

tion, 'Has not each congregation a right in itself, 'and independent of others, to the enjoyment of all 'divine ordinances?' Abstracting, on this question, from the idea of a complete church supposed to exist in each congregation, we only ask in our turn, Can there be no ordinance, like the passover for instance, of a general nature, the observance of which might be designed to affect the unity of congregations otherwise distinct, and to demonstrate this to the world? If the Lord's Supper be an ordinance of this description, and our proof has gone that way, then whatever be the rights of single congregations, it ought to be observed, (when circumstances permit) so as to answer the purpose for which it was intended. No congregation has a right in this case to adopt such a plan of observance, nor ought such a plan to be established by general consent, as would in any respect counteract the nature and use of the ordinance in its bearing on the visible church. "We being many," whether individuals or churches—many members, "are one body and one bread; "for we are all partakers of that one bread."

'But the design of the ordinance,' we are told, 'is not counteracted; for though weekly dispensation separate each congregation from fellowship 'with others of the same profession or body, yet 'while the Supper is dispensed throughout the body, 'there is a *spiritual communion* of all the members, 'according to which they may be said to be one body 'and one bread; they all at least enjoy it under the 'same banner, and as bearing in its celebration 'among them on the same system of doctrine and 'duty.'—The Supper, according to these ideas, is no more a peculiar ordinance of communion than the preaching of the gospel, or public prayer and praise.

The clergy of any particular denomination have either all subscribed the same creed, or done what is equivalent. And in prayer, Christians approach the throne of God with direct supplications in behalf of each other, nay, of all the churches of Christ.—Spiritual communion is nowise manifestative of unity in a pure and consistent profession; and as the common public exercises, which must necessarily be performed in separate congregations, could not afford a proper demonstration of this unity, God, we have found, provided for such a demonstration in the ordinance of the Supper. Any plan of observance therefore, that would reduce it to a level with other institutions, and require us to take refuge in the simple idea of spiritual communion, may justly be viewed as in so far destructive of its characteristic design.—But might not the friend of private administration also insist upon it, that though he does not partake with his brethren, there is spiritual communion; and that such communion must be considered as obtaining among all the individuals who *separately* receive the ordinance, especially if dispensed to them by the office-bearers of the same church? There is even something more directly apposite to the apostle's language, "We are one body and one bread; for we are all partakers of that one bread,"—in administration to the dying, or in conveying portions of the consecrated bread to persons in private, than in the abstract idea of spiritual communion. If by either of the former, the design of the ordinance, so far as dependent on the true method of observance, be set aside, it cannot surely be fulfilled by the latter. Suppose spiritual communion all that is requisite for the fellowship of congregations in the Lord, and why may it not suffice also for individuals? Why might not the dis-

pensation of the Supper in one congregation suffice for a whole body of Christians? Or why might not the observance of the institution by a few members in any congregation, (not to say by the minister and elders, as by the priest and his clergy in the Roman church) suffice for that congregation; all the members of which, if saints, would have fellowship with these few, and though not saints, yet, if of the same principles, would have it as far as public profession was concerned†? If in these instances spiritual communion cannot fulfil the design of the ordinance, upon what ground is it resorted to as sufficiently verifying that design in regard to the fellowship of different congregations, which are no less members of one body, than individuals are of one congregation?

That the plan of observance followed among Presbyterians is suited at once to the importance of the Supper, to its solemnity, and, by promoting an en-

† The council of Trent defended masses in which the priest alone eats sacramentally, on the ground of spiritual communion. "Vere communes censeri debent; partim quod in eis *populus spiritualiter communicet*; partim quod a publico ecclesiæ ministro, non pro se tantum, sed pro omnibus fidelibus qui ad corpus Christi pertinent, celebrentur." *Sess. xxii. cap. vi.* To this VÖSSIUS (*Disp. antea cit. Thes. 1.*) replies, "That spiritual communion does not come up to the command of Christ, nor the design of the ordinance." And if it does not with respect to the members of one congregation, neither does it with respect to those of different congregations, who are equally bound to testify by means of this ordinance that they are one in the Lord.

larged fellowship, to its use in regard to the demonstration of unity, has never yet been disproved ; but weekly communion, and every plan that approaches to it, seems to be founded on a partial view of the ordinance. If Presbyterians shall conform to the schemes so vigorously of late pushed into public notice, by the erection of a certain society, and even by some of themselves, they may anticipate the effect. Too frequent dispensation, though it may compel to frequent communicating, will be found in the end to establish an independency of communion. Satisfied with what may be enjoyed in their own congregations, the people will become careless of association with their brethren ; the prevailing disrespect to enlarged testification of fellowship will be fostered ; the very face of our church will be changed, and many of our "pleasant things" utterly marred. We may then remember the days when we went with the multitude to the house of God, with the multitude that kept the holy solemnity, and remember them only to lament that such days are no more. Christians will no longer see their brethren gathering from different quarters, to strengthen their hands in the good way and work of the Lord. Often they may have entertained them as angels of God, and found their hospitality amply repaid by refreshing, elevating spiritual conversation, and by the mutually endearing intercourse of brotherly love. It was "as life from the dead," as when many people should say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord : O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of our God, let us sing together in the heights of Zion." But soon every vestige of such associations will vanish ; these blissful fruits of enlarged communion will cease to be known ; the ordinance, moved from its sphere

and spoiled of its honours, will languish under defective, obscure dispensations.



SECT. IV.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

VARIOUS exceptions may perhaps have occurred to the Reader in perusing the preceding pages. It may seem that many things usually brought forward are entirely overlooked, or studiously kept out of view, particularly the usage of the primitive age, the sentiments of reformers, and other topics on which the advocates for frequency are wont to enlarge. Appeals to facts are indeed calculated to make a more forcible impression on the majority of Readers, than general reasoning. But who knows not that we are to judge of facts by principles, and that many practices which boast of high antiquity are far from deserving approbation or perpetuity? Let the nature and design of the Lord's Supper first be determined, and let every usage ancient or modern be tried by this standard. Lest however it should be thought we are afraid to encounter the mass of facts which have been placed as in battle-array against the Presbyterian method, the following observations are added to remove objections as well as farther confirm our positions and the principles on which they are founded.

I. The practice of the church in the **APOSTOLIC AGE** does not militate against what has been stated.

The facts on this head are recorded in Scripture, and are therefore to be distinguished from others. Could it be proved, that while the church was under the immediate inspection of the apostles the practice was *hostile* to the presbyterian method, that method might then be justly suspected, there would at least be some ground for attempting reformation. Let the idea of hostility however be carefully remarked.

The subjects of the New Testament church were not, like the children of Israel at Sinai, all collected and capable of being organized at once. The gospel behoved to be diffused; the disciples were to go and teach all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The New Testament fabric was to be gradually reared. It was enough if it rose sufficiently into view to discover its plan and symmetry ere the apostolic age expired, and while the wise master-builders were employed about it. Its erection too, behoved to be considerably affected by circumstances to which it was necessary some regard should be had. We find that Jesus accordingly did not at once promulgate a system of ordinances, or code of laws minutely detailed, under various sanctions, and to be instantly carried into effect, as was done at Sinai. During the forty days he spent on earth he was employed in delivering the pattern in private to his disciples; afterwards he completely enlightened them in regard to all things pertaining to the kingdom, by the effusion of the Holy Spirit, but this was properly an internal illumination†. He meant that by these master-

† John xiv. 26. Acts. ii. 2, 3. 1 Cor. ii. 16. They had the mind of Christ, not publicly proclaimed as at the giving of the law, but internally reveal-

builders the church should be erected and its plan disclosed to the world as providence should open the way. Much therefore is to be learned from the conduct of the apostles and its results. In these the mind of Christ is brought forth both as to government and the observance of divine institutions, where we often find no express laws or injunctions. But on the very ground stated, it ought not to be taken for granted in appeals to the apostolic age, that every notice which occurs either in regard to government or observance, is something from which abstractly considered we may reason with sufficient force. No; various considerations must be taken into view. The tendency of the procedure adopted by the apostles, the form and state into which they evidently laboured to bring the church when not impeded by circumstances, the intimations of the general plan they had in their eye, and as they could overtake it carried into effect,—these ought to be clearly marked, and *they* are the proper rules by which we ought to be guided. Notices of some things different from the Presbyterian mode of observance may occur, which, if we adhere to these rules of judging, may yet be found by no means hostile unto it.

Before reasoning from the practice of the apostolic age in regard to the Supper, it seems but just that the following things be recollected: 1st, The

ed, to be by them gradually brought forth. Such was the New Testament legislation, as *real* as the Old, and so predicted and described in allusion to it, Acts ii. 19, 20. Psal. l. 1---7. but *different in mode* as well as spiritual grandeur. Circumstances required it should be so. Read Heb. xii. 18---25, 28.

distance between many of the newly planted churches. This necessarily rendered them in a great measure independent both as to government and observance. That intimacy of fellowship which the ordinance of communion was designed to promote, might not be attainable. Members from different congregations could not always come together into one place to testify their unity. Connected with this, if a church or congregation was at a great distance from others, so that it had little, perhaps no access to the Supper when dispensed in them, there would be a necessity for a more frequent observance of the ordinance in it, than if more happily situated †.

† Thus too, general convocations of deputies from the different courts by which congregations were governed, could not at once be established. The idea of the unity of the visible body of Christ was secured, in this state of things, by the relation in which the *apostles* stood to the whole church. Matt. xix. 28. Gal. ii. 7, 8. Their extraordinary powers also rendered presbyteries and synods less needful. Tit. i. 5. with 1 Cor. xi. 34. Divine decisions on subjects about which they were applied to, were given in their epistles. The first to the Corinthians is a specimen. The idea of unity was also supported by the general *deaconship* for which providence gave occasion. Acts vi. For *perpetuating* this idea, however, and exhibiting the manner in which it should be realized as to government when the apostolic office had ceased, presbyteries were established. Acts xxi. 18. explained by ver. 25. and 1 Pet. v. 1. 1 Tim. v. 17. Particularly in 1 Tim. iv. 14. we have a notice of a presbytery according to the usual acceptation of the term, for it seems absurd to suppose a meeting called to

—2dly, The great need of *confirmation* in the days of the apostles. Churches newly erected and organized, consisting of converts from among the Jews or heathen, needed much to be established in the faith and profession of Christ. For this end the observance of the Supper was eminently adapted. We should not be surprised then to find a peculiar frequency of administration in that age. Multitudes of new converts were also coming in, to whom it was proper to dispense this seal, and confirm them in fellowship with the house-hold of faith. We might expect that the apostles or evangelists as they

bestow extraordinary gifts on Timothy, which any apostle could have done, and more absurd to imagine that any but teaching elders could ordain him to the office of a preacher and evangelist. Paul it is likely himself conferred this last office, or he might be present at the ordination of Timothy, 2 Epist. i. 6. An occasion was also afforded in providence for a more general assembly in which the apostles sat with the elders to decide in a certain cause; and in which, though the men of inspiration were present, with others supernaturally gifted both elders and people, yet the mind of the Spirit came to be known only as in the synods of Presbyterian churches. Acts. xv. xvi. 5.—Thus did Jesus the Lord of the church provide for her future state, when extraordinary relations and powers should have ceased, and thus did he disclose the intended plan of government. It is possible to account from circumstances for all that has the appearance of independency in the apostolic age. But what circumstances can account for the great lines of Presbyterianism then stamped on the church? These must have been the fruit of design.

went their rounds in visiting the churches, would celebrate the ordinance wherever they came, and enjoin a frequent observance even though the association of brethren from neighbouring congregations should not always be attained.—3dly, The propriety and necessity of deeply impressing on Christians in that age, the idea of the *abolition of the law*. For this purpose the ordinance of the Supper was specially calculated,—the memorial of the death of Christ, the sign of the atonement made, a seal of the New Testament, the only feast of the church, a feast exclusive of sacrifice, simple in its rites, and intended to supersede the passover. There might on this ground be a peculiar expediency in its frequent observance. It proclaimed the virtual abolition of the law by the death of Jesus, and while it familiarized the mind and heart to this, contributed to the actual abolition.

Though some differences then between the practice in the apostolic age and that in use among Presbyterians should be marked, little will be gained in point of argument. Peculiarities were to be expected, nay, in some instances necessitous deviations from the intended plan. But were the things which may be alledged, designed to be perpetual, or did the leading principles on which the apostles proceeded tend to perpetuate them? If an opponent would reason to purpose, he ought to shew something in these principles hostile to the plan we would support, or point out in the instances to which he may refer, an indication of some other general plan different from ours, but manifestly that according to which the apostle proceeded.

But let us look into the history of the apostolic age. Peculiarities we have said might be expected, few of them however are recorded; the record was

to serve for direction, and it is not encumbered with these. Rather according to it we find, that so far as practicable the communion of different congregations took place, and we have no proof that there was any such frequency as had been incompatible with this.

1st, We have no express injunction of frequency. However surprising it may seem, considering the ado that has lately been made on this topic, the frequency of observance is left to be inferred from the importance of the ordinance, and to be regulated by the most proper plan of accomplishing all its ends. --The words of Jesus, "Do this in remembrance of me," are usually brought forward in triumph. But what do they affirm about frequency of dispensation in the same place? Though every Christian will consider them as an address to his heart, and a call to neglect no opportunity, they are properly declarative of the nature of the ordinance. "Do this," instead of keeping the passover, and "in remembrance of me," not as a figure of something to come, but in memorial of what is past. The words bear on the substitution of the Supper instead of the antient feast, and hence, while they lay an obligation on gratitude, cannot be supposed to enjoin such a frequency as would remove the idea of solemnity which they transfer and attach to the Supper, or prevent the manifestation of unity in which that ordinance behoved to fulfil what the passover did of old.---"But have we not full proof in 1 Cor. xi. 26. "As *often* as ye eat this bread, &c.?" There is certainly no precept in the passage; this is still a great desideratum; nor is there any thing in regard to example, which might be considered as binding. The word 'HOSAKIS "as often as," would require much criticism to elicit the idea of frequency, yet

it has been held out to the people on account of the sound of the English rendering as complete proof. To minds unaccustomed to mark the force of words, it might be difficult to prove in an abstract grammatical way, that a sentence in which the term "often" occurs, conveyed no particular idea of frequency. We might say the words *as often as* are a kind of phrase expressive of proportion, or equivalent to *whenever*. But an example or two may answer the purpose better. Suppose one were to say, 'As often as the General Assembly meets, a speech is made from the throne,'---would this imply that it met frequently, or more than once in the year? Here the phrase is used simply in regard to *time*; but in the passage referred to, it is not used even in this sense, or as directly bearing on time. To produce a more apposite example; suppose our apostle having received accounts of the introduction of profane song-music into the worship of God in certain churches, and of the adaptation of hymns and spiritual songs to light and wanton airs, had written to these churches reprimanding them for their practice,---he might have described to them the ordinance of praise, enlarged on the solemnity of it, and then concluded his admonition with desiring them to be on their guard, since, 'As often as they sang in the assemblies of Zion, they were professedly shewing forth the praises of Jehovah.' It must have been obvious that the phrase here was exactly equivalent to "whenever," and that the same idea might have been expressed by that term. The frequency of the exercise is neither implied, affirmed, nor denied in it. Much less does it contain or insinuate any injunction to frequency, which is in no respect the subject. It merely states the *nature* of the exercise, to inspire with a proper respect to

the gravity that ought to be displayed. The idea is this, 'religious singing is a shewing forth the praises 'of God,' not the celebration of some hero, or of some amour storied in a popular ballad. Precisely similar is the idea, 1 Cor. xi. 26. The apostle had heard of great abuses in the observance of the Supper. He wrote to correct these, not to excite to frequent dispensation, nor even to the duty of frequent communicating. For the purpose of correction and admonition, he lays out the form of the institution to serve as a model, and to impress with a sense of the solemnity of the ordinance. He then warns them of the danger of 'mismanagement, putting them in mind, that 'as often as, or whensoever they ate that 'bread and drank that cup, they were shewing the 'Lord's death,' not holding one of the collation suppers to which they had been accustomed in their heathen state, nor any thing of the like nature. The phrase gives no specific intimation with regard to the practice of the primitive church. Though the Supper had been dispensed thrice in the week, or but thrice in the year, the words might have been used with the same propriety, and would have conveyed the same meaning, namely, that it was a shewing the Lord's death, and therefore not to be lightly thought of, nor inconsiderately observed.

In favour of frequent dispensation, it has farther been urged, that our Lord, even during the forty days he remained on earth, kept the Supper repeatedly with his disciples. Passages where *the breaking of bread* among them is mentioned, are quoted; and it is contended that the phrase must refer to the Supper, because at the time of institution he promised "to drink of the fruit of the vine new with them in his Father's kingdom." But, 1st, The

strength of this reasoning rests, in some measure, on our Lord's having drunk literally of the cup at the time of Institution. The argument must stand thus : " The promise refers to his joining with them ' in the same manner as he did when it was made ; ' but when it was made, he partook of the external ' symbols, therefore he must, to verify the promise, ' some time or other have joined with the disciples ' in a literal participation of the ordinance, which ' could only be between his resurrection and ascen- ' tion.' That our Lord however literally partook at the time of institution is no where expressly stated. The supposition that he did, is encumbered with a difficulty that ought to have been solved : Luke seems to represent him as declining even to drink of the passover cup, and declaring that he would " no " more drink of the fruit of the vine, till the king- " dom of God should come." How could he then a little after, and while the kingdom was not yet come, drink of the fruit of the vine at the supper ?—*But, 2dly,* Allowing that he did literally partake in both instances, choosing to make the same declaration in regard to each, must the promise necessarily be understood of the same kind of participation ? If so, then it must be limited to the apostles, and wholly restricted to the period he spent on the earth, after he rose from the dead.—*3dly,* What if it might be shewn, that during that period the kingdom of God could not properly be said to be come ? Though Jesus was then glorified, he was only in his prophetic character, laying the foundations of that kingdom by the instructions he gave to his apostles, and which he concluded with the sublime commission, " Go, disciple to all nations, baptizing " them." Even after this they were to wait at Jerusalem till endued with power from on high. It

was with the effusion of the Spirit the kingdom of heaven commenced in the church ; “ I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you in my Father’s kingdom ;” in that state, when exalted to my Father’s right hand, I shall rule for him in Jacob to the ends of the earth.—*4thly*, Our Lord, if he did join with his disciples, observed the ordinance at the time of institution, in a certain way, which is distinguished from his drinking the fruit of the vine *new* ; he observed it as still with his disciples under the preparatory state of things which was soon to become old. The ordinance did not belong to that state, but it was kept at first in prospect of his sufferings ; it might be in the way of his being sealed to these, and of having all the blessed consequences of them in the New Testament represented and sealed to him the surety, for the support of his humanity in prospect of the approaching awful scene in which it was to be involved. But whatever purpose the ordinance might serve to him on the eve of his sufferings, we ought to remember, that after his resurrection, as soon indeed as the kingdom of heaven in any respect began with him, he was glorified, and thus beyond the sphere of sacred ordinances. The case is different with respect to the church : though under the kingdom of heaven, we are not in a glorified state, and therefore the participation of external signs belongs to us. On these grounds we conclude, that the promise refers to *spiritual communion*, of which indeed it is beautifully descriptive. It lends no aid to the notion of his repeatedly observing the Supper with his disciples before his ascension. And, *5thly*, The passages it is called in to cover with this meaning, relate to common entertainments. Shall we suppose he took the two disciples at Emaus by surprise, and began to dispence the Supper?—that,

without intimating his design, he came out with the words, "This is my body," &c. and after having begun and thus discovered himself, withdrew without completing the feast? No: they were set down to a common meal, when Jesus, perhaps by the peculiar manner in which he addressed the Father, or by assuming his wonted character and manner when respected as the head of his family the twelve, was instantly recognised. He had done what was sufficient to convince them of his resurrection, and therefore immediately disappeared. They reported their conviction, but not a word of the Supper.—He did not stay to eat with them, as it was unnecessary. But this farther proof of his resurrection he afterwards gave, because it seemed to be a method calculated to remove from the minds of his disciples all hesitation about the fact—"While they yet believed "not for joy, and wondered, he said unto "them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave "him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey "comb," (neither fish nor honey were ever permitted to be used in any divinely instituted feast (Lev. ii. 11.) "and he took it and did eat before them." Luke xxiv. 41--43. This and similar instances, of which we have another recorded John xxi. 12, 13. are evidently those appealed to Acts x. 41. "God raised him up the third day, and shewed him "openly, not to all the people, but to *witnesses* chosen before, to us who did eat and drink with him "after he rose from the dead."—In fine, There is no proof that the Supper was observed during all the period Jesus remained with his church on earth after his resurrection,—a circumstance somewhat perplexing to the advocates of weekly communion, or of frequency on the sole ground of spiritual advantage.

2. There is no evidence from the New Testament, that the Lord's Supper was observed every first day of the week. It cannot be reckoned fair or candid, to bring forward every passage where *the breaking of bread* is mentioned, as if this ordinance were always meant. The phrase alludes to the Jewish custom in all their meals, which though followed in the Supper, and indeed necessary in order to have *broken bread*, the proper symbol, is not itself a significant rite. The account we have of believers "breaking bread from house to house," (Acts ii. 46.) is manifestly descriptive of the fellowship they had with one another in their necessary meals, as having "all things in common." These very meals, in that peculiar state of things, became a kind of love-feasts, and perhaps gave birth to the custom. A considerable number might join together at each repast, and spend the time in edifying conversation; for it is added, "they did *eat their meat* with gladness, and singleness of heart;" without suspicions and envyings, in undissembled sincerity, in mutual confidence and affection. We may show the Supper to be meant in Acts ii. 42. because the "breaking of bread" is there connected with other exercises of devotion. But there is only one clear notice of the observance of this ordinance in the whole book of Acts, chap. xx. 7.

This notice, however, is thought to be sufficient, and quite in point; "On the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread," therefore it was their usual practice. Nothing, it would seem, could be more convincing. Had the words, indeed, been a general assertion, intended to notify the usage of the church, the argument had been good: As if this were the case, they are commonly

quoted in the above insulted manner. But if they refer to any particular instance, the argument fails; if to an extraordinary occasion, it is lost. Let us suppose, for the sake of an example, that instead of new-moon the Jews had been appointed to keep full-moon as a period of sacred worship; any one, previously acquainted with the history, must have perceived the difference between these two sentences, 'At full moon the Jews killed and offered sacrifices to the Lord;' and, 'At full moon they killed the passover.' The latter sentence would not imply that every full-moon was observed by killing the passover, but only that when it was killed, this was the season. If, on a *certain occasion*, the disciples of a particular church came together to break bread on the first day of the week, all we can infer from the notice is, that they did not keep the Jewish Sabbath, and that they preferred the Lord's day as the most proper time for having the Supper dispensed, when it was to be so; but not that it was even their custom, much less the universal custom of the church, to have it dispensed every first day of the week. If farther, there be something *extraordinary* mentioned in regard to that occasion, such as the presence of an apostle, which they had not every Lord's day; the natural conclusion is, that the opportunity was embraced on this account. On the first day of the week, when Paul being present, the disciples came together to keep the Lord's Supper; he officiated, and honoured the dispensation of that ordinance with a discourse of unuommon length. As in visiting the churches he intended to confirm them, it was proper to dispence the sacrament, though perhaps not at the usual time, (if times were then fixed), ere he departed; and accordingly, chusing to honour the first day of the week with this

sacred observance, he waited for it, delaying his departure till it should be past.—“ But the multitude *continued* in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread.” ‘ Now, as we find they met on the first day of the week for this breaking of bread, their continuance in the practice must denote the *constancy* of it every first day of the week.’ Such arguments need no refutation. To persevere, be diligent, and wax bold in the faith of the gospel, and the observance of divine institutions is one thing, to have the sacrament every Sabbath is another; the former may obtain, where the latter does not†.

3dly, Certain intimations, unfriendly to the idea of weekly communion occur.—Not only is there no proof in its favour, there is something against it. The first passage to which we shall here revert for more particular consideration, is 1 Cor. x. the second, chap. xi. 20. where we have a notice, by the bye, of the mode of observance.

Let us attend to the reasoning in chap. x. Some of the Corinthian Christians had given great offence to their brethren, whose consciences were weaker, by partaking at feasts with their heathen friends, even of meats devoted to idols. This liberty was not expedient, did not tend to edification; it scandalized, not only Jews and Gentiles, but the church of God. (Ver. 23---33). The apostle admonishes them, to consider the nature of that fellowship they professed in the Lord’s Supper. “ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ,” &c. They were to take care they did not trespass against their conjunct pro-

† Acts ii. 42. ESAN PROSKARTEROUNTES. See ver. 46. Col. iv. 2. &c.

fession of this fellowship, either by symbolizing with the heathen, or offending the consciences of their brethren in seeming to do so: "*We being many,*" says he, "are one body and one bread, for *we are all* partakers of that one bread."—Now, in the 1st place, This reasoning tends to establish a general rule, not restricted to the members of one congregation, as if it were enough for them to be observant of one another, without regarding the consciences of their brethren in other congregations pertaining to the same body. "We," says the apostle, including himself, who was not directly a member of the Corinthian church, "we Christians, being many, are one body." But how does the argument from the testification of this in the Supper apply? where is its force, or why should an appeal be made to what is done in this ordinance, if there was not by it, even in that age, as far as could be attained, a circulation of visibly expressed communion throughout the body? "We being many are one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread." The conclusion is, that therefore, wherever we are, and whatever be our more immediate connections with the church, we must beware of stumbling or offending any of our brethren in the body, particularly of causing general offence. Though directly connected with this or the other congregation, we are members of one body, and stand related to our brethren in all the congregations of which it consists. Of this our fellowship with them in the great ordinance of visible communion is the token and pledge.—But, 2dly, There were several congregations even at Corinth. The reasoning which proves that there were several distinct congregations at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Ephesus, &c. proves that the Christians at Corinth might b

spoken of, or addressed as one church like those in the places specified, and yet be divided into several congregations; and it establishes a strong probability that the case was the same at Corinth as in these places†. Arguments from the account of conversions at Corinth, go to confirm the point, that the case was actually the same. And we have a direct assertion of it, 1 Cor. xiv. 34. "Let *your women* keep silence in the *churches*||."—Now the

† The appeal is made to the reasoning on the multitude of Christians at Jerusalem, &c. because the information is more full in regard to these places. See AYTON on *Church Government*, chap. ii. sect. 5.

|| 'It is vain to plead that the churches here meant are not those of Corinth but of other places, such as the churches of Judea, of Galatia, or of Macedonia; for what had the women of Corinth to do in these churches, so as to need a prohibition from preaching or speaking in them? However improperly some of them might be disposed to conduct themselves in their own churches, there is no reason to think they were itinerants.' *Vindication by* WHYTOCK, p. 12. Dr. CAMPBELL suggests what may account for the sacred writer's styling the Christians at Jerusalem, Corinth, &c. one church, after several congregations might have been erected. The first congregation formed in these places, founded the name, which was retained, even after that mother church had produced others around her. At the same time, the conjunction of these churches under one presbytery, (Acts xxi. 18.) and their joining in one place in the celebration of the Supper, may be taken into the account, tho' the Doctor supposes both these parts of order to be of later date. *Lect.* vol. i. p. 40, 253—266.

general rule laid down, admitted on this ground an express application to the Corinthian Christians. The members of one church-meeting were to be observant, not merely of their brethren in it, but of all their brethren with whom they were wont to join in the ordinance of the Supper. Suppose the members of one church had all been more enlightened in their own view than those of another, were they, because the liberties they took gave no offence among themselves, therefore warranted to indulge in these to the scandalizing of their brethren? Would the argument of the apostle have failed in this case? Or does he not rather appeal to their fellowship in the Supper as demonstrative of their unity, and represent this ordinance as that which God had provided to keep alive the idea of General relations, to be a caveat against any one's supposing he had no concern but with the members of his own congregation? but how could the apostle appeal to it in this light, if it had been a part of stated observance, restricted, like the other parts of divine worship to each congregation, by being kept every first day of the week? It must have been an occasional observance, affording an opportunity for the members of the several churches to associate in visible communion. "We "being many," and though thus necessitated to meet for stated worship in distinct congregations, are yet "one body," and this is testified by our joining together in the Lord's Supper; there we proclaim that we are "one bread,"---as intimately connected as the portions used, or the particles of which they are composed,---"for we are all partakers of that "one bread."---3dly, The scheme of weekly communion destroys the force of the argument, as intended to be of permanent use in the church. The idea of spiritual fellowship pervading a body may

be called in ; but under this idea too, the strength of the consideration suggested, evaporates ; for spiritual fellowship exists, and must exist among all genuine saints, nay, in a certain sense, among all Christians of the same profession, though many of these may be greatly defective in their duty to Christ, or to their brethren in the Lord. There was indeed no necessity for appealing so specifically to what is done in observing the Supper, if spiritual fellowship was solely meant by the apostle,

‘ Did the Corinthians then assemble to celebrate
 ‘ conjunctly this ordinance of communion? How
 ‘ was it practicable, since they are said to have been
 ‘ so many that they could not meet together in one
 ‘ place, and are therefore supposed to be divided
 ‘ into several congregations?’ The difficulty here is wholly imaginary: How do the Christians of Edinburgh, St. Cuthberts, and Leith, hold fellowship in the Supper? That all in these districts should meet together for the purpose, is by no means requisite. Might not the church at Cenchrea, the port-town of Corinth, and at but a small distance from it, have communion in the same manner, by some of her members with the Christians at Corinth? (Rom. xvi. 1.) The sacrament behoved not to be dispensed in both places on one day, this was all that was necessary.---But though the association of a few members from other congregations, as in this degenerate age, may produce a circulation of visible communion, the primitive Christians seem to have been more studious of fulfilling the design of the ordinance. In 1 Cor. xi. 20. we have a notice of their *coming together into one place* to eat the Lord’s supper. This was the second passage to be adduced. The terms imply at least a very general assembly for the purpose. They throw light on the reasoning in chap. x. they

confirm the view we have taken, and let out, as it were, by the bye, the manner of observance, to which the apostle refers, and on which we have seen the strength of his argument depends.

The Author is no stranger to the use Independents have made of the words now quoted, to prove that what are called churches at Corinth, Jerusalem, &c. were but single congregations, which could meet in one place for common worship. He knows also the replies of Presbyterians, stating that the phrase does not always mean gathering into one place, but sometimes engaging in the same actions, being combined to the same purpose, or existing in the same state†. But let it once be proved by valid arguments, as has been done‖, that the church at Jerusalem, at Corinth, &c. consisted of several congregations, or of such multitudes as could not all meet in one place for *stated* worship; and then to admit, that the phrase EPI TO AUTO refers to place, so far from hurting the Presbyterian cause, must be in its favour, particularly on the head of communion. It will be found, 1st, That the phrase most commonly, if not always, (except when used adverbially, or in regard to time, as in Acts iii. 1.) signifies *into one place*. But, 2^{dly}, That an extraordinary meeting, or assembly is meant.

In support of the first position, we remark, that only one passage is pointed out in the New Testament, where the words are thought to bear a different meaning. This is the quotation of Psal. ii. 2. in Acts iv. 25, 26. "The kings of the earth stood

† AYTON, *Orig. Const. of the Church*, p. 215, 216, 217.

‖ *Ibid.* chap. ii. sect. v. *Vindication by WAT-TOCK*, p. 4---19.

“up, and the rulers were gathered together (ΕΡΙ ΤΟ
 “ΑΥΤΟ,) against the Lord, and against his Christ†”
 ‘When,’ it has been demanded, ‘did the kings of
 ‘the earth and the rulers assemble together into one
 ‘place against Christ?’—As far as a literal inter-
 pretation is concerned, the Jewish council met in
 one place, and the people of the Jews, with their
 rulers and chief-priests, gathered also unto Pilate’s
 judgment-hall, to have Jesus condemned. ‘But
 ‘kings?’ Well, Herod, tetrarch of Gallilee, was
 also up at Jerusalem, and if certain punctilios did
 not permit him to meet in the same hall with Pilate,
 or to consult personally with him, they were at least
 both in one city, and that city a remarkable place,
 (worthy of being hinted at) for such a combination
 against the Lord’s Anointed,—the place which God
 had chosen as his rest, and made the centre of his
 worship.—But who sees not, that both the words of
 the Psalm, and the form in which they are quoted
 must be figurative? Did *kings* at the time referred
 to, even in “harmony of design,” conspire against
 Christ? To make out kings, we must view Pilate
 as the Emperor’s agent and representative, and join
 Herod with him. But Herod also held his govern-
 ment of Tiberius, so that we have but one king or
 emperor thus represented. The words of the Psalm
 are prophetically descriptive of all combinations that
 ever have taken place, or yet may, against the Lord
 and his anointed; and declare, that though the
 greatest personages should engage in these combi-
 nations, disgrace and ruin must be the issue of their
 plots. The prophecy had a special reference to the

† The verb here expressive of “gathered toge-
 “ther,” is the compound *SANECHTHESAN*.

conspiracy against Christ in the days of his flesh. In this, the emblem and pattern of every other combination, it was strikingly verified. Hence it is quoted with a commentary explaining it, and accommodating the very terms in that instance, to Herod, Pontious Pilate, the rulers, and the people of the Jews. But the prediction is of extensive application, and it is adorned with such grandeur of imagery, as might completely expose the folly of attempting to counteract the purposes of heaven. The kings and rulers of the earth are figuratively described as assembling into one place, meeting to concert their measures together, while God is represented as looking down on their assembly, and observing their plans with a smile of contempt†. Allowing, however, that “harmony of design” were

† Other instances of the use of this phrase, *EPI TO AUTO*, are quoted from Dr. Lightfoot by Mr. Ayton, in which it is supposed to signify something else than “into one place;” these are from the Septuagint version. But on consulting the passages it will be found, that in all of them, the idea of one place may be understood; in some of them it can bear no other meaning, Judges iv. 33. xix. 6.— Isa. lxvi. 17. is explained by ver. 24. the allusion is to Tophet. Were not the companies mentioned, 2 Sam. ii. 13. met in one place, even at the pool of Gibeon? Though on opposite sides of the pool, they were as near as was expedient. May not the LXX. have mistaken the sense in Jer. vi. 12.? or what sense, according to their version, can be made of the threatening? In Psal. xxx. 3. xlix. 2. there was no occasion for inserting the notice of “one place.” But it does no harm, does not alter the meaning.

the idea of this passage, must this always be considered as the idea suggested by the phrase? What tolerable sense could be put, according to this idea, on the Corinthians being said to "gather together *EPI TO AUTO*, to eat the Lord's Supper?" When a phrase has different applications, the sense in which it is used must be determined by the place where it occurs, or by other circumstances. The natural idea in the passage is evidently that expressed by our translation.

But, *2dly*, The phrase denotes some extraordinary meeting, or bears upon some peculiar occasion of being together. Were not this the case, it would be quite pleonastic when joined with *SUNAGO*, *SUNERCHOMAI*, or similar verbs. In plain English, when speaking of a multitude assembling, after saying *they came together*, to add "into one place," would be needless, unless there were some peculiar reason for the intimation; for how can people gather together but into one place? the thing is implied in the very notice of their assembling. If we attend to the passages where the phrase occurs, we will find reason for its use. Abner and Joab, with their respective companies "met together in one place," or at a certain spot. (2 Sam. ii. 13. *Sept. version*.) This was no common meeting; they came to fight, and they met in one place as the scene of action. "They that sanctify themselves in gardens, behind one tree in the midst, eating the abomination, shall be consumed together," Isa. lxvi. 17. The LXX. add *EPI TO AUTO*, "in one place;" and by this they only more forcibly express the sense of the Hebrew, "These idolators shall be consorted in Tophet; tho' their abominable mysteries were performed in secret companies, or individually, they shall all be associated in punishment, and

“exposed together,” ver. 24. In the New Testament we read, Acts ii. 1. that when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the disciples “were all with one accord in one place.” Here the notice is proper—the occasion was remarkable, and the Christian dispensation being then only to commence, distinct congregations had not been formed. The same is obviously the reason of repeating the intimation, ver. 44. “All that believed were in one place, and had all things common.” They remained at Jerusalem, unwilling to disperse or separate from one another, and the fellowship of the apostles. For some time too, ere the church was reduced into order and the proper arrangements made, they resorted to the usual place of Jewish worship, the temple; and to shew their unity in the faith, assembled together in one part of it, the area of Solomon’s porch, ver. 46. The only remaining instance is, 1 Cor. xiv. 23. “If the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say ye are mad?” This is a supposition made for the purpose of effectually exposing the abuse of spiritual gifts, particularly of tongues, which obtained among the Corinthians. He would have them figure to themselves “the whole church” met together, something which they did not witness every Lord’s day, and then consider what effect the conduct which prevailed in their several congregations, and which in these smaller meetings might be less glaringly absurd, would have in such an assembly. As if he had said, “What sort of appearance to the ignorant or infidels would it have, if you were all gathered into one place, and the whole assembly were to engage in a confused clamour of different lan-

“ guages ? would they not take you for a conven-
 “ tion of maniacs ?” Had he referred to their usual
 meetings, there had been no occasion for specifying
 “ the *whole* church ;” nor would the question have
 been put as it stands ; it would have been, Do not
 the unlearned and the unbelievers think you are mad ?
 If indeed the whole church usually met in one place,
 the appeal to imagination was quite unnecessary,
 and the sentence as laid, is rhetorically viewed im-
 proper, if not inexplicable. But that the argument
 is hypothetical, for the sake of striking the mind
 more forcibly with the absurdity of their conduct,
 is evident, not only from his using the hypothetical
 particle *if*, but from his farther (for the same end)
 supposing them all endued with the gift of tongues.
 We perceive then a reason for the EPI TO AUTO.—
 What the apostle had stated in this hypothetical form
 he applies to their particular church meetings, ver.
 26. in regard to another abuse ; but there he does
 not use the phrase. He simply mentions their *com-
 ing together* ; “ When ye come together, every one
 “ hath a psalm,” &c. This was the actually exist-
 ent case.

To return now to the passage, 1 Cor. xi. 20.
 the words, according to what has been stated, inti-
 mate, that the Corinthians did meet in one place for
 the celebration of the Supper ; and that their meet-
 ings for this end were of a general nature, a kind of
 solemn convocations. These behoved to be only
 occasional. If the Christians in that quarter were
 so numerous that they could not all meet in one
 place for stated worship, if they composed several
 congregations which behoved to meet separately on
 the first day of the week for such worship, and yet
 are said to come together into one place to eat the

Lord's Supper, the Sacrament could not be a weekly observance among them†.

The question may recur, 'The Christians at Corinth were so numerous that they could not all meet for stated worship in one place, how then were these general occasional meetings effected? how got they together into one place to eat the Lord's Supper?' The answer is simple. It was not necessary they should all communicate at one time; it might be impracticable. The reasoning of the apostle in chap. x. does not imply that they did, and it holds good though they did not. But such was the regard shewn to the design of the ordinance stated in our third conclusion, that rather than this design should be overlooked or defeated, general meetings were held for the celebration of the Supper, not always, we apprehend, at the mother-church, as if it had been an acknowledged cathedral, but in routine, that while as many as could joined on each occasion, all might have an opportunity afforded. The several congregations would thus

† When there is nothing particular in the case, the preposition *SUN* expressive of association, is considered as sufficient. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," &c. Matt. xxviii. 20. See Acts i. 6. x. 27. xix. 32. xxviii. 17.

Dr. CAMPBELL supports the view of the communion of the primitive churches stated above. According to him the churches which sprung from that which had been first planted in any district, joined together at the mother-church in holding the Supper. But he places the origin of this usage to the age that succeeded the apostolic; and he seems to do so, merely for the sake of giving a plausible account of the formation of parishes.

successively enjoy the privilege in their respective places of meeting.

These convocations were a church, or church-meeting; for coming together into one place, ver. 20. may be considered as of the same import with coming together in the church, ver. 18. The apostle however by changing the phrase when he comes to speak of the Supper, evidently alludes to something peculiar in the mode of its observance, which rendered the disorders he meant to reprove most glaringly improper. Let us mark how he brings forward the reproof, and by the introduction of new terms carries it out to the utmost extent. His design was, not only to condemn the irregularities which obtained, but to expose them in such a manner that they might be condemned by the Corinthians themselves. For this end he tells them, that according to the accounts he had received, the divisions which operated in private among them, to the marring of peace and edification, had even been manifested in their public assemblies. “*You come together,*” says he, ver. 17. “not for the better, but for the worse.” On this he would fix their attention. To exhibit still more impressively the condemnable nature of their conduct, he notes particularly the kind of assembling thus marred and perverted, ver. 18. “When ye come together *in the church,*” even in church-meetings for the service of God, where a very different temper should appear, “there are divisions among you,” so I have heard, “and I partly believe it;” though willing to judge charitably, there must be some ground for the report. Nor was it merely in their ordinary church-meetings he had reason to fear such divisions productive of disorder appeared; their operation behoved to extend even to solemn convocations held

for the purpose of shewing conjunctly the Lord's death ; and it did so, ver. 20. " When therefore " ye come together *into one place,*" such being the state of things among you, even when ye meet with the express design of manifesting your unity in the ordinance of communion, " this I declare is not to " eat the Lord's Supper," it cannot be ; the design of the ordinance, a design which you profess to have in view, is defeated ; and it is in fact set aside, " for every one taketh before other," or without regard to his brethren, " his own supper." This was the fruit of their divisions ; they might as well have had no public social meeting at all, let alone a general one by their coming together into one place. The absurd notion they had formed of the Supper favoured their state of division. They had supposed it an institution similar to the collation-suppers in use among the Greeks. These were a kind of entertainments intended to promote social intercourse and conviviality, without putting any individual to great expence. A number of persons met in one place to feast together, each brought his own provision with him, the rich what was suited to their dignity, the poorer such as their circumstances could afford ; and each took his own respective supper, while they enjoyed one another's company and conversation†. The account of the manner in which the Lord's Supper was held by the Christians at Corinth, exactly agrees with this description. Its declared purpose for promoting communion might at first occasion the mistake ; and the ease with which it could be kept, in the manner of the feasts referred

† HARWOOD'S *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. ii. p. 23—28. where the authorities are produced.

to, without direct testification of cordial fellowship by "partaking of one bread," might afterwards, in the state of division which obtained, confirm the practical error. But the banquets or collation-suppers were only occasional, they were general meetings of friends, and sometimes in one house, and sometimes in another, that a routine of social intercourse might be kept up. Had the Lord's Supper, (so styled by the apostle, especially in contradistinction to these suppers,) been a part of stated worship, in which each congregation kept by itself, the Corinthian converts could scarcely have supposed any such resemblance between it and their banquets, as would have led them to assimilate its celebration, and thus degenerate from the original form of observance.

Still perhaps the question may be put, 'Where have we any account of general meetings, in which several congregations might be said to convene? Let it be shewn that a multitude of Christians who could not be supposed to meet in one place for stated worship, might occasionally come together. Are there any instances on record?' We may appeal at least to three. The first is in the 6th chapter of the Acts, where the twelve, we are told, "called the multitude of the disciples unto them," or held a general meeting on a subject of common concern—the choice of deacons for the service of the whole church. An early provisional display of the unity of the visible body of Christ took place in the community of goods. The appointment of seven general office-bearers for the distribution of the common stock, followed up this display, which had been properly owing to the exigencies of the time. An occasion for that appointment was afforded in Providence. The Grecians, or Hellenists,

complained that their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. It is natural to suppose these Grecians and the Hebrews, had distinct places of worship, each class one or more. There must at any rate have been several congregations by that time, which, though they might not be fully organized, met separately for the stated acts of public worship. It is noticed, ver. 1. of the chapter, that "in those days the number of the disciples was multiplied." We read in chap iv. 4. of five thousand ; and in chap. v. 14. after the affair of Ananias and Sapphira, we are told "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." There had been still farther increase, and these are styled believers or disciples, church-members ; opportunity was doubtless given to others to attend their worship as hearers. (Chap. v. 13. 1 Cor. xiv. 23, 24.) They could not therefore all meet in one place for the stated observance of the Sabbath in public religious service, nor was it necessary, having twelve apostles among them. A general meeting however was called, vi. 2. and the business laid before them, ver. 3, 4. To constitute this meeting, it was not requisite that all should attend ; a number of both classes, Grecians and Hebrews, or from each congregation, by that time probably *seven*, might be sufficient, and would form a general convocation. The choice mentioned, ver. 5. might be made in the different congregations, and the names given in to the apostles at another meeting, when the persons were presented for ordination, ver. 6. Matters being thus comfortably settled, new additions were made to the number of disciples, ver. 7. *et seq.*—The

second instance is recorded, Acts xv†. The apostles and elders came together to decide in a certain cause, and the multitude is said to have attended, ver. 12 ; this multitude is styled *the whole church*,

† Even chap. xiv. 27. might have been adduced as an instance. Paul and Barnabas, when they returned “to Antioch, whence they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled, gathered the church together, and rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.” It was no common occasion, and an extraordinary meeting was held. For a summary of the clear and convincing evidence that the church at Antioch must have consisted of a plurality of congregations, see *Vindication by WHYTOCK*, p. 9, 10. The passages appealed to are Acts xi. 20, 21, 24, 26, 30. xiii. 1. The account of the success of Paul and Barnabas, ~~was~~ probably given in at a general meeting *to those by whom they had been missioned* and commended to the grace of God. This meeting was publicly advertised, that all of the people who chose might attend, and hearing, might rejoice for the consolation. Another similar meeting is mentioned, xv. 30. only in this, as relating to their own cause, the multitude were more immediately concerned ; they were accordingly called together, and to them the degrees of the apostles and elders were read. It is not necessary to suppose that all attended, but those who did would soon spread abroad the happy issue to which matters had been brought. It is observable that the usual phrase in describing these general meetings is, “*the multitude* were called together,” denoting a large and indiscriminate assembly.

ver. 22. who though they took no part in the discussion, according to what is stated in ver. 12. yet by their silence, or perhaps some testimony of acquiescence, shewed their consent to what was done. Besides the official men who came together to consider the cause, there were others present who being endued with supernatural gifts, might have spoken had any thing been revealed to them ; but all acquiesced in the sentence of James†. Probably an opportunity was given these brethren of speaking if they chose, and their not differing or dissenting from the apostles and elders, formed an additional proof that the sentence was the mind of the Spirit. It was indeed in that controversy, a great object gained to have the acquiescence of the Jewish converts, as the decision affected their communion with the Gentiles ; it was the decision of a practical cause, and of one that bare on the law of Moses, in regard to which the most prudential plans of procedure behoved to be followed. Though therefore the multitude were not “ called together,” as in the former instance, since this in the present case would have recognized them as judges, yet their attendance was of importance. The meeting accordingly was public, an opportunity was given to

† Though the extraordinary spiritual gifts which obtained in the first age might authorize any who possessed them to preach, yet even in that age the line of distinction seems to have been clearly marked in the subject of *government*, between those who were merely qualified by such gifts for preaching or exhorting, and those who were regularly ordained office-bearers in the church. Compare 1 Cor. xiv. 29—32. with Acts iv. 31. and mark the account chap. xvi. 4.

all who could attend, the concourse was great; and the apostles, and elders, pleased to find that in this delicate cause their decision met with general approbation, notified this to the Christians at Antioch, as a circumstance that ought to have its own weight in conciliating brotherly love. The third instance to which we refer, is mentioned Acts xxi. Paul the minister of the Gentiles, on his arrival at Jerusalem, met with the apostles and elders, ver. 17, 18. They informed him, that so soon as it was known he was come, "the multitude would assemble," ver. 22. Reports had been circulated of his teaching the Jews which were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and not circumcise their children. It was a critical case; the converts at Jerusalem were yet weak in conscience, and unable to bear much. It would not be possible to prevent the multitude from attending those meetings of James and the elders, in which Paul might be present, perhaps from demanding some satisfaction as to the reports they had heard. The next meeting the brethren suspected behoved to be public, and they alledged it would be a pity to give any offence. "What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together." Here James supposes the practicability of general meetings. But in the very address he made to Paul, he cuts off every surmise that the whole body of Christians at Jerusalem could assemble even on such occasions, and much less surely could they meet together for stated worship in one place. "Thou, seest, brother how many myriads," (MURIAI thousands at least, ten thousands according to the force of the word; allowing it to be a hyperbole, vast multitudes) "of the Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law.

“What is it therefore? The *multitude*,” (he does not say the whole, it had been impossible,) “must ‘needs’ come together.” Though he had said “the whole,” common sense would have limited the expression to a large proportion, a very general concourse, as in Luke i. 10. viii. 37.

Recollect now the points which seem to be established: What may be styled a general meeting of the Christians at Corinth for observing the Supper was practicable; the phrase, “they came together ‘into one place,’” unless it be a pleonasm unseasonable in a serious admonition, where every expression ought to bear on the case, must denote a meeting of this kind, and according to ver. 18. a church-meeting for public worship, not the attendance of spectators at a court, as in some of the instances adduced; such meetings could be only occasional, as the numbers did not permit them to meet in one place for stated worship, on which all were bound to attend every Lord’s day, and for which separate assemblies afforded a convenient opportunity to all. We conclude therefore, that the members of different congregations, as many as could, joined together at certain times in the ordinance of the Supper, to testify their unity in the profession of Christ; and that for this end the ordinance was dispensed now at one place of meeting, now at another, in routine, sometimes in Corinth itself, then at Cenchrea the port-town, where there was confessedly a church, however small, and the members of which seem to be included among the Corinthians to whom the epistle is addressed.

II. The practice in the first ages after the days of the apostles, ought to be the next subject of review. It would be tedious, however, to detail and comment on the various accounts of ancient usage in re-

gard to the Supper. It is by no means necessary we should. From these accounts we can only gather that uniformity of practice did not obtain even in the age that succeeded the apostolic; and that afterwards different regulations were made by councils and bishops with a view to uniformity, but not always the best. A few remarks may suffice.

The very names of the New Testament feast in ancient times, KOINONIA "the communion," which may be said to be scriptural, (1 Cor. x. 16.) and SYNAXIS "the gathering together," taken in connection suggest the mode of observance already stated from the sacred records. It was styled the *Communion*, as manifestative of the fellowship of Christians in faith and profession. *Synaxis* was a term first used, according to some, to denote the Christian congregations, and distinguish them from the Jewish synagogues in speaking about them. (CASAUBON. *Exercit. xvi. in Barab. § 42.*) It came soon after to be appropriated to the Supper, which was styled the *Synaxis*, by way of eminence. And why, unless because in it some peculiar gathering together took place? If it still was in some places, as it had been at first, an ordinance of sacred convocation, as the word means, the name once attached to it, though but in these places, would soon become common.

Pliny's letter to Trajan has been appealed to as an evidence that the Sacrament was dispensed every first day of the week†. This letter, it should be

† "Affirmabant hanc fuisse summam vel culpam
suarum vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante
lucem convenire,—seque sacramento non in scelus.

recollected, states the account which the Christians gave of themselves and their worship *in a time of severe persecution*, when the free exercise of their religion was under many restraints. But it ought not to be taken for granted that the Sacrament mentioned in the account was the Lord's Supper. The name *sacrament* does not appear to have been then used among Christians in the application it afterwards obtained to the seals of the covenant. Though it had, Pliny was a heathen, and could not be supposed to adopt the technical language of the Christians, in describing their worship to his master. The Christians who gave the account were not Romans, and to them the word must have been foreign; his letter is a Latin translation of their account. *Sacramentum* was with the Romans, the name for their military oath, because among that warlike people the administration of it was a rite of their religion, a sacred ordinance. In process of time it came to signify an oath of any kind; and it is evidently used by Pliny in this general sense, "They bind themselves *sacramento* in an oath." The Lord's Supper neither implies, nor exacts, nor imposes an oath. The words of the letter are rather descriptive of a species of covenanting. In those perilous times the Christians had recourse to every proper mean for their own establishment, and for strengthening one another's hands. Compelled to meet secretly, or as they could get opportunity, they were wont to engage in some vow to abide faithful and avoid the pollutions of the world, pledging themselves to one another to stand firm as

"aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent," &c. *Plin. Epist. ad Trajan. lib. x. ep. xcvi.*

an host vallant for the truth, and confirming the engagement with an oath. This transaction being mentioned to Pliny as a part of their worship, and being also somewhat similar to a military oath, he might style it *sacramentum*†.

Epithets early began to be applied to the Supper, and designations to be used, which though attended with no bad consequences at first, were very improper, and afterwards gave rise to gross errors and dreadful abuses. It was denominated *the Sacrifice, the Sacrifice of the altar, &c.* Very untenable language and unguarded expressions frequently occur in the Fathers. Cyprian speaks of Jesus ‘ carrying ‘ or holding himself in his own hands’ at the time of institution: Augustine, of our ‘ taking the body ‘ of Christ into our mouths, and having our tongues ‘ imbued with his blood.’ These and similar modes of speaking might be owing to great respect for the ordinance, but if they did not suggest the idea of transubstantiation, they have tended to cherish it. We must not judge from every expression, of the sentiments of the Fathers; and neither must we from every notice or illusion, reason to the general plan of observance, or form schemes of the universal practice in primitive times. If respect for the ordinance occasioned extravagant commendations

† In confirmation of this view, we may appeal to the summary of the letter given by Tertullian in his *Apol. cap. ii.* ‘ *Plinius secundus consuluit Trajanum,—allegans nihil aliud se de sacramentis (holy rites) eorum comperisse, quam cœtus antelucanos ad canendum Christo et Deo, et ad confederandum disciplinam, adulterium, fraudem, perfidiam, et cetera scelera, prohibentes.*’

and descriptions, it might also produce extravagancies in practice, neither the one nor the other of which are to be our rule of direction. The using of the Creed after the manner of the mason-word and signs, or of the *symbola* by which the heathen gained admittance to their mysteries; (KING'S *Hist. of the Creed*, chap. i.) the mystery that was in fact attached to the Supper; the *missa* or dismissal of the catechumens and of such as were not in membership, ere it was dispensed; these and other things of a similar nature, might be specified as instances. Of rectitude and propriety, antiquity has long been acknowledged to be no infallible test.

It may be said antiquity is appealed to, not in point of authority, but in proof of facts. The very confession admits that deviations from the apostolic plan of sacred observance, as well as erroneous views, might exist in the earliest ages of Christianity. How then shall the practice of primitive times be a true and faithful index of what existed in the days of the apostles, of what they ordained and meant to be perpetuated in the church? And if it is not appealed to in this light, what end, clear of proposing authoritative example at least, can be served by the proof of facts? Of all veneration for antiquity, this seems ever to be the language, both in regard to writers and customs, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well, and drank thereof himself, his children, and his cattle?" He to whom these words were addressed was both more antient, and greater in point of authority than father Jacob: And the nature of divine institutions, declarative of their design, that design again requiring a certain mode of observance, the principles on which the apostles proceeded, the plan according to which they evidently laboured to model

the church, whether in regard to government or worship,—all these are also both more antient and of greater authority, than any practices in what is called the primitive age. The apostles, as they wrote for the regulation of the church, took care to record but little of those necessitous deviations from the plan they intended, which were occasioned by circumstances, while they mark the execution of this plan, wherever it rose into view. Antient historians and fathers had other ends in writing; they often detail peculiarities solely owing to circumstances, and pretend to trace these back to the apostolic age. On their details, instead of marking and delineating the apostolic pattern itself, later historians and ecclesiastical writers build schemes of the original constitution of the church. These historians may themselves be sceptical as to church government and observances, but their readers too often embrace the schemes they have fabricated, and hold them up as models to which the church ought to be conformed. It is probable the Christians of the second and third centuries might commit this very mistake themselves. Engrossed with the idea of the spiritual utility of the Supper, and finding that at the erection of the church it had been dispensed in the same place frequently, and in single congregations without the communion of others, yet not attending to the reason in the circumstantial independency of many congregations when first planted, and overlooking the grand end of the ordinance relative to the visible church, they might give into the plans of weekly and of daily communicating.

III. The doctrine of the first reformers, particularly of Calvin, and the practice of the church in their days, has been appealed to.

With Calvin we most certainly agree, that ‘the custom of mere annual communicating, by whomsoever introduced, is a most evident contrivance of the devil.’ But when he adds, ‘Every week, at least, the table of the Lord should have been covered for the Christian assemblies,’ we have already assigned sufficient reasons for stating our dissent from his views. The reformed have learned, and from Calvin too, *in verba jurare nullius magistri*, to call no man master on earth. If in some instances they have been charged with being more Calvinistic than Calvin himself, or with pushing his views farther than it is alledged he intended, there are others in which they have exculpated themselves, and freely dissented from his opinion. That Calvin did not consider weekly communicating as the only plan for the Christian Church, and something required by the nature of the ordinance, is evident from the connection in which the passages quoted are found. Having declared the custom of annual communion an invention of the devil, by whose instrumentality soever introduced, he goes on to vindicate Zepherinus from the charge: ‘Since under the frequent dispensation of the ordinance in his age, it seldom happened that all did communicate, and since it was necessary that those who had a right to do so, being mixed with idolators and the profane, should in some public way testify their faith, this holy man appointed a set day, when the whole Christian people might make confession of their faith in partaking of the Supper. This appointment of Zepherinus, otherwise good, posterity perverted, establishing a law, by which annual communicating was made the *minimum* of solemn service.’ Here Calvin, in apologizing for Zepherinus, remarks the disadvantage of weekly

dispensation. He allows it was found to cherish a spirit of indifference about communicating: Even all the members of the same congregation did not join in celebrating the feast. He expressly approves the Zepherine decree, by which set times were appointed when the ordinance might be observed after the due order, and seems to have considered it as a piece of reformation in that age.—That Calvin should befriend weekly communion may appear surprising to some, while his opinion may be sufficient to determine the minds of others. But the zeal of the first reformers against the superstitions of popery might carry them too far on some points. Fleeing from one extreme they were apt to fall into the other, ere the consequences could appear to correct them. Thus a just indignation at the intolerable yoke of fasts and festivals, days dedicated to saints, to events, &c. in the Romish church, seems to have driven Calvin off his guard; even with respect to the Sabbath: he maintains by far too spiritual views of that seventh part of our time claimed by God, and speaks dubiously of the moral obligation of the fourth commandment in regard to the suspension of labour. On this head too he could appeal to the practice of primitive times. The Christians, the more effectually to distinguish themselves from the Jews, did not incline to observe the first day of the week after the mode of the Jewish Sabbath. They were apt to go to an extreme from aversion to the Mosaic system. And why might not Calvin go to an extreme, as on the doctrine of the Sabbath, so on that of communion, from a just hatred of the Romish system, founded on a clear perception of the mystery of iniquity it involved? To this very principle the origin of the Independent scheme may be traced. What was it at first but an

extreme, into which some good men were carried, by their aversion to episcopacy and the Romish hierarchy? We condemn those, who, while they levelled at the Antichristian fabric, demolished Christianity itself, and became a nation of Deists. And surely we may discard the artificial devotion, disclaim 'the example, traditions, and enactments of apostate Rome,' may make a sufficient remove from all her superstitions, though we do not hurry into enthusiasm, nor establish counter-schemes and regulations as really inimical to the institutions and order of the house of God. That Calvin and others should have fixed upon the Presbyterian plan of government and order, as that appointed by Jesus, while so many circumstances combined to carry them into the opposite extreme from Romish domination; and that that plan should have had such a general reception among the reformed, while the same circumstances, strengthened by new temptations to deviate either to the right or the left existed—must have been owing to serious meditation on the divine rule, and an accurate investigation of the mind of Jesus. They were thus, through the good hand of God upon them, taught where to stop, and prevented from tarnishing the glory of their victorious career. We may rather wonder that the instances should be so few, in which they missed the spirit of Presbyterianism, than that any occur.—The words of Calvin, of which such advantage has been taken, are in fact a lamentation over the dismal state of religion under the reign of Antichrist, and the deplorable lukewarmness produced by the enactments of Rome. The decree of the council of Lateran had sanctioned annual communicating; 'Whence it came to pass,' says he, 'that almost all, when they had once observed the

' ordinance, as if they had discharged their duty
 ' for the year, gave themselves no farther concern
 ' about the memorial of our Lord's death. It
 ' ought to have been far otherwise; every week, at
 ' least, the table should have been covered for the
 ' Christian assemblies.' And who would not pre-
 fer even an over-attention to the Supper, to an im-
 pious neglect? Who would not rather see a weekly
 dispensation of that divine institution, than have
 the service of the church engrossed and debased by
 a pompous routine of human festivals and supersti-
 tious observances? In the first case there would at
 least be the appearance of some fervour of piety,
 and of zeal for the honour of Jesus, such as is
 thought to have prevailed in primitive times, when
 even daily communions were sought; Spiritual ad-
 vantage might also have been expected, though all
 the ends of the ordinance had not been fulfilled. In
 the other case, what but the honour of saints and
 martyrs, real or fictitious, seemed to be regarded?
 how could the blessing of the Lord be expected or
 desired to a ritual, every way hostile to his will,
 and by which *his* ordinances were thrown into the
 shade? Under it the spirit of pure religion behoved
 to languish and expire.—' But Calvin expressed his
 ' decided opinion,—Every week, at least, the table
 ' *should have been covered.*' Yes; and it was na-
 tural on contemplating the scenes of corruption and
 irreligion before him, to give this decision. The
 soul is apt to be transported, on such occasions, be-
 yond the bounds which a farther attention to the sa-
 cred oracles and a correcting experience would set.
 Did Calvin ever attempt to establish weekly com-
 munion? He was, it is likely, prevented by what
 he allows in defending Zepherinus, that it was found
 to cherish a spirit of indifference, as really as the

Lateran edict, though not in an equal degree. He saw, probably, that were it established, even in that reforming age, which was certainly not defective in zeal and genuine religion, another Zepherine law would soon become needful. Only four times a-year was the Supper observed at Geneva, and in most of the reformed churches. Calvin himself expresses the same fears with Witsius and other great men who lived afterwards, that a more frequent dispensation might depreciate the ordinance; for there is another passage in his writings which ought to be known, one where he coolly delivers his mind, and when treating directly of church observances: ‘To celebrate the Supper *once every month*, would indeed be more agreeable to me, provided more frequent dispensation did not produce negligence†.’ A monthly observance was what his judgment approved, but he was afraid a

† These words of CALVIN are quoted by Bingham *e Responso de quibusdam, Eccl. Ritibus*. He states that the Supper was dispensed only four times a year among the reformed, but thus gives his mind, ‘*Singulis mensibus Cœnam celebrare maxime nobis placeret, modo ne usus frequentior negligentiam pariat. Nam dum major pars a communione abstinet, Ecclesia quoddammodo dissipatur.*’ BING. *Orig. Eccl. lib. xv. cap. ix. in notis*. However strange it may appear, what is styled by the advocates of weekly observance *in frequent communion*, has ever on reflection been considered as upon the whole most favourable even to the interests of religion. The very men who in some fervour of zeal, have declaimed against it under this title, ambiguous and calculated to mislead, have in cooler moments either partially or wholly come over to its side.

more frequent dispensation might overshoot the mark, and defeat the very design in view.

Since the independent scheme has been developed and displayed its operation, the Reformed have been led to mark other reasons against weekly communion, which do not seem to have occurred to Calvin,—reasons connected with the very nature of the ordinance, and its manifest design in regard to the visible church.



SECT. V.

OBSERVANCE OF FAST, THANKSGIVING, AND PREPARATION DAYS.

AMONG Presbyterians the observance of certain days is usually connected with the dispensation of the Supper. This practice has of late been traduced as an unwarrantable human invention, an unrighteous yoke of bondage; nay represented as hostile to the commandment of Jesus, and a manifest reversion to Judaism.

The days referred to have never been considered as **ESSENTIAL** to the right celebration of the ordinance. They who befriend them, and among whom they obtain, are not in the habit of condemning others as guilty of profaning the Supper by holding it without them. Nor are they ignorant of the fact, that for many ages this Sacrament was ob-

served without any regular attentions to public preparatory service. The law has not yet been made to establish, even by church authority, the necessity of fast, preparation, and thanksgiving days, or to 'wed these to the supper,' as a late author has expressed it. Acts for uniformity may have been framed, but they were never designed to mark out any particular mode as what ought always to be observed. The propriety and necessity of a general attention to uniformity was what they enjoined; in other respects they were merely recommendatory, and as such, the spirit only of these acts has been honoured in the Presbyterian churches of Scotland. The specific appointment of the days under consideration has always rested with sessions; and the authority of the appointment has not been extended beyond the proper sphere,—to subject the members of other congregations to exclusion from the ordinance for not having joined with their brethren in all the preparatory exercises.

But though the days are not deemed essential, as must be evident both from the principles on which they are appointed, and from the practice of the Presbyterian churches, and though they be not sanctioned by direct divine institution, they are not therefore to be treated as unrighteous impositions. They admit of a strong and sufficient vindication.

I. THEY ARE NOT UNWARRANTABLE. No zealous friend of religion will hold, that the fourth commandment *prohibits* the dedication of any portion of our time to the Lord, or enjoins to devote the six days allowed us, solely and always to worldly affairs. Freewill-offerings may certainly still be made of our time, as well as of our substance, to the Lord; and such offerings may be made with equal propriety by the church, as by individuals.

God by claiming only a seventh portion of our time, hath furnished scope for the native operation of heavenly-mindedness, and the voluntary manifestation of religion, in setting apart to his service what he hath not by previous requisition appropriated to himself. And as such heavenly-mindedness might be expected more to prevail under the full effusion of the Spirit of adoption in the New Testament age, the laws of requisition on time, which formerly existed, are withdrawn. God deals with his church as if now arrived at the state of majority, when like persons who have attained the years of discretion, she is left to act more freely, and of her own accord to discover an attention to the things that are well-pleasing in the sight of the Father. It would ill become the church or her members to take advantage of our freedom from the antient system of minute arrangements. The liberty now granted is an holy liberty, not a restoration to self and worldly pursuits, or to indifference and carnal ease in regard to our duty. We are left free as to the express divine settlement of many regulations, that the arrangements adopted, the seasonable employment of authorized means, and the intelligent discovery of attention to the mind of God, may afford on the face of the Christian world an illustrious display of the full effusion of the Holy Ghost, particularly as the "Spirit of wisdom and prudence, and of the fear of the Lord."

Here we are told, 'that not the dedication of time even by the church, but the *connection* established between the days in question and the ordinance of the Supper, is the ground of offence.' No evidence sufficient to prove the connection unwarrantable has yet been adduced. The constancy of it may have given rise to mistakes with some.

For these, however, no just occasion has been afforded, while the validity of the Sacrament dispensed in various communities, or received by individuals, without the observance of days, has never been denied by those who observe them. The people of the Presbyterian persuasion have no ground for supposing the days are accounted essential, or that the constancy of the practice imports any such idea.—As to the connection itself, it ought to be remarked, that though the Jews were under greater restrictions than we are, by having a system of specific appointments beyond which it might seem they durst not proceed, yet we find them without divine reprehension observing days additional to those God had ordained, and that too in connection with one of their solemn feasts. In the history of the pass-over kept by Hezekiah and his kingdom, we find that the congregation of Israel kept seven days by way of thanksgiving, beside the days of the feast, and the four preparatory days which were of divine institution. For this God did not testify any displeasure against them. A reasoner, such as some who have lately arisen against the observance of days, would have attempted to confound the good king with “who hath required this at your hand†?”

Let it not be said ‘there is a reverting to *Judaism*, ‘that by the sacramental days, according to the connection defended, the Christian service is encumbered, and a yoke of bondage imposed.’ The calumny of will-worship has been liberally thrown out. An appeal has sometimes been made to the words in which Paul charges the Colossians with a

† 2 Chron. xxx. 33. Thomson’s Lett. to Mason, quoted by ANDERSON, *Vind. Cant. Dom. Append.* p. 310.

shew of wisdom, in voluntary sacrifices to which they had no call, Col. ii. 18—20. ; and the censure, “ye observe days,” Gal. iv. 10. has been tauntingly given for a motto on the friends of the presbyterian method. Let any one read the passages, and mark what sort of days it is to which the apostle refers. It must be evident, that, according to the scope in both epistles, attachment to Jewish observances is specially the subject of blame. If the censures are to be transferred to Christian observances, then we must allow “no man to judge us,” to perplex or fetter our consciences, or call us to any account, even in regard “to the Sabbath days,” (ver. 16. first cited passage.) Thus we shall get more disengaged, and attain the spirituality at which some aim with respect to the Sabbath itself†. But

† A certain body otherwise respectable in the Christian world, having rejected many arrangements for which the Spirit of wisdom and prudence was promised to the church, as having their foundation only “in the wisdom of men,” speculated a little farther, and found that the common mode of observing the Sabbath itself is Jewish. They attempted accordingly, in their zeal for the privileges of the New Testament state, and as the weak among them were able to bear it, to discard any peculiar attentions to the Sabbath in private. We must beware lest our hatred of Judaism transport us to an unwarrantable length. The Quakers have still more spiritual views of the New Testament state than the Baptists. It is with them the dispensation of the Spirit relieving the church from beggarly

as the Christian church has nothing to do with the *divers* baptisms of the Jews, some for one purpose, some for another, some by sprinkling, others by washing; so neither with the *divers* Sabbath-days, nor any other holydays and new-moons of the Mosaic institution, "which," says the apostle, "were "a shadow of good things to come." It will not be alledged, that the days kept at the dispensation of the Supper are viewed by us in this light, that they either were appointed, or ever existed, as shadows of good to come. Were any to observe them in this light, supposing it possible, there would then indeed be reverting to the rudiments of the world, and a subjection to cardinal ordinances.—But 'a yoke of bondage is imposed!' This language we might expect to hear from a certain class who are ever ready to complain, "what a weariness is it?" not from those who profess to "love the habitation of God's "house, and the place where his honour dwalleth." The reasoning of some primitive Christians was very different, and certainly preferable in point of the temper it indicated, to that of our modern opponents of Judaism. These Christians understanding the new dispensation to be the "good "thing," or age of spiritual rest shadowed forth by the Jewish Sabbaths, concluded that God had now to a certain degree consecrated all time to himself, and so far from grudging an occasional surrender of some of the days allowed for secular employments, were for his service pervading the week. A portion of every day was devoted to public worship. Their views might be extravagant, but sure-

elements of every description.—that rudiment of this world about which their spiritualizing brethren contend so much, Baptism itself not excepted.

ly the dedication of a part of our time to the Lord, cannot render the "yoke of Jesus" an oppressive burden to a saint. The church, while she submits to that yoke as imposing a claim even on these voluntary dedications, will always confess it to be "easy and light;" nor will any of her genuine children murmur against her authority, when righteously exerted in compliance with the claim.

We are told, however, by those who press the objection, 'that the sacramental days are *stated*, 'that they are wedded to the Supper, and combined 'with it in all its periodical returns. To join the 'exercises of fasting or thanksgiving statedly with 'any stated part of worship, is to disregard the very 'thing which makes them duty, and to tie down to 'certain periods what the Bible hath tied to no periods†.' On this principle the conduct of the Jews

† MASON'S *Lett. on Com.* let. vii. p. 180. 'By 'lopping of therefore these redundancies of human 'fancy,' this author proposes to attain 'a more pure 'and scriptural method of keeping the feast,' p. 124.—You insist, Sir,' says Mr. Thompson in his reply, 'at great length against our fasts, as being 'inconsistent with the nature of that duty, because 'fasting must be only occasional. Your whole reasoning upon this point is founded on a material error, viz. that communicating is a stated duty, 'which you always take for granted, but never have 'proved. Give up with this error; allow communicating to be as our Saviour has indeed left it, an occasional duty, and then fasting will be an exercise 'occasionally suited to that occasional duty. Whenever you prove your stated periodical times of 'communicating, *sanctioned by the authority of our 'Lord and his apostles*, in the sacred oracles, your

deserved severe reprobation, if, as seems to be generally admitted, they annexed to the feast of Tabernacles a stated exercise of thanksgiving in memory of the deliverance from Sennacherib. "On "the last and great day" of that feast, not one of the seven days of the feast itself, but the eighth, (Numb. xxix.) the rite of drawing and pouring out water before the Lord, founded on the prediction, Isa. xii. 4. is said to have been performed. But the appointment was so far from being reprobated by Jesus, who came to "sit as a refiner," that on the last that great day of the feast, he stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and "drink," taking the subject of his discourse from the rite then performing, and appropriating to himself the prophecy on which it was founded. It is observable too, that though Jesus at the midst of the feast went up to the temple and taught so as to attract admiration, probably taking his subject from the references of the feast itself, yet that discourse is not recorded, whereas the other is preserved. We may put it to the objectors, whether it be either absurd or unwarrantable *statedly* to connect preparation with the observance of the Supper? If not, as must be granted in favour of at least one species of preparation, 1 Cor. xi. 28, 31. then the question resolves itself into this, Whether fasting be a proper and justifiable mode of preparation? for if the affirmative be proved, the argument from *statedly* observing a fast previous to the Supper is lost as to all the use it was intended to serve. The constancy of the recourse to this mode of preparation,

' reasoning will have some consistency, but till this
' is done, your vain shew of argument is like water
' spilt on the ground.'

cannot prove it unwarrantable. But there seems to be some ambiguity in the application of the term *stated*. We find it often used by the objectors, to denote the periodical recurrence of the fast and thanksgiving days in the presbyterian method, and then the argument is, that they are thus converted into holidays. At other times it bears on the nature of the Supper, as according to the views of our opponents a part of the ordinary public worship of God, and then the argument is, either that the observance of these days moves the Supper from its proper sphere, by rendering weekly communion impracticable, or that the exercises of fasting and thanksgiving, which are extraordinary duties, are moved from their proper sphere, by being connected with what ought to be regarded as an ordinary part of the worship of God. Let us consider the proof of unwarrantableness brought forward in these several ways..

I. 'By the periodical recurrence of the fast and thanksgiving days along with the Supper, they are converted into holydays.' This argument we should scarcely have expected from one who seems to have studied, on this very subject, the catholic controversy, and who is able to quote CHEMNITZ even against Protestants. Yet this is the style of his reasoning, 'Talk no more to a Papist or an Episcopalian of his uncommanded holy-days: He will reply that you have no objection to holydays, provided they be of your own appointment. Question him not about the fast on Good Friday before Easter Sunday. He will question you in his turn, about your Thursday or Friday fast before, what he would call, Sacrament Sunday. Ask not his warrant from the Bible. He will retort by asking yours. He will produce quite as many,

‘and quite as good proofs for Lent, as you can for your fast-days; and infinitely more examples.’ (MASON, *Lett.* p. 110.) This is a pretty bold censure on a certain body of Christians in Scotland, with whom Mr. Mason stands intimately connected. It would have been prudent at least to have concealed their Antichristian practice, till either reformation had been effected in a regular manner, or his communion with them wholly dissolved. He had forgotten the conduct of Ham. The pathetic exclamation of David, “Tell it not in Gath, lest,” &c. was not in his mind. But does Mr. M. not know that the line of distinction is clear,—that in the case of fast or thanksgiving days, the sanctity of the day or portion of time, rests on the exercises and service to which it is devoted: whereas in the case of holydays a previous sanctity of the day requiring such and such exercises, is supposed? This sanctity which is considered as inherent in the day, or as ever attaching to it in its annual recurrence, arises from its being dedicated to some saint, or commemorative of some great event. But it belongs to God only to *hallow* a day, or stamp upon it a permanent sanctity, which shall be the reason of our being bound to keep it sacred to him. (BRUCE, *Ann. Sec.* ch. ii.) Mr. M. was not ignorant of this; he has remarked it in a note. (p. 111.) ‘The difference,’ however he apprehends, ‘is merely circumstantial, the principal (on which we and the Papists proceed is the same.’ This is all the apology for his extravagant assertions. Has he proved that there is any previous sanctity supposed in the Thursday or Friday before the observance of the Supper, (as in the case of Good Friday,) requiring the exercise of fasting, or that the special observance of these days is ordained by an ecclesiastical

law? Our defence is simple. 'In the opinion of
 'Papists and Episcopalians on holydays, the *time*
 'regulates the duty, as in the Sabbath, both being
 'observed in their periodical recurrence as holy
 'times. But, with regard to the days employed in
 'religious worship, both before and after sacramen-
 'tal occasions, the *duty* regulates the time.' (AN-
 DERSON, p. 312.) If humiliation and thanksgiving
 be judged proper, some time must be allotted for
 them; and such days must be chosen as shall best
 suit the relation in which these exercises stand to
 the Supper. The dispensation of the Supper may
 be fixed to certain times of periodical recurrence in
 the different congregations which constitute a body
 of Christians. But this is merely and properly cir-
 cumstantial. No Sabbath is held to be more sacred
 than another, or to have a claim beyond others on
 the commemoration of our Lord's death. Conve-
 niency, and the accommodation of brethren, must
 be studied. And can any be so foolish as to ima-
 gine, not to say argue, that because on these
 grounds there is a stated or periodical recurrence
 of the dispensation of the Supper, therefore the
 days of fasting and thanksgiving which are judged
 proper to attend it, are converted into so many holy-
 days to the different congregations in which it takes
 place?

2. 'The Supper pertains to the stated, that is or-
 'dinary worship of God. But the concomitant days
 'move it from its sphere. They are unwarrantable,
 'because they render its being observed as a part of
 'ordinary worship, impracticable. If,' says Mr.
 M. 'Just regard were shewn in this particular (fre-
 'quency of communion) to the dying precept of
 'our Lord, and all the extra days of worship kept
 'up, no congregation either would or should submit

‘to the burden.’ (*Let.* p. 99.) Could it be shewn that such frequency of dispensation in the same place, is incumbent from ‘the dying precept of our Lord,’ or any other precept, or even from the nature of the ordinance,—as would be incompatible with the observance of the days, or would render it detrimental to the interests of individuals and society, then indeed we might acknowledge their appointment unwarrantable. There is nothing, however, in regard to the ends for which the Supper was appointed, that requires more than occasional celebration†. And weekly communion in particular is,

† SECT. 2. at the beginning.—The term *occasional* is obviously used in opposition to *stated* as denoting what belongs to the common service of every Sabbath. The dispensation of the Supper may be occasional in the sense meant, yet for reasons of expediency fixed to times of periodical recurrence in the several congregations of which a body is composed. It may also be occasional, yet one of the ‘outward and *ordinary* means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption,’ namely, in opposition to extraordinary means, such as those employed in the call of Abraham, or the conversion of Paul. Nothing can be more evident than that our Reformers used the word *ordinary*, as signifying *usual*, in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms, and other deeds, where it is applied to the institutions of the Gospel. It is by no means descriptive of the *qualities* of these institutions, or the relation in which they stand to each other. Thus ‘diamonds, gold and silver ear-rings, and cloth of various texture, may be said to be outward and ordinary parts of ornament or dress in some countries; but that there is a very great difference

we have seen, not only destitute of scriptural warrant, but contrary to one great design of the ordinance which directs to occasional celebration, and to fulfil which, we shall endeavour to shew, in our second proposition, the observance of the days greatly contributes.

3. Still the objection of unwarrantableness is urged, on the ground, 'that in connecting fasting and thanksgiving with the dispensation of the Supper, we combine duties that ought not to be combined, and are guilty of a mixture which God never mingled.' (*Lett. on Com.* p. 97, 98.) The exercise of fasting, we might reply, on the day of annual atonement, was as *stated* as the day and the solemnities of it. This mixture was by divine appointment, and shall we deem it improper? No: But there is no similar appointment, we shall be told, in the New Testament age, and the principles on which the observance of fasts is warranted to us, do not permit the connection we have devised. In this sense there is 'a mixture which God never mingled; for the connection between the Supper and the fast and thanksgiving days, is a *human device*, and the compound as real an addition to God's appointments, as human presumption ever ventured upon.' (*Lett. on Com.* p. 97, 98.) Had the connection been established by a law, and made essential to the right observance of the Sacrament, there might have been some ground for the charge. According to the present plan, it can be no more a human device, than the appointment of fasting, by the office-bearers of the church, on any other proper

'in the qualities, &c. of these things, every person knows.' See *COURTAS' Let. to the Old Dissenters*, p. 62, 63.

occasion. Nor does 'our faith stand in the wisdom of men,' (*Lett. on Com.* p. 97, 98.) when they ordain fasts on *such occasions* as are allowed to warrant them by the word.

The objection however, proceeds on the idea, that the Supper is not a proper occasion. 'The Sacrament being an ordinary institution of the Gospel, and which belongs equally to times of prosperity and adversity, can never furnish any special occasion of fasting and thanksgiving.' (*Lett. on Com.* p. 70. 102.) In this position, the emphasis sometimes rests on the word *ordinary*, and then the argument is, that the Sacrament being a part of the common service of God, like the preaching of the word, can furnish no call for extraordinary duties. We have shewn that it is, as really as the passover was, a special ordinance, not intended for constant celebration. Nor, as has also been remarked, is there any thing in the standards of our church inconsistent with this, 'ordinary parts of worship,' mean in the Confession of Faith, what belongs to the established service of God, independently of providential calls. We are not to wait for some providential call to celebrate the Supper, nor does our warrant for keeping it depend on any such warning. But what is there in this to prove, that the ordinance itself may not require preparation, or that fasting may not be resorted to as a proper and warrantable mode of preparing ourselves? Will our opponents deny, that even the Supper, "ordinary" though it be, and not dependent on the dispensations of providence, may yet be resorted to in providential emergencies, as an eminent mean of confirmation and consolation†. Their reasonings on

† Mr. M. seems to do so. 'The duties suited to

the distinction between ordinary worship, and extraordinary duties, pervert the design for which it was made. That design was solely to mark in the first, what forms the permanent ritual of divine service; in the second, what pertains to voluntary sacrifice, or providential requirement;—not to preclude *all connection between the one and the other*, nor even in emergencies which call for extraordinary duties, such as public vowing, &c. to prohibit the use of special ordinary means along with these†.

The emphasis, however, does not rest altogether on the word *ordinary*, and the meaning attached to it. The Supper, as we find in following out the objection, is denied to be a special occasion, on the very ground of its being *an ordinance of worship*. To do the objectors all manner of justice, we endeavour to extricate from the mazes of their reasoning, the various heads of argument to which they have recourse. These they have provided, like so many posts or strong-holds to which they may successively betake themselves in case of a retreat. Should we prove that the Supper does not pertain

‘special occasions, are such as are out of the line of God’s ordinary worship,’ p. 69. But it was a case of special emergency when the Supper was first observed.

† The truth is, if any divine institution whatever may be an occasion of fasting and thanksgiving, we should expect it would be one of those styled *ordinary*, or which belong to the appointed routine of divine service. Extraordinary duties we might suppose could not well be occasions of extraordinary duty. Yet even here the speculation fails: Public vowing or covenanting, may, abstract from the providential call, require the exercise of fasting.

to the common weekly service of the church, or that the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary duties will not subserve their cause, the point is not gained, we meet the objection in a new form. A broader basis is laid. Providential dispensations alone, we are told, are proper occasions of fasting and thanksgiving. Though it should be granted therefore, that the Supper is discriminated from other divine institutions, yet while it is one, and even in our sense of the Confession and other standards a part of the established worship of God, to connect such duties with it is held unwarrantable. Thus an objector proceeds, 'Special occasions are such as are out of the line of God's ordinary providence. No one surely will call the administration of the Supper an eminent and extraordinary dispensation of providence. You regulate the seasons of fasting and thanksgiving, not by providential dispensations, but by human agreements. You lift yourselves up to the throne of God, and determine for him, instead of allowing him to determine for you, when these duties are proper. If you call us to such duties, and divine providence does not, we cannot enter into their spirit, because the occasion of them does not exist. (*Lett. on Com.* p. 69, 88, 102, 103.) Calamities either threatened or inflicted are accordingly specified as evident calls to fasting. In them God may be heard proclaiming from heaven, "Sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly:" Here church-courts cannot mistake the will of the Almighty. Let them on such occasions lift up their voice and say, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel;" or when in spiritual judgments there appear evident tokens that the bridegroom is taken away, "then shall they fast in those days."

Are we to conclude, that because fasting is specially incumbent in such cases, it is restricted to them? that because it is absolutely requisite according to the divine will, on awful emergencies in providence, therefore voluntary recourse to it on other occasions must be unwarrantable? May there not be solemn dispensations of grace as well as of providence, and of such a nature, that the warrants for fasting in the one case, or the principles on which it may be resorted to, apply to the other?—*1st*, Fasting pertains to the mortification of sin. It is an eminent mean to be occasionally employed for promoting this spiritual exercise, which is always incumbent, though calamities should neither be threatened nor inflicted. (1 Cor. ix. 25—27.)—*2dly*, Our Lord supposed its continuance as a mode of worship subservient to mortification, when in Matth. iv. 17. he gave directions about the manner of observing a fast: “When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance,” &c. The fasting of the Pharisees is evidently meant. Now, though the Jews fasted in prospect of the coming of Messiah, our Lord cannot refer to the continuance of the exercise on this ground. The Messiah being come, it was in his view, like putting “new wine into old bottles.” But the Pharisees also considered the exercise as a mode of voluntary service, and affected a shew of mortification. (Luke xviii. 12.) The words of Jesus imply the continuance of the exercise in this light, but according to its truth, and without the ostentation which disgraced it. That continuance is remarked, 1 Cor. vii. 5.—*3dly*, Fasting pertains, not solely to the bewailing of public or personal calamities, but to the seeking of favours at the hand of the Lord. These two

purposes may often be combined, as in Dan. ix. 3. Matt. xvii. 21. But in the case of Cornelius, we find fasting employed solely with a view to a favour, some want of which might be felt, Acts x. 30.—

4th, There are examples of fasting in regard to the performance of some duty, and to implore the presence of God in it, Esth. iv. 8, 16. During the patriarchal age, we have no specific notice of fasting. An equivalent preparatory exercise, however, was enjoined by Jacob on his household, Gen. xxxv. 2, 3. Even our Lord's fast in the desert, whatever other great ends were in view, may be considered as a preparation for the public service on which he was about to enter, and for the solemn "approach he had engaged his heart," to make un- to God in his sufferings and death. We may reason from his example in a general way, to the propriety of fasting in prospect of solemn service, without approving in the most distant manner, the commemoration of his fast by a similar one, without pretending to imitate its duration, or supposing we ever can be in the same circumstances with him.—

Various other cases of fasting might be produced, as when under great spiritual languor, when in imminent hazard of being ensnared in some sin, when already entangled, and endeavouring to escape, &c. (BOSTON'S *Memoir relative to Fasting*). We adduce only another instance from scripture history, Acts xiii. 2, 3. The prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch, "ministered to the Lord, and "fasted." Public calamities, or abounding evils in that church, were no more the grounds of their fasting than of their ministering to the Lord. If we may judge from what followed, they had engaged in this service with a view to success in their labours, and to the opening of a great and effectual

door for the calling of the Gentiles: "As they ministered and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." These two were accordingly ordained. Though supernaturally called, church order was not to be neglected in regard to their mission. This ordination to missionary labours was also attended with fasting; "When they had fasted, and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

It will scarcely be pretended, that all the occasions of fasting specified above, are to be placed to the account of providence. The instance of Jacob's commanding his house to sanctify themselves, which, tho' there might not be an abstinence from food, amounts to the import of the duty, must be deemed an exception. A solemn eucharistical service was in view. Our Lord's fast, according to the principle laid down, for its application to the subject in hand, must also be excepted. And particularly, the general use of fasting as subservient to the mortification of sin, or a mode of seeking the countenance and blessing of God on any undertaking, even in the discharge of duty.—As to the rest, we know it will be alledged they were special occasions, for though they pertain to the dispensation of grace, yet they were out of the line of God's ordinary providence, under which particular managements even of the dispensation of grace, are to be considered as falling. Far from contesting this doctrine, we rather wish to be explicit upon it, because it is often supposed sufficient to set aside our reasoning from the instances adduced, and others of similar nature, whereas, to a candid enquirer, it will not appear to affect that reasoning in the smallest degree. In the Shorter Catechism,

both the covenant of works, and the dispensation of the covenant of grace are classed under God's works of *providence*. The term is used in a very general sense. Particular managements of the dispensation of grace, as to times and seasons, and remarkable effects, we do not hesitate to ascribe to providence, or the peculiar administration of Jesus Christ. Such are copious effusions of the Spirit, the opening a great door for accessions to the church, particular revivings, &c. Such too is the sad degeneracy and defection into which a church may be allowed to fall. These are special occasions; fasting becomes proper under the circumstances of the latter kind, or with a view to the former.—On this very ground the defence of our practice were easy. The dispensation of grace is conducted by means of divine ordinances. We are not to expect revivings, or eminent demonstrations of divine favour and love to the church, in a miraculous style, nor even as certain events may be brought about in the government of the world, according to the common idea of providential interposition. Rather we are to look for such special interpositions in behalf of a church or congregation, through the blessing of God on the ordinary institutions of grace. It is usually by eminent countenance granted to these, he crowns a people with great spiritual prosperity; and, even when the interpositions of relief from peculiar degeneracy may not be needed, elevates to a state beyond mediocrity in Christian attainments. Now, if there be any ordinance distinguished above others, as adapted to these ends of divine manifestation, any ordinance that seems to promise a visitation, which shall be as “the beginning of months” to many, and “as life from the dead,”—may not this ordinance, according to the prospect it affords, be

warrantably viewed as a special occasion of fasting and prayer? While the sovereign managements of Jesus affect the dispensation of grace *in its ordinances*, and the state of the church *by means of these*, the idea, that special occasions pertain to *providence*, though admitted in its utmost latitude, can never be made to prove the unwarrantableness of observing a fast previous to an ordinance of established worship, merely because such an ordinance does not itself form what may be properly called a dispensation of providence.

But we do not rest here: The design for which the instances of fasting were adduced, was to mark the *general principles* on which that exercise proceeds, and may warrantably obtain. Allowing then, that in these instances, the grounds of the fasting displayed themselves only in certain special providential circumstances, yet surely if the same grounds, when once ascertained by an induction of facts, shall be discerned in, or in regard to some ordinance of grace, that ordinance may warrantably, and abstract from any expectation of uncommon interposition, be viewed as itself affording a proper occasion of fasting and prayer. Let us mark the grounds of the duty, and then apply the argument.—From the instances adduced we learn, that fasting may properly obtain, even in a peaceful and prosperous state of affairs. Under no such state hitherto has the kingdom of our Lord been exalted to its predicted triumph in the latter days, or attained universal extension. With a view to this, “prayer shall still be made for him;” and why may it not be connected with fasting, as among the disciples at Antioch? This exercise is, we perceive, a part of divine service that ought ever to be kept alive. It is a mean of removing our indisposition

for other duties to which we may be called ; a method of seeking after the Lord, to obtain his presence or his aid in cases where we are peculiarly apt to mismanage ; a way of desiring more abundant communications of his grace, greater success to his work, rich manifestations of his glory, personal or social favours. It is to be resorted to as eminently subservient to the mortification of sin. Joint confession of guilt, and social evidence of concern about expiation, publicly testified as among Israel on the day of atonement, tend much to the glory of God, as well as the promoting of sanctification. While the exercise occasionally engaged in, is manifestative of proper regard to the great ends of the permanent dispensation of grace, and its effect among a people, even though unpressed by any calamity, the solemnity of some approach to God particularly warrants it.—Our argument is then, If fasting be proper on account of such reasons, or for such ends as these, and if they shall attach to an ordinance of grace, the exercise may warrantably obtain with a view to that ordinance. There seems to be only two ways of evading the conclusion ; either, 1st, By denying that it is possible for such grounds to attach to an ordinance of grace ; or, 2^{dly}, By maintaining, that, tho' they should, yet its being an ordinance sets them aside from being in that case warrantably considered as occasions of fasting. But the reasons or ends we have mentioned are of a very general nature. It can never be proved that they can have no existence but in regard to special circumstances of providence. And by what means shall it be demonstrated that it is solely in regard to such circumstances they ought to be viewed as warranting a fast ? that particularly, tho' attaching to an ordinance, yet its being an ordinance changes

their bearing on our duty, and precludes us from fasting? To demonstrate this, it must be shewn, that to connect fasting with any part of the established service of God, is a thing which no other considerations can justify, that is, a thing in itself *absolutely sinful*. Here is the last resource. It is indeed the true spirit of the objection under discussion, and what the objector ought to have explicitly stated and supported, instead of amusing the minds of his readers with plausible reasonings about providence and special occasions. But if the connection be criminal in itself, why has it not been expressly prohibited by God? Why, since individuals and the church are left to act voluntarily in this matter, did he not guard us as to the species of cases to which the reasons for fasting ought to be restricted, and prohibit all attention to these, except in providential circumstances? Nay, why did he himself form a connection between fasting and an ordinance of established worship in the Jewish church, the solemnity of annual atonement? nor only in the Jewish, but in the Christian church, as in the case of ordination? This last is not indeed simply an institution of worship, but it belongs to the established order of the church, and is a solemn transaction, in which service is performed to God. We find it connected with fasting at the mission of Paul and Barnabas, and in ordinary cases, Acts xiv. 23. Our Saviour himself, at least watched, denied himself the refreshment of sleep, and spent a whole night in prayer, before the ordination of his apostles, Luke vi. 12, 13.†

† The Author has enlarged on fasting, because that exercise seems to be chiefly objected to, and because the same reasoning is applicable to thanksgiving.

It is enough on our first proposition, to have shewn, that the days, or the exercises performed on these days, are not unwarrantable, as they are not foreign to the liberty of the New Testament state,—do not impose a yoke of bondage,—infringe not on the simplicity of the Christian system,—establish no holy-days,—are not incompatible with the requisite frequency of communion,—do not connect duties incapable of connection, nor misplace certain parts of holy obedience, contrary to the will of God, whether expressed in precepts, indicated by example, or learned by just conclusions from his word.—The way being thus clear, should it be proved, in passing to the positive part of our defence, that there is, in the LORD'S SUPPER, either according to its nature or design, what may be deemed sufficient ground for the exercises in question, the appointment and observance of the days will be justified; this shall be the business of our second proposition. Should it appear farther, that, beside what appertains to the ordinance itself, there are in the word certain intimations relative to it, from which the propriety of such exercises may be gathered, our vindication of the plan will be strongly confirmed: to these intimations we shall attend in the third proposition; and then in the fourth, we may consider the argument in favour of the plan, from the present state of the church.

II. As there are neither prohibitions, nor principles to deter from the observance of the days in connection with the Supper, so that we are free to appoint and keep them, if sufficient reasons can be discerned,—there are such reasons in regard to the *ordinance itself*.

When we speak of reasons or grounds of fasting and thanksgiving, it is always supposed they attach

somewhere, either to providential aspects or events, or to seasons and modes of divine service. It is only thus we can be furnished with a special occasion, and without this, no court can be vindicated in making appointments or requiring observance. Such an occasion the Supper is held to be, as an ordinance of great spiritual utility, and of peculiar solemnity. The observance of the days also contributes to a fulfilment of its design, as the grand ordinance of fellowship and public profession. We revert here to the view given and supported in the preceding sections; for the plan of dispensation is so consistent in all its parts, that the same principles which vindicate it on the head of frequency, justify it also on that of the days.

The object is not to prove such a call for fasting and thanksgiving as would render these exercises indispensably necessary to the due administration of the sacrament; but solely to shew, from the nature and design of the ordinance, that there is a propriety and expediency sufficient to vindicate their appointment. So far from pleading express precept to render them essential, we do not regard the Supper even in the same light with calamities, or those great events in providence, which, taken in connection with the word, may be considered as the voice of God directing to, and positively requiring the exercises mentioned. The opponents of our plan, ought to have understood the precise principles on which that plan is conducted. Had they done so, fair-dealing would have narrowed greatly the sphere of their argumentation. They have often 'erected a man of straw,' for the pleasure of gaining, or seeming to gain an advantage. We shall hear one: after he has demolished what was never

maintained, by a sly insinuation about wresting the Scriptures, talk big in behalf of these sacred oracles, and enjoin us to remember, that as they are 'the sworn witnesses of the King eternal, we must beware how we order them to the rack.' (*Lect. on Com. p. 67.*)

A difficulty which seems to occur at the outset, and to be founded on the terms of our proposition, may afford an opportunity of stating precisely the object in view. It may be said, You regard the *Supper itself* as a special occasion; now as it can never alter its character, it must always be so, and consequently by its very nature must render the exercises of fasting and thanksgiving so indispensably necessary, that to omit them in any instance would be a crime. There is a distinction, we reply, even among special occasions. In regard to some, fasting is suitable and seasonable; while in regard to others, besides being suitable and seasonable, it is absolutely requisite: we reckon the ordinance of the Supper to pertain to the former, emergencies of providence to the latter. In the one case, fasting is warranted as of the nature of a voluntary service; in the other, the warrant, seconded by the voice of providence, amounts to a positive requirement of the Lord. And where public fasting is concerned, sessions in the first case *may* call on the people under their inspection to engage in the duty; in the second, their liberty is controuled, they *must* call to it: but in both, while they cannot be said to overstretch their authority, they have a claim to obedience†.

† The same has been the doctrine of the Reformed on public vowing and on the arbitrary connection between an oath and such vowing. Mr. M. could be no stranger to it.

The question is then, Is the Lord's Supper an ordinance, in regard to which, fasting, preparation, and thanksgiving may be deemed suitable, seasonable, and proper? That it is, we argue,

1st, From its distinguished character as an ordinance fitted for eminent spiritual utility. We take our description of it in this light from an opponent. 'It is an affecting representation of the communion which believers have with Christ Jesus, and with each other in him. The subject commemorated is that point in which the leading doctrines of revelation concentrate their rays, and where they shine with united lustre.' Such an ordinance, considering the mode of celebration,—the words, the symbols, the actions, by which it is distinguished from other institutions in the ordinary dispensation of grace, must be peculiarly calculated for the confirmation of faith, and the strengthening and promoting of fellowship with Jesus, and with one another in him. 'It hath a *mighty* efficacy,' says our author, 'in quickening the graces, and mortifying the corruptions of believers. And in it they are often admitted to near intercourse with the God of the spirits of all flesh.' (MASON'S *Second Let. on Com.*) Promising, through the divine blessing, such advantages to individuals, may not the times of its dispensation be expected to be "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," to a congregation, and to their brethren who associate with them? Can special *preparation*, then, for such an ordinance, be unseasonable or improper? Rather does not the prospect of it invite to the exercise? Jacob did not know more certainly than we, that God would visit him in Bethel. He believed it, and therefore called on his house "to sanctify themselves." As a patriarch in that patriarchal eco-