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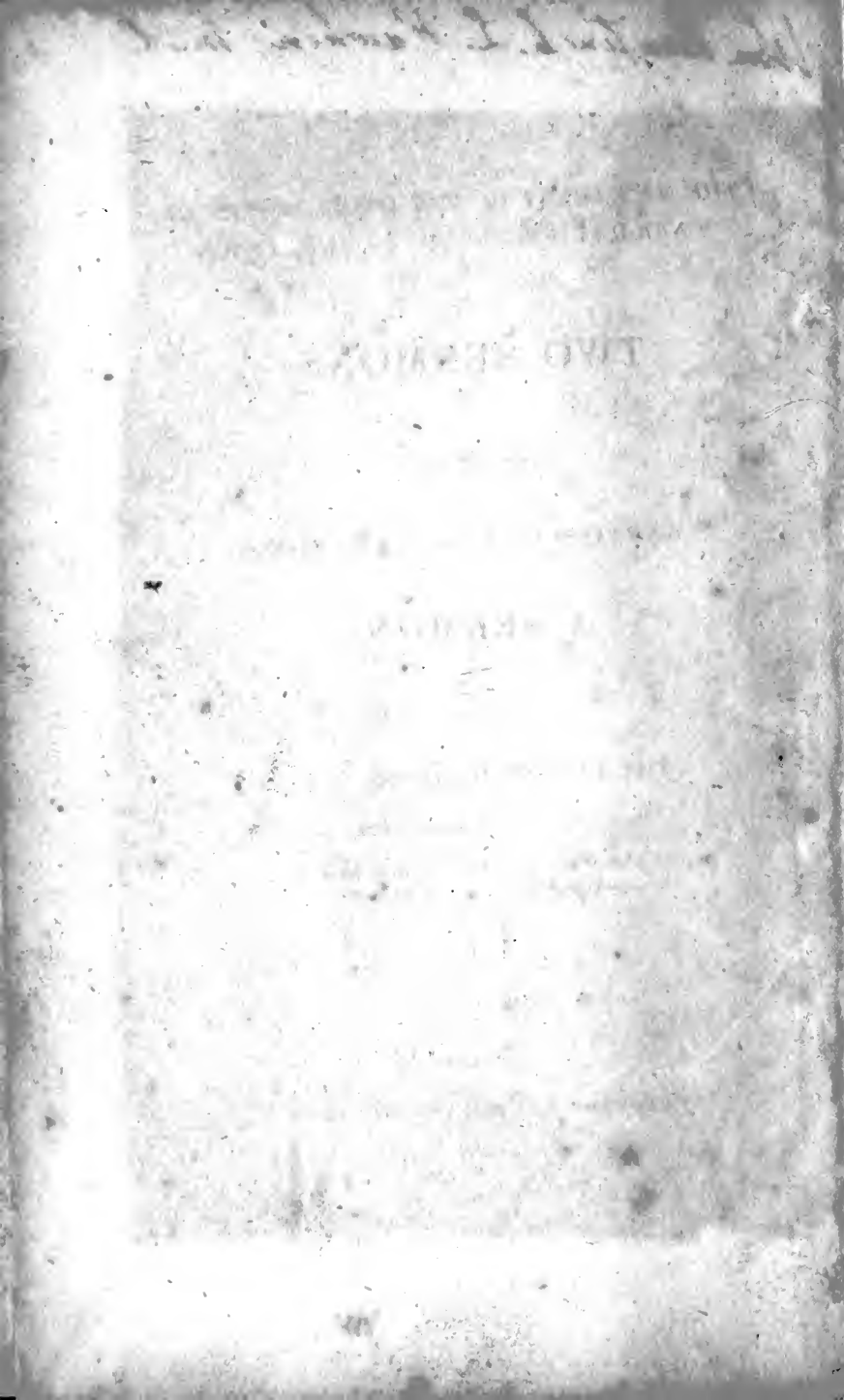
PRINCETON, N. J.

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Wm. Bentinck. L. Hawkins, M.A.



“ THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER GE-
NERALLY NECESSARY TO SALVATION.”

TWO SERMONS :

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

“ BAPTISMAL REGENERATION,”

A SERMON,

BY

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TO THE
CONGREGATION
OF
REGENT SQUARE CHAPEL,
THESE SERMONS

ARE DEDICATED BY THEIR SINCERE FRIEND
AND MINISTER,

THE AUTHOR.

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SERMON I.

ST. LUKE, 22d Chapter, part of 19th Verse.

“ This do in remembrance of me.”

WE are instructed by the Catechism of our Church, that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is “ *generally necessary to salvation;*” by which is meant, that the observance of this holy rite is *absolutely necessary* to the salvation of all persons who are capable and have the opportunity of communicating.

In the following discourses I shall undertake to prove the scriptural truth and justice of this position. I shall first treat the subject independently of all its

spiritual relations, and show the obligation under which every Christian lies to receive the Sacrament as an act to which he is bound by a positive command of God. I shall, afterwards, proceed to treat the subject with a view to its spiritual relations, and show the obligation under which every Christian lies to receive the Sacrament, as the means divinely appointed for applying to himself those blessings which are offered to mankind through the sacrifice and mediation of the Redeemer. Every disciple of our Lord, who voluntarily and constantly abstains from the Lord's Supper, puts his eternal interests in imminent peril.

I. Because by his omission, he lives in a state of habitual sin, which is incompatible with the accomplishment of his salvation.

II. Because by his omission he deprives himself of those graces of the Holy Spirit which are indispensable to the attainment of his salvation.

Our reflections will, in the present discourse, be confined to the consideration of the first of these heads.

The Christian, who refuses to communicate, lives in a state of habitual sin, which is incompatible with the accomplishment of his salvation.

No terms can be more distinct or comprehensive than those in which this solemn rite was instituted.—The scriptural account of its origin as given in the collected words of St. Matthew, St. Luke, and St. Paul, is this: *—“The Lord Jesus,

* Matthew xxvi. 26, 27, 28;—Luke xxii. 19, 20;—1 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25, 26.

“ the same night in which he was be-
“ trayed, took bread and blessed it, and
“ brake it, and gave it to his disciples,
“ saying: take, eat, this is my body, which
“ is given for you: this do in remem-
“ brance of me. After the same manner
“ also he took the cup, and gave thanks,
“ and gave it to them, saying, drink all
“ of ye of this, for this is my blood of the
“ New Testament, which is shed for you,
“ and for many, for the remission of
“ sins; this do in remembrance of me.
“ For as often as ye eat this bread and
“ drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s
“ death till he come.” No command can
be more clear:—no language can be
more distinct or unequivocal:—A reli-
gious observance is here appointed by
the Messiah, as a figurative commemo-

ration of his death : “ *Do this in remembrance of me.*” It is to be performed by all of his disciples; “ *Drink all of ye of this.*” It is to be continued to the end of the world; for it is designed *to show forth the Lord’s death till he come*: that is, till he shall appear in glory at the day of judgment. We find then, from these passages of scripture, that there is an express and peculiar law enjoined on all the disciples of Christ: a law distinctly stated: a law of universal and permanent obligation: a law which it is impossible for any individual to evade, unless he reject the divine authority of Jesus, and deny the right of the Redeemer to legislate for the creatures he has redeemed.

The conduct of the Apostles proved the reverence and the importance which they attached to the Sacrament; and in

every Church which they established, the Lord's Supper was instituted and celebrated amongst their converts as the distinguishing rite of their religion. Their immediate disciples scrupulously persevered in following the instructions of their masters, and, revering the ordinance as an indispensable part of Christian worship; "they continued steadfast" says St. Luke, "in the Apostles' doctrine "and fellowship, *and in breaking of bread* "and in prayers."* Among the primitive

* Acts ii. 42.—The word rendered *fellowship* in this text is *κοινωνία*, *communion*. This passage affords the first information which we have respecting the public worship of the primitive Christians. And it appears to have consisted among the immediate followers of the Apostles, as we know that it did in times immediately subsequent to theirs, of these three parts—of hearing God's word, of prayers, and of the Sacrament. The text referred to above, may be rendered "and they were continually engaged in hearing the instructions of the Apostles, "and *in communion and breaking of bread*, and in prayers." According to Schleusner, the words "communion, and breaking "of bread," are spoken by Hendiadys of the Lord's Supper.

Christians we may read of the misuse of the Sacrament—of occasions in which the bread and wine had been unworthily received—of discussions whether the consecrated elements might or might not be administered to infants—of exhortations to receive them with a holy reverence—of the frequent, even of the daily, celebration of the Lord's Supper; and of the exclusion of offending brethren: but I do not remember a single passage among the early records of Christianity which would lead us to suppose, that any individual, who had been entered by Baptism as a member of the Church, ever dared to neglect the ordinance. Our elder Fathers in the faith respected this rite as one with which they were bound to comply, by the submission that they owed to the authority of the Son of

God: they were as careful to partake of the Sacrament, as they were to obey those holy precepts of conduct which had been delivered to them in the Sermon from the Mount; for the command of their Lord had rendered each an equally essential part of Christian duty: they were as fearful of abstaining from the Sacrament, as they were of infringing any of the moral precepts of the Gospel; for they knew that each was equally sinful as a violation of the revealed will of their Creator. In the history of the early ages of the Church, we may read, indeed, that those disciples, who had rendered themselves obnoxious to the censures of the Church, by corruption of life, or by heresy of opinion, were liable to excommunication as a punishment; but we do

not read of any, who voluntarily excommunicated themselves.

Yet, at the present day, this is the practice of the large majority of the nominal disciples of the Gospel.—Such a line of conduct is wholly unaccountable: it appears impossible to reconcile it with a sincere and firm conviction of the divine authority of Jesus Christ. The observance is easy to be performed: there appears no obstacle to your obedience: and yet you persevere in omitting it without any sense of shame or self-reproach. You would, perhaps, tremble to transgress any other point of Christian duty; yet here your transgression is persisted in without the slightest misgiving of conscience, and almost without any feeling of transgression. You do

not fail to attend your Church. You find yourself uneasy and distressed, if the habitual duties of the Sabbath are interrupted; yet you desert with the most perfect carelessness that holy solemnity, which is more peculiarly and exclusively an office of Christian worship, and which your Saviour has expressly instituted as the chief rite of his religion: you would not be guilty of any of the moral crimes forbidden by the Gospel, of murder or robbery, of dishonesty or falsehood, of calumny or licentiousness; but yet you would desert the Sacrament, which is equally a violation of the divine law, without the slightest consideration of its guilt.

And why is this?—Whence originates this inconsistency?—Why do you not take

warning from that fearful declaration of the Apostle, which instructs us that “if any man shall keep the whole law, and offend in one point, he is guilty of all?”*—But you conceive that the neglect of the Sacrament cannot be a very grievous sin; that it cannot be a crime of so heinous a nature, as to exclude the transgressor from the mercy of God; and that it must be a *slight* and *venial* offence; because it is not attended by any evil consequences to society. I will for a moment admit your supposition: I will suppose the offence to be one which carries no evil consequences along with it: this is not the case; yet for the sake of argument I will agree with you in supposing it to be so: but my brethren

* James ii. 10.

it will by no means follow, as you imagine, that the offence of your neglect is on that account either *slight*, or *venial*.

And here I must demand your attention: religion acknowledges no such thing as a *slight* offence. In a worldly point of view, to the eye of the mere moral man, conduct is capable of various degrees of censure. Morally speaking, sins may be considered as having a relative magnitude, and may be spoken of as great or small, as heinous or inconsiderable; because, as the welfare of mankind is the rule of conduct, we can estimate the shade of guilt which attaches to each, by the extent of the injury it occasions.—But in a religious point of view, there is no such thing as a slight offence; because the will of God is the

rule of conduct, and we are equally bound, as creatures of God, to live in obedience to that will, whether it command the first, great, universal precepts of natural duty, or enjoin the most trifling ceremonial observance. “It becometh *us*,” said the Saviour of the world, speaking for himself and his disciples, at the hour of his baptism, “to fulfil all righteousness.”* When he reproved the Pharisees for their rigid attention to the external appointments, and their neglect of the weightier duties, of the Mosaic law, he did not impugn the necessity of their strict obedience, but reproved them for the wickedness of their omissions:

* “Our Saviour was baptised,” according to the Apostolical “Constitutions,” not that he needed any purification, but that “he might testify the truth of St. John’s baptism, and be an *example to us*.” APOS. CONS. i. vii. c. 22.

His words are, “ these things ought ye
 “ to have done, and not to leave the others
 “ undone.”* They were all equally points
 of religious duty, and were all equally
 demanded by the written word of the
 Almighty. To the faithful servant of God
 who looks to religion, and religion only,
 for his rules and his motives of conduct,
 an offence can only appear *slight* from its
 being an offence of accident, or inadvert-
 ency; and every offence becomes enormous
 which is habitually and presumptuously
 committed. The will of God is the
 only christian rule of action :—The Sa-
 crament of the Lord’s Supper is ordained
 by the will of God :—Abstaining from
 the Sacrament is a violation of the will
 of God :—Constant absence is habitual
 violation of the will of God :—Absence

* Matt. xxiii. 23.

after being instructed in your duty, is presumptuous violation of the will of God. According therefore to the only religious means which we possess of estimating the extent and measure of iniquity, the refusing to communicate, bears with it all the characteristics of great and aggravated guilt.

But if the neglect of the Sacrament be not a *slight* offence, still you conceive that it may be considered as *venial* by the Almighty, because it is merely the violation of a religious ordinance, and appears to be unattended by any immediate injury to your fellow creatures. I do not conceive that the Scriptures would warrant you in entertaining such an opinion. They represent the Almighty as acknowledging no rule of

right, but that of his written word, and punishing the transgressors of his moral, or ceremonial laws with an equal and impartial severity.

This important truth is demonstrated by innumerable examples. It was appointed from on high, that none, except those who were of the seed of Aaron, should offer incense in the public worship of the Tabernacle.* To all human apprehension there would seem to be no fear of injuring our neighbours by the infringement of this ordinance ; and consequently little chance, as you would suppose, of exciting the vengeance of the Almighty. So thought Korah, and Dathan, and Abiram :—and, though they were not of the appointed family, they

* Numbers xvi. 40.

presumed to offer incense before the Lord: “and the ground clave asunder
 “that was under them, and the earth
 “opened her mouth and swallowed them
 “up.”*—It was ordained that no man who was not of the tribe of Levi should lay hand upon the Ark of the Covenant;—but who need be apprehensive of the commission of such an offence?—Where could be the moral criminality of such an act?—yet, “when Uzzah put forth his hand
 “to the Ark of God, and took hold of it;
 “the anger of the Lord was kindled
 “against Uzzah; and God smote him
 “there for his error, and there he died
 “by the Ark of God.”† Both these offences, severely punished as they were, infringed upon the ceremonial law alone,

* Numbers xvi. 31. 32.

† 2 Samuel vi. 6, 7.

and involved no moral delinquency. But what was the offence that changed the character and the condition of the whole human race? Why were our first Parents expelled from Paradise? Not for any crime, which was, according to our views, obnoxious to reproach as an act of great moral turpitude and enormity ; but for an offence which was, as you imagine the offence of abstaining from the communion to be, morally innocent in itself, but which the solemn interdiction of the Almighty, had rendered religiously guilty. But, indeed, there is a case exactly parallel with that of abstaining from the Lord's Supper. The Passover was instituted among the Jews to prefigure that very sacrifice of Christ, which the Sacrament was instituted to com-

memorate. If it was considered a slight offence to neglect the Passover ; or if, when neglected, the offence was one which the Almighty had expressed himself inclined to pardon ; we may reasonably hope that the same degree of leniency and indulgence will be shewn towards those who disregard the Sacrament : but if, on the contrary, we find that the Almighty has expressed himself with extreme severity against those who abstained from the Passover ; we can not help presuming that the same severity will be exhibited towards those who absent themselves from the corresponding, but the more perfect and holy, rite. Now, with respect to the Jewish institution, attendance was enforced under the sanction of the weightiest religious

penalties. Two opportunities were afforded for observing the feast.* The first on the Anniversary of the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt; when it was required that all, who were able, should be present: The second, a month afterwards, for those who had been incapable of attending on the appointed day: “but,” says the Lord, speaking through his prophet, “the Man that forbearth to keep the Passover, even the same shall be cut off from among the people;—because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.”† And if such were the denunciations uttered against the man who failed in his observance of the *typical* ordinance;

* Numbers ix. 11.

† Numbers ix. 14.

why should we presume that a greater degree of impunity will be allowed to those who persist in the voluntary and habitual transgression of the *commemorative* institution.

We have then no reason for supposing that the general neglect of the Sacrament is either a *slight* or a *venial* offence. But we will now proceed to consider the general pretext, which assumes that this offence is free from the guilt of entailing any evil consequences on society. This persuasion is, I am aware, the chief defence by which you sustain yourself in the known and wilful violation of so express an article of christian duty. Let us then consider this plea. Now, it is quite certain that the laws of God are always designed to promote

the ultimate good of his creatures ; but, as we are not always capable of discovering the particular end in view, it is our duty to confide entirely in his wisdom ; and, whether we can, or cannot, perceive the design of the divine institutions, to follow them with an humble and implicit obedience. But, in the present instance, it is very easy to trace, from the beneficial consequences which have followed the observance of this holy rite, the object and end for which it was appointed ; and it is, therefore, equally easy to point out the injury to your fellow creatures which must necessarily accompany your neglect of it.

In the first place, by the institution of the Sacrament, there was established a certain and perpetual evidence of the

truth of christianity. It has been shewn at large by Leslie, in an argument against the Deists* which none of that ingenious sect has ever been able in the slightest degree to shake, that there are four certain rules, which if they are found to meet in any matter of fact, it is impossible that that fact should be false. The rules are these. 1st. The fact must be such that men may judge of it by the outward senses of hearing and of sight. 2dly. It must be done publicly in the face of the world. 3dly. Some outward action must be performed in memory of it;— and 4thly. Such actions or observances must be instituted and commence from the time that the matter of fact was done. Now, all these rules meet in the

* *Short and Easy Method with the Deists.*

facts related in the Gospel. They were miracles of which the senses of any man, who saw them, would enable him to know that they were supernatural. They were performed publicly in the face of the world. The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were celebrated in perpetual memorial of them; and that, not in after ages only, but at the very time the miracles took place. It is not my purpose to give an abstract of the volume in which this argument in proof of the truth of Christianity is exhibited at large, and in a manner which I believe to be wholly incontrovertible; but there is a deduction from the argument which I am anxious to enforce on your attention:—If it be a fact, that the uninterrupted observance of the Sacrament from the days of

the Messiah to our own is a certain testimony of the truth of Christianity to us; you must perceive of how great importance it is that this holy rite should be handed down to our descendants, and remain as the certain testimony of the truth to them: you must perceive that by abstaining from the Sacrament, you do, to the utmost of your power, endeavour to break the chain of proof; and that, if your offence were universal,—a consideration which may teach you to appreciate the criminality of your omission,—the most conclusive, the most immediate, and the most tangible of all the different kinds of evidence by which the truth of the gospel history is supported would be lost to posterity; and Christianity deprived of one of its

strongest bulwarks against the attacks of its enemies.*

* The history of the tract of Leslie above referred to, may teach the reader how to estimate the importance and value of the testimony derived from the existence of the Sacrament. The anecdote which is given by Jones of Nayland came, through Dr. Delany, from Capt. Leslie, the son of the Author. "It was the fortune of Mr. Leslie to be acquainted with the Duke of Leeds of that time; who observed to him, that although he was a believer in the Christian religion, he was not satisfied with the common modes of proving it; that the argument was long and complicated, so that some had neither leisure nor patience to follow it, and others were not able to comprehend it; *that, as it was the nature of all truth to be plain and simple, if Christianity were a truth, there must be some short way of shewing it to be so*: and he wished Mr. Leslie would think of it.—Such a hint to such a man, in the space of three days, produced the rough draught of 'The Short and Easy Method with the Deists;'—which he presented to the Duke, who looked it over and said; 'I thought I was a Christian before, but I am sure of it now: as I am indebted to you for converting me, I shall henceforth look on you as my spiritual father.' And he acted accordingly, for he never came into his company afterwards without asking his blessing."—The Providence of God by the institution of the Sacrament has afforded the Gospel that *short and easy proof of its truth*, which it is the nature of all truth to have, which the unbeliever might have been justified in demanding, but which, now that he is in possession of it, renders him without excuse in his unbelief. The importance and value attached to this testimony by the disciples of infidelity may be

But the Sacrament is not only an evidence of the truth of the Gospel which you are bound to maintain, but it also serves to convey a most impressive lesson of Christian doctrine. It inculcates by emblems the great paramount doctrine of the Atonement. That mankind are indebted for their reconciliation with God to that body which was given for them, and to that blood which was shed for their transgressions, is the chief, essential, indispensable, article of Christian faith; and it is one, which, even in the darkest ages, among the most ignorant

perceived in the eagerness they have shown to discover some false fact, which was accompanied with all the marks laid down as the infallible signs of truth by Leslie. Dr. Middleton is said to have enquired for twenty years, with the hope of finding some instance which might be set in opposition to the evidence of Christianity afforded by the Sacrament, and, with all his learning, enquired without success.

of Christian nations, has never been lost sight of. But how was this momentous truth preserved? Simply, by the universal and uninterrupted observance of the Lord's Supper. The bread broken, the wine poured out, the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus, were the records by which ignorant and benighted people were instructed of the efficacy of his sacrifice. The regular return of the Sacrament was not only a festival of religious gratitude, or a rite of religious worship, but it was an experimental lesson of religious instruction. When every other voice was silent, when the book of God was concealed in a language unintelligible to the multitude, and could only be purchased at a price that placed it out of the reach of the multitude,

the consecrated elements were as the preachers of the faith. The memorials of the death of Jesus handed down from generation to generation, the holy and mysterious import of his dying. In these present days of light, it may be conceived that such aids for the preservation of the truth are no longer needed; that, having the Gospel open before us, we may there read, and learn, and meditate, and adore; and that the time is come when we may dispense with all such symbolic aids to our religion. But, my brethren, how do we know that our present state of light and knowledge will continue? How know we that barbarism and ignorance may not again extend itself over the nations of Christendom? How know we that the existence of the Holy Sacra-

ment may not again become the only source of instruction, from which the unlettered disciple of the Redeemer may derive his knowledge of the hope that is in him? How know you, that your omission of this observance,—however slight, or trivial, or unimportant, it may appear to some,—may not assist in bringing about that disuse of the institution, which may eventually lead to a total abandonment of the Sacramental table, and thus prevent the stream of religious light from reaching those darker times, which may, possibly, if not highly probably, await our descendants.

Again, this sacred rite was designed as a public manifestation of your own faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. Your attendance is a public and solemn avowal

of your dependance on the atonement of your Redeemer, and not on your own merits. By the observance of this rite, you demonstrate that you rely on the graces of his Spirit, and not on your own human strength for the accomplishment of your salvation; that you are not merely a Christian by birth and education, but that you are a Christian in spirit and in truth. Now no one, who has the slightest acquaintance with the principles of human nature, and observed the tendency of man to yield to the authority of numbers, rather than undergo the trouble of enquiring and judging for himself, will fail to comprehend the wisdom of such an institution. Mankind are, as it were, sympathetically convinced by witnessing the conviction of

others ; and you are called upon to exhibit an act of faith in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, that those, who are unsteady and wavering in their belief, may be convinced by the persuasive influence of your conviction. This tendency of human nature, which impels every man to fly from the doubt and insecurity of his own private speculations, and support his views by precedents and authorities, is of such universal operation, that those very unbelievers, who pretend by the mere force of intellect to have obtained an emancipation from all popular prejudices, still have recourse to the same means of confirming themselves in their opinions. They endeavour to persuade themselves that their sentiments are secretly the senti-

of you all; that you are but formalists in religion, and hypocrites in faith, and sceptics at the heart; that you attend the services of religion as Deists, and not as Christians. Your abstaining from the Sacrament justifies these suspicions. It confirms them in their unbelief; for, how is it possible to suppose, that any man can be more than an external and nominal Christian, who, when his Redeemer has desired him to perform a simple act in remembrance of him, refuses to declare his remembrance by the performance of the act? In this point of view, then, your desertion of the communion is injurious to society. You withdraw your signature from the public declaration of the truth of the Gospel. You diminish the weight of authority in its favour.

As far as the influence of your example reaches, you weaken the reverence for revelation in the public mind, and with that reverence the public welfare and happiness must ever rise or fall.

The sin of neglecting the Sacrament is aggravated by another consideration. There are spiritual benefits attached to the pious and worthy observance of this rite. These benefits are added graces of the Holy Spirit; the strengthening of your virtuous resolutions; the depression of your violent and unrighteous dispositions.—Now, it is not possible for any of you to obtain these additions of divine grace:—you cannot make these approaches towards the sanctification of your soul, without benefiting, and that most materially, the circle of your fellow

creatures among whom your life is spent. The happiness of every man is so immediately dependent on the virtues of those with whom he is connected, that your improvement in virtue is essential to the happiness of your relatives, your friends, your neighbours, your superiors, and your dependants; consequently, by omitting to avail yourself of the means of sanctification, which the Almighty has mercifully placed within your reach, you commit a real and essential injury against those, whom your spiritual improvement would have benefited. By neglecting the Lord's table, you diminish the stock of national holiness; and of national happiness, the consequence of national holiness. You retard the fulfilment of your own daily prayer, that "the will of

“ God may be done in earth as it is in
“ heaven,” by rejecting that divine assist-
ance without which you cannot have
the power of rendering your own per-
sonal share to the sum of universal
obedience.

There is yet one other consideration,
which shows that the guilt of neglecting
this holy institution is aggravated by the
injury which it occasions. Did you not,
each of you individually, add the autho-
rity of your example to the desertion of
the Sacramental table, others would be
ashamed of incurring the guilt of so im-
pious an omission. You make a precedent
to encourage them in their disobedience.
You add to the crowd who throng from our
churches, without completing their reli-
gious duties, on the days appointed for

the celebration of the Lord's Supper; and give countenance to the carelessness and omission of many who might otherwise be brought to a consideration of the sin they are committing, and become habitual and devout communicants. If the majority remained to obey the ordinance of their Saviour, there would be a disgrace and ignominy attached to the neglect of this Sacrament. An universal practice of attendance would gradually ensue. All, who were of age to communicate, would regularly communicate; and that on every day of communion.* And so it ought

* The primitive Christians never assembled together without the celebration of the Sacrament. In the days of St. Basil, who commands *daily* communion, [Epist 219, ad Cæsar.] the Christians constantly communicated *five times* a week and on all Saints days; and it may be seen from one of the Apostolical Canons, [Can. xi.], that all Christians, who came to the public assembly, and heard the Holy Scriptures, and did not remain to com-

to be: man is by nature so imperfect, so in love with sin, and so averse from good; that he cannot unite himself with his duty by too many ties, or surround himself by too many barriers against transgression. The constant attendance at the Lord's Supper constrains the Christian to the habit of self examination:—it brings him, as it were, into the frequent

municate were liable for the future to be excommunicated.* If then the example of the primitive Christians can be considered as being of any authority with their descendants, it would appear that we ought to attend the Sacrament on every opportunity which is offered us, and that the neglect of our Lord's command in this respect cannot, under any ordinary circumstances, be excused. Where the Sacrament is administered only once a month, it cannot be reasonably abstained from on the plea of its too frequent recurrence. It is sometimes urged that the Church of England never meditated so general an attendance, and that inconvenience would arise from such a multitude of communicants on account of the length of time required to distribute the elements. If such inconvenience should ever happily occur, it is one for which a remedy might easily be discovered.

* See Nelson's *Christian Sacrifice*.

presence of the judgments of his God:— he sees the day of Sacrament close before him; and it acts as a warning to him to abstain from offence.—It adds to the terror of iniquity.—If he err, it compels him to speedy repentance.—Evil is prevented from growing into habit.—The constant, periodical, observance of the Lord's Supper restores to religion its natural power over the conscience: It renders vice an object of present dread: It renders obedience an object of more immediate interest:—and, in this respect, no man can countenance by his example the general and unrighteous desertion of the Sacrament, without invalidating the influence, and impairing the efficacy, of Christianity itself.

But in what does this neglect of the

Sacrament originate? Does it not arise from an unhealthy state of the religious affections? May it not generally be traced either to a want of Christian *piety*, or to a want of Christian *humility*?—You obey the laws of God in other respects; but why are you indifferent to this?—Other transgressions are avoided, because there are the penalties of this world to be dreaded; but the Sacrament is omitted, because there is no other punishment to be apprehended but the distant retributions of eternity.—In other offences, there is the reproach of your fellow creatures, and the censure of public opinion, and the supercilious eye, and the loss of favour, and the sarcastic taunt, and the attain of character to be encountered;—but, in this offence, you find impunity in

the multitudes of the disobedient, and the infamy of many resolves itself into the infamy of none.—In other instances of obedience, there is the approval of the world to be obtained; and the desire of admiration tends to stimulate and sustain you in the course of duty; in this instance, there is nothing to be acquired, which possesses any value to the soul that is defective in religious love; its fruits have no reference to the things of this world; they are spiritual graces only; they consist in the remission of your sins,—a reconciliation with your God,—the peace of conscience,—the communion with your Redeemer,—the renewing and the strengthening of the Holy Ghost: and these hallowed things, according to the perverted views of the

worldly understanding, and the corrupted sentiments of the worldly heart, are cast aside with indifference as objects that are undeserving your consideration.

But the neglect of the Sacrament may also be traced to another source: to a want of intellectual humility. We are too conceited of our own abilities and acquirements to submit ourselves with an implicit obedience to the revealed will of our Creator. I know it is not thus that the man who offends in this respect would himself speak of his transgression; nor is this the light in which he is accustomed to regard it. He has other arguments of evasion; and when is the heart at a loss for an excuse to defend and palliate its criminality? With those moral precepts of the Gospel, which are con-

nected with his duty to mankind, and of which he can perceive the necessity and the importance, he does not hesitate to comply; or if he offend, he silently offends, and admits the justice of the censure, which the minister of the Gospel passes on his transgression, without any attempt at vindication. But it is considered that these constitute all the essential duties of a Christian, and that his attendance at the Lord's Supper may be omitted with impunity as a mere observance, as an act of supererogation, and as a form which may be indifferently complied with or rejected.—And why? because you do not perceive the necessity of attending to it.—Now, if this defence be translated out of the fair language in which the ingenious so-

phistry of the heart so often disguises it, into its plain and natural form of expression, what is the sentiment that it conveys? It is this:—The Almighty has given you a law which you will presumptuously scan, and measure your own fallible notions of right and wrong. You will only submit your conduct to the direction of the Omniscient as far as you can fathom his design and comprehend his purpose. You will be the proud and lofty servant of your God, and only condescend to execute his commands when they correspond with the views of your own reason or experience. You will be the disciple of the Gospel, as far as its instructions coincide with the conclusions of your own ethics, and fall away, when its light would guide you to an act of

duty, which you do not happen to perceive the immediate importance of.—But where is your humility?—How does this temper harmonize with the docility of the Christian?—How does it correspond with that precept of the Lord your God which directs, that “Ye shall not do, every
 “ man, whatsoever is right in his own
 “ eyes, but what thing soever I command
 “ you, observe to do it; thou shalt not
 “ *add* thereto nor *diminish* therefrom?”*

We have then, I think, seen, that abstaining from the Sacrament bears with it all the properties of sin:— It is an offence against the law of God; and the law of God is the only Christian rule of action:— it is most eminently injurious in its effects upon society:—it originates, like every other

* Deut. xii. 8, and 32 verses.

sin, in an unhealthy and irreligious state of the mind and heart:—it bears with it, therefore, all the properties and characteristics of a grievous sin; and we are justified in considering my first proposition as distinctly proved, and may conclude, that “the Christian, who refuses to communicate, lives in a state of habitual transgression which is incompatible with the accomplishment of his salvation.”

SERMON II.

ST. LUKE, *22d Chapter, part of 19th Verse.*

“ This do in remembrance of me.”

IN my last discourse, I considered the offence of abstaining from the Lord's Supper simply as a sin of disobedience. I, as far as possible, excluded from our observations all the spiritual relations of the holy Sacrament; and, regarding the neglect of it simply as a transgression of the divine will, endeavoured to demonstrate, that “the Christian, who constantly
“ refuses his attendance at the altar, puts
“ his eternal interests in the most imminent peril, because he lives in a state of

“ habitual sin, which is incompatible with
“ the accomplishment of his salvation.”

Such was the argument of our last reflections on this important and sacred subject.—I shall, to day, request your attention to the importance and necessity of partaking of the Lord’s Supper on other grounds.—“ The Christian who
“ refuses to communicate, puts his eternal interests in peril, because he
“ deprives himself of those spiritual aids
“ which are indispensable to the accomplishment of his salvation.”

This sacred rite was considered by the divine author of our faith as so essential a part of his religion, that we find St. Paul was visited by a particular revelation respecting it. He had not been present when the Sacrament was instituted by our

Lord; but to place him on an equality with the other Apostles, and preclude the existence of any deficiency or imperfection in the Churches which he might establish, the Apostle of the Gentiles was inspired with a miraculous knowledge of the circumstances and nature of this holy ordinance. In remonstrating with the Corinthians on their abuse of the Lord's Supper, his words are: "For I have *received of the Lord*, that which I also delivered unto you;"* and then, in recapitulating the circumstances of the intelligence which he had thus received, not from any one who had heard it of the Apostles, or from the Apostles who were present, but *miraculously* from the Lord himself, he delivers an

* 1 Cor. xi. 23.

account of the institution of the Sacrament, corresponding, in all respects, with those which are delivered in the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. St. Paul concludes his description with a sentence which declares, that the duty of assisting at the celebration of this rite is one of perpetual obligation ; that it extends to all ages ; and that it will only cease with the present economy of the universe, at the second advent of the Redeemer ; for says the Apostle, “ As often as ye eat this bread, and drink “ this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord’s “ death till he come.”* The revelation thus made to the Apostle of the Gentiles on the subject of the Lord’s Supper, I cannot but consider as the strongest pos-

* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

sible proof of the great importance with which it is regarded by the Divine Author of our religion ; and, if we examine the terms in which the sacred rite is mentioned in the New Testament, we shall very readily comprehend the reason for which so much importance is attached to it. It there appears that whatever spiritual privileges are enjoyed by us, as Christians, are dispensed by means of this Sacrament.—Do we hope for remission of sins through the merits of Christ's death? It is by means of the Sacrament that that atonement is rendered available to us.—Do we require the assistance of his spirit to obtain eternal life? It is by means of the Sacrament that those graces of the Holy Ghost are to be obtained.

It is by means of the Sacrament that

the atonement of Christ is rendered available to us.—The words of our Saviour in delivering the bread to his disciples were, “ Take eat *this is my body* :”* of the wine he uses a similar expression, “ Drink ye all of this, *this is my blood* “ of the New Testament which is shed “ for you and for many for the remis- “ sion of sins.”† Now to suppose, as many do, that the bread and wine undergo a real change at the moment of consecration, and are actually converted into the body and blood of the Redeemer, is to follow the literal meaning of his words with a timid subjection of the understanding, which is far more creditable to the humility, than it is to the judgment of the interpreter. It is demanding

* Matt. xxvi. 26.

† Matt. xxvi. 28.

of the faith an exertion which is beyond the powers of faith.—The Christian's faith may require him to believe in doctrines that are above the reach of reason ; but it never requires him, as is the case with the article of transubstantiation, to receive any thing as fact which his senses demonstrate to be false. Besides, to imagine an actual change of substance in the sacred elements, appears to attach a materiality to the institution, which is very inconsistent with the strictly spiritual nature of the religion of Jesus Christ.—“ But, let us,” says Hooker, “ give ourselves to meditate what we have by the Sacrament, and not to dispute the manner how. Such curious and intricate speculations do hinder, they abate, they quench such inflamed notions of

“ delight and joy, as divine graces
 “ are apt to raise when extraordinarily
 “ they are present. The mind, there-
 “ fore, feeling present joy, is always
 “ marvellous unwilling, to admit any
 “ other cogitation, and in that case cast-
 “ eth off those disputes whereunto the
 “ intellectual part, at other times, easily
 “ draweth.”* We will not then presump-

* Hooker, *Book v. c. 67*. I cannot refrain from transcribing
 the following charitable and pious observations of the great
 and good Author above quoted with respect to all controversies
 on the nature of the Sacrament. “ Seeing that we are grown, for
 “ aught I can see, on all sides, at the length, to a general agree-
 “ ment concerning that which alone is material, namely, the
 “ real participation of Christ, and of life in his body and
 “ blood, by means of this Sacrament; wherefore should the
 “ world continue still distracted and rent with so manifold
 “ contentions, when there remaineth now no controversy, saving
 “ only about the subject where Christ is? Yea, even in this
 “ point no side denieth, but the soul of man is the receptacle
 “ of Christ’s presence.”—“ All things considered, and compared
 “ with that success which truth hath hitherto had by so bitter
 “ conflicts with errors on this point, shall I wish that men would
 “ more give themselves to meditate with silence what we have

tuously enquire in what manner the graces, communicated by means of the

“ by the Sacrament, and less to dispute of the *manner how!*
 “ If any men suppose this were too great stupidity and dullness,
 “ let us see whether the Apostles of our Lord themselves have
 “ not done the like. It appeareth by many examples, that
 “ they of their own dispositions were very scrupulous and
 “ inquisitive, yea, in other cases of less importance, and less
 “ difficulty, always apt to move questions. How cometh it to
 “ pass, that so few words of so high a mystery being uttered,
 “ they receive with gladness the gift of Christ, and make no show
 “ of doubt or scruple? The reason hereof is not dark to them
 “ which have any thing at all observed how the powers of the
 “ mind are wont to stir, when that which we infinitely long for
 “ presenteth itself above and besides expectation.”—“ Since we
 “ all agree, that by the Sacrament Christ doth really and
 “ truly in us perform his promise, why do we vainly trouble our-
 “ selves with so fierce contentions, whether by *consubstantiation*,
 “ or else by *transubstantiation*, the Sacrament itself be first
 “ possessed with Christ, or no? A thing which no way can further
 “ or hinder us, howsoever it stand, because our participation of
 “ Christ in this Sacrament dependeth on the co-operation of his
 “ omnipotent power which maketh it his body and blood to us;
 “ whether with change or without alteration of the element,
 “ such as they imagine, we need not greatly to care or enquire.
 “ Take therefore that wherein all agree, and then consider by
 “ itself what cause there is why the rest in question should not
 “ rather be left as superfluous, than urged as necessary.”

Ecclesiastical Polity, Book 3, c. 67.

If that re-union of all Christian people, which every true

Sacrament, are conveyed ; but we will enquire what those graces are?—What do the words of our Lord impart?—To receive the terms, used in the institution of the rite, with only such extension of meaning, as may be warranted by scriptural precedent, what would their fair interpretation appear to be? Simply this :—As our Lord himself was called by John the Baptist, “ the Lamb that taketh away “ the sins of the world,”* with reference to the Lamb of the Passover, which was the *anticipative* type of the sacrifice of Jesus ; so the bread and wine, which are the *retrospective* symbols of the same

disciple of the Saviour so devoutly longs for, should ever take place, it must be brought about on the principle which Hooker, more than two hundred years ago, laid down : on the principle of considering *essentials*, and omitting the consideration of all minor points.

* John i. 29.

sacrifice, are denominated by our Lord his body and blood. In this sense then, the words are figurative; but what is the truth that they express?—This does not appear a question of difficult solution.—As the Israelites, by the sacrifices of the Mosaic law, received remission of their sins on account of that future propitiation of Christ, which those sacrifices prefigured: so the Christian, by observing the holy institution of the Sacrament, receives remission of his sins, on account of that past propitiation of Christ once offered, of which the Sacrament, may be considered as the commemorative oblation. The consecrated elements, though mere bread and wine, indeed, as received externally by the communicant, are to his soul, spiritually,

and for the remission of his sins, as the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. They are hallowed by the word of our Saviour, as the appointed instruments by which the benefits of the great atoning sacrifice are conveyed to his disciples. For this interpretation of the words, in which this sacred rite was instituted, we do not depend on the ingenuity of any uninspired teacher. It is taken from St. Paul himself. From one who was supernaturally instructed of the form, and nature, and design of the Sacrament. The Apostle's expressions are, "The cup
" of blessing which we bless, is it not
" the communion" (or does it not render us partakers) "of the blood of Christ?
" the bread that we break, is it not the
" communion," (or does it not render us

partakers) “of the body of Christ!”*—
 And who is there but has daily and hourly need of flying for refuge from the penalties of sin, beneath the shelter of the Cross of Christ? Who is there, that can stand secure in his own merits, without feeling any want of that sacrificial propitiation which the devout and sincere communicant acknowledges the necessity of, and accepts with gratitude and reverence, in the consecrated elements of the Lord’s Supper?—Even the most zealous disciple

* 1 Cor. x. 16. “The ancients held the oblation of the Eucharist to be answerable in some respects to the legal sacrifices. They believed that our Saviour ordained the Sacrament of the Eucharist, as a rite of prayer and praise to God, instead of the manifold and bloody sacrifices of the law: that as the legal sacrifices were types and shadows of the great sacrifice on the Cross, and had a relation to Christ that was to come, so the Christian sacrifice of bread and wine looks back, and has a relation to Christ that was crucified. There was also among the Jews an ancient tradition, as has been observed by learned men, *that in the time of the Messiah, all sacrifices should cease but that of bread and wine.*”

NELSON’S *Christian Sacrifice.*

of our Saviour has many transgressions to lament.—He may be walking “in the strait and narrow path,” but from the infirmities of nature he will often stumble there.—He may be “going on into perfection;” but it is by evidence of his imperfection, that his progress will be tracked.—The life of every man must always, in some degree, be a life of error and repentance. When the Christian has no longer any cause to mourn over the commission of actual sin; he will still have to lament the neglect of opportunities of virtue: and, as the justice of God is commensurate with our transgressions; he has opened in the Sacrament the means of pardon, through the sacrifice of Christ, that his mercy may be equally proportioned to our faith and our repentance.

But the graces of the Holy Spirit also are conveyed to us by means of the Lord's Supper.—It is not only remission of past sins, that we receive by the devout observance of this holy rite; but also strength to assist us in the future discharge of our duty. It is an established and universal article of Christian faith, that there is a strict, spiritual union between the Saviour and his Church; that all who are true members of his religion are influenced by his Spirit; that they are, according to our Lord's beautiful illustration, connected with him as the branches are with the vine; that, as long as this holy intercourse is continued, they “may bring forth fruit;” but that, when severed from him, “they can do nothing.”* This holy, spiritual union with Christ is

* John xv. 5.

begun in Baptism: “we are,” says St. Paul, “*all* baptised by one Spirit:”* but that Spirit, which we received in baptism, must be continually renewed, and cherished, and increased by application to the means of grace afforded in the Lord’s Supper. The Apostle of the Gentiles, who tells the Corinthians they were “all baptized by one Spirit;” also adds “that they have all been made to “drink into one Spirit:” in which he evidently refers to the Holy Cup of the Eucharist. In the same manner, St. John says, that “Christ cometh by water and “blood—not by water only, but by water “and blood:”† which means,—according

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

† 1 John v. 6. Our translation renders the words, “This is “he who *came* by water and blood;” but “Οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ “ἐλθὼν,” in the original, naturally bears the sense which I have given above.—“This is he which *cometh* by water and “blood.”

to the most easy interpretation and the consistent doctrine of the universal church,—that the Spirit of Christ is conveyed to his disciples, not only by the water of Baptism, but also by the consecrated element, the figurative blood of Christ, received at the Lord's Supper. In it the tree of life is restored to us; and the fruit is freely offered to our acceptance by which the soul may be nourished to eternal existence.—“ The grace
“ which we have by the Holy Eucharist,
“ does not begin, but continue life. No
“ man therefore receiveth the Sacrament
“ before Baptism, because no dead thing
“ is capable of nourishment. That which
“ groweth, must of necessity first live.
“ If our bodies did not daily waste, food
“ to restore them, were a thing super-

“ fluous. And it may be that the grace
 “ of Baptism would serve to eternal life,
 “ were it not that the state of our spiri-
 “ tual being is daily so much hindered
 “ and impaired after Baptism. In that
 “ life therefore, where neither body nor
 “ soul can decay, our souls shall as little
 “ require this Sacrament, as our bodies
 “ corporal nourishment. But as long as
 “ the days of our warfare last, during
 “ the time that we are both subject to
 “ diminution and capable of augmenta-
 “ tion in grace, they, who by Baptism
 “ have laid the foundation and attained the
 “ first beginning of a new life, have here
 “ their nourishment and food prescribed
 “ for the continuance of life in them.”*
 And, my brethren, if you really and sin-

* Hooker, Book v. c. 67.

cerely do design to lead a Christian life; that object must be effected by Christian means.

The life of a Christian is a constant progress towards perfection; and habitual communion constitutes the means, by which the faithful disciple of the Saviour is enabled to advance upon his ascending course. Looking to his salvation as the principal concern of his existence, and anxiously endeavouring to mould the dispositions of his soul into a perfect resemblance of the character of his Redeemer, the true Christian does not suppose that these important objects can be accomplished by a single, sudden, and instantaneous effort. He knows that they must be effected by a slow and gradual and

continued exercise of his powers.— He regards the returning days of Sacrament as the steps by which he marks his advancement in holiness of life. He examines his heart before he approaches the altar ; and, discovering its infirmities, resolves within himself, that, by the assistance of God's spirit, from the present Communion to the next, no emotion of envy, no impulse of licentious passion, no feeling of impatience or irritation, no movement of desire towards the sin which may be the predominant infirmity of his soul, shall be allowed to occupy his thoughts or influence his actions. He determines to struggle with it. He resolves, that, during the interval between Communion and Communion, he will avoid and fly from it.—The recollection of the Sacrament, at which such

a holy resolution was sealed, and the grace of the Saviour was entreated to confirm it, remains upon the memory as an impediment to restrain him from transgression.—The expectation of the Sacrament, to which he is advancing, cheers and animates his endeavours by presenting to his view the near prospect of a spiritual victory, to which he is, day by day, and hour by hour, more nearly approaching. In the mean time, his human and corrupt affections are weakened by resistance.—Their aliment has been withdrawn;—they pine and die away;—while, on the other hand, the grace of the Holy Spirit, which he has received, is cherished and increased: and, when the succeeding day of Sacrament arrives, he returns to the presence

of his Lord, with the talent doubled which had been committed to his trust, and to have that doubled talent again restored to him ; that it may be again improved, and again committed to his charge.

An uncommunicating Christian may have faith—a cold, historical, theoretical faith ; but, that he should be making any advance towards the sanctification of his soul, is what I never can believe. We can do nothing but as we maintain our communion with Christ ; and an uncommunicating Christian is a cleft and withered branch, severed from that true vine, “separate from which we can do nothing.” The grace of Baptism is not sufficient to sustain us ; unless it be renewed by the grace of the Sacrament.

The judgment of the last day appears too remote to influence the soul ; unless we anticipate its date, and bring ourselves into frequent judgment before the tribunal of our own conscience, by the self examination and repentance which attend the Christian to the Communion Table. The conquest of our evil and wandering inclinations is too difficult, too complicated, too gigantic an undertaking for us ; unless we orderly and progressively attempt the victory over the whole body of sin, by constantly applying to the source of spiritual strength for the weapons that are proper for the conflict. It is expressly stated by our blessed Lord himself, that the sacred elements of the Lord's Supper, are hallowed in a most especial manner for

this end. We read in St. John's gospel these strong expressions of our Redeemer on this point.—“ I am the living bread
 “ that came down from Heaven :—If any
 “ man eat of this bread, he shall live for
 “ ever ; and the bread that I will give,
 “ is my flesh, which I will give for the
 “ life of the world.—He that eateth my
 “ flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth
 “ in me, and I in him ; as the living Father
 “ has sent me, and I live by the Father :
 “ so he that eateth me, even he shall
 “ live by me.”*---If then we would “ dwell
 “ in Christ,” if we would that “ Christ
 “ should dwell in us,” by a real, spiritual
 union ; we possess, my brethren, in the
 consecrated elements of the Lord's Sup-
 per, the certain, the appointed, and the

* St. John, vi. 51, 56, 57.

hallowed means, by which our alliance may be effected with the source of spiritual holiness, and life, and light.

The Saviour has thus attached the *remission of sins*, and *the dispensation of his spirit*, to the worthy observance of the Sacrament, in conformity with the infirmities of our human nature.— Conscious that the imagination is a most powerful agent ; he has thus addressed it in the cause of religion : knowing that sensible objects are apt strongly to affect the mind ; he has sanctified them as the means of conferring his spiritual graces : having proved the fallibility of the human memory, and the liability of man to forget the greatest benefits, and the severest judgments ; he has prescribed this simple and easy rite to be performed

in remembrance of him, that the world might never lose the recollection of the iniquity which needed an atonement, nor of the Saviour by whose death it was voluntarily and mercifully achieved. The devout partaking of the Lord's Supper, is in the Christian an act expressive of religious *love*, and religious *faith*. Of religious *love*, solicitous of improving every possible occasion of spiritual intercourse, and of obtaining a more near and immediate communion with the Saviour; of religious *faith*, relying with humble confidence on the word of revelation, and seeking salvation by means of those instruments, through which the Lord of Mercy has declared himself willing to dispense it; and as the many sins of the Magdalene

were forgiven because she *loved* much ; as that diseased person, who timidly and silently approached the Saviour, meditating within herself “ If I can “ but touch his garment. I shall be “ whole,” was healed, because her *faith* had saved her ; so is the act of religious *love* and *faith* performed by the pious communicant, through the grace of God and the merits of his Saviour, inseparably connected with the remission of sins, and the strengthening and refreshing of the soul.

Now, that the fruits and advantages of redemption are thus attached to the devout participation of the Lord’s Supper, appears perfectly unquestionable, as long as we receive the intimations of Scripture in their plain, and clear, and

intelligible sense. But here originates a very important question. Though it be true, that the blessings, purchased for weak and transgressing man by the redemption of Jesus, are conferred by means of the consecrated elements, at the Communion Table; and though these blessings are indispensable to his salvation, may not these indispensable blessings be conveyed without the use of the consecrated elements? To entertain such a supposition is to render the solemn and holy rite itself void and ineffectual.—It is presuming, that God has covenanted to dispense the mercies of redemption to his creatures in one manner; but that he, indeed, designs another mode of distribution. And whence originates the question?—Is it that you

find any impediment to receiving the divine mercy on the terms proposed?— or is it that you will only deign to be forgiven, and condescend to be saved, according to your own devices, and not according to the counsels of your God?— But we have scriptural authority for asserting, that the fruits of the atonement are only to be obtained by the means prescribed. I am justified in this assertion by the words of our Saviour himself, which, however some interpreters may endeavour to explain them away, or divert their purport to other applications, have no connected or intelligible sense, but when viewed as prophetically spoken of the bread and wine received at the Lord's Supper. The sentence, to which I refer, is taken

from another part of that passage of St. John's gospel, to which I have before alluded. It contains the solemn denunciation of our Saviour against those who abstain from Communion :—" Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."*—Such is our Lord's own definitive sentence.—He declares, that to receive the Sacrament is indispensable to salvation ;—that not to receive it is to have no life in you.—" This, you say, is a hard saying ; who can hear it?"†--So murmured some of the disciples when the words were first uttered by our Saviour.—And ye will not obey.—Even so did many of our Lord's first converts ; they were so offended

* John vi. 53.

† John vi. 60.

with these words, that "they went back," says St. John, "and walked no more with "him."*

But, since it is evident, that if we would obtain the privileges and graces of the Gospel, we must seek them in that holy Sacrament which Christ has instituted as the means of communicating them to us; why is it, that so many, who profess and call themselves Christians, and fully appreciate the blessings which their profession opens to them, still refuse, by abstaining from the Sacrament, to secure to themselves those blessings which they so highly value, which their Redeemer mercifully offers to them, and which he graciously invites them to receive.—With a large propor-

* John vi. 66.

tion of these, I apprehend, the omission may be traced to the superstitious alarm created by a passage in our own Communion Service. The passage to which I allude is the following :—“ For as the
 “ benefit is great, if with a true peni-
 “ tent heart and lively faith we receive
 “ that holy Sacrament ; (for then we spi-
 “ ritually eat the flesh of Christ and
 “ drink his blood ; then we dwell in
 “ Christ and Christ in us ; we are one
 “ with Christ and Christ with us :) so is
 “ *the danger great, if we receive the*
 “ *same unworthily*, for then we are
 “ guilty of the body and blood of Christ
 “ our Saviour ; we eat and drink our own
 “ *damnation* ; not considering the Lord’s
 “ body, we kindle God’s wrath against
 “ us ; we provoke him to plague us with

“divers diseases and sundry kinds of death.”—This passage is paraphrased from a part of St. Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians. It is introduced in the exhortation at the opening of the Communion Service. It can, of course, have no other meaning in that place, than such as may be authorized by the sense and context of the original; and, if we refer to the original to discover what that meaning is, we shall find that it has no application whatever to present times and circumstances. The words in question were called forth by an evil practice which had arisen in a church that the Apostle had himself planted, and would most probably never have been written, if that practice never had prevailed.—In the early ages of Christianity, it was cus-

tomary, at the celebration of the Sacrament to hold a common supper, or feast of charity, to which each of the disciples contributed according to his means. Among the Corinthians this custom became the cause of great and aggravated sin. We learn from St. Paul's first Epistle to them, that the harmony of these feasts was interrupted by "divisions,"*—that "in eating one took his own supper before another"—that "one was hungry and another drunken"—that they "despised the church of God, and put the poor to shame."† In fact, all the great principles of the Gospel were violated. The humble were outraged by the contumely of the proud; the necessitous disregarded by the selfish and the uncharitable; the poor insulted

* 1 Cor. xi. 27, 30.

† 1 Cor. xi. 19, 22.

by the rich ;—the temple of Christ profaned by the excesses of the sensual ;—and these impieties, odious in any Christian person, at any moment, received additional enormity from their being practised at the celebration of that very rite, which our Saviour had ordained with the design of uniting his disciples as a band of brethren, who were equally the children of one father, and who equally participated in the same spiritual privileges.

There is no one, I should imagine, but will allow this to be “ eating and “ drinking unworthily ;” and some may, perhaps, conceive that such abominable profanation would not be too severely punished, even though visited by the *damnation*, denounced against it by the common translation of the passage in

question. The Apostle is more lenient. The word which he uses signifies *punishment*. In the next verse he proceeds to inform us what was the nature of the punishment incurred by those who thus “eat and drank unworthily.” “For this cause,” he says, “many are weak and sickly among you, and many are dead.”—The punishment, then, which St. Paul speaks of, was not an eternal but an earthly *judgment*: and, in a subsequent verse, he intimates the benevolent reason for which even this was inflicted, that “being chastened,” that is, being corrected, and so brought to repentance, “they might not be condemned with the world.”*

“If then,” says St. Chrysostom, “you

* 1 Cor. xi. 32.

“ approach the Sacrament, do nothing
 “ *unworthy* the Sacrament ; neither in-
 “ sult the humble, nor despise the hun-
 “ gry, nor be drunken, nor profane the
 “ Church.”*—These were offences com-
 mitted by the Corinthians ; and which
 exposed them to the judgments of the
 Almighty, as receiving the sacred ele-
 ments *unworthily*.—But how is it possible
 for you to be guilty of any similar offence?
 —How is it possible for you to incur the
 peril of a similar punishment ?—It is no
 longer in your power, as they did, “ to
 “ eat and drink your own condemnation.”
 I cannot imagine in what manner, under
 the present wisely regulated and holy
 form of administering the Lord’s Supper,
 any person can “ eat and drink *unwor-*

* Homily xxvii. on 1 Cor. xi.

“ *thily*,” so as to commit the sin, and be liable to the punishment of the Corinthians.

But you will, perhaps, reply, that though you cannot be unworthy in the same manner the Corinthians were, yet, in some other manner, you may be equally unworthy:—Undoubtedly you may; but, remember, this is entering upon an entirely new ground. The Apostle utters no intimation whatever with regard to your being *worthy*, or *unworthy* to receive the Sacrament; he speaks only of the manner in which the Sacrament is received. — Now, between these two things, there is the greatest possible difference:—Every man, who has sinned, has rendered himself *unworthy* of those blessings of pardon and support, which

God has, in his infinite mercy, proposed to him in the Eucharist : but still, sinner as he is, he may receive these blessings *worthily* ; he receives them *worthily*, if he receive them with faith, with penitence, with gratitude, and with a sincere and earnest purpose of reformation.—In fact, if we consider the subject justly, our being unworthy is the very reason of the institution of the Sacrament ; if we had been *worthy*, we should neither have required this nor any other means of obtaining the remission of sins, the forgiveness of God, and the increase of our spiritual strength.

Who, then, are the persons that ought to attend at the altar, and avail themselves of the privileges which the Almighty has thus mercifully vouch-

safed his creatures?—And here, addressing myself to the most guilty part of my congregation, I would answer, that even in their case, I would not venture to incur the awful responsibility of admonishing them to remain away.—Your conscience tells you, perhaps, that you are living in a state of vice incompatible with the precepts of your religion ; and you will not endeavour to loosen from the heart the closely rivetted fetters of your prevailing sin, and attend, with faith and penitence and sincere resolutions of amendment, to fulfil the solemn command of your Redeemer. You have gains to make that are not to be sought in the direct road of integrity; and you must secure the wages of your iniquity, before you can conscientiously entertain commu-

nion with the God of Righteousness. You have negociations to complete, that involve you in the many labyrinths of artifice and deceit and cunning; and you will not fly from the wiles of falsehood, that you may conscientiously entertain communion with the God of Truth. You are still cherishing in the breast the malignity against your neighbour, which is born of envy or of revenge, of jealousy or of pride; and you will not cast out Satan, that you may conscientiously entertain communion with the God of Peace. You are still deeply enamoured of the world, its pomps, its vanities, its wealth, its pleasures, and its parade; and you will not relinquish the pursuit of the unhallowed treasures of the earth, that you may conscientiously enter-

tain communion with the God of Heaven. You are dishonoured and depraved by inclinations wandering from your homes; abandoning the soul to the pollution of that deadly sin, which peoples our penitentiaries with female victims, you are wholly engrossed in a course of licentious crimes that threatens to end in your destruction; and you will not separate yourself from the objects of your forbidden attachment, that you may conscientiously entertain communion with the God of Purity. You are living in habits of sin; and you determine to continue in those habits. You confess yourself unfit to enter into communion with your Lord and Saviour; and, as a point of conscience, you would abstain from celebrating the rite which

your Redeemer has himself appointed, as the solemn commemoration of his death, and as the means of imparting to his disciples the benefits of his dying. You appeal, perhaps, to the minister of religion to advise you in this difficulty.---The Gospel affords him no instructions on the subject.---The custom of the primitive Church, as a disgrace, and as a punishment, excluded from all communion such presumptuous offenders as you state yourself to be: but the Gospel reveals to us no instructions on this subject. We only know from it, that your spiritual state is not a state of grace; that if you were to die in that state, you would inevitably be lost for ever; and doubtless, if, in that state, you were to attend the Sacrament, you would profane

the Table and increase your condemnation. But, remember, your refusing the Sacrament is no means of impunity; if you desert the Table, what is the advantage to you?—Your state is the same; you add another crime to the catalogue of your offences, and by the omission increase your condemnation. All we know is, that God will punish sin: which sin is liable to the severest punishment, the unworthy reception, or the voluntary reception of the Lord's Supper, I know not, neither have I any interest in inquiring: it is no part of my ministry to appoint the inflictions of the condemned; neither did I ever know, that it was any part of a Christian's duty to compare the guilt of different crimes, and curiously balance between them, so

as to secure to himself the lighter degrees of punishment in Hell; but I had always imagined, on the contrary, that he was constrained by the very principles of his profession, to abhor every species of offence, and to strive to be "*perfect as his Heavenly Father is perfect,*" with the hope of attaining the highest eminences of felicity in Heaven. The Sacrament is a means of grace; and sin is indisputably rendered more enormous in proportion to the talents which are given to us in vain; but, if this be a reason for refusing to communicate; it should also be a reason for refusing to attend your church, for neglecting the study of the Holy Scriptures, for omitting your morning prayer, and for ceasing from your evening thanksgiving. All these are

means of grace; and, if abused, they tend to aggravate the guilt and enormity of the sinner's transgression. But, if you reject all these merciful aids to your salvation, will you obtain a liberty of conscience, and a privilege of sinning with impunity?—no, far otherwise; you change indeed the character of your offence; but the danger to your salvation remains the same.—You are no longer disobedient, but apostate.—You involve yourself in the condemnation of the children of Israel: and are guilty “of blinding your eyes, and of making hard your hearts, lest you should see with your eyes, and understand with your hearts, and be converted and live.” Whether, if you are resolved to persevere in voluntary sin, you ought, or

ought not, to unite with the more devout and pious disciples of the Saviour in attending the Lord's Supper at the appointed days of Communion, I know not. It is a choice between such tremendous and appalling evils, that I dare not venture to determine for you. If you consider Archbishop Tillotson's authority of any weight, his words upon the subject are these: "He that abstaineth
" from the Sacrament, from fear of un-
" worthy communion, placeth himself
" in a desperate state, and does certainly
" damn himself to avoid the danger of
" damnation."

But there is a class of my congregation with regard to whom I have no hesitation in speaking with confidence and decision. You are unworthy—you

say—conscious of offence—desirous of improvement; but, as yet, have found yourselves too weak to contend successfully with the powers of darkness, and incapable of casting off the fetters of the sins that hold you.—If this be your spiritual condition:—If you have only touched upon the first limits of conversion:—If there be but this germ of grace opening in the soul:—If you have but now begun to find your offences burthen-some; and to feel a sorrow for your past transgressions, and a desire of reform, where would you fly for refuge but to the Cross of Christ?—It was for you that the body of Jesus was bruised; it was for you that his blood was shed.—Why, my brethren, there has been a sad misapprehension here.—You are not *unworthy*

—You are *worthy* communicants.—The invitation that summons the congregation to the Sacrament, more particularly addresses itself to you.—You are sinking beneath the oppression of your offences; and is it not those “that travail and are heavy laden” whom your Redeemer solicits to come unto him?—You are desirous of forgiveness; and where is it to be obtained but by the atonement and mediation of the Messiah?—You are anxious to possess yourself of strength to emancipate the soul from the passions that enslave it; and to what aids shall man, in his weakness, have recourse, but to those invigorating influences of the Holy Spirit which are given by Jesus Christ; and

which are sufficient for us; and which the sacred elements of bread and wine are the appointed instruments of dispensing to his disciples.

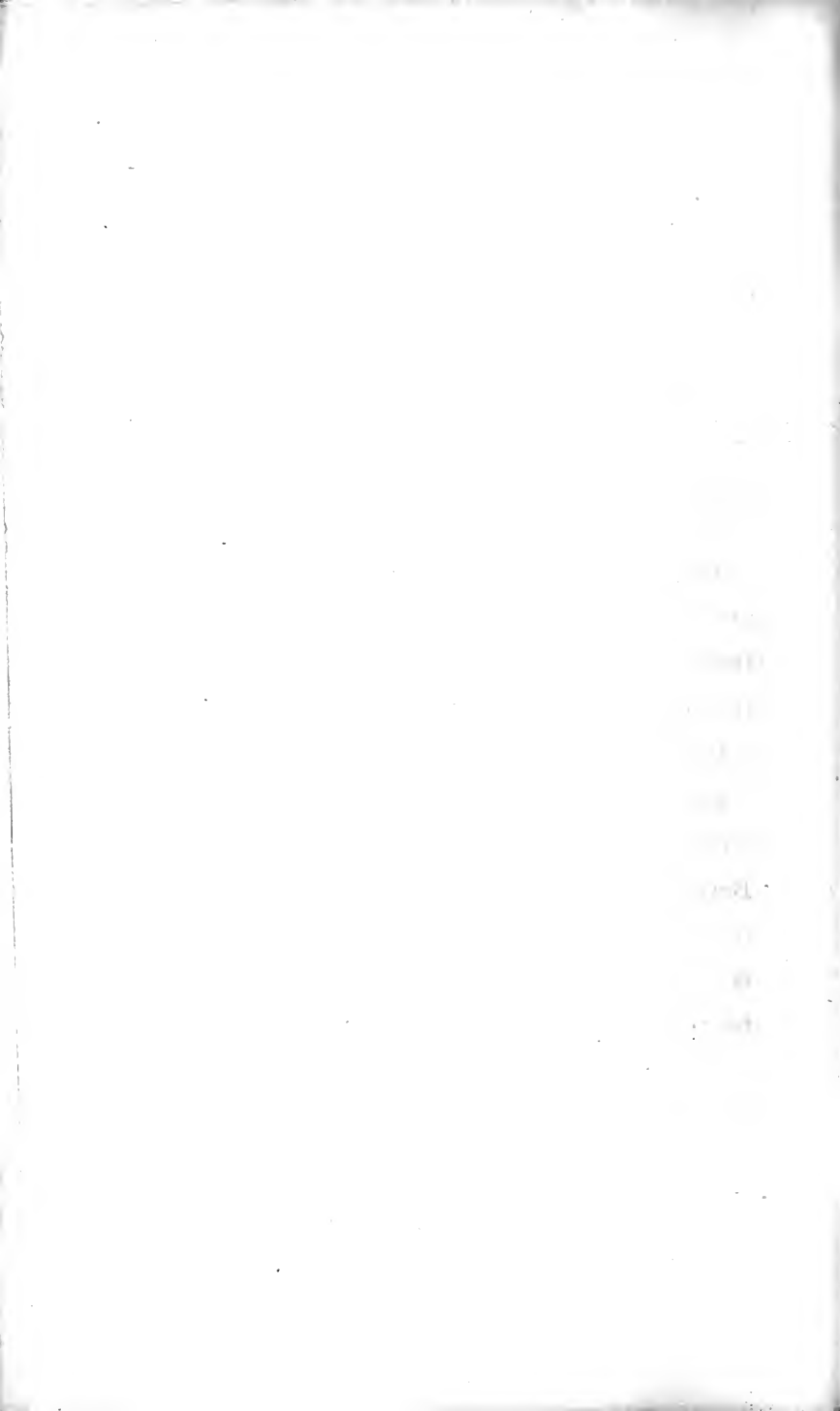
My brethren, I have been thus earnest in attempting to point out to you the necessity of attending the Sacrament, because, as I firmly believe, and as I hope some of you may be convinced, the crime of omitting it must inevitably class you among the many who will be rejected, rather than among the “few who will be chosen.”—The omission is, as we have seen, living in a state of habitual sin, *incompatible* with the accomplishment of our salvation.—It is refusing those spiritual graces which are *indispensable* to the accomplishment of our salvation.

I conclude in the words of Bishop Taylor; “ All Christian people must
“ come; they indeed, that are in the
“ state of sin, must not come so, but
“ yet they must come; first they must
“ quit their state of death, and then
“ partake of the bread of life. They
“ that are at enmity with their neigh-
“ bours, must come, that is no excuse
“ for their not coming; only they must
“ not bring their enmity along with
“ them, but leave it, and then come.
“ They that have variety of secular
“ employment must come, only they
“ must leave their secular thoughts and
“ affections behind them, and then come,
“ and converse with God. If any man
“ be well grown in grace, he must needs
“ come, because he is excellently dis-

“ posed to so holy a feast; but he that
“ is in the infancy of piety, had need to
“ come, that so he may grow in grace.
“ The strong must come, lest they
“ become weak; and the weak, that
“ they may become strong. The sick
“ must come to be cured, the healthful
“ to be preserved. They that have lei-
“ sure must come, because they have
“ no excuse; they that have no leisure,
“ must come hither, that by so excellent
“ religion they may sanctify their busi-
“ ness.—The penitent sinners must come,
“ that they may be justified; and they
“ that are justified, that they may be
“ justified still.—They that have fears,
“ and great reverence of these mysteries,
“ and think no preparation to be suffi-
“ cient, must receive, that they may learn

“ how to receive the more worthily;
“ and they that have a less degree of
“ reverence, must come often, to have it
“ heightened: that as those creatures
“ that live amongst the snows of the
“ mountains, turn white from their food
“ and conversation with such perpetual
“ whitenesses; so our souls may be
“ transformed into the similitude and
“ union with Christ by our perpetual
“ feeding on him, and conversation, not
“ only in his courts, but in his very
“ heart, and most secret affections, and
“ incomparable purities.”*

* TAYLOR'S *Works*, 8vo. edit. vol. iv. p. 274.



SERMON III.

TITUS *3d Chapter, part of 5th Verse.*

“According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of
“regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

IN conformity with the suggestion of my text and other passages of Scripture,* the Church of England maintains, that that effect upon the soul, which is called “being born of God,” or “being born again,” or “being regenerate,” is the covenanted grace of the Sacrament of Baptism. In unison with these views, the minister of religion, when the infant is presented at the font, first prays to the Almighty to “wash and sanctify

* St. John, iii. 3, 7:—1 Pet. ii. 23.—1 Cor. xii. 13.—Acts ii. 28.

“ the child with the Holy Ghost, and
“ to give his Holy Spirit to him, that
“ he may be born again;” and then having
baptised him with water, according to
the institution of Jesus Christ, “ in the
“ name of the Father, and the Son, and
“ the Holy Ghost,” authoritatively pro-
nounces, that the blessing which he had
prayed for has been conferred, and calls
on the congregation to unite with him
in thanksgiving to Almighty God; “ be-
“ cause he had been pleased to *regene-*
“ *rate* the infant with his Holy Spirit.”
—By these citations from the form ap-
pointed by our Church, we are plainly
taught, that the learned and pious men,
to whose care the composition of our
sacramental offices was entrusted, had
no notion that any separation or distinc-

tion could be imagined between the rite of Baptism, and the grace of regeneration. In their minds they were one and the same thing. It is manifest, that they conceived them to be, as our catechism teaches, the *two* parts of *one* Sacrament, of which water was the outward visible sign, and regeneration the inward spiritual grace. If any other doctrine be taught respecting this Sacrament; if any attempt be made, to suppose a division between baptism and the grace that hallows it; if the outward sign be desecrated, and the rite degraded into a mere idle ceremony, by instructing men to look for an after regeneration, distinct and separate from that which Baptism is supposed to confer; it, at all events, is evident, that such lessons are

opposite to the views entertained by the authors of our Church offices, and contradictory to the hopes, with which we were admitted among the disciples of the religion of Christ. From what quarter such derogatory tenets may be promulgated is, my brethren, very immaterial to us; but it is most material for us to ascertain, that our church is right in its views; that its opponents are in error; that our religious confidence is well founded; and that the Sacrament of Baptism really is, as my text affirms, “the washing of regeneration and “renewing of the Holy Ghost.” It is most material for us to be assured, that the Priest, who by his holy office and ministry dedicated us to Christ at the font, did not ineffectually offer up his

prayers for a blessing which had no connection with the ceremony, nor return an empty thanksgiving to God for a grace which had never been communicated. As baptised persons, and as members of the Church of England, it is most material for us to know, that the first, essential Sacrament of our religion is not a vain observance, and an empty formality; that it really has conveyed to us, that *new birth* which is indispensable to salvation, and that they, who, at the present day, would disjoin the rite from its spiritual effects, are blindly attempting to put asunder what God had inseparably joined.

To convince you on this point will be the object of my present discourse. In considering the subject, I shall, *first*,

explain the nature of baptismal regeneration:—I shall, *secondly*, produce the evidences in proof of baptismal regeneration;—I shall, *thirdly*, require your attention to some reflections that naturally arise out of the proof of the doctrine.

And, *first*, of the nature of Baptismal Regeneration.—What the Church of England inculcates in her Articles and expresses in her Baptismal Service on the subject of that new birth or regeneration which we receive at the font, is simply this :—As the child, at his first or natural birth, is endowed with the principle of animal life, so it is maintained, that, in his second birth, he is infused, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, with a principle of spiritual life. At his first birth, the child receives those faculties of body and

mind, which, if properly fostered and cultivated, will enable him to provide for the exigencies of his mortal existence upon earth. At his second birth, he receives that portion of the Holy Spirit “which by nature he cannot have;”* and which, if cherished and improved by those religious means that the Almighty has appointed,—such as prayer, the study of the Word of God, obedience to the Divine commandments, and attention to the ordinances and sacraments of religion,—will enable him “to work out his salvation,” and attain a state of everlasting happiness in heaven. Regeneration, according to our acceptation of the Word, is the beginning of our spiritual life; it is the first receiving that

* Exordium to the Baptismal Service.

Spirit of Christ, which, according to St. Paul, is resident “in every disciple except “he be reprobate,”* and which it is the Christian’s duty to increase and foster.—Such is the sense in which the term was invariably received by the whole Christian Church, for sixteen hundred years; and, if we were only to refer to the plain and natural signification of the word as the test to prove the truth of our opinions, we might, from that test alone, conclude that our opinion was correct. The term *regeneration*, or *new birth*, must necessarily imply, the commencement of a new state; and if any expositor should represent it as meaning anything more than this, he may very reasonably be suspected of an error in theology;

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

for he is certainly guilty of a solecism in language.

Now, this regeneration—this new birth—this first grace of the Holy Spirit, we maintain to be really and inseparably connected with the Sacrament of Baptism. This Sacrament “doth challenge
 “to itself the inchoation of those graces,
 “the consummation whereof dependeth
 “on mysteries ensuing. We receive
 “Jesus Christ in Baptism once, as the
 “first beginner; in the Eucharist often,
 “as being by continual degrees, the finisher of our life.”*

Having thus briefly explained the nature of Baptismal Regeneration, I now proceed, *secondly*, to shew the evidences on which our view of it is maintained.

* HOOKER, *Eccles. Polity*, Book v. ch. 57.

And here I must first premise, that the inseparable connection which subsists between the Sacrament of Baptism and the grace of regeneration, was insisted on by every writer of every age and every nation of Christendom, till long after the Reformation.—But it is not to the authority of a tradition, however uniform and venerable, or of Fathers of the Church, however learned and pious, that we are willing to submit our faith on so important an article of religion. We have recourse to the only pure and certain source of information. We apply to the Word of Christ and to the writings of his Evangelists. We consent to be directed by no inferior testimony. And, here, it does appear to me perfectly impossible for any man,

whose mind is not prejudiced by system, or perverted by the dreams and speculations of a minute philosophy, to resist upon this subject the powerful, the conclusive, and the wisely guarded evidence of Scripture. — “ Verily, verily, I say “ unto you,” said our Lord to Nicodemus, “ except a man be born again of “ water and of the Spirit, he cannot “ enter into the kingdom of God :”* and anticipating the false doctrine of those, who in the new birth of Baptism would separate between the element and the grace,—the water which is the sign, and the accompanying spirit which that water signifies,—the wisdom of Providence has so arranged the circumstances under which the Sacrament was instituted, as

* John iii. 5.

to afford an historical demonstration of their holy, and inviolable union ; and we receive, at the same time, the announcement of the truth, and the argument for the refutation of error.

Previously to the commencement of our Saviour's ministry, we read in the gospel, that St. John appeared, "baptizing with water unto repentance."* This was a baptism which was not a Sacrament. It was a simple form, and innocent ceremony, required as expressive of the change, which had taken place in the mind of the penitent, but was hallowed by no holy influence from above. The Baptism of John was precisely such, as some teachers would represent our present Christian Bap-

* Matthew iii. 5.

tism to be. But, as if this observance had only been practised among the disciples of John, for the sake of magnifying the Baptism of the Saviour ; as if it had been only instituted for the sake of drawing a distinct line between any ordinary symbol of purification, and the rite which Jesus was subsequently to appoint ; as if it had been only adopted for the sake of shewing by a fair example and a striking comparison, the difference between a mere outward ceremony, and the Christian Sacrament of regeneration ; we find the forerunner of our Saviour undervaluing his own ministry, speaking slightly of his own ordinance, and declaring that he “ indeed “ baptized with water to repentance, but “ that the mightier one who came after

“ him, should baptize with the Holy “ Ghost.”* The Baptism of Jesus then was, according to the clear statement of St. John, to be accompanied with the Holy Ghost. And here again, my brethren, it is most worthy of admiration, to observe the precautions adopted by the wisdom of Providence to obviate the possibility of any misapprehension on this important subject, in the minds of those, who are willing to receive the intimations of Scripture with humility, according to their plain and natural signification. Jesus was “ to baptize “ with the Holy Ghost.” Now had Jesus himself baptised, it might have been supposed, that the grace accompanying the rite was not inherent in the Sacra-

* Matt. iii. 11.

ment, but emanating from the holiness of the individual by whom it was administered. The spiritual benefit might, in that case, have been considered as a mere temporary effect of the ceremony, and limited to those whom Jesus had himself admitted as members of his Church: but to guard against every chance of such a misconception, our Lord indeed instituted a Baptism. He directed his apostles "to go and teach" (*or make disciples among*) "all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost."* But we are expressly told by the apostles, that "Jesus himself baptised not, but his disciples."† It was, then, concerning the Baptism which our Saviour

* Matt. xxviii. 19. † John iv. 2.

instituted, and which he commanded his apostles to exercise among all nations, that John the Baptist spoke, when he said that the “mightier who came after him, should baptize with the Holy Ghost.” In this light the Sacrament was viewed and set forth by the apostles. “Repent and be baptized in the name of Christ,” said St. Peter to the converts on the day of pentecost, “and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”* In the same manner we find St. Paul declaring that “as many as have been *baptised* unto Christ, have put on Christ,”† and that “by one Spirit we are all *baptised* into one body.”‡ All Christians are indiscriminately told “that they are the temple of the living

* Acts ii. 38. † Gal. iii. 27. ‡ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

“ God.”* And in what manner were all the disciples of Christ thus universally sanctified by his Spirit, but by their participating in the common rite of Baptism, in that holy Sacrament, which “ saves by the washings of regeneration, “ and the renewing of the Holy Ghost?”

Among all the passages relating to Christian Baptism, which are met with in the New Testament, it would be difficult to find one which does not contain some allusion to the spiritual grace that accompanies and hallows the observance. But there is a passage in the Acts of the Apostles which may serve to shew, more convincingly, perhaps, than almost any other, the inseparable connection which the first teachers of our religion con-

* 2 Cor. vi. 16.

ceived to subsist between the outward sign and the inward grace of Baptism. When St. Paul was preaching at Ephesus, he met there certain converts to the faith.* In the course of his conversation with them, he enquires, “whether they had received the Holy Ghost?” Their answer is: “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” Astonished at this reply from persons whom he supposed to be disciples of Jesus, and, as such, admitted by the appointed rite of initiation to the privileges of the Christian Church, he demands, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” evidently implying by the question, that all who were baptized, according to the form prescribed by our

* Acts xix. 1—7.

Redeemer, “unto the Father, the Son, “and the Holy Ghost,” received with their Baptism the inward illuminations of the Spirit. The converts answer that they had only been admitted “unto John’s Baptism.” On hearing this, the surprise of the apostle ceases: he at once comprehends the reason of their unregenerate state; and he proceeds to instruct them of the difference subsisting between the two forms of Baptism. “Then,” said St. 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, in Christ “Jesus.” The Ephesian converts no sooner “heard this, than they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus;

“ and when Paul laid his hands upon
“ them, the Holy Ghost came on them.”
But, indeed, the very words which our
Saviour has appointed to be used con-
tain a proof and an assurance, that the
gift of the Spirit, which constitutes re-
generation, is the covenanted and in-
separable grace of Baptism. We are
“ baptized in the name of the Father, the
“ Son, and the Holy Ghost ;” of the Fa-
ther, whose forgiveness is sealed to us
in that Sacrament ; of the Son, by whose
sacrifice, and for whose merits that for-
giveness is granted ; of the Holy Ghost,
by whom we are sanctified : but unless
that sanctification is a real, and invariable
part of the Sacrament, the name of the
Holy Ghost is taken in vain ; and, with
whatever reason the two first persons of
the Blessed Trinity are named in the

celebration of it, the third title is introduced as an empty form, and as a vain expletive, which has [no proper, or immediate, or necessary connection with the rite.

It appears then, not only from the clear declaration of Scripture but from the examples of Scripture History, that that gift of the Holy Ghost, which constitutes regeneration, is, wherever Baptism is rightly administered and received, the covenanted, the promised and the inseparable grace that accompanies the rite.*

* The primitive Christians considered all persons who were regularly baptised, as regenerated, because they were admitted into the visible Church or kingdom of God, and therefore to be looked upon as *justified* persons, who had received the Spirit at the same time. St. Augustine, speaking of Simon Magus, says, "Simon ille Magus natus erat ex aqua et spiritu," "though," adds Bishop Gleig, "*probably* at the time of his Baptism, and *certainly* soon after it, he was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity."

There are persons who cannot trust the letter of revelation, when it ascribes so great a benefit to so simple a rite. They will not believe, that the sprinkling of a little water on the infant, can be effectual, through the mercy of his God and his Redeemer, for conferring the grace of the Holy Spirit to his soul. Like Naaman, the Syrian, they cannot believe that the moral leprosy can thus be cleansed. “Had the Lord commanded them to do some great thing, they surely would have done it ;” but they pause,—they hesitate,—they doubt of the efficacy of the ordinance, when it is heard, that nothing more is required of them, than to be baptized and be clean. I grant that this is a mystery—a high and important mystery—a mystery of mercy.

But, my brethren, the Almighty never requires his creatures to grant their consent to any point of religion so dark, but so momentous in its nature, as that of Baptismal Regeneration, without affording the most satisfactory evidence in support and corroboration of his word. Whenever the Saviour has demanded our belief to any article of faith, which was beyond the scope and investigation of our reason, he has always accompanied his instruction with some miraculous evidence which might afford a sensible proof of the truth of his instruction. It was, for instance, in his power to remit the sins of the penitent ; but what argument did he use to persuade mankind of the existence of his authority in this respect, and induce them to rely on him

for their reception into a state of grace? He healed the sick in the presence of the multitude. He performed a supernatural cure on a disease of the body, in which the spectators could witness the previous malady and the subsequent deliverance; that they might believe in the reality of his power to heal those diseases of the soul, where both the malady and the deliverance were beyond the reach of their observation.* Again, when he required our consent to the great gospel doctrine of the resurrection of the body from the dead: he was not satisfied with merely revealing to us the truth and demanding our belief of it on the unsupported assertion of his word; but he confirmed the lesson by arising

* Matt. ix. 2—8.

himself from the grave, “ as the first “ fruits of them that slept;” he certified the fact by the testimony of many credible and disinterested witnesses; and he has thus addressed to us the mystery of the resurrection, not as a mere speculative doctrine of theology, but as an incident of certain and authentic history. In all things the Lord is desirous, “ that “ we should be able to give a reason for “ the faith which is in us:” and as, in the points which I have mentioned, he has granted miraculous testimony to confirm the article of faith demanded; so has he also mercifully granted the same testimony to secure our faith in the article of baptismal regeneration. In the first ages of the Church, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, the

miraculous graces of the Holy Spirit, such as the "gift of tongues," or the "faculty of prophesy," or "the working of miracles," were not unfrequently received by the converts on their admission to this sacred rite, not indeed as the special and appointed grace of the Sacrament, but as the outward sign, that the grace which is special and appointed was conferred. Even in primitive times, these extraordinary graces were not the constant accompaniments of Baptism; as we do not find that they were bestowed on any of the three thousand converts who were admitted into the Church, after the preaching of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost. They appear to have been given so frequently as to afford all classes of Christians a certain miraculous demon-

tration that "the renewing of the Holy Ghost" was, indeed, the grace of Baptism; though they were so frequently withheld, as to instruct them that such supernatural gifts were not to be expected as the ordinary and covenanted graces of the Sacrament. "Jesus Christ" says St. John, "*cometh* by water and blood; not "by water only but by water and blood: "and it is the spirit that beareth "witness, because the spirit is truth."* That is, the Spirit of Jesus Christ is received by his disciples in the holy sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper which he has established; and that Spirit, "which is truth" itself, and whose testimony cannot be questioned, "bears "witness" in miraculous effects to the reality of his being thus received. "All

* 1 John v. 6.

“men” according to St. Chrysostom, “who believed and were baptised, were sanctified by the Holy Ghost; *but since this gift was invisible, a sensible proof was given of its power*, and men either spake with tongues, or prophesied, or wrought miracles.”* This conspicuous testimony is now withdrawn; it remained only with the apostles and their immediate disciples: it continued long enough to convince mankind of the high, spiritual importance of the Sacraments; and it gradually ceased after that conviction was fully established in the Church. But the past existence of those miraculous graces among the elder brethren of the faith ought to satisfy us, as well as it satisfied them, of the ex-

* See Bloomfield's Crit. Dig. vol. vi. p. 552.

istence of those ordinary graces in the Sacraments, in proof of which, the miraculous graces were originally superadded as the certain, external signs.

Before we leave this part of our reflections; in which I trust it has been made sufficiently clear by scriptural authority, and example, that the illumination of the Holy Ghost is the appointed grace of Baptism; I must say one word respecting the Baptism of Infants. That they are fit recipients of the benefits of this Sacrament, appears from these considerations. It is certain that our Saviour never limited his command to the Apostles to any particular age, or class of persons. In obedience to his command we read, that the Apostles baptized whole households and families; and it is no

where said, that the infants of those families were excepted. We know, that in the age, immediately subsequent to that of the Apostles, and when their practice and authority were still remembered in the Church, infants were universally baptized. If it had been designed by our Lord, that infants should be excluded from the benefits and privileges of the ordinance; he would necessarily have intimated his intention: for as the Sacrament was intended to correspond with and supersede the rite of circumcision, which was always performed on infants at the eighth day; and as it was adopted from the Jewish custom of baptizing heathen proselytes, according to which, whenever the parents conformed to the religion of Moses, the children, however

young, were baptized and admitted as proselytes with the parents; unless the Apostles had received some express prohibition to the contrary, they would have been directed by a venerable custom, by their early sentiments, by their national prepossessions, and by all they had seen and heard from previously established institutions, to admit infants with their converted parents to the Christian Baptism. And that the children of Christian parents are fit recipients of the Sacrament, requires to my mind, no further proof, than the words of St. Peter in a passage to which I have before alluded. In addressing the multitude on the day of his first Sermon, he calls on them to be baptized that they may "receive the Holy Ghost;"

of which, he affirms, “ the promise is to “ them and to their children:”* and therefore for a Christian parent to withhold his infant from the Sacrament of Baptism, is withholding him from that source of spiritual strength, which the Almighty has mercifully appointed for his salvation, and graciously promised to vouchsafe.

I must lastly require your attention to some reflections which naturally arise from the proof of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration.

And, first, we may observe the consistency which exists between the mode adopted by the Almighty in communicating the graces of the Holy Spirit to the soul, and the ordinary courses of

* Acts ii. 33, 39.

his providence. In the external and sensible operations of the Creator, we perceive the slight beginning, the gradual development, the progressive increase, and the slow and orderly attainment of maturity. The dawn breaks upon the darkness; the light flows onward from its source; and the day-spring, by slow and regular degrees, kindles into the glowing effulgence of the noon. The seed is committed to the earth; it takes root in the richness of the soil; it is fostered by the genial influences of air and sun and shower; and by steady but imperceptible growth, the plant advances to the perfection of its height and strength and beauty. The admirable endowments of our intellectual nature at first lie hidden in the obscurity

of the infant soul; but day by day, and hour by hour, according to a regular and appointed law of Providence, their energies are evolved; their powers are matured; and they become complete in the ability to plan, and in the vigour to achieve. And in the same manner,—as if the Creator had determined that no discrepancy, no irregularity, no disproportion should be perceptible in the issues of his counsels,—we are taught that the Almighty has determined to dispense the aids and illuminations of the Holy Spirit to the soul, in strict analogy with all the other efforts of his wisdom and his power. He has prescribed to the progress of our sanctification the same laws, which he has prescribed for the progress of our human

faculties. The gift of the Holy Spirit is inspired in infancy, as another power of our being. It is granted, as an energy superadded to the common properties of fallen and corrupted human nature. With the waters of our Baptism, the grace of regeneration, the seed of the Holy Ghost, the principle of a higher existence is committed to the soul; it grows up with us as an innate impression of our being; it is "as the wind of heaven, blowing where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but we know not whence it cometh;" it is as an inward light, demonstrating to us the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice; it is as an emphatic counsellor, prompting us to perseverance in the paths of duty; it is as a smiling

comforter, consoling us under every unmerited reverse by the mild approval of the conscience; it is as a certain guide, pointing out to us the course of right in every moral emergency; it is a heavenly tempered sword, with which we may successfully contend against the manifold temptations that assail us; it is as a rigid monitor, that silently, but incessantly, remonstrates against every omission or violation of our Christian service. We feel "the spirit striving against the flesh;" and, if we are guided by it, if we live to it, if we fulfil our baptismal covenant; that germ of grace is fostered and increased, till we are no longer as "*new born*," but "have put on the *new man*:" till we are not only regenerate, but confirmed in grace: till the promise

of Jesus to the woman of Samaria becomes fulfilled to us; and the water of Baptism, “ which he hath given us, “ is, as a well of living water, springing “ up to everlasting life.”

By thus connecting the grace of the Holy Spirit with the simple rite of Baptism, the Redeemer has wisely provided an antidote against all those wild and injurious dreams of enthusiasm, which have almost universally arisen among the disciples of the Gospel, whenever they have refused their consent to the true, scriptural doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. Man is informed by his sense of moral weakness, that divine co-operation is indispensable to assist him in subduing the passions of his original nature, in sanctifying the heart, and in

“ making his calling and election sure.” If, indeed, this important truth were not declared to him by his consciousness of infirmity; it would not be possible for him to read the volume of the New Testament and remain in ignorance of the fact. As long as the believer trusts to his Baptism as the source of spiritual life, all is well: he strives to improve that spiritual talent which was then committed to his trust; and he fears lest it should be impaired by any act of voluntary transgression: but the moment he is taught to look on Baptism as a mere empty rite; to unhallow the ceremony; to expect a new birth of the Holy Ghost independent of the Sacrament to which the Saviour has allied the blessing; from that moment all his

faculties become bewildered: the order of his mind is disturbed: his imagination is let loose from its legitimate restraints: he is no longer attentive to his duty, that he may grow in grace; but awaiting the moment, when that grace shall begin to act: he no longer applies himself to the appointed instruments of spiritual support; but is idly looking for the overpowering illumination which shall render all such holy instruments unnecessary to him. He is watching, with an aching sensibility, with a feverish anxiety, every emotion of his frame; in the hope of welcoming the sensible regeneration of his soul. A morbid state of thought and feeling is engendered. Religion ceases to act as the favouring gale that wafts the bark in

safety to its destination, and proves the destructive tempest that arrests and shatters it upon its course. The Gospel is no longer the balast that steadies the understanding, but the weight that sinks it. And then, perhaps, there follows the derangement of the intellect; the maniac sorrow, that originates in the intense and painful energy of continually defeated hope; the wild hallucinations of the self-elected Saint; or the groundless terrors that haunt the victim of religious despondency: and, if a certain coarser fibre, a certain rigid frame of character, should last out the wearing and destructive action of enthusiasm; if the fanatic should at length conceive, that his wishes have been prospered with success; how different in its effects is that false persua-

sion of the divine gift which the deluded man receives from his imagination, from that true grace of the Holy Spirit which is communicated by the institution of the Saviour. He fancies, perhaps, in some sudden elevation of his animal spirits, in some incongruous vision of the night, or in some unaccustomed emotion or sensation within him, that he has received the long desired, the anxiously expected privilege of regeneration; but how different is "the Spirit, that beareth witness with his Spirit," from the pure, the calm and the holy Spirit of the Gospel. His fanatical *new birth*, appearing to elevate him among mankind by a partial interference of Providence in his favour, instead of being distinguished by the fruits of gentleness, meekness, temper-

ance, is marked only by the opposite characteristics of presumption, contumely and pride. And, while it bears false witness to the heart of the deluded man, that he is "the child of God;" to every dispassionate, unprejudiced and rational observer, it bears an opposite testimony; and is contemplated with a melancholy eye, as another proof of man's perilous openness to self delusion, and of his liability to fall away from communion with his God, even while he fancies himself most confirmed in the possession, and most zealous in the cultivation of the graces of the Holy Spirit.

But, my brethren, there is a most serious, practical reflection to be derived from the article we have this day considered. In Baptism we have been

admitted as the children of God; have we performed our duty with the diligence of children to a munificent and tender father? — We were reconciled to him through faith in the atonement of Jesus; have we evinced a proportionate degree of gratitude to him, “who so loved us that he gave his only Son for our redemption?” — We were new born, regenerate by the Holy Spirit, rendered capable of performing the duties of our Christian profession, endowed with that supernatural strength which would enable us to resist every temptation of Satan and the world, “for” says St. Paul, “stronger is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.” — How have we used that privilege? — Have we fought manfully the good fight of faith? — Have

we exercised with diligence, and preserved by continual application to the fountain of grace, the heavenly tempered weapon, with which, as the first fruits of their love, our God and our Redeemer have blest us in our Baptism?—Oh! my brethren, it is a most important talent, which our heavenly Master has intrusted to our care:—It must not be neglected:—It is ability to conquer; if we retain it in our grasp:—It is the origin of all the fruits of holiness; if we hold our position, as branches of that true vine into which we have been engrafted, and separate from which we can do nothing. But, if we neglect the gift; that gift will be withdrawn:—if we omit to obey its dictates; they will cease to plead with us:—if we resist the Spirit, the

Spirit will be quenched and extinguished in the soul. Not all the *ten*, who were cleansed of the leprosy by the miracle of our Saviour's mercy, "returned to give glory to God;"* and not all who are cleansed by the Sacrament of Baptism, answer the merciful purpose of their regeneration. But, oh! how bitter shall their condemnation be,—recovered from a lost estate, and self-destroyed;—purified and self-polluted;—elected by the mercy of the Almighty, and reprobate by their own ingratitude;—chosen and hallowed as the children of God, and wilfully reverting to the slavery of sin and Satan. Most miserable, my brethren, shall the eternal state of such men be. Our Saviour's baptism is of a

* Luke xvii. 11, *et seq.*

double nature. "He baptiseth with the "Holy Ghost, and with fire;"* which, according to the interpretation of Tertullian, means, that, while "*the baptism of the Holy Ghost*" is to all his disciples whose faith is sincere and steadfast; there is an after "*baptism of fire*" for those whose faith is feigned and unstable, and who are therefore baptized, not to salvation, but to judgment. All who are baptized are his; but "his fan is in his hand, "and he will thoroughly purge his floor, "and gather his wheat into the garner; "but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." — "Know ye not," says St. Paul, "that ye are the Temple "of God, and that the Spirit of God

* Matthew iii. 11.—Tertull. *de Baptismo*. See Bishop Key's *Eccles. Hist. M.* p. 434.

“ dwelleth in you? If any man defile the
“ Temple of God, him shall God destroy.”*
Let not such be our desperate condition.
Let us renew the grace we have re-
ceived day by day; let us not neglect
the holy privileges that have been com-
municated to us; let us apply to our-
selves the admonition of St. Paul, and “ stir
“ up the gift that is in us.” As we are
born again, let us put off the old man with
his deeds; and, as by the grace of the Holy
Spirit we are endowed with the ability
of doing, let us “ put on the new man,
“ which after God, is created in right-
“ eousness and true holiness.” Let us
“ grow in grace” by sincere devotion to
the will of God; by living as constantly
in his sight; by resisting the sugges-

* 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

tions of the flesh; by following the suggestions of the spirit only; by study of the word of God; by attendance on the rites and ordinances of his religion; by constant prayer; by frequent self examination; by separating the heart from worldly and perishable things; and by attaching it, more and more, to the everlasting treasures of Heaven. Let us cherish the germ of the Holy Spirit, which was bestowed upon us in our Baptism, that the course of our sojourn upon earth may not be marked by the sad remembrances of trials and of failure, of sin and of repentance, of recovery and relapse; but may be bright as an Angel's flight, a course of progressive sanctification, a treading in the footsteps of the Saviour, a diligent imitation of his exam-

ple, a studious adaptation of our character and our disposition “to the mind that was “ in him:” till, from being the *new born* sons of God, we gradually attain that state, which the rich language of the Apostle of the Gentiles only can adequately portray:—“ The measure of the stature of “ the fullness of Christ.”

THE END.

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