baptism being substituted for circumcision. *Acts xv. 1 to 35; Gal. iii. and v. chapters.* We know nothing, and can know nothing, as to whom baptism is to be administered, but from what Christ hath told us as to the subjects. Now—

Secondly, I ask, What evidence have we from the Bible that infants are to be baptized?

You may reply, They are included in the covenant. What covenant? In that of circumcision? Surely not, for that hath vanished away. If you say, In the covenant that was confirmed of God in Christ, I *answer,* It was not this covenant which entitled Abraham's household to circumcision;

therefore, though your children be in this covenant, that does not, of itself, entitle them to baptism; whether baptism be in the place of circumcision, or not. You will then say, What can entitle our children to baptism? *Answer.* Their being disciples, and so coming within the compass, or pale, of the baptismal institution.

As we can know nothing of the subjects of baptism, any more than Abraham and Israel could of the subjects of circumcision, but from what we are informed in the institution, and in what is said upon it, we will inquire what the Bible saith of this matter.

If the Lord, in his word, hath not given us sufficient instruction upon this subject, we must practise in the dark, for we have no where else to go.

We will begin with John. 1. Did he baptize any children? We have no evidence that he did. Besides, he told the multitude which attended his ministry, not to plead Abraham, or Abraham's covenant, as a title to baptism. *Matt.* iii. 7, 8, 9, 10.

2. Did Christ's disciples, whilst he was with them, and whilst they *made* and *baptized* more *disciples* than John, baptize infants, or any visibly unbelieving children? No evidence that they did.

3. Is there any evidence from my text, which contains the words of the institution, that infants, or unbelieving households, were to be baptized? None, but the contrary.

4. Is there any passage in the New-Testament, which commands, or says so much as one word, that infants are to be baptized? Not one.

5. Is there any example, which shows that the apostles baptized any upon the faith of parents, or masters, or upon the faith or promises of any others?

I know, my brethren, there are three instances, which are supposed by some to favour the affirmative of the question. I have rather been of the same opinion. If it be so, may facts convince us.

We will look at each of these examples separately.

The first supposed example we find at Philippi. Here was a woman, named Lydia; she appears to have been a woman of business. She belonged to Thyatira, but was now at Philippi, probably selling her merchandize, with several attendants. The history is thus related, *Acts* xvi. 13th, 14th and 15th verses. "On the sabbath day, we (Paul and

other disciples) went out of the city, by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made, and we sat down, and spake unto the women who resorted thither. And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there."

This is all we know of the matter. She belonged to another city. She worshipped God. She was, on the sabbath day, by the side of a river, where prayer was wont to be made. The Lord opened her heart to attend to what Paul said. Her servants were with her. She had a house, either her own, or one taken for the time. She was baptized, and her household. As to her having infants with her, you can tell, as well as I. Moreover, whether her servants believed the words of Paul, you can, if you attend to the circumstances, form as correct a judgment, perhaps, as any other can make up for you.

The things to be considered are, 1. Lydia was a godly woman. 2. She attended meeting. Paul found her where prayer was wont to be made, where religious women had been accustomed to meet. 3. She, like other religious people, took her household to meeting with her. 4. It appears that Paul baptized none of her household, but such as were with her at the female praying meeting. 5. The strong probability is, that Lydia, being a pious woman, one who worshipped God, would select for her attendants, maidens or servants who also were worshippers of God. In verse 40, we are told, the apostles entered into the house of Lydia, comforted the brethren, &c. You will weigh these circumstances, and make up for yourselves, so far as you can, a righteous judgment.

The next example is recorded in the same chapter, and appears to be in same city. The history of the matter is contained in the 25th verse, and on to the 34th. The noticeable facts, and on which we must make up our judgment, are—The jailer says, Sirs, What must I do to be saved? Paul and Silas answered, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were

in his house. And he was baptized, he and all his, straight-way—and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

Here are three things to be put together. 1. The word of the Lord Jesus was spoken to them all. 2. They were all baptized. 3. They all believed in God. Whether here be any example of infant baptism, you will judge, each one for himself.

As some have supposed that this passage, and a few others of similar import, afford an argument in favour of sprinkling, it may be well to give it a moment's consideration. Here we are told, that the keeper of the prison brought out Paul and Silas. Where he brought them to, seems plainly enough to be gathered from the 32d verse, in which we find them speaking to the jailer the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. In the next verse we are informed that the jailer and all his were baptized. Where they were baptized, we are not told. One thing however is plain, it was not in the house; for in verse 34 it is said, When (i. e. after the household were baptized) he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house. From these observations, the following things appear:—

1. That Paul and Silas were in the jailer's house, when they spake the word of the Lord to all that were in his house. 2. That when the ordinance of baptism was administered, they were not in his house. 3. That the mode of baptizing then in use rendered it inconvenient to be performed in the jailer's house. 4. After the ordinance was administered, they went into the house. How this favours sprinkling I see not.

The other supposed example is in 1 Cor. i. 16, where Paul says, I baptized also the household of Stephanas. In the xvi. chap. 15th verse, we have a short history of Stephanas's household; it is thus, "Ye know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that *they* have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." Whether there is here found any evidence of infant baptism, you will determine for yourselves.

6. Are the encouragements which are given to parents in behalf of their children, made to their having them baptized; or are the blessings connected with their dedicating them to the Lord, and with their bringing them up in his *nurture* and *admonition*? With which, your Bibles will inform you.

7. Do we, or do any, pretend, that there is any certain evidence, from either precept or example, for the baptizing of infants? Indeed there is none. Probably not many suppose it.

8. Is there, as some have affirmed, the same evidence for baptizing infants, that there is for observing the Lord's day, for admitting females to communion, and which there is for family prayer?

There is a day called the Lord's day, and religious things were to be observed on it. Are there infants, who are called baptized infants, and are they to be attended to as such?

Females and males are declared to be all one in Christ, and so fit subjects for the communion of saints. Are infants unequivocally declared to be fit subjects of baptism?

We have examples of family prayer, and are commanded to pray with all prayer. Are there scripture examples of infant baptism, and are we commanded to baptize all; and so are infants included?

9. Ought I to teach you infant baptism, if our Lord Jesus Christ hath no where directed me to do thus?

10. Hath Jesus Christ spoken one word of baptism, as being substituted for circumcision? Hath he any where commanded his ministers to teach this substitution?

Thirdly. Shall we go, and are we under the necessity of going, to the law and covenant of circumcision, to prove infant baptism, when both this law and covenant have long since waxed old, been repealed, and have perished? *Heb. vii. 18, 19, and viii. 13.*

But you will ask, Are not the blessings of Abraham come on the Gentiles? *Ans.* Yes. You will then say, Are not our children included in the promise? *Answer.* If they be Christ's, then are they Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. *Gal. iii. 29.* Abraham's children, after the flesh, were not included in the promise, as the Pedobaptists of our day would have theirs. But you will say again, Are not our children included in the covenant? In what covenant? In that of circumcision? Surely not. For though that covenant was often renewed, yet it hath long since passed away. Is your question this? Are they not included in that covenant, which was confirmed of God in Christ, twenty-four years previously to the covenant of circumcision? I answer, No man knoweth, nor can know, but as your children give evidence, that they possess the Spirit of

Christ. But as I have observed to you before, so I say again, even were your children included in this covenant, and saints; this does not of itself give them any right to baptism, any more, than Abraham's being included in the same covenant gave him a right to circumcision. This covenant determines nothing as to the one, or the other. The covenant of circumcision determined who were to be circumcised. So the ordinance or institution of Baptism, determines who are to be baptized. One determines no more who are to be admitted to the other, than does the covenant of an everlasting priesthood (*Numb. xxv. 13.*) determine who shall be ministers in gospel days. In short, there is no arguing from one to the other in this matter. They are both of them positive institutions, and nothing can be known of either, but what is revealed in its particular institution.

While viewing this subject you will inquire, What will become of our children? I answer, God only knoweth. You may rejoin; But what shall we do for them? *Ans.* Dedicate them to God, and, like faithful Christians, bring them up for him.

Fourthly. We will now attend to some legitimate consequences which follow, upon supposition that the subjects of baptism are to be determined from the subjects of circumcision.

1. One consequence is, every man who is converted to the Christian religion is to be baptized, and all his household, though he may have three hundred and seventeen training soldiers born in his own house. Not only are these soldiers to be baptized, but their wives, children, and all other servants, who belong to this great man's house. A thousand infidels are to be baptized, because one great man, their master, is christianized.

2. These soldiers, with their wives, children and servants, are all to be considered and treated as church members, or as being in covenant. I confess this does not look to me gospel-like.

3. Another consequence is, the adults among these, and among all others, who are baptized, are not only to be admitted to the communion, but required to come. I ask, could such a communion be called the communion of saints?—one great and good man, with hundreds of unconverted servants.

4. All who have been baptized, and have not, for misdemeanor, been expelled the church, have a right to baptism for their children: and no man may forbid them.

5. Another consequence is, notwithstanding Christ faith, My kingdom is not of this world; yet the regulations were such, especially the mean of admission into it, as strongly, and of infallible consequence, tended to make it of this world, and that abundantly so.

6. Another consequence is, many learned and pious ministers of New-England are inconsistent with themselves, in requiring of persons baptized in infancy a profession of experimental religion, as a term of communion. It was not so done in Israel.

7. Another consequence is, many of the same pious and learned ministers are very inconsistent with themselves, in refusing baptism to the children of such as are, by their baptism, in regular church membership, or in covenant, as it is termed.

I have taken, as you observe, for granted, what I do not believe to be true, that sprinkling, or a very partial washing, is baptism.

Lately. Another consequence is, it doth, so far as it hath its *perfect work*, destroy the very idea of the gospel church, contradict the prophets, and make Paul, and others, speak not the truth, and it throws us back to the state of the Jewish church.

Jeremiah, prophesying of the gospel church, faith, chap. xxxi. 31 to 34, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with your fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; but this shall be the covenant, that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them, unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.

If this means any thing, it certainly means that the gospel church shall exceed in purity the Jewish church; that it shall, at least, be composed of professing saints. *Isaiah*

says, chap. liv. 13, All thy children shall be taught of the Lord. The latter of these passages, our Lord applies to the gospel day, *John* vi. 45: The former is applied to the gospel church by Paul, *Heb.* viii.

Moses says in *Deut.* xviii. 15, 19. The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

This, and much more, Peter applies to gospel days, and to the gospel church, *Acts* iii. 22, to the end. Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul that will not hear that Prophet, shall be *destroyed from among the people*. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in *turning away every one of you from his iniquities*.

Through the New-Testament, the gospel church, is, or appears to be, spoken of as a society, nation or church of saints; and as being greatly different from the nation of the Jews. But the subjects of baptism being determined by the subjects of circumcision brings the gospel church as to its constituent materials, to the same condition with the church under the law of carnal ordinances. Indeed, what is now, generally, called the gospel church is hardly to be distinguished by its members from the old Jewish church.

Do not these things look as though the twelve hundred and sixty years of Antichrist's reign were not wholly past? Is there not, my brethren, some defiling error at the root of all this? Can such streams, as are these consequences, flow from a pure fountain? Indeed many good ministers of our land have long since discovered some of these evil consequences, and have laboured hard to rectify them. President Edwards, and many others, made a noble stand against this flood of *corruption*; yet they discovered not the fountain,

whence these streams flow, and will flow, till it be removed. Putting or mistaking the covenant of circumcision, for the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ to Abraham, twenty-four years before circumcision was known, and substituting baptism for circumcision, and determining the subjects of the one by the subjects of the other, without any authority thus to do, have produced all this corruption, deception, and world of evil. Would good ministers be persuaded to lay the axe at the root of the tree, as John did, the evils would be soon rectified.

The subject, on which we now are, is of such high concernment to the church of Christ, generally, and your conviction of the truth of it, being almost, or quite, essential to our future peace and union together, I would willingly omit nothing which might chase away your darkness, and cause the true light to appear. I will, therefore, add here the history of infant baptism. Should we find that infant baptism is of men, as we have already found sprinkling to be, it is hoped that you will either give it up, or practise it as being of man's device, and not, as Mr. Dickinson would have it, as belonging to infants by divine right.

The first information which we have of infant baptism is about the middle of the second century; about which time Irenæus, in one of his epistles, has the following sentence: "The church received a tradition from the apostles to administer baptism to little children or infants."*

The next account we have of this matter (if we except Tertullian, who opposed the practice) is given us by Origen, in about the middle of the third century. His words are, "Little children are baptized for the remission of sins." For the remission of original sin, or pollution, for of this is he speaking. Again he says, "The church had an order from the apostles to give baptism to infants."

Another part of the history of infant baptism we have in a quotation from the decisions of the famous council at Carthage, in the year 253. It is this: "From baptism and the grace of God none ought to be prohibited; especially infants need our help and the divine mercy." We have a farther account from Augustine, who flourished about the middle of the fourth century. His words (writing of infant baptism) are, "Let none, therefore, so much as whisper any

* Pref. Dickinson on Baptism.

other doctrine in *your ears*: this the church hath always had, has always held."

The next we hear of infant baptism is, that the practice was confirmed, and so put beyond dispute, by Pope Innocent the First.

Now fire and sword were the all-conclusive arguments used for the conviction and reformation of all who refused to practise, or dared to call in question, infant baptism. We will pass over the horrid persecutions, which now began to be, and have ever since been practised, at intervals, upon those who would not submit to the divine right of infants to baptism, as conferred on them by the ghostly Popes of Rome.

Luther, the famous German reformer, says, "that infant baptism was not determined till Pope Innocentius;" and Grotius, in his annotations on *Matth. xix.* says, "It was not enjoined till the Council of Carthage."*

We ought, however, to trace the history of infant baptism one step farther, and notice Calvin, and a multitude since, who were unwilling to acknowledge their dependence on the Mother of Harlots, for their authority in this matter; and therefore with great ingenuity have discovered infant baptism, as a gospel ordinance, or the right of infants to it, in the law of Moses. Indeed they have supposed that this doctrine is implied in a number of passages of the New-Testament. Yet, I believe, none who practise it, are willing to venture this New-Testament ordinance upon New-Testament evidence.

Here you see that *tradition* is the foundation of infant baptism; *error*, the belief that *baptism washes away original sin*, the nurse of its tender age; the church of Rome, the confirmer and strong defender of it; and the long since repealed, ceremonial law of Moses the evidence for it. You see, the introduction of infant baptism was tradition. Upon this foundation hath it manifestly rested ever since. All the ingenious arguments of learned and pious men, can, in fact, add no strength to its first foundation. The first we hear of it is, it was placed upon tradition, and there it hath rested, or been standing uneasily, ever since.

Besides, this *tradition*, as well as the practice which followed, is doubtless the offspring of error, and man's inven-

* Ancient Dialogue Revised.

tion. At best we have but one witness for it, in the mouth of whom nothing can be established. Origen says, "The church had an *order* from the Apostles." Still we have but one witness. Moreover, the very expressions of the Pedobaptists show that they were from the beginning opposed by the Baptists. Irenæus says, "We have a tradition." Origen says, "We have an order." The Council of Carthage say, "Infants ought not to be *prohibited* from baptism." Augustine saith, "Let none so much as whisper any other doctrine in your ears."—Does not every syllable indicate the dispute which the Baptists had with the inventers and supporters of this anti-evangelical principle and practice?

It is worthy of a moment's consideration, that not one of the most ancient fathers makes the least pretension that infant baptism is supported by so much as one passage in either the Old-Testament, or the New; and they mention no authority but *tradition*, and an *order* from the Apostles, &c. which, at best, are very uncertain things.

Whoever can fix their faith, continue their practice, and venture their responsibility, on such a traditionary foundation, I cannot. Upon this foundation for our practice, have both we and our fathers ventured to oppose the Baptists, with greater or less degrees of virulence; whilst, by our tradition, we have greatly injured the ordinance of Christ, if not, in this instance, made void the law of God.

In fine: Was not infant baptism first introduced to escape the offence of the cross? Is it not, with many, unknowingly continued for the same end? It bringeth the church to its former state as under the law. If I yet preach *circumcision*, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased, Gal. v. 11.

SERMON VII.

MATTHEW xxviii. 19, 20.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

I HAVE already set before you the principal part of what I intended under the two first propositions in my text. What remains is to bring forward—

III. Christ's command to all his ministering servants to teach all nations, or those who should be disciplined among them, to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them. And then—

Lastly. His comforting and strengthening promise, which is, And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

To these propositions, your serious, Christian attention is requested. The first is—

III. Christ's command to the ministers of his gospel to teach all nations, or those who should be disciplined among them, to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them.

Here you see the extensiveness of my orders received, and which I must carefully observe, would I be obedient unto the Heavenly Teacher, who came from God.

Christ Jesus, when personally on earth, gave a new edition of his own and his Father's mind and will. In this new edition, he abrogated or left out, many ceremonies of the old, as being no longer useful. Under the old edition, the church was in its childhood, and therefore under such tutors and governors as were not needed in her riper years. In this new edition, Christ hath pointed out what is to be preserved of the old. The sum of the moral law and the prophets, were to continue in force. These are, indeed, in the very nature of things, binding on accountable creatures. But when Christ, the anointed and expected Messiah, was come, then all those rites, sacrifices and typical institutions

of the ceremonial law, which were, together, as a school-master to lead the observer to Christ, were disannulled, being no longer of use.

You see what ministers have authority to teach for both doctrine and practice. It is what Christ hath commanded them, and nothing which is contrary from it.

In time past I have taught you the precepts of Christ, somewhat largely. As I have taught them, so you have, as is believed, received them to the saving of your souls. The ordinance of the supper I have taught in its simplicity, and so have you received it. You have also been informed, that Jesus Christ appointed baptism, as an ordinance to be observed in his church. But what that ordinance was, and who were the subjects of it, you have not been particularly told, till of late. Nor had I, till a short time since, a clear understanding of either. I, no doubt, ought to have known them before; but till I did, I could not teach them to you. When I came to the knowledge of them, it was no longer in my power to be faithful to Christ, and refuse to teach them. In the simplicity of my heart have I taught you what is baptism, and who are to be baptized.

Whether these things be, or be not, agreeable to my former notions of them, is nothing to the point. One thing I am settled in, I have, of late, taught them to you, as Christ hath commanded me.

Not only was it my duty to teach you these things, but I am commanded to teach you to observe them: for then are you Christ's disciples, when you do all things whatsoever he hath commanded you.

To observe these things, is like obedient children to receive instruction, and then to search the scriptures, that you may know how these things are. It belongs to me to teach you—

1. To observe these things till you understand them.
And then—

2. To observe them in your practice.

1. Would you walk in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless, you must observe these things till you understand them.

You and I have been unreasonably prejudiced against light and truth in these matters. If I do not misjudge, the Lord hath, in answer to prayer, afforded me the needed light and knowledge upon the subject. It was not in a

day, nor in a month, after my prejudices received a shock, and my mind partial conviction, that I obtained satisfaction. Nor can I expect that you will, all of you, possess such a ready mind, as to give up your long, and almost inveterate prejudices, and receive the light at once. It is by little and little, that antichristian errors must be destroyed from the church, and from your hearts, as well as from mine.

You may expect to find me ready, at any time, and at all times, to afford you every instruction, and to answer any objection which may occur to your candid minds. You should have your Bibles always nigh you, and possess continually, a prayerful, teachable spirit. Be determined to hearken to none but Christ, and to be obedient to all his commands.

Be careful to avoid all bitterness and evil speaking. Wisdom will not dwell with strife; nor will the wrath of man work the righteousness of God.

2. It belongs to me to teach to observe the ordinance of baptism, and the proper subjects, in your practice. You must understand these things before you can acceptably practise them. Some of you, no doubt, sufficiently understand them to proceed to practice. But I have not thought it duty to hasten your practice, or to lead you by example, lest the minds of others should be injured. It is a time to weaken prejudices, and not to increase them. Wisdom dwells with prudence. Many of your minds, as well as mine, are, with pleasing expectation, looking forward to the time, when we may, with nighly, or quite, all our brethren with us, keep all the ordinances of the gospel, as Christ hath commanded us.

When you shall understand these things, happy will you be if you practise them; for all gospel obedience gives pleasure in the practice.

As Moses had much to do in Egypt, before God said unto him, 'Speak unto the people that they go forward,' so, my brethren, I may have much to do before things shall be in readiness, and before the Lord shall bid me speak, saying unto you, *GO FORWARD*. But, if the Lord will, I would live to see that day.

After Israel went forward, and were baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea, they had a tedious wilderness to pass; so it may be with us. But, should we observe the pillar of cloud and of fire, we shall come to the promised

land; and it may be, with much safety and speed, should we hearken to the good counsel of Joshua.

You know, my brethren, as it is my duty to teach you to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded me, so it is your duty to receive instruction, and be obedient: Your obedience is not to be rendered to me, but to Jesus Christ, and to the word of his testimony.

It will doubtless occur to your minds, Whom shall we hear? One minister teaches us one thing, and another teaches us differently. You are to hear no man any farther than he shall teach you as the man Christ Jesus hath commanded him. Ministers have no authority, any farther than they receive it from him. He hath given them no power to teach, but what He hath commanded. When they transcribe out of the old into the new edition of God's word and will, and tell us that the rite and covenant of circumcision are to explain to us the observance of a New-Testament ordinance, we are not obliged to believe them, unless they point us to the place where Christ hath so commanded. You are to obey them who have the rule over you. But even Paul was not to be followed any farther than he followed Christ. So it ought to be with you, in hearkening to what your teachers say. Ministers are but men, and they have proved themselves to be so, by changing the ordinance of baptism into quite a different thing, and by administering their new rite to subjects to whom Jesus Christ never commanded it. It surely is a surprising thing, and not to be accounted for, but from the relics of human depravity, that so many good men should, unknowingly, do and teach things which are quite aside from what Christ hath commanded them.

It is too late for you, my hearers, to cloak yourselves under what great and good men have said; for the truth of the Lord hath already been told you. Had I not come and spoken to you this word of Christ, you would not have had sin; but now have you no cloak for disobedience.

We now come—

Lastly, To consider Christ's comforting and strengthening promise to his ministering servants: which is, And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

Christ Jesus hath been with his ministers: and he will be—

1. In preparing them for their office. He was personally with his first gospel heralds, for the space of three years, or more; after this he left them for a short space; in this short interval they passed a severe trial. He was with them again, at times, for forty days. Soon after this he sent his Spirit upon them, and filled them with it to a remarkable degree. Then they were prepared for their office. They speedily filled it remarkably, and the effect was wonderful. Three thousand were converted in a day.

Christ is as really, though not so apparently, with all his gospel messengers in preparing them to go forth into his harvest. Those, who have not Christ with them, to prepare them for their office, are but as wolves in sheep's clothing, when they go forth into the ministry. They preach for *filthy lucre*, and frequently have their *reward*. It is too often the case, that those, whom Christ hath prepared, are obliged to go into the field, or make tents for their support, whilst such as run, not being sent, swim in luxury.

2. Jesus Christ will be with his ministers in bringing divine things to their remembrance.

It is the Lord's Spirit which causeth divine truth to occur to the minds of his servants. Truths, which have been forgotten for months, and it may be for years, or passages which before were understood, may be, and not unfrequently are, fresh and plain in the minds of his servants, for their comfort, or for the comfort and instruction of others, or for the comfort and edification of both.

3. Christ will be with his ministers in affording them wisdom, fortitude and faithfulness.

The entrance of his word giveth light. He maketh light their paths, and ordereth all their steps. He maketh their feet like hinds' feet, and causeth them to be swifter than the eagle, stronger than lions, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. With what wisdom did Stephen speak! With what fortitude did Peter, Paul, and a thousands others, address their auditories! With what wisdom hath he made his servants to speak! With what fortitude to bear, with what faithfulness to endure, for his name's sake! How remarkably hath it been thus, in times of persecution! And when will you find a time, when they that are born after the flesh do not persecute those who are born after the Spirit! How often is it the case, when ministers, like Paul, wax bold, and testify that Jesus is the Christ, and what are his words and

institutions, that they are persecuted, openly or more secretly!

4. Christ is and will be with his ministering servants, whilst they are reproached and suffering for his name and truth sake.

He says to them all, If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. When Christ's ministers are reviled and suffer for his sake, his truth and Spirit bear their spirits up. He gives them to believe and know, that though they weep now, they shall soon rejoice; that their light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are preparing them for, and working out for them, a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.

5. Christ Jesus will be with his faithful ministers in giving them to see their desire upon his enemies.

This appears to be particularly implied in my text. They are commanded to go and disciple all nations. Their desire is to see disciples multiplied. They go forth, Christ goes forth with them. Many of Christ's enemies submit to his yoke, which is easy, and to his burden, which is light. In this are they gratified, and their desire on them is accomplished.

6. Christ is with his ministers in explaining and defending his truth.

How did Peter, Paul and others, in the first ages of Christianity, explain and vindicate the truth, to the confounding of both Jews and Gentiles! Whenever, in ages since, he hath spoken the word, great hath been the company, or force, of those who have published, explained and defended it. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and a number more in the reformation, were like flames of fire: nothing could stop them from publishing, explaining and defending the truths of the Saviour, for he was with them.

You will ask, How is it that Christ is with his ministers, when they contradict one the other, and themselves too? *Answer.* It is not said, that Christ is with his ministers in explaining and defending error. Error is human; truth is divine. When ministers undertake to support error, they go without Christ's blessing and presence in this their labour. Hence it is that they are so contradictory and inconsistent; and are obliged to wrest the scriptures from their plain and easy sense, to support a beloved prejudice. But when they take up for truth, plain scripture supports them,

and they have plain and pleasant work, and their subjects supported with ease, as you have seen whilst attending to the several truths in my text.

Besides, it may be the case, that some very good men may mix truth and error, the commands of God and their own traditions, together; and, whilst practising accordingly, they may enjoy a comfortable frame of mind, and hence conclude that their beloved compound is all from heaven. This may be illustrated by the following example. Mr. S. finds it to be a truth, that his infant offspring, as well as every thing else, should be devoutly given to God. He hath received and holds a tradition from the fathers, that his infants should be baptized. He publickly gives them to the Lord, and solemnly promises to instruct them in the way of truth and duty. He, at the same time, hath the ordinance of baptism administered to them, or administers it himself. During the whole transaction he possesses much comfort in his mind. His consequence is, the whole matter is according to truth; just as God would have it. Is not this going a little too much by sense, and not quite enough by scripture? Does it not contain a *spice* of enthusiasm? Would not the good man have had the same mental satisfaction, had he possessed the same spirituality, and yet had omitted that part which is enjoined by tradition only?

Lastly: The Great Captain of salvation is with his ministers, to teach, lead and comfort them, in all their trials, in all their straits. Whosoever will leave them, he will not. Though he, the Great High Priest of our profession, when suffering for his people's sins, was left alone—all forsook him; yet, whenever his friends are afflicted, he kindly calls, saying, Lo, I am with you. This hath been the stay of good men in all ages, in all circumstances. Those who have wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, who have been afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy, have found their refuge here. There is nothing like this to support the feeble, distressed soul. When godly ministers have been obliged to leave their people, yes, and their families, and sometimes their native country, for the truth's sake, this hath sustained them—Christ was with them. President Edwards, for a noble attempt at partial reformation, was constrained to flee his beloved charge: but Christ was, no doubt, with him. Should I, for laying the axe at the root of the tree, be obliged to leave you, though, for the

present, I see no particular reason to apprehend such an event, yet I trust this will be my hiding place——Jesus, who will be with me.

APPLICATION.

FROM what hath been said in the preceding discourses it appears—

1. That the two sides of the controversy between the Baptists and the Pedobaptists stand thus.

Before I state the two sides of the controversy, it is but reasonable that I define those whom it respects. By the Baptists, on one side, I mean the regular Calvinistic Baptists. By the Pedobaptists; on the other, I now intend the Calvinistic Congregationalists among them. I give this definition, that I may be clearly understood.

You see both sides are Calvinists, that is, they are agreed in what are styled the doctrines of grace. They are both of the congregational order, as it respects the government of the churches.

Now for the controversy, and it is this: The Baptists hold immersion only to be baptism. The Pedobaptists hold that sprinkling may be substituted for immersion, and may answer just as well.

The Baptists hold that the scriptures know nothing of a Christian ordinance of baptism for unbelievers and infidels. The Pedobaptists hold that, if a great man, who hath a thousand slaves, should become a disciple, then all his household are to be counted disciples, and are to be baptized.

The Baptists hold that the church of the New-Testament is composed of visible or professed saints. The consistent Pedobaptists hold, that this great man, his thousand slaves, together with his wife and children, all belong to the gospel church, though he only be a believer in Christ.

The Baptists hold that none have a right to partake of the Lord's Supper, but those who are his friends. The consistent Pedobaptists hold, that all the adults in this great man's household, if they be not guilty of gross immorality, have a right to come.

The Baptists plead New-Testament authority for the defence of their principles and practice, where they differ from their brethren of the Pedobaptists. The Pedobaptists in support of their sentiments plead convenience, and the cov-

enant and rite of circumcision, which were decaying, waxing old, and ready to vanish away, more than 1700 years ago.

The Baptists bring nighly threecore texts of scripture, which are plainly and fully to their point in favour of immersion. The Pedobaptists mention three or four texts, which, at most, are but very doubtfully in their favour; and, when rightly understood, appear fully against them.

What advantage, my brethren, have the Pedobaptists over the Baptists? And with what crime or error, in this matter, do they stand convicted?

2. It appears that gospel ministers have no authority to teach Christians, that their children and servants should be baptized, because Abraham's were circumcised.

Christ hath no where commanded them to teach thus. Christ hath no where commanded them to teach infant baptism at all, or baptism upon the faith of another; much less, that they are to be baptized because Abraham's were circumcised.

3. It appears, that many of the pious and learned clergy of New England have made some noble and promising advances towards truth in this matter; yet in this they are inconsistent with themselves.

They will receive none to the communion but such as profess faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as repentance for sin; and they will administer baptism to the children of no other. Here, in two instances, they refuse to follow the law of circumcision. One, in refusing to admit to the supper, impenitent, though civil, baptized persons; the other, in not admitting to baptism the children of all those who have been baptized. This is consistent with truth so far as it goes; but inconsistent with the notion that the subjects of baptism are to be determined from the subjects of circumcision.

These good men, so long as they possess their present light, must come over to the true Baptist ground, or submit to the imputation of inconsistency. I wish them to come over. For myself, I expect to, though my carnal nature hates the name of a Baptist, as much as theirs does. But my better judgment tells me, that the Baptists are on the gospel ground.

4. It is a matter of lamentation, that pious and learned ministers have not a little more self-denial: then they might be consistent with themselves and with truth too. Could I be with them, and ask them this plain question, Do you not

find a little backwardness from searching critically into the primitive meaning and practice of baptism? I fear they would answer with some reluctance.

To me, I confess, it appears an hard case, that the Baptists should suffer so much reproach, merely on account of their sentiments, when many of our best old divines have given them the ground, and confessed, that their sentiments, as to the mode, are from heaven, and ours from convenience. Our opposition to them, on account of the subjects, appears but little better, being but poorly supported by scripture: they having the plain word, and full current of all the prophets from Moses to Malachi, so far as they have spoken of the gospel church, together with the New-Testament, in *their* favour; whilst for us, in this particular, nothing better can be alleged than the antiquated rite of circumcision. If the Baptists be right, why not join them, and suffer small inconveniences? If wrong, why not prove them so? It is pitiful that great and good men should be dallying with inconclusive arguments, when the time is long since come, that the *highway* of holiness should be so *plain*, that *wayfaring men*, though fools, should not err therein.

5. We see why good men have been so divided among themselves, as to infant baptism.

The reason is, they go without Christ in this matter. He is not divided.

Some baptize all. Others will baptize only the children in the households of communicants. Some baptize upon the half-way covenant. Some will baptize all who are under age. Again, others will baptize all under seven. Others still will baptize upon the good promises of godfathers and godmothers. You will observe I use the word baptize in a sense which I believe to be improper, but I would not offend you with a word, when my meaning may be understood. But what propriety is there in all this inconsistency about the subjects of baptism? Does not the matter look as though there were no rule to go by, or as though none understood what it was!

6. We see why good men, when writing or speaking of baptism, are left to speak untruths.

It is doubtless because they will follow their own prejudices, and not the truth. Error hath divided them, and Christ is not with them in what they say. Some good men, not many, dare assert, in opposition to the Baptists, that

there is not a word about immersion for baptism, in all the Bible. For *laymen* to say thus, is *presumption*, and for men of *learning* to make the assertion, is *almost unpardonable*. For they know, or ought to know, that the word, to baptize, is not once mentioned in all the Bible but immersion is mentioned, unless they mean to play upon the word; and then it is a truth, when *baptizō* is mentioned, immersion is, if they will give it its plain, literal English.

If the Baptists have the plain, literal and unequivocal sense of the scripture in their favour, is it not enough that they are despised and persecuted by the wicked of every class and not helped by any; but must we add to their affliction, by falsehood or equivocation? O prejudice, what will thou not do, even in a saint!

Besides, our good brethren, who are so warm against the Baptists, and will not allow them a word for their mode, do not agree together to inform us what the mode should be. One tells us, it is sprinkling, another says, pouring is the mode, a third contends for washing the face, a fourth is for putting water on the back of the neck, as the Swiss are said to do; whilst others affirm, that all these are right. Now, suppose the Baptists are wrong, who shall we say are in the right, or is there no right in this business? Does not all this look just as it would were there an error at the bottom? Hath the Great Teacher, who came from God, left matters thus at loose ends? Does the Bible thus differ, whilst pointing out the mode? No. Its language is pure and determinate.

7. It appears, that, in infant sprinkling for baptism, the intent of the institution is lost, and becomes no Christian ordinance at all.

Both the thing itself and the subjects of it are changed. It is quite a different thing from what the Institutor hath appointed. Neither this mode nor these subjects are known in the institution, nor in any passage of the Bible, where baptism is mentioned. This mode is of man's device, and the subjects of it have, at best, but a traditional right. For good men to do thus, whilst they think it consistent with truth, appears to be a sin of ignorance; but if any do thus, while they know what the scriptures enjoin, their practice deserves a harder name.

8. It appears that dipping, immersion, or burying in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is baptism.

No man of real piety and solid learning, ever doubted it. Whereas, sprinkling hath been doubted by many, denied, continually, by a large class of Christians; and been proved by none to have been ever appointed as the Christian ordinance of baptism.

9. We see, that every plea which hath been made, for a general or partial neglect of the scripture mode of baptism, is an indirect, though unintentional, charge of negligence, or want of benevolence, or of foresight, in the Divine Instructor. Let every man of candour and common sense examine this matter. Did not the Lord, who made our northern climes, know how cold they are?—Did he know them to be too cold for his disciples who might live in them, to be separated from the world by being vivily buried and raised again to join his kingdom?—Why then did he not mention an exception in our favour, and not leave us to suffer this inconvenience, or be in perpetual uncertainty and continual dispute, to defend our, at best, but doubtful practice? Did he not perfectly know all the *compelling necessities* which Cyprian and others would, in their erring judgments, need to break over the bounds of the baptismal institution? Why then did he make no provision for these extreme cases? By doing this, he would have saved the Pedobaptists a world of anxiety, contention and censure. The fact appears to be, that our Lord intended, that the way of admission into his kingdom should be uniform, and that those who would not submit to it, should suffer the inconvenience of darkness, error and strife.

10. From what hath been said in the preceding discourses, is not the following a fair and undeniable conclusion? That I and other Pedobaptist ministers, so far as we have spoken a word against the Baptists, and especially that those, who have publickly warned their people to avoid the Baptists and flee from them, as from a dividing and dangerous heresy, have in this matter acted the part of the old Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites—who would not go into the kingdom of God themselves, and those who were entering, they hindered.

I by no means suppose that all who have done thus, are indeed hypocrites, save in this particular. No reasonable doubt can be entertained, but many of them are learned, pious, and very useful men; men, whom the Lord hath greatly honoured as labourers, in gathering in the harvest.

of souls. Many of these have been, in measure, bold, zealous and faithful, like Peter; yet when they dissemble, or teach and practise contrary from the truth, they are to be blamed; yes, they are, in this instance, worthy to be rebuked.

It would, indeed, be very injudicious in me to contend, that all which the Baptists have said and done is justifiable. It would be equally injudicious to justify myself, or my brethren, where we have both said and done things contrary from the church and name of Jesus of Nazareth. It is time for both ministers and people to look to this matter, lest the Lord send leanness into our souls.

11. From a review of the whole subject, the following inference appears natural, and at the same time worthy of much consideration. The divinely constituted method by which any of the fallen race are to enter the kingdom of heaven below, remarkably sets to our view the way by which we are to commence perfect members of the kingdom of heaven above. Our obedience to the former is a practical declaration of our faith in the latter.

In joining Christ's kingdom on earth, we professedly die unto sin, go down to the grave, are buried, and rise, as from the dead. To join the kingdom of glory, we must actually experience what is but shadowed forth in baptism. We must die, be buried, or return to the dust, and rise from the dead.

How exactly doth our entrance into the church militant shadow forth our hoped for entrance into the church triumphant! It also appears that Christ hath directed, that the subjects of the one should be professedly, what the subjects of the other shall be actually, all saints.

How beautiful doth the church appear, so far as she observes the commands of her Lord, as to the members which she admits, and the manner of receiving them! She thus resembles Jerusalem, which is above, which is the mother of us all, if we be Christians. May the Lord direct our hearts into the love of the truth.

In the conclusion of the whole, it becomes us to add, to the truths delivered, what Christ Jesus added to my text:
AMEN.

A MINIATURE HISTORY

OF THE

BAPTISTS.

IT may be pleasing to some of my readers to be presented with a brief account of the Baptists. I shall extract this account from the writings of those who were not of the Baptist denomination, but rather prejudiced against them.

Here it may be observed, that the religious sect, called Baptists, have caused the learned world more perplexity and research to decypher their origin, than any other sect of Christians, or, perhaps, than all others. Yes, this research hath baffled all their erudition in ancient story.

It is not difficult to fix the period when one sect of this denomination was first called Petrobrusians, when another was known by the name of Waterlandians, when a third was denominated Mennonites, &c. But the difficulty is this, to ascertain the time, place and medium, by which Christ's disciples were led to adopt the peculiar sentiment, which is now held by those called Baptists, and which distinguishes them from all other denominations.

It may be farther observed, that if no one, however learned and wise, be able to trace this sect to any beginning short of the days of the apostles, or of Christ, it is possible that it then arose. Besides, if all other religious denominations, or the Pedobaptists, who include all which are not Baptists, can be traced to a probable origin short of the apostles, and the Baptists cannot be, it affords still more probability, that they might have arisen then.

I wish my readers to indulge me one question, and to give me an explicit answer. Are you willing to have the origin of the Baptists fairly explored, and to open your eyes to the light, should light be afforded?

You cannot, my Christian readers, unless your minds be unduly swayed by prejudice, do otherwise than say, Yes. For, though you be not very friendly to the Baptists, you will not deny them what you grant to your worst enemy,

liberty to speak the truth, and that truth its weight, at least in measure.

It ought to be particularly noted, that my object is not to give the history of a name, but of a principle. I shall not contend who were first called Baptists, Anabaptists, Mennonites, or the like; but who have held the peculiar sentiment which is adopted by those who are called Baptists. Wherever we find this principle, there we find the men, the Christians, who, had they lived in our day, would be styled Baptists. Nor is the present controversy this, Whence came that *mode* of baptism, which is practised by all, who are known by the name Baptists? For this mode is granted, generally, if not universally, by all learned and honest men, to be as ancient as John the Baptist and the apostles. This mode is, indeed, not peculiar to the Baptists, for the Pedobaptists, for many centuries, practised this mode; and many of them do, to this day, practise immersion.

The peculiar characteristic of the Baptists is this: They hold, that the ordinance of baptism is to be administered to adults, or to visible believers only.

One natural consequence of this principle is, when any one who was baptized, or sprinkled, in his infancy, comes over to the Baptists' sentiment, they require him to be baptized. Hence they are called Anabaptists. Another very natural consequence is, this sentiment constrains the Baptists to oppose the baptism of infants. Hence they are distinguished by the name of Antipedobaptists.

I shall add one observation more, and then proceed to give you a succinct history of the Baptists. The observation is this: Whenever and wherever I find persons, who hold the peculiar, characteristic, sentiment of the Baptists, I shall call them by that name. Their history now follows.

I. The origin of the Baptists can be found no where, unless it be conceded that it was at Jordan, or Enon.

Dr. Mosheim, in his history of the Baptists, says, "The *true origin* of that sect, which acquired the denomination of the Anabaptists by their administering anew the rite of baptism to those who come over to their communion, and derived that of Mennonites from the famous man to whom they owe the greatest part of their present felicity, is *hid* in the *remote depths* of antiquity, and is of consequence extremely difficult to be ascertained."

Here, Dr. Mosheim, as learned an historian, though not so candid a one, as the science of letters can boast, bears positive testimony, that the origin of the Baptists is hidden in the *remote depths of antiquity*. Nothing is more evident than this; the Doctor either knew not their origin, or was not candid enough to confess it. At least, we have this conclusion, that he could find their origin no where short of the apostles.

II. A large number of the Baptists were scattered, oppressed, and persecuted, through many, if not through all, the nations of Europe, before the dawn of the reformation under Luther and Calvin. When Luther, seconded by several princes of the petty states of Germany, arose in opposition to the overgrown usurpations of the church of Rome, the Baptists also arose from their hiding places. They hoped that what they had been long expecting and praying for was now at the door; the time in which the sufferings of God's people should be greatly terminated: but God had not raised Luther's views of reformation to nigh the height the Baptists were expecting. Their detestation of the Mother of Harlots, owing to their bitter experience of her cruelties, and the clear gospel light with which they had been favoured above Luther, and their ardent desire to be utterly delivered from her cruel oppressions, made them wish to carry the reformation farther than God had appointed Luther to accomplish. They were soon disappointed in Luther, and probably did not duly appreciate the reformation which he was instrumentally effecting. It was as might have been expected; the Lutherans and the Baptists fell out by the way; and Calvin, if not Luther, warmly opposed them. *See Mosheim, Cent. XVI. Chap. iii. Sect. 3. Part 2.*

Mosheim, vol. IV. page 427, speaking of the Baptists, says, "This sect started up all of a sudden, in several countries, at the same point of time, and at the very period when the first contests of the reformers with the Roman Pontiffs drew the attention of the world." From this we have one plain and fair deduction; that the Baptists were before the reformation under Luther and Calvin, and therefore did not take their rise from the Enthusiasts under Munzer and Storck, or at that time; or at Munster.

III. The Hussites, in the fifteenth century, the Wickliffites, in the fourteenth, and the Petrobrusians, in the

twelfth, and the Waldenses, were all Baptists.* To this fact Dr. Mosheim bears the following testimony.† “It may be observed that the Mennonites (i. e. the Baptists of East and West Friesland, Holland, Gelderland, Brabant, Westphalia and other places in the North of Europe) are *not entirely mistaken*, when they boast their descent from the Waldenses, Petrobrusians and other *ancient sects*, who are usually considered as *witnesses* of the *truth* in times of universal darkness and superstition. Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay *concealed* in *almost all* the countries of Europe, particularly in Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland and Germany, many persons, who adhered tenaciously to the following doctrine, which the Waldenses, Wickliffites and Hussites had maintained; some in a more disguised and others in a more open and public manner, viz. *That the kingdom of Christ, or the visible church he had established upon earth, was an assembly of true and real saints, and ought therefore to be inaccessible to the wicked and unrighteous, and also exempt from all those institutions which human prudence suggests to oppose the progress of iniquity, or to correct and reform transgressors.* This maxim is the true source of all the peculiarities, that are to be found in the religious doctrine and discipline of the Mennonites. (or Baptists in the North of Europe) and it is most certain that the *greatest part* of these *peculiarities* were approved of by many of those who, before the dawn of the reformation, entertained the notion already mentioned relating to the visible church of Christ.”

From this testimony of Dr. Mosheim we may remark—

1. That the Mennonites were Baptists, or Anabaptists, for these different names he uses to express one and the same thing.
2. That the Petrobrusians were Baptists; for the Baptists assert, and Mosheim allows it, that they were their progenitors in principle and practice. Besides, in his history of the twelfth century, part II. chap. v. sect. 7, he expressly tells us, that one of their tenets was, *that no persons whatsoever were to be baptized before they were come to the full use of their reason.*
3. That the Waldenses, Wickliffites and Hussites were Baptists; for, as Mosheim says, they all held to the great

* Not all, every one; but all, generally.

† Vol. IV. pp. 428, 429.

and leading maxim, which is the true source of all the peculiarities that are to be found in the religious doctrine and discipline of the Mennonites. These several denominations of Christians were not known by the ancient, modern and appropriate name, Baptists. But their doctrine and discipline were the same with our Baptists, and were they now living, they would be thus called. In other words; just so far as they were consistent with their great and leading maxim, and just so far as the modern Baptists are consistent with *their* great and leading maxim, just so far these ancient and modern Baptists are alike the one to the other.

4. That in the sixteenth century the Waldenses, Petrobrusians and other ancient sects (i. e. of the Baptists) were usually considered as having been witnesses of the truth, in the times of darkness and universal superstition. How differently from this would and do many consider them in our day!

5. That before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, particularly in Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland and Germany, many persons who held the same doctrine and discipline with the Baptists in our day, and were, of necessary and fair consequence, of the same denomination.

IV. We have already traced the Baptists down to the twelfth century. We have also found that they were scattered over almost all the countries of Europe, and were, in the dark ages of popery, the witnesses of the truth; or have been usually thus considered. Besides, we have found that the Waldenses were, in principle and practice, Baptists; or in other words, we have found that the Waldenses were Baptists. We will now see to what origin we can trace the Waldenses.

Dr. Maclaine, who translated Mosheim's church history from the original Latin, gives us, vol. III. pages 118, 119, under note, G, the following history of the Waldenses. His words are, "We may venture to affirm the contrary (i. e. from what Mosheim had just said of the Waldenses taking their name from Peter Waldus) with Beza and other writers of note; for it seems evident, from the best records, that Valdus derived his name from the true Valdenses of Piedmont, whose doctrine he adopted, and who were known by the name of Vaudois and Valdenses, before he, or his immediate followers, existed. If the Valdenses, or Wal-

denfes, had derived their name from any eminent teacher, it would probably have been from Valdo, who was remarkable for the purity of his doctrine, in the ninth century, and was the cotemporary and chief counsellor of Berengarius. But the truth is, that they derive their name from their vallies in Piedmont, which in their language are called Vaux. Hence Vaudois, their true name; Hence Peter, (or, as others call him, John) of Lyons, was called in Latin Val- dus, because he had adopted their doctrine; and hence the term Valdenses and Waldenses, used by those who write in English, or Latin, in the place of Vaudois. The bloody Inquisitor Reinerus Sacco, who exerted such a furious zeal for the destruction of the Waldenses, lived but about eighty years after Valdo of Lyons, and must therefore be supposed to know whether or not he was the real founder of the Valdenses, or Leonists; and yet it is remarkable, that he speaks of the Leonists as a sect that had flourished about five hundred years; nay, mentions authors of note, who make their antiquity remount, to the apostolic age. See the account given of Sacco's book by the Jesuit Gretser in the Bibliotheca Patrum. I know not upon what principle Dr. Mosheim maintains that the inhabitants of the vallies of Piedmont are to be carefully distinguished from the Waldenses; and I am persuaded that whoever will be at the pains to read attentively the 2d, 25th, 26th, and 27th chapters of the first book of Leger's Histoire des Eglises Vaudoises, will find this distinction entirely groundless.—When the Papists ask us where our religion was before Luther, we generally answer, in the Bible, and we answer well. But to gratify their taste for tradition, and human authority, we may add to this answer—and in the vallies of Piedmont.

To the above we may add, one of the Popish writers, speaking of the Waldenses, says, "*The heresy of the Waldenses is the oldest heresy in the world.*"*

It is here worthy to be particularly noticed—

1. That Reinerus Sacco speaks of the Waldenses, or Baptists, of his day, as a sect that had, at that time, flourished for about five hundred years; which brings the history of the Baptists, as a religious sect, down to the fifth century.

2. That this same Reinerus Sacco mentions authors of note, who make the antiquity of the Waldensian Baptists to remount to the apostolic age.

* President Edwards's Hist. of Redemption, p. 267.

3. That the Baptists are the most ancient of all the religious sects, who have set themselves to oppose the ghostly powers of the Romanists.

4. That, if there be any body of Christians, who have existed during the reign of antichrist, or of the man of sin, the Baptists have been this living church of Jesus Christ.

5. The consequence of the whole is this: The Baptists have no origin short of the Apostles. They arose in the days of John the Baptist, and increased largely in the days of our blessed Saviour, when he showed himself unto Israel, and in the days of his Apostles, and have existed, under the severest oppressions, with intervals of prosperity, ever since.

But as to the Pedobaptists, their origin is at once traced to about the middle of the second century; when the mystery of iniquity not only began to work, but, by its fermentation, had produced this error of fruitful evils, namely, that baptism was essential to salvation; yes, that it was regeneration. Hence arose the necessity of baptizing children. Now comes forward Irenæus, and informs that the church had a *tradition* from the Apostles to give baptism to infants. We are told in the Appendix to Mosheim's Church History, that one of the remarkable things which took place in the second century was the baptizing of infants, it being never known before, as a Christian ordinance for them.

What a pity it is, that good men, who have renounced the error, which was, as church history informs us, the progenitor of infant baptism, should still retain its practical and erroneous offspring, to the prejudice and marring of the church of God! Not a single sect of the Pedobaptists can find its origin nearer to the Apostles than the second century. We hence conclude, that their origin was there, and that they then and there arose in the mystery which was then working. May the Father of lights open the eyes of my brethren, that they may come out of this, perhaps, the last thicket of gross error and darkness.

I will now add—

V. The testimony which President Edwards bears in favour of the Waldenses and other faithful ones, who were scattered through all parts of Europe in the dark ages of Popery. It is the following:

“In every age of this dark time, there appeared particular persons in all parts of Christendom, who bore a testimony against the corruptions and tyranny of the church of

Rome. There is no one age of antichrist, even in the darkest time of all, but ecclesiastical historians mention a great many by name, who manifested an abhorrence of the Pope and his idolatrous worship, and plead for the ancient purity of doctrine and worship. God was pleased to maintain an uninterrupted succession of witnesses, through the whole time, in Germany, France, Britain, and other countries, as historians demonstrate, and mention them by name, and give an account of the testimony which they held. Many of them were private persons, and many of them ministers, and some magistrates and persons of great distinction. And there were numbers in every age, who were persecuted and put to death for this testimony.

“ Besides these particular persons, dispersed here and there, there was a certain people, called the Waldenses, who lived separate from all the rest of the world, who kept themselves pure, and constantly bore a testimony against the church of Rome, through all this dark time. The place where they dwelt was the Vaudois, or the five vallies of Piedmont, a very mountainous country, between Italy and France. The place where they lived was compassed with those exceeding high mountains, called the Alps, which were almost impassable. The passage over these mountainous, desert countries, was so difficult, that the vallies where this people dwelt were almost inaccessible. There this people lived for many ages, as it were alone, where, in a state of separation from all the world, having very little to do with any other people, they served God in the ancient purity of his worship, and never submitted to the church of Rome. This place, in this desert, mountainous country, probably was the place, especially meant in the xii. chap. of Revelation, 6 verse, as the place prepared of God for the woman, that they should feed her there during the reign of Antichrist.

“ Some of the Popish writers themselves own that that people never submitted to the church of Rome. One of the Popish writers, speaking of the Waldenses, says, the heresy of the Waldenses is the oldest heresy in the world. It is supposed, that this people first betook themselves to this desert, secret place among the mountains to hide themselves from the severity of the heathen persecutions, which were before Constantine the Great, and thus the woman fled into the wilderness from the face of the serpent, *Rev. xii. 6*; and so verse 14, And to the woman were given two wings

of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time from the face of the serpent. And the people being settled there, their posterity continued there from age to age afterwards, and being as it were by natural walls, as well as by God's grace, separated from the rest of the world, never partook of the overflowing corruption."

It is hoped that the reader will very carefully and candidly compare what is testified to us by three very learned men, Dr. Mosheim, Dr. Maclaine, and President Edwards. The testimony of the first is, that the Waldenses and many others who are *usually considered as witnesses of the truth* in the times of *universal darkness and superstition*, were essentially agreed with the Baptists of modern date, as to *principle and practice*, or as to the great maxim, whence flow all the peculiarities of that denomination. His testimony, in short, is this; the Hussites, the Wickliffites, the Petrobrusians and the Waldenses, with other witnesses of the truth, scattered over Europe, in the dark ages of Popery, were essentially the same with the Baptists of later times; or that they all were what we call Baptists.

Dr. Maclaine testifies that the Waldenses flourished as early as the fifth century; yes, he informs us that some authors of note carry their antiquity up to the apostolic age.

President Edwards informs us that these Waldenses were the main body of the church in the dark ages, and have been, together with their scattered brethren, the pure church of Jesus Christ, during the reign of Antichrist, and, of certain consequence, were successors of the pure church, from the days of Christ and his apostles.

The fair consequence of all is this, that the Baptists have been the uninterrupted church of our Lord from the apostles' day to ours.

I may, indeed, exclaim, What have I been believing, what have I been doing, with respect to the Baptists, all my days?

I know, and I confess, that the history of the church assures me, that the denomination of Christians to which I have belonged, and to which I do still visibly belong, came through the church of Rome, and was broken off from the mother of harlots, and it is not greatly to be wondered at, if all her filth should not be yet wiped away. At the same time, the same history assures me, that the Baptists

never have submitted to her superstitions and filthly abominations.

I am somewhat surprized at my own long continued ignorance, and at the yet remaining darkness of my brethren, as to this matter. But above all, what shall I say, at the hard opposition which some good men yet maintain against their brethren, the Baptists? Surely, they might with great propriety be addressed in the words of Gamaliel: "Take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do, as touching these men." If ye will not favour them, "refrain from them, and let them alone; for if their counsel or work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

All the power, craft and cruelty of the wicked, though practised for nighly one thousand eight hundred years, have not been able to prevail against them. Surely the misguided zeal of good men will not.

In this short History of the Baptists, we see the continued accomplishment of one of Christ's promissory predictions, which is, *Matt.* xvi. 18. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. That denomination of Christians which are called Baptists, are the only known society of professing Christians, against which Satan hath not prevailed, either in point of doctrine, or discipline, or both. This church, or old and inveterate heresy, as Satan would call it, he acknowledges, by the mouth of his servants, the Romanists, that he could never subdue. It is true, Satan hath joined many of his legions to it, as he did many false brethren to the disciples in the days of the apostles. But he hath never, no, not for an hour, prevailed upon this ancient and primitive church to give up the doctrines of grace, or the administrations of the ordinances as Christ delivered them to his people. That which she first received, she still holds fast, and will. In all the history of the church, we read of no other body of professing Christians, after which Satan hath cast such a continual flood of waters; but hitherto the earth hath helped the woman, and the flood of persecution hath not prevailed. Satan's future efforts will be equally without effect.

My Fathers and Brethren in the ministry, and my brethren among the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, suffer a word of exhortation.

If you will not take up the cross, and so increase the number of Christ's continually preserved, yet always suffering, little flock, be ye careful how ye set yourselves in array against them. For more are they who are for them, than are those who are against them. With you is an arm of flesh, in all your oppositions, but with them is the Lord their God to help them, and he will help them; and by and by he will help them right early.

I shall be very pleasingly disappointed, should I not be, by many of you who are rulers in Israel, set at nought, for coming over to the help of the Lord against the mighty. But, if I may but know the truth, and please the Lord, it is, with me, but a comparatively small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment. I do, indeed, wish for the continuance of your good opinion and friendship, but I cannot possess them at the expense of truth. That I might testify unto you these things, I have risked every thing which the world calls valuable. I am now determined, and through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ I hope that to the end of my life I shall be determined, to venture every thing in defence of the doctrines and ordinances and church of the Son of God. I beseech all of you, who know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that ye do not as did many of the chief rulers in Israel. They believed on Christ, but did not confess him, because of the Pharisees, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God. *John xii. 42; 43.*

You have now heard me, and know what I do. You will therefore now make up your judgment. But I pray you, remember one thing: With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.

I am, Reader,

Thy Servant, for the Gospel's sake,

DANIEL MERRILL.

Account of the Baptist Church lately constituted at Sedgwick, District of Maine.

THE Rev. Daniel Merrill graduated at Dartmouth College, 1789, was ordained over the Congregational Church in Sedgwick, in September, 1793. His labours have been very much blessed among his people, who have experienced several precious seasons of revival under his ministry, particularly in the years 1798, and 1801.

Several circumstances occurred to lead Mr. Merrill, in the course of the last year, to review, with more critical attention, the grounds on which he had practised *infant baptism*. The result of his inquiries may be learned from the preceding Sermons on baptism, and from the following account of his baptism, &c.

At a meeting of the church (or covenanted brethren) Feb. 28, 1805, they voted unanimously to send for a council of Baptist ministers to come and assist them in the following particulars, viz. 1st. To administer Christian baptism to them; 2d. To constitute them into a church upon the primitive Baptist platform; 3d. To set over them in the Lord, the Rev. Daniel Merrill, to be their minister.

Agreeably to their request, Messrs. Pitman of Providence, Baldwin of Boston, and Williams of Beverly, accompanied by a number of brethren, took passage at Salem, at 8 o'clock on Thursday evening the 9th day of May, instant, and arrived at Sedgwick the Saturday following, at one, P. M. Lord's-day, half past 10 o'clock, Mr. Pitman preached from Acts v. 20. After an intermission of half an hour, Mr. Baldwin preached from 1 Cor. iii. 9. After another intermission of a few minutes, Mr. Williams addressed the people again from Prov. xxv. 25. At 6, Mr. Baldwin preached again, from Sol. Song, i. 8.

Monday, May 12, at 2, P. M. the council formed, and then adjourned until the next day. At 3, assembled in the meeting-house, and Mr. Williams preached from John xiv. 21. After which proceeded to an examination of the candidates for baptism, until the day was spent.

Tuesday, 13th, examined a number more candidates. At half past 10, Mr. Williams preached particularly on the institution, from Acts ii. 41. Immediately after, we repair-

REASONS

FOR

SEPARATING

FROM THE

GENERAL SYNOD OF ULSTER.

BY ALEXANDER CARSON, A. M.

Tubermore, Ireland.

SECOND EDITION.

To the laic and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is because there is no light in them.* *Isaiah viii. 20.*

Thou son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities, and let them measure the house. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the fountains thereof, and all the passages thereof, and all the fountains thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them, *Ezek. xliii. 10, 11.*

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PREFACE.

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EVERY Christian is a member of two kingdoms perfectly distinct, but perfectly compatible in their interests. In each of these, he has peculiar duties, in the discharge of which he is to pursue a very different conduct. As a subject of civil government, he is called to unreserved, unequivocal obedience, without waiting to inquire into its nature and quality, or even the legitimacy of the title of those in power. If he understands his Bible, he knows that "the powers that be, are ordained of God," and that he must "submit to every ordinance of man, not merely for wrath, but also for conscience sake." In Britain he will submit to monarchy; in America to a republic; and in France he will obey, without puzzling himself in determining whether Buonaparte is a legal governor, or a usurper. But it is not so in the kingdom of Christ. Here it is his duty in every thing to judge for himself, and in no instance to be the disciple of man. He is commanded to examine, not blindly adopt the dogmas of his spiritual guides. He is no where required to conform and submit to that form of church government, under which he has been educated, or to which he may at any time have thought it his duty to attach himself. He is enjoined to "prove all things, and to hold fast *only* that which is true." He is Christ's freedman and should not suffer himself to become the servant of man, nor to be fettered by human systems.

Convinced that this is both the duty and privilege of every Christian, I have largely and leisurely examined the *original nature*, and *present state* of that church,\* in

\* I am obliged sometimes in this pamphlet to use the word church in this common acceptation, though not so used in any part of the New Testament.

which I was educated, and in which I have for some years acted as a minister. I have examined, and am convinced, that both in *plan* and *administration*, it is contrary to the word of God. It must appear to every man of candour, that I could have no interest in deciding as I have done. Every interest of a worldly nature was surely on the other side. The day I gave up my connexion with the general synod, I gave up all that the world esteems. I sacrifice not only my prospects in life, and my respectability in the world, but every settled way of support. It is usual for men to desert a church under persecution; I have deserted one in the tide of her prosperity, or as some of her friends speak, in her "*meridian glory*." If people never begin to think anything amiss in their religion till they are persecuted for it, or till superior honours and advantages are held out to view, they have reason to suspect their judgments. But when wealth and respectability in society are in the gift of the church, when one of her members sits in judgment upon her, she is likely to get a fair trial. A man is not apt, upon slight grounds, to reason himself out of his living, his friends, and his reputation. It will not be out of whim he will exchange ease for labour, respect for calumny, present competency for the naked promise of God. Notwithstanding this, I am perfectly aware that the worst motives and designs will be attributed to me. I would indeed know little of human nature, and less of the Bible, if I did not expect the reproaches of the world. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, much more those of his household.—He himself experienced such treatment from the world, and he knows how to succour his children in like circumstances.

The divine right of the presbyterian form of church government, it may be expected, will now become the *present truth* among all sects of presbyterians in this country. Their inveterate rage against each other, will for a time be suspended, that they may unite against the common enemy. Every pulpit will resound with the cry of innovation; many an affecting representation will be given of the sufferings of our worthy forefathers, in

erecting the *venerable fabrick*. I would caution Christians not to suffer themselves to be imposed on by such feeble declamations. The appeal on both sides must be to the Scriptures; not a stone of the fabrick can be lawfully rested on any other ground. If classical presbytery is in the New Testament, let its advocates come forward, and fairly refute my arguments. I have no object but truth, and whatever may be published against my pamphlet, in a Christian and candid manner, shall receive every attention. But let them not lose their temper, nor substitute railing for argument. Neither let them nibble round the surface of the subject, but let them enter into the essence of the debate. If any are convinced, let them beware of stifling convictions. Let them not suffer interest, prejudice, or the fear of reproach, to deter them from obeying *the least* of the commandments of Christ. "Whoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his father with the holy angels." Mark vii. 38.—"He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it," Mat. x. 37.—

39.

Though I am decidedly convinced of the complete independency of the apostolical churches, and of the duty of following them, I would not be understood as placing undue importance upon this point. Christians of every denomination I love, and I will never, I hope, withhold my hand, or my countenance from any who, after impartial investigation, conscientiously differ from me. I can from my heart say, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth." Pity indeed, while there are so few friends of Jesus, that those should harbour hard thoughts of each other, for conscientious differences. But let it not be expected from this, that I shall "know any man according to

the flesh," or avoid freely censuring whatever I judge unfounded in scripture, out of compliment to any friend who may countenance it. This would be to "walk as men."

In endeavouring to overthrow the system of presbyterianism, I have only assaulted the main pillars of the edifice; if I have succeeded, the roof and all the rubbish will fall of course. The voluminous defences of presbytery, of former days, I consider too stale to be particularly noticed. I wait till their advocates recognize them. But though every pin of that system could be proved to be divine, it would not affect my opinion of the duty of separating from the synod. I would stand upon ground still tenable. I do not shrink from discussion. Truth will finally prevail.

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# REASONS, &c.

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## CHAPTER I.

*REASONS a priori\* why it is probable that the Scriptures contain a Divine Model of Church Government.*

**N**OTHING can be more unfair than to determine *a priori*, with an air of demonstrative certainty, what must be revealed in Scripture; and then to open the book and compel it to favour the hypothesis. We are not arrogantly to prescribe to God what he must reveal: our conclusions upon what is proper to be revealed, must be ultimately determined by a candid inspection of the sacred volume itself. Controvertists upon the subject of church government have frequently abused this argument; and have, as it were, almost settled the dispute without opening the Bible. Their favourite system must be *there*, and they are determined to find it. In proportion to the poverty of scripture materials, is there a wider scope for imagination: where Scripture fails them, *high probability* will amply compensate for the deficiency, and is even more convenient, as it will vary according to the necessities of the different writers.

### A

\* By *a priori*, I mean those arguments that render it probable that there is in the New Testament a Divine Model of Church Government, previous to the investigation of Scripture, and I use it here and elsewhere to prevent a circumlocution.

But though this argument has been abused, we are not on that account entirely to abandon it. I apprehend that there is a legitimate use which it may have on many questions, highly serviceable, if restrained within its natural limits. Though we are not warranted to conclude with certainty, that there is a divine model of church government in the New Testament, till we prove it from itself, yet there may be reasons to render the affirmative extremely probable; which, when considered, will animate us in our search, induce us to collect the scattered fragments, and prepare us to receive, with gratitude, even the scanty pattern which scripture may afford. Suppose I live near a river on which there are many bleach-greens—after a flood I find a web—I am anxious to know to whom it belongs, for different persons have lost. I instantly conclude that it will tell its owner itself—I open it and examine the ends for the owner's name, but to my great surprize, though both are entire, I find no name. I recur to my argument *a priori*--I reason thus: Can it be possible that a linen draper would be so careless as not to mark his cloth? This web is entire—therefore certainly it must have a mark, though I cannot discern it. Encouraged by this, I unfold the web, and glance hastily over it from end to end; but no mark can I find. Shall I give over? No; the principle upon which my expectation is founded, remains unshaken, therefore it must be owing to my unskilfulness that I am unsuccessful. I am not accustomed to the business, and therefore the mark has eluded me. I begin again--I search more leisurely, not a thread of the woof escapes my eye. As I advance I see some little strokes marked thus (Λ 11)—this cannot, I say, be the mark; however I will keep it in view. I proceed again, and in a little I find some other of the same unintelligible specks (H H) Strange! what does this mean? These are not letters say I, yet they are not accidental. I advance in hopes of some clearer discovery, but all I can obtain is something like the rest (Λ 11)—The thought occurs to me to bring these together, and try what they will make when joined. At last, after trying and fitt-

ing them a thousand ways I make A H. Overjoyed, I exclaim, this is Mr H—'s my neighbour's web. Just so I reason, and so I act, upon the subject under consideration. I see an evident necessity for scriptural direction on this head. I perceive strong antecedent reasons to expect that the New Testament will contain the model of the apostolical churches for our direction. With these sentiments I open the Bible; I read and read, collect and compare, and when I get the scattered fragments to make an harmonious whole, I am not doubtful of its divine origin.

1. Human manners are much affected by the difference of civil government. The genius of the constitution gives a turn to general manners and modes of thinking. Nations have their characteristic habits and customs which the philosopher can trace to this source. May not the same effects be expected from particular forms of church government? This influence may not be discernible in a comparison of two individual Christians, trained under different forms of church government, but will be sensible when sects are compared in the bulk. The government that is most spiritual will unavoidably communicate a tincture of its spirit to the mass of its subjects. Now, if the mode of the government of the church be in the smallest degree influential of manners, I cannot conceive that Christ would leave this to human discretion.

2. The different theories which have been adopted on this subject, have materially influenced the sentiments of their respective advocates, not only in the explanation of the passages of scripture immediately concerned, but also of many in which they are not under the influence of a party spirit. All scripture truths have a mutual connexion, and it will often inevitably happen, that adopting a wrong theory upon one point, will lead us into other mistakes in the interpretation of scripture, or hide from us the true key of analysis. To those who have attentively studied this controversy, it will appear evident that the elucidation of many places in scripture is affect-

ed by it. Now, if a difference of opinion on this subject affect the explanation of other passages in scripture, there is, besides its own importance, an additional reason why it is worthy the interposition of God.

3. The general sense of professing Christians in all ages, argues the necessity of scriptural direction on this point. This argument is used with success in favour of revelation, and I see no reason why it should not have all its weight here. The great bulk of professing Christians have in all ages supposed, that they have found in scripture, at least the ground-work of their respective plans. When was the *divine right* giving up? Not till the enlightened advocates of worldly churches saw that it could no longer be pleaded with advantage. When they found that the witness would not speak in their favour, they endeavoured to keep him out of *court* lest he should speak against them.

4. Either unanimity on this point is not a duty, or the scriptures must afford us the means of effecting it. Now, the apostle frequently calls our attention to this as a duty in all things. True, indeed, perfect unanimity is not to be expected; but is this the fault of a defective revelation, or of our remaining corruptions and blindness? There can be nothing a duty which is not revealed. Our differences about the smallest matters in religion are owing to ourselves, and not to a want of scripture direction. Now I know of no way to effect unanimity, but by proposing self-evident truths, or the authority of God in revelation. That the mode of church government does not belong to the former, is sufficiently evident from experience; it must therefore belong to the latter. But unanimity upon this point is *consequentially* of more importance, than upon many others of more *intrinsic* importance. Upon many other points, if Christians have differences of opinion, they have it to themselves; upon this their difference affects each other. Either I must submit to be ruled by the opinion of my neighbour, by a church government which I think Christ did not appoint, or he must do so to me, or we must form differ-

ent sects. Now upon many other questions perhaps more intrinsically important, each of us may hold our own opinions, and bear with each other in the same church. I cannot think then that God would leave us without scriptural direction on this matter.

5. Will there ever be a day when all sects shall coalesce? I can see no reason to doubt of this. Without it, I cannot conceive that perfect harmony, the scriptures, with the general consent of professing Christians, give us reason to expect. Discrepancy on this point is too great to be consistent with the *increase of knowledge* of the latter days. Whether is this to be effected by a new revelation, or by a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon Christians, and a greater attention to the *revealed will* of God? Is there any other way in which revelation can effect this union, but by giving us a model, or directions on this point? I think it not supposable; that the want of a model in scripture would be a means of uniting all Christians. For if there is no model or direction in scripture, unanimity or uniformity is not a duty. This would be saying, that the opinion that union is not a duty, would effect union. Never would there be a greater variety than when this notion should prevail. To effect union, on this supposition, it would appear to me to be necessary to enlarge the powers of the human mind, beyond what hath ever yet appeared in man. The sublimest geniuses on earth have their differences of opinion on every thing but self-evident truths. But to effect union in this manner is derogatory both to revelation and the office of the Holy Spirit.

6. There cannot be that prompt, cheerful, and dutiful obedience to church rulers, if the model and laws of the church be not in scripture. If church rulers have a discretionary power to enact laws, they may abuse that power, and therefore their decrees must be received with examination and caution. Thus there may be a difference of opinion with regard to their propriety; and, at all events, the conviction of the duty of obedience will be more slowly and circuitously obtained.

This will gradually introduce either a spirit of disobedience, or of abject servility, among church members. They will be led either to slight the authority of church judicatories, or receive their dictates with a slavish submission. The truth of this remark is abundantly evidenced among those sects which more or less claim the right of acting according to circumstances; of enacting *laws of expediency and discretion*. The people are either the slaves and dupes of their church rulers, receiving the decrees of ecclesiastical assemblies, as the dictates of heaven; or they make light of, and despise their authority. Complete, unequivocal, cheerful, and conscientious obedience is to be found only among those who dare not command without opening their commission, and appealing to the laws to which they enforce obedience. Here there is no room either for disobedience on the one hand, or slavish obedience on the other. Church members see clearly they are not obeying man but God.

7. Either all forms of church government are alike calculated to promote edification, or if one is better than another, that which is best will be so evident, that all Christians will readily agree in it, or the scriptures must afford us sufficient means to discover it; otherwise they are deficient. I know not that there are any who will agree to the first, and it appears from fact that the second is not just. In the same times, in the same city, we find almost all the varieties of church government that have existed in times and countries the most remote. Now, if it is a matter of importance to adopt one form rather than another, and if the children of the same family as well as the inhabitants of the same city, will differ in their opinions on this subject, it would appear to be a matter worthy of divine interference. If there is no divine model, I cannot see how God is not to blame for all the variety of sects occasioned by difference of sentiment on this subject. If we are left to our own judgment and prudence, there can be no sin in using them; and a variety of sects is the unavoidable consequence.

8. Whatever is left to human discretion in religion; is of such a nature, that there is no room for the weakest Christian to err, nor the least foundation to dispute; nor would the smallest advantage have accrued to the church, by having those things determined, which are left undefined; but on the contrary such a determination would have been attended with inconveniencies. Such, for instance, are the times of meeting for public worship on the Lord's day, the order of the services, &c. Who ever complained that these things were not confined? Would it have been of any advantage to Christians, that Christ had appointed certain stated hours for public worship? Nay, would not this have been attended with many inconveniencies? But it is quite otherwise with the point in question. The determination of this would have been attended with no inconveniencies, but with many and important advantages. The leaving of it undetermined would give unavoidable occasion to dissention and schism.

9. Civil government and legislation require the highest exertion of human genius, and the greatest men who have written on the subject, are by no means agreed even in theory, what is the form best calculated to promote the happiness of mankind. In what respect is church government a less important or difficult matter than civil government? nay, I conceive the former to be the more difficult, by how much the government of the mind is more difficult than that of the body, and the more important as spiritual is greater than temporal happiness. Is it then supposable that Jesus would leave a matter of such importance to the discretion of man? Besides, Christ's disciples, upon whom this duty would devolve, are the unfittest imaginable for such a business. They are generally "the weak things of this world." True indeed, they all have spiritual wisdom, for "they are all taught of God;" but this requires political rather than spiritual wisdom. It is evident that every *human* form of church polity is, and must be, on the model of the most approved civil polities. A Christian then to be calculated for a legislator in the church must have

the qualifications of a civil legislator. But the great body of Christians are destitute of these prerequisites. They must then either yield to be led implicitly by the few learned and enlightened men among them, or be liable to the greatest mistakes.

10. I suppose there is not another question in religion about which so much human blood has been shed, or on account of which the earth has been filled with so much confusion, as this very question. Does not this argue the necessity of a divine model, that God may be vindicated, and the blame be wholly attachable to man?

11. If no divine model had been given, it would have been impossible to prevent ambitious men from imposing on the simplicity of the multitude, and promoting schemes for their own aggrandizement, under the specious cover of zeal for religion. Such men as Diotrephes would always assume the pre-eminence. Antichrist would on this supposition have some apology. Nay, in such a case some sort of Antichrist is unavoidable; and it is not very material whether he be one man, or several hundreds. I do think, then, that to leave the Christians of the first ages without excuse—that men may be clearly chargeable with the guilt of rearing and nurturing that monster, it was necessary that a divine model should have been given, from which the smallest deviation was sinful.



## CHAPTER II.

*If there be a mode of Church Government in the New Testament, what is the Nature of that Form we are warranted to expect?*

1. THAT form of church government which is practicable in all countries, ages and circumstances, is likelier to be the Scripture model than one which is not. Now there is no country, age or circumstance, in which the independent plan is not practicable; but to make either presbytery or prelacy practicable, there must be a number of congregations formed in a particular district. If there were but a single congregation in a kingdom, the independent government would not be affected; if every individual of a nation were a Christian, it is equally adequate. In the former situation presbytery could not exist; in the latter, if there were a sufficient number of pastors for every congregation, a general assembly would be altogether unwieldy. Independency is not fitter for one country than another; presbytery and prelacy are each peculiarly suited to one form of civil government rather than any other. The former was suited to the Republic of Geneva, the latter to the Roman Monarchy. Independency meddles not with the state, but in things civil, conscientiously obeys "the powers that be," *whatever be their form or quality.*

2. That form of church government that is capable of the least abuse, is the likeliest to be divine. Now unquestionably this is independency: If a particular church on this plan degenerates, becomes erroneous, or indifferent, it has no power to injure others, or draw them into its errors. If all the independent churches of a nation were to degenerate except one, that one

cannot be compelled or overawed into their errors. But it is quite contrary with presbytery. When one congregation becomes dead or erroneous, it has an influence on all the rest: and when such become the more numerous, they have power to corrupt those that are more pure. On the other hand, in a period of general lukewarmness or apostacy, if any particular independent church be impressed with the duty of reformation, there is nothing in their connection with other churches to clog or prevent them; but a congregation in such a situation among presbyterians would find the whole weight of the connection hanging upon them, and that it would be absolutely impossible for them to succeed, without bringing the majority of the whole body to their mind, or by separation. I know indeed it is said that presbytery is better calculated to prevent error from creeping into congregations, by the power the majority claims over the minority. But how should one man or one congregation keep another from error? By compulsion or persuasion? I apprehend there is no lawful means for one church to keep another from error, but by remonstrance and exhortation. Nay, there is no other method can be successful: if this fails, pains, penalties, imprisonments, confiscations, and death would be useless. Force may make hypocrites, but will never make a Christian. A law of synod may prevent a minister from preaching error, as to the five points, but can it enable him to preach "the truth as it is in Jesus?" Will it enable "the blind to lead the blind, without both falling into the ditch?" Where is the great difference between poisoning the sheep, and starving them? But let the history of synods vouch their utility and efficacy in restraining error, and preserving vital religion. They may, for a time, preserve orthodoxy in *the letter*, but midnight darkness may reign with an orthodox creed. "The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit, because they are spiritually discerned." Vital religion seems in a great measure extinguished, even among those sects who make the highest pretensions to orthodoxy. A violent wrathful spirit of party, and an ardent zeal for human forms and hu-

man creeds, seem pretty generally substituted for spirituality, and catholic Christian love. Now all the means, of remonstrance, persuasion, exhortation, and entreaty are equally open to independent churches, to preserve each other from backsliding and error. An independent church may reform other churches, but can receive no injury from them: a presbyterian congregation may be injured by its connexion, if they are corrupt, but cannot reform them in any other way than what is practicable by an independent church. I conclude then, that as independency hath all the advantages without any of the disadvantages of presbytery, as to their influence of connexion, it is more likely to be the scripture plan.

3. It is a maxim in philosophy as well as in divinity, that God does nothing in vain. According to this, if all the ends of government can be obtained in an independent church, all foreign interference being useless, cannot be appointed of God. That a church under this form of government can subsist in vigour, is evident from experience; and that it is capable of exerting all necessary influence in preserving others from backsliding, we have also seen. What possible advantage can be gained by a numerous subordination of courts? If a light hat of fur be sufficient to preserve my head from the weather, why will I cover it with a mill-stone?

4. That form of church government which cannot preserve purity of doctrine without human expedients, is not so likely to be the Scripture model, as that which can attain and preserve the highest possible degree of vital religion, as well as purity of doctrine, without admitting, in any instance, the devices of the wisdom of man. Now it is generally acknowledged by presbyterians themselves, that it is impossible to preserve uniformity of opinion among them, without a formula or confession of faith to be publicly recognized by their members. Now, it must be evident to every unprejudiced person, that there is no formula in the Scriptures. That constitution, then, that requires one to maintain pu-

city, is not likely to be of God. The same may be argued from the necessity they are under, to decide by majorities, instead of uniformity; debarances, invitations, tokens of admission to the Lord's table, &c.

5. That form of church government that leads us most to the scriptures, and requires in church-members the greatest acquaintance with them, is the most likely to be that of the New Testament. Now, without an intimate acquaintance with the Bible, independents cannot advance a step in church affairs. I might speak from what I have witnessed of the knowledge of the scriptures among independents. I speak only of its necessity, arising from the constitution of their churches. With them it is absolutely necessary not only in church rulers, but private members. The Bible is their code of laws; they have no other confession or book of discipline. They can do nothing without it; it must be continually in their hand. The rulers rule only by the word of God.—But a man may be a presbyterian all his life, either pastor or private member, with a very slender acquaintance with the Bible. The knowledge of forms and of ancient usages, of ecclesiastical canons, and books of discipline, are the chief qualifications that are necessary for a presbyterian judicatory.

6. That form of church government that needs most the presence of God and prayer, is the most likely to be the Divine model.—Now the independent is the only plan in which there is, strictly speaking, room for the *manifest* interposition of God. There are instances in which prayer is their only resource. Their doing all things by unanimity, creates a peculiar necessity for prayer. If there be but one member of a different mind from the rest, it is the same as if there were the one half. In such a situation, the promised presence of Jesus is their only refuge; prayer is their only remedy; and when the difficulty is thus removed, which perhaps will scarcely ever fail, if explanation, remonstrance, and intreaty be affectionately applied, all the praise will be

seen to belong to God.—On the other hand, a presbyterian court can proceed as independent of God as a court of civil justice. True, indeed; it is usual to ask him to preside; but can they not proceed smoothly enough without him? Is there ever a situation in which they are not as competent to do business, and settle the most critical affair, as the parliament of England? I cannot think, then, that an institution is of God's appointment, which does not *need* God's presence.

7. That form of church government which is most favourable to liberty of conscience, in which the individual experiences the least undue influence in determining his principles and conduct in religious matters, is the most likely to be the scripture model.—The scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice, and every man is bound to judge of them, and determine their meaning for himself. He may use helps to understand them; but if he understands them differently from others, he is bound to act upon his own belief, rather than that of another. Now this liberty can be completely enjoyed as a right in no other than an independent church. True, indeed, in some presbyterian connexions, individuals may enjoy all the liberty they desire; but does this flow from the nature of the constitution of classical presbytery, or from the indulgence, or indifference of those connected with them? The very leading idea in presbytery, that for which it is most prized by its greatest admirers, is this very power of restraining principle and conduct in matters of religion. If presbytery is robbed of this power, what end does it serve? It is then nothing more than a selection of members from different congregations met for counsel and advice. But where is the presbytery that acts solely upon this principle? If there be any, they are, as to constitution, a sort of independents. There are indeed presbyterian connexions in which individuals may be Socinians or Calvinists, but this is the result of connivance in the general body, and not the genuine fruit of presbytery. Whenever the body chooses to claim its right, a majority may compel an individual to embrace every shibboleth of their creed, and direct

and circumscribe his labours as they please. But view genuine presbytery among the stricter sects, and it will clearly appear that in all things there must be a complete uniformity. Forbearance is not known. I do not say that we are bound to hold religious intercourse with any individual, or body of men, that we judge destitute of the truth. But as long as we can look upon a man as a brother *born again* and walking in the commandments of God, we are bound to exercise forbearance towards him in other matters of comparatively less importance. But if there are some presbyterian connexions liberal as to principle, are they equally so as to religious conduct? Can any of their members enjoy the privilege of acting for himself, as well as of thinking? Is he not amenable to their bar, if he transgress any laws of theirs, although he judge them contrary to the laws of Christ? I conclude, then, that although from connivance, there may be more liberty of conscience in some presbyterian connexions than others, yet as a power of compulsion is inherent in the very nature of presbytery, it is not likely to be the scripture model.

8. Nothing is more universally felt in the human heart than ambition. Nothing our Lord found more difficult to repress in his immediate followers. That form of church government, then, which affords the fewest incitements to ambition, is likely to be the model which he would pitch upon. Here also, the independent will stand foremost. It is not capable of an adulterous alliance with the world. Its spiritual nature has no charms to tempt the meretricious embraces of worldly men. Though presbytery is not the most exceptionable in this view, yet it is not without objections. It has been courted by, and wedded to the world, and a hideous progeny has issued from the connexion. It has fought for, and in its turn obtained temporal power and riches; and whilst it held the sword, it was more like to Mahomet of Mecca, than Jesus of Nazareth. The forensic nature of their courts, also, is too much calculated to foster pride, by inducing men to aspire to be the lead-

ers of parties, and make a figure in assemblies, collected from every part of a province or kingdom.

9. If there be any particular model of church government in the New Testament, it is probable that the enlightened advocates of it will rest the cause on the same foundation, however various may be their arguments. For if several intelligent men embrace the same model, and have the same means of information, they have every inducement to unanimity, and if uninterested, or unprejudiced, are likely to defend it on the same general ground. If they take different and opposite hypotheses to serve as a ground work for their superstructure, they are not likely to have had a common ground in scripture. Now the advocates of presbytery take quite different grounds to rest it on. Some defend the whole machine as divine, to the smallest pin. Others pretend to see only the skeleton in scripture, with a power to fill up the outlines. Others defend it as a lawful human system, upon the ground that we are bound to no particular mode of church government in scripture. Some find the presbyterian elder in scripture, and some make him only a prudential human expedient. Some give him a seat in ecclesiastical assemblies in his own right; others in right of the people whom he represents.—They are as divided also about the right of nomination of elders. Some give this right to the congregation, or seat holders, whether servants of Christ or of Satan; others claim it for the old session. Now, I think the inference which any rational, disinterested, unprejudiced man would draw from this, is, that they have no common source from which they draw their ideas. If they had, certainly presbytery would not be such a camelion. If they all saw the same picture in the scriptures, surely they would not give so many contradictory accounts of it, when it was their interest to agree. If presbytery had been in scripture, of all its friends Dr. Campbell of Aberdeen, was the best able to defend it; yet Dr. Campbell gives up its divine right, and proves beyond contradiction, that the apostolical churches were independent. If ever presbytery could be found in scrip-

ture, the luminous and penetrating mind of Dr. Campbell, who lived and died at the head of a Scotch university, would certainly have traced it. The pen that hath so unanswerably overthrown the *jus divinum* of the church of England, would not have failed to have established the church of Scotland on that enviable foundation, had it been possible.

10. The end of church government, and church meetings of every kind, must be the edification and growth of the members, and the promotion of brotherly love. That form which is best calculated to promote these ends, is the most likely to have been instituted by Christ. Now, we might rest this upon matters of fact, in favour of the independents; but we shall content ourselves by observing, that their peculiar advancement in experimental religion, deadness to the world, devotedness to Christ, zeal for his cause, and love towards the brethren, are much the result of the principles of their constitution, in which they are distinguished from other societies. Some of these are their separation from the world, into a spiritual communion, in which they can all look upon each other as Christians, upon good evidence—their frequent church meetings, and mutual public exhortations—the care and watchfulness that every member has over every other as his “brother’s keeper,” and not committing church power to a few—the opportunity of discovering every talent, and occupying even the smallest in its proper sphere—the close union of all the members rich and poor, each acting on the other as the different wheels of a watch set in motion by the main spring. Their church order resembles the Macedonian phalanx, which so long as it kept its ranks, was invincible. There is here no possibility of playing the coward: each encourages, and in a manner compels the other to do his duty, as a good soldier of Christ. When individuals are under temptation to give ground, and begin to backslide, the whole body acts as a rear rank, to encourage them to behave valiantly, to support them when overpowered, to give them an opportunity to rally when they are thrown into confusion, to prevent them from running



from the field of battle, and to push them on again to the engagement. The great piety and zeal, discovered in individuals of other sects, is no objection to this. Such persons would have been still more eminent, had they enjoyed a purer communion. There may be healthy men in a very unhealthy climate. This, however, would not induce any man to say, that India is as healthful a climate as Ireland. Compare the nature of the church constitutions, and then compare the general body of the members of the one, with that of the other, and if you are unprejudiced, you will not be long in suspense. I forbear to draw a picture of the generality of presbyterian connexions: it is really too hideous to be reviewed. Besides, many of the evils among some of them, are not the necessary result of the presbyterian constitution.

II. Christ's institutions father themselves. If a child had been lost, and after many years, several pretenders had come to the father, and there be not sufficient evidence from testimony to determine between them, would it not be very proper to look for a resemblance to the parents, and their other children, either in bodily appearance, temper, or genius? If such a striking resemblance is found in any of them, it will be instantly concluded that he *fathers himself*.—In the same manner it is reasonable to expect a family likeness in all the ordinances and works of God. Let us then apply this rule in ascertaining the divine legitimacy of the form of church government. Christ has had such a child, but he has been exchanged at the nurse, and a vile impostor has been imposed upon the world, during all the dark ages of the reign of Antichrist. Since the reformation, various pretenders have laid claim to the honour of heavenly birth. It might be highly serviceable, in judging of their pretensions, to compare the features, mien, temper, and genius of each claimant, with those of the father and his other undoubted children. I shall content myself at present, by examining and tracing a few of the lineaments of two of them, presbytery and independency.

God's wisdom is foolishness to the world, and the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. Whatever, then, be the divine form of church government, it is evident that it must not be one which would be suggested by human prudence or policy, that it may appear to be of God, analogous to his procedure in other instances, and having a necessity for his presence and guidance. It must be one which would appear defective and inadequate, in the estimation of the wisdom of this world, that God may have all the glory of upholding it himself. This is exactly the manner of the Divine procedure in every other instance. The wisdom of the world expected Christ to have appeared in far different and opposite circumstances, and to have acted in a quite contrary manner, in erecting and establishing his kingdom: but the Divine wisdom appears in this, that the Almighty power of God is manifested in accomplishing what had evidently no other support. As the gospel was first propagated by means the most unlikely to succeed, in themselves the most inadequate; to shew that the unseen hand of God upheld and spread it, and that the Divine procedure be consistent, it seems necessary that the government be seen solely to rest on *Immanuel's* shoulders. As this King was introduced and inaugurated, and his kingdom erected in a manner directly the reverse of human prudence and policy, so also is it probable will he govern it. To conduct the government of his kingdom upon any of the plans of human governments by measures and assemblies formed upon a worldly model, would be inconsistent with the whole conduct and procedure of Jesus.

Now, if there be any justice in this reasoning, a very child may apply it to the point in hand—nay, let our enemies themselves be the judges. The very arguments by which they support presbytery, the very objections which they make to independency, fully prove to which of them this character belongs. Presbytery has every feature of a child of this world's wisdom. It is entirely a political institution, every part of it analogous to civil polity. In this view, it is really a vigorous republic.

and so far as its power extends, it shews that it knows well how to exert it. Its decision, by majorities, instead of unanimity; representation in ecclesiastical assemblies; subordination of courts; and the right of appeal; forms and etiquette of business, &c. are all borrowed from the world. On the contrary, independency, like Christ himself, has never approved itself to the wisdom of this world. Nay, the only arguments that can plausibly be urged against it, is its insufficiency for any other than *primitive times*. In no civil institution in the world, are the distinguishing features of independency to be found. It could not govern a private family of unregenerate men. It has been called by those who did not understand its constitution, the *purest democracy*, but it is evident that it is rather a *Christocracy*. Christ alone governs. There is not a law or regulation left to the wisdom of man. What civil government ever existed, in which the unanimous consent of every member was necessary, in every instance? Human affairs could never be conducted in this manner, nor could a body of unconverted men be governed in a church in this way. Nothing but the unseen, almighty power of God could have protected and propagated the gospel, in the circumstances of its appearance, opposed by all worldly powers: nothing but the presence and power of Jesus could make the simple machine of independent church government, effect its end. I conclude, then, that if a likeness to God, and an analogy to his procedure in other instances, be any token of childship, independency, and not presbytery, is the lawful heir.

But let us pursue the comparison in some other instances, and we will see that presbytery has not a feature of the family. In all the institutions of God there is a remarkable simplicity, but classical presbytery is the most clumsy and complicated machine that could possibly be invented, and a tedious round-about way of settling differences, and transacting church business. Several hundred men, from the most distant parts of a province or kingdom, meeting annually, besides all their subordinate meetings, is a thing that bears no resemblance to the sim-

plicity of other gospel institutions. When united to those, it is like a sober, plain-dressed gentleman, with a huge military hat and feather; or like a small neat chapel with a towering steeple. But peep for a minute into their general synod or assembly. What pomp, what stateliness, what importance do they assume! See you young orator artfully apologizing for his youth, and this aged gentleman looking importance from his years of standing. Stop a little; here is rudeness; "*chair!*" "*chair!*" there will be a quarrel about a trifle; "but the apostles quarrelled at Jerusalem."—Here now are several days spent, and what is done? Nothing about religion for its advantage; nothing but what could have been done to better purpose in any congregation.

I might trace the picture much further, but I shall only barely mention, that presbytery is too expensive for a "kingdom not of this world." The other children of the family live on a trifle; if this is the heir, he is a rake.

## CHAPTER III.

*On the Obligation of Apostolical Practice.*

HAVING given some reasons to shew the antecedent probability of a divine model of church government, with some observations with respect to the plan we are entitled to expect, before I proceed to examine the scriptures respecting the claims of presbytery and independency, I shall endeavour, in this chapter, to establish the obligation of the practice of the apostolic churches. Not that this is more necessary to me than to the true presbyterians, but because it is beginning to be fashionable with the members of worldly churches, when they are driven from the scriptures; to take refuge in the liberty of deviating from the example of the apostles\*.

1. The combined weight of all the arguments *a priori*, fall into the scale of the obligation of the example of the apostolical churches. We cannot positively determine what the Bible contains, till we examine it; but if there be every reason antecedently to expect a divine form of church government, and if it is possible to trace the practice of the apostolical churches, is there not every reason to look upon this as the divine model, exhibited in the scriptures as an universal pattern? The arguments *a priori*, I grant are inconclusive, if no form could be pointed out from the scripture; but if it be possible to ascertain the constitution of the apostolical churches, I see no good reason why they should not have their full force. Like an O in figures, they draw all their value from their situation;

\* Dr. Stillingfleet is the great patron of this hypothesis. In his *Irenicum* he endeavours to unite presbyterians and episcopalians by proposing a scheme of a sort of presbyterian-episcopacy. But to effect this, it was necessary for him to rid himself of the obligation of taking the apostles of Jesus Christ for an example. I originally intended to have followed the Doctor through his performance; but I found I could not do so without exceeding all bounds.

standing alone they are worth nothing; united to the approved apostolical practice, I do not see how their worth can be depreciated or their force invalidated.— If a divine plan of church government be extremely necessary, by what authority does any man reject the apostolical?

2. Not only the general sense of professing Christians is on the side of the obligation of apostolical example, but the very advocates of the contrary opinion evidently betray their chagrin, that it is not in their favour.— How anxious are they to catch at every thing that looks like approving of their respective churches? What abundant pains do they take to detect every part of the system of their adversaries, that is not apostolical? Every sect goes as far as it can in company with the apostles; it is not till they cannot follow, that the apostles are acknowledged as insufficient guides. Did ever any man think of this hypothesis, till he found apostolical practice against him? Could any of the worldly churches produce uniform apostolical practice on their side, how would they triumph!

3. If the apostolical churches are not a model to us, then all those numerous scriptures that are employed in describing them, or in giving them directions, are useless to us. Why is such lumber contained in the word of God? All scripture is said to be “given by inspiration,” and “to be necessary;” but if we are not to imitate the apostolical churches, there are many passages in the New Testament that are now absolutely useless. Accordingly; it is very evident how uninteresting such portions of scripture are to all that hold themselves at liberty to deviate from apostolical practice. Such persons have a much more barren and jejune revelation than others.

4. Either the apostles acted by divine direction, or by their own wisdom, in the constitution of churches. If the latter, they would undoubtedly have told us so.— But if, as there is every reason to believe, they acted by divine command, the form of church government they

instituted, can never be changed but by the same authority. If any form is better than another, surely the apostolical is the best. It cannot then be a matter of indifference whether we follow the best, or adopt a worse: If the Holy Ghost had judged it expedient to adopt a different form in a different period, or in different circumstances, would we not have some intimation of it? Without a Divine license we are not at liberty to alter or infringe in the smallest degree. We may as well assume the right of altering any other apostolical institution, as that of church government.

5. There can be no danger in the closest imitation of the apostolical churches. Is any man sure that he does not displease God by refusing to imitate them? Between the certainty of pleasing, on the one side, and the possibility of offending on the other, the choice which a Christian should make, is evident.

6. No person who pleads the authority of apostolical example for the first day Sabbath, or any other purpose, can consistently reject it in this instance.

7. A plan in model, and not in systematic description, is what we are entitled to expect. A direct and formal treatise on the subject, which some people look for, would be altogether anomalous in scripture. After-ages are no where addressed but in the persons, as it were, of the apostolical churches: we are not known but as members of them. Whatever is said to them, is said to us. Thus our Lord, promising his continual presence with his servants in preaching the gospel, addresses them all in every age, in the person of the apostles then present, "Lo I am with *you* alway to *the end of the world*." "Where two or three of *you* are met, there am I." The apostles also, speaking of what was to happen in every after-age, address those to whom they write as concerned, and warn them of what was to happen to us and our successors to the end of the world. "We, which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep."—

Here the apostle addresses, in the person of the church of the Thessalonians, which then was, those Christians which shall be on the earth at the time of the second coming of our Lord. I might quote innumerable examples, were it necessary. Now this being the case, that after-ages are addressed only in the person of apostolical churches, how absurd is it to expect a formal treatise on church government? Every necessary instruction must have been given in the forming of the churches. How preposterous would it be for an apostle, after he had formed a church, and left it, to write a treatise to that church on the method of forming a church! All then that can be expected, is an incidental account of apostolical practice: The subject cannot be formally, but indirectly, and, as it were, unintentionally handled. Suppose, for instance, the apostle Paul had founded the churches of Edinburgh, and after his departure, had written a letter to them, to establish them in the faith: would any rational man expect a treatise on the constitution of a church, which he had already constituted? No, all we could expect, would be an allusion to what he had done. I say, then, according to the analogy of the manner of revelation, there is not room for any other information on church government, than an account of apostolical practice. Here, I think, Dr. Cambell fails of his usual acumen, or he would not have expected the subject treated in "another manner," upon the supposition, that we are absolutely bound to the constitution of apostolical churches. But some other observations on this subject, I will reserve to another place.

8. The tabernacle itself was made according to model, and not from a verbal delineation, or treatise. "Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle. For see, (saith he,) that thou make all things according to the *pattern* shewed to thee in the mount." Now we have also a pattern in the mount, for our New Testament churches, exhibited to us, in those of apostolical constitution.—To this pattern, we are to look for every part of our constitution and discipline. Let every man take care that he make every thing in a gospel church, after the pattern of that ex-



hibited to us in the scriptures. This is a divine model ; to add to it, or take from it, will spoil the beauty, and diminish the strength of the building.

9. We are often called upon, to be followers of the apostles, without any exception or limitation.—By what authority then do any except from this rule, the conduct of the apostles, in the formation of churches ? From every general command, I think there can be no lawful exception, but what is impossible, sinful, or otherwise determined. If we are called upon without reserve, to follow the apostles, I think the injunction extends, not merely to their conduct as men, but particularly as our examples in all church affairs. If I justify a quarrelsome disposition from the example of Paul and Barnabas, I am condemned by the scriptures. But this quarrel was not recorded for nothing. It is for an example, to guard us against such a temper. If any one would contend for the duty of celibacy, from the example of Paul, his example, in this, is declared not to be binding. If any man would take it into his head to work miracles, like the apostles, this is impossible, without receiving the power of an apostle. Yet these, and such as these, are the mighty objections alleged by Dr. Stillingfleet, against the obligation of apostolical example. But I ask, is the imitation of apostolical churches sinful, impossible, or otherwise determined, in any part of scripture. If not, I demand a reason for excepting it from the general injunction \*. With what reason, then, does Dr. Stillingfleet refuse,

\* Not only the conduct of the apostles in the churches, is exhibited as an example to us, but their very antecedent characters, as well as their after-trials, supports, joys, &c. are recorded for our encouragement, instruction, or example, to avoid or practise. The great design of the Almighty, in allowing the rebellion of Paul to proceed to such a height, is said, to be an example to us, that the most notorious sinners might not be afraid to come to Christ, 1 Tim. i. 16. Paul's declining to avail himself of his right to live by the gospel, and his working with his own hands, are declared to be for an example to Christians to support themselves by industry, 2 Thess. iii. 9.

with triumph, to be bound by apostolical example, till we produce him an express command, for that particular instance? May we not, with the same reason, demand a positive command, at the end of every apostolical example? Here is a general command; let it be shewn, why this particular instance of the obligation of their example, in the constitution of apostolical churches, should be excepted. Besides, if the observation above be just, that we are known only as members of the apostolical churches, what room was there for a command to after-ages, as distinct from that in which they wrote? An express command to a church, to continue the form of government, which an apostle instituted. we would think superfluous. This is always supposed, without a positive declaration to the contrary. No, it lies not upon us to produce such a command, but on those who take upon them, to set aside the obligation of apostolical example; it is certainly incumbent, that they should produce their warrant. If God instituted the independent plan, before any man can warrantably deviate from it, it behoves him to produce from scripture a specific licence.

10. But though the manner of divine revelation forbids us to expect a direct address to after-ages upon the obligation of apostolical practice, yet we have what is equal to it. There are instances in which an older, completely organized apostolical church, is exhibited as a pattern to others, more imperfect. Now, if the apostolical churches are exhibited as a model to others, and if some are praised or blamed for their conformity to, or disagreement from them, it is very clear, that the apostles intended that all churches, in every age, should be upon the same model 1 Cor. vii. 17. "So ordain I in all churches." 1 Cor. xiv. 33. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." Here, the same order is intimated to exist in all churches. But how is God the God of order and peace in all the churches of saints, if he has not ordered every thing himself? If he has left men to choose their form of church government, and to

make laws for themselves, could it be said, that he is not a God of confusion? The confusion that would exist on that supposition, would be boundless and endless. 1 Cor. xi. 16. "We have no such custom, neither the churches of God." Here the other apostolical churches are exhibited, as a model to this. 1 Cor. xvi. 1. "Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye." Here, the example of the churches of Galatia, is exhibited as a model to the church of Corinth. Titus, i. 5. "For this purpose, left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, *as I had appointed thee*" Here, we see, that in setting in order the things that were wanting, even the evangelist Titus was not left to his discretion, but was to act in every thing, *as Paul had appointed*. Titus had his instructions, as an officer from his general. Can we pretend to greater power?

11. Is it possible for a church to exist and flourish without observing any other laws, rules, or regulations, without any other offices, or modification of offices; without any other discipline or sanction of discipline; without any other test of admission, or means of preserving purity; but what are to be collected from apostolical example and the scattered information of Scripture? If this question can be answered in the affirmative, what apology can men plead for their innovations? The advocates for a liberty of deviating from the form of apostolical churches, lay the weight of their cause upon this argument: "No form of church government could answer all ages, countries, and circumstances." What do men mean by this jargon? Do they mean, that no form would answer for a civil establishment under every form of civil government? Do they mean, that none could be given to suit the various humours of carnal men? Yes, the true meaning of this objection, if they would put it into words, is, that no one form could be given to serve as a part of a political system, under different forms of civil government—that the simple apostolical model, suited only apos-

tolical times, being incapable of governing that mixed multitude, of which all worldly churches consist—and that it was unsuitable to the dignity of an aspiring clergy. But these are the very credentials of its divine appointment. It is eminently calculated to govern Christ's children, who, like the Spartan youth, have their minds moulded to their laws; but it will always be found to fail, when members are admitted, not of the character of the members of apostolical churches. Nay, one impure member, if not cut off, when detected, would stop the harmonious procedure of the whole machine, as effectually as a watch is stopped by the accidental admission of a hair. But, can a man be pleased with the prostitution of his wife? Can Christ be pleased, or his cause advanced, by the prostitution of his ordinances? Shall the spiritual kingdom of Christ, change its appearance, with the fluctuating opinions of the world; the varying laws of temporal kingdoms; or the caprice of carnal men?

## CHAPTER IV.

## PRESBYTERY EXAMINED.

HAVING, in the preceding chapters, stated some reasons to render a divine model of church government probable—having shewn some characteristics of that which is likely to be the scripture model—and endeavoured to establish the obligation of apostolical example—let us now proceed to inquire, *What is actually the mind of the Scriptures upon this point?* Let presbytery first come under review. One thing I would premise, as a caution to myself and all who treat this subject—*Let us never forget, when we are interpreting scripture texts, that they are the words of the Holy Ghost.* He that forces them, to make them countenance or avoid discountenancing his system, is guilty of an attempt to compel the Holy Ghost to speak a lie, and bear false witness. How guilty! how infamous is the wretch that employs, or compels another to perjure himself to serve his interest! But how much more criminal and infamous is the man who would put a forced interpretation on the language of the *Holy One!* I have heard a man say, that indeed it was very criminal to employ a person to *swear a lie*; but if at an assizes he should run short of an evidence, he would think no great harm of getting one to *swear the truth for him*, though he was not a witness of the truth of the matter. I am afraid there are too many scripture critics who act upon this principle. They lay it down as a matter indisputable, that such a tenet is true, and expressed clearly in some passages of scripture, and therefore they will set about to silence, or force other texts to compliance, by perversion. Let us then attend simply to the testimony of plain

Scripture, in its plain acceptation. It is really the interest of the Christian, if he could allow himself to think so, to discover and embrace truth, though it should deprive him of the dearest earthly possession.

Another thing that must be attended to, by all who plead for the divine right of any particular form of church government, is, that nothing be admitted but what is clearly founded in the scriptures, either in precept or example. Those that pretend a divine model, must produce it, without the help of conjecture, or probabilities, to complete it.

The great bulwark of Presbytery, according to its friends, is contained in the 15th chap. of the Acts of the Apostles. Let us therefore examine this portion of scripture, by the rules of candid criticism, and see if in any thing, it give its countenance to this mode of church government\*. The matter of fact related, seems to be this: Certain teachers had gone down to Antioch from Judea, who had inculcated the necessity of the observance of the Mosaic law. From verse 24, it appears, that if they were not actually sent out by the church of Jerusalem, to preach the gospel, they at least wished to have it understood, that they had apostolical authority. The church of Jerusalem, in their letter, acknowledge that they went out from them, and do not deny their being sent by them; but affirm that they had no such doctrine in charge from them, as the circumcision of Gentile converts. Previous to this, Paul and Barnabas had returned thither from their first itinerancy. Of consequence, they opposed this doctrine; and after they had much fruitless discussion upon the subject, it was resolved by the brethren in Antioch to send Paul and Barnabas, and certain others, to consult the apostles and church of Jerusalem from whom these teachers had come out. But let us read the chapter with calmness and attention, and

\* This subject is fully and ably discussed by Mr Ewing of Glasgow, in "A Lecture on part of the 15th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles," which the reader would do well to consult.

we will see that it contains not one feature of modern presbytery.

1. Where do we find here the Presbyterian subordination of courts? Was the matter first tried by the church session at Antioch? Was it next carried to a presbytery? Was this appeal from a presbytery at Antioch? Who sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem? It will puzzle the most metaphysical head to discover a session and a presbytery, or either, at Antioch; yet, if it cannot be proved that this appeal came from a presbytery of ministers and lay elders at Antioch, the meeting at Jerusalem cannot be a synod.

2. If this be allowed to be a synod, it will cut off all superior and inferior courts. There cannot be a superior court, for this determined for the whole Christian world, and from it there could be no appeal. There cannot be subordinate presbyteries and church sessions; for this appeal was not from any inferior court, but immediately from the brethren at Antioch. I know it is said, that the presbytery of Antioch deputed Paul and Barnabas; but it is easier to say this than to prove it. The antecedent to the verb "determined," is not clearly expressed. The structure of the sentence, if the sense of the passage would admit, would allow Paul and Barnabas, or the false teachers themselves, or both together, to be the persons, who "determined." But this will make nothing for presbytery; nay, it would overthrow it. For if Paul and Barnabas, or these with the false teachers, or if the latter only, "determined" to depute the messengers, there is an end to presbytery. It is no unusual thing, however, in reading the New Testament, to be obliged to look back a little for the antecedent to the verb, or to take it from the general sense of the passage. The most natural interpretation is, that the brethren deputed Paul and Barnabas; or that it was done conjointly by the brethren, the false teachers, and Paul and Barnabas. This is clearer, from the words, as they stand in the original, which are more literally translated: "They appointed Paul and Barnabas, and

certain other of them, to *go up*," &c. The false teachers could not appoint Paul and Barnabas to go up to Jerusalem, nor is it likely they desired it, as they must have known that they received no such *charge* from that church. But be this as it will, upon no supposition could they have been sent by a presbytery, because no such thing is mentioned in the connexion. Whatever be the antecedent to *επαρξεν*, it must be found among the persons spoken of in the preceding verses. It may as well be said that the magistrates of Antioch sent them, as the supposed presbytery of that place. There is the same evidence for the one as the other. Besides, if the appeal had been from a presbytery, would not the answer have been to the appellants? The letter of the church of Jerusalem would not have been addressed to the brethren, which are of the Gentiles, but to the presbytery of Antioch?

3. This assembly carried all things by complete unanimity; therefore can be no model to any assembly, in which a majority decides for the whole. Suppose it to have actually been a synod, no decree of a modern synod could plead its authority, which was not carried unanimously.

4. Suppose this to have been a synod, it only warrants their meeting, as matter of dispute may arise among the churches. It would give no countenance to regular periodical meetings. But presbyterian courts have their stated meetings, whether or not there be business of importance to justify their meeting.

5. The decision of the church at Jerusalem was obligatory, not only in the church of Antioch, which had appealed, but upon all churches in the world. In the letter, verse 23, Syria and Cilicia are expressly included. And in Paul's second journey, he and his companion gave the churches in the cities through which they passed, the decrees ordained by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Will any man say, that there were representatives from these places, in the Jerusalem



assembly? It cannot then be a model for a synod, where none are bound, but those represented. If synods will quote this for a precedent, they must no longer confine themselves to make laws for their own connexion, but decide in matters of religion for the whole Christian world. But as this assembly consisted solely of the members of one church, if it be a warrant for foreign interference of any kind, it will prove that an individual church, consisting of its rulers and brethren, should give law to all the churches of the universe.

6. By what authority is the meeting at Jerusalem called a synod? Who were the members that composed it? Were they not the apostles, the elders, and the brethren of the church at Jerusalem *only*? Was there a single representative either minister or lay elder, from any other church upon earth? Those who accompanied Paul and Barnabas from Antioch, were not representatives but messengers of that church to report the matter of fact, and receive the decision. Accordingly, the letters are in the name, not of a representative council, but of the apostles, the elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, from whom the troublesome teachers went out. How absurd would be their language, upon the supposition that there were representatives in it, from the church of Antioch, and others. "For as much as we have heard, that certain which went out *from us*." Could the Antioch, and other representatives, put their signatures to this letter? Could they say that they went out *from them*? They went out from the church at Jerusalem, and no one could say, "they went out *from us*," but the church at Jerusalem. The language "went out *from us*," plainly excludes from that assembly, all members from foreign churches.

7. As there were no representatives in this meeting, from any other church, so *all the members or brethren* of the church at Jerusalem, were admitted. What is there similar to this in presbytery. So far from being admitted into general meetings, they have no share

in the administration of the affairs of a single congregation. The minister and elders, are the sole judges in all disputes. The people must make their mind known, by petition to church courts. Upon the supposition, that this was a representative assembly, consisting of members from the different churches of Judea, Samaria, Antioch, &c. by what authority did *the brethren* of the church at Jerusalem, take a share in the deliberations? What peculiar right had they over the brethren of all other churches, to a place in this assembly? Why did not the church at Jerusalem choose representatives, as well as the other churches? Or, if the Jerusalem brethren were to be admitted, why not all the members of all the churches, or at least, as many of them as might choose to attend? What presbyterian assembly is so constituted? This would destroy the balance of power. The admission of the brethren of the church at Jerusalem, plainly shews that it was not a representative assembly.

8. This was an appeal to inspired authority, which, in after ages, could be imitated only by appealing to the apostolical writings. The message was to the apostles, and to the elders, who were men endowed with the gifts of the Spirit. This was nothing else than our appeal to the Scriptures. The apostolical writings were not then in existence; the apostles themselves were in the room of the New Testament. There was no other possible way of deciding the dispute. The Scriptures that were then in being had nothing *express* upon the subject. But what question can now arise in any church, which the Scriptures cannot determine. They contain a full and perfect rule of faith and practice. This question is settled for ever, and the decision is a part of Scripture. Never can the same, or a similar, again recur. Paul and Barnabas, it is true, were at Antioch; but they, in some sort, were esteemed a party, by the judaizing teachers. Besides this important question, the condition upon which the Gentiles were to be received into the church, behoved to be discussed and settled in the most public manner, that the

Jews in every part of the world, might the more readily unite with them. Accordingly, it seems probable that this was the time, and this the occasion, that Paul went up to Jerusalem, by revelation, Gal. ii. 2\*. The apostles might have decided the question themselves, but it behoved to be done in this manner, because it was a matter in which the church of Jerusalem was concerned, as the false teachers had gone out from them, and because they wished, in this first church, to give a public specimen of transacting church business. This shews us, that matters of public concernment to a church, are not to be smuggled through a session, but conducted in the presence, and by the consent, of the whole brethren. Though, then, it affords not a precedent for one church to appeal to another, yet this portion of Scripture will, to the end of the world, be useful to direct us in transacting church business.

9. The decision of the church at Jerusalem was the issue of the infallible interpretation of Scripture, and the voice of God in the previous conversion of the Gentiles. Peter argues, that if God had already given them conversion without circumcision, the matter must be already determined, as they were really already saved when they were converted. If, then, circumcision, or the Mosaic law, had been necessary, they must have received it before conversion. He argues from their belief, that the Gentiles and themselves should be saved in the same manner, that is, wholly through the Lord Jesus Christ, which could not be the case, if they must be circumcised. James proves the same, by an inference from a passage of one of the prophets. Now, none can plead this as a precedent for any body of men to settle controverted matters for others, who cannot plead the gift of infallible interpretation of Scripture.

10. If the apostles presumed not to give their decision, without giving such reasons, upon which it was

\* See Innes's Reasons, page 39.

founded, how arrogant are those assemblies, who make their own opinion of expediency the law of every individual! Were such assemblies of God's own appointing, yet, if their proceedings are not directed by the Scriptures; if they cannot plead the sanction of the Scriptures for every decision, their acts would be invalid. Let synods apply this criterion to their decrees, and it will at once sweep away all their *prudential regulations and human expedients*, and every act that cannot plead *express* Scripture. It will not be enough, that such a thing is the "*mind of this synod*," but that such a thing is the mind of Scripture, the voice of God.

11. No body of men can plead this as a precedent to determine in matters of religion for others, who cannot preface their decree with; "It seemed good unto us, and *to the Holy Ghost*." Without this, their decision is as invalid as an act of Parliament without the sanction of the king.

12. Whatever be the divine model of church government, it is in no measure invested with a power of legislation. The question of a right to make laws according to circumstances, for the government of Christ's church, and the inquiry into the divine form of its government, are entirely distinct. Whether episcopacy, presbytery, or independency be of God, to none of them can belong a right to enact new laws, any more than to promulgate new doctrines. The business of church rulers is not to make laws, but to execute the laws which they find enacted by Christ, in the New Testament. If an individual independent church, were to take upon itself to enact laws, draw up a plan of rules and regulations for their government, and worship, I would have the same objections to it, that I have to presbytery. To suppose a liberty to enact laws or regulations, according to the exigence of circumstances, is to arraign the competency of Christ, as the King of the church, and a declaration that he hath left the code of laws imperfect. Executive and legislative authori-

ty, even in civil affairs, are entirely distinct, and in the best governments are lodged in different hands. The parliament enacts laws, and the civil magistracy executes them. As well might the civil magistrates of a county meet to frame laws, in imitation of the parliament, as church rulers plead the right of making laws, because the inspired apostles of God did so. Church rulers are to execute the laws which the apostles enacted. Every new law is an act of treason against Christ, and an attempt to rob him of the most valuable prerogative of his crown. How astonishing is it to hear men arguing so warmly, that Christ would not leave his church without a form of government, who suppose that he has left it without a sufficient code of laws! Surely it is as necessary to have divine laws for the government of Christ's church, as a divine plan of executing those laws. If the laws are human, what avails it that the plan of government be agreeable to the Scripture model? Were we then to allow that the plan of church government, by synods, &c. &c. was the true one, still their business would be very different from what it is. They would not meet as legislators, but as jurors, to judge of the *application* of Christ's laws. Suppose, for instance, that a member of their communion was charged with being an extortioner, a reviler, a drunkard, &c. there is an express law of Christ, that he should become a subject of discipline. Now, their business would be to judge the offender by the law of Christ, examine proofs, and determine whether or not the charge was fairly applicable. But it happens, that this rule is given to the brethren of an individual church, and not to a synod or presbytery.

But the very idea of a right of legislation in the church of Christ, supposes infallibility in the legislators. To suppose that Christ would give a commission to men, to make laws, and a command to his people to obey them, while at the same time, he would leave such men without infallible direction, is monstrously absurd. If synods are fallible, they may enact sinful laws, and enforce them in the awful name, and by the authority of

te Lord Jesus Christ. If they are not infallible, why do they enforce their laws, as if they were infallible? Do they not enforce the smallest law they enact, with the same rigour they could do a law of God? Nay, it is very possible to break many of the laws of God with impunity, while a law of synod or presbytery must be inviolable. If an individual approve not of any law, the only redress he has, is to separate. He has no liberty to act upon his own convictions. Their opinion of expediency must be his guide. Now, if they are not infallibly right, why do they not leave individuals to act according to their own convictions? Is not this, to "teach for doctrines the commandments of men?"

Upon the whole, in the 15th chap. of Acts, we have no precedent for any foreign interference among the churches of Christ. The distinguishing features in this assembly, are not to be found, nor ever can be found, in any assembly on earth. If it be asked, of what use is this relation to us, if it does not warrant us to decide differences in a similar way, I would answer, that whenever a text of Scripture is so explained, as to be rendered useless to after-ages, I readily grant, that it certainly must be a forced explanation. But have we not here a precedent for appealing to the apostles, in all our controversies, as the church of Antioch did? Have we not here a precedent of applying every doctrine, and *observance*, and *rite* and *regulation* of churches to the word of God? If the apostles drew their conclusions from this source, shall *human prudence*, and *expediency* direct church rulers? Every tittle must be brought "to the law and to the testimony; whoever speaks not agreeable to this, it is because there is no light in them." Have we not here an admirable model for the transaction of all church business. The question could, indeed, only be determined by apostles; but as it was an affair in which the church at Jerusalem was concerned, and to give us a living model for transacting church business, the apostles consider the matter in conjunction with the whole church. What a beautiful picture does

it give us of a church meeting! It is not a minister and session, nor the ministers and lay elders of a district, but the apostles, elders or pastors, and brethren. Whenever the pastors and brethren of a particular church come together now, they must have the apostles in their hands, by whose writings they are to conduct all their affairs.

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## CHAPTER V.

### *Of the Office of Lay-Elders.*

HAVING, in the last chapter, examined the pretensions of presbyterians, as founded on the relation contained in the 15th chapter of the Acts of the apostles, I intend, in this, to enquire into the validity of the office of lay-elders. Presbyterians themselves are not agreed, either as to the foundation, extent or prerogatives of this office; a circumstance that will go far, in the judgment of every unprejudiced inquirer, to prove that the office is not scriptural. As to the scripture authority of lay-elders, some refer us to the office of deacon. "Though the name is not scriptural, (say they,) yet the office is." But here I would remark, that the names are not more different than the offices. A scripture deacon is an officer in the church of Christ, for managing its temporal concerns, and attending to the wants of the poor brethren. He has no concern in the ruling of the church, more than the rest of the brethren. A lay-elder is compounded of a New Testament deacon, the half of a New Testament elder or pastor, as he is a church ruler, and a part of the office of an apostle, as a legislator, to make laws for the church. In the superior courts, he is looked upon by some as a representative of the people; by others as the representative of his own order. In either view,

his office is derived from our ideas of civil policy ; for there is not the shadow of any such representation in the word of God. It is absurd in the extreme, to found his office on that of the Scripture deacon, seeing it extends so much farther. If he is the same as the deacon, let him do the deacon's office only. Besides, if he be the deacon, why has he been called elder ? Has not the father the best right to give the name to the child ? Is not the Spirit of him who instituted the office, the best judge of the most fitting name ? Especially as the name was appropriated to another order in the church, why was it chosen ? If men thought that they could give a more proper and decent name to this office, than the Spirit of God had done, which is not a very modest supposition, why did they take that which he had assigned to pastors ? Has not the tendency of this been to mislead the English reader, and make him believe, that where he meets the word elder, in the New Testament, the presbyterian elder was intended, and not the pastor. This has been one of the most successful artifices of priestcraft in all ages. But there are others who pretend to find both name and office in the New Testament, and produce as their authority, 1 Tim. v. 17. " Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine." " Here (say they) is an evident distinction, between ruling and teaching elders. There must be some elders to rule, and others to teach." To this I answer,

1. Allowing the presbyterian explanation of this text, in its utmost latitude, what does it make ? Granting that there should be a body of lay-elders to join with the preaching elders, in ruling a church, does this give any countenance to a church session as a body of legislators, to make laws, rules, and regulations for the congregation ? Their being church rulers, does not constitute them church legislators. Upon this supposition, their business would be to carry the laws of Christ into effect, not to make laws. Neither would this give any countenance to a minister and session, exclusively judg-



ing of the application of discipline, and engrossing the whole power of the church into their own hands. Whether the elders of a particular church be all pastors, or some ruling, and others teaching elders, to neither would belong the sole right of judging when the laws of Christ were to be applied. If a brother was accused, the whole church would judge him according to the law of Christ; and if he is found guilty, the business of church rulers is to execute the law of Christ, which the church has judged applicable; just as a judge pronounces the verdict found by the jury. But a church session is not only a parliament to make laws, but a jury to judge of the application of both their own and Christ's laws. The brethren are entirely excluded. They may lodge a complaint, or appear as a witness, but in judging of the guilt or innocence of the accused, they have no share. I do not stay here to shew that this is contrary to the apostolical commands, in which the whole church is intrusted and charged with judging of the application of discipline. This I intend to shew in another place. What I would observe here, is, that according to their own interpretation of this text, there is no foundation, for the legislative or exclusive judicial authority of church sessions.

2. Allowing, from this text, an order of ruling elders, distinct from teaching elders, this gives no countenance to a body of what are called lay-elders: that is, men not invested with the pastoral office. Such ruling elders would be as really pastors, bishops, ministers, &c. as the preaching elders. The office of a preaching elder would not be superior to that of the ruling elder. The ruling elder would be a pastor of the church, invested with the pastoral character, in as full a manner as the preaching elder. The only legitimate conclusion that could be drawn from this interpretation, would be, that in every church there should be two orders of ministers, the one for ruling, and the other for preaching; and that neither of these had a right to interfere in the department of the other. The preaching elder was not to rule, any more than the ruling el-

der was to preach. The preaching elder, then, should not preside in the session, nay, he should have no seat in it, any more than the ruling elder should have in the pulpit. If the one is only to rule, the other is only to preach. If the one must not mount the pulpit, neither must the other sit in church-court. All then that can be fairly inferred from this interpretation, is, that in the pastoral office, there are two distinct departments, which should not interfere with each other; that those appointed to rule, should rule; and those appointed to preach, should preach; which instead of serving would overthrow, from the foundation, the whole presbyterian system. If, then, we should allow that there is in this text, an order of ruling elders, distinct from another order of preaching elders, still such ruling elders would be pastors or bishops, and nothing a-kin to presbyterian elders. Nay, the ruling elders would be more eminently, if not exclusively, the bishops or overseers. Oversight surely belongs rather to the ruler, than the preacher.

3. Is it possible that two orders so different as that of ministers and lay-elders, should be called invariably in Scripture, by the same name? is this like the perspicuity of the Bible? Is it probable, that when the New Testament writers employ so many words to denote the same office, as bishop, presbyter, shepherd, &c. they could not afford a distinct name for the office of lay-elder if it was apostolical? Is this agreeable to the use of any language, upon any subject? Especially, is it agreeable to the genius of the philosophic language of Greece, where every shade of difference in idea, is marked by a different word, expressive of it? But the English reader of the most common understanding must be convinced that it is impossible for the Greek word *πρεσβυτερος* to denote two so widely different officers from the use of our own word elder. Though this is the exact translation of the Greek word, and in the estimation of presbyterians must include both minister and lay-elder, yet to avoid confusion, it has been appropriated by them to denote the latter only. What presbyterian speaks

promiscuously of ministers and lay-elders by the common name elders? Or who would understand him if he did? Yet such undefined, indetermined language, they scruple not to put into the mouth of the Holy Ghost. If ever they use the word elder to denote the minister, they are obliged to prefix the word *lay* to it, when attributed to the presbyterian elder, to prevent obscurity. Now, if we cannot talk in English of ministers and presbyterian elders by the same name, is it possible that the Scriptures should be guilty of this obscurity?

4. Granting that this text does constitute two orders of elders, then there will be three orders of officers in every church, and the presbyterians want the third. They have not the deacon. "Yes, (say they), our elder is the deacon." But upon what authority do they combine offices, which the apostles kept distinct. There is incontestibly an order of deacons; if there be two orders of elders, there should be three distinct orders in every church. No man hath authority to combine any two of them into one, any more than to make a new order over the rest. If it be said, that the office of the lay elder and that of the deacon are the same, I have already shewn that they are widely different. The office of the deacon is to take care of the poor; whereas, if there be a distinct order of ruling elders, their office must be to rule the church. Is there any evidence in Scripture, that these two offices were combined into one? The office of the deacon is in itself no more connected with ruling, than with preaching. To rule in the church, and to take charge of the poor, are offices distinct in themselves, and separated in the New Testament.

5. If there had been two orders of elders, so distinct as that of lay and preaching elders, is it possible that their offices and qualifications should be included in the same description? In describing the office of the elder, and his qualifications, no notice is taken of two orders, one as requiring a different kind of qualifica-

tions from the other. They are called upon, without exception, to feed the flock, take the oversight of it, &c. ; and are all required to be διδασκτικός, "fit to teach," which, as Dr. Campbell has observed, could hardly be the case, if some of them were to have no concern in teaching. This candid inquirer has given up this text, and thinks it is too trivial a circumstance, upon which to found so material a distinction. It is not said, that a preaching elder must have such and such qualifications, and do so and so, but *the elder*, which must include every distinction of elders. Besides, the words elder and bishop are perfectly interchangeable, constantly applied to the same officers, as all presbyterians will allow. Now, if there be an order of lay-elders, there must be also an order of lay-bishops; that is, *men who have the pastoral office, yet are not pastors.*

6. Commentators seem generally agreed, and the 18th verse absolutely requires that τιμή here translated "honour," signifies the *honourable maintenance of the ministers of the gospel.* The apostle proves that they are worthy of this τιμή from the law of Moses respecting the ox employed in treading out the corn, and from the words of our Lord, with respect to those engaged in preaching his word. Now, the argument drawn from this, goes directly to shew that all those elders, spoken of in the 17th verse, are worthy of honourable support. It does not indeed require that a church is in every situation to support all its labourers. Some may not need it; the church may be so poor that it cannot support more than one pastor. There is nothing to prevent it from using the labours of some who support themselves by lawful industry. But the text undoubtedly implies, that all elders are *worthy* of support, and if they need, and the church can give it, it is their right. Do presbyterians think it their duty to support their elders, or will any one say, that they are worthy of it? If not, they cannot be the elders of which the apostle speaks. Besides, the 18th verse proves incontestibly, that all the elders spoken of in the 17th verse, have the same pas-

toral character, and are employed in the same work. They are all "treaders out of the corn," all "labourers worthy of reward." How do presbyterian elders "tread out the corn?" In what manner do the most conscientious of them labour so as to be worthy of reward? These figures represent the elders as labouring constantly in the work of the gospel, and having that for their employment as the ox was daily employed in early days, and till the present time in some countries, in "treading out the corn," and as a labourer is employed, not occasionally, but constantly in his labour. Should it be said, that the illustration in the 18th verse is applicable only to the latter part of the 17th verse, I answer, that beside the necessity of referring it to the whole verse, the texts quoted by the apostle, would not be relevant in that view. They go to prove the propriety of support in general, and not a superiority of support.

7. Hitherto I have granted, that this text does create two orders of elders; and even on that supposition, have shewn that this constitutes two different orders of pastors in every church, not a separate order of what are called lay-elders. I will now endeavour to shew, that the text neither proves nor admits a distinction of order among the elders spoken of. The opposition is not between ruling elders and preaching elders, but in the first part of the verse, between those who discharge the office well *in general*, and those who are particularly employed and distinguished for talents and labour in that difficult, important, and laborious branch of the office, the preaching continually to large public assemblies. In every apostolical church, that was perfectly organized, there was a plurality of elders or pastors, of different gifts. Some were distinguished as public speakers, others as church rulers, others for a talent of private exhortation, peculiarly fitted to converse with the saints, on the state of their souls, and to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit. Now, each of these sustained the whole of the pastoral office or character, and might occasionally be employed in any part of it, while each was usually

employed in that department of his office, for which his talents, and his temper, fitted him. The advantages which would thus accrue to the church, are obvious and admirable. It enjoyed this diversity of gifts, while at the same time, if any of the elders were absent or should die, or that it could not procure, or support for some time, as many elders or pastors as were necessary, any one of them could officiate in the peculiar department of any other. Churches which have not this plurality of pastors, and diversity of gifts, are not aware of the disadvantage under which they labour. At the same time, some congregations which have a plurality of pastors, do not seem to know how to use them. They do not assign their pastors, each the peculiar province for which he is best qualified, but each statedly labours in every part of the office, alternately. This plurality of elders, is rather suited to the indolence of the labourer, than the edification of the church. This being the case, the reason of the injunction of the text is obvious and important. All such elders are worthy of "honourable maintenance:" those who are distinguished in their office, have a right to a double portion; especially those who are peculiarly and usually employed in preaching. This requires peculiar, and perhaps rarer talents; much more time, study, and expence to qualify them for the office; has much greater labour and fatigue; incurs more expence, by frequent excursions: exposes much more to public censure and odium; and requires much more intense application to furnish the mind, so as to be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. To discharge this part of the office in a proper manner, requires a life solely devoted to it. Such is my view of this text; now to confirm it.

The word translated *rule*, is by no means exclusively applicable to that department of the pastoral office called ruling. *Προεσως* is rather a commander \* in the field

\* As the word *imperator*, from signifying a military came to signify a civil officer, so this word is usually employed for a governor or magistrate.

than a president in an assembly. *Προεδρος* would be the most proper word for the latter. Accordingly, in the Athenian council of 500, the seven of the Prytanes chosen by lot to preside every week were called *πρόεδροι*; and the president of the day was called *επιστάτης*. This is a too peaceful and inactive office to give a name to Christ's officers. I know not that they are ever so called in the New Testament, though they early assumed this title. But *προσως* is a word which fully expresses their arduous, dangerous, and honourable office. It signifies an officer who goes before his men, and stands in the front of the battle. He encourages them by his example and exhortations, and leads them into action. Officers have the command and the care of the army; train and discipline the soldiers; and keep them to their duty. They take care to supply them with provisions, and prepare them for battle, by military speeches. Such an officer is the elder in the church of Christ. Like a military officer, he trains and disciplines his troops; supplies them with wholesome provisions; rules them by the laws of Christ; instructs them in the will of their king; and prepares them for battle by his public preaching. I apprehend, then, that the word *προσώταις* here, is not to be referred exclusively, to any one part of the pastoral office, but to the office in general. It means the elders who discharge in an eminent manner, the duty of an officer in the army of Christ, and preaching is as essential a part of this, as ruling. That *προσως* refers to the office in general, is farther evident, from I Thess. v. 12. where the same persons who are said to labour among them, and to admonish them, are called also *προσημωταις*. Indeed I am astonished that any person who has ever looked into the Greek Testament should think that the *προσώταις* were an order inferior to preachers. There is not a higher word to denote pastor, in all the word of God. They are Christ's military officers. Accordingly they are called also, Heb. xiii. 17. *ηγερμενοι* or military leaders. — Agreeably to this we find, that when one of the elders began to be distinguished above his colleagues, he assumed these very appellations as the most honourable.

He exclusively appropriated to himself, *πρωτως* and *ηγεμενος* as well as *επισκοπος* or bishop. But especially, can there be any thing more unfit to the character of military officers, than an order of lay-elders?

My sense of the passage may be illustrated by a simile. "Let the kings who rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, especially those who distinguish themselves as the protectors of religious liberty." Here ruling well, refers to the whole kingly office, and the word "especially," distinguishes a particular department of the duty of a king. "Let virtuous and distinguished legislators, be esteemed worthy of double honour, especially those who labour for the abolition of the slave trade." Who would infer from this, that members of parliament were each confined to a particular department? Each member has a right to speak and vote upon every subject, though his time and talents may be chiefly employed on his favourite object.

Besides, if I am not greatly mistaken, grammar requires that *οι κοπιωντες* have *πρωτως* *πρεσβυτεροι*, and not merely *πρεσβυτεροι*, for its antecedent. The phraseology is *οι καλως πρωτως πρεσβυτεροι*, and not *οι πρεσβυτεροι οι καλως πρωτως*. But common sense requires that the *πρωτως πρεσβυτεροι* include the *κοπιωντες εν λογω και διδασκαλια*. If a general, after a victory would write thus to the secretary at war. "The officers merit the highest praise, especially the general officers," he would write sense. But how ridiculous would it be to say, "the subaltern officers merit the highest praise, especially the general officers." In the first instance, the word "officers" includes the general officers, but in the second the general officers are not included among the subaltern officers. Now, this is exactly what the presbyterian interpretation of this text makes the apostles say, "Let ruling elders be counted worthy of honour, especially the preaching elders." *Μαλις* is properly used, when a part is distinguished out of the whole; or one out of a number:



Compare this passage with 2 Tim. iv. 13. "Bring with you the cloak, and the books, especially the parchments." Here, the generic word *books* includes the parchments, as a particular sort of the books which he had desired him to bring. But how ridiculous would it have been to have said, "Bring the cloak, especially the parchments."

Thus have I examined the meaning of this much disputed portion of scripture. I have first endeavoured to shew, that granting presbyterians their own interpretation of this text, and that it fully establishes an order of lay-elders, or an order of rulers in the church, who are not pastors, that even this did not give a church session any authority to judge in all matters for the church or congregation. Even in this case, the whole church should judge, and those officers carry the result into execution. Again, that granting the exclusive management of church affairs to the session, gave it no authority to legislate, as the whole church, or the united voice of all the churches upon earth, have no right to make the slightest alteration, amendment, or addition with respect to the laws of Christ's church. Further, that granting a distinction of order in elders to be established from this verse, it would make two orders of pastors; and not a distinct order of lay-elders. And, lastly, that a distinction of order of any kind, is neither necessary, probable, nor possible, from this verse. It constitutes, indeed, a plurality of pastors, in every perfectly organized church, who, being of different gifts, should be usually employed in the department best suited to each; that there should be a gradation of support according to talents, zeal, and diligence: and that the highest is due to those who are distinguished for *labouring in word and doctrine*. This plurality of elders or pastors in a church, is called (1 Tim. iv. 14) the presbytery or eldership. The modern signification of the word presbytery, as consisting of the ministers and representative lay-elders of the congregations of a whole district, is not known in scripture, nor in all the first ages of Christianity.\*

\* Chrysostom supposed the presbytery spoken of, 1 Tim. iv. 14, to have been a synod of bishops. To what extra-

ance will men run, who give themselves up to a party  
and take their opinions from their sect; and not from the  
Bible

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## CHAPTER VI.

### OF INDEPENDENCY.

I HAVE an objection against imposing names of *human invention* upon *the things of the Spirit*. When I use the words *independency* and *independents*, for that form of church government, instituted by the apostles, and those who now embrace it, I would be understood to do it, not of choice, but of necessity. The disciples of Christ are properly called *Christians*, *saints*, or *brethren*, and an assembly of those, for the purpose of enjoying the ordinances of Christ, according to his appointment, is called a *church*. Now, these are the words I would always wish to use to denote the same objects; but it has happened that some of them have been so abused and prostituted to other significations, that it is impossible to use these plain scripture words without obscurity. There is now the church of Rome, the church of England, the church of Scotland, the church of Secession, &c. &c. &c. In speaking therefore of a church formed on the model of the apostolical churches, we are obliged to call it an *independent church*, to distinguish it from the others, which have usurped the name. Still, however, we use this, not as the name of Christ's church, but of the particular mode of the government of an apostolical church, to mark its distinctive feature. The apostles had no occasion to use this, or any other word of the same nature, for the same purpose, because no different form of government had been erected. It is obvious,

then, that this use of the word *independency*, is very different from sacrament, eucharist, altar, clergy, and a multitude of the such names, which the wisdom of men has imposed upon the ordinances of God.

That the government of Christ's appointment, is what is called independent, is obvious from the rule which he gave for the settling of private offences among his disciples. Matt. xviii. 15,—18. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of one or two witnesses, every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican." Here the last appeal is to the church. He does not say, if he does not hear the church, take him to the presbytery, and if he does not hear the presbytery, take him to the synod, &c. but if he hear not the church, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican." I know, indeed, that various subterfuges have been invented to evade the force of this plain scripture. Every sect has attempted to find its own discipline in this passage, whilst individuals, to apologize for what they cannot justify, have attempted to darken its meaning so as to make it of no practical use. The multiplicity of interpretations, in the opinion of Dr. Stillingfleet, is an argument to prove that it is totally inexplicable; in my opinion it proves only what is proved by the variety of sentiments on every other point in scripture, the perversity, the selfishness, or the prejudice of professing Christians. What! has the Lord Jesus given a precept, in a case of such importance, and of such frequent occurrence, which cannot be understood? Did he wish to be, or could he not avoid being unintelligible? Must the Holy One of Israel speak with the darkness and evasion of an heathen oracle? If he did not mean to be understood, why did he speak? if he meant to be understood, why did he not speak in intel-

ligible language? If we cannot find out who are the divinely appointed arbitrators of our differences, he might as well have said nothing on the subject. What an insult upon the Holy Ghost to represent his language to be so vague and indeterminate, that it cannot be understood? Christ has said, "tell it to the church;" is there no way of coming at his meaning? Has the word *church* no determinate meaning in the New Testament? But Dr. Stillingfleet is of opinion, that if the discipline Christ has appointed, be executed, it is not material by whom. Is it then the same thing, whether a law be enacted by the lawfully appointed legislators, or by any other body of self constituted men? or that a criminal be tried by a lawful judge and jury, or by men who assume the right of judgment, without the countenance of lawful authority? If Christ has appointed any particular referees, it is as really a breach of his injunction to appoint any other, as it would be totally to neglect that instance of discipline. But is there any native necessary obscurity in the precept, arising from the promiscuous use of the word *church*, in the New Testament? If it is now in any measure obscure, it has been rendered so, not from the ambiguity of the scripture use of the word, but from its prostituted application in modern acceptation, and the sophistry, and subtleties of interested, prejudiced, or bigotted men: we find no difficulty in the passage until we hear the forced explanations of it given by controvertists, and our mind begins to be distracted, and the subject obscured by the smoke of their unhallowed fires.

I lay it down, then, as an axiom, that Christ meant some *determinate thing* by the word *church*, and that there must be sufficient evidence in the New Testament to lead the humble, teachable inquirer into that meaning. Christ must have spoken intelligible language. Now, to investigate the scripture-use of the word *church*.

In every language there are two different processes recognised, which affect the signification of words, appro-

priation and extension. The one confines them to a part of their original territories, the other extends them a little beyond their natural limits. This is not peculiar to the language of scripture, but is practised in treating of all the arts and sciences, and the whole business of life. Thus the word angel literally signifies a messenger, and is not naturally confined to any description of messengers. But the Bible hath in a manner appropriated that word to denote an order of beings, whose employment is that of messengers of the Most High, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. And though it may occasionally, even in scripture, claim its natural rights, being sometimes used for other messengers, yet it is the *appropriated name* of that order of beings called angels. The same may be said of the words *apostle, elder, bishop, &c.* sometimes they are appropriated upon particular subjects or departments, while they enjoy the full extent of their signification upon others; and sometimes the same word is differently appropriated upon different subjects. Thus, while the words angel, apostle, &c. are usually confined to a particular province in scripture, they have unbounded licence in profane authors of the same date; and thus when men use the word minister, conversing upon political subjects, it is immediately understood that they mean the first minister of state. But if they are conversing on religion, it is as readily understood to be *the minister of the congregation*. On the other hand, sometimes a word will come through time to exceed its natural boundaries, and be extended to include ideas not necessarily, nor naturally inherent in it. Thus, *ἡσπορευω* literally signifies to vote by holding up the hand, and was used in the popular assemblies of Athens in contradistinction to the vote by scrutiny, which was denoted by *ψηφίζω* from *ψηφος* the pebble used by the voters. But in an advanced period of the history of this word, we find that it sometimes dropped the principal idea altogether, and was extended to denote election in any manner, and even the conferring of an office, not by election but individual nomination. Our language has recognised the same abusive principle; in the words man-

midwife, head-pleurisy, &c. Now, to apply this reasoning to the point in dispute. We are to enquire what *ἐκκλησία* literally signifies; what it was originally applied to; what it came to be applied to in the process of its history; what is its use in other instances in Scripture; how it is used in profane authors of the same date; whether in the New Testament, it hath been appropriated, or extended; and if appropriated, to what? Proceeding thus, we shall find, that in the New Testament it is invariably used, either for an individual congregation, or the whole community of Christians.

*Ἐκκλησία* literally signifies an assembly *called out* from others, and is used among the Greeks, particularly the Athenians, for their popular assemblies summoned by their chief magistrate, and in which none but *citizens* had a right to sit. By inherent power it may be applied to any body of men *called out*, and *assembled in one place*. If ever it loses the ideas of *calling out* and *assembling*, it loses its principal features, and its primitive use. I will not say, that by the operation of the abusive principle I have described, it might not have come to lose even both, after a length of time from its first introduction; but this I say, that I no where find it in profane writers, nor in the scriptures speaking of civil affairs, to have lost either, but especially the latter. Nor will I be driven from my position by the use of this word in the 19th chapter of Acts. That assembly, however tumultuous, irregular, and unlawful it may have been, was a *meeting of the citizens called together* by the silversmiths. The craftsmen were *called together*, (verse 25,) by Demetrius, who, inflamed by his speech, burst out into intemperate acclamations to their goddess Diana. The rest of the citizens were roused and assembled by their noise, and adopting their zeal, though many of them knew not the cause, they rushed into the theatre—the very place of public deliberation. Though, then, it was an irregular, lawless assembly, it was nothing a-kin to an English mob, but rather like a parliament assembling being summoned, not by the king but by some incendiary among themselves. Still more

strongly may it be affirmed, that it is no where used by profane writers to denote any body of men, but in their *assembled* capacity they are called, *εκκλησια* only as *assembled*.

Such being the origin and use of this word among the Greeks, to what may it be legitimately applied when used in sacred things? It may signify any *assembly called out* from the world, and *united in Christ*: Agreeably to this, whenever it is used in Scripture in a sacred sense, that is, as applicable to believers, we find that it is invariably appropriated to an individual assembly of Christians, meeting to enjoy the ordinances of Christ, or the Christian community in general. Whenever the apostles made a number of converts in any place, they separated them from the congregation, by forming them into an *εκκλησια* or church. And just as in the Athenian assemblies none but citizens could sit or vote, so none but the citizens of the new Jerusalem were allowed to join themselves to this company. As in the parliament many may be present to hear, though none but senators speak or vote; so in a church of Christ, many are present to hear the gospel of salvation, but none are admitted as members of the *εκκλησια* but those who are first by that gospel make citizens of heaven. But with equal propriety may this word be applied either to all the Christians on earth, or all both in heaven and earth, as assembled in Jesus. Nor does this application stretch it a whit beyond its natural and intrinsic meaning. It is as literally and as truly applied to the one as to the other. All the saints on earth, all the saints in heaven, are assembled in him, as really as the branches of a vine are united in the trunk, the stones of a building upon the foundation, or the members of the body with the head. With the strictest truth all Christians may be said to be already "in heavenly places in Christ." This double application of the word is neither foreign nor forced, incorrect nor indistinct. When it is used indefinitely, it applies to the community of believers assembled in Christ: when it is used with respect to an individual church, which is its most general application, the context, or the nature

of the circumstances, gives sufficient intimation. Let any one take the trouble to run over all the places where it is found in the New Testament, and I will be bold to say, he will not find a single text, which will not fairly explain on this hypothesis. The cases where it may occur in the civil- or unappropriated sense, are not accompanied with the smallest difficulty, the context, or a note of appropriation, as "church of Christ," &c. sufficiently marking the difference. Those who, from this circumstance, would argue the impossibility of ascertaining the meaning of the word church in Mat. xviii. 17. and elsewhere, will find the same difficulty in the words apostles, angel, and innumerable others. Indeed the admission of this principle, and I see it admitted, and acted upon, by some very ingenious men, would involve, in impenetrable darkness, the clearest point in theology. If it be maintained, that the meaning of a word so important, so frequently used in the epistles, could not be ascertained, why should not this be the case with others? Were such a principle established in criticism, I have no hesitation in saying, that there is not an ancient author could be understood; that there is not a passage so clear in any author, in any language, upon any subject, which could not be so perplexed by the ingenuity of a sophist, that the ablest critic could not unravel it. Critics would be ashamed to reason thus on a passage in Homer or Sophocles. Grant only to the inspired writers, what will be granted to all—that they had a meaning in their words, and wrote to be understood, and it will be our fault if we cannot understand them.

Having stated the literal meaning, the profane and sacred application of the word *εκκλησια* let us next examine the claims of its modern \* acceptations. It is quite a cameleon. It is as various in its meaning, as the necessities of each party require. Sometimes it is a church session: sometimes an individual church; sometimes a classical presbytery; sometimes a synod; sometimes a general assembly; sometimes church rulers;

\* I call them modern, because they are later than the New Testament.



sometimes all the churches of a province or kingdom. Truly, if the Scripture gives ground for all these, it is more dark and perplexing than was ever an answer of the Sybil. Is not the bare statement a refutation of the fact? and the supposition a calumny on the oracles of God? But the practice of presbyterians themselves, is a complete refutation of this hypothesis. They do not speak promiscuously of all their assemblies by the name church, but have a distinct name for each, as the congregation, the session, the presbytery, the synod, &c. Now, if each order of these courts be a church, as well as each congregation, and the collective congregations, why do they not speak of them by the scripture name? Why have they imposed upon them names of their own invention? Evidently because they would otherwise be unintelligible. If one of their writers on church discipline was to speak of all their assemblies by the name church, without additional marks of distinction, his readers would not understand him: yet this is the very inaccuracy they charge upon the writers of the New Testament. They suppose them to speak promiscuously of the greatest variety of subordinate courts, as well as assemblies of a different nature, by the same name, without any mark of distinction to guide the reader. Now, I think this is a very fair criterion; scripture ordinances should be sufficiently intelligible by scripture names, without the use of any other. I believe it will be found a very just conclusion, *that the institutions which have not a name in scripture, have not an existence in scripture.* Let presbyterians, then, use nothing but the Scripture names, and their doctrine of subordinate courts will be jargon. By their unnatural extension of this word, they have taken it in modern use from that which alone deserves it—the individual assemblies of the saints. Let us suppose, then, that *εκκλησια* might have been legitimately appropriated to denote any one of these assemblies, this appropriation will take it from all the rest. If a session is a church, then a congregation cannot be a church; if either of these be a church, then a presbytery cannot, without confusion, be usually so denominated; and if a presbytery is a church, then it will take that name from all inferior and superior courts. Now,

if these courts be scriptural, let their advocates produce their distinct scriptural names. No word can have two appropriate meanings upon the same subject; *εκκλησια* may be a civil assembly and appropriated also to a religious assembly; but in neither civil nor religious matters can it be appropriated as the distinctive name of two different assemblies, the one subordinate to the other. It may denote a particular assembly of saints, and the community of Christians assembled in Jesus; but without confusion, it cannot be used as the appropriated name of a particular and general assembly of the same sort. This is clear from the names of civil courts. Though some of these be such as to be literally applicable to all, yet they are not so appropriated. Thus sessions, assizes, &c. Thus also in the church of England, though each of the orders are called clergymen, yet for this very reason it could not be the appropriated distinctive name of any one of them. There is curate, rector, bishop, &c. For the same reason, though *bishop* was the common name of all presbyters originally, yet when it was appropriated to one of the number, it was taken from all the rest. If, then, the word church be generally applicable to such a variety of assemblies, each assembly must have a distinctive name besides; to produce which out of Scripture, will be rather an arduous task. Besides, in speaking particularly of each of these assemblies, the common name could not be used, any more than the name clergyman would distinguish a bishop from a presbyter. When our Lord says, then "tell it to the church;" if he intends presbyterian ecclesiastical courts, to which does he refer? If to the session, then all higher appeals are cut off; for if the offending brother will not "hear the church, let him be as an heathen man and a publican:" if it means a general synod or assembly, then all inferior courts are cut off. But if *church* be also the scripture name of an individual assembly of saints, consisting of pastors and church members, is not the obscurity still increased? Whether must the congregation or the session be appealed to?

I have hitherto combated this multifarious application of the word, upon the supposition that it was equal-

ly proper to any one of the things signified. But I have objections against the propriety of applying it either to church rulers, or the associated churches of a province or kingdom, both from the meaning of the word and its original application, as well as its use in Scripture. According to the intrinsic ideas contained in *εκκλησια* the churches of a province or kingdom could not be so called, because they are never assembled. Now this would be *an assembly, never assembled*. Should it be said that they are present in their representatives, as the nation may be said to be present in the parliament, (besides that this is too figurative for a distinctive or appropriated name,) then private individuals can no more be called members of the church of Scotland, &c. than private subjects members of parliament. None are members of an assembly, but those actually possessing a right to sit in that assembly. A national or provincial church, in this view, consists of church rulers alone, or rather a selection of church rulers. Besides, church is used in scripture, according to its literal signification, for an assembly of saints *actually* assembled; it would not therefore be used in such a loose sense in the first stages of its history. Words may come to lose their leading idea, but it is always by the operation of time and change of circumstances. Add to this, that the Greeks did not use it for representative assemblies; but assemblies in which all the citizens had a right to be present. None were represented but the members who composed the assembly. Children, females, and slaves were not represented. This last objection lies equally against church rulers being at any time exclusively called *the church*. *Ἐκκλησια* was a popular assembly, distinguished from *συγκλησια* an assembly of nobles or senators. It seems very clear that this latter would be the most appropriate name for a court of church rulers: I freely acknowledge, that the literal ideas contained in the word *εκκλησια* might be applicable to a court of church rulers, but it would be upon a principle different from its usual application among the Athenians, as well as its other acknowledged applications in Scripture. A church of Christ is so called, because it consists of members called and separated from the world

by the gospel of Christ, and united in the enjoyment of his ordinances. But if a court of church rulers were so called, it would be not because they were called out of the world, and united in the service of Christ, but called out from their brethren to legislate for, and govern them. Now such a use of the word would be nothing a-kin to the other. They would not be the same word, though composed of the same letters. Between the particular and general use of the word church, the leading ideas are common; both are called out of the world by the gospel, separated from it, and assembled in Christ. But between these and the word as signifying church rulers, there is no resemblance. To appropriate a word for a double purpose upon the same subject, by a process so different, is altogether unexampled. Neither is this agreeable to the principle that generally operates in language, to extend and diversify the signification of words. They are usually correctly and ambiguously applied at first; variety of signification grows by abuse and time, as a fact related by many individuals will be known in different countries, with a loss or addition of circumstances. Add to this, that in a new science or art, when an author is obliged to borrow and appropriate a word, he doth so generally agreeably to its natural import and approved use in the language from which it is taken. If, then, our Lord had taken *ἐκκλησία* to denote an individual assembly of saints, he would have taken *συνεκκλησία* for a court of church rulers, if he had instituted such a court.

But what saith the scripture? This must finally decide the pretensions of these different claimants. Is there a single passage in which this word must be acknowledged to have any of those significations I combat? Does it occur in any place where it plainly refers to a court of church rulers, or to a number of churches under an associated government? Are not all the passages in which it is said to be so used as undecided as the present? Upon what principle, then, of fair criticism can it be argued? If they could produce any one occurrence of it, in which it must incontestibly be so un-

derstood, there might be some colour of ground so to understand it in others, though used with less perspicuity. But without an acknowledged foundation, they never can raise a superstructure. If the word *church* was in any one place explained to be a representative assembly, and an association of the churches of a kingdom, they might plead such a sense here with efficacy. But if it is never so explained, never can it be so interpreted here. On the other hand, we can produce texts innumerable, where it signifies an individual assembly of saints, and in which our opponents must and do acknowledge that it hath such a signification. We can produce a number of passages in which a church of Christ is explained to consist of the saints of a particular church. By what authority, then, can they refuse it to have such a signification here? There is not the least intimation in any part of the New Testament of a representative government. Nothing is said about a number of church rulers being selected as an ecclesiastical council over a number of individual churches; nor any such use of the word church, as including a number of individual churches. When the inspired writers speak of a single assembly of saints, they invariably call it a church: when they speak of a number of churches, or the churches of a province or district, they do not call them a church, but churches. Thus when Paul writes to the Corinthians, he addresses the "*church* of God which is at Corinth:"—but when he writes to the Galatians, he addresses *the churches* of Galatia. Thus also when the church of Jerusalem is spoken of, it is called *a church*; but when the aggregate of the individual churches of Judea and Samaria are spoken of, they are not called the church of Judea, or the church of Samaria, but the *churches* of Judea, and the *churches* of Samaria: Thus also *the church* of Cenchrea, (Rom: xvi. 1.) and the *churches* of Achaia: the *church* of Ephesus, the *church* of Smyrna, &c. But when they are spoken of in the aggregate, it is the seven *churches* of Asia, not the *church* of Asia, Rev. i. 4. and ii. 1. &c. I know indeed that with respect to Jerusalem and Corinth, it is alleged that the saints in those cities must have been too numerous to have assembled in one place. But I need

not take up my time in shewing how or where they might assemble, or in ascertaining their numbers. They are not more numerous than I wish them to have been; and the scripture itself refutes the objection in both instances. Acts ii. 44. 1 Cor. v. 4. and xi. 18. In these passages they are expressly shewn to have met in the same place.

But if there were really any ambiguity in Mat. xviii. 17. can there be a better way of ascertaining truth than by referring to the use of it in the writings of the New Testament of a later date, thus comparing spiritual things with spiritual? Can there be a better commentary on the gospels, than the epistles? If any thing is not fully explained, but hinted at, by Christ, where will we go for farther information, but to the apostles, who were to finish the revelation he had begun, and fully illustrate, what may be said to lie in embryo in his words? Can any thing then be a clearer commentary on Mat. xviii. 17. if it needed any, than 1 Cor. vi. 1.—where Paul speaks of another similar case of discipline? Can it be supposed that the apostle would institute one way of terminating disputes, and his Master another? The apostle makes the *saints* of an *individual church* at Corinth, the arbiters of civil disputes. Would he have done so if his Lord had referred personal disputes to the cognizance of an ecclesiastical council? No man will say so.

The ingenious Dr. Campbell, who, in his Lectures on church history, has treated this subject with demonstrative clearness, alleges the acceptance of the word among the Jews with signal success\*. He shews that it was appropriated with them in the same manner either to the whole nation or church of Israel, which was a type of the universal church of Christ, or to those that met for worship in the same synagogue. Now, this being the then received acceptance in the time of our Lord, he would not have been understood, had he em-

\* See Dr. Campbell's Lectures on Church History, vol. i. page 320.

ployed it in any other ; and as he could not intend the whole commonwealth of Christians, it must be a congregation of Christians. But how unintelligibly do they represent Christ as speaking, who give so many acceptations to the word church? Suppose we insert congregation instead of church, who would understand him to refer to ecclesiastical courts? Yet *congregation* is no more fixed by presbyterians to their assemblies for public worship, than *εκκλησια* was to denote the members of a synagogue, or of an apostolical church. Neither is *εκκλησια* more applicable, nor indeed is it so applicable to the various presbyterian assemblies, as *congregation*. A synod or general assembly might have been at first denominated congregation as well as by the term by which they are now known. What presbyterian now would say "tell it to the congregation," intending by that a church court. Yet this would not be more senseless than what they attribute to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another argument Dr Campbell brings, equally convincing, is derived from the practice of the churches in the first ages. "Another collateral and corroborative evidence," says he, "that by *εκκλησια* is here meant not a representative body but the whole of a particular congregation, is the actual usage of the church for the first three hundred years. I had occasion formerly to remark, that as far down as Cyprian's time, which was the middle of the third century, when the power of the people was on the decline, it continued to be the practice, that nothing in matters of scandal and censure could be concluded, without the consent and approval of the congregation. And this, as it appears to have been pretty uniform, and to have subsisted from the beginning, is, in my opinion, the best commentary which we, at this distance, can obtain on the passage." See page 325. vol. i.

I may add farther, that the circumstance of the word *church* being afterwards used to signify the house of worship, is a very clear corroborative argument

argument to shew that an individual worshipping assembly of Christians, and not a representative body of church rulers, or the churches of a particular district, was first so called. Though this be not scriptural, yet it shews the primitive application of the word, when the house received the name of the assembly. Just as the Jewish houses of worship were called synagogues, from the assembling of the people therein. This shews what sort of assembly a church was. Had it been a meeting of church rulers, like a synod, &c. none but the places of their assembling would have been called *churches*. This, in my opinion, is the most unexceptionable species of historic proof. It can never be biased, and is often the surest criterion of the truth of facts.



## CHAPTER VII.

*The Independency of the Apostolical Churches proved, from the Apostolical Injunctions, and inferred from other circumstances in the Epistles.*

NOR only is the independency of individual churches proved from the origin, and profane and sacred acceptance of the word by which they are denominated; but the laws and regulations given by the apostles for their direction, put the matter beyond doubt.—The whole discipline of Christ's house is, without exception, committed to the individual church, consisting of the pastors and brethren of one congregation. Apostolical injunctions, which cannot be obeyed in any other than an independent church, implies the necessity of independency. Now of this sort, are all the rules, with respect to the administration of discipline. It is the whole church, and not a church session, that is to receive members. Rom. xiv. 1. "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye."—"Receive ye." Now, no presbyterian congregation could comply with this injunction. The brethren have nothing to do with the receiving of members. This province is entirely usurped by the minister and lay-elders.—The epistle to the Corinthians, is addressed to the church of God at Corinth, which is explained, (1 Cor. i. 2.) to consist, not of minister and lay-elders, but of "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." Now, the power of excommunication is expressly vested in the whole church, (chap. v. 4.) not in church rulers alone. If a presbyterian congregation would presume to interfere with their rulers upon such a point, it would be actual rebellion. Nay, the whole congregation, minister, elders and people, could not put way from their communion the grossest adulterer, if

the superior ecclesiastical judicatories would think proper to screen him. But the church at Corinth, is commanded to put away from *among themselves*, that wicked person, (verse 13,) and to purge out the old leaven, (verse 7.) To judge of the application of discipline, that is to examine and judge whether a crime be chargeable upon an accused member, is also stated, (verse 12.) to be the business of the whole church. "Do ye not judge them that are within?" The whole church is to judge the accused person, though the church rulers are to execute the judgment. Now, a church which cannot admit an apostolical direction, cannot be apostolically constituted. Indeed, excommunication, though the highest act of church authority, is so peculiarly the business of the whole church, that the apostle does it not himself by an act of apostolical authority, but commits it to the saints themselves, that there might be an example and model to all future ages. Likewise, in Gal. v. 12. he does not say, "I cut off those that trouble you," but "I would that they were cut off." The restoration of fallen brethren upon repentance, is also the duty of the whole church, (2 Cor. ii. 6, 7, 8. Gal. vi. 1.) Here, it is observable, that the excommunication was not the act of a select part of the church, but "was inflicted of many." We have also seen that the church was the final judge of personal and civil disputes among its members, Mat. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. vi. In these and other instances, the instructions and commands given, necessarily suppose the constitution of the church to which they were directed, to have been independent; for to no other could they have been applied; in no other could they have been executed.

It will not be deemed a sufficient answer to this, that the apostolical discipline may be executed in spirit and substance, though not by those apostolically appointed. The thing must not only be done, but done as it is commanded. The command must not only be obeyed in its primary object, but in the appointed manner, by the divinely appointed agents. Here we have not only the thing commanded to be done, but the persons commanded to do it. We may as well say, that we need not exe-

cute apostolical discipline, as that it may not be done by those apostolically appointed. The judges are here as clearly appointed, as the thing to be judged. To fulfil a law, we must not only do the thing the law directs, but in the manner directed by the law. The law ordains the murderer to die, but it does not warrant any but those legally appointed to judge, condemn, and execute him. The king summons his parliament: but the senators, intent upon their rural amusements, or the improvement of their estates, send their stewards. They meet; they enact laws; they send them to the king. Will he, will the constitution, recognize such legislators? And will the Lord Christ recognize the proceedings of the unconstitutional judicatories, of what are called representative churches? Shall they be excused, who, on account of business, amusement, or indolence, have neglected their duty as church members? They have no more authority to delegate the performance of this, than of any other duty which they owe to society, to their families, or to God.—Would private Christians let any one persuade them, that they were to be present in heaven by representation only? It would be every whit as easy to prove the one as the other. In all the New Testament, there is not the shadow of a representation, in the church of Christ.

To attend to the affairs of Christ's house, is the *privilege* of all church members. It argues ingratitude, contempt, and indifference, to transfer that right to others. But this is not only a privilege, but a duty, and each member is answerable for the personal discharge of it. Every individual member has the king's commission, and the king's command, to attend to the affairs of his kingdom, in concert with his brethren. If any neglect their duty, or pretend to depute others to represent them, they are guilty of disobedience to Christ, indifference to his laws, interest, and honour; and are traitors, as presuming to alter the constitution of his church. If any man, or body of men, assume the right by invasion, or accept it by delegation, they are usurpers, and act without, and contrary to the king's commands. But the very

idea of a transference of duty, in religious matters, is absurd. None can think, judge, or act for another, with respect to spiritual things.

I have supposed the work to be done, and discipline to be duly administered. But I deny that this ever is or can be the case in a perfect manner, when *they* do not the work who are divinely appointed. The imperfect state of discipline, in all presbyterian churches, fully proves the assertion. Some of them, indeed, have a multiplicity of human rules, which they are very rigorous in putting into execution; but I know not any, that act fully up to the discipline of the churches of the New Testament.

Not only is discipline and all church power committed to the individual church, but every direction, command, and exhortation is suited to such alone. There are laws sufficient in the New Testament for the government and conducting of an independent church, but not a single rule, or precept, or example for the government of a number of churches combined. All its rules and examples are applicable to individual congregations only. Independent churches have either precept or example for every case that can possibly occur. They are not obliged to proceed one step upon dubious ground. But it is evident that presbyterians are obliged to vindicate their discipline, &c. by borrowing what is applied to individual churches. Thus the epistles to the church at Rome, to the church at Corinth, &c. &c. are epistles to individual churches, and speak uniformly either of individual duties, or reciprocal duties of church-members, and of the duties of the elders to the flock, and of the flock to the elders. But there is not a word as to the duties of elders as members of an ecclesiastical assembly, or of the duties of private Christians as members of an associated church. Now, if there was such a thing as an associated church under the same government, is it not strange we should have no rules with respect to it; that elders should have no directions as to their duties in these assemblies; and private Christians as to their relations to them? The individual flock is often called

upon to obey their pastors or rulers, but never is either flock or shepherd commanded to obey a superior assembly. The apostles frequently and earnestly inculcate love among the church members, and warn them against schism and divisions. Not a word, however, do they say as to the duty of union among several churches under the same government, nor of the sin of one church separating from another. Is not this a plain proof that they were not externally joined? But men have got a convenient way of quoting scripture now; for what is said (1 Cor. i. 10.) against the members of the same individual church going into factions and parties, they apply to prove the sin of one church separating from another, or individuals separating from the church in which they were educated. We never hear the terrific word *schism* in any other sense in modern application. But it is evident that the schisms which the apostle here reprobates, are not the separation of a part even of an individual church, so as to form another; for this may be often done to advantage; it is the members of the same church running into factions and cabals, against which he speaks. Thus, in every other instance, they have to borrow what is spoken to individual churches, and apply it to associated churches. Either the scriptures are lame, or such associations are unscriptural.

There are various other indirect hints in the epistles, which will occur to the reader who is accustomed to *mine* into the word of God, and *weigh* each particle, as more precious than the gold of Ophir. Truth is ever consistent, and that opinion which does not gain strength from a progressive acquaintance with the scripture, is not likely to be a scripture truth. That hypothesis that forbids a minute attention to the most casual and indirect circumstance divinely recorded, cannot be well founded. An instance of what I mean, we have in 2 Cor. iii. 1. The apostle reasons that he had not, like others, need of recommendatory letters either to or *from the church* at Corinth. Now, the manner of the apostle's speaking here, would have been altogether improper, had the church at Corinth been under presbyterian church government. He speaks of the recommendatory let-

ters as necessary to some, but unnecessary to him, as coming from the *church*, not the presbytery. Had the apostle been a presbyterian, he would have subjected himself and this church to severe censure, had he received credentials from it. This is the prerogative of the presbytery or church rulers alone \*. How would a modern church judicatory resent it, if a probationer were to receive credentials from one of their congregations? The apostle himself could not be received into the general synod, if he could not produce his credentials from his presbytery. Nor could any minister or congregation *regularly* give him their pulpit.

The whole strain of the letters of the apostle Paul to the churches, shews them to have been independent. He uniformly addresses, praises, or blames the church itself, and never a church session or ecclesiastical council of any sort. In chapter v. and xi. of 1 Cor. he blames the whole members, with respect to the incestuous person and their irregularities in eating the Lord's Supper. Had they been under presbyterian government, the *brethren* could not have been guilty; in keeping the fornicator, because they had no authority for putting him out. The session and superior courts would have been exclusively to blame; and would, undoubtedly, have received marked apostolical censure. If improper persons are admitted to communion among presbyterians, what private member takes the guilt upon himself; but, if he disapproves of it, exclaims against the session. Upon the same persons should the abuses of the Lord's Supper have been principally chargeable.

In like manner, when our Lord writes to the seven churches of Asia, he praises or blames them individually. He never censures one, for the errors of another, though, with great severity, he reprimands each, for the errors of any part of itself. He charges the whole church as guilty, in keeping or retaining in communion an errone-

\* See also Acts xviii. 27. When Apollos was disposed to pass over into Achaia, he received recommendatory letters from the brethren, not a classical presbytery.

ous or profligate member ; but he never charges one church, with the errors of another. Now, if they had been under the presbyterian form of church government, all the churches would have been chargeable with the faults and defects of each, as much as the whole individual church was chargeable with those of its members. Neither does he call upon the one to reform the other ; but each to reform itself. Now, had the churches of Lesser Asia been presbyterian, our Lord would have written to the synod or presbytery, and not to the individual churches to reform themselves. A presbyterian congregation cannot reform itself. Christ, therefore, could not have been the author of presbytery.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.*

HAVING investigated the claims of presbytery and independency upon scripture evidence, it may be proper to take notice of some objections that I have heard urged against the scheme which I defend. Some of these are really so futile, that I am almost ashamed to bring them forward, to give them a formal refutation. But I have observed in conversation on this subject, that when the advocates of presbytery are driven from the scriptures, they sometimes shelter themselves under the supposed defects of independency, or advantages of presbytery. And it is really astonishing with what superficial reasoning, they will impose upon themselves. A few of such objections I will mention, and dispatch with the utmost brevity.

1. It is alleged, that "there are too many sects already, and that we should rather endeavour to unite those that are already formed, than form another." I perfectly agree with the objector, that there are too many sects already, and that it is our duty to endeavour to unite Christians in all things. But how is this to be done? Is it by each party proposing to throw away a part of what they look upon to be truth, and embrace a little of what they consider wrong, that they may splice up a worldly union? Is it by the church rulers of different sects, meeting to compromise their differences, like a reference after a quarrel in a country fair? Is it by such language as this, "I will give up so much, give you up so much, and we will meet?" Is this a scriptural way to unite sects? Is it not rather for each to appeal to the Bible, and meet on that common



ground? Should not the language be, "We cannot all be right, let us then try our systems by the standard of truth, adopt whatever it recommends, and reject whatever it condemns?" Truly it is a very modest way of reasoning, that there are so many sects already, that there is no room for introducing the model which Christ has left us in the churches of the apostles! If once Christians could be brought to *feel* it their duty to *cease from man*, and renounce every standard but the Bible, they would not be long in uniting. Every union that is attempted, or affected upon other grounds, is not of God, but of the world.

2. It is suspected that "the encouragement that is given to call in question the opinions of our forefathers, and scrutinize them so severely by the scriptures, will excite such a spirit of innovation, that it will lead to universal scepticism." Nay, some go so far as actually to fix the time when such inquirers must be advanced into atheists.

Truly it is a very astonishing thing that a habit of searching the word of God, of relying implicitly upon it, and comparing all human opinions with that standard, must lead to scepticism. As well may it be said, that a habit of trusting God will lead us to distrust him. The scriptures then are to blame for commending the Bereans for "searching the scriptures daily whether these things were so." If our ancestors at the reformation, had been afraid of these consequences, they never would have dared to call in question the antient usages of their fathers, or to have condemned them by the word of God. Never can any hurt arise from searching the scriptures and a habit of being regulated by them. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not agreeable to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

I do not however mean to say, that there are no extremes on this side of the question; but I do say, that these do not consist in comparing every human opinion about divine things, with the word of God; in reject-

ing every tittle of what is contrary to this standard ; and adopting the merest minutiae of what is pointed out. To run into extremes here, must be to go farther than the scriptures. While we keep upon this ground, we cannot advance too far. But in searching the scriptures upon this, as well as every other subject, there is great need of humility, and a consciousness of our own nothingness in the sight of God. If ever we begin the search with a desire to go beyond others, and have the honour to be more sharp-sighted than those who preceded us, we shall certainly err. The natural pride of the human heart shews itself in various ways, and it is not strange that it should sometimes lead even good men into singularities. The scriptures are plain, but it is only "the Spirit that can lead us into all truth." In searching the scriptures for the mind of God, we should never neglect to ask, not formally, but earnestly and continually, the guidance of that heavenly conductor. O what prayer ! what self-abasement ! what a thirst for truth ! what self denial, are necessary in those who would advance in the knowledge of divine things ! If we depend upon our own superior sagacity, if we prize not the smallest scripture truth as more precious than rubies, and are not ready to give up the dearest earthly possessions and connexions rather than part with it ; if we have not simplicity of view, and a single eye to the glory of God, it will not be strange if we go astray in our search. But if we are made willing to receive truth at the greatest risk, and, conscious of our weakness, incessantly and importunately to crave the direction of the Spirit, I do not think that the God of truth will suffer us to be led astray. Whilst, therefore, we, like the Bereans, search the scriptures for ourselves, let us not be *heady* or *high-minded*, but humbly wait at the feet of Jesus, to learn wisdom from his lips.

3. It is alleged that "the presbyterian form of government is better calculated to repress heresy, preserve purity of doctrine, and authoritatively settle all disputes that arise among their congregations." But I ask, how have they this power ? Is it by force or persuasion ? If it is by the latter, then independents enjoy

it in its utmost latitude ; if it is by the former, then the gospel disclaims it ; Christ abhors it. Is not this evidently inconsistent with the whole spirit and letter of the gospel ? These are carnal, not spiritual weapons. Is not this to put a hand to the ark, and a distrust of the power of the great head of the church, who bears it upon his own shoulders ? What is the crime in the nations which God hath always punished with the greatest rigour ? Is it not that of presuming to take upon themselves the defence and protection of his people the Jews ? Those who injured his people, are indeed punished ; but those who stepped in between him and them, to take their confidence off himself, are punished with the utmost severity. Egypt, that oppressed Israel, was punished ; but the crime was, as it were, afterwards forgotten ; but Egypt that became the staff of Israel, is not pardoned till this very day. From the overthrow of Nectanebus by Ochus, 350 years before Christ, it never has had a king of its own. Degraded from among the nations, governed by foreigners, enslaved and oppressed, God hath exhibited it as a malefactor in the gibbet, for a warning to others. He is as jealous of the prerogative of supporting his church, as a husband is of the confidence and affection of his wife, and views every foreign interference, as an attack upon his honour. Will men, then, never learn to trust God with his own cause, and use only the means that he hath appointed to preserve his truths ? Will they never cease to provoke his jealousy, by associations to defend his church ? Is there any fear that ever the gates of hell will shake it off Immanuel's shoulders ? Alas, that ever Christians should have thought of substituting human bulwarks, for the continual presence of Jehovah, who is as a *wall of fire around his Zion !*

But the presbyterian method of preserving orthodoxy, and settling disputes, is not only unscriptural, but is always without any real advantage. They may keep their members from preaching contrary to their standard, but can they enable "the blind to lead the blind, without both falling into the ditch." Force may make

a hypocrite, but can never make a Christian. Interest may constrain a carnal man to profess the leading truths of the gospel, but midnight darkness will reign in his congregation. Among many there is a continual cry of *soundness* and *orthodoxy*, who appear to every spiritual man to be destitute of the truth, as it is in Jesus, and to hold the truth in unrighteousness. Even among the stricter sects of presbyterians, I am constrained to say, that while some of them do not fail to shew their zeal by lifting up a testimony against the corruptions of the general synod, they appear to be *bunting* after the world with equal avidity. And I know where it is said, "If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him."

4. It is alleged in behalf of presbytery, that "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety; that several congregations must have more wisdom than one; and that an assembly of learned men must be better qualified to transact church matters than an ignorant multitude."

This reasoning might have some effect, if there was any thing left to the wisdom of man. The generality of Christians, are the "weak things of this world." and of all men living they are the least qualified for the arduous duty of legislation. But thanks be to God, he hath left no such things to be done by any. Every necessary law and direction are given, and nothing more is necessary, than to judge of their application, to which the most ordinary capacity is equal, in the use of the appointed means, and under the promised guidance of the Spirit. Poor despised Christians would indeed be ill qualified to appear in what is impiously styled a court of Christ. But the meanest and most ignorant of them are equal to judge of every case of discipline, that can occur in Christ's house; for it is said that "they shall be all taught of God." And indeed I would expect a more just determination from such, than from the representatives of all the churches on earth. Christ's presence is with the one, as being according to his own ap-

pointment, while it is likely the other shall be left to their own wisdom\*.

\* Such objectors differ very widely from the Apostle Paul, who supposes that even the weakest saints are capable of judging not merely of the spiritual concerns of the church, but also of settling the civil disputes of the brethren. 1 Cor. vi. 4 "If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church." We are not to suppose from this however, that a church is always to select "the least esteemed" for the arbitration of civil differences. In my opinion the spirit of the passage is this—differences among brethren should be settled by arbitration of the church. Some of the Corinthians had transgressed this rule, and shewn, by their appealing to the civil law, that they supposed there were not any among their brethren fit for this office. The apostle takes fire at the supposition, that those who were to judge wicked men and angels as assessors with Christ in the great day, should be esteemed unfit to judge in such comparatively trivial matters; and to shew them that he looked upon all Christians to be qualified for this business, he bids them choose from among themselves even those that were accounted the weakest. As if he had said, to shew you that they are wise in whom the Spirit of God dwells, let the "least esteemed" brethren be singled out upon any emergency, and they will wisely determine the matter. Then he subjoins, "I speak this to your shame;" you have looked upon all your brethren as unwise or unjust; the Spirit of God declares them all, even the least esteemed of them, to be qualified to settle your disputes. Are you not then ashamed of your opinion and conduct, with respect, to your brethren, judging so unfavourably of them, and differing so much from the judgment of God? That the apostle looked upon all the saints as fit for such an office, is clear, not only from the words "least esteemed," but also from the arguments of illustration in the 2d and 3d verses—the saints judging the world and fallen angels. All the saints small and great, shall have this honour; therefore, to make the argument conclusive, all the saints must be fit for the duty of arbitration. But that a church is not bound *always* to select the "least esteemed" for this purpose, is clear, not only from the spirit of the passage already explained, but from what follows in the 5th verse—"Is it so that there is not a wise man amongst you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" This question supposes, that the church was at liberty to choose

I have heard, that the most usual, and the most effectual way that certain persons have taken to prejudice the minds of the people of this country against independents, is, by representing them as “disorderly;”—“without discipline;”—“breaking down the hedge;”—“not coming in by the door.”

In the New Testament, Christ calls himself the door; if any one, then, come not in at this door, I heartily consent that all pulpit doors be shut against him. God is said to have made a hedge about his vineyard. But it seems now, that not Christ, but the presbytery, is *the door*, and, that the hedge of God’s laws and institutions is not sufficiently high and prickly to keep out wild beasts, but it must be new-made, or at least mended by synodical authority. I am afraid that the generality, even of Christians, in this country, are much mistaken in their notions of the discipline of Christ’s house. It is not the punctual attention to a wide system of human rules and regulations, that deserves the name of discipline, but the faithful execution of all the laws, given by Christ in the New Testament. Those sects, who, in this country, are most highly applauded for discipline, have indeed, a rigorous code of human laws, and are peculiarly strict in the observance of them; but this is not discipline, but ecclesiastical usurpation and tyranny. Christ’s discipline is calculated to prevent the entrance of the carnal professor, or to discover him, if he has been admitted. But such a person, if he has a decent behaviour, and a sound of orthodoxy, might pass his life in the most rigorous presbyterian connections, without detection. He must, indeed, have a considerable portion of pharisaical righteousness, but he will be admitted and

the wisest among the brethren. If then, the “least esteemed,” are qualified judges, they are inexcusable, who will not be amenable to the decision of the most esteemed in the church. Corollary—If the weakest brethren are qualified to decide in matters of property, without appealing to the superior learning, wisdom, or judicial knowledge of a presbytery or synod, nay without even appealing to the civil law, much more are they qualified to judge of every thing, as to the discipline of Christ’s house.

continued without the life and power of godliness. This is a bold charge; if any sect of presbyterians think it unjust, let them repel it. Before they can do this, they must be able to declare, that there is not an individual in their connexion, that they do not look upon as a member of Christ. If they cannot make this declaration, their discipline is defective. I can refer them to an independent church, consisting of more than 600 members, in which each individual can make this declaration concerning his brethren. I am therefore constrained to charge such objectors, either with the grossest ignorance, or wilful misrepresentation. A want of discipline, is what I charge upon presbyterians. This is among the chief objections I have to them. "By their traditions, they have made void the law of God." But let them produce one single rule of discipline, appointed by Christ, which independents refuse to admit. If they can shew them any thing in scripture, which they have not hitherto observed, I am sure they will not act up to their principles, if they do not adopt it with gratitude. But if they must be called "disorderly," because they reject the interference of man in the things of God, because they refuse obedience to any rules but those of Christ, they are not concerned to repel the charge.

6. When presbyterians are driven from the Bible, they sometimes shelter themselves under the wings of learned and pious men. "Are you wiser or better than our ancestors, who have shed their blood for presbytery? If ever the Spirit of God was with any body of men, it was with the Westminster divines." With some, it is very common to point at the reformation as perfect, and every declension in principle or practice in professors, is a declension, not from the scriptures, but the *reformation*. They must indeed be blind, who do not look upon the reformation as the greatest national blessing any people ever experienced; but those who thus idolize the reformers, are guilty of setting up another God in Israel. However much we have been benefited by their labours, however eminent were their attainments, it is "to the law, and to the testimony;"

not to the reformers, we are directed as the standard of truth. As to the Westminster assembly, I am neither concerned to accuse nor condemn them.—Episcopacy, presbytery, and independency have each had some of the most pious men in the list of their defenders; the Christian then can have no safe guide but the Bible.

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## CHAPTER IX.

*Reasons why some are apt to conclude, that there is no Church-model in Scripture.*

I HAVE now given my reasons, why it is probable that the scriptures of the New Testament contain a model of church government, and have examined the pretensions of presbytery and independency. Before I dismiss the subject of church government, I think it not amiss, to point out a few reasons, why some ingenious and pious men have not been able to discover any definite plan of any kind. If disinterested enquirers differ materially upon any point, in the examination of which they draw from a common source, there is likely to be some circumstances in their situation which lead to the difference; something that tends to involve the subject of inquiry.

1. In my opinion, one thing that tends to prevent some from seeing a model of church government in the New Testament, is, their being accustomed to take their ideas of the government of a spiritual, from that of a temporal kingdom. They are apt to expect a vigorous plan, a-kin to their ideas of the best constituted civil governments. Whatever they judge the best calculated to govern a kingdom of this world, they look upon to be the fittest for the kingdom of Christ. In examining the scriptures, then, it is no wonder they pass and repass the apostolical model, without seeing it. This is too



simple to be effectual. Like Naaman the Syrian, who thought he was mocked by the prophet, when he prescribed as his cure, to wash in the water of Jordan, they do not think it worth their trouble, even to give it a trial. They must have a firm and coercive plan, calculated to sustain Christianity, and avenge it of its adversaries, as civil rights are by civil laws. In this view, I grant that the apostolical government must disappear, when brought into contrast or competition with either presbytery or episcopacy. Presbytery is a vigorous republic; but as I said elsewhere, *this* is not calculated to govern a single carnal family. It would be totally inefficient in worldly policy. To those, then, who have these worldly ideas of Christ's kingdom, independency is like David going out with his sling and pebbles against Goliath.

2. Others are much influenced by the carnal institutions, and pompous and multifarious Jewish hierarchy and sanhedrim. They are apt to transfer their ideas of the government of the Jewish church, to that of the Christian. If they are too impartial and enlightened to pretend to see any thing of this nature in the New Testament, they are inclined to think, that for this reason, we are left to form a mode of church government for ourselves, according to time and circumstances. They do not find what they expect, and they hastily conclude that nothing is to be found.

3. Many inquirers have been all their lives so accustomed to the pompous, multifarious, and complicated systems of presbytery, and episcopacy, that when they go to the New Testament they are led to overlook the simple apostolical plan. Their minds are filled with these intricate and punctilious systems, and are so habituated to the voluminous canons, laws, rules, regulations, acts, &c. &c. &c. which are to be found in almost all modern churches, that the Scripture directions for church government, appear altogether defective, obscure, and unadequate. They look into the Scriptures—they can find neither the church of England, nor the church of Scotland, nor any of the numerous sects

formed on the same model—they instantly conclude, that there is no form of government revealed, or at most, is only coarsely blocked, to be variously formed or shaped according to the different humours of succeeding ages.

4. Another reason why some are inclined to conclude that there is nothing delivered in Scripture sufficient for the government of a church, is, that many writers have represented the matter much more clear, full, and express, than it is in reality. With some there is not a doctrine more clearly and fully revealed in Scripture. They can see their favourite system in almost every page. When we hear men arguing from the tabernacle of Moses, to the polity of the Christian church, and asserting that Christ's faithfulness engaged him to be as explicit, full and particular, in giving a model for the government of his church, as Moses was in erecting the Tabernacle, and thus determining *a priori*, with the most arrogant confidence, what Christ must have done, instead of considering what he has actually done, we are apt to expect *the most stately fabric*. When we go to the Scriptures themselves, if we cannot see through the magnifying glasses of particular sects, and swallow their *high probabilities* for demonstration, we are ready to conclude that there is no definite model at all. They make us expect a giant; we see a man, of nothing but the ordinary size; and from our disappointment, we are ready to look upon him as a very dwarf. When we are made to expect too much, we are apt to be chagrined with our disappointment; and from our previous high imagination, we think the object more insignificant than it really is. Dr Pococke tells us he had formed such an idea of the celebrated cataracts of the Nile; from the exaggerated accounts of former travellers, that when he came in sight of them, so very much did they fall below his expectations, so far from thinking these to be the objects of his curiosity, he asked when he should reach them; and it was not without surprise, that he was told they were already in view. Such is the case with many when they go to look for church government in the Scriptures.

5. Another thing that tends to hide the Scripture model from some inquirers is their expectation of a *systematic* plan, or a formal treatise on the subject. They look for a *jointed* scheme, as methodically detailed, as presbytery is exhibited in the Westminster Confession. When they look into the New Testament for such a plan, there is nothing like it to be found; the half of the whole epistles would scarcely contain such a system. The conclusion then is, that no form of church government is revealed. I would ask such inquirers, upon what do they found their expectation of a system, or formal treatise on church government? Is there in the whole range of revelation, any thing like a system, upon any subject? Is there any doctrine, is there any precept in scripture delivered systematically? Take, for instance, the doctrine of the atonement; we do not find all the texts that illustrate this doctrine, collected into a system, but scattered from the beginning to the end of revelation. In the same manner, doctrines and precepts are not kept distinct, but intentionally intermingled, as it were, to prevent daring men from separating them, and setting up the one in opposition to the other. Doctrines are there taught practically, and precepts as flowing from the doctrines. We have in the same reasoning, in the same period, doctrine and precept. Thus in Philippians ii. 5.—11, we have the doctrine of Christ's equality with the Father, and the precept of humility, as flowing from this, in the same period.

Indeed the manner of the revelation of divine truth, seems every where calculated and intended to excite to industry and search, and overcome our natural love of ease. Nothing is got by the lazy and inattentive. While on the one hand the great truths of revelation are so plain, that a man may, as it were, "run and read," being found in every page, so that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein;" on the other, it is so wisely regulated to spur us to exertion, that to exhibit completely in all its features and bearings, and effectually prove any one point, it is necessary to turn over and over, search every page, compare spi-

ritual things with spiritual, and examine the same doctrine in the different connexions and views in which it is found in Scripture. In one text a doctrine is taught, perhaps with all its essential parts, but with some of its features more marked and prominent than others, according to the purpose the Holy Spirit meant it to serve on that particular occasion. In another, the same truth is brought forward in a different point of view, to serve a different purpose, with the features that were less prominent in the other, now more marked and distinct. Like a painter who would exhibit the same scene in a multiplicity of views, alternately bringing forward and putting into the back ground the different objects which he wants to represent. In one representation we have a palace as the chief object of attention, and its owner and family walking at some distance, are seen indistinctly. In another, the owner, if a celebrated personage, is represented as the chief object, and the palace is put into the shade. In another, if the painter has an intention to shew us principally, some surprising and romantic scenery, we will see the palace and the master both put into the back-ground. Now, that we may form a clear and distinct notion of the master, the palace, and the scenery, we must view all the three pictures alternately, though all are represented in every one of them. Just so it is in Scripture. Its truths are so scattered, and variously represented, upon such various occasions, for so many distinct purposes, that we cannot have a complete view of any one of them without examining the whole Bible. They are so interwoven, and have such a connexion and mutual dependence upon each other, that a knowledge of one truth cannot thoroughly be obtained without a pretty general acquaintance with all the rest \*. How absurd is it then, to expect a system or formal treatise on church govern-

\* I am sure I have found the advantage of this mode of revelation in examining this subject. Had it been methodically laid down in one place, and been accompanied with no difficulties, I would have been deprived of much additional knowledge, which I obtained, on many points, in my search.

ment! If the greatest truths of Scripture are revealed in this manner, how unreasonable is it to expect a different method on this point! Yet it appears to me that an attentive observer will find that the reason why many conclude there is no form of church government laid down in Scripture, is because they do not find a *system*.

6. Some are led to think that there is no complete model intended to be exhibited in the New Testament, because all we have on this subject is given indirectly, and as it were unintentionally, and not sufficiently and fully explained. I have already hinted at the reason why the subject could not be consistently handled in an express and copious manner. As we are no where known in Scripture, but in the person of the first churches, we could not expect a direct address on the subject of church government: what is said to them is said to us. And as it would be absurd to expect that an apostle, after *forming a church* in any place, would, in a subsequent letter, give them express directions for *the formation of a church*, seeing this was already done; all we can expect is an indirect, and as it were, an unintentional allusion to what was done, and a scattered picture of their church order. Instead, then, of being disappointed at this mode of communication, no other can we reasonably expect. Indirect hints, incidental observations, and a passing view of their practice, is all that the *manner* of revelation can admit. The knowledge of their church order must necessarily be obtained from passages where the apostles are professedly treating of something else. But this is not the only thing to be proved in this manner. The chief knowledge that we have upon many other points, is obtained exactly in this indirect and circuitous way. A distinction between ordinary and extraordinary officers is generally admitted; yet the exact boundaries of their office is no where professedly and exactly treated. A standing ministry is generally granted, yet the chief proofs of this must be obtained from incidental, indirect, and as it were, unintentional hints, and the example of the apostolical churches. To prove the truth of the Scrip-

tures themselves, or any of their doctrines, nothing more is necessary than sufficient evidence to convince the humble earnest enquirer. It is by no means necessary to silence the caviller, and divest the disobedient of every pretext. There is not a single doctrine of revelation, the investigation and proof of which, is not accompanied with difficulties. "There must be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest." If, then, there are difficulties, even with respect to truths necessary to salvation, is it strange that there should be more in matters of comparatively less importance?

But though the subject is not largely explained and directly inculcated, the scattered incidental hints we have, when united, will be found not at all deficient for the purposes of church government. They will be found so complete, that a church of Christ will not be obliged to advance a step but on sacred ground. If this be the case. I would ask, what more do people want? I acknowledge, that this mode of conveying divine truth does not suit those who enquire under the influence of a worldly spirit. When this is the case, it will not be strange if the Scriptural materials should appear extremely scanty, and obscure or confused. He will be too ready to think himself justifiable to take the side of worldly interest, unless the glare of evidence be such that it is impossible to resist it. He must be driven to duty by the thunders of Sinai, and not constrained by the gentle voice of Christ, when he says, "He that loveth me, keepeth my commandments." But we should not ask, like Henry IV. of France, "Is there salvation in such a church?" but with the apostle. "Lord what would'st thou have me to do?" ready to perform the least, as well as the greatest of his commandments. We should continually hang upon the lips of our Master, ready with the alacrity and alertness of an angel, to perform his pleasure, glad of discovering it, though it should rob us of our property, or even our life. Such enquirers, I apprehend, will, after leisurely investigation, have no need to complain of a want of Scripture materials on this subject.

## CHAPTER X.

*Character of Church Members—or the necessity of  
pure Communion.*

I HAVE NOW stated my views of church government, which, after an impartial and leisurely search, I have been constrained to embrace. But I have other reasons for separating from the general synod, which still more pungently touch my conscience. One of these is the continual necessity I would be under, of prostituting the ordinances of Christ by promiscuous communion. I shall therefore devote this chapter to point out the character of the members of the apostolical churches, and prove the necessity of pure communion. If I succeed, it will be evident, that I cannot conscientiously remain in a connexion in which I am obliged to transgress so important a law of Christ. Even were I still a friend to presbyterian government, I could not hold communion with the general synod, nor any other presbyterian connexion that I am acquainted with. In none of them that I know of, is there purity of communion. —Many of them, indeed, have raised very high human hedges around the Lord's table, and have enjoined very rigid terms of communion: but in none of them, I believe, is *credible evidence of the new birth* the test of membership. The gate is indeed shut against the openly profane, but the *decent* worldling may pass. At the same time, the child of God is excluded, if he cannot digest all the peculiarities of the sect, and load his soul with a mass of human obligations. If I am mistaken with respect to any involved in this charge, I will be glad to retract my censure, upon convincing

information. I do not write to compliment, neither do I write to expose, but to reform. This is a point which I know many presbyterians will not dispute. They acknowledge its desirableness, but doubt, in the present state of the church, as they speak, its practicability. Nay, all who exclude any, virtually acknowledge this principle. For if they exclude one sort of sinners, by what authority do they admit another? I beg, therefore, that presbyterians of this description will accompany me through this chapter. Though they are able to disprove all I have said on the subject of church government, yet if I can convince them, of the sinfulness of admitting to communion, any but the credible disciples of Christ, and to persuade them to act up to their convictions, I will not have lost my labour. I would be glad indeed, to see any of the presbyterian connexions, even thus far reformed. I acknowledge, I have been guilty in this instance, hitherto, and am persuaded, that nothing has contributed so much to render my labours so unfruitful, though I had not the same views of the subject which I have at present. I look upon promiscuous communion to resemble adultery—it must be viewed by a jealous God with the utmost displeasure. What is the reason, while there are multiplied sects of flamingly orthodox presbyterians, that darkness covers our land, and gross darkness the people? Is the fault in man or in God? “Behold the arm of the Lord is not shortened that he cannot save, nor his ear heavy, that he cannot hear,” &c.

When we look into the epistles for the character of the members of apostolical churches, we find that they were considered as members of the body of Christ, 1 Cor. i. 2. In writing to the church at Corinth the apostle denominates the members *sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints*. Were I not already too voluminous, I would quote and illustrate the addresses and many other passages of the epistles to the churches, to shew the character of the members of the apostolical churches; I must be contented with referring to them, Rom. i. 7. 2 Cor. i. 1. Eph. i. 1. Phil. i. 1. Col. i. 2. and ii. 6. 1 Theff. i. 1. 2 Theff. i. 1. 1 Pet. i. 2.



2 Pet. i. 1. 1 Cor. vi. 11, 19, 20.—x. 17.—xii. 27.  
 2 Theff. ii. 13, 14. 1 Cor. x. 16 17. These passages  
 will clearly point out what is the character of those who  
 ought to be recongnized as church members. The  
 church at Rome is commanded to receive him that is  
*weak in the faith*. Now, this supposes that they were  
 in the habit of judging of those whom they admitted to  
 membership and that those who had *no faith* were not to  
 be received. For if they deliberately received any without  
 evidence of faith, there could be no propriety in com-  
 manding them to receive him that was *weak in faith*.  
 “Give not that which is holy unto dogs,” is as much a  
 command of Christ as “thou shalt not kill;” and what-  
 ever be its primary meaning, it is a general precept, and  
 will hold more eminently true in this instance than in any  
 other I am acquainted with. 1 Cor. iii. 10,—16. is  
 more naturally interpreted of the admission of church  
 members, than of doctrines. Both the preceding, and  
 succeeding connexion fix it to this. Christians, not doc-  
 trines, are the lively stones in God’s building, and God’s  
 husbandry. His temple is to be built of these materials.  
 It is not any doctrine, with respect to Christ, that is said  
 to be the foundation; but he is the foundation *himself*.  
 New members might be added to apostolical churches,  
 but new doctrines could not be lawfully promulgated. In  
 this sense, the apostles not only laid the foundation, but  
 finished the house. There are neither gold, silver, nor  
 precious stones now remaining to be built upon the foun-  
 dation of the apostolical doctrines. But the gold, silver and  
 precious stones, beautifully represent converted church  
 members, who are not injured by the fire, and their dif-  
 ferent degrees of value\*. All are valuable; but while  
 some are silver, others are gold, and others precious  
 stones. On the other hand, unconverted church mem-  
 bers are like wood, hay, and stubble, which will be con-  
 sumed whenever fire is applied. The fire of temptation  
 and persecution will try every church, during which, un-  
 converted members will shew their combustible nature,

\* This interpretation is strengthened from Isaiah liv.  
 11—13, in which church members are represented under si-  
 milar figures.

and be consumed. At least the fire of the great judgment will try the house of what sort of materials it is built, and the builders will either have loss or gain, according to the result of the trial. "And he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire," with the utmost difficulty, as a man escaping from the midst of the flames. He being a servant of Christ himself, shall certainly have an entrance, but not an *abundant* entrance into heaven. Yea, and very probably, when the church is trying, by means of the fire of temptation and persecution, although he may be preserved from falling, he will be "saved by fire." Heavy trials and afflictions may be laid upon him, and the Lord may chastise him sore, though he may not give him over to death. He may be sorely scorched in the fire of affliction, although he be not burnt up. If this be the true interpretation of the passage, which is adopted by some of the best commentators, and which I have always thought the most natural, from the first time I heard it suggested, there is an awful lesson in it to every church ruler, and to every church member, not to hazard the peace and comfort of their own souls here, nor the loss of a part of their reward hereafter, by building God's house with combustible materials; admitting unconverted sinners to membership. But the character of church members is clearly determined from Act ii. 47. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," which is literally translated thus: "The Lord added the *saved* daily to the church." It does not mean that the Lord added to the church universal by conversion, though that is previously supposed; but that he added such as were converted to the church at Jerusalem. As soon as sinners are converted, they are *saved*, and none but the *saved* were added to the church at Jerusalem. It was the *Lord added them*, because the terms of admission were not the *prudential regulations* of the church, but the Scripture evidence of their being *saved*. The church was only God's instrument. "The Lord saved them," and the church seeing this, received them.

When we consider the character of the generality who sit down at the Lord's table, and then read that awful

affeuration (1 Cor. xi. 27.) it is enough to make the hand to tremble which distributes among them the emblems of the body and blood of Christ. Indeed, I am really astonished that my conscience could ever have borne it. Ah! the guilt of professing Christians, in this single instance. If every unworthy communicant is a murderer, yea a murderer of the Lord Christ, what must be the guilt of all sects of presbyterians? Is it any wonder that the labours of faithful individuals among them, should be in a great measure unproductive. If the murder of a man like ourselves be a crime so heinous, in the estimation of God and man, how aggravated a crime is the murder of the Son of God? What countless thousands of stupid sinners are permitted rashly to embroe their hands in the blood of Christ? Dreadful sentence! "Whoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Now, how much more aggravated is the guilt of the church that admits such members, and the pastor that administers this ordinance to them? I know, indeed, that they usually hold themselves excused, by faithfully warning them of their danger, and thus laying their blood upon their own heads. This indeed was my own refuge. I wished to persuade myself, that if I was faithful to point out the characters of such as were unworthy, in a clear and explicit manner, and fervently warn them of their danger, that then I was innocent. But I now clearly see that this refuge was untenable, and have plainly told my people, that I would no more administer that ordinance among them, in the same promiscuous manner than I would descend from the pulpit with a sword in my hand to destroy them. I have no standard but the Bible, and am ready to change any erroneous sentiment or conduct, as soon as I discover it. We are frequently mistaken for want of having made any matter the subject of particular consideration. But if any minister of a feeling conscience, can allow himself in the promiscuous administration of this ordinance, after his attention has been called to the subject, and having made it a matter of prayer and investigation, I am really astonished. The apology of faithfully warning, will not stand even

in human judgment, far less in the awful day of God. If I put a sword into the hand of an angry madman, it will be no excuse for me that I have warned him not to kill the person against whom he is enraged. I might have known he would not have listened to my counsel. So if I put the emblems of Christ's body and blood into the hands of impenitent sinners, I may warn and warn, they are mad, and will not take warning, but rush upon their ruin. Suppose there is a madman standing in an apothecary's shop, while the apothecary is mixing up a dose of poison in a liquor of which the madman is very fond—the madman asks for a drink of it—the apothecary tells him there is poison in it—and that it will surely kill him if he drink it—the madman insists to have it, alleging that there is no fear, and that he can drink it without any injury—the apothecary still asserts that it will kill him if he will drink it; but if he persists in desiring to have it, he will give it him, rather than disoblige him—the madman reaches for it—the apothecary gives it, taking the madman, and those present, and God himself to witness, that he is clear of his blood, for he hath faithfully warned him—the madman drinks—and dies. Reader, were you one of the jury to try the apothecary, would you clear him? Will the Lord clear him in his judgment? And in what does the apothecary differ from the pastor, who puts the emblems of Christ's body and blood into the hands of impenitent sinners? In nothing but in the degree of their guilt. The latter is the more guilty, inasmuch as the shedding of the blood of Christ is a greater crime than the shedding of the blood of a mere man; and in as much as the murder of a soul is a greater crime, than the murder of the body. It is no excuse that great as the crime of unworthy partaking of the Lord's supper is, it is nevertheless pardonable. This is altogether with God, whether he will grant pardon and repentance or not; and although the individual is afterwards pardoned, the pastor's crime is not thereby mitigated. I have applied it particularly to the pastor, but every church member is guilty, and will be accountable; for it is not to one or a few, but to the whole church, that Christ has committed the discipline of his house.

I believe that *debarring* or *fencing the tables*, and *giving of tokens*, like all other human expedients in religion, have been of the most serious injury \*. It is a bungling expedient to supply the want of Scripture discipline, and an apostolically constituted church. If none but those who are credibly Christians, were admitted to church membership, what occasion would there be for tokens of admission, or debarring. They will take their seats around Christ's table, as naturally as children will seat themselves unasked around the table of their earthly father. Who dare debar any such? And who dare invite any other? The custom of debarring, under the appearance of excluding the unworthy, is, in reality, only a pretext for admitting worldly men, without seeming to share in their guilt. Church rulers dare not professedly admit unregenerate men, from fear of offending God, and they dare not candidly deny them admission, from fear of men. They have therefore found out a way to compromise the matter between God and the world, by *fencing the tables*. Thus, they avoid giving individual offence, and driving unregenerate men away from their society, and imagine themselves clear as to the crime of prostituting the ordinance of Christ. I ask, was ever this mean found effectual to preserve purity of communion? I am sure I have tried it in the most awful man-

\* Every one who receives a token has the solemn declaration of church rulers, that they consider them as real Christians. For if it is granted that none but real Christians have a right to this ordinance, of what is this a token, if not of their fitness, at least in the estimation of those from whom they receive it? Now, if church rulers give a token to any whom they do not upon good evidence consider to be Christians, they are guilty of the most awful deceiving of sinners that can be imagined. They lead them with a blind upon their eyes to the brink of a precipice, and tell them, as they are falling, that they are tumbling into perdition. I beseech those Christians who are engaged in this murderous business, to stop and reflect; to weigh this with seriousness and prayer. I believe that there are many who give tokens with a trembling heart, and a smiting conscience. Let them beware lest conscience, by the repetition of guilt, become callous and scared. Their state is awful, if it has ceased to smite.

ner in my power, and I do not know that it was in any degree effectual. Often, very often, the hardened unawakened sinner will let all pass through his ear as the path of an arrow through the air, while the weak and timid Christian will take what is said as against himself, and be discouraged. Indeed, they know very little of the human heart, who think that an unawakened sinner will take such a warning. I have laboured several hours with individuals, without convincing them of their danger. Till the Lord open the eyes of their understanding, they will still have some refuge of lies. How then could it be expected to prevail with a multitude, in a few minutes speaking, before the administration of the supper? I demand that those who practise it will produce me either precept or example, either expressed or implied, for debarring and tokens of admission at the Lord's supper. If this cannot be produced, I argue that that church which cannot maintain apostolical purity, without human expedients is not apostolically constituted. When I see a wall supported by a buttress, I judge it has not a good foundation. When I see a human invention employed to prop an ordinance of Christ, I form a similar judgment.

But not only is the necessity of pure communion proved from the character of the members of the apostolical churches, and direct Scripture precept—the very model of the apostolical churches could not be otherwise preserved. Christ's laws are not at all calculated to govern the devil's subjects. Spiritual laws will take no hold of carnal men. If there are unregenerate members admitted and retained, they will throw all into confusion. They will stop the equability of the church's motion, and whenever the fire of temptation begins to burn, the house will fall with a crash in the midst of the flames. If they are not excluded, a majority must instantly be substituted for unanimity; human laws and human sanctions must be substituted for those of the New Testament. From one step to another, they will arrive to a full grown antichrist, and the more heads he will have, the more monstrous will he be.

I may add, there are ordinances of Christ which cannot be attended to, if strict purity of communion is not preserved, 1 Cor. vii. 1.—That civil disputes should be determined by the church, is an apostolical ordinance, for the neglect of which, the Corinthians are severely reprov'd. But this is an ordinance which no church can ever observe, if they admit unregenerate men to membership. Such persons will yield to the decision of the church, if it be in their favour; but if it be against them, they will shew little respect to the determination. Neither does the apostle's reasoning hold good with respect to such as judge, for *they will not "judge the world."* Something like this, may, in smaller matters, be attempted in a mixed communion, among a few individuals, generally poor, and not able to maintain law-suits, having little civil intercourse; but can never effectually take place in all cases, except purity of communion be strictly adhered to.

Mutual exhortation in church meetings\*, is another apostolical ordinance, 1 Cor. xiv. 29.—1 Theff. v. 11. Let any presbyterian congregation give this liberty to private individuals, and they will soon see the house in flames. The wood, the hay, and the stubble, would instantly take fire, and it would be altogether impossible to preserve any sort of order or decorum. This would shiver them, as a cedar in Lebanon is splintered by the lightning. None but the children of Christ could bear or improve such a privilege.—Now, that church which cannot bear an apostolical institution, is not apostolically constituted.

\* As hypocrites will occasionally find admittance into the churches of Christ, such ordinances as these, seem wisely calculated to detect them. That which appears to worldly churches the most exceptionable in these ordinances, is, in reality, their great perfection, and prove their heavenly birth. They afford an expeditious way to discover, and exclude carnal professors. They are also useful to discipline the true soldiers of Jesus; they grind off their asperities, accustom them to forbearance, exercise their patience, and improve all their graces.

## CHAPTER XI.

*OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.*

MANY who look upon purity of communion as a desirable thing, and go a certain length in effecting it, do not aim at a strict separation, apprehending the attempt to be either fruitless or dangerous.—Some go so far as to shield themselves under Scripture example: I was once of this number myself. I shall therefore employ this chapter in answering the objections usually alleged against any attempt to effect a pure church.

OBJECTION I. It is said, “We cannot know men’s hearts; if they are sober and decent in their external conduct, and acknowledge their belief of the orthodox doctrines, we can go no farther.”

This objection, if there was any thing in it, would go to shew that Christ has given a command to the churches, which it would not be in their power to put into practice. If Christ has said, “Give not that which is holy unto dogs,” he supposes we are able to distinguish the persons whom he intends, otherwise his advice is unimportant. A physician cannot look into the inner part of the human body, to see what is the disease of his patient, yet he judges of this, by the symptoms and appearances he beholds. Just so are we to judge of the human heart. If the fountain be salt, so will the streams; if the streams are fresh, we may judge that the fountain has also been made fresh. Our Lord tells us that a tree is known by its fruits. If there is faith in the heart, there will be obedience in the life. If there be spiritual life, there will be some symptoms of it. The true penitent will bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The



man who is born of the Spirit, will know the things of the Spirit, and will lead a spiritual life. If he be renewed in the image of him that created him, he will evidence this by his knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. If he loves Christ, he will keep his commandments. If his heart is with God, his person will not usually be found in the company of the wicked. If he loves him that begat, he will also love them that are begotten, and prefer their company and conversation to that of all others. In short, if there be a real change of heart, it will manifest itself in the life. In some instances, arising from particular circumstances, there may be difficulty; and if, after much prayer and necessary investigation, a church is deceived in any instance, it is not guilty. I dare say if the members of a church would take as much trouble in this, as they do in giving out their money upon interest, they would seldom be deceived. They are not apt, out of excessive charity, to hazard it with a man of a merely specious appearance, till they enquire minutely into his circumstances and character.

Obj. 2. I have heard some allege, "that if they would go to such strictness, they could admit very few."

I perfectly agree with them in this sentiment: but this objection is not an alleviation, but a dreadful aggravation of the crime. Such pastors are building a Babel, not a temple of God. When their work will be tried by the fire of the great day, it will be burned up, and they shall sustain a dreadful loss; and be saved, admitting they are the disciples of Christ, with the utmost difficulty. But this is not the remedy, but the very cause of their fewness. If a church is once formed upon the apostolical model, and walking in the commandments and ordinances of the gospel, it is impossible, but they will increase. Though at first there should be no more than a dozen, the Lord will be adding daily to them, such as are saved. The presence of Christ shall be with them, and continuing in prayer, they shall be multiplied; for whatever two of them agree in asking, they

shall receive. I am convinced, from experience, that this is the case. Since I ceased to prostitute the Lord's supper at home and abroad, my labours have been more visibly blessed, and I have had more evidence of a work of grace going on, than I had in the whole five years of my ministry; and I am convinced that if a gospel church is formed amongst us, and ruled by the laws of Christ, we shall have still more promising prospects. But be this as it may, as to myself, I hope I would not again administer the Lord's supper in the same promiscuous way, for any earthly consideration.

OBJ. 3. It is said, that "this sort of strictness will drive sinners away from the gospel altogether, and therefore will defeat its own end."

What a pity that Christ had not the benefit of the advice of these sage counsellors! he would not have given a command so contrary to his own intention. Such objectors may have an orthodox creed, but the objection arises out of presumption and unbelief. Not to mention that the rejection of unregenerate persons, is often overruled to their conversion. our business is to obey God, and leave events to himself. Have we a greater interest, or are we more heartily concerned in enlarging his church, than he is himself? He hath the hearts of all men in his hands, and he turneth them as rivers of waters. He can make the most violent enemies, the most devoted friends of his gospel, whenever he pleases. If he says, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" the answer would be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Every human invention to enlarge and support the church of Christ, will not only utterly prove abortive, but generally will have a tendency directly the reverse of what is proposed. The great encouragement given to the heathen to renounce their religion, buried Christianity in a heap of rubbish, in the time of Constantine. And in every age the admission of impure members, to make a party respectable from their numbers, has had the worst effects. While the life of those that are spiritual is almost extinguished, the unregenerate become secured and hardened. Nothing can tend more

effectually to retard the progress of the gospel, and keep the eyes of the multitude continually blinded, than to give them the Christian name and privileges, whilst they are still the servants of Satan. They think they are safe, and believe they are Christians, though not so good as some others. If their minister is so faithful as to lay open their character in public, and shew them their danger, they will either shuffle it off upon their neighbour, or apologise to themselves for their own conduct. Those who are accustomed to examine the hopes of sinners, will find that admission to what they call Christian privileges, is a very prevalent ground of hope. If all the churches of Christ were to treat the world as heathens, till they are born again, it would be a likely mean in the hand of the Spirit to rouse them to inquiry, and lead them to repentance. Even those who are in the habit of refusing admission to persons of a scandalous character, very frequently do it in an improper manner. They ground their refusal, not upon their want of conversion, but their irregularities, or their not submitting to rules. This tends to mislead the sinner, and keep him ignorant of his real state; whereas, if he were faithfully told that his non-admission was the consequence of his want of the *new birth*, and not of the straitened rules of a party, he would be more likely to receive it with benefit, and even less irritation. Often the minister will throw the blame upon the session, and they again upon their rules, from a cowardly disposition, lest they should give offence. Thus the person is led to believe that the fault lies more in the straitness of the rules, than in himself. The placing of his admission or rejection upon his discharge of certain external duties, has the same mischievous effect. He is led to look upon this, not as an evidence of his state, but as forming his title to heaven. One thing I would ask at those who make this objection; let them answer it candidly to their own conscience. Whether are you more afraid that this would lessen the church of Christ, or *the stipend*? Whether are you more afraid of injuring the cause of Christ, or the credit of *your party*?

Obj. 4. It is pleaded in defence of promiscuous com-

munion, "that Judas was admitted to the Lord's table." Judas was once a pillar upon which I thought I could safely rest my defence; but since I have more maturely and impartially considered the matter, I have entirely given that up. We are never in a likely way to obtain truth as long as we are searching for a justification of our own conduct, rather than the mind of the Spirit. I am afraid that there are many who examine this question in this temper. A drowning man will catch at any twig before he will sink. Thus many, overwhelmed by positive Scripture precept, perhaps producing some qualms of conscience, catch at Judas to keep them above water. They do not see any thing to extricate themselves from their difficulty, and because, in their present situation, they cannot comply, they too easily impose upon themselves, as to the sin of setting the word of God at variance with itself. There is certainly a difficulty in determining whether Judas was, or was not, present at the institution of the supper. It would appear to me, from the most impartial examination of the gospels which record the relation, that he was not. We know Scripture cannot contradict itself; and when it seems to do so, that analysis must be admitted, which is most conformable to the general tenor of the whole. If, then, there are innumerable passages to prove the duty of pure communion, and if the presence of Judas at the supper be contrary to this, that passage which seems to say he was, must be understood so as to agree with that which positively, or even apparently says he was not. I think also that Luke's account can more easily be explained in consistency with John's, than John's in consistency with the order of the narration of Luke. The inversion of order in the narration of facts, is no singular occurrence in the gospels; but John states the fact positively, circumstantially, and minutely. John xiii. 30. "He then, having received *the sop* \*, went *immediately* out." To make Luke agree with this, we have nothing to do but what must be done in many other cases, to suppose an inversion of order in the narration. But this I mention, rather to reconcile the evangelists, than

\* This was in eating the passover.

to support my argument in the point under debate. I do not think, that in order to prove the duty of pure communion, there is any necessity to exclude Judas from the first supper. What was Judas? He was a polished hypocrite. What is a hypocrite? Not a man who pretends to be religious, signs an orthodox creed, and leads a heterodox life, but a man to all human appearance a real Christian, and for a time walking as one, though in heart and in the sight of God an impenitent sinner. Such was Judas. There was not a more plausible character among the apostles than this very man. None of his brethren suspected him more than themselves.— Even when our Lord declared that one of them should betray him, their language was not, “Lord, is it Judas?” but, “Lord, is it I?” Now such characters might be in any church without the smallest blame being attachable to either church rulers, or church members. If the church receives them as real Christians, it is guiltless, though they are like Judas. This, however, is no apology for those who admit carnal men, who discover no evidence of conversion, nay frequently of whom they have no hopes at all. It is argued, that though Judas was a hypocrite, yet that our Lord knew him to be such. A fact most unquestionable; but our Lord’s omniscience is no rule of conduct for us, nor did he act according to it in many other cases. He had various and important reasons for choosing this hypocrite to the apostleship, and the same he might have had for allowing him to take his seat at his supper. Our Lord, by acting as the administrator of this ordinance, had no need to avail himself of his omniscience, by forbidding Judas to partake; because in this he could have been no example to us, as we had not the same means of detecting hypocrites. Besides, he might design to shew us, that if such characters as Judas would afterwards get admission into any of his churches, they would be blameless. The guilt, in this matter, is not in receiving hypocrites, but in retaining them, after they discover their true character. Judas the hypocrite might be a church member, but Judas the betrayer never was, nor could be. Granting every thing, then, that the abettors of impure communion themselves can demand from the case of Judas,

to what does it amount? that a hypocrite may be admitted to the Lord's table without sin in the church. Will any say that because Christ knew this man to be an hypocrite, that therefore we may admit persons whom *we* know to be hypocrites; if we know them to be hypocrites, then they are no longer hypocrites; for we cannot know this as Christ knew it, by looking into their hearts, but from their discovering this by their lives and conversation. The case of Judas cannot fairly be drawn any farther. Besides, if it is alleged to justify the admission of members who give evidence that they are not partakers of the grace of the gospel, it will set Christ the master, and Paul the servant at variance. The latter positively commands them not so much as eat with one who is called a brother, when once he discovers an inconsistency between his character and profession, 1 Cor. v. 11. Timothy is strictly charged to withdraw from those "who had a *form* of godliness, but denied the power thereof."

But can there be any thing more truly ridiculous than for those who justify impure communion by the example of Judas, to spend whole hours in debarring and fencing? If our Lord did not debar Judas, and if this shews the propriety of admitting persons whom we know to be unworthy, the conclusion is, that it would be improper to forbid them. If the sober *worldling* is admitted, I ask, by what authority is the drunkard, the swearer, the fornicator, &c. denied admission? Ah! brethren, you must be at a great loss for a foundation, when you are obliged to build upon Judas. It must be an ill built house, in which Judas himself is the chief corner-stone.

Obj. 5. The parable of the tares and the wheat, is usually one of the bulwarks of impure churches\*.—

\* For a full, clear, and satisfactory explanation of this parable, see "Mr Innes's Reasons for separating from the church of Scotland." I decline a full explanation of this, and some other things, as they are largely treated in that pamphlet, which I think should be in the hands of all who wish for information on this subject.

But this objection is founded on a misapplication of the parable. It supposes that the field is the church, whereas our Lord himself expressly explains it to mean the *world*. The tares are considered as church members; whereas, this would make our Lord's injunction contrary to that of the apostle Paul, "Purge out the old leaven." "Do ye not judge them that are within?" It was also the devil who sowed them, and not Christ's servants by mistake. Those, who from this, plead for promiscuous admission, acknowledge themselves to be, not the servants of Christ, but of Satan, employed in sowing the tare-seed in Christ's field, while his servants sleep. But without spending time in shewing why it cannot have this interpretation, I will just briefly point out what I take to be its obvious and consistent meaning. The wheat represents the children of God; the tares the children of the wicked one; they both grow in the same field, the *world*. The servants of Christ are not to endeavour to root out the latter, lest in doing so, they would root out the wheat. The design of the parable, is to shew the impropriety of persecution, from this reason, that if the wicked of one generation were cut off, thousands of the children of God, who are to spring from them, would thereby be prevented from coming into being. The lives of the wicked are now preserved, because they are the ancestors of multitudes, who shall turn to God in the latter days. This I take to be also the meaning of Matt. xxiv. 22. "For the *elect's* sake, those days shall be shortened." By *elect* here, we are, in my opinion, principally to understand the *unborn* elect. The Jews, who escaped at the siege of Jerusalem, were spared, because they were to be the fathers of all those Jews who shall turn to God in the restoration. God could have preserved the elect that were alive in the time of that siege, in various ways. But in what other way could the prophecies of the restoration of the Jews. have been accomplished, than by preserving a number of that wicked generation, for the purpose of introducing his future people into existence? If all the Jews had been cut off then, what would have become of those countless thousands and millions of their descendents, that shall serve Christ in

their return? The Jews, since their rejection of Christ, have been preserved, perhaps *chiefly* for the sake of their future offspring. This is clearly expressed in the prophecy of Isaiah lxxv. 8. As the unripe bunch of grapes is preserved for the sake of the wine that it shall afterwards yield, so God preserves the Jewish nation for the sake of their future descendents, who are to serve him.

## CHAPTER XII.

### *Additional Reasons for Separating from the General Synod.*

THOUGH I had no objection to the government of classical presbytery, and could effect purity of communion in my own congregation, without experiencing any hindrance from foreign interference, still I could not with a good conscience remain a member of the general synod. I have many reasons for this conviction; a few of them I will here state.

1. "How can a man mount a very high hill with a weighty burthen, having several hundreds pulling him back by the skirts? Is it not much better to climb up the precipice in company with others who are going the same way, to go arm in arm, the strong bearing the weak, so that if a foot slip, we may not be dashed to pieces by a fall?" The former was exactly my situation; the whole weight of my connexion being as a clog upon me, retarding my progress, by their laws, example, and spirit. We have all too much inclination to indifference and negligence in our Lord's cause. There is no need of an external hindrance. "Can a man take fire into his bosom, and not be burned?" Who will say that the very society of men indifferent to religion, is not a strong temptation to relax exertion in the cause of Christ? But especially, if they are not only indifferent,



but inimical to the spreading of the gospel, the danger is increased. If the religion of the Bible be called enthusiasm and madness, there is a strong temptation to hide its peculiar features, and appear less zealous for its diffusion. "Two cannot walk together except they are agreed." What concord, then, can there be between them and me? They view me with jealousy, and I consider them traitors to my master\*.—My exertions for a revival of religion they think useless. Some suppose that I am actuated by a love of applause, while others, more friendly, think I am only mad. Now, in this situation, what mutual happiness can there be from the society of men so opposite in their views and conduct? We both contribute to make each other uncomfortable. I am sure I have never suffered more acute pain in my life, than in their assemblies. I avoided their meetings as much as I could, for I always entered them with horror and reluctance. But of late, I understand they have determined that I should not enjoy that liberty. Is it not, then, much better that I should act separately, for I am sure they are not more offensive to me, than I am to them? Shall I, for a morsel of bread, sacrifice my own happiness, and remain under continual restraint and temptation? "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth." He must be a very inexperienced Christian indeed, who thinks that he does not need rather to be spurred than curbed in his course.

2. "I cannot be a member of the general synod, without renouncing my Christian liberty, and submitting my conscience to be ruled and lorded over by man." I am not allowed to be directed by my own conscience in the service of my master. I must act not on my own conviction of what is right and wrong, but

\* When I involve the synod in a general censure, I always intend a majority of the members, and not every individual, because a majority is the synod, and can rule the minority as they please. I pretend not to determine what may be the number of faithful servants of Christ in that connexion. For such, whatever be our difference of opinion, I have the most cordial affection.

according to the caprice of others; nay of those I esteem as decided enemies to the cause of the Lord Jesus. I might get drunk frequently; associate with the most profligate; spend the Sabbath afternoons in gay parties; follow the world the whole week with my whole heart; preach against the peculiar doctrines of revelation; deny the very Lord and Saviour of men; attend the theatre, balls, and card parties; and still my brethren would extend their charity to me: except a formal charge would be brought against me by my own congregation, I might even pass unnoticed. Here human frailty, and freedom of inquiry, would plead my excuse. But if I would dare to preach the gospel out of my own bounds, or admit an evangelical minister of another denomination to occupy my pulpit, dreadful would be the thunder that would be hurled against me! Nothing less than public rebuke for the first, and suspension for the second commission of such *mortal sins*. “Whereas  
 “it appears, that our laws respecting the admission of  
 “men, not members of this body, or licentiates under  
 “its care, to officiate for us, are too generally expressed  
 “to be of any practical use: It is now enacted, that no  
 “man, not a member of this body, or a licentiate under  
 “its care (the presbytery of Antrim, and southern as-  
 “sociation excepted,) shall be permitted to officiate for  
 “us in our congregations, until he shall first submit his  
 “credentials to the presbytery, in whose bounds he  
 “wishes to preach, and until he shall be approved of by  
 “the presbytery: and any minister of this body, viola-  
 “ting this law, shall, for the first offence, be publicly  
 “rebuked by his presbytery, before his congregation,  
 “and for the second be suspended *ab officio, sine die*.”  
 If ever a child was known by its resemblance to the parent, this sure must be the daughter of the mother of harlots. This is her prominent feature: this is her very temper and genius. “O, ye Scribes and Pharisees, how long will ye make void the law of God by your traditions! In vain do you worship him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Where is their authority for imposing such restraints upon the servants of the Lord? I cannot submit to this tyranny without calling men my master, contrary to the express command

of Jesus. I am commanded "to stand fast in the liberty with which he has made me free." Though the apostle speaks this immediately of the Jewish yoke, yet, as no scripture is of any private interpretation, it equally forbids any human imposition, in the things of God. When Christ has left us free, we are not to allow any man or body of men to bind us, or even to bind ourselves. Every human restraint in religion is usurpation and treason. A Christian, indeed, is sometimes to decline using his liberty, to avoid stumbling his weak brother, but he is not even in this case to come under bondage to him, still less is he to come under restraint to please those who are enemies to the *pure gospel of salvation*.

I am truly concerned for the spiritual darkness of my native land. While the work of the Lord is flourishing in both parts of Britain, there is in this island as yet but little done. Ah! the thousands that are perishing for lack of knowledge! What profligacy of manners do we see every where abounding! I am convinced that there is no other remedy for the evil but the *unadulterated gospel of Christ*. Shall I then submit to be crooped up in a corner, and restrained by human fetters from lending a hand to rescue my brethren from the pit of destruction? "Time is short;" the day of work is but a blink; I must soon give an account of my stewardship, and I know that however much I may incur the displeasure of men, however great may be my temporal loss, in the end I shall not repent the step I have taken. I know that God judgeth not as man judgeth. I know, indeed, it is said that I might employ all my time in my own congregation; but I answer, that I may do much abroad, and not do the less at home. I believe we will generally find, that those who do most abroad, likewise do most in their own congregation. It is my duty to feed the poor of my own neighbourhood rather than those at a distance; but it would be a hard matter, if I was so bound that I could not give a halfpenny to a starving beggar on my journey. Besides, the public preaching of the gospel is that part of the office in which I take peculiar delight, and in which I am never weary.

The hireling may work his hours, but he that loves Jesus, should, like him, "go about doing good;" like him it should be his very "meat and drink, to do the will of his heavenly Father."

3. "I do not find myself justified in recognizing as "ministers, those whom I consider as destitute of the "qualifications deemed essential by an apostle." A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, *vigilant, sober, of good behaviour*, given to hospitality, *apt (rather fit) to teach—not given to wine—no striker—not greedy of filthy lucre*, but patient—not a brawler *nor covetous*—one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a *novice*, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have *a good report of them which are without*, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil," 1 Tim. iii. 2—7. "A bishop must not be self-willed—*not soon angry—a lover of good men—just, holy, temperate—holding fast the faithful word*, as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gain-sayers," Titus i. 7—9. I forbear to make the application. Suffice it to say, that if these are essential qualifications in a pastor, I cannot recognize as brethren many of the members of the general synod.

4. "A Calvinist and a Socinian or Arian can with "no propriety worship together." They do not address the same God. When they unite in prayer, they are like a friend to the Pretender, and another of king George, drinking *the king*, as a toast, when each intended his own favourite. They do not address the same being, though they use the same name. If I address the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as my God, he that denies the Godhead of the Son and Spirit, must look upon me as an idolater. In return, I look upon him as an atheist. "He that denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that hath sent him." When he prayeth,

he addresses not the Jehovah of the Scripture, but an idol of his own creation, as different from the true God, as Jupiter or Apollo \*. His God is as really of his own making, as if he had hewn him out of wood or stone. He steals from the Scripture account of the true God, some of his properties, and those attributes that suit him best. When he robs him of his justice, and abusively extends his mercy, he can dispense with the sacrifice of Jesus; he has got a god to his mind: an idol of his own imagination. This god he loves, because this god does not hate sin; but the Jehovah of the Scriptures he hates, because he is the enemy of sin, and "hath revealed his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." In what then are we agreed? Not even in the God we worship: not in the way of salvation. How improper is it, then, for us to make each other the organ of prayer? How can we co-operate, seeing our principles are so entirely opposite? If each of us be conscientious, we must be at constant war. With as great propriety, might the French and English officers meet in a council of war, before an engagement, to concert the measures that each were to adopt, as people of such opposite sentiments to sit in the same synod.

5. "By remaining in connexion with the synod, I contribute to deceive the public, as to the radical difference between my principles, and those maintained by many in the synod." My example by continuing in that connexion, might be the means of keeping some of the people of Christ under the ministry of those who corrupt the gospel. It is natural for people to judge that there cannot be any momentous points in which we differ, or we would not continue to co-operate and acknowledge each other as brethren in Christ. This I

\* The same thing will hold against making any unregenerate man the organ of prayer. When such men are set up to offer the prayers of an assembly, as they "know not God," so "they worship they know not what." They cannot pray with the Spirit, and consequently they cannot pray at all. Those who join them are partakers in their abominations.

know to be the case. The generality of private Christians in the general synod, have no conception that we differ so materially. Suppose, then, I could remain a member of synod, without injury to myself, yet I am guilty of deceiving others. If I think that any ministers of that body, are wolves in sheep's cloathing, not feeding, but devouring the flock, I am a partaker of their soul murder, if I do not give the alarm, and warn the sheep to fly.

What is the use of the 8th chapter of 1 Cor. to us? Does it not teach us, that, if in any particular instance, the use of our Christian liberty may prove an occasion of stumbling to weak brethren, we ought to forego it, rather than he should be injured? If I sit in the idol's temple, eating the flesh of animals offered in sacrifice, though I eat it simply to satisfy my hunger, knowing that there is no divinity in the idol, and that the meat cannot be rendered in itself impure, by this improper use, yet my weak brother seeing me there, partaking with idolaters, is led to think, that I am joining them in their worship, and by my example, is emboldened to eat it as a sacrifice to the idol.—“Through my knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?” Suppose, then, that my connexion with the synod, was a matter not sinful in itself, yet by its consequences, it becomes sinful. Many may be encouraged by my example, to sit under a ministry, in which the gospel is depraved, or hidden. If I should be the occasion of stumbling one of Christ's little ones, the loss I would sustain in the day of the Lord Jesus, would be infinitely greater than all I can lose by leaving the synod. Awful will be our responsibility, and it is required, above all things, in a steward, that he be faithful. If this be not a lawful application of Scripture, I know of no use that this chapter can be at present.

6. “My connexion with the synod is contrary to the law of love, and the duty I owe the members of it as men.” If I believe, that “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;” and if I believe that few of them evidence such a change; nay, if

I know many of them to deny and ridicule this truth as enthusiasm, I would not be their friend, if in any thing my conduct would lead them to believe, that I considered their situation to be less dangerous, than in reality I know it to be. Now, as long as I remain a member of synod and act with them as brethren in Christ, it is impossible for them to think that I am really in earnest, as to the importance of my views of the truths of the gospel. Besides, there are many who would subscribe perhaps every doctrine of the gospel, of whose state I have no better hopes. Such persons, then, would have reason to complain of me in the judgment of the great day, that I acted an unfriendly part towards them; that while I considered them as "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," I acted with them as ministers of Christ; by which means they were led to conclude that I could have no very unfavourable opinion of them. I know I will be charged with a want of *charity of sentiment*, when I express such an opinion of the synod. Charity, however, is not a matter of opinion, but of feeling, and a man may have the purest love for another, while he is most strongly convinced of his guilt and danger. A juror may have every wish that the criminal may be acquitted, yet he may, by evidence, be obliged to join in the verdict, "*guilty*." Shall I go past my neighbour's house at night, seeing it on fire, and not awake him, lest I should disturb or grieve him? Shall I rather suffer him to be consumed in the flames, than alarm him? Yet this is the murderous charity for which many plead; that, while we have the clearest evidence that men are living without God, we should believe, or feign to believe, that they may be saved in their sins. In other words, we hope God is a liar—that he will not do as he has said. Dr Johnson said, that every man was to be held unlearned, till he proved the contrary. The observation is equally just when applied to religion. No man has a right to be esteemed a Christian, till his fruits prove it. What would we think of the man who would say, that in the judgment of charity, he looked upon all, or the greater part of men to be learned? The same should we think of the man who professes to believe, that men are

Christians, who give no evidence of the fact. We have the word of unerring wisdom, declaring that all men are "by nature the children of wrath;" until we have evidence that they are born again, and adopted into the family of God, we are not warranted to look upon them as Christians. Eternal life is the worst I wish to any member of the synod, or to any man on earth; but if I believe God, I must believe that all "who *know not God, and obey not the gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

7. "I cannot conscientiously join in licensing and ordaining those whom I know do not possess the requisite qualifications, pointed out in the word of God." Paul states these minutely to Timothy and Titus. I do not think that it is right to give our countenance to any candidates, who do not answer to this description. The candidate for "the office of a bishop," must not be even a *novice, or new convert*, lest from his inexperience he should fall into temptation from the natural pride of the human heart\*. But if it be improper to appoint *newly converted men* to the charge of a flock, how dreadful must be the sin of appointing the blind to lead the blind, and unregenerate men to feed the flock of Christ? Paul says to Timothy, (1 Tim. v. 22.) "lay hands suddenly upon no man, neither be partakers of other men's sins: keep thyself pure." It appears, then, that those who give their sanction to unworthy men to preach the gospel, are partakers of their sins. They share with them in the guilt of all the evil they commit in destroying the souls of men. He does not direct him to ordain no man without subscribing a human confession of faith. This could have been done in an instant; if this had

\* Those who justify the appointment of unconverted men to preach the gospel, and take charge of a church of Christ, from the example of Judas, would do well to consider the import of this portion of Scripture. If a man newly converted be unfit for the pastor's office, much more is he who is not converted at all.



been the test, there would have been no need of delay. The caution implies not only that Timothy should not ordain persons of a scandalous character, but even that persons who seemed to possess the requisite qualifications, should not be appointed to the pastoral office, till they had given sufficient evidences that they were what they seemed to be. All unregenerate men are the servants of Satan; and let them *subscribe* and *swear* what they will, Satan they will serve, "until they are turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." How dreadful then is the crime of giving a public sanction to such men, as the servants of Christ! They will preach orthodoxy or heterodoxy as best suits their temporal interest, but though they have *the form*, they have none of the power of godliness. They may preach a dead, dry system, but being blind, they cannot lead the blind; and having no spiritual organs to "discern the things of the Spirit, they cannot know them." I acknowledge the most conscientious may be deceived, but it is really awful to hear some good men pleading for the propriety of sending out unconverted men to preach the gospel, because Judas was an hypocrite. It is no wonder, then, that some sects, with all their boasted orthodoxy, have little more of the life and power of godliness than those who do not make such high pretensions. Once acknowledge the principle that the servants of Satan, if they are orthodox and sober, are proper persons to feed the flock of Christ, and in a short time deadness and torpor will pervade the body. All the zeal of individuals will not be able to keep it alive. A profession of orthodoxy was not the test used by the apostles. "And when James; and Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision," Gal. ii. 9. The evidence of his qualifications was not the *subscription of a formula*, but *his appearing to have received the grace of God*. I cannot see how an unconverted orthodox minister is a less dangerous man than he who is most openly hostile to the doctrines of the gospel. In my opinion the former is

the more dangerous of the two, as men are less aware of him. Paul, speaking of the deacons, (1 Tim. iii. 10.) says, "Let these also first be proved." This shews the great care that should be taken in choosing church officers. Their acknowledgment of the leading doctrines of the gospel is not given as a test. Even persons that appear to possess the necessary qualifications, are not to be hastily appointed to office; *they must be proved*. "These also," that is, deacons as well as pastors. If this reasoning be just, it is applicable to all the denominations of presbyterians, with which I am acquainted. But I am not obliged to rest any part of this argument upon the sinfulness of licensing and ordaining merely *unconverted men*. As a member of the general synod, I may be forced to join in licensing and ordaining men whose *characters and doctrines* I condemn. I may be obliged to be the very organ of licensing and ordaining a man who preaches an opposite gospel from what I believe to be true. What a monstrous inconsistency is here! If I believe the doctrines I preach, I must be convinced that I am sending out a murderer instead of a physician. Am I not guilty, then, of all the blood he spills? Surely I am partaker of this man's sins. Yes, I take shame and confusion of face to myself, that I have so long sanctioned my master's enemies. I acknowledge myself to have hitherto been a partaker of the guilt of those who are the "enemies of the cross of Christ, whose God is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things."

8. "I have a positive and express command to "separate from a corrupt church." 2 Cor. vi. 14,—18. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore

come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*, and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The Corinthians are here commanded to separate from their unbelieving and idolatrous neighbours; to abandon their worship, and form no intimate alliances of any kind with them. This command is given to me as well as to the Corinthians, for I am no otherwise addressed but as a member of the apostolical churches. All unconverted men are idolaters, and unbelievers, and a connexion with them is even more dangerous in a country called Christian, than in a heathen country. The same reason also that forbids the marriage of believers with unbelievers, will equally forbid our connexion in church communion with such. It is also exceedingly obvious, that though the command is particularly levelled against joining in the idolatrous worship of the heathens, it is expressed in a general manner, so as to include the view I now give of it, as literally, and with as strict precision, as the other. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." This will hold not only in this or that instance, but it is universally applicable to the formation of any intimate union of believers with unbelievers, especially in church communion. Besides, there is not an argument here used to shew the impropriety of this union but what equally applies in this view. All believers are righteous, all unbelievers are unrighteous. All believers are light, all unbelievers are darkness. Christ dwells in all believers, Belial dwells in all unbelievers; he is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Unbelievers of every description have different views, objects of pursuit, pleasures, and aversions, from believers. They have no common ground upon which they can found any intimate union. Every believer is a temple of God, which he inhabits through the Spirit; idols of one kind or other inhabit the heart of every unbeliever. I would just further observe, that if some of those who have long successfully quoted this portion of Scripture to shew the duty of separating from the general synod, would look a little more narrowly into it, they might find that they should

carry their separation to a greater length. I think it fairly condemns the admission of all carnal men to church communion. It is an union of believers with unbelievers, not merely of orthodox with heterodox, which is here forbidden. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

A similar command have I in Rev. xviii. 4. "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." This indeed is immediately spoken of the mother of harlots, but it will equally hold with respect to each of her daughters. If we are to leave one corrupt church, we are certainly to leave another. If our remaining in communion with the spiritual Babylon would make us partakers of her sins, and subject us to share her plagues, the same reasoning will prove that we are partakers of the sins of any corrupt church with which we are connected. If we must come out of the one to free us from her sins, the same thing will be necessary with respect to every other. As long as we countenance them we are sharers of their guilt, and liable to share their punishment.

Paul gives Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 1,—5.) a list of characters who would assume a profession of religion, without the power of it. From these, he positively commands him to "turn away." Now, if there be any such characters evidently in the general synod, it is equally my duty to withdraw from them. This is another passage which the advocates of impure ministerial and Christian communion would do well to consider. These might be very orthodox men; they had a "form of godliness." They would have no objection to subscribe the Westminster Confession. Most of them appear also, not to have been openly immoral. They might have a very sanctified air in a church court. Yet from such, there is a peculiar necessity to withdraw; from such there is a peculiar danger. When men of such a character appear, and are acknowledged in a church of Christ, "the times are perilous." The devout worldling is more dangerous than the openly pro-

fane. Timothy is also commanded to withdraw from every teacher who would teach otherwise than the apostle had directed. "And consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness," 1 Tim. vi. 3,—5. Certainly, then, I am not justifiable in remaining in connexion with the general synod.

In writing to the church of the Thessalonians, Paul gives them this charge: "Now I command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." What Christ speaks to a church in general, is spoken to each individual, in particular. Though classical presbytery were of God's appointing, yet, if there were but one disorderly member in the general synod, and I could not get him removed, it would be my duty to withdraw; otherwise I am a partaker of his sins. As long as I am a member of that body, I am an accomplice with every irregular person in it, whether minister or private member\*. We are positively commanded to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but to reprove them," Eph. v. 11. This precept we can never obey, while we hold professed communion with unbelievers. Nay, so far from holding communion with them in the ordinances of Christ, we are not even allowed to have a friendly intimacy with those that are called brethren, if their characters belie their profession. This would be a scandal to the religion of Christ, and would give occasion to the wicked to blaspheme. I cannot, then, be a member of the general synod and an obedient servant of Christ.

\* If there be any justice in this remark, it is a considerable argument against an associated church government. We would in that case, be accountable for the conduct of those of whom we could not possibly have any knowledge.

## CHAPTER XIII.

*OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.*

HAVING in the last chapter given some reasons for separating from a corrupt church, I will conclude this pamphlet by taking notice of a few objections that have been frequently urged upon me to dissuade me from giving up my connexion with the general synod.

I. "It is said that a material error prevailed in the churches of Galatia, and that in writing to them, the apostle does not command one part of them to separate from the other, upon the supposition that the majority would not return to the truth—that in case the majority of the Corinthian church had taken part with the incestuous man, and refused to obey the apostolical injunction, Paul gives no command to the minority to separate from the majority—and that our Lord, in reprovng the churches of Asia, does not command any separation of individuals in case the greater part in any church might not return to their duty."

With respect to each of these instances, I answer, that there is not one of them parallel to my situation. These churches, with all their declensions and corruptions, were still churches of Christ, apostolically constituted, and the bulk of them real, though censurable saints. Consequently, when their errors would be laid before them, they would unite in correcting them. But the matter is widely different with respect to a church neither upon the apostolical model, nor constituted of mem-

bers like those of the apostolical churches. As to the churches of Galatia, there was no room to give any such command. The apostle says, Gal. v. 10. "I have confidence in you, through the Lord Jesus, that you will be none otherwise minded." If he had such an opinion of them, and believed that they would comply with his injunctions, where would have been the propriety of giving a command of separation to the few, in case of the disobedience of the many? The error of the judaizing teachers, had indeed infected the body, so that the apostle found it necessary to express his doubt of them\*; but he had confidence that they would return to the truth when he called them to it. Nay, he supposeth the whole matter to arise from a very few; "but he that troubleth you, shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be." "I would they were even cut off that trouble you." "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Here he counts upon the allegiance of the great bulk of the members of the churches, and even intimates his wish, that the authors of this false doctrine should be cut off. In what, then, does this countenance the remaining in a corrupt church? Nay, it is directly against it. The apostle knew that the greatest part of them would return to the truth, therefore could not suppose it necessary to advise individuals to separate, upon the supposition that it would be otherwise. But the few that spread this doctrine, he advises to be cut off. This shews us what we should do with those who trouble a church with false doctrines. They are not, out of false lenity, to be suffered to remain and corrupt the body, but removed as morbid members.

This objection is entirely founded upon an improper conception of the nature of a church of Christ, judging of it as a worldly society, in which the majority is supposed to be the whole, and is enabled to direct all its proceedings. But it is not numbers, but the *obedient*; that constitutes the church, whether they be the majority or minority. Had all the members in any one of

\* Even this doubting shews what he formerly took them to be, when organized as a church.

the Galatian churches, except two or three, resolved to retain their error, in contempt of the apostolic authority, to these two or three obedient disciples the apostle's direction was still given, "I would that they were cut off that trouble you."—Obedience is the test of discipleship. Had the majority of any of these churches refused to obey, the obedient few were bound to "cut off" the disobedient many. Those few, go where they would, were still the church.

Indeed if it be a duty to "cut off" one or a few disorderly and troublesome members, it will still be more so with respect to many. There is not one argument why three thousand should cut off three, which will not prove that three should cut off three thousand, with an accession of strength proportioned to the increase of numbers. "If a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," if not purged out, there still is greater reason to dread, that the leavened mass will soon infect a few particles. If a whole church is in danger from one, two, or three; one, two, or three must be in much greater danger from a corrupt body. What is the reason of cutting off one disorderly member? Is it not lest he bring a scandal upon the religion of Christ; be a stumbling block to weak Christians; infect the body; become an offence to unbelievers; and to reclaim the individual. Each of these reasons will derive additional strength when applied to numbers.

The same reasoning will hold good with respect to the church of Corinth, and the churches of Asia. The apostle addressed the Corinthians as "saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus;" and every where through his epistle considers them as true believers, though in many respects greatly to blame. How, then, could he suppose that they would not obey him? This would have been as if the king would send an order to the house of commons to try one of their members for some improper language or conduct, at the same time applauding the members for their fidelity and zeal, and then add, "yet if a majority unite to screen the offender, let the faithful minority protest." How incongruous would such



language be? Yet not more so than what such objectors would expect from the apostle. After all, I will suppose that the whole church at Corinth had taken part with the incestuous person against the apostle, except one, two, or three, still it would have been the duty of such to have withdrawn from the disorderly society, which no more deserved the name of a church of Christ, than a congregation of Musselmén. The few that obeyed the apostle were the church, and to them the command was given, 1 Cor. v. 4. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one," &c. The offender, and all who sided with him, were to be removed as disorderly brethren. The same may be said as to the case of the Asiatic churches. To the very worst of them Christ said, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." They were much to blame, but with all their faults, they were true churches of Christ. Nay, the very accusations Christ alleged against them, not only shews the bulk of them to be saints, but proves the necessity of pure communion, and of cutting off impure members. He blames some of them for having the propagators of false doctrines among them. This shews that a church is to purge out the old leaven, and become a new lump. And if he blames them, for having a few false teachers among them, how much more has he had occasion to blame me, for continuing so long with a corrupt body? With what propriety, then, can a Christian allege the state of these churches to justify their continuance in corrupt societies? With what face can any church allege this, to justify impure communion? If these apostolical churches had any improper member among them, they are not praised; they are not held excusable; they are severely reprimanded for it.

2. Another objection is, "that I give up an important station. I cowardly desert the field of battle, and in all probability deprive myself for ever of an opportunity of preaching the gospel. Now Paul says, 'Woe unto me, if I preach not the gospel.' Christ says, 'The harvest is plenteous and the labourers few.'

“ It must then be highly improper to leave a ripe harvest without labourers to reap it.”

What is the amount of this objection? It is, “ Do evil that good may come.” If I have shewn that such a connexion is sinful, no supposed advantages resulting to religion from it should have the smallest weight, because they are nothing in reality. What good could I do in any situation on earth, without God’s blessing upon my labours? And is it supposable that I am likely to have this blessing, when I refuse to obey him? Before my attention was turned to this subject, when my views were not so clear, God might have partially blessed my labours. But I could no longer look for a blessing, nor with a good conscience preach the gospel at all, while conscious that I was not complying with his will. “ I leave an important situation.” What sort of language in the mouth of a Christian? If I had an opportunity of preaching the gospel in every parish in the island, could I of myself call one sinner to repentance? A station is only important as there may be the probability of doing good, and I can see no probability of this, as long as we live in the wilful neglect, or the breach of the least part of the known will of God. Ah! friends, I am afraid if we search our hearts to the bottom, the real motive of remaining in corrupt churches, is rather the importance of it to our own temporal interest, than a concern lest the work of the Lord should stand undone. “ Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our gain.” But “ I am running as a coward, out of the field of battle.” No, I am only repairing to the standard of my captain, and deserting his enemies. I am only putting myself in a situation in which I can fight without restraint, and whether I am to be an officer or a private, must be left to my general, who employs every man in the situation that suits him best, and in which he can render the most effectual service. But “ is it not a sin for me to put myself out of a condition to preach the gospel?” Yes, if I would give up preaching the gospel for the most splendid throne in Europe, I would be unworthy of opening my mouth to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. If I would quit my station for the

fake of a little more of the *unrighteous mammon*, I would be inexcusable. If I would quit preaching for fear of man, "woe would be upon me." But if I quit a station by the command of my general, I am not to blame.

But "the harvest is great, and the labourers are few." True, very true; and what is the consequence? Is it that I must transgress the orders of Christ to reap the harvest? Is there no way of obeying one command, without breaking another? Put the objection into words, and it will run thus: "O Lord, thou hast a great harvest and few to reap it; I am an active young labourer, but I cannot serve thee unless thou allowest me to break one of thy commandments. It is but a little one, and it is much better for thee to give me this liberty, than to want my services, for thou canst not do well without me. Thou must either take me on these terms, or thou must lose thy grain?" Were I to reason and act thus, the Lord of the harvest could soon lay me aside, and let me see, he could have the work done without me. It is for us to do what is duty, and leave events to God. If he has any work to do at present in Ireland, I am sure I am taking the way to do it. If he has work to do, who is he most likely to employ as his instruments? Will he let me stand idle in the market place, and employ others to serve him, whose sole object is to serve themselves? If it be my supreme delight to win souls to Christ, I do not think I shall be disappointed. If it be in any measure my meat and drink to do his will, it is not likely he will refuse to give me employment. "And whatever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." "He that loveth me, keepeth my commandments." "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say."

3. No argument hath been more frequently used to reconcile me to the synod, than "the duty I owe my family." "He that provideth not for his own, espe-

"cially for those of his own household, hath denied the  
 "faith, and is worse than an infidel." I acknowledge  
 the obligation of this scripture in its fullest extent.  
 But am I obliged to neglect one duty by attending to  
 another? I am to provide for my family; but will any  
 say, I should rob and murder to support them? I am  
 to provide, but it is things that are lawful. I am not  
 to support them at the expence of a good conscience.  
 If I cannot trust my family upon God, how will I trust  
 him with my soul? He hath not only said, "He that  
 provideth not," &c. but he hath also said, "Seek ye  
 first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all  
 these things shall be added unto you." I must either  
 renounce the 6th chap. of Matthew, or I must do duty,  
 and trust myself and family to him who feedeth the  
 fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field. He  
 that feedeth his enemies will not suffer his friends to  
 starve. With what conscience could I press others to  
 trust in providence, when I distrusted him myself?  
 When I read the history of Aristides, the Athenian, and  
 many other pagan sages, who scorned riches for earthly  
 fame, I am ashamed that the glories of heaven, and the  
 love of Jesus, should have a slighter impresson upon me.  
 Cyrus was fed upon brown bread and cresses, to fit him  
 for a consummate general; and shall I think it a  
 grievance to submit to that discipline, to enable me more  
 successfully to fight the battles of my Lord. I must  
 "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."  
 Perhaps there never was a general of distinction, who  
 has not undergone more hardships, fatigues, wants, and  
 dangers to procure temporal glory, than I have any pro-  
 spect of in my more honourable warfare. "Now they  
 do it for a corruptible crown, but we for an incor-  
 ruptible." A few years hence, and all my wants and  
 sorrows shall be no more. I will be where "the wick-  
 ed cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."  
 "They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the  
 firmament, and they that turn many unto righteousness  
 as the stars for ever and ever."

And must I part with all I have,  
 My dearest Lord for Thee ?  
 It is but right, since thou hast done  
 Much more than this for me.

Yes, let it go—one look from thee,  
 Will more than make amends  
 For all the losses I sustain,  
 Of credit, riches, friends.

Ten thousand worlds, ten thousand lives,  
 How worthless they appear,  
 Compar'd with Thee supremely good,  
 Divinely bright and fair !

Saviour of souls ! could I from Thee  
 A single smile obtain,  
 Though destitute of all things else,  
 I'd glory in my gain.

FINIS.



