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A Disquisition on the Observance.

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DISQUISITION

ON THE
OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,
WITH A VIEW TO THE

DEFENCE

OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN PLAN OF ADMINISTERING
THAT ORDINANCE.

APPENDIX.

A
SHORT REVIEW

OF
MR. MASON'S LETTERS ON COMMUNION.

(Alexander Duncan)

*Est modus in rebus ; sunt certi denique fines,
Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum.*

Horat.

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P R E F A C E.



THE late vigorous dissemination of Independent principles, followed up by a practical exhibition of the Independent plan to an extent hitherto unknown in North Britain, may sufficiently apologize for calling the attention of the public to the subject of the following sheets. It is on the head of communion, the Author apprehends, the operation and effects of these principles among Presbyterians are most to be dreaded. Though individuals may be gained over to the new societies, or to the old Independents, there seems to be no great danger of any sudden revolution as to government in the Presbyterian churches. The attempt, however craftily, or under whatever plausible pretexts of reformation it might be made, would be too obviously a direct attack on the Presbyterian system, and the friends of that system would instantly be alarmed into vigilance. But the Independent mode of observing the ordinance of communion has an imposing appearance, and is apt to throw serious Christians off their guard. It seems to be recommended by the value of the ordinance, by primitive usage, and other considerations apparently unconnected with the Independent scheme. While it holds out much to prejudice the godly in its favour, it also presents a

strong allurements to the worldly minded, by restoring to them those portions of time usually devoted with us to religious services, and thus adapted to these opposite classes, is likely to gain ground. Some Presbyterians, carried away by the contemplation of supposed spiritual advantages, which seem alone to have engrossed their attention, have contributed not a little to the success of the new measures. The dissertations and warm addresses of these authors have found too much in the circumstances of the times to give them effect. But it is not merely the spirit of Independency, already operating in various Presbyterian communities, we have reason to dread. Were the plan of observance proposed by the authors alluded to adopted, Independency itself, so far as, without a total subversion of the Presbyterian system, capable of being introduced among us, would actually be established. The fear of future danger was not, however, the writer's sole determining motive: In some publications in favour of the new measure, our mode of observance is criminated as will-worship, and charged with inconsistency and tyranny, as well as with ingratitude to our Saviour. This affects the consciences of those who adhere to it. Since "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," they are called upon to vindicate the mode, to ascertain its warrantableness, and justify it to the public. These are the objects of the following disquisition. Though the plan and stile of disquisition is adopted, the Author did not conceive it necessary for him to act the part of the sceptic, or proceed as if hitherto nothing had been ascertained on the subject. He considered it as the most fair as well as forcible method of defending the practice in which he and other Presbyterians are engaged, first to state the Nature and Ends of the Lord's Supper; next,

to deduce the conclusions which such a statement might furnish ; and then to apply these to the mode of Observance.

After the work was sent to the press, two publications on the same subject were put into his hands : the one ' A Letter by Mr. JOHN COURTAS, addressed to the Community of the Old Dissenters, in answer to a pamphlet entitled, *An Address to the Christian People under the Inspection of the Reformed Presbytery,*' Glasg. 1797. The other, ' *An Essay on Humiliation and thanksgiving Days, as observed in connection with the Lord's Supper,*' in an appendix to a book entitled, ' *Vindiciæ Cantus Dominicæ,*' by a Mr. ANDERSON, a Presbyterian minister in the United States of America. Both these publications deserve to be better known. Of the latter few copies ever came over to Britain. The Author could not deny himself the pleasure of supporting his views by quotations from these writers. To compensate for the length to which the Section on the Days has been extended, he has abridged the Review of Mr. Mason's Letters, originally first written. It was unnecessary to enlarge, after the liberal discussion of the subject of these letters, in the body of the work. The copy used, and to which the references are made, was the edition of the letters in a small volume, entitled, ' *First Ripe Fruits.*' The Author hopes he has treated the subject in a dispassionate manner, and will be sorry if in any instance he has offended against candour and moderation.

A

DISQUISITION

ON THE

LORD'S SUPPER, &c.



SECT. I.

THE INSTITUTION, NATURE, AND USE OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER.

THE Lord's Supper has been thought to resemble the postcœnium held by the Jews at the close of the paschal feast. That it was designed, however, for greater and more noble purposes, is sufficiently evident both from the history and doctrine of its Institution, Nature, and Use.

THE INSTITUTION was peculiarly impressive. It ascertains the Supper to be not only an ordinance of the New Testament state, but one that ranks high in solemnity and importance. "On that night which Jesus was betrayed, he took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, Take, eat; This is my body broken for you, this do in remembrance of me. After

“ the same manner also he took the cup, &c.” The mode of institution was practical; not by a simple commandment, as when God appointed the passover, or when Jesus himself commissioned the apostles to teach and baptize, but by an *observance* of the feast. This is the more remarkable, as we are informed, that during all the period of his ministry on earth, our Lord never dispensed the ordinance of Baptism. He had been declared by his fore-runner to be the person who should “ baptize with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” To prevent therefore his being placed on a level with him who baptized with water, to appropriate to himself the pre-indicated character, and support his claim to its distinguishing honours, Jesus abstained from baptizing. But though the spiritual verification of the Supper, as well as of baptism, be solely his prerogative, we find, that instead of delivering the form and substance of that ordinance to the apostles in a verbal mandate, as he did afterwards to Paul, he chose to observe it among them, and be first administrator himself. And may not the words, “ Do this in remembrance of me,” be considered as also combining the *precept* of our Lord with the example he set? They are properly the words of institution, seemingly bearing on the whole ordinance, and with this view pronounced at the commencement of its celebration. The official character of the apostles was doubtless recognized in the mandate. They were then receiving of the Lord what they were afterwards, in the discharge of their office, to deliver to the church. The words prescribe at once the duty of Christians, and the future dispensation of the ordinance. ‘ Let this ~~sacred~~ feast,’ as if Jesus had said, ‘ the form and manner of which I am now begun to exhibit, be henceforth observed

‘ in the church, in all its parts, according to what
‘ respectively belongs to dispensation and reception.’

The practical and preceptive institution by which the Supper was singularly honoured, was also from the time and circumstances calculated to mark its SUCCESSION to the passover feast. Jesus and his company had just finished this feast: No sooner was it concluded in the usual manner, than he appointed the Supper. Taking the bread, (as he did afterwards the cup, to shew that a new entertainment to which both should belong, was to be kept) and blessing it for sacred use, he said, “Do this,”—this instead of what was wont to be done in the passover; let this be henceforth the sacred feast of my church. The words are emphatic, and natively suggest the substitution of the latter for the former. One reason why our Lord chose to appoint the Supper ere the preparatory state of things was expired, and though it could not then be kept in that “newness” [Matt. xxvi. 29.] which belongs to the state for which it was intended, seems to have been, that by instituting it immediately after the observance of the passover, he might clearly indicate its nature as designed to succeed and supercede the antient feast. The idea of substitution was disclosed and forcibly impressed on the mind, by his passing directly from the observance of the one ordinance to that of the other.—To the same purpose we remark the contrast of meaning and use expressly stated in the words of ordination: “Do this,” said Jesus, “*in remembrance of me.*” The Supper was to bear on that event as past, which the passover exhibited as future. They are thus ascertained to be correlate solemnities; as if our Lord had said, Instead of the prefiguring, a commemorative ordinance must henceforth be kept in the church. The idea of sub-

stitution is still more plainly brought forth in the declarations relative to his own concern in each of the feasts. Of the passover he said, "I will not henceforth eat of it, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." This declaration he explained, on appointing the Supper. Then he told his disciples that what he meant would be accomplished by his "drinking of *this* fruit of the vine," that used in the Supper, "new with them in his Father's kingdom." The first declaration evidently implied, that the sacramental eating which had hitherto obtained in the church, would be continued after his death. "I will not henceforth eat of it, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God," that is, by the event to which as a prefiguring ordinance it referred, and which was one of the good things of the promise, properly pertaining to the kingdom of God,—his own passion. But the passover in being "fulfilled" by this event, behoved to cease—to be abolished. Our Lord therefore transferred the sacramental feasting which he had intimated would continue, to the Supper, and declared it was by this ordinance he would hold fellowship with his people "in his Father's kingdom." [Luke xxii. 16. compared with Matt. xxvi. 29.] To this substitution of the Supper for the antient feast, the apostle Paul seems to refer in a well-known passage: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast, &c." The feast of Christ sacrificed is the Lord's Supper, and the notice of the passover suggests the character of the New Testament ordinance, as corresponding to that of the Old. It is the Christian pasque, as baptism is "the circumcision of Christ," or the Christian circumcision. [Col. ii. 11. 12.] Hence in allusion to the antient ceremonial rites, a moral observance is enjoined: "Let

“ us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

The Supper is the **ONLY SACRED FEAST** of the Christian church. There were, besides the passover, two other feasts of solemn convocation under the Mosaic economy. But to neither of these could any correspondent ordinance be expected in the New Testament state. The reason is obvious. They did not, like the passover, typify Christ in some particular view of his character and work, so that ordinances bearing on the verification in the fulness of time, and thus answering to them, could be appointed. They presented scenes figurative of the New Testament state itself, the one of what should take place at its commencement, the other of its general and permanent nature. Pentecost was properly the feast of first fruits, and, as some think, commemorative also of the legislation from Sinai. Its grand references received their fulfilment in the effusion of the Holy Ghost after the ascension of Christ, when the law went forth from Mount Zion, and the first fruits of the Christian church were collected and presented to the Lord from among various nations. [Acts ii.] The Scenophegia, or feast of tabernacles, was the feast of ingathering. It was a scene of liberty and joy, though at the same time the exhibition of a transient sojourning state. Then the Israelites having completed the labours of the season, enjoyed a sacred vacation, and free from care spent seven days in holy festivity, under the shade of booths formed of the branches of palm-trees and other trees of the forest. They “rejoiced before the Lord.” But though the rural tents in which they lodged, and their manner of observing the feast, proclaimed their state of rest in the promised land, they seemed to resume the so-

journing life of their fathers in the desert, where the joy of harvest was unknown. In its grand reference to "the good things to come," this sacred season prefigured the general nature of the New Testament age,—as an age of spiritual liberty and joy, yet an age in which the state of final perfection is not attained. [See Zech. xiv. 16, 18.] The new dispensation has realized to the church freedom from labour and the yoke of bondage, the liberty and joy of the Holy Ghost, all that was comprehended in the predicted spiritual rest; but it is, like the ancient solemnity, only a feast of tabernacles, recalling to mind the state of the tribes ere they entered the promised land. The region of consummate rest is yet a "land a far off." "I am a stranger with thee," said David, "and a sojourner, as all my Fathers were." And still amid all our privilege we are but "strangers and pilgrims" on the earth.

The Passover bore no such general reference to the New Testament state of the church. We find indeed the whole gospel-dispensation represented under the idea of a feast, Isa. xxv. 6, 7. of a feast in which God rejoices over returning sinners, and makes ample provision for them, Luke xv. 11—32. and of a marriage supper, the marriage supper of a king, a splendid entertainment, Psal. xlv. Prov. ix. 1—5. Matt. xxi. 1—14. By the same figure, glorious periods of that dispensation are also described,—its commencement, when the Jews were rejected, Luke xiv. 15—24. its acme of splendour and prosperity in this world, when the Jews shall be converted, Rev. xix. 7—9. and its consummation, Matt. xxv. But though in some of these passages there be an allusion to a feast on a sacrifice, (particularly Luke xv. 23—32. which admits an easy explanation from John vi. 47—56.) yet in none

of them is there any allusion to the passover feast, as neither is there any specific reference to the ordinance of the Supper. We may view that ordinance as an abridged exhibition of the gospel-dispensation, and thus with great propriety accommodate to it what is said in general of a feast, or of the marriage-supper of the King. There is not however the slightest intimation, that the passover presented an emblematic delineation of the New Testament age. It was, from its peculiar nature and references, of the three annual solemnities, the only *sacramental* feast, and corresponding to it there is but one sacred feast in the Christian Church, the Lord's Supper.

If the Supper was appointed instead of the passover, as the correspondent ordinance in the present economy, then, *mutatis mutandis*, its nature and use, or the purposes it was intended to serve, must be the same with those of the antient sacrament: and this, from the plain indications of substitution, must have been understood to be the case by the apostles, unless something to the contrary had been specified by Jesus. If the one was a figure, the other is a memorial; if the former was a sign of something to come, the latter is the Witness of its realization; if as a figure and sign the one behoved to be an eminent mean of spiritual nutrition, equally and much more must the other be so, as a memorial and witness; subserving this practical purpose, each, in its respective age, presents itself as the medium of communion between Christ and believers; and both were accordingly intended to display and promote the fellowship of church members in privilege and profession.

By abstracting from farther reference to the passover feast, let us take a short survey of the ordinance

of the Supper. It will be found that the enumeration just made exhibits its nature, and comprizes the grand ends for which it was appointed.

This ordinance is a MEMORIAL of the death of Christ—"This do, in remembrance of me." It was not properly in remembrance of his life and suffering lot, the period of which had nearly elapsed, our Lord required the observance; nor was it to recal and cherish the memory of that pleasing fellowship his disciples had enjoyed with him in the days of his flesh. The institution of the ordinance on the eve of his passion, was evidently intended to shew them the certainty of his *death*, and disclose to their view, something of its nature, design, and blessed consequences. Nothing could prevent it, nor were they to wish its prevention. He placed it before them as if already past, and taught them that so far from being a melancholy event, according to their apprehensions, it would be the source of joy and comfort in all succeeding ages. The symbols are those of his *broken body and shed blood*; the sacramental acts bear upon them as such.—Than the death of Jesus the Lord of glory, there is no event more worthy of being held in everlasting remembrance. It may well be perpetuated in memorial for the conviction and humiliation of the world. It was the murder of the Just One, a most astonishing instance of human depravity. Here we perceive how the heart is naturally disposed to act towards the most exalted virtue, and to what lengths prejudice even against the clearest light may proceed. Nor is the abject character to be devolved entirely on the Jews, among whom its manifestation was allowed to break forth: In the ordinance of the Supper every man may "look on him whom he has pierced and mourn." The death of Jesus may well

be perpetuated in memorial, as also a most astonishing part of the divine economy. It was a strange dispensation, seemingly unaccountable till explained, and even then most wonderful, something into which the angels desire to look ;—"the just suffered for the unjust," God's eternal Son for guilty men ! Yet here was the crowning display of divine wisdom ; for to say nothing of the covenant-arrangements, it was then God in his moral government made the wrath of man most illustriously to praise him, and accomplished by the ragings of the people the chief of his ways. The more we contemplate the death of Jesus, the more clearly will the propriety of its being selected for memorial in the church rise to our view. It was not only a most wonderful event, considering the person, what he endured, and the state in which he suffered ; it was also a most blissful event for the sons of men, one in which the love of heaven attained its highest glorification, and an event most honourable to the Judge of all. But the true reasons of selection are found in its nature and design. It was the atonement,—that special part of our Lord's execution of the work entrusted to him, which consummated at once his obedience and satisfaction. In this view it was the center to which all the types and figures of the law, with the long train of predictions, " had tended and verged for so many generations." By it in this view, Jesus himself was consecrated to his glorious administration ; his resurrection, his ascension, the effusion of the Spirit, and the whole state of privilege pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, are its blessed consequences and effects. It founded a dispensation of the new covenant properly suited to the nature and spirit of that gracious constitution, a dis-

pensation in which the claimant voice of law and justice are not to be heard. If therefore it was not expedient that many and diverse commemorative ordinances should occupy the Christian system of worship, the death of Jesus, the most important and extensively influential of all events in the history of salvation, was wisely fixed upon for the grand subject of memorial.

This first and more simple view of the Supper leads to consider it farther, as intended to be a PUBLIC SIGN OR WITNESS, that the atonement is made, and all the consequent state of privilege attained. The antient symbolical system represented good things to come. Its ordinances, by the common relation they had to the law and the promise, pointed out both what was required in order to salvation, and what would be performed in the fulness of time. But they were also "figures for the time then present," *parables* of the age, or public signs that accomplishment had not yet taken place, that it was certain, but future, and, while they continued, a subject of hope†. The ordinance of the Supper by

† There were in the antient system of worship, some things strikingly expressive of the nature of the period during which it existed, and of the state of privilege then in the church. Thus the apostle Paul fixes on the veil which divided the tabernacle into two parts, and concealed from view the mysteries of the holiest, or rather the first part of the tabernacle thus separated, as, *PARABOLE EIS TON KAIRON TON ENESTEKOTON*, a parable of the time, or in reference to the time that then was, Heb. ix. 9. A parable is designed to convey some truth or moral by expres-

its symbols represents what has been done, exhibits the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. It is on this very ground a sign or witness, attesting in the church and to the world, the accomplishment of all that was claimed by the law, and foretold by the promise. "There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, the water, and *the blood*: and "these three agree in one." [1 John v. 8.] The blood and the water which issued from the side of Jesus, were the incontestible proofs of his death: They shewed that the cavity of the heart had been pierced, that his heart itself had been reached by the spear;

sive imagery. Parables are therefore modes of instruction calculated to disclose and bear home on the mind with peculiar force, the subjects on which they are employed. While the key is wanting, the parable must be dark. Attendant circumstances may furnish the key, but usually meditation and research are necessary to attain it. When found, the parable instantly becomes a clear and striking exhibition of the intended truth or moral. The existence of the veil and its effect during the former economy was a general sign of the age, indicating that the way to the holiest was not then actually opened, or that the true atonement had not taken place, nor in consequence of it a full disclosure of the mystery of redemption elevating the church to a glorious state of spiritual privilege. It was a sign, however, of a *parabical* nature, somewhat obscure. The Lord's Supper is also, by its very existence in the church, a sign of the state now attained. But it cannot properly be styled a parable of the age, as that species of sign was rather suited to the ancient dispensation; it is therefore denominated a *witness*, an ordinance that gives clear and explicit testimony.

no suspicion of his having merely fainted through the severity of his sufferings could remain. Some undeniable proof of the fact was expedient; as in his death he anticipated the expiration of those who were crucified with him. The reality of his death was of the utmost consequence, and the evangelist accordingly gives a solemn assurance in regard to the proof: "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came thereout blood and water; and he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." [John xix. 34, 35.] The water and the blood which formed the plenary evidence of the death of Jesus, and thus of the fulfilment of all that the *waters* of legal purification and the *blood* of sacrifices had pre-denoted, are afterwards, and with great propriety, employed by the evangelist as mystical terms for *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*. Was the mingled fluid that followed the thrust of the spear an attestation or sign of the death of Jesus, of the period when men might "look on him as pierced," of the day when the fountain was "opened for sin and uncleanness?" [John xix. 37. Zech. xii. 10. xiii. 1.] the same is the import and use of these ordinances. They are too of the witnesses by which God proclaims that we have now received the atonement. "This is the record," the sum of their testimony, a testimony which they not only publicly declare like the gospel, but are eminently calculated to bring home to the mind and conscience, "that God *hath given* to us eternal life, and that life in his Son." He that believeth "hath the witness," the record or testimony, "in himself." [1 John v. 10, 11.]

It natively follows that the Supper is an ORDINANCE OF SALVATION. We are not to view it sim-

ply as a monument established by God in memory of a certain event, or in attestation of a fact. So far as it serves this purpose, it must be, from the very nature of what it commemorates and testifies, an ordinance of salvation to sinners. Let them be merely spectators, it is declarative of something in which they are deeply interested. Did not the ordinances of the law, in being public signs of what God had promised, exhibit to the worshippers the grand subjects of faith and hope? They disclosed the arrangements and substance of a covenant of grace. By these signs the gospel was preached to the children of Israel. The ceremonial system was a method of conveying heavenly instruction, as by letters and diagrams, adapted to the state of minority. And doubtless those ordinances of the New Testament in which symbols are still employed, may serve a similar purpose, even to spectators. They publicly announce something to the world; they proclaim, by their very existence, truths and facts universally interesting, and the testimony of these two witnesses is no other than that which is verbally declared and elucidated in the preaching of the gospel. But,

The Lord's Supper, like baptism, is a PECULIAR ORDINANCE OF SALVATION. Now that the church is able, without the intervention of elements or rudimental sketches, to bear the simple and plenary declaration of the gospel, why should ordinances in which *symbols* are employed still be retained? Some special purpose must have been in view, beyond what the preaching of the word could accomplish. We find accordingly that the Supper is not a sign for bare contemplation. The observance of it lies in dispensing and receiving. The worshippers are

to be brought under this sign as directly as under baptism. They must approach the table of the Lord: Seated there, the whole import of the ordinance is made to terminate upon them: the symbols are put into the hand of every communicant, and these symbols are attended to each with the declarations they are designed to apply in the most particular form.—“This is my body broken for you; “this is my blood shed for the remission of sins.” There is here an appropriate exhibition of Christ, ratifying the gospel deed of gift, and calculated to produce the highest assurance.

Hence one character by which the Supper is discriminated from the ordinary dispensation of grace: it is in its very nature and form **A SEAL OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH THE CHURCH.** Considering the covenant of grace as an eternal transaction between the Father and the Son, the sealing or ratification of it behoved to lie in the death of Jesus, the consummation of his obedience and satisfaction. But this covenant never appertained exclusively to Jesus. It was a divine constitution for the behoof of sinners, in which he was considered as a public head, the person on whom the fulfilment of the requisite conditions devolved, that the blessed privileges therein purposed and promised might be attained and enjoyed by us. It is a covenant, therefore, that admits of being sealed to our faith. And it is most impressively sealed up by an ordinance which puts into our hands the symbols of that death that hath opened our access to every privilege, and secured the enjoyment; an ordinance which while it communicates these symbols for individual reception, attests by them, that the body of Jesus was broken *for us*, his blood shed for the remission of our sins. What is this but to testify, to bear witness with the

most particular application, that all the requisite conditions were fulfilled for us, and in our name? Through the fulfilment of these the covenant terminates on man; it receives an establishment with the church, and this in the ordinance of the Supper is carried home to the faith of every communicant—the covenant is sealed to him.

During the first period of the revelation of this covenant, the fulfilment of its conditions had not taken place, and was but the subject of promise. The revelation or dispensation in the church behaved therefore to correspond to this state of things, that is, to be at once a revelation *by the law* of what was demanded in order to the enjoyment of spiritual privilege, and *by the promise* of what would be accomplished. Accordingly the antient economy formed through the conjunction of the law and the promise, a disclosure of the covenant, according to the state in which it then was, as subsisting between the Father and the Son. The Mosaic system taken in any other light was indeed a re-exhibition of the covenant of works, and thus could make nothing perfect; but, considered as declarative of the transfer of that covenant to the promised seed in the eternal purpose, it was a disclosure of God's gracious will, sufficient for the comfort and salvation of the fathers. The sealing ordinances of that system were designed to confirm to their faith this disclosure, and to produce the strongest assurance, that the promised events on which their eternal felicity depended, would be accomplished.—The manner of the first dispensation was such, that Jesus himself could with the greatest propriety be brought under it, in our nature. Though engaged to the Father as a divine person, he was also to be brought under the covenant as a descendent of Abraham according to the flesh.

[Gal. iii. 13—17. iv. 4, 5.] He behoved at once to be made under the law, and to become the object of the promise as God-man, in order to an immediate fulfilment of his eternal engagement. The public character he sustained, discriminating him from the other descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, necessarily occasioned a peculiar bearing of the covenant-revelation upon him. To the Head and Surety, the passover accordingly would seal the necessity of his performing the requisite conditions, the certainty of his own sufferings and death, and the consequent realization on him in our nature of all the promised blessings.

By the fulfilment of what had been prescribed to the Head and Surety, the covenant came to be established with the church *in that state and form according to which it properly pertains to the children of men*. It never had or could have any termination on them, any direction to them, but under the idea of a ratified covenant, one of the conditions of which were fulfilled by a substitute. *In plain terms, there could be no dispensation of its blessings, but on the ground of the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ, either actually accomplished, or accounted as good as done. Of old that obedience and satisfaction were accounted as good as done, the promise exhibiting the conditional part as with Christ, proclaimed their certainty, and the seals of the promise realized them to the faith of the worshipper. But now the long expected decease has been accomplished without the gates of Jerusalem, and it has dedicated the covenant to the church. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah." What is the *making* of the covenant with the church, but just its revelation? By this, God carries it into

effect. There is no mutual transaction, stipulations, and re-stipulations; in this "making" of the covenant; it consists simply in declaration,—“I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.” What is the making of the *new covenant*, but its revelation after the form and manner in which it properly pertains to us, *as wholly a covenant of grace*? There was more in the first economy; the voice of the law was heard, there was an exhibition of what behoved to be done—of the requisite conditions? All this the death of Jesus hath cancelled. Consummating his obedience, it hath substantiated every legal claim, and the covenant now rises to view a free testament to men, is made over to the church according to what it really is in relation to all our concern with it, “the New Testament in the blood” of Jesus. Of this the Supper, even in the light of a memorial and public sign, is a seal. It bears witness that the covenant is ratified, and every condition now implemented by the Surety. And it is properly Christ’s seal; an ordinance appended by him to the testamentary disposition made in his death, and thus designed to ascertain, through all ages, the state in which the covenant has been placed by that event. “This cup is the New Testament in my blood.” But what is the *state* referred to? No other; we have already observed, than that in which the covenant properly terminates on us. It could not be made with us, as it was with Christ, in the way of involving the law and proposing conditions; and it is not so made, because in our name he fulfilled the conditions, and removed the law. Our concern is solely with its blessings and privileges. The sum of these is announced in the declaration, “I am your God, and ye are my people;” or as it is also laid, to intimate the per-

manent security of the privilege, "I will be your
 "God, and ye shall be my people; my sons and
 "daughters, saith the Lord." This is the gospel-
 testimony by which the covenant is made with us.
 We have nothing to do, but to believe the record,
 and the proclamation of it is all that making of the
 covenant, that faith will ever find to embrace†. The

† It may be objected, that according to this view,
 the covenant will be made with all gospel hearers.
 But the fact is admitted. "The promise," said
 Peter, "is to you and to your children, and to all
 "that are afar off, *even as many as the Lord our God*
 "*shall call.*" By baptism all who pertain to the
 church are declaratively brought under the promise.
 We are not to look for some inexplicable making
 of the covenant with the soul different from that
 which obtains in the gospel-dispensation. Misled
 by an idea of this kind, there are many, it is to be
 feared, who consider Christ and his benefits as mere-
 ly offered in the gospel, and imagine there must be
 something more to constitute him God's gift to
 them. There is no doubt a difference between the
 gift made, and the gift accepted, the latter is true
 only in the case of believers, but the former may be
 affirmed of the whole gospel-dispensation. The ac-
 ceptance lies in the belief of God's testimony, and
 in this testimony Jesus is actually "made of God
 "unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification,
 "and redemption." He is given for a covenant of
 the people, "I will make with you, or put to you,
 "an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies
 "of David," TA OSIA the obsequies, the funeral
 honours of David; these are all the blessed fruits
 and consequences of his death, as one delivered for
 our offences, and raised for our justification. See

ordinance of the Supper brings home with the most particular application what is proclaimed to all in the gospel, and by affording the highest assurance of interest in that death which ratified the covenant,

Acts xiii. 32—38. The covenant is made with all in the gospel; and to realize it to any soul, it is only necessary for the Spirit of grace to disclose the truths proclaimed in their divine light and evidence. —Should it be said, if the covenant be made with all in the gospel, how can we account for the truth of God's testimony, "I am your God," while many finally perish from under the dispensation of grace? The answer is not that the truth of it depends upon faith; it is true in itself. One view of the testimony is, *that God, on the ground of what Christ has done, has nothing to require of any individual in order to salvation.* This is gospel, glad tidings of relief to a distressed conscience, and it is a truth independent of faith. Such is the sufficiency of what Christ hath done, that were all men to be saved, nothing more could be demanded. Then it is to be observed, that *what Christ hath done* is ever proclaimed in connection with the testimony, that nothing can be demanded of us by the law and justice of God. The truth of that declaration, and of the Lord's being our God, depends upon the death of Jesus, and the sufficiency of this death will ever justify the general proclamation of these truths, which is indeed to us the only conceivable plan for carrying into effect the design of that event in regard to its particular destination. In fine, as God has a right ever to be believed when he speaks, so he considers himself as *always speaking to faith*, in the gospel. He never speaks in any gracious declaration, *under the idea of not being believed*, and yet the declaration remain-

or converted it into a free testament, and on which the fulfilment of every promise depends, proves a seal of that covenant to the faith of every communicant. If Jesus by his death secured for himself, in his public character, the promised good, he secured it for us. That he did so, the gospel declares and the dispensation of his body and blood by sensible signs, gives a personal direction to the declaration, confirming it to every recipient, and testifying so as to exclude every fearful surmise, that to him God's promises are yea and amen. "This is the New Testament in my blood."

The Supper is thus, farther, an eminent mean of SPIRITUAL NUTRITION. In Scriptural figure, the food of the soul, is whatever can render it genuinely happy. Nothing of this kind is to be found in the world of Nature, since man became a fallen creature. We must look to God's covenant of Salvation; here, in the sure mercies of David, all that the soul can desire is contained. Must we be replaced in the favour of God which only is life? must the conscience be relieved and satisfied? must the mind be re-

ing true, or being realized in the case of the unbeliever. No; in addressing sinners, he deals with unbelief to subdue it, but he does so in the way of speaking to faith, and for the production of faith. In the declaration, "I am your God in Christ, or on the ground of what Christ hath done," which is the sum of the gospel, he speaks as one who expects to be believed, as one proclaiming a truth, the proper subject of faith. Faith consequently does not make the declaration a truth, but finds or discerns it to be so, while unbelief puts away the grace, the gift and the covenant of God from the person, making or accounting God a liar.

stored to the pleasing, the felicitating contemplation of the divine perfections, moral character, and ways of God? must the affections be furnished with objects of worthy and lasting gratification? All that is requisite for thus rendering happy is comprized in the covenant of grace. Its exhibition in the gospel, is accordingly "a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined." And the ordinance of the Supper, by sealing this covenant, must be an eminent mean of spiritual nutrition. There is no grace it is not calculated to strengthen and improve. Faith, it has a tendency to raise to the fullest assurance, and the vigorous exercise of faith is influential on all the fruits of the spirit. As a seal of the covenant, it applies to the soul the death of Jesus, the grand summary of spiritual entertainment. His death is in its very nature the source of that felicity which lies in deliverance from wrath, and from the terrors of an evil conscience, as it is also by its meritorious efficacy the source of that felicity which lies in the enjoyment of heavenly privilege. Hence said Jesus, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." The form of the ordinance corresponds to its use as the grand mean of spiritual nutrition. It is a feast, in which Christ and his benefits are set forth by the chief articles of food, while the personal application is denoted by eating and drinking.

Farther, according to these views, it must be AN ORDINANCE OF COMMUNION. It affords a display of that union between Christ and believers whence all communion proceeds, and on which it depends. "He that eateth me," said Jesus, "even he shall live by me." There is in this ordinance a representation of Christ crucified, as our spiritual food,

and of that eating of his flesh by which, as the symbols are taken into the body and incorporated with it, he dwells in the soul.—We may remark resulting from this union a two-fold fellowship between Christ and believers,—a fellowship of common interest, and a fellowship of mutual intercourse. They who have a common interest in the same property are said to be in a state of fellowship. This idea of fellowship is precisely that conveyed by the Greek word rendered *communion*, in treating of the Supper. 1 Cor. x. 16. As obtaining between Christ and believers, it is a communion discerned only by faith, “the evidence of things not seen.” It is however real and most intimate; yet a fellowship which at the same time recognizes his character and pre-eminence in being their covenant-head. They have fellowship with him in his *death*, according to its nature and value. It is his, and it is theirs; but standing for all his righteousness, it is his as their great representative, theirs by imputation, or in the divine reckoning and account proclaimed by the gospel. They have fellowship with him too in the *fruits* of his death,—access to God, the enjoyment of the Spirit, and all the blessings of grace. But his is the *access* of their great High Priest into the immediate presence of the Father, and in a public capacity; theirs the access of spiritual priests in a private and personal respect. The promise of the *Spirit* he hath inherited without measure; they receive from him according to their measure. Though the unction be one, the oil of gladness was poured on him as the head, and only descends from him on his fellows. In him also it pleased the Father that all the *fulness of blessing* should dwell, his people receive grace for grace, but still only as members of his mystical body. Of

this fellowship announced in the gospel, the Supper is a sign and seal,—an ordinance by which it is visibly displayed, realized to faith, carried home to the mind in the most impressive manner, so as to afford and often produce the utmost assurance. “This is *my* body,” but it is my body “broken for you.” And “this is the *New Testament* in my blood,” with all its blessings, the fruits of my death.—On the same ground the Supper is eminently adapted for realizing that communion of mutual intercourse which ever obtains between Jesus and his friends. Their fellowship of common interest with him can never be affected by their conduct, it pertains to their state before God, and though the truth and comfort of it may be more vividly, or in a more sensible manner, brought home to their faith, it is unalterably the same in itself. But the latter species of fellowship pertains to their exercise and experience. There may be times when it seems to be suspended, and there are seasons when Jesus “sees them again, and causes their hearts to rejoice.” There is no season, however, in which it can be said wholly to cease. The security given to every individual whose heart is opened to receive Jesus, is this, “I will come in and sup with him and he with me. I and my Father will come unto him, and abide with him ;”—a permanent gracious intercourse, however it may seem to wax and wane, to languish and revive, shall obtain. Now of all ordinances, the Supper, from the very relation it bears to the first kind of fellowship, is the most calculated to promote this divine and blissful communion. Then it is in its very form, an entertainment. Here Jesus holds a feast with his professed friends ; and feasts among men are expressly designed to afford an opportunity for the pleasures of mutual or social

intercourse. To the Supper the honour of realizing this kind of communion in an eminent degree, seems to be appropriated by Jesus. It is the ordinance in which he hath promised to “drink of the “fruit of the vine new with them, in his Father’s “kingdom.” Here accordingly there is *giving* and *receiving*, and an alternate giving and receiving ;—an intercourse of this kind, not merely in regard to the symbols with all their spiritual import, which are given by Jesus, and received by the communicant, but also in regard to the persons of believers presented as living sacrifices, and in regard to their worship, their obedience, their future services in the cause of their Lord and Saviour,—all which are given on their part by the very nature of their profession in this solemnity, usually also in actual dedication, and as given, are accepted of him. Here too, in prayer, in praise, in the secret breathings of their souls, in the very act of communicating, while the language of their faith is respondent to his declarations in the ordinance, they *commune with him* ; while he, on the other hand *communes with them* by the words of institution, or by the operation of his Spirit calling to remembrance. As if on the mount of his glory they talk with him of his accomplished decease ; he again, as if from Pisgah, often displays before them the scenes of everlasting felicity to which it hath opened access, points out the beauties, and seems to expatiate on the pleasures of the promised land. They sing in the heights of Zion, and are replenished with the goodness of the Lord. Here they find him not ashamed to own them as friends,—ready to sympathize with their souls. Under the signs of his presence, they pour out their hearts to him with the utmost confidence, and in a full assurance of redress to all their wrongs, satis-

faction to all their holy desires. They find in this ordinance at once what emboldens to such exercise, and what furnishes present solace, restoration, and genuine felicity. The fruit of the vine is to them as "the best wine which goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of them that are asleep to speak," or rendering eloquent even the otherwise timid and languid. It is wine for those of a sorrowful spirit, cheering their souls; wine that nourisheth the frame and maketh the heart to rejoice,—a cup of salvation.

But the Supper is not only an ordinance of communion between Christ and believers, it is also an ordinance of communion among the members of his body. Let us consider them, first, as saints. In having fellowship with the Father and his Son, they "have fellowship one with another;" and while they all drink into one spirit, the communion of the Holy Ghost pervades their conjunct exercise. Believers have a common interest in the same *atonement*, and they are heirs of the same *inheritance* made over in testamentary disposition by the death of Jesus. This fellowship is visibly displayed, is declared and sealed in the Supper; for here they are all partakers of one bread the symbol of Christ's *body broken for each*, and they all drink of one cup, the symbol of their *portion*, the New Testament in his blood. [This idea of a cup frequently occurs, Psal. xi. 6. xvi. 5.] Let us again, secondly, consider them as church members, pertaining to the visible body of Christ. They are all in this view brought under the same dispensation of the covenant, and the ordinance of the Supper at once proclaims and seals their communion in privilege and profession. Such was the use of the passover to

Israel of old, And to the same use of the New Testament feast the apostle refers when he styles it, "The communion of the body and blood of the Lord. For," says he, "we being many are one body, and one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread." [1 Cor. x. 16. 17.] But this use of the Supper as it is of a general nature, and intimately connected with the mode of external observance, will fall afterwards to be more particularly considered. It leads us at present, in pursuing our view of the ordinance.

To pass from its own import and references, as an institution from God to the church, to the import and peculiar nature of the *SERVICE* performed on our part. Of this we have a summary account by the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 26. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." The distinguishing feature of observance on the part of communicants lies in *SHOWING THE LORD'S DEATH*. In this there is much included beyond what obtains in the acts of praise and prayer, and still more beyond the amount of their profession in hearing the word. "Ye do shew,"—the term used by the apostle properly means, ye announce, declare, or publicly proclaim the Lord's death†. Communicants are admitted in this ordinance, without transgressing their stations in the church, to preach the death of Christ,—to do by their conduct, what ministers are employed in doing by the discharge of their office, or rather what the ordinance itself does as a sign and witness.

† Acts xvii. 23. "whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I (MATANGELLO, the same word) unto you." Signifies to preach, 1 Cor. ix. 14. Acts xv. 36. xiii. 5. &c.

By their observance, the import and use of the Supper considered in this light is fulfilled, or carried into effect.—First, they implement the design of the ordinance, in publicly announcing the death of Christ, and displaying it before men. To the unconverted, to the profane, to infidels of every description, they hold up this death as a past event, as the only ground on which men may expect to be saved and enjoy the privileges of the kingdom of heaven ; declaring at the same time their reliance upon it, and full persuasion of the truth. The men of the world may behold at the table of the Lord the society of the faithful all testifying to them for their instruction and admonition, nay, testifying against their indifference, unbelief, and hardness of heart, as Noah in building the ark is said to have “condemned the world of ungodly.” Here “wisdom is justified of her children.”—Secondly, To angels also, they announce and exhibit the death of Jesus, the ground of the restoration of sinners to the favour of God, and thus to the fellowship of these blessed spirits. (Eph. i. 9, 10. Heb. xii. 22.) Those things into which the angels still desire to look, bowing down, in the true sanctuary, over the mercy-seat to contemplate the mysteries of propitiation, are here shewn in all their blissful effects to the admiring view of the heavenly host, who, as the service goes on in the church, raise anew the song, “Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to the children of men.” Here in an eminent manner, “to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, is made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.”—[1 Pet. i. 12. Eph. iii. 10.] Thirdly, To their brethren in the Lord, to one another, communicants shew the death of Christ, according to the purport of the exhibition

made in the ordinance, as the ground of their fellowship one with another in divine privilege and blessed prospects.—But, Fourthly, To God the Judge of all, they shew the death of Christ for the same ends, or in exact correspondence to the design for which it is exhibited in the ordinance to them. In all our service we have to do with God as the Judge of all. It is a character of which he cannot be divested. As the Judge of all, he condemns, and as the Judge of all he justifies the ungodly. There is no change of the character he sustains, but only of the light in which we stand before him ; and this change, our being reconciled to God, is through the death of Jesus. In every approach to him, therefore, a respect must be had to this death as the only way of comfortable access, that by which we find the glorious high throne established in justice and judgment, a throne of grace unto us. (Psal. lxxxix. 14. Jer. xxx. 21. Dan. vii. 13, 14. Rev. v. Jer. xvii. 12. Heb. iv. 15, 16.) We may not suppose it was only on Sinai he revealed himself as the Judge of all. Though we are not come, in the gospel-dispensation, to the Mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, we are come “to God the Judge of all, and to the Mediator of the new covenant.” (Heb. xii. 18.—24.) It is the character in which he presides over the whole economy of redemption. Now in the ordinance of the Supper there is a solemn exhibition made of the death of mediation to our faith, and by the observance of this ordinance it is shewn to God, for the same purpose for which it is exhibited to us.—We may add, that in being shewn to the *Judge of all*, as the reconciliation, the ground of pardon, of access into his favour and into that state of privilege which lies in the varied enjoyment of this fa-

your, it is also shewn forth before every *accuser*, before the law, the conscience, the grand adversary Satan, and the powers of darkness.

All this shewing of the death of Jesus implies **GLORIFICATION**. It is in the finished work of our common Saviour that believers have "whereof to glory before God;" in this also they exult together as the foundation and medium of their spiritual fellowship, and of all the angelic communion with which they are honoured in the kingdom of God; of this they profess they are not ashamed before men. To observe the Supper is publicly, in the most solemn manner, and in a direct avowal of the grand subject of offence, to glory in the cross of Christ. Communicants by the sacred acts of participation profess their faith in the doctrine of the cross, and proclaim it "the power of God, and the wisdom of God for salvation."

In fine, the shewing of the death of Jesus, as inclusive of what has been stated, is a **CELEBRATION** of that event. The Supper has been justly styled the eucharist or thanksgiving ordinance. It lays claim to this designation, not only on account of the solemn thanksgiving with which it commences, but on account of its very nature, and particularly on account of that shewing the Lord's death which is the amount of observance on the part of communicants. This last is the most solemn and practical *profession of gratitude* we can possibly make in the church below. It concentrates in a few acts the whole of our improvement of Jesus to the glory of God, and these acts visibly performed, so as to attest before all the world the honourable light in which we regard the work of our Saviour. The ordinance itself is a monument established by God in honour of the death of Jesus, as that event in

which, beyond all the works of creation, he hath "rested and been refreshed," or in which all his perfections have attained their highest manifestation. Communicants acquiesce in the design God had in view, and follow it out by entering into his rest, shewing back to him and before men that death which he, with divine complacency, exhibits to them. —But this shewing is also a *triumphant exercise*. The death of Jesus hath founded his glorious administration. Having soiled principalities and powers on his cross, the Father hath given him a name above every name, and committed all power in heaven and earth into his hand. Of this committal we have an emblematic disclosure in the fourth and fifth chapters of the Revelation of John: In the fourth, a vision of the throne of the Father to whom, as sustaining the majesty of Deity, the supreme power in the management of providence and grace primarily belongs; in the fifth, a vision of the bestowment of this power on Jesus, under the idea of a sealed book given to be opened by him. His fitness with respect to ability, and his right by the covenant-promise (which in its reference to royalty, had been restricted first to Judah, and afterwards to the house of David), are proclaimed in his titles, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root and the Offspring of David." But his worthiness and immediate claim are traced to his death. He appeared to John, "as a Lamb that had been slain." And on the delivery of the book, the song is raised, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God." Similar is the celebration of the death of Jesus in the Supper. There that illustrious event is triumphantly shewed forth, "till he come again;" that is, till all the comings which pertain to his ad-

ministration, shall terminate in his second and glorious appearance. Communicants, by the observance of this ordinance, stand forth to public view, ranged under the standard of the cross, the armies of heaven who follow the Lamb in his vesture of blood. They shew his death to the confusion not only of personal enemies, but of the public foes of his kingdom ; and thus feasting in the very "presence of their enemies," celebrate that death as the permanent ground of victorious administration, and an event in which they anticipate the triumph of final success.

The Supper is, lastly, AN ORDINANCE OF VOWING. If the solemn profession of communicants be such as we have stated, it necessarily involves an engagement to be the Lord's. There is in their conduct a new surrender of themselves, a new avowal of his cause in the world, and a dedication of all that they are and possess to its support. An obligation is thus, as really as in baptism, brought on the conscience, whether it be recognized or not. But this is not all, if vowing be implied in our profession of faith and obedience, we ought to realize that profession by actually engaging in the exercise. The Lord's table is indeed on many accounts a most proper place, and the time of communicating a most fit opportunity for making express vows to God. The believer can scarcely avoid it. Here he has the most lively view of his infinite debt to the grace and love of the eternal Three. He feels himself unable to make any suitable return. He is at a loss to express the gratitude with which his heart is warmed. "What shall I render for all thy benefits?" "Truly, O Lord, I am thy Servant." Here he has the most clear view of his redemption,—sees that a price was paid for him,—that he is redeemed to

God. 'I am not my own, then, I am bought with a price; thou hast the best claim to me; I will endeavour, as I am bound, to glorify thee in my body and spirit which are thine.' Beholding here the glorious liberty into which he is brought, he yields himself to his deliverer, and, like the servant who allowed his ear to be bored to the door post, vows eternal service to him. A feast, as a token of reconciliation, is an opportunity for mutual assurances and engagements. When a superior, in particular, feasts with his subjects, and especially with pardoned rebels, it is a season in which he expects they will assure him of their attachment and regard. Feasts upon sacrifices were of old in various countries, occasions of solemn engagement. Well, Christ at his table gives his people the tokens and pledges of his love, and shall they not in their turn give him similar assurances? 'Yes, Lord,' the communicant will say, 'constrained by this love, I am thine, everlastingly thine, and these sacred pledges of thy love shall be the tests of my fidelity, and witnesses against me if I ever abandon thy service, or renounce thy cause in the world.'—Such vows imply a renovation of all former engagements. And we may suppose the exercise foreign to the New Testament state, while vowing is determined by the law to be a moral duty, and while such predictions as these remain to be fulfilled, "One shall say, I am the Lord's, another shall call himself by the name of Jacob;—the heathen shall know the Lord in that day,—they shall vow a vow and perform it." (Isa. xlv. 5. xix. 21.)

SECT. II.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PRECEDING VIEW.

THE view given may serve to DISCRIMINATE the ordinance of the Supper from other institutions of the gospel, and what may be styled the common dispensation of grace.

It is one of God's three witnesses ; (1 John v. 8.) and, as witnesses must always be distinct, though the testimony it bears be the same with that of the word and of baptism, it must be different from these two, either in the mode of testification, or in other respects. By the employment of sensible signs, both it and baptism are sufficiently distinguished from the ordinance of preaching. These two ordinances of symbols agree in being seals of the covenant-dispensation. Between them however the distinction is also sufficiently clear. It is strongly marked in their form and spiritual signification. In baptism something is done upon the recipient ; he does not himself make use of the symbol. The ordinance is thus adapted to its use and import, as intended to denote regeneration, and to mark out the heirs of the promise whether adult or children. In the Lord's Supper again, something farther is done by the recipient, expressive of voluntary and active profession. Baptism from its nature and import cannot be repeated ; the observance of the Supper, as the grand ordinance of spiritual nutrition, ought to be frequent during the life of a saint. The vows too come under at the Lord's table are peculiarly sacred and forcible. This arises from the

manner and circumstances in which they are made. In the baptismal dedication, our wills are not consulted, nor is it requisite they should, since our own consent is not necessary in regard to the obligations of duty†. Still, however, our own consent has great weight with the mind and conscience. What we would otherwise feel reluctant to perform, we do cheerfully, when we consider that we have voluntarily pledged our faith for it. This is a great obligation, for it is self-obligation. We are bound to be the Lord's whether we vow or not, but if we have vowed, or made a profession of equal amount, we are doubly bound; and the more frequently we have done so, the more evidence is there of plenary consent. At the Lord's table we, as it were, renounce all indifference about the matter,—which cannot properly be affirmed of our subjection to the other institutions.

At our entrance on the controversy relative to the observance of the Supper, the question occurs, “Ought it to be placed on a *level* with the other institutions of the gospel? Ought all the three wit-

† As the reference is here to Pædo-baptism, what is affirmed may be deemed objectionable. It should be remembered, however, that we are naturally under obligations, independent of our own will or choice. As creatures we are bound to serve and glorify God. Whether we will or not, we are bound to obey him. And in being born heirs of the promise, that is by relation to Christian parents, brought under the dispensation of the covenant, “I will be your God, and the God of your seed,” or, “In thee shall the families of the earth be blessed,”—we are born, not only to all the privileges, but also to all the duties of our holy profession.

“nessing ordinances to be conjoined in the *stated* and *common* dispensation of grace?” As to baptism an exception is made, and admitted on both sides. It can be dispensed only when subjects are found to receive it, and there must be no repetition.

But the Supper, it is alledged, ought ever to be conjoined with the preaching of the gospel as a part of stated and ordinary service in the church. In support of this plan, attempts have been made to reduce it to a level with the usual dispensation of grace, as in no respect more solemn, nor to be discriminated from other institutions by any previous peculiar attentions. Particularly it is represented as bearing no such marks of specialty, as might indicate its being designed only for occasional observance.

A very different conclusion arises from the view presented in the preceding section. Let us again candidly survey the institution, nature, and use of the Supper. It will appear to be an ordinance that neither requires, nor can properly admit of any thing more than OCCASIONAL OBSERVANCE.

While it was honoured with an institution in various respects impressive and different from that of the other witnessing ordinances, it was, we have seen, appointed instead of the passover feast. But the passover was not a part of stated ordinary service in the Jewish church, and we have no indication from Jesus, that a difference was intended in this respect with regard to the Supper. To fulfil its ends in keeping up the remembrance of the death of Christ, or being a public sign that the atonement is made, and the promised state of privilege realized, there is no necessity for having the ordinance in constant dispensation. On the contrary, it is moved away from its proper sphere, and much of

its impressive effect must be lost, if, instead of occasionally recalling to mind the glory of our gospel-state, and presenting to view the event to which all our privilege is owing, it shall be made one of the common external privileges of that state†.—Is it the sacred feast of the Christian church, and designed to realize, in visible exhibition, the whole gospel-dispensation, which is represented as a feast of fat things, or the marriage-supper of the Lamb? Then while that dispensation was manifestly intended for the stated spiritual entertainment of the people of God, the symbolical exhibition must surely have been meant for an extraordinary observance. To join it ever with the usual dispensation of grace, would seem greatly to supercede that “eating of the flesh, and drinking of the blood of the Son of man,” designed to be the permanent exercise of faith in hearing the word. Some difference was doubtless intended to be put between the constant public feast in the gospel and the sacramental feast, but that difference is much overlooked if both are placed on a level, or if the eating and drinking by

† The case of the Sabbath may perhaps be objected. But the Sabbath is only the *time* of Christian worship, not an ordinance of worship, like the Supper. And if the Seventh part of our time be claimed by God, it was proper that the day which antiently commemorated the creation, or the redemption from Egypt, and the Canaan-rest, should now bear a respect to God’s ultimate rest in the finished work of Christ, and to our rest with him in this here or hereafter. If however the Sabbath be the stated memorial of finished redemption, the Supper, on this very ground, must be a peculiar ordinance, intended but for occasional observance.

symbols be not occasional.—We ought to bear in mind also that though the Supper be an high privilege in its nature, and references, yet *the use of symbols* is an accommodation to an imperfect state of the church. The symbols of the Mosaic economy were numerous, because the church was then in minority; those of the Christian state are few; but that any appear is owing to the want of final perfection. As the shadow or profile hath vanished, the glass in which the very image is seen will also be removed; when that which is perfect is come, we shall see face to face. The ordinance of the Supper is thus, as far as the use of symbols is concerned, somewhat like a relic of God's antient method of training up his church. But to mark the comparative perfection of our state as the symbolical ordinances are few, so they were appointed the one instead of circumcision, which could be but *once* performed, and the other instead of the passover, an *annual* feast, an indication of their being intended only for occasional observance. Instead of all the other symbols and carnal ordinances of the law, we were to enjoy the simple preaching of the gospel, the plenary and unveiled dispensation of spiritual privilege†. But

† Hence in enumerating the witnesses on earth, John denominates the preaching of the gospel "the spirit." 1 John v. 8. It is the spirit in opposition to "the letter," the legal system and method of instruction, 2 Cor. iii. 6—3. But in the gospel-economy, it is appropriately "the spirit," even in contradistinction to "the water and the blood," baptism and the Supper, for in these along with the words which are "the spirit and life," (John vi. 63.) there are material signs employed. But what is the

if, overlooking the design of occasional observance which coincides with the fewness of our symbolical ordinances, we make the Supper a part of stated service, do we not, as it were, multiply the tokens of imperfection, revert in so far to the legal state of things, and endeavour to introduce and establish in the Christian church, by that single ordinance, a permanent symbolical service? With what has just been stated, and which may seem to depreciate the Supper, its being an ordinance eminently calculated for the confirmation of our faith is no wise incompatible. The very grant of the use of sensible signs, considered as an accommodation to our imperfect state, contributes to this end, and particularly the grant of such signs as, differing from those of the law, proclaim the atonement to be past, and divine justice fully satisfied. But we cannot suppose that God would have his people constantly under the sensible pledges of his favour. He well knows that this, from the very operation of the infirmities he designed to counteract, would have a tendency to frustrate the end proposed, would render common and familiar, as other institutions, what he meant to have a striking and strongly confirming effect. Hence also, if we would consult the eminent promotion of grace which depends on this effect and for which the ordinance as adapted to that end is peculiarly calculated, we must obey its claim on occasional observance.—Attend we next to the service implied or performed in communicating, every one knows that

preaching of the gospel, but the Holy Spirit simply, and without the intervention of any material emblems, testifying to us, dealing directly with our understandings to the full disclosure of the truth as it is in Jesus?

vowing should be only an occasional exercise. So strong is the conviction of this, that the friends of stated weekly dispensation find it necessary to discard the idea of vowing wholly from the observance of the Supper†. But let us even hold by the amount of the exercise and profession of communicants as declared by the apostle: That *shewing of the death of Christ* in which they engage, must be something of a very public nature. It is of all the acts of Christian worship, that in which the most open and explicit avowal of the cross of Christ is made. The failing must therefore be great in regard to the nature and object of this profession, if the Supper be not celebrated in the most public manner, if it be not distinguished by the mode and times of observance from the ordinary profession made every Sabbath in Christian worship.

Instead of following out this summary sketch in detailed argument, we may simplify the subject by stating three general conclusions from the nature and use of the ordinance, which ought to regulate in regard to observance. If the view formerly given be just, then the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of great spiritual utility,—it is a most solemn ordinance,—

† In some of their reasonings on this head, the ideas of vowing and swearing are confounded. A vow, however, is only a solemn promise to God. An oath may be added, but a vow does not necessarily imply an oath; nor is the idea of an oath to be attached to the Supper, considered as an ordinance of vowing. It neither exacts nor imposes an oath. It is styled *a sacrament* merely according to the primary and principal meaning of the term as denoting *a peculiarly holy ordinance*. Shorter Cat. Quest. 92.

and it is specially provided for manifesting the unity of the body of Christ.

I. It is an ordinance of GREAT SPIRITUAL UTILITY. This requires no particular proof ; it is admitted on all hands. A copious and animated illustration of its importance to the Christian life may be found in Mr. Mason's second letter on communion. To this idea indeed the Author wisely confines his view of the ordinance. It is the only idea that can subserve the point he meant to establish.—
But the Supper is also,

II. PECULIARLY SOLEMN. Of late, indeed, there has been much declamation, and even by some Presbyterians against accounting one ordinance more solemn than another. The arguments usually brought forward are, 1st, That the same authority is interposed in every divine institution : 2dly, That the object of worship is the same in all : And, 3dly, That in all there is the same spiritual reference, namely, to the mediation of Christ. The first of these arguments will prove, that every ordinance is entitled to respect in its own place, and that no one ought to be neglected in its proper season, nor observed at the expence of another. The second will prove that in no instance ought we to approach without reverence and godly fear : And the third, that there is no access to God but through Jesus Christ. What they prove in regard *comparative* solemnity, [for all the ordinances of grace are solemn,) may appear from the following considerations : 1st, The discriminating marks of comparative solemnity are not touched in these arguments. They confessedly relate to what is common to all sacred institutions. It was incumbent on those who adduced them, to have proved that there could be nothing peculiar in regard to one ordinance more than another, or to

have shewn that their arguments establish this point, and set aside the possibility of any thing peculiar. *2dly*, If admitted to determine the question of comparative solemnity, the arguments specified will prove too much : They will prove that no peculiar solemnity could attach to any of the Old Testament institutions more than to any of the New. The same authority, for instance, was interposed, the same God was the object of worship, and the reference to the mediation of Christ was as real—in the daily sacrifice as in the passover feast. Will it be said it was the convocation of the people that rendered the last peculiarly solemn ? Then, here is a circumstance different from any thing specified in the arguments ; it is however only an extraneous circumstance, and one moreover which will scarcely be resorted to by the adversaries of comparative solemnity, who are no friends to solemn convocations. The arguments so confidently propaled, if admitted to decide the question would prove, that it is utterly impossible even with God to constitute one ordinance more solemn than another. But with God nothing is impossible, sin excepted, of which if he were capable he would be no God. And surely the ordination of comparative solemnity, though but in condescension to our weakness, is not like sin, contrary to his nature.

Therefore, *3dly*, The discriminating marks of peculiar solemnity are to be sought in—the manner in which the divine authority has been interposed—the form in which the approach is to be made to the object of worship—and the mode of reference to Christ's mediation, with other additional circumstances which may tend to impress the mind, or draw forth serious regard. As to the manner in which the divine authority has been interposed, it is

nearly the same in regard to all the institutions of grace, lest any advantage should have been taken to neglect some and overrate others. Yet even on this head, the methods of divine wisdom for producing a peculiar effect may well engage our admiration. The authority that ordained and sanctioned sacrifice from the beginning was the same that appointed the legal modes of worship; but the manifestation of the grandeur of that authority on Sinai, when God descended with the sound of a trumpet, was awfully impressive. The command in regard to one institution may be more express, or the sanction may be more awful than in regard to another. It is of no consequence here, whether that sanction be given forth in so many words, or implied and notified to conscience in the very nature of the ordinance. In fine, God may more specially vindicate his authority with respect to one institution than another, and shew that in it particularly he will be sanctified of all them that draw nigh unto him. Apply these remarks to the Lord's Supper; and consider—its immediate appointment by Jesus; and not when giving general directions about the kingdom of heaven; nor in the way of combining it with other ordinances, as he did baptism with teaching in one general mandate, but by itself;—the practical institution with which it was honoured;—the express command, “Do this in remembrance of me;” nothing similar to which took place in regard to the Sabbath, and various other articles of Christian order;—that too, his *dying* command, delivered in circumstances calculated to impress deeply on the heart the authority interposed;—the revelation of this ordinance afterwards from his state of *glory* to Paul, a revelation made in the very terms of his institution, and thus not only a new act of authority, but one

manifestative of peculiar regard;—*lastly*, the awful sanction, 1 Cor. xi. 29. with the special vindication of the ordinance on such as had profaned it, ver. 30.

The object of worship is the same in all ordinances, but the manner of approach is not. On the very ground on which solemnity is considered as attaching to any act of worship, comparative solemnity may also exist. We are as really in the presence of God in the market as in the church, we have as really to do with him in the one place as in the other, and in regard to both, “all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” Shall we say then that to appear in the market and in the church are equally solemn? No; there is a drawing near, which must be done with true hearts. Ordinances are means by which, to use an unclassical but expressive word, we are *sisted* more directly in the presence of God. Now according to the same idea, they may be so constituted, that we shall be more deeply impressed with the awe of his presence in one than in another. And we find that God, regarding us as creatures who are liable to be thus impressed, has adapted the modes of worship to our state. He did so under the Mosaic economy. The approach made by the high priest when he entered the holiest, and by the people in him was more solemn, because more impressive in its manner and references, than the approaches made in the daily sacrifice. We find *sensible signs* still employed, and one ordinance in which a *peculiar mode of worship* is required, a mode not unsimilar to entering the holiest, and certainly the striking realization of the same thing in spiritual import. [Heb. ix. 7, 8. x. 19—22. 1 Pet. ii. 9.] Is there in the form of this ordinance no

adaption to our state, and our liableness to be impressed by what affects the senses? If not, God is Spirit, and might be worshipped in spirit without any such ordinance whatever. Combine with the form the *signification* of the Lord's Supper, and it is an ordinance by which the idea of a near approach is more strongly impressed, than by any other. It is intended visibly to exhibit the realizing of our access to God through the flesh of Jesus, and our direct improvement of him as the way to the Father at the very time we are engaged in the act of worship.

This brings us to its peculiar reference to the mediation of Christ. The gospel is the preaching of the cross, but by this ordinance Jesus is evidently set forth crucified among us. While the whole doctrine of salvation must be by detail proclaimed in the gospel, here it is compendized; that grand event to which all is referable is exhibited after an uncommon manner, and as a past event. This is at once the summary of the New Testament in the blood of Jesus, and God's method of sealing the covenant to the faith of communicants. If there was in the pass-over, as bearing on the mediation of Christ, something beyond the daily sacrifice and particular atonements of the law, then the same high reference is transferred to the ordinance of the Supper, and with it the characteristic solemnity of the antient feast.

In addition to these observations we may note—the connection between the signs and the thing signified, which demands the most serious attention of the worshipper†, and the peculiar profession re-

† According to the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, the bread and wine are the real body and blood of

quired and implied in partaking of the signs. Attendance on the gospel does not amount to a profession of saving faith, as partaking of the Supper must necessarily do. Much is implied in shewing the death of Christ beyond what can be implied in waiting on the ordinary dispensation of grace.

The simplicity of the New Testament worship so far from being unfriendly to the idea of comparative solemnity, must have a contrary effect. Under the law sensible signs were employed in almost every ordinance. This behoved to render the discrimination

Christ. LUTHER, rejecting this doctrine, held that the body and blood of Christ are in, with, or under the symbols,—an opinion which he could never properly explain, which covers the ordinance with unintelligible mystery, and seems to linger on the borders of transubstantiation. ZWINGLIUS went to the opposite extreme, simplified too far. He held that the bread and wine are merely signs of something really absent, but by them figuratively present, as a king is said to be present by his ambassador who represents him. This idea is just, if by the body and blood of Christ we understand his humanity. It is in heaven, it cannot be present in more places than one, and the heavens must retain him till the restitution of all things. But the body and blood of Christ mean, in Scripture, not his glorified humanity, but his death as an atonement, with all its blessed fruits. John vi. 51—63. CALVIN accordingly struck the medium, and with him, keeping by the scriptural meaning of the terms, we consider the Supper as an ordinance in which *Christ crucified* is really, though only spiritually, present in, or by the symbols employed.

more difficult than now under the gospel, when they appear only in two instances. Sensible signs being so generally used in the Mosaic dispensation, many additional circumstances were requisite to mark with peculiar solemnity a few of the legal ordinances, whereas the very employment of these signs goes far for this end in a dispensation otherwise most simple. Thus more vivid tints and deeper shades are necessary to raise on the canvas an object amidst a groupe of similar objects, while the uniform azure of the heavens displays at once whatever appears in the sky. The compensations in the plan of divine wisdom are admirable.

III. The Lord's Supper may be claimed as strictly a Presbyterian ordinance. What is meant by this epithet is, that according to our view of its nature and use, it must be considered as an ordinance designed to secure a permanent MANIFESTATION OF THE UNITY OF THE VISIBLE BODY OF CHRIST. On this conclusion much depends in regard to observance, both as to frequency and mode. It is a conclusion which naturally follows from the specific ends we have found the ordinance appointed to serve: And it is a conclusion justified by various passages of Scripture where reference is made to the demonstration of unity as a general purpose intended.

In the first place, the substitution of the Supper for the passover must forcibly occur to the mind. The passover was a feast of *solemn convocation*,—one of those in which by assembling the males of all Israel† at one place to join in solemn worship, God provided for a manifestation of the unity of his an-

† Females were not excluded, though the injunction was laid on the males. Luke ii. 41—44. In Christ there is neither male nor female.

tient church. (Deut. xvi. 1—8. 16.) The plain substitution of the Supper, hath fixed upon it the same idea. It behoved to be regarded by the apostles as designed for the same purpose in the New Testament state. No caution to the contrary was given by Jesus. It may perhaps be objected that the passover was originally a kind of family observance. But in order to keep it, the tribes behoved to go up to Jerusalem. As soon as general association could form an active and purposed demonstration of unity, (which had been inexpedient, nay, impracticable in Egypt, and could not obtain in the wilderness where the tribes were necessarily together, and dwelling alone were sufficiently proved to be one body)—that association was ordained to take place in celebrating the passover feast. In correspondence to the design of this feast, it was so ordered that the family of Jesus with whom he first observed the Supper comprised the whole church; the apostles were the *stamina* and representatives of the New Testament church. Among them, Judas having then left their society, it was the sacred pledge of unity; and this public dispensation, for such it was from the character of the recipients, though their number was small, though they were met but in an upper room, and no spectators seem to have been present,—this public dispensation might sufficiently indicate that the ordinance was, instead of that superseded, designed to be the pledge of unity among all who, through these founders of Christianity, should profess to believe on the name of Jesus.

But the Supper is evidently adapted for this purpose by its very nature and use. The communion of spiritual privilege is here *visibly* declared. There is also in the conduct of communicants a joint profession of adherence to their common Lord, and

while this profession is made before the world, a mutual testification to each other of their fellowship in him. The ordinance is a feast, the holding of which is a token of friendship; it is the Lord's table, where communicants sit down together as members of one family. It must therefore have been designed to furnish in its celebration, as far as the New Testament state would admit, a public and permanent display of the unity of the church.—Spiritual communion exists among believers every where and at all times, whether they join in the ordinance of the Supper or not. Whatever denomination they belong to, they have fellowship in the same title to eternal life, in the same righteousness on which that title is founded, and in the enjoyment of the same blessings, though the degree of enjoyment may vary and even be considerably affected by the peculiarities of their profession. Nay, so far as they all hold of the Head, to that extent and no farther, they have fellowship in the faith of the gospel, and in duty to Christ. But this is the fellowship of the invisible church. The ordinance of the Supper is calculated *publicly to express* the communion of saints, and to attest before God, angels, and men, their being of one mind and purpose in the Lord. So evidently is it adapted for testifying unity, and so clearly is this object involved in its nature, that, except the latitudinarian who seem to overlook its import, all parties have agreed to consider fellowship in this ordinance as the token of being of one mind, of being engaged in the same cause, and pertaining to one body. Independents themselves receive only independents to join with them, and thus, as far as their modes of procedure and govern-

ment will admit, make association in the Supper a pledge of unity†.

Our conclusion is farther justified by various passages of Scripture where reference is made to Christian communion. The reasoning of the apostle, 1 Cor. x. deserves our attention on this head. He has two objects in view; first, to admonish the Corinthians against valuing themselves on the external privileges they enjoyed, and next to correct the abuse of Christian liberty which obtained among them. In pursuing both these objects we find a particular reference to the ordinance of the Supper, and to it as the intended and necessary pledge of unity. Effectually to expose the folly of resting in external privileges, or boasting of these, the apostle reminds

† There is but "one baptism". Eph. iv. 5. If it can at all be accounted Christian baptism that the person has received, it is improper to repeat it on his joining another society. The spiritual import of the ordinance precludes repetition; and it is unnecessary, for whatever can be regarded as Christian baptism binds the person to espouse and adhere to the cause of Jesus in all its purity, "to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded." In renouncing an impure communion therefore, the person is but fulfilling his baptismal obligation. The case is different as to the Lord's Supper. In it there is an active testification of being of one mind, and pertaining to one body with those with whom we join. Its very nature in this light, as divisions were foreknown, would prevent it from being specified in the passage referred to; and hence its being omitted there does not militate against the general argument.

the Corinthians of what the Israelites enjoyed whose carcasses fell in the desert. They had ordinances similar to those of the Christian church, and even of an extraordinary kind; for, to give the greater pertinancy and force to his example, Paul wisely fixes, not on the ordinary sacraments, circumcision and the passover, but on two extraordinary, and which bear a striking resemblance to baptism and the Lord's Supper. These Fathers, he informs us, "were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and they ate of spiritual meat." He remarks that "they were *all* baptized," they had one common baptism, and that "they did *all* eat the *same* spiritual meat, and drink the *same* spiritual drink." The direct purpose of these assertions was doubtless to remind the Corinthians that there was no exception;—those "with whom God was not pleased," enjoyed the same privileges with the rest. But these assertions also pertain to the similarity between their privileges and those of the New Testament which the apostle meant to suggest, implying that he accounted both kinds manifestative of the unity of the church.—By his manner here, he accordingly paved the way for the reference he was about to make to the Supper on the second point, the abuse of Christian liberty. Some of the Corinthians who were strong, paid no regard to the consciences of the weak, and on the ground that an idol is nothing, did not scruple to feast with their heathen friends, and partake of food that had been previously devoted to one or other of the heathen gods. To correct this the apostle states, ver. 17. "We being many are one body and one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread." The reference is not to the permanent spiritual fellowship of saints which had availed little to his purpose, but to the testifica-

tion of unity by visible communion in the Lord's Supper. Hence the figure expressive of the unity meant, is borrowed from that ordinance, "we are one bread;" and the reason of affirming this unity is given in an appeal to what takes place in communicating, "for we are all partakers of that one bread." The purport of the declaration is evident from the context; "I speak as unto wise men," says the apostle, "judge ye what I say." They were to judge that, as they *manifested themselves to be one body*, by joining together at the Lord's table, they ought, first, to keep by themselves and avoid whatever might amount to fellowship with idolaters in their idolatrous practices; and, secondly, to shew deference to the consciences of the weak who were of the same body, whatever the strong, that is the really or opinionatively more enlightened, might think of certain associations with the heathen. See from ver. 16. to 33.

It may suffice at present to quote another passage, where a similar reference is made to the Supper in connection with baptism, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. "As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all *baptized* into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to *drink* into one spirit."

SECT. III.

APPLICATION OF THE CONCLUSIONS TO REGULATE
OBSERVANCE.

THE observance of the Lord's Supper among Christians ought to correspond to the nature and design of that sacred institution. A due regard must therefore be had to its importance, its solemnity, and its general use in the visible church, as an ordinance provided for manifesting the unity of the body in faith and profession.

I. A due regard must be had to its **SPIRITUAL UTILITY AND GREAT IMPORTANCE**. This must be obvious. It is a point that does not require the laboured proof and illustrations which have been bestowed upon it. Such proof and illustrations might indeed be proper in an attempt to awaken the negligent, and excite them to their duty. Let every habile and warranted method be used to stir them up to embrace the opportunities afforded in providence, for shewing forth the death of Jesus. Let their consciences be enlightened, that they may feel themselves constrained to comply with every call to engage in this at once pleasant and profitable service. And, considering the state of the Presbyterian churches, particularly the direliction of first love which generally prevails, it will be found that even according to the plan of occasional dispensation, there is both sufficient ground and abundant scope for exhortation to frequent communicating. But we must not confound the duty of church-members with the proper order of church-procedure. Christians may frequently partake, though the ordinance

be not dispensed every Sabbath, or once a month, in the same place. And no plan of observance ought to be established merely to accommodate the negligent, and as it were compel them to their duty†, which would set aside, or have a native tendency to defeat any of the great ends for which the Supper was appointed. For,

II. A due regard must also be had to the SOLEMNITY of the ordinance, and the grand purposes it was intended to serve, particularly that one according to which its dispensation specially AFFECTS THE VISIBLE CHURCH. Let us consider what it would be to frustrate any of the ends God had in view, much more to bury by our inconsiderate plans of procedure one of the great objects for which we have seen the Supper was expressly designed, and to which, even according to its spiritual import as well as external form, it is peculiarly adapted,—that of manifesting and confirming the unity of a religious body in faith and profession. Whatever method of observance shall lay a bar in the way of visible communion, and of a circulation of this throughout the body, must militate in so far against the proposed utility of the ordinance, even though spiritual advantage should be consulted.—Let us consider also what it would be to efface those marks of importance which God has impressed upon this, as he did on various institutions of the law, in the solemnity of its nature and form. And let us remember, that if, in tampering with our own supposed spiritual capacity of preserving the idea of solemnity

† While weekly communion existed in the Greek church, those who neglected to observe the Supper *three weeks* successively, were excommunicated. **ERSKINE'S** Dissert. 271.

amid the utmost familiarity with sacred things, we shall overlook that regard God hath had to our weakness in constituting certain ordinances more solemn than others, we are in danger of counteracting even the spiritual utility of these ordinances, in so far as it may be connected with the solemnity impressed upon them. God, we have seen, who knows the proper way of managing his people in this imperfect state, had a regard to their condition as yet in the body and liable to be affected by sensible signs, when he appointed these to be used in the seals of his covenant. On the same principle did he proceed in annexing peculiar solemnity to some of the legal institutions, and for the sake of this solemnity appointing them to be observed *less frequently* than others. The church is now exalted to a state of greater spirituality, she is more able to bear the mysteries of the kingdom, but her members are not glorified, and we must take care of establishing modes of procedure which might seem to imply that no familiarity with holy things in the most solemn exhibitions of them, could defeat the very end of such exhibitions. Declamation here on want of piety and heavenly fervour, as if the ideas now stated could not be entertained by any warm and zealous Christian, is of no avail. There may be a zeal which is not according to knowledge. Its language is, "My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved : Lord, "it is good to be here." But what is the indication of God's mind? This is the question. He hath not limited the whole dispensation of grace to the symbolical ordinance under consideration. Were this the case, and were there no opportunity of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God but in it, there might be some reason for requiring a constant observance. But he hath, for

certain reasons connected with our present state, appointed this ordinance to be a *solemn exhibition* of the whole dispensation of grace, and these reasons demand respect in settling our method of procedure.

What would we have thought of the Jews, if, in the way of magnifying the spiritual utility of the passover, they had condemned the wisdom of God who appointed it only for an annual feast, or supplicated through the medium of Moses its more frequent celebration? They had been unfriendly to themselves, it may be said, since their request, if granted, would have required their often to travel up to Jerusalem. But, according to the plea now entertained by the advocates for frequent communion, this solemn convocation was something that might have been easily dispensed with. The Jew might have said, 'This is an ordinance of great spiritual benefit; it is a sacrament as well as a sacrifice; it is different in this respect from our other feasts; intreat God for us, that we may have it more frequently, and at home in our families apart, as was the case at its first institution in the land of Egypt.' They might thus, under a very spiritual pretence, have saved the trouble of solemn convocation, and the expence of going up to Jerusalem to testify in this ordinance the unity of the body. And when we consider that they had other feasts of solemn convocation, it may seem that the plea would have had more weight in regard to the passover, than it can have in regard to its substitute, which is the only feast of communion in the New Testament state. But God had no such respect of old to frequency at the expence of all other considerations, as these apparently very pious sentiments seem to imply.

III. The *solemnity* and the use of the Lord's Supper, as the intended *pledge of unity*, CLAIM TO REGULATE OBSERVANCE both with respect to frequency and mode. This ought to be admitted unless something to the contrary can be pointed out in the nature of the ordinance, or some positive injunction produced determining the number of times. That there is any such injunction will not be pretended: And we have endeavoured to shew, that there is nothing in the nature or ends of the ordinance that requires more than occasional observance. Now its *spiritual utility* cannot alone regulate the frequency of its administration. For the maxim which many have got into their mouths, "the oftener the better," proves more than they would be disposed to admit. If the idea of utility is solely to be attended to, why not twice, thrice, four times a-week, and why not, to render this convenient, private dispensations? But, say the advocates for frequency, the feast must be kept after the due order, publicly in a church-assembly, under the proper administrators, &c. The frequency then, it seems, is not to be regulated entirely by the idea of spiritual importance; other considerations are to be taken into view. And if the ordinance really possess the solemnity stated, if it was also designed visibly to display and confirm the unity of a religious body, to declare their fellowship in faith and profession,—these are considerations which *specially affect its dispensation*, and thus hold out a peculiar claim to regulate as to frequency and mode.

These three positions are general principles relative to the conclusions deduced from our view of the Lord's Supper. Let us mark more particularly their application in a few instances.

1. Annual communicating, or the conduct of

those who communicate but once in the year, must, from what has been stated, appear to be very reprehensible. Such persons shew little regard to the *importance and spiritual utility* of the ordinance. They are guilty also of disrespecting the liberty of more than annual and paschal-like dispensation granted to the New Testament church, and of disobeying the calls of divine providence in the many opportunities afforded according to this liberty.

2. A mere anniversary dispensation would be condemnable. To celebrate the Supper but once a year on a ~~set~~ day, (suppose Easter, or ~~what is~~ styled Christmas, or any other day,) through the Christian church, might seem to favour the idea of *solemnity*; but it would do so at the expence of what ought also to be kept in view, the importance of the ordinance, and its use as the medium of visible communion. 1st, *Its spiritual utility* would be equally disrespected as by annual communicating; and the disrespect would be more public and glaring. If the conduct of annual communicants be censurable on the ground specified, on the same ground the church behoved to be condemned for sanctioning their conduct by a law. Such a law would infringe on the prerogative of Jesus, to whom alone it belongs to appoint sacred days, and months, and years, as in the legal economy; and who, if he had intended any such peculiarly sacred seasons under the present dispensation, would have marked the times, and prohibited the employment of any other. He hath sanctioned no day, but that in the seven which takes its designation from himself. This day he has sanctioned for all the parts of public service, without discriminating among his Sabbaths which ought to be appropriated to the ordinance of the Supper.

Nor was there any distinction known in the apostolic age. Paul, it is likely, when he visited the churches to confirm them, dispensed the Supper wherever he happened to be present among Christians in an organized state, and on whatever Sabbath was most convenient. Thus, while he was at Thessalonica, "the disciples came together to "break bread," or to have the ordinance dispensed by him ere he departed; and for this end they honoured "the first day of the week," the usual day of public worship. Neither they, nor he though in haste to depart, chose to have it on any other day. But ~~it was~~ an anniversary day, as in the case of the passover, ~~been~~ the fixed season, whether it fell on the first day of the week or not, it behoved to have been kept, and the apostles had also been deprived of many opportunities of confirming the churches by solemn dispensations of the Supper. There was no law in existence against selecting any Sabbath. Besides, the Supper is not like the passover—one of many sacred feasts; it is the only one pertaining to the New Testament state. Were we in imitation of the passover to fix an anniversary day for its celebration, we would render the privileges of that state inferior to those of the legal economy, under which three times a-year the tribes were assembled in holy communion.—*2dly*, The plan of annual dispensation on one day throughout the Christian church would destroy the use of the ordinance as *the medium of visible fellowship, provided for the manifestation of unity in privilege and profession*. On this plan there could be no association of different congregations, no circulation of communion among them; in the case of divisions, (which have taken place,) no discrimination of fellowship, except perhaps what was merely accidental in the distinction

that might be made by the different sects as to the admission of strangers or travellers. Let us recollect that the antient church was one people. A stated day for their annual feasts, the return of which became the signal for solemn convocation to one place, was the very plan for securing a display of the unity of the body. But it must be obvious that this plan would have had a contrary effect in the Christian church. Her members could not all assemble in solemn convocation like the Jews. While this behoved to be impracticable, to have appointed an anniversary day for the observance of the Supper, would have effectually established an independency of communion, contrary to the very principle of the antient plan. Christians met in their respective congregations, but denied fellowship with any but their brethren in these congregations, would have resembled the Jews merely in their synagogal meetings. The plan of the synagogues would seem to have been the only part of the antient method of worship adopted in the New Testament church; no respect had to the divinely instituted ordinances and solemn convocations, which also existed among the Jews, and were manifestative of God's regard to the visible communion of saints†. But when

† As there was no harm in the appointment of synagogues, because they could not establish independency of government and communion in the antient church, so long as the divinely appointed government and convocations remained to preserve the idea of her unity, they were permitted, and were even sanctioned by Jesus. The model of the synagogues behoved to be in so far adopted under an extended and designed universal religion, but shall we suppose the demonstration of the unity of the church

Jesus *substituted* the Supper for the passover feast, he recognized the principle on which these convocations were appointed. In order that the same end might be gained, it was necessary that the times of observance should be left free, particularly that the idea of an anniversary feast which pertained to the passover, should not be transferred to our ordinance of communion. Accordingly no stated day of universal observance was appointed; no intimation of the kind was given by Jesus; evidence to the contrary occurs in the practice of the apostles. For the very same reason for which the passover was ordained to be kept once a-year on a stated day, the sacrament of the Supper was not; and that reason is obviously the designed end of both institutions—for manifesting and confirming the unity of the body of Christ; an end which, while the church was limited to one nation, so that her members might easily all gather together to one place, was fitly accomplished by an anniversary day of solemn convocation, but

formerly connected with them is set aside; that now, when more necessary than of old, no provision is made for it? No: we find the same principle on this head recognized, and that in regard to the same plans of demonstration,—government and communion. In these respects, though congregations must meet separately for stated worship, unity shall still be displayed. Hence the correspondence in point of government intimated by the allusions to the *sanhedrim* in the choice of the seventy disciples, and when specifying the character of the apostles, Psal. lxxviii. 27. Matt. xix. 28. or the office of ordinary rulers, Matt. xviii. 17. And hence in regard to communion, the substitution of the Supper for *the passover*, a feast of convocation.

which now, in the diffused state of the church, would have been completely counteracted by a similar appointment.

3. Private communicating and private administrations, are also condemnable. Much respect may seem to be shewn to the *spiritual utility* of the Supper, by the practice of administering it to the sick or the dying, and to malefactors before execution, not to mention the Catholic custom of carrying the host or portions of the consecrated bread to persons in such situations, or detained at home. The practice however is incompatible, not only, 1st. With the form and attendant circumstances required by the *solemnity* of the ordinance; but, 2dly, And chiefly, with its great design as to the visible church—the manifestation of *fellowship in the unity of the spirit*. This design is inseparably connected with observance; and indeed unless it be kept in view, scarcely any argument can be brought against private communions that will stand before the general reasoning from spiritual utility. We might alledge that the practice referred to seems to imply, that the ordinance is essential to salvation. But this would be instantly disclaimed, and a defence stated merely on the ground of its importance to the Christian life, the assurance and comfort it is calculated to afford. This sacrament, however, cannot fulfil the design specified, by private dispensation to individuals; and we are not warranted to overlook that design on any occasion. Were it lawful to hold the Supper for any one of the purposes it was intended to serve, abstract from the others, or in the way of neglecting them, then communicants might observe it simply as a memorial of Christ's death, or (like some Socinians) as a love feast, without improving

it as an ordinance of salvation ; nay, might not the mere exhibition of the symbols in the church, as of the host among Papists, answer the purpose of a memorial without participation? If we may not overlook on any occasion its use as a seal of God's covenant to our faith, neither may we, in any instance of observance, neglect its design as an ordinance of fellowship, nor set aside the manner in which it was intended to be so. There must be a convocation, and communion visibly expressed among many. Private masses in which, while the people look on, the priest alone eats sacramentally, are on this ground contrary to the nature of the ordinance. The idea of the priest's representing the people, though resorted to by the council of Trent, is of no avail for their vindication. (Sess. xxii. Can. viii.) The Supper is not even a token of fellowship like the *symbola* employed in the pagan mysteries, or the masonic word and signs. It is in its form the celebration of a feast, and requires to be kept as such, in order to fulfil its design in being an ordinance of communion. Our Lord as he did not intend it to be a test of qualification for those civil offices of power and trust to which some of his disciples looked forward with great anxiety, so he did not chuse to administer it to them separately, as if thus it could have answered the purpose of testifying their being members of one body. It is adapted to this purpose in another way than the ordinance of baptism ; the difference ought to be clearly marked and sacredly observed. When our Lord dispensed the Supper the apostles were convened, and on giving the cup, he said, " Drink ye all, (or, let all " drink) of it." The Corinthians even though they

† The Papists hold that " the bread" is enough

“came together into one place,” yet counteracted their design of eating the Lord’s Supper, by taking “each of his own Supper” apart. There was no visibly expressed communion; feasting in the same house, did not fulfil the import of the ordinance; they behoved all to eat the same bread and drink into one cup. Hence the apostle reprehends them, declaring that though they shewed their intention of holding communion by coming together into one place, yet they mistook the manner in which that communion was to be expressed, as well as gave into gross abuses: “When ye come together into one

for the people: They well know that the words which attended the cup militate against their private administrations and masses. Yet in announcing these very words our Lord, as he foresaw it, seems to have condemned the denial of the cup.—The alleged *privacy* of the first dispensation has been noticed already. It is accounted for from circumstances. Our Lord had taken leave of the Jews. Matt. xxiii. 39. But there was a company with him, and that company the *apostles* of the New Testament church. There was no more a private dispensation at that time, nay, far less so, than among Christians when afterwards in days of persecution they had to meet secretly to enjoy their privileges. As to none being present but communicants at the first dispensation, this furnished no warrant for the practice which afterwards crept in of expelling all but members, when the ordinance was to be observed. It might with equal reason have been argued that none but official men should partake, as the only persons present at the institution were apostles. But how could spectators be there, after Christ had taken leave of the Jews?

place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper.* (1 Cor. xi. 20.)

By this sketch of the application of the conclusions deduced from the institution, nature, and use of the ordinance, we are happily saved the necessity of much reasoning on the subject of WEEKLY COMMUNION.* Every unprejudiced mind must perceive that they admit the same application to it as to anniversary observance, and private dispensations.

In treating these points, the danger of exclusive respect to *spiritual utility* has been sufficiently evinced.—On the head of *solemnity*, weekly administration has not much in its favour. The proper form may indeed be observed; it cannot well be curtailed. The expedient of having but one service of the table has usually been adopted to shorten the administration. This, where convenient, may be laudible enough; although much benefit has frequently been reaped, both by spectators and communicants, from the directions and consolatory advice for which several services afford an opportunity. To secure as much as possible the sense of solemnity, a deep silence may be observed, like that which seems to have obtained during the hours of darkness while Jesus hung on the cross†. Nothing may be said in imitation of the consolatory words spoken while the first recipients had the symbols among their hands, or of those precious discourses with which, ere they removed from the table, the participation was followed up by the Great Adminis-

†The Papists defend their *low muttering* in celebrating what they call the unbloody sacrifice, from the silence of Christ on the cross. *Bellarmin lib. ii. de Missa, cap. xii.*

trator†. Yet after all, we are not deterred by the charge of irreligion from maintaining, that according to human infirmity great familiarity with solemn institutions will ever tend gradually to remove the impression God designed they should make, and with it much of the peculiar effect they were framed to produce. Though left at liberty with regard to the periods of dispensation, we should take care lest in our zeal we overdo the matter, perhaps overlook the very principle recognized by God himself, and adopt a plan of observance, even in its tendencies unfriendly to the purpose he had in view, or to the manner of accomplishing that purpose. Let us beware lest we forget the state in which we are—forget that we have infirmities which God would counteract, and thus in some fervour of piety think of “ma-

† Our Lord on delivering the cup, besides the words of institution, accompanied it with a gracious invitation, “Let all of you drink of it;” as if he had said, “Eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved.” He added an assurance that he was then holding communion with them, and that this communion would ere long be crowned with a glorious state of fellowship, Matt. xxvi. 29. The words seem to have been spoken during the time of participation. It was succeeded by a consolatory discourse on the future events relative both to him and them, and about what they might expect ere such another period of communion, distant many weeks, would arrive. The usual Presbyterian method of dispensation is formed on this pattern set by Jesus himself. Though other modes may not be condemnable, it has certainly much in its favour.

“king tabernacles,” and retaining the ordinance in continued dispensation†.

† The boasted argument of spiritual utility led some of the antients to a *daily* observance of the Supper. In this they outstript their posterity who contend only for weekly communion. “Our ancestors,” says POLYDORE VIRGIL, “were wont to receive the eucharist every day.” *De Rerum Invent. lib. v. cap. xi.* BINGHAM in his *Origines* shews that this was the case in some places, though not universally. VOSSIUS has a curious passage on the subject, from which it appears that private masses rose out of the practice. “When Christians were few in number and fervent in zeal, they partook of the eucharist daily: but afterwards as their number increased and *piety began to wax cold*, the priests were left to keep up the custom, while the people satisfied themselves with communicating once a week.” *Disp. xxi. De Cæna. Thes. 3.*—No doubt the defence of daily participation was good. They found it in the Lord’s prayer? “Give us this day our daily bread.” Arguing from the less to the greater, it was easy to reason thus, ‘natural food be so necessary, much more the food of our souls.’ To no purpose would we have urged, that the food of the soul is not restricted to the ordinance of the Supper, that Jesus spake of eating his flesh and drinking his blood ere it was appointed, and that this is the eating and drinking he declared to be absolutely necessary;—such reasoning could not stand before the argument from the high spiritual utility of the ordinance. But the antients found the Supper to be directly meant in the prayer, doubtless by anticipation. To the Greek word which we render “daily,” and which properly

The observance of the Supper every Lord's day necessarily precludes circulation of communion throughout the body, and thus knocks up that *display of fellowship* in faith and profession, that demonstration of *unity* for which the ordinance was intended. According to the plan specified, the celebration of the feast is no pledge of union but among the members of the congregation where it takes place. The plan therefore as really establishes an independency of communion, contrary to the very design of the ordinance, as the scheme of anniversary observance. The same reasoning *mutatis mutandis* lies against the one and the other. By both, that extended fellowship in which different congregations ought to prove that they are one body, as partakers of one bread, must be completely prevented. Whatever discrimination of communion may obtain can be only circumstantial; the ordinance itself is not according to its nature purposely observed for the manifestation of unity. Nor is this all, weekly dispensation will be found to coin-

signifies *necessary for subsistence*, they gave a very forcible meaning. With them it denoted "substantial" bread, and was an epithet which could not apply to common food. Some scholastic divines were afterwards able to prove that it signified *super-substantial* bread, and was therefore fitly descriptive of the sacramental bread as converted into the real body of Christ, and, without the cup, enough for the people. Fitly descriptive indeed, since *super-substantial* and *transubstantiated* bread are equally unintelligible, and alike nonsensical.—Such however may be the shifts of an ill-regulated piety to support the practices it genders, and similar too may be the consequences.

side on this head also with private observance. Why should the latter practice be condemned but because it is contrary to a leading idea of the ordinance,—the very same that weekly communion operates against, though perhaps not to equal extent. Unless there be a convocation and visibly expressed fellowship, unless the members of the body of Christ join together in testifying that they are one in the Lord, we have seen there must be a direliction of the design for which the Supper was appointed, and which according to its use, whether in regard to spiritual import or public profession, it is calculated to serve. Let it be granted then, that the body of Christ is not confined within the bounds of any single congregation, it will follow that different congregations are as really members of his visible body, as different individuals are members of their respective congregations. On this principle, the same reasoning applies against weekly administrations that has been advanced against private observance. And till this principle be proved a PROTON PSEUDOS, or prime fallacy, as exclusive respect to spiritual utility has been, no friend of weekly communion can argue against private dispensation, without to a certain degree implicating and condemning himself†.

Here we may expect to be posed with the ques-

† The writer of these sheets knows well the disadvantage under which he labours in arguing against weekly communion without entering at large on the independent scheme. He can only take general ground. But he apprehends such general principles are afforded on the subject of communion connected with the ordinance of the Supper, as are sufficient for his purpose, and even militate against the whole of that scheme.