

mony, he prescribed to them their duty. The approach of the Feast, is a particular admonition to attend to whatever may be a mean of removing our spiritual indisposition, or of mortifying those corruptions, which, by provoking dereliction and impeding communion, might defeat the gracious design of the ordinance. God is every where present, but on certain occasions he is said "to come out of his place," "to come down," to display his presence more strikingly in the government of the world. It is by means adapted to the purpose he does so, for he is still the "invisible God." Similar is his mode of procedure in the dispensation of grace. Though ever "the glory in the midst of Zion," there are occasions when he "he shines forth illustriously "from above the mercy-seat," or propitiatory. Can preparation be less proper for beholding the goings of our God, and our King in his "sanctuary," and receiving his gracious visitation, than for witnessing the stately steps of his Majesty, "his glorious "marching" as the Governor among the nations? The ordinance of the Supper is calculated beyond others, for realizing in the most impressive manner the presence of the Lord, and by the concession of our opponents, has usually been honoured as the medium of signal manifestations. Well, "Thou "meetest him, that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways," —(Isa. lxiv. 5. compare lviii. 3—12.) The renewed enjoyment of such an ordinance, may also be justly regarded as worthy some public testimonial of *gratitude* to God. Granting that no visible evidences of "a time of refreshing," should have occurred, we are not thence to conclude that it has not obtained, for the kingdom of heaven cometh not usually "with observation." The blessed effects

may appear many days after. At any rate we have ever ground to believe, that under a pure dispensation of the ordinance, much spiritual good may be done; and our faith of this, may well be a foundation of thanksgiving to God. Such an exercise will testify our belief in his promise of maintaining the credit of his institutions, according to their respective uses and ends. It will "put him in remembrance," and shew that we are not unmindful of what he hath given ground to expect. And then, a day of thanksgiving affords an opportunity of directing the people by public discourse, how to display their gratitude in conduct suited to the holy profession they have made. Is the return of the feast anticipated with emotions of gladness similar, nay superior, to those produced by the antient edict, "O Judah, keep your solemn feasts?" Have we joyed, like the tribes of old, when it was said to us, "Go up to the house of the Lord?"—then surely it must gratify the feelings of the godly, to have an opportunity afforded of "giving thanks to the name of the Lord," for the rich dispensation of his grace; of singing to his praise, "how amiable are thy tabernacles," and saying ere they part, for their friends and brethren's sakes, "Peace be within thy walls, O Jerusalem, and prosperity within thy palaces."—With a view to such blessed experience, and in the faith of a time of refreshing, how seasonable the exercise of *fasting*! 'None,' says a servant of Jesus, while commending the sacramental fast as 'a laudable practice of our church,'—'none, according to the method of grace, stand so fair for a lifting up, as those who are most deeply humbled,' James iv. 10. Isa. xi. 4. Matt. v.

4. When a most striking display of the Atone-

ment, and of its blessed effect, access to God, even into the holiest, was to be made to Israel, a solemn public confession of sins was required, attended with fasting. And when the seal of "redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins," is about to be dispensed, may not the people be called to a special consideration of their ways? The more extensive and deeply affecting the views of sin, under which they approach the table of the Lord, the more eager will be the actings of faith on the crucified Saviour, and the more abundant the consolation of atonement. The improvement of the seal of God's gracious economy, may thus be expected to suit its design better than otherwise. Again, would we have a time of refreshing, and is fasting one way of seeking after the Lord, and expressing an ardent desire that he would "glorify the house of his glory†?" How proper! how respectful to the grand designs of the Supper! for a people to join together in pleading with the Lord by fasting and prayer, that on such an occasion, as of old at the dedication of the temple, he would fill the

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† See the account of Anna, and others who waited for the consolation of Israel, Luke ii. 37, 38. compared with Hag. ii. 9. "The glory of this latter house shall be greater," &c. The account of the disciples after our Lord's resurrection, Acts i. 14. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication," no doubt for the fulfilment of the promise, "I will see you again," viz. by that effusion of the Spirit, which was to glorify the New Testament church. And the account of the prophets and teachers at Antioch, who fasted and prayed for an increase of the glory already begun, Acts xiii. 1. 2.

house with his glory, and accept the sacrifices of his chosen ; or that the Bridegroom may come in an eminent manifestation of his presence, may see his disciples again, and cause their hearts to rejoice. Is fasting seasonable and proper in prospect of the marriage of a people to the Lord ? Is it a mode of imploring the divine blessing at the organizing of a church, or on the commencement of a fixed dispensation of grace ? (Acts xiv. 23. Then surely, for the same end, it must be equally proper in regard to those occasions, when the seal of that dispensation is observed among them, when the symbolical exhibition of all gospel privilege, and the visible representation of the marriage-supper of the Lamb takes place. In fine, was it intended for the mortification "of our members which are on the "earth?" it must be peculiarly seasonable. With a view to the celebration of the Supper, we are specially enjoined to "purge out the old leaven." There is a leaven of "malice and wickedness," or other unchristian dispositions, which church-courts who are "to separate between the precious and the "vile," have it not always in their power to purge out by judicial procedure. Yet this leaven may work to the marring of intercourse with God, and of that Christian fellowship, that plenitude of fraternal love which ought to obtain. May not these courts therefore resort to the mean that God has appointed and promised to bless, for mortifying the members of the body of sin even in saints ? Are they not warranted to call for a public profession of this exercise, and a genuine endeavour after it, by that people among whom it is their duty to secure, as far as can be attained, the proper observance of divine institutions ? The amount of their edict for a fast in this light, is no other than the command of the apostle,

which it tends to fulfil,—“ Purge out the old leaven,  
 “ that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unlea-  
 “ vened. For Christ our passover is sacrificed  
 “ for us ; therefore let us keep the feast, not with  
 “ the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice  
 “ and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of  
 “ sincerity and truth.”

What have we alledged against all this, by the  
 opponents of our plan? So far as the author knows,  
 only two things. 1<sup>st</sup>, That in the ordinance of the  
 Supper, there are no special blessings represented  
 and sealed ; that is, ‘ no blessings appropriated to  
 ‘ special occasions. This is the argument of the  
 same writer from whom our description of the ordi-  
 nance was borrowed a little before. Does he then  
 mean to destroy in one part of his book “ the things  
 “ he had built” in another? Yes : while the fabric  
 shall support the scheme of frequency, it may stand ;  
 but if it seem friendly to our plan of the days, it  
 must be demolished. To gain one point, we have  
 large commendations of the Supper ; to gain ano-  
 ther we find it reduced to a level with other institu-  
 tions, nay with ‘ the craving of a blessing before  
 ‘ meat.’—But let us ponder a little his idea. ‘ I beg,’  
 says he, ‘ the Christian to point out a single blessing  
 ‘ to be supplicated or expected at the holy commu-  
 ‘ nion, which he does not, or at least ought not, to  
 ‘ supplicate and expect in *every* approach to God  
 ‘ through the faith of Jesus. Till this be done, all  
 ‘ that has been, and all that *can* be said about the  
 ‘ *specialty* of the blessings connected with the Sup-  
 ‘ per, is mere illusion.’ This writer may not de-  
 serve to be ranked with those who are “ wiser in  
 “ their own eyes than seven men who can render a  
 “ reason ;” but there are instances in his work of  
 bold assertion founded on the illusions of his own

mind, which ought to have been repressed. Who ever pretended that the *blessings* represented and sealed in the Supper, are different from those exhibited in the ordinary dispensation of grace? But is the *representing and sealing* no special privilege? And is it not in various respects "appropriated" to this ordinance, so as to discriminate it, not only from the preaching of the Gospel, but even from Baptism? On this ground, has not the same writer acknowledged, that the Supper is eminently calculated for promoting intercourse with God, and the fellowship of the saints? It has frequently been honoured, suitably to its nature and design, as a *special occasion* of realizing the blessings of grace, when all the goodness of the Lord has been made to pass before his chosen, and a time of refreshing enjoyed.--2dly, Fasting, it has been said, is proper when there appears evident tokens that the "bridegroom is taken away," Matt. ix. 15. But in prospect of the New Testament feast, the joyful commemoration of that event on which all our hopes and spiritual privileges are founded, when called to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, and enjoy the signs of his presence, must be like putting "new wine into old bottles," a thing altogether incongruous, and detrimental.--Our Lord's application of the proverbs about new wine and new garments, teaches the impropriety of fasting in seasons of eminent spiritual enjoyment; and thus we may grant the impropriety also of *combining* that exercise with the celebration of an ordinance specially calculated for manifesting his presence; but to fast *in prospect* of such seasons, or of such an ordinance, is nowise condemned, rather the contrary. The antient fast on the day of atonement, seems to have been connected with the feast of tabernacles, and it was held

four days before, not during the feast. Our fast is not kept on the day of the dispensation of the Supper. Had this been the case, the charge of incongruity might have had some plausible foundation; or it might have been supposed, the cheering exercise, and ravishing attainments to be expected on such a day, would, like the new wine, break through and destroy the mournful fasting frame, if attempted to be super-induced upon them. But fasting, we may remark farther, is not always that sad or mournful exercise which they who make calamities its proper ground seem to imagine. There are diversities of fastings, according to the object in view, all of which might be improper while Jesus was manifest in the flesh, bodily present with his church. Every one who reflects on the inestimable privilege then bestowed in the mission of the promised Deliverer, who considers that in him the Father had given all that could warrantably be desired according to the age and the state of the church, for deliverance, spiritual or temporal, and who at the same time attends to the wisdom of the pre-determined arrangements as to the circumstances of the Jews, and the success of his ministry, arrangements the best suited to the fulfilment of his mission,—every one who ponders these things, must perceive, that fasting could not be sanctioned by Jesus, as either expedient or proper, during the days of his flesh, whether for obtaining a removal of the subjugated state of the people, or some eminent spiritual interposition, or even greater success to his labours. He behoved not to go beyond the extent of his commission, and it had not been warrantable to implore an enlargement of that commission. Every thing was then doing which was proper to be done for the benefit of the church,

may, for the salvation of the Jews from temporal wrath.

But *in prospect* of the Saviour's coming, fasting was both suitable and seasonable. Now this is specifically the fasting to which Jesus refers, "Can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" They may before, but not when the object is attained, or under the enjoyment of his presence. Considering the exercise as having a respect to the coming of the Messiah, the occasion was removed. Its continuance therefore among the Pharisees, arose from inattention, or rather, wilful blindness to "the signs of the time." Even the disciples of John had not sufficiently clear views of the character of Jesus, otherwise they had associated with the children of the bride-chamber, and desisted from fasting. (Luke v. 33. vii. 19—23.) But for the disciples of Jesus to have kept up the practice, had not only been incongruous, but a virtual opposition to the claims of their Master, which the Baptist himself admitted. (John iii. 28, 29.) Is there any thing then in the passage, or application of the proverb about "new wine," that can be constructed as unfriendly to our holding a fast in prospect of the Supper? Our Lord declares, "The days would come when the bridegroom should be taken away," and fasting again become proper. If the words refer to his bodily absence, these "days" will be descriptive of the whole New Testament period: if to spiritual withdrawalment, they will be descriptive of *one* special occasion of fasting, without denying the propriety of the exercise on other occasions. Nay, may we not from this very passage argue the propriety of the exercise, with a view to glorious manifestations of his presence, such as the Supper is calculated to afford, and of which



it has been honoured as the means†? By organizing a church, or the gift of a gospel-ministry, the Bridegroom eminently comes amongst a people and marries them to himself||. Yet we learn from the practice of the apostles, (Acts xiv. 23.) that fasting, with a view to the realizing of this spiritual marriage and its blessed fruits, is not incompatible with our Lord's discourse on the subject. The relation of the Supper to such occasions has already been stated.

2dly, The preparatory exercises are seasonable and proper, on the ground of the solemnity of the ordinance.—The children of Israel were frequently called upon to “sanctify themselves,” when God was about to descend among them by the symbols of his presence, or cause them approach unto him. We are not indeed “come to the mount that might be touched, that burned with fire,” that was “compassed with darkness and tempest.” (Heb. xii. 18, 22.) It will readily be granted that there was something in all God's manifestations to Israel in the desert, correspondent to the legal economy, and that “we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.” We still however, as the

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† In the absence of the Bridegroom fasting was to become seasonable. Now, when about to depart, he made promise, “I will see you again;” it was doubtless to be seasonable, with a view to the fulfilment of this promise. But one way, among others, in which it was to be fulfilled, was “his drinking with them of the fruit of the vine new in his Father's kingdom” Compare John xvi. 22. as explained, ver. 14—16. with Matt. xxvi. 29.

|| Isa. lxii. 5. See *President EDWARDS'* Sermon on this passage.

apostle reminds us, "come to God the Judge of all;" and in the Supper there is a special exhibition of this character sustained by the Father in "bruising" his own eternal Son, and "putting him to grief." Seated at the table of the Lord, we are directly brought under the verification of all that was imported by the legal economy, in regard to the judicial character of Deity. There, while "Christ" is evidently, or vividly, as in a representation of the object†, "set forth crucified," and for our sins, the grandeur of the eternal Judge is more impressively and affectingly displayed to our view, than in the whole system of sacrifice, or even on Sinai itself. The apostle in the passage referred to, after stating at large the superiority of New Testament privilege, draws from it a conclusion very different from that which would set aside the idea of solemnity, or discard peculiar attentions to certain parts of our worship. "We therefore," says he, as if he had been afraid of the inference, that now we have no need to sanctify ourselves, afraid of inconsiderate freedoms, even with the most distinguished institutions of the gospel state, "We therefore receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire." The allusion is obviously to the case of

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† PROGRAPHE, *eorum depictus fuit*. The Jews had only "the shadow, not the very *image* of the "things," such as the glass on which we look presents to faith. Shall the exhibition made to us, be accounted less solemn, because clearer, and not like the mysterious shadows, apt to occasion a servile fear?

Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, who were consumed by fire, for their heedless or presumptuous conduct. The apostle would have us remember, that still God, as he declared on that occasion, "will be sanctified in all them that draw nigh unto him."

Another example of the divine regard to solemnity as a ground of special preparation, we have in the case of the *passover feast*. The solemnity of this institution which rendered peculiar preparation requisite to its observance, seems to have arisen from its sacramental nature. As a commemorative, and in its typical references, a sealing ordinance, it was distinguished from other feasts of the law. For a stated period God would have the minds of his worshippers abstracted from the world, and fixed on the grand import of the service in which they were about to engage, ere they ascended this holy hill. To this end he enjoined the performance of certain significant rites. Now, on the same principle, even abstracting from the relation the one sacrament has to the other, special preparation must be seasonable and proper in regard to the New Testament feast. It is not less worthy of respect than the former, nor are its nature and references, such as to preclude our knowing it in any peculiar form. The preparation must no doubt correspond to the present economy. In point of time to be spent, we need not, we dare not recur to the yoke of bondage from which Christ has set us free. And instead of the legal rites, the simple exercises and forms of Christian worship are the only succedaneum allowed us. These however, are equally, nay, in a superior manner calculated to instruct and direct, to abstract the mind from worldly concerns, and elevate the affections to God and spiritual objects. The

grounds of the paschal-preparation are not to be ascribed solely to the genius of the law, as if our having received the atonement, rendered any thing similar wholly impertinent and improper in regard to the Supper; for though that preparation in its duration and rites, formed a part of the antiquated bondage, yet, correspondent to what was stated in the preceding paragraph, we may remark the emphatic particle used by the apostle on this subject, —“ **EVEN** Christ our passover is sacrificed for us;” as if he had said, this so far from setting aside the propriety of imitating in Christian observances, the Jewish preparation, should have a contrary effect, “ **Even** Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,” so much the more solemn and impressive is the New Testament sacrament, “therefore let us keep the **feast**; not with the old leaven,” &c.

Farther, in *awful dispensations* of providence, is not the *solemnity* of the manner in which God arises to deal with men, and calls them to meet him, one special ground of the seasonableness of fasting and prayer? We are not surely to be stirred up to these exercises by the working of servile fear, or a more selfish desire of temporal preservation. God by his judgments would impress deeply on our minds, a sense of our guilty conduct, and thus excite to reformation. If the idea of solemnity may have place in regard to calamities, as justifying the call, “ **Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel,**” may it not also have place to vindicate a similar call by the overseers of the church, along with their invitation, or rather the edict of providence, “ **O Judah, keep your solemn feasts?**” Zion is still like Jerusalem of old “ **a city of solemnities.**” Such she was predicted to be in her New Testament state. (Isa. xxxiii. 20—24.) And we may here also observe,

that the grandeur of the Judge of all is not less visible, than in dreadful providences, nor our approach less affecting in an ordinance which commemorates the most awful display ever made of his hatred against sin,—against our sins. ‘Yes,’ it will still be retorted, ‘but here the vindication of his character is exhibited as past, and we meet him as the God of peace, in whom we may rejoice through the blood of the everlasting covenant.’ And may we not reply, Every believer beholds him in the same light, when he arises to execute vengeance on the earth? “Because thy Judgments are made known, let mount Zion rejoice. The daughters of Judah may shout. This God is our God for evermore.” Psal. xlviii. 11. xcvi. 1—8.) The persuasion of faith will not on such occasions excuse from the duty incumbent. We must “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.” If the view of his character as the God of peace be more clear in the ordinance of the Supper, we have reason to expect our fasting will be less apt to be tainted with that servile spirit which the prospect, or the infliction of judgments, often tends to produce.

In fine, the more solemn the service, the greater on various accounts is the danger of mismanaging; in case of mismanagements, the higher will be the dishonour done to God, and consequently the displeasure provoked, whether paternal or not, must be peculiarly severe. Sin, we know, is capable of many aggravations, from the circumstances in which it is committed. And will any one hold, that there is no difference between failing in attempts at seeking after the Lord, hearing the gospel while under the influence of an evil heart of unbelief, or, let us say, between rejecting the counsel of the Lord, and

being " guilty of the body and blood" of Jesus, by a profanation of the Supper? Great caution is needful: Even saints, it will be granted, ought to exercise a godly jealousy over themselves. Is there then no propriety in joining together to ask of the Lord a right way, and supplicate his favour by fasting and prayer? The exercise is doubtless both suitable and seasonable, such as the overseers of any people may warrantably call for and expect.

IT may perhaps be said, that, allowing the force of all that has been advanced on the two preceding heads, still the preparatory exercises may be performed in private, without the appointment or observance of any days for the purpose.—This will not be denied. A reasonable suggestion temperately stated, always deserves respect. The thought may occur to a candid enquirer, and it is not without force. Such an one, we would remind, that the defenders of the days never held them to be essential, never maintained an absolute necessity for public preparatory service. There are however considerations sufficient to vindicate the appointment of this, and which will also have their due weight with a person of the temper supposed. He will remark, that in the instances from which we have argued, *public* preparatory service, on the grounds specified, usually obtained. It was appointed by God himself in the cases of special intercourse with Israel in the desert, of the passover and of the feast of Tabernacles. The fasting too in cases of ordination, which are social concerns, or of calamities, is public. The observance of the Supper is both public and social, discriminated in this character from baptism, though equally a sacrament. Besides the personal benefit to be expected, it promises con-

gregational, and even diffusive advantage. That it may be blessed in its bearing on the public profession of the body, or for the confirmation of brotherly love, or as a season of revival to any congregation, there is, correspondent to these objects, a suitability and propriety in socially testifying our desires, imploring the abolition of all grounds of controversy, and preparing for its reception. The candid enquirer, will also take into view the many advantages of affording public opportunities for preparation, and calling the people to improve them. Were it not for these, we have reason to fear, the duty might be greatly neglected. He will consider the regard that the overseers of a church ought to have to the due observance of divine institutions, and the expediency of their taking order by all proper means to secure it, as far as in their power. Public administrations, he will allow, are fit and warranted aid for enabling to discharge aright the preparatory duties, and, as such, when circumstances admit, ought not to be withheld from the people.—But our next observation bears more directly on the publicity of the service, and may therefore afford farther satisfaction.

*3dly*, The observance of the usual days both suits and contributes to the fulfilment of the great design of the ordinance, as to the visible church. It was one of our conclusions from the institution, nature, and use of the Supper, that it behoved to be intended for such fellowship as might display the unity of the body in profession and privilege. (Sect. ii. Concl. 3d.) Now the usual days, so far from militating against that frequency of communicating which according to this design is incumbent, are favourable to it. *1st*, The rich dispensation of the Gospel for which they afford an opportunity, has

been found to be an inducement to the people to gather together into one place. Many are thus prevented from satisfying themselves with communicating perhaps but twice a year, in their own respective places of worship, and are brought to testify their fellowship with their brethren in the Lord.

*2dly*, Take the case in another view : Suppose church-members attentive to their duty ; although they should need no inducement to seek after the fellowship of their brethren, yet, if under a spirit of regard to all the ends of the ordinance, the multitude shall gather together, then surely there is a call for a rich and more abundant dispensation of the Gospel than ordinary. If we are "to preach the word in season and out of season," it can never be more in season than on such occasions. "When the people are gathered together, the Lord will give them water." *3dly*, By the observance of the days, and the method of dispensation with which they are connected, the communion of the ministry as well as of the people is attained and manifested ; their fellowship is publicly displayed, both in the discharge of their functions, and in the solemn act of communicating at one table. The beneficial effects of this to themselves and the church must be obvious. Besides the happy opportunity of profiting each other in private by taking sweet counsel together, and in public by doctrine and example, how much does their joining together in the grand acts of solemn profession tend to confirm the members of the church, and according to the nature of the feast, promote the spirit of harmony and love among them ! How striking too, to the world, their joint confession of Christ in this holy ordinance ! But let the days be dropt, and then perhaps only one assistant, a mere case of necessity appears ; let weekly com-



munion be adopted, and nothing of the kind shall obtain. By the communion of the ministry, the reference of the ordinance to the unity of the body is more completely followed out, than even by the convocation of the people. Besides, the people have an interest in this communion. Not to speak of the results of private counsel, or public example tending to stir up the gift possessed by each, and all redounding to the advantage of their respective congregations,—the people have a claim on the occasional exercise of the different gifts God hath bestowed on his church. This is a privilege, which, as far as can be attained, they ought to enjoy. Ministers are not so entirely appropriated to their particular flocks, as not to have a general connection with the body : “ Now there are diversities of gifts, “ but one Spirit ; and there are differences of admi- “ nistrations, but the same Lord, &c. The mani- “ festation of the Spirit is given to every man to “ profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit “ the word of wisdom, to another the word of know- “ ledge, &c. But *all these* worketh that self same “ Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will. “ For as the body is one and hath *many members,* “ and all the members of that one body being many “ are one body, so also is Christ†.” Never can

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† 1 Cor. xii. 4—13. Though in this passage there be a reference to some extraordinary gifts, this does not destroy its application. The case stated by the apostle is the same as to the gifts which still exists in the church. Those of the primitive age were the *manifestation of the Spirit*, or sensible evidence that he was come ; and he came for this among other ends, as they also indicated, to qualify for the work of the ministry in all succeeding ages.

the communion of privilege with respect to the gifts God has bestowed on his church, be more fitly displayed, than at that feast which is intended to manifest the unity of the body,—a light in which we find it appealed to, in the very words which follow those now quoted. *4thly*, The method of dispensation with which the observance of days is connected, has ever had the effect of collecting a multitude of spectators. Now passing the good which may be done by a rich dispensation of the Gospel, under differences of “administrations, and diversities of gifts,” while the impression of the grand solemnity of Christian worship affects the mind, and the followers of Jesus are seen glorying in his cross,—to say nothing of this, the best opportunity is attained of ministers and people jointly fulfilling that great end of the ordinance, which lies in publicly “shewing the death of Jesus.” How grievously, with respect to this end, did the primitive churches err in their *missa*, or dismissal of all but communicants, when the Supper was to be held! Let us not make even such an approach to their error as weekly communion exhibits, or any plan that would nearly limit the publicity of our confession in this ordinance, to ourselves. If we would shew forth the death of Jesus to the world, if under the banner of a holy profession we would glory in his cross before men, let us adhere to that plan, in following which we may ever expect to be “compassed about with a cloud of witnesses.” The consequences too on spectators, which are not foreign to the purpose of “shewing the death of Christ,” may redound to the honour of our crucified, but risen Lord, and to the advancement of his kingdom.

Having disproved the unwarrantableness of the connection between the days and the Supper, and

endeavoured to shew grounds from the ordinance itself which may justify their appointment and observance,—we add, as a

**III. PROPOSITION,** That there are intimations of the mind of Christ and his Spirit in Scripture, which favour the practice. We shall not dwell here on the adaption of various Psalms to our plan of celebrating the New Testament feast; though this has often struck the minds of the godly, and diffused through their exercise a peculiarly pleasing animation, as if our only sanctioned and sacred liturgy, had been designedly formed to suit the service, and express their emotions†. Nor shall we recur as

† We might specify in their order as adapted to the plan, Psalms cxxii. li. xliii. lxiii. lxxv. lxxxiv. Some single Psalms seem to recognize the very mode of procedure, as the xxvi. divided into two parts at the 8th verse; others comprize all that pertains to the plan, as if written to describe it, cxvi. But the opponents of the plan will make no account of all this; they can easily construct Psalms adapted to whatever plan they may invent. Our mode is accused of Judaism, and no wonder, they may think, the Jewish Psalms should suit it. As the Spirit, however, has not thought fit to provide a new system of Psalmody, we may conceive he regarded the one already with the church, as sufficiently adapted to every warranted part or mode of worship in the New Testament state. Had even the adaption of the Psalms suggested the plan, (and it probably has its influence,) this had been no inconsiderable testimony in our favour. The provision in the Psalms has certainly seemed to sanction it, and contributed to its general reception. In the great Hallel, a part of which, it is likely, was sung after the first cele-

we might, on anew ground, to the Passover. In considering solemnity as a proper foundation for preparatory service, we appealed to the solemnity of that feast, as one reason of the preparation enjoined; we might now take up the substitution of the Supper instead of the Passover, as an indication of the propriety of honouring it with similar attentions. We only appeal, however, to some things recorded in regard to the ordinance itself.

The apostolic injunction, 1 Cor. xi. 28. is well known, and readily occurs: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." This exercise was to have a special respect to the "discernment of the Lord's body," and that, not merely in a speculative way, but in spiritual improvement, the former in order to the latter. To enforce the exercise, "the danger of eating and drinking unworthily," is declared; he that does so "eateth and drinketh judgment to himself." There may be various ways of partaking unworthily, as to state, exercise, or external deportment; and correspondent inflictions be dreaded, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." No doubt the Corinthians had fallen into very gross abuses. From these such a mode of observance as obtains among us, would have tended to guard them. They would not have been in danger of confounding the ordinance, even with their love-feasts, much less

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bration of the Supper, Matt. xxvi. 30. and of which some portions are beautifully suited to that ordinance, as Psal. cxvi. 11—19. there are yet Judaisms which many cannot digest, and have seemed to ridicule. See Psal. cxviii. 27.

with their collation-suppers, common entertainments. The design of the apostle was to rouse them to make the necessary distinction, and to regard the Lord's Supper as a peculiarly solemn part of Christian worship. Self-examination he particularly enjoined. To follow up his mandate, is one design of our preparation service, and of what has commonly been called *Fencing the Tables*. The precept could doubtless be obtemperated in private; and the terms used by the apostle, may from the circumstances of the case, be considered as bearing on a private discharge of the duty. The teachers of that church, it would seem, had been guilty of the same abuses with the people; all had misapprehended the design of the ordinance, and needed to examine themselves. But it will not be granted that the words, "Let a man examine himself," necessarily describe private performance, much less restrict the duty to it. They require most particular and *personal* examination; but this may obtain in public under the ministry of the word; and—considering the wandering of minds little accustomed to survey their own operations, the defects of knowledge, the involvements of perplexing cases, the deceitfulness of the heart, &c. better than in private. The aid of their pastors, in an orderly state of the church may well be expected by the people, and ought to be afforded. When one commits the work to God, and says, "Examine and prove me, try the heart and reins," does he look for some miraculous influence or effect upon him? No: his desire is to be fulfilled by the word, which is as "a fire and a hammer." And special countenance is promised to the preaching of the word, for accomplishing all the ends to which it is suited.—The instruction of the people in the nature and grand references of

the ordinance, to guard as much as possible against all that may be implied in not discerning the Lord's body ; the more immediate abstraction of the mind from the world ; the elevation of the affections, and whatever may tend to excite to self-examination, assist or direct in it ;—these are the objects in view by our day of preparation. And we make it a separate portion of time, because to employ the day of fasting on these objects, would be to deviate from its proper design†.

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† It cannot fail to be observed, that the opponents of the days, have adopted what has long been the Socinian view of 1 Cor. xi. 28—32. This is by no means an invidious remark. There is no design of insinuating, that the ideas of the Supper coincide with those of Socinians : But in attempting to simplify this ordinance, however strange it may appear, they have found it necessary to take refuge in a notion of discerning the Lord's body, and of the judgments threatened against those who do not, which cannot be better expressed than in the words of the Bishop of Landaff : ' Be not terrified by some expressions you will meet with in your common Prayer-book, about being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,' &c. Then explaining the whole passage as entirely restricted to the misconduct of the Corinthians, he adds, ' You see how little reason you have to fear you will receive the Sacrament unworthily, in the sense in which St. Paul uses that word ; or that you will incur the guilt that was incurred by the Corinthians ; for you will not commit intemperance at the table of the Lord, nor will you irreverently consider the Sacrament as a common entertainment : but you will with

Let us next attend to our Lord's procedure at the time of institution. There were no days observed. It was impracticable. Jesus passed directly from

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' great piety and gratitude remember the death of  
' Christ; you will eat bread as a memorial of his  
' body which was broken, you will drink wine as a  
' memorial of his blood which was shed for you,—  
' and in doing this, you will discern the Lord's bo-  
' dy; for not discerning of which the Corinthians  
' were punished with divers diseases and sundry  
' kinds of death.' *Address after Confirmation. Lond.*  
1789. p. 26—29. Unless then we be liable to the  
same gross abuses which prevailed among the Co-  
rinthians, it seems there can be little necessity for  
self-examination, or for serious concern in regard to  
the Supper. But the great body of Protestant di-  
vines have hitherto considered much more as inclu-  
ded in discerning the Lord's body, than the Bishop  
of Landaff and some others are disposed to admit:  
Believing all Scripture to be given by inspiration,  
and profitable, they have been unwilling to fritter  
away or set aside large portions of the New Testa-  
ment, as bearing merely on the state of affairs at  
the commencement of Christianity, and of no far-  
ther use in the church than a faithful record of facts:  
they have viewed the Spirit as embracing the oppor-  
tunity afforded by the evils that prevailed at Corinth,  
to furnish general direction and instruction to the  
church in future ages, and particularly about the  
proper observance of the Supper: they have consi-  
dered the directions about external observance, as  
given in order to spiritual improvement, and re-  
garded this last as chiefly in view. Though they  
allow that the New Testament is not a ministration  
of death and terror like the Old, and that temporal

the celebration of the Passover to that of the Supper ; his disciples could not fast while he was with them, and no day of thanksgiving could succeed, since " that same night Jesus was betrayed." Though the observances had been practicable, yet unless our Lord had intended they should be essential to the celebration of the New Testament feast, it is not to be supposed he would have sanctioned them even by exemplification. We have various things however in the history of the institution, sufficiently evidential of the mind of Jesus as to the propriety of preparatory exercises, such as we are wont to connect with the ordinance :

1st, Our Lord made the time previous to institution a season of solemn inquiry. The disciples, it will be conceded, did not know that any such ordinance as the Supper was about to be kept. But their Master knew, and in what we are about to state of his procedure had a respect to the intended institution. He made a declaration which produced " great thoughts and searchings of heart," and he made it manifestly with that design ; " Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." Is there no danger of treachery still among

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judgments are less frequently inflicted, yet they have held, that, according to the very spirit of the New Testament, we ought not to need the influence of severe sanctions to excite to our duty. Christians are not to be scourged into obedience like children in a state of minority ; but are they therefore to be less studious to please God ? Shall the familiarity to which they are admitted, diminish from the veneration ever due to the Lord, and which the solemnities of our Zion are intended to call forth in an eminent degree ?



professed disciples? Let serious self-examination have place even on this head. Among the multitude of communicants there may be some one who shall "betray the Son of man with a kiss." Mark the effect of our Lord's intimation; the disciples were deeply concerned, and began to say, "Lord, "is it I?" The sincere friends of Jesus will ever exercise a godly jealousy over themselves; they will not only merely consult together, as Luke informs us the disciples did, (Luke xxii. 23.) nor only put home the question to their own consciences, they will bring it to their Lord, and embrace every opportunity of being tried by him, according to the means still existent in the church. To have known that treachery was among them, and yet have wanted the opportunity of applying for a discovery from their Master, would doubtless have added much to the grief of the disciples. Their application was most particular; "They began to say to him *one by one*, Is it I?" (Mark xix. 19.) It would seem they expected an affirmative answer. Not receiving this, as Jesus for a time kept them in suspense, "Peter beckoned to the disciple whom Jesus loved, "that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast, said, "Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." Still this answer seems to have been only secretly communicated to John. John xiii. 26. compare 28, 29. "When he had dipped the sop he gave it to Judas Iscariot." This man suspecting he was pointed out by the action, was instantly impelled by Satan to fulfil his purpose. On our Lord's saying farther, "That thou dost, do quickly,"—a sentence which the other disciples interpreted very favourably, Judas supposing he was no longer hid, came out at length

with the question "Lord, is it I?" Jesus answered, "Thou hast said." (Matt. xxvi. 22—23.) Of all things, genuine disciples are most afraid of dishonouring their Lord: The fear of betraying him, will often sadden in some measure the most joyful occasions, and this holy concern will be most apt to engross their minds in prospect, or on the eve of solemn professions. It is the will of Jesus, we perceive from the account now stated, that it should. The hypocrite, like Judas, will be the last to investigate the case, to apply to Jesus for a discovery, or resort to the proper means for attaining it.

*2dly*, Our Lord previous to the administration of the Supper, performed a very significant action; "He washed the disciples' feet."—This action took place after the Passover; for we are told, "Jesus *rose from supper,*" when he "laid aside his garments and girded himself with the towel," John xiii. 2. 4. But the materials of the Passover were not removed, since it was after the washing "he dipped the sop for Judas;" the action therefore took place before the administration of what is styled the Lord's Supper. Among other things, it might intimate the commencement of a new feast about to take place, as it was usual to wash the feet before sitting down to an entertainment. But it had another reference of a more appropriate kind, to the ordinance of the Supper. That we may not seem to stretch the import of the transaction beyond the design of our Lord, we shall state shortly the purposes it was intended to serve. 1st, To testify our Lord's love to his disciples, amidst all their failings, though he knew there was a traitor among them, and had full in his view the scenes both of his sufferings and glory,—was one design,

ver. 1, 2, 3. *2dly*, Another might be, to exhibit before them his own voluntary abasement for their sakes, particularly that servitude in which he engaged for their purification, and the last scene of which they were soon to witness. Of this, the several actions he performed, laying aside his garments, putting on the servile habit, &c. as stated ver. 4th and 5th, are fitly descriptive. After he had performed the service dictated by his love, he took his garments again and sat down, ver. 12. See Heb. x. 10, 11, 12. A *3d* end he had in view, was that of setting an example of charity and hospitality, particularly of humility in all the offices of brotherly-kindness, ver. 13—17. It was foreign to the Jewish manners for a teacher to wash the feet of his disciple ; it is contrary to the manners of any country for the master to act such a part to the servants. But what a Teacher and Master was here ! The humility displayed in the transaction was wholly without precedent or parallel. Our Lord therefore proposed the example in an argument from the greater to the less, “Ye call me Master and Lord, “&c.” But, *4thly*, The seemingly incidental opposition of Peter, ver. 6th, brought out a discovery of something more couched in our Lord’s procedure on this occasion ; “What I do,” said Jesus, “thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know *hereafter*,” ver. 7. There was a mystery in the transaction sufficient to vindicate its propriety, something of which Peter had no apprehension. This our Lord did not mean to conceal. At some future time, probably by the descent of the Spirit, it was to be fully disclosed. For we learn from what follows, that the mystery he referred to, did not lie wholly in the example, which Jesus immediately explained to the disciples. Peter not conceiving it suitable for

his Lord to perform a service so humble, continued to oppose, and in terms that seemed to reflect on the other disciples for quietly allowing their Master to wash their feet, ver. 8. On this Jesus unfolded a little of the mystery; and though Peter acted freely according to the natural warmth of his temper, his opposition appears to have been wisely ordered, for affording to our Lord an opportunity to disclose the reference his conduct had then to the character and state of the disciples, as well as to the sacred observance about to take place. His discourse and detection of the traitor, previous to the institution of the Supper, as recorded ver. 18—30. threw farther light on the transaction. Two things pertain to the mystery it involved: (1.) The washing of his disciples' feet, might be an emblem of the BLESSEDNESS they were to experience in their future labours. It intimated that he would be kind to them, would solace and refresh them under all their fatigues in his service, and abundantly compensate for the hardships they might undergo in following him through good and bad report. Hence in allusion to what he had done, he describes them ver. 20th, as ambassadors, his missionaries. The emblematical transaction was most apposite to the character; for as the feet of such are the members most apt to be wearied or beat, the washing of them, especially considering the mode of travelling in eastern countries, is most grateful and refreshing. The disciples then, were not only to comfort one another after their Lord's example, but practically "to know thereafter," his kindness in verifying what he had emblematically taught them to expect. It was at the close of his personal ministry our Lord thus, as it were, refreshed his disciples for all their toils in following him. And we find him elsewhere describing the

future and final reward of compensation, by an allusion to something of a similar nature. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall *gird himself*, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them†." But this emblematic instruction does not exhaust the mystery; for, *2dly*, We find from his address to Peter, it lay chiefly in the necessity of attending to PURITY both in individuals and ecclesiastical societies. With respect to *individuals*, the particular address to Peter, intimates the necessity of spiritual purity as manifestative of interest in Jesus. "Except I wash *thee*, thou hast no part in me." The inconsiderate reply of the apostle produced an explanation, by which we learn, that the transaction as to him and others did not bear on regenerating influence, but on the necessity of purification even after conversion. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." The regenerated can never fall so, as to need to be washed anew. Hence Baptism, the sign is not to be re-administered. But much defilement may be contracted in the walk and conversation. Personal purity, however, was not solely in our Lord's view: The transaction was designed to intimate that *ecclesiastical societies*,

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† Luke xii. 37. He does not speak of "washing their feet," because then all their labours will be ended; they will no more need such refreshment and solace as he taught his disciples to expect during their sojournings in his service on earth. The idea in this passage quoted from Luke, is, that whatever his servants may lack here below, a sumptuous entertainment waits them, to be served up by their Master. See also Luke xxii. 27—30.

even the purest, will require purgation. This is evident from his extending its reference to the disciples as a body; "Ye are clean," said he, "but not all." The evangelist explains, "For he knew who should betray him;" that polluted member who was a devil, a calumniator and covetous, "therefore said he, ye are not all clean," ver. 11. A society or church once "washed" or reformed, may not need to re-commence the work, or engage anew in reformation, but may, as to its general character, be "clean every whit." Yet still there are in the purest, as among the disciples, unworthy members who need to be purged out†.

Consider now this mystery in its reference to the *time* of the transaction. It was immediately before the institution and observance of the Supper, our Lord washed his disciples feet. As the administrator of that ordinance, he prepared them for its reception, and immediately proceeded to verify what he had done in a mystical form, ver. 18—35. As the apostle of our profession, he also set before the disciples the necessity of personal purity, and of sanctifying the people with a view to solemn service. What they might not know fully at that time, they were to know thereafter, when called to direct and

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† The view given may appear too much expanded. There is a fulness of meaning in the uncommon transactions of Jesus, worthy of being traced out, as far as we have lights afforded to guide us with certainty. The design of enlarging, however, was to prevent any from supposing, that by proving one or two of the ends designed by our Lord, (as for instance the exhibition of an example,) they had set aside the application of the transaction to the point in hand.

manage the service of the Christian church, to which the Supper belongs. The modes of preparation for the Passover, were not suited to the New Testament feast, they could never be connected with it. Even at the time of institution, the *ceremonial* fitness of the family of Jesus for the typical ordinance, was not to stand for the sanctification required in order to the observance of the Supper. Jesus accordingly set about a peculiar preparation, the meaning of which he soon exemplified in the cases of Judas. And it was such a preparation as taught the necessity of a *moral* or Christian sanctifying of individuals and bodies, in order to similar service. The transaction, it may be remarked, does not properly point out the duty of courts, or of the overseers of a body in their judicial capacity. They ought, no doubt, to put a difference between the clean and the unclean. It is incumbent on them to exclude the vile from the table of the Lord; but if we attend to the history, we shall find that Judas was ~~not~~ excluded by any act of what might be called ~~judicial~~ authority, on the part of Jesus. Some commentators hold that he was actually present. The accounts of the evangelists placed together in their harmony seem to be unfavourable to the idea†. But

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† Luke is the only evangelist who seems to represent him as present. But it is well known, Luke does not write according to the order of time; he often connects events by their similarity, or coincidence in other respects. This accounts for his mentioning the celebration of the Supper immediately after that of the Passover, and connecting the declaration about the traitor, which, as appears from John, intervened, with that about the ambition of the disciples, which, according to Matthew, was

whether he was present, or absent, is by no means material. In following out the purport of the transaction, something was done by Jesus to detect and expose him, that a pure communion might obtain. This was done by Jesus rather in his *ministerial* capacity, than as one sitting in judgment on a character. And though the ministerial procedure of our Lord was not always attended with success, it is likely it had the effect in this instance, through the operation no doubt of the evil passions of Judas, who could not bear to be exposed, ver. 30—35. As Jesus sustained no office connected with the legal economy, (Heb. vii. 13.) so he did not exercise any ministerial authority in regard to the due observance

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before the Passover, and that about Peter's denial, which by the consent of the other evangelists followed upon the Supper. The words of Luke, chap. xxii. 21. "Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the table," are to be explained by Matt. xxvi. 23. or Mark xiv. 20. as referring to his "dipping with our Lord into the dish," which must obviously be understood of the Passover feast. This was not the specific exposure of the person. Neither Matthew nor Mark mention his going out when detected; but we learn from John, that on his receiving the sop, and the intimation to do quickly what he was about, which, it would seem, brought out the question, "Lord, is it I?" and the explicit declaration, "Thou hast said," recorded by Matthew and Mark,—“he went out immediately.” Now this detection, according to the two last evangelists, was before the celebration of the Supper. The sop seems to have been taken from the materials of the Passover, which had remained on the table during the washing of the feet.



of the Passover ; but it was his province to see to purity of communion in the Supper. Judas had a right in the eye of the church to partake of the ancient feast. A similar right he might be supposed to have to sit down at the New Testament Table, since the purposes he had formed were not yet ripened into scandal. But in the eye of God, who seeth not as man doth, he had no right, and therefore our Lord in his ministerial character, by an expressive action, declared to the disciples that they “ were not all clean,” and shewed them the necessity of a purgation, which he soon took means to accomplish, by detecting the hypocrisy of Judas.

May we not conclude then, from the solemn preparation for the first communion, from the instruction it was intended to convey, and from our Lord’s procedure according to it, that it is his will a special regard should be had by individuals to personal purity, and by ecclesiastical bodies to the state of their members, in prospect of the Supper, no less than under the law in prospect of ascending God’s holy hill? (Psal. xxiv. 3—6.) And does it not appear also to be his mind, that even supposing a society “ clean every whit,” so that there are no grounds for judicial procedure against any, yet all means ought to be used *ministerially* for “ sanctifying the people?” If these conclusions be admitted, the transaction certainly countenances our recourse to fasting and other warranted means of preparation, not only in private but in public, while it must be unfriendly to the plan that reduces the Supper to a level with the usual parts of Christian observance †.

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† During the 2d and 3d centuries we find the practice of washing the feet, an appendage to Baptism.

IV. The mode of observing the Supper among us, is farther justified by the present state of the church, and the character of the age in which we live.

What is contained in the two preceding propositions, forms a defence of preparation ; and of fasting and thanksgiving, from the nature, import, and design of the Supper itself. Preparation either in public or private, can at no time be dispensed with ; and we have endeavoured to shew, that fasting and thanksgiving, with the public performance of special preparatory duties, when otherwise expedient, admit of sufficient vindication. While fasting and thanksgiving, however, are not deemed essential to a due and valid celebration of the Supper, much less the *public* performance of these exercises, or even of any preparatory service, we allow that the circumstances of particular congregations, and the general state of the church, ought to be considered, and to have influence in determining the expediency of appointments. They to whom the power of appointing days of public worship and calling the peo-

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This, besides the absurdity of taking the command, ver. 14th, in a literal sense, was an improper connection. What our Lord did, referred not to the first and complete washing of a person, but to the future purification which saints or churches require, and to which any solemn service may be considered as a special call. It had been better for the Christians in these primitive times, to have taken up the import of the action performed by our Lord, and adopted, according to its spirit, some such plan of observing the Supper as is followed by us, instead of superstitiously adhering to a rite of bodily exercise.

ple together, belongs, will act according to "the Spirit of wisdom and prudence." As we might specify various circumstances in the case of particular congregations, which will merit their attention, so 'we may conceive a time when the power of godliness will be such, that professors will not need to be *put upon* preparation and thanksgiving exercises, 'by being called so often to *public worship* before 'and after the sacrament of the Supper; and when 'they will of their own accord employ much more 'time in these exercises, on such a solemn occasion, 'than they do at present by our days of public wor- 'ship.' (ANDERSON, p. 313.) Whatever grounds the ordinance itself may furnish to justify the exercise of fasting in all common cases, we may conceive a period when the reign of grace, or the grand operations of Providence may be such, that, as in the days of our Lord, fasting would be altogether improper,—such, that the exhortation once addressed by the priests and Levites to God's antient people, would become the ministers of the Gospel, "This season is holy, mourn not, neither weep, nor be grieved." Let the church go forth with mirth on every side, to behold her King adorned with that crown, or those "many crowns," acquired in "the day of the gladness of his heart." In such periods the public profession of fasting, as it would be improper, is usually less needful than in times of a different description. The youth of Jesus attend him "in the beauties of holiness, as the dew from "the womb of the morning."

But is the day in which we live such a "day of divine power," or of the glorious reign of our Redeemer? So far from perceiving in our times, any thing to controul the expediency of our plan, or secure sufficiently without the provisions it makes, the

regard due to the Supper, we find on the contrary in the present state of the church, and in the character of the age, additional grounds of vindication. These too must be the less liable to exception with our opponents, as they pertain directly to the scheme of Providence.

Many an eulogium has been bestowed on the piety and purity of the primitive ages. Whether the Christians of these ages deserved the indiscriminate commendations so liberally lavished on them, particularly in regard to their weekly and daily communicings, may be questionable. The apostle John has in the epistles directed to the seven churches of Asia, and which exhibit "the things that then were," (Rev. i. 19. comp. iv. 1.) delineated a scene very different from that held up to our view by the advocates of frequent communion. In one place, the Christians had "left their first love." In another "the things that remained," were "ready to die," and there were but "a few names who had not defiled their garments." In another, lukewarmness prevailed to a remarkable degree. Jesus had something against all these churches but one; and yet these were the churches which enjoyed the inspection and labours of him who outlived all the apostles. The fears expressed by Paul in regard to his beloved Ephesians, and other highly favoured churches, began it seems to be realized ere John departed to the joy of his Lord. In his catholic epistle he laments the tokens "of the last time," or predicted period of degeneracy, which even then began to appear. Many unworthy spirits had shewn themselves in the church. Antichrists were abroad; apostacies had taken place to such an extent as to discourage the faithful, (1 John ii. 18, 19,) and among them brotherly-love seemed to be rapidly de-

clining. The venerable apostle found it necessary to adduce every topic by which charity might be enforced.

Allowing, however, that much of the praise bestowed on the primitive age is just,—the character of the Christians then, while, as delineated by our opponents, it differs widely from that of Christians in the present age, so far from furnishing the conclusion drawn from it, founds an opposite conclusion. Instead of saying, the first Christians were spiritual, heavenly-minded, and charitable, and they celebrated the sacrament frequently, and without the observance of attendant days, therefore we ought to do the same; the statement must be—the body of Christians then, were of a different cast from what they are now, and therefore much may be requisite in this last time for securing a proper observance of that holy ordinance, which could not be needful with them. Under the zenith of apostolic ministrations, “the faith and love of the saints” afforded copious matter of thanksgiving, was “spoken of throughout the whole world†.” We need not therefore be surprised, if the apostles did not call upon them to observe days of fasting, or give public attendance on preparatory service, to secure among them a proper celebration of the Supper. ‘A peculiar mode of dispensing the ordinance of baptism obtained, during the ministry of the Baptist: The exercise of solemn fasting and mourning for sin, with an humble acknowledgment thereof, accompanied the dispensation of that ordinance by this

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† See particularly the high commendations of the Thessalonians, in the two epistles to them; and, in general, the introductory parts of the Apostolic Letters.

‘ messenger of the Lord to the people.’ (COURTAS *Lett. to the Old Dissenters*, 70—72.) The circumstances were such as to attach to it the name of *the baptism of repentance*. Now though repentance could not be dispensed with, the solemn austerities, and severe discipline of John’s ministry, would have been improperly transferred to the administration of that sacrament after the effusion of the Holy Ghost. We find less required by the apostles, under the evidences of that plenary effusion, in order to baptism, than by the prophet of the desert. But his mode of procedure was suited to the state of things in the church when he appeared.

‘ We may conceive a time when the power of  
 ‘ godliness will be such, that professing Christians  
 ‘ will not need to be *put upon* preparation and thanks-  
 ‘ giving exercises.—But who will say that this is the  
 ‘ case at present? Many are forward to seek tokens  
 ‘ of admission, who make no secret of their back-  
 ‘ wardness to spare the time necessary for suitable  
 ‘ preparation, from the hurry of worldly business.  
 ‘ And yet while people make no conscience of suit-  
 ‘ able preparation, communicating will not only be  
 ‘ unprofitable, but bring on fearful plagues†.’ Our  
 mode, then, as we have seen it is lawful, is highly  
 expedient for securing as far as attainable right ob-

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† ANDERSON, p. 313. “ It appears a little enig-  
 “ matical to me,” says the author of the *Letter to*  
*the Old Dissenters*, “ that persons in such a dege-  
 “ nerate age as this, and so deeply immersed in pub-  
 “ lic business, that they cannot spare a day once or  
 “ twice a year, should yet be so habitually prepared  
 “ for celebrating the sacrament of the Supper every  
 “ Sabbath,” p. 76.

servance, and preventing the divine displeasure that might otherwise be incurred.

It is calculated, farther, to secure the credit of the ordinance in a degenerate age. ‘ To persons, or a church, such as the apostolic, most eminently under the reign of grace, the ordinance being viewed by faith as a holy and sublime institution, and they thus affected with the highest love and veneration, in which, connected with the holy and sublime nature of the ordinance itself, proper solemnity consists ;—to these persons, frequency could not be supposed to diminish the solemnity.’ Proceeding on this supposition, such persons, or such a church might be capable of a more frequent dispensation than usually obtains among us, and, unaccompanied with our public services, without the credit of the ordinance being destroyed. But among a very different description of persons, in a degenerate age, many weak and sickly, and many, possibly very many, possessed of no more than a mere outward profession ; faith and its evidences low among the best, the case must be otherwise : Recourse must be had to the means of impressing with awe, and awakening reverence, or maintaining it on the spirit. And such a plan of observance becomes proper, as may best guard this sacred institution from being abused by nominal Christians, or contemned by an ungodly generation†.

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† COURTAS, p. 72, 73. After stating the utility of solemn public certifications, and of those discoveries which the word of God may make even to the reason of natural men, he adds, “ To adopt the” supposed “ apostolic frequency,” and, (we may insert,) lay aside the public preparatory services, “ in a degenerate state of the church, would infallibly

In fine, if in a period of prevailing immorality and defection, a body of people shall be associated together, to keep themselves free, as far as can be attained, from the evils that surround them, they are associated to bewail these evils, and testify against them. To the profession of such a body, fastings necessarily belong: They resemble those "men who sighed and cried for the abominations done in the land;" of whom Jehovah expressed his high approbation, and at a time when he gave commission to seal them, or set a mark on them, to secure them from approaching calamities. (Ezek. ix. Rev. vii. xi. xiv. 1.) When can such a body of Christians more properly observe days of fasting, than when about to avow solemnly their discriminating profession, and their fellowship in it at the table of the Lord? Their very existence as a separate society, indicates, that matters are not well with the church of God, that the purity, fervour, and faithfulness supposed to characterise the primitive ages, are not the distinguishing ornaments of the present generation. Abstracting from all other reasons which might justify fasting in prospect of keeping the Supper, they may perceive in the very grounds which occasioned, and still require their separate existence, enough to vindicate the practice with them. In a period of corruption, it is specially incumbent on

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"destroy that external solemnity, (by which he  
 "means the awe produced on the minds of nominal  
 "Christians) with its advantages, I have now men-  
 "tioned. The consequence would be, a more open  
 "contempt of God's institution by the wicked, and  
 "disregard of his law. In this opinion I am sup-  
 "ported by the common experience, and common  
 "sense of all mankind."



them, according to the character they bear, to manifest a sacred regard to the pure and devout observance of divine institutions†.

To what has been stated under these four propositions in vindication of our mode, we subjoin the following observations :

1. The authority of appointing such days of public worship as are connected with the Supper, belongs to the office-bearers of the church.—Had there been stated periods for fasting and thanksgiving of divine institution, the necessity of exercising a delegated authority had been superseded ; nothing had remained but to see to observance, as in the case of the Sabbath. Public fasting and thanksgiving, however, are only declared to be warrantable on fit occasions, or on such grounds, as according to scripture examples and deductions from them, appear to render the duties seasonable and proper. The canon of revelation is closed, and we cannot expect a voice from heaven to fix the specific times. The power of judging concerning these, and of appointing accordingly, must therefore reside somewhere in the church.—But the New Testament code acknowledges no ecclesiastical power as invested in any but those denominated rulers. (1 Cor. xii. 28, 29. 1 Thess. v. 12. Heb. xiii. 7, 17.) These are declared to be the elders, whether they labour in word and doctrine or not. (1 Tim. v. 17.) To them it belongs to mark the seasons, to judge of the occasions, and determine the expediency of all pub-

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† The author of the Letters of Communion, who has so eagerly contended for the new measure, is connected with a society, or societies of this description. They are the last from whom opposition to the present method might have been expected.

lic voluntary observance. (1 Tim. iii. 1. Tit. i. 5, 7. they are overseers and stewards.) And it is their province to order in every warranted mode, for the due celebration of divine institutions. (Acts xx. 18. 1 Tim. iii. 5. 1 Pet. v. 2.)

2. When the days are appointed, they ought to be kept.---The authority by which they are appointed is the very same to which an immediate respect must be had in observing a day of fasting or thanksgiving on any emergency of providence. It may be thought that in such cases the providential call is what chiefly requires respect. This will not be denied. But of that call the people are not the constituted judges, so as to determine and appoint the correspondent public services. They have, no doubt, what has been denominated a discrete or private judgment, in regard to the emergencies of providence, as well as the doctrines of the gospel, and according to this, may petition their overseers for a day of fasting and thanksgiving. They may in various other ways endeavour to excite their rulers to a discharge of their duty, should they seem negligent or inattentive. Nay, without transgressing their province, they may, in a prudent and becoming manner, say even to a faithful pastor, "Take heed to the ministry thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it†." But still the autho-

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† Col. iv. 17. The faithful in that church were desired to read "the epistle from Laodicea." See preceding verse. If an inspired epistle be referred to, it was probably the first to Timothy, said to be written from Laodicea. In that epistle directions for the fulfilment of a ministry received of the Lord are laid down. The faithful were to express their

ity to which an immediate respect must be had in the observance of uninstituted times of worship is that of the rulers: nor is this authority less worthy of respect when exercised in cases of voluntary sacrifice, provided the appointments be warrantable, and have enough to justify their being made, than when controuled by providence. Let us instance a case of the choice and ordination of deacons. The office of deacons is warranted, but it is not so essential that a congregation cannot be regularly organized without them. They are denominated "helps," and where their assistance is needful, or might be useful, may be created. God has provided, by sanctioning the office, that their being employed, as assistants to elders in certain duties, shall not be an unwarrantable addition to the order of his church, nor placed on a level with will-worship. Now, they who are the judges in such matters, may act, not only on the call of necessity, but even of propriety and expediency, in requiring the people to look out among them such as they may reckon fit for the office. The authority exercised in this case ought not to be disrespected; nor may those who are chosen refuse ordination, though the persons by whom the choice was appointed should not be able to shew them a call of absolute necessity.---The divine command to the people is express, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls." They may be said to watch for the souls committed to their charge, when they endeavour to secure the celebration of a solemn ordinance in the manner best suited to its nature and design.---Since then, as we have

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desire that Archippus should follow these directions among them.

proved, the connecting of certain days, or public exercises, with the Lord's Supper, is not unwarrantable, and since there is enough to justify the appointment of these days, or of the exercises to which they are devoted; the overseers of any congregation have a right to require the observance of these days when appointed.

*3dly*, It is proper that an uniformity of worship, particularly of the mode of celebrating the Supper, should obtain in a religious body. The establishment of uniformity in Britain and Ireland was once the object of a very laudable and solemn engagement. Acts have been made to secure uniformity in the dispensation of the Supper. Although much be left to the regulation of Sessions, who are the best judges of expediency and propriety in particular circumstances, as indeed the whole business of appointment ought to rest with them, instead of ever being determined by a general ecclesiastical law, yet Sessions ought to study as far as possible an uniformity of method. The want of this is often attended with serious consequences. It may occasion unnecessary offence, a thing peculiarly disagreeable in regard to the ordinance of communion. If the Supper be, as we have seen, designed to maintain the fellowship of the different congregations which constitute a professing body, a common understanding as to the mode of procedure will be requisite, and the overseers of one congregation, while acting in the sphere of their own jurisdiction, ought to manifest a proper regard to the rest of their other brethren in the Lord. The common grounds of vindication, stated in our propositions, are a sufficient basis of uniformity, and while acted upon will ever produce it. They pertain to the ordinance itself, and the present state of the church. Any

great alteration of affairs, which we have supposed may controul the plan now followed, will be generally felt. The direction it may give to the mode of observance will not be confined to one congregation; it will establish uniformity while its influence lasts. And where particular circumstances may now interfere, no offence can be warrantably taken.

4. While there is so much in the nature and design of the ordinance, and in the circumstances of the church to justify the present mode of observance, it ought not to be laid aside on grounds of personal inconveniency,—

(1.) Because the days are not cumbersome to the people who are required to observe them. They do not too frequently recur; no more than what are barely proper are appointed, and only one half of the Saturday and Monday is set apart, constituting with the Fast but two entire days.

(2.) Because we ought not to yield to the worldly-minded. Men devoted to the world, anxious to retain on all occasions what God has allowed for the concerns of this life, may grudge even half a day from their six. The principle by which they are actuated, would appropriate the Sabbath itself, did not civil authority interpose. The prevalence of this principle, and its opposition to the usual sacrifice of time, as well as of substance, on sacramental occasions, ought not to overrule regard to a plan which is calculated to testify against it.

(3.) Because the godly ought to be more enlightened than to refuse compliance, and are not to be expected to oppose on grounds of personal inconveniency. No individual who pleads a case of necessity for himself, if but a reasonable man, not to say a genuine Christian, will be disposed to set up that case for a directory to any court of Christ. Because

on some occasions he may have found the observance of the days inconvenient, or perhaps may have such an allotment in life, that while certain circumstances remain, it must ever be impracticable for him to observe them, he will not therefore wish the plan to be accommodated to his situation, much less to be laid aside ; nor, which would amount to the same thing, but discover less illumination and greater perversity, will he strike out against the authority of his overseers to appoint the observance of such days. It must ill comport with the fervour of piety, to grudge the small sacrifice of time claimed for more necessary purposes than any the world can ever place in competition, purposes too far superior to the mere dispensation of tokens for which a modicum, it seems, would be allowed by those who are for discarding our plan.

Upon the whole, the arrangements in the Presbyterian method will be found, it is hoped, among the "gold, silver, and precious stones,—work" that will stand every trial by fire, and survive even the judgments designed to demolish and consume the whole structure of superstitious inventions.—May God shew kindness to Zion, then shall the righteous offerings of his church and people be accepted of him ; --"the meek shall eat and be satisfied, and give "praise to the Lord."

THE END.

# A P P E N D I X.



## SHORT REVIEW

OF

MR. MASON'S LETTERS ON COMMUNION.



**F**OR the abilities of this author, the writer of the present review acknowledges great respect. In the compilation, quaintly entitled, "First Ripe Fruits," there are peices which do honour to the powers of his mind, to his eloquence, and to his piety. The "Letters on Communion" come in for their share of this just tribute of praise. It is to be feared, however, they have served the cause of Independency beyond what Mr. Mason himself either apprehended or would have wished. If we may judge from their tendency, they have produced in some, and cherished in others, the idea, that according to the plan hitherto followed, the rulers of the church have been tyrannically infringing on Christian liberty, and imposing on the consciences of the people; they have thus encouraged a spirit of insubordination, not only inimical to the peace and order of the church, but to the interests of religion in general. The fervour of piety which glows in almost every page, must have greatly conduced to these unhappy effects. Had Mr. Mason, before he adopted the style and manner of writing employed

in his Letters, looked to the probable consequences, pondered these in his mind, and considered at the same time, that he was striking out against what deserved to be respectfully treated,—a plan very generally approved and received,—he would doubtless have proceeded with greater caution. There were other methods to which he might easily have had recourse, and methods more worthy of a Presbyterian pastor. The reformation designed, if it did not go all the length of establishing weekly communion, was not so very important as to warrant his attempting to expose to public odium the practice of the Presbyterian churches, or representing that practice as in fact a reception of the “bequests of Rome,” an imitation of “the precedents she had set.” Boldness in the cause of truth, or of what we apprehend to be so, is commendable: We must take care, however, lest by our boldness we stumble the brethren, and cause many to offend. “A prudent man dealth with knowledge.”

But passing these consequences, the very spirit of the Letters, and the plan they would establish, seems in various respects unfriendly to Presbyterian communion. In them, the design of the Lord's Supper in regard to the visible church, and the holy profession of Christians, is greatly overlooked, if not entirely set aside. The chain of reasoning employed, goes to support and vindicate weekly dispensation; and the author, feeling the tendency of his argument, has not, in several instances, concealed his disposition to acquiesce in this plan. These, however, we may regard as but a species of involuntary concessions which could not well be avoided, for the object of the Letters was not to recommend its adoption. They were obviously designed only to bring about a more frequent dispensation than at



present obtains. Were we induced to judge from the elaborate discussion on the observance of days, we might suspect that the main drift of the work was to have these days, so unrighteously "wedded to the ordinance," discarded; and that the argument of frequency was chosen as best suited to accomplish the end. If so, it was natural for the mind to be ingrossed with the idea of spiritual utility, and it would be unjust to charge the author with wilfully neglecting, or keeping out of sight other ends for which the ordinance was expressly designed. He meant not, neither came it into his heart, to sap the foundations of Presbyterian communion, or introduce such a plan as would change at length the face of the church. Whatever was his original purpose, he would certainly deplore the effect, were every vestige of that diffusive demonstration of unity abolished, which has so long been kept up by means of the Supper, and for which the ordinance was evidently provided.

In the execution of the work, there are two grand fallacies to be marked; a few reflections on these may shorten our review of the Letters.

*First*, The author all along confounds frequent *communicating* with a frequent *dispensation* of the ordinance *in the same place*. It may be uncharitable to ascribe this to design, but the argument certainly required it; for should it appear, or even be allowed to occur to the reader, that though the Supper be not frequently dispensed in the same place, yet there might be (as there is in fact on the plan presently followed), abundant scope for frequent communicating, the argument is lost. The reader must think with himself, what does Mr. Mason mean by *frequent communion*? If it refer to the *duty* of Christi-

ans, there can be no objection against stating the obligations to it, and awakening to a sense of its importance. But the title is ambiguous. If it bear on the *plan of procedure* in ecclesiastical administration, the reasoning ought to run in a different channel ; it ought not to be that sort of dealing we would employ with the careless and supine, to rouse them to embrace every opportunity of shewing the Lord's death ; but argument drawn from the nature and ends of the ordinance, to shew that sufficient regard is not had to these in the present plan, and that therefore the plan ought to be changed. Unless it can be proved that the infrequent dispensation of the Supper in the same congregation, lays an embargo on the duty of Christians, and prevents a due regard to the ordinance, declamation on their duty from the topics of love, gratitude, &c. should have no place in the controversy. But even as matters stand, there are sufficient opportunities for frequent communion. How often would Mr. Mason wish the Supper to be kept ? Four, five, or six times a-year ? The members of that congregation with which the reviewer is connected, tho' the ordinance be dispensed it is only twice, have opportunity of communicating, all of them, four or five, and some of them nine times a-year. There are other congregations much more happily situated. Frequent communion, then, in the sense to which Mr. Mason's reasoning chiefly applies, and frequent dispensation in the same place are quite different things. Nay, I am convinced they are so very different, that the latter would be most unfriendly to the former. What was the consequence when weekly dispensation obtained in the primitive ages ? To mark it, we have only to recur to that passage in the Institutes of Calvin, of which such advantage has been taken, " Seldom, if ever,

“did all the members, even of the same assembly, “join in the celebration.” This Calvin allows to have been the case, and therefore defends Zepherinus as having consulted the interests of religion in ordaining a less frequent dispensation. Suppose the Supper dispensed six, eight, or ten times in the same congregation, would there be no danger of christians neglecting the fellowship of their brethren in other congregations, and (to use the words of Calvin on annuel communions), “conceiting they “had fully discharged their duty, giving themselves “up for the rest of the year to supinenss and “sloth.” (Lett. iii. p. 43.) By frequent dispensation they might be more easily accommodated with their priviledge, but it would be at the expence of one great design for which the ordinance of communion was appointed.

The 2d fallacy is the native result of what has just been remarked. The author, confounding frequent commnunicating with frequent dispensation in the same place, probably because he considered them as inseparably connected, and essentially dependant on each other, so that without the latter the former could not exist, has all along, in pleading the cause of frequency, confined his own attention, and that of the reader, to the *spiritual utility* of the Lord's Supper. This idea, and this alone, will be found to pervade all the views of the ordinance brought forward in the second letter. He proposes to detail the ends for which it was appointed, and which believers will find it calculated to serve, but he ever keeps by the single thought of spiritual advantage; and the detail is, in fact, only a diffuse dissertation on one design God had in view; excellently adapted it may be for animating Christians to their duty, and encouraging the faithful in their holy service,

but very defective if intended to prove, as the title should have borne, and is meant to bear, that 'frequent dispensation in the same place is indispensably requisite. The first position may seem to be an exception, and it is the only one where the author had nigh stumbled on something else than spiritual advantage. But it was a position that could not be passed, and it is happily placed in the front, since when once got over, the way was clear for descanting at large on the favourite theme, and thus leaving the intended impression on the mind. The position is this, 'The sacrament of the Supper, (the observance of it the author surely means) is an important part of our practical testimony to the cross.' If so, it might seem to demand a publicity, to which even frequent dispensation in the same place would in due time be found to be fatal. But in the illustration, the author runs directly into the notion of spiritual advantage; 'This holy ordinance contributes 'as much, if not more,' why this tardy concession, but because it is expedient to reduce the Supper as nearly as possible to a level with other institutions? --- 'it contributes as much, if not more than any other, to keep alive in the earth the memory of that sacrifice, which, through the eternal Spirit, our High Priest offered up unto God. In a powerful appeal to the senses, it arrests attention and strikes with awe, while the scenes of Gethsemene and Calvary pass along in review.' This last sentence is of a piece with the commentary which occurs but a little before on the words of Jesus, 'Here is the symbol of my broken body, and here of my streaming blood.' But these are only the slips of pathetic description, for the author certainly does not consider the ordinance of the Supper as a re-exhibition of the *crucifixion* of Christ. So soon,

however, as he leaves the idea of spiritual advantage, he is off his ground, and has to walk with great caution; 'In this holy ordinance' we proclaim to surrounding spectators, that we are not ashamed to 'confess the despised Jesus before a crooked and 'perverse generation' &c. The publicity that would here press forward is immediately guarded and limited, that it might not interfere even with weekly administration. The observance of the Supper is allowed to be public, in distinction from family worship; social, in distinction from baptism; and discriminating in distinction from other services of the sanctuary. But farther he does not proceed on this head.

The view of the ordinance is carried on as follows, 'It is, *2dly*, an affecting representation of the communion believers have with Christ Jesus; *3dly*, 'An exhibition of their union and communion with 'one another.' Here something relative to its use for the manifestation of unity in visible profession, might have been expected. But this had been foreign to the drift of the letter: it might have suggested thoughts unfriendly to that limitation of visible fellowship to single congregations, which must be produced by frequent observance in the same place. The utility of the ordinance as visibly expressive of the spiritual communion of all saints is alone brought into view.' 'It shews that they being many are one body.' In what respects? Why '---partakers of a common salvation, heirs of a common inheritance, having one faith,' (the principle or grace appears from the connection to be meant), 'one calling, one hope;' it is thus allowed to be 'the communion of the body and blood of Christ,' and celebrated as a 'thrice blessed ordinance, which 'clothes *spiritual principle* with visible form.' See

on this subject our remarks, Sect. II. conclus. 3  
 The author goes on, ‘*4thly*, The death of Christ  
 ‘ commemorated in the Supper, is a point in which  
 ‘ the leading doctrines of revelation concentrate their  
 ‘ rays, and where they shine with united lustre.’  
 The illustration, however, has no respect to that  
 glorying in the cross of Christ according to the idea  
 suggested, which belongs to the Christian profes-  
 sion; but solely to the *spiritual benefit* we may reap  
 from contemplating ‘ the infinite evil of sin, the jus-  
 ‘ tice of God in the punishment of it, the riches of  
 ‘ the Father’s grace, the Love of Christ, and the  
 ‘ harmony of the divine attributes in the recovery of  
 ‘ sinners.’ As we proceed, we meet still with the  
 same prospect of spiritual benefit held out in other  
 views. For, ‘*5thly*, The death of Christ has a  
 ‘ mighty efficacy in quickening the graces, and mor-  
 ‘ tifying the corruptions of believers: And, lastly,  
 ‘ In the *holy* Supper they are admitted to near inter-  
 ‘ course with the God of the spirits of all flesh.’  
 Here however the author again finds it necessary to  
 qualify his commendations: ‘ Not, says he, because  
 ‘ the Supper is more *holy* than other ordinances, or  
 ‘ because access to God therein is in itself more  
 ‘ near, but he will put a special honour upon it, and  
 ‘ upon them who love it, because it is that ordinance  
 ‘ which in a special manner puts honour on his Son  
 ‘ Jesus.’ How difficult must the author have found  
 it, so to commend the Supper as to produce the in-  
 tended impression, and yet guard against elevating  
 it above the ordinary institutions of grace? We con-  
 tend for no peculiar *holiness*, which is but an ambi-  
 guous term liable to great misconstruction, but for  
 peculiar design and the obvious requisites to fulfil it  
 in the mode and times of dispensation. To parody  
 the author’s address, which he has put in the mouth

of the apostle Paul on supposition he were now to appear, we may with equal justice conceive the apostle posing the friends of weekly communion with such enquiries as these ; ‘ How do you observe the great ordinance of communion ? Do you use it according to the mind of the Lord, for displaying to the world your unity in holy profession and attachment to the doctrines of the cross, for visibly attesting this unity among yourselves, confirming and sealing it throughout the body ? Have you, wholly attentive to your own advantage, neglected that of the church, or the general interests of religion, and overlooked the respect that your Lord had to these ? Have you, on pretence of seeking spiritual benefit, and mindful of this alone, defeated in a great measure one special object he had in view, established a disconnected plan of observance, and thrust the celebration *into corners* ? Is there not at least the appearance of selfishness here ? Lay aside these partial views, and restore the sacramental feast of fellowship to that mode of celebration it requires.’ (See the peroration with which Lett. ii. is concluded.)

Letter III. takes up the first expected objection, —Innovation. Here we admit his position, ‘ That if the measure proposed (by which surely must be meant frequent, if not weekly, dispensation in the same place,) be our duty, it is high time the innovation was made.’ But it will not be so easily admitted that ‘ he has proved,’ as he affirms he has done, that measure either to be needful or duty, by the partial and irrelative view of the ordinance presented in the preceding letter. He would now shew, however, that so far from being an innovation, the adoption of the measure proposed would be only the restitution of ‘ what was the order of the church from

‘the beginning.’ To this purpose he appeals to Acts xx. 7. And from his remarks on this passage we learn for the first time what we are to understand by the measure proposed: ‘*Weekly communions* were the constant practice of the primitive Christians.’ How does he make this out? ‘The words intimate that sacramental communion was a principal, if not the principal object of their meeting.’ No doubt it was, in the instance and on the occasion referred to. They came together that Sabbath the apostle was with them, expressly *to break bread*. But what then? ‘Prayer, praise, and the preaching of the word were their stated exercises, but of such moment was the Supper considered, that in recording their employment on the Sabbath, the sacred historian mentions nothing else,—they came together to break bread.’ Mr. Mason found it necessary to account for the historian’s specifying so particularly the breaking of bread, and has exerted his ingenuity to convert it to his own purpose; for in fact that very specification, since prayer, praise, and preaching, were the stated exercises, intimates something *peculiar* in the occasion referred to. The disciples at that time came together to break bread: It was to be a sacramental Sabbath. Had the Supper been one of the stated ordinances, the historian would naturally have mentioned only the “meeting on the first day of the week,” and the notice of its dispensation as a thing of course, would have occurred merely in the account of the exercises which took place,—“Paul having preached, and broken bread, and discoursed a long while after, even till break of day, departed.”

To the remarks already made, Sect. IV. on this passage, and on the other, 1 Cor. xi. 20. which are the only ones produced by Mr. Mason to ascer-



tain the practice in the apostolic age, the Reviewer has nothing to add. Nor does he think it necessary, after what has been stated in the same section, to trace the history of communicating down to the age of Reformation, or enter into new discussions on the opinions of the reformers.

In the next letter the objections, 'that frequent *communicating* would banish reverence, and prevent preparation,' are attacked with considerable success. Various considerations exceedingly just, and happily expressed, worthy the attention of those *who would excuse themselves from their duty* by taking advantage of the Presbyterian plan, are here brought forth. We allow them all their force in their direction against 'the formalist, the hypocrite, the Pharisaic Christian. 'One hour, one minute of genuine humiliation, one tear of gracious contrition, one groan unutterable of the Spirit of adoption, is of more value in the sight of God, than the most splendid round of formalities.' The former indeed are of no more value as a ground of acceptance in the Lord's Supper, than the latter; but if there be any who plead preparation from the impracticability of observing the days usually appointed, as a reason for not joining with their brethren in other congregations, or for dispensing with that frequent communicating for which opportunities may be afforded, they abuse the Presbyterian plan, and expose the very form of preparation they mean to support. Such Christians seem to indicate, that they consider preparation as restricted to the round of external formalities, and by their conduct defeat the purpose of a circulation of fellowship throughout the body.

If however the reasoning be meant to prove that there is no distinction among divine institutions, as

is obvious from the argument brought forward, 'that God is not more holy in one than in another;' if it also go the length of subverting the necessity of a regard to warranted means of preparation, because the bare observance of these belongs but to the form of godliness, then, on the first head we have endeavoured to detect its absurdity in our second section; and on the other, it is only needful to remark, that the power of godliness is by no means inconsistent with the form. Are we to discard days of fasting in every instance, because 'one hour, or minute of genuine contrition before God, is of more value in his sight, than a round of formalities?' On this principle, the observance of the Supper itself might be entirely set aside; one spiritual act of gratitude in remembrance of Christ, is more pleasing in God's sight, than the most frequent participation of symbols. The argument ought to have been guarded, but had it been guarded, it would have failed in its application to Mr. M.'s purpose. We are the less concerned with the objections discussed in this letter, as they are not much connected with the principles on which we defend the Presbyterian plan of observance. But however 'truly astonishing it may be that they should ever be brought forth by a living Christian,' Calvin and other reformers, though they do not make nor sanction the objections, yet allow that they must be attended to, in settling the plan of observance. The question is not what Christians ought to be, but what they really are, and may be expected to be in this imperfect state. And we have seen that God himself in diversifying his system of ordinances, was not unmindful of their state. "He knoweth our frame." Mr. Mason appeals to fact. 'Do other duties grow contemptible by their frequency,—prayer for instance?'

We may appeal to facts more pertinent ; ZEPHERINUS found that weekly dispensation produced<sup>d</sup>, not only irreverence, but disorder ; CALVIN allows that he consulted the interests of religion in altering the plan ; he himself was afraid of weekly communion ; WITSIUS was ‘not without apprehension that such frequency might depreciate the ordinance ;’ none of the reformed churches found it expedient to ordain such frequency. But expediency is not the ground on which we support the Presbyterian method ; and that method is so favourable to the frequency of communicating claimed by the ordinance, that Presbyterian pastors, in exhorting their people to their *duty*, find abundant scope for taking off the force of the very paliations and excuses referred to in the objections.

Having dispatched the subject of frequency, that of the observance of days is next introduced. Here we meet with an elaborate discussion. Though the subject is brought in merely as a fourth objection against the measure proposed, yet it is protracted through no less than four letters, and occupies nearly the half of the book. A final blow to what he is pleased to call ‘the customary appendages to the Lord’s Supper, the redundancies of human fancy,’ was doubtless intended. One reflection naturally occurs on reading the title, ‘Of the customary appendages, *particularly public Fasts and Thanksgivings,*’ no word of Preparation-days ; why are they overlooked ? Is it because they may be bone with ? One would have thought the very idea of preparation had been offensive to the Author. Is it because the topics of declamation against the Fast and Thanksgiving days are more numerous, and afford the most spacious reasoning ? To charge him with such motives might be uncharitable. On looking

into the Letters we find that he has no objection against at least a preparation sermon; he even attempts in a note an apology for it. Besides, something of the kind is allowed to be proper in certain Confessions and public deeds, which he would have us to believe are wholly on his side, and utterly hostile to the practice of others who adhere to them. Yet his very argument, 'that the Church of Scotland from the dawn of the Reformation till 1638, indulged but one sentiment as to the administration of the sacraments, viz. that it was not to be encumbered with any *rites* contrary to, or *beside* the written word,' (P. 83.)—this argument militates equally against a Preparation sermon, or day, as against the Fast and Thanksgiving days. The former as really as the latter are '*beside* the written word,' in the sense affixed by Mr. M. to the term; and embracing the view which depends on that sense, he must discard the one as well as the other. The fact is, the *rites* opposed, were, Mr. M. allows, the Popish and Prelatical ceremonies in the form of administration and reception. That the acts he has quoted, lay down an universal rule against 'the imposition of *rites* and observances which have *no foundation in the word of God*,' is readily granted; but then in the same sense in which he apprehends this applies against Fast and Thanksgiving days, it must apply against all forms of preparation; even a sermon for the bare purpose of distributing tokens, is *beside* the written word; and if solely intended for that purpose, more so, than any observances in the usual Presbyterian method.

A 2d remark is suggested by the length of the discussion. Mr. M. having introduced the subject as an objection which weighs much with conscientious people against his measure, evidently takes it up,

not according to the true principles on which the days in question are defended, and capable of defence, but according to the absurd, and perhaps superstitious views which some who would be religious over-much, or have a zeal not altogether produced and directed by knowledge, entertain. This gives him an easy advantage, and furnishes matter for many pages that might well have been spared. (P. 61—67.) The ‘samples of inconsistency and contradiction,’ he professes to exhibit seem to be fabrications of his own mind; and the charge he brings against the supporters of days, of ‘beating the air,’ may well be retorted on himself. He approaches the point only when, page 68. he comes to consider the propriety of fasting ‘in view of some special duty, or in expectation of some special blessings.’

*3dly*, In managing the objection, he seems to reason in a circle. The objection imports, that the measure proposed requires such frequency as would be incompatible with the observance of the usual days. One part of the answer is, that this observance of days ‘is attended with great and serious evils.’ (P. 60. 95.) To prove this, we are told, that among other evils, ‘the multiplicity of week-day services is incompatible with the frequency intended.’ (P. 99.)

Owing to the indeterminate form in which he has taken up the subject, it would be tedious to follow him through all his discussion. A fair statement of its substance may be sufficient to expose its almost perpetual deviation from the point. The FIRST part of his method is to shew, ‘That sacramental fast and thanksgiving days have no warrant from the word of God.’ If by *warrant* he means ex-

press appointment, it is granted there is none ; but in this sense, there is no warrant in the New Testament for any fast, or thanksgiving days whatever. Had the exercise of fasting been, by divine institution, appointed to precede the celebration of the Supper, it had been as essential to the right observance of that ordinance, as it was on the day of annual atonement among the Jews ; in no case could it ever have been dispensed with, nor could any individual who had not opportunity of joining with his brethren of other congregations in their sacramental fast, have warrantably communicated with them in the Supper. Divine wisdom hath laid no such bar in the way of that fellowship for which the ordinance was expressly designed ; and since we have never pleaded for fasting or thanksgiving as essentially requisite, we are not confounded by the wonderful discovery, that there is no specific ordination of such days, nay, not even a passage from which we may infer an inseparable connection between them and the holy Supper. Mr. M. manifestly perplexes the question, while he professes to state it in the most accurate terms. ‘It is not,’ says he, ‘whether fasting is a divine ordinance ; but whether it is a divine ordinance *preparative to the Lord’s Supper* ?’ (P. 66.) From what has been already observed, it must appear, that this never was, nor can be the question, unless the notion of fastings being absolutely essential were held. The point at issue is not, as the statement implies, whether fasting has been specifically ordained as a part of necessary preparation for keeping the Supper ? for there is no divinely instituted ritual of fasts or thanksgivings enjoined to the New Testament church ; the appointment of these rests with her courts. The question therefore is precisely in the first instance, what Mr. M. would

set aside, 'whether fasting be a divine ordinance?' He seems indeed to suppose that there are texts which exhibit general warrants for fasting, *without respect to the circumstances in which it ought to take place*; and alludes with no little indignation, to 'a 'large column of these' he has somewhere seen raised up against his proposed measure. I know no general warrant for fasting, or texts which exhibit it as a duty in general, without bearing, one way or another, on the circumstances in which it either *may or ought to take place*. Were there any such, then fasts referable to no special occasion would be warranted, and it would be needless any farther to debate whether the sacrament of the Supper be a special occasion or not. By the nature of the warrants, however, the question is narrowed to this point, Is fasting suitable, seasonable, and proper, before the celebration of the Supper? That it is we have endeavoured to shew in Sect. V. and also that on this ground Sessions are so vindicated, or have such sufficient warrant for making the appointment, that obedience is due by those under their inspection. Mr. M. apprehends that our warrants 'will 'equally prove the *necessity* of fasting before baptism, before the Sabbath, before family worship, 'or craving a blessing to our meat, as before the 'sacrament of the Supper, unless they can be shewn 'to have been *coupled with the latter*, and not with 'the former.' (P.66.) Baptism is a sacrament as really as the Supper, and from this consideration the inuendo of its being degraded by the want of a previous fast, may be apt to impose on some. But as baptism is not a congregational nor general concern like the Supper, it would be improper to appoint a public fast in prospect of its administra-

tion†. If the person shall choose to seek the Lord by fasting and prayer, with a view to the reception of this ordinance by himself or his children, he would not certainly act an unwarrantable part, not even though as patriarch in his own house, he appointed a family fast. Mr. M.'s own reason for discarding the fast with a view to weekly communion, is sufficient to expose the absurdity of ordaining such preparation for the Sabbath. 'It would be a burden to which no congregation either would or should submit. The tribute of time which would be withdrawn from their ordinary occupations, would be much too great for any who eat their bread in the sweat of their brow.' As for fasting before craving a blessing to our meat, it is only brought in to caricature the subject, and is therefore utterly unworthy of notice.

What has been observed, may be sufficient to take off the force of the remark made with critical acuteness on the words of the Directory, p. 88. as well as of the bold assertions, p. 105. while it suggests also a solution of the problem considered in the note at the foot of this last page. 'There is,' says Mr. M. p. 88. 'a small letter in one of the places cited from the Directory, which completely ruins the cause the citation was intended to support. It does not say *in the administration of the sacrament*, but *sacraments*, including baptism, and making this to be an occasion no less special than the Supper. So that if the argument, shape it as you please, prove any thing, it proves that the Directory prescribes

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† Mr. M. admits the distinction himself, and has expressed it with sufficient accuracy, p. 18. 'In holy baptism our profession is separate and public, but not *social*, at least very imperfectly so.'



‘ a public fast as often as a child is baptized. Unless this be admitted, the foundation is swept away, and the fabric of itself tumbles to the ground.’ The Directory was never appealed to as *prescribing* any fast in the one case or the other, but merely as admitting that the sacraments are special occasions; and therefore not ‘ hostile’ to the propriety of seeking the Lord by fasting and prayer in prospect of them. The exercise pertains to the persons particularly concerned; Sessions may call to it in prospect of the Supper, but they have no power to appoint personal or family fasts. Instead therefore of ‘ establishing a pernicious distinction between the two sacraments,’ p. 105. while Sessions fulfil what belongs to their province, their appointments in regard to the Supper, rather tend to inspire a proper respect for the other sacrament, and intimate the exercise to be suitable in private for those who are concerned in its administration. If the fact be otherwise, as Mr. M. complains, and with too much reason, p. 106. we can only deplore it. The wisest regulations are liable to abuse. Because parents cannot reasonably expect a whole congregation should be called to seek the Lord by fasting and prayer, with a view to the baptism of their children, it would be absurd and impious for them to conclude, that therefore baptism is a trivial matter. Let them learn what account to make of this ordinance, which they know to be equally a sacrament, from the manner of the church in observing the Supper, and be admonished to discover in its sphere the same sacred veneration. As for the mighty problem, ‘ How many communicants are requisite to a public fast?’—just as many, we reply, as may constitute a public communion. Whether ‘ two’ can do so, as well as ‘ ten thousand,’ is left to Mr. M. to deter-

mine. Were fasting essential to right observance, or coupled with the Supper by positive institution, which had been very strange, then no doubt it behoved to have obtained, however small the number of communicants. The problem is constructed on the supposition, that we hold it to be thus essential. Now we only maintain that it is warrantable, and that Sessions must judge of its expediency. There may be cases in which it would not be proper. Suppose the very small number of communicants to be one of these, yet where is the similarity between this case and that of baptism, in which though there be only a parent and child, the administration is as full, as that of the Supper would be if honoured with ten thousand communicants. Let the parent therefore treat the ordinance with the same sacred regard, as is shewn to the Supper in all ordinary cases. Mr. M. should have remembered, however, that though in the way of his proposed measure's being carried into effect, such limited communions, as he supposes for the sake of the difficulty, may occur, they are not likely to be met with while the present Presbyterian plan is followed out, nor would they long puzzle any church-court even if they were. We are not tied down by the view we entertain of 'sacramental fasts and thanksgivings,' as they are styled.

The SECOND part of our Author's method was to shew 'that sacramental fast and thanksgiving days 'are *contrary* to the judgment of almost the whole 'Christian church.' This was an arduous task. How is it executed? Part of it lies in setting the Confession and Directory to rights, for they seemed rather to grant too much on the opposite side. Most unquestionably he has failed to shew that the days in dispute, are *contrary* to their doctrine or

prescriptions. To prove his point he ought to have shewn,—not that the days had no existence in foreign churches, nor at home till of late, (Some time after 1645.) for this might well be the case, and yet the church entertain no judgment contrary to them; not that no mention is made of them in the different Confessions he has appealed to, for how was it to be expected, if they were not existent when these Confessions were written? not that no law has been made by the church about them, for such a law would not have been made even though the church had been favourable to them and engaged in the practice, because it would have been beside the written word, would have seemed to constitute them holidays;—but he ought to have shewn that the *principles* hitherto maintained by the reformed churches, and published in their Confessions, are contrary to the practice. Some specimens of the little that bears on this point we have already remarked, particularly his attempt to support the proposed new measure, by the doctrine of the Westminster Confession about ‘ordinary parts of worship,’ and to reconcile with this doctrine as explained by him, the words of the Directory, where the administration of the sacrament is allowed to be ‘a special occasion,’ and classed with public fastings and thanksgivings. ‘The term *special*,’ he observes, ‘is indefinite. When applied to the Lord’s Supper, (as in the Directory,) it merely distinguishes this ‘from other duties.’ (*Lett.* p. 87.) He should have told us in what respects. Perhaps that sacrament is so very special as even to warrant a previous fast. The distinction he refers to, cannot surely mean nothing more than the notice of a difference between the Lord’s Supper, and preaching for instance, as one ordinance is distinguished from ano-

ther by its name or form ; were this all, the craving a blessing to our meat might also be denominated special, to distinguish it from sacramental service. Other passages in our own and foreign Confessions to which he has appealed, are granted by himself to have been framed solely against the Romish rites and superstitious appendages to the sacrament, which are utterly unwarranted by Scripture. (Lett. p. 82.) Though Mr. M. had succeeded in proving that our fast and thanksgiving days are on a level with such rites, he could have brought out the judgment of the church against us, only *by inference*. It was too much then to set out with a bold assertion, that ~~these~~ days are *contrary* to the judgment of the Christian church, as if 'the whole current of public sentiment expressed in solemn enactments, &c. had been diametrically opposite to them.' He found it expedient to soften down the *contrariety* first intended to be proved, into 'it was *not* the judgment of the church for a long series of ages, such days should be observed.' By this he has sheltered himself a little ; for the fact is, during these ages the church gave no judgment on the subject, nor any that can by implication be made to apply.

The THIRD part of our author's method, was 'to exhibit the great and serious evils with which sacramental fasts and thanksgivings are attended.' Most of the supposed evils have already fallen under consideration, Sect. V. in the objections against the Presbyterian plan, which are adduced chiefly from Mr. M.'s work. Under the four propositions of that Section, the Reviewer conceives he has sufficiently repelled the allegations, 'that these days are an unwarranted addition to the ordinance of the Supper, —that they involve us in self-contradiction,—and that they tend to banish the principle and practice

‘of scriptural fasting and thanksgiving.’ A little attention to the observations subjoined in the Section, may correct the mistake with which Mr M. sets out in specifying the evils, ‘that the days in question establish a term of communion which has no scriptural sanction.’ Enough has been said also on the ‘pernicious distinction’ supposed to be ‘created between the two sacraments,’ by our plan. Whether the observance of days of fasting and thanksgiving be ‘unfriendly to pure and evangelical devotion,’ can scarcely be determined by reasoning. The legal disposition will endeavour to convert every thing, of which it can take advantage, to its purpose. And does Mr M. apprehend no danger of an abuse of weekly communicatings by that disposition? These, one would imagine, might furnish it with the plea of even works of supererogation. But due care may be taken to guard Christians from supposing, that our preparatory services mean, ‘we must work the harder in order to our acceptance in the Supper.’ Evangelical ministers are not usually so inattentive to the legal spirit, as to neglect the requisite cautions. If, however, that spirit be so predominant in the present age, as Mr. M. seems to insinuate, there is the more need for previous fasting to humble ourselves before God, for serious self-examination, for all that public aid and direction by which, under the blessing of God, Christians may be enabled to set forward “in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness only,” in an observance more explicitly declarative of faith in Jesus, than attendance on the common dispensation of grace. One of the evils specified, we have shewn to be a special advantage of our plan.

It is the communion of the ministry. ‘ Our numerous services,’ says Mr. M. ‘ render the dispensation of the Supper almost impracticable to any minister without the aid of his brethren.’ See on this subject, Sect. V. prop. ii. 3d. At the same time it ought to be recollected, that we are not so tied down to the plan usually formed, as to be bound by it in all cases and circumstances. Where extensive fellowship, or ministerial aid, can seldom be attained, the sacrament may be more frequently dispensed than would otherwise be proper, and even though the public services should be abridged, and on some occasions laid aside.

In his letter, Mr. M. brings forward the ADVANTAGES of his proposed but undetermined measure, — frequent communion. These we might dismiss with the single remark, that if the measure be wrong, “ we must not do evil that good may come.” On surveying however the advantages held out, we are at a loss to conceive how he would appropriate them to his plan. Some of them seem to be equally, if not better attained by the mode we defend. It is certainly better calculated ‘ for promoting and confirming brotherly love,’ than the scheme of weekly dispensation. But in general, more of the divine countenance may be expected to a mode is which suited to the design of the ordinance, than to one which either overlooks or counteracts any of its ends. We too might specify advantages, and some that are peculiar to our method. Besides the ‘ consolation we have’ of treating the ordinance with due respect according to its nature and ends, and of endeavouring to secure right observance in a degenerate age, a proper interval is allowed by our

plan for the manifestation of regard to vows, or following up and verifying the solemn profession made. The period during which the ordinance may be considered as producing its fruits, and displaying its effect, is not needlessly prolonged. While none will pretend that constant observance would keep alive a spiritual frame, solemn dispensation recurring at intervals may be expected to rouse the languid, to revive attention to the state of the soul, to excite peculiar interest, and lead to beneficial reflections on past conduct. But instead of enlarging on advantages, a theme apt to blind the mind to just views and solid reasoning, the true supports of any mode of religious worship, we conclude by specifying two disadvantages under which the Independent plan obviously labours, and of which ours is happily clear. By weekly communion, the Christian Sabbath is converted into a constant *festival*. Something is thus added to, or superintended on the Lord's day. It is made the stated memorial at once of his death and resurrection. There is a change effected upon it, at least beside the written word. To this the judgment of the reformed churches is manifestly hostile. They allowed that fasting was not improper on Sabbath, and in various instances actually kept the first day of the week as a fast. But a fast, and a festival or feast never can be combined, and to the friends of weekly communion particularly, fasting must appear utterly incapable of combination with the observance of the Supper. In fine, if that ordinance was intended to be kept every first day of the week, it will be difficult to free Paul from granting some kind of allowance to neglect it, or at least supposing it might warrantably be omit-

ted. Were the same language adopted with respect to the Sabbath,—“As often as ye keep the first day of the week,” &c.—who would not instantly conclude that stated observance was not expected?

