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THE  
PRINCETON REVIEW.

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JANUARY 1840.

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No. I.

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ART. I.—*The Signs of the Times: a Series of Discourses delivered in the Second Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.* By Cornelius C. Cuyler, D.D., Pastor of the Church. Philadelphia: William S. Martien. 1839. pp. 319. 12mo.

WE have already expressed our favourable opinion of these excellent Discourses. We now recur to them again, that we may make the subject discussed in the fourth lecture, entitled "God's frowns against Covetousness," the foundation of some remarks that seem to us adapted to the existing state of things. We have nothing to say in the way of objection to the views presented by Dr. Cuyler. His leading position is, that the pecuniary distress which pervades our country is a judgment upon the people for their covetousness. But in maintaining this position, he avoids the presumption of those who, "taking upon themselves the mystery of things, as if they were God's spies," pronounce with all confidence upon the final cause of every dispensation of providence, and invade, with unhallowed tread, even the sacred privacy of domestic sorrow, that they may make every individual calamity the occasion of impeachment against the character of the sufferer. His interpretations of divine providence are suffi-

their accomplishment shall be taken out of the way. That every thing in individuals or in governments—in business or in pleasure—in men's possessions or employments—which is opposed to the religion of Christ, shall be destroyed. And that the temporal prosperity of men has invariably made them sensual, and proud, and irreligious, would lead us to presume that a prelude to our recovery, would be the removal of this temptation; would be the taking away of our earthly dependencies, in order that we may put our trust in him; the breaking of our pitchers, that we may be led to the fountain.

The time has certainly arrived, when both the church and the world are watching with painful anxiety the signs of the times. "Men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." May we not unhappily mistake the mind of the Spirit as revealed in the word, to which we should take heed as to a light shining in a dark place.

And while we see, in the agitations and corruption, internal feuds, and "distress of the nations," the tokens of revolution and decay, let us, like Abraham, look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

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ART. II.—*Letters on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper:*

By Samuel Bayard, Esq. a Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Congregation at Princeton, New Jersey. Second edition. 18mo. pp. 219. W. S. Martien, Philadelphia.

IT is now seventeen years since the first edition of this useful little work was published, and it now appears in a new dress, somewhat abridged, greatly corrected, and almost entirely freed from a few superficial blemishes which attracted notice in the original impression. Apart from the intrinsic importance of the subject, the volume derives peculiar interest from the fact that it comes from the pen of a layman, of a son of the Huguenots, and of "an old disciple;" for the venerable author is now in his seventy-third year. The cause of religion is greatly strengthened when it receives the public aid of men who have spent their lives in secular pursuits; as a striking example of which we need only name the *Practical View* of Mr. Wilberforce; with

whom, we may say in passing, the venerable author of the work before us was on terms of personal intimacy.

These Letters do not undertake to discuss the vexed questions concerning the Lord's Supper which have occupied controvertists. They are eminently practical, being intended chiefly to remove from the minds of timid and desponding converts, particularly young believers, those undue scruples, and that unscriptural trepidation, which have kept thousands from the Lord's Table. This is a good work, and has been performed in a manner altogether agreeable to what we suppose is the mind of the Spirit in the Scriptures. In connexion with this, the young communicant is in a perspicuous and interesting manner led into the knowledge of what this blessed ordinance signifies and communicates. There is in every page a character of gentleness and Christian benevolence, which renders it as fit to soothe the mind of the hesitating, as any similar manual with which we are acquainted. The author has gleaned from many rich fields, and spread before us the testimonies of a great number of the best theological writers, especially of French divines, whose works are not accessible to most readers. It is but just to add, that, as certain parts of the Letters, as they first appeared, were not approved by some judicious critics, these have been entirely omitted, with the exception of what relates to the unpardonable sin; on which subject the author holds an opinion which we do not feel called upon at present to review. In some minor points, in the exposition of particular passages, and in the estimate of authors cited, we cannot always agree with the venerable author.\* At the same time, we believe no Christian professor, whether young or old, could read this book with a proper disposition of mind, without great edification, if not delight: and we think it might well take the place of several more unwieldy volumes which we have seen in the hands of young communicants.

The occasion thus afforded, allows us to subjoin some remarks upon a few points which are interesting chiefly to such as are called to administer the ordinance. To ministers of the gospel, this as well as other rites owes its due celebration, as well as its chief corruptions. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as the most solemn rite of the Church, has not failed in any age to awaken a degree of awe

\* We can by no means subscribe, for example, to the statement which makes Dr. MacKnight one of the "ablest commentators on the epistles."

which does not attach itself to any other part of external worship; and, where superstition is avoided, there is every thing in such reverence to promote edification. Yet the tendency is strong, in all minds, to introduce human inventions, under the pretext of supplying what is deficient in the divine institution. As celebrated by the first Christians, this sacrament was exceedingly simple, bearing very much the appearance of a common meal. But for this, we can scarcely see how any room should have been given for the abuses of the Corinthian Church. The constant endeavour to make it more striking, despoiled it by degrees of almost every trait of its original. The bread became a divine sacrifice; the table was changed into an altar; the minister became a priest; and the cup was altogether withheld from the laity. Instead of a broken loaf, there was a vessel of wafers, and instead of sitting at a table of Christian fellowship, the communicants were made to kneel before the "breaden God."

At the time of the Reformation, the return to the original model was different as to extent in different churches. Among all the Reformed, however, the principle was maintained, that as far as possible the simplicity of the divine prescription should be adhered to. Here there was room for some diversity of judgment, and accordingly we find that even among Calvinistic churches, there was never a perfect uniformity. Still it was only a difference in apprehending the scriptural example; for all agreed that no one had any right to add to what was prescribed. In the Scottish church, and so far as we learn, from the very beginning of the Reformation, the method has obtained of gathering around a table, and in successive companies, where all could not communicate at once. This was regarded as very important, and Mr. Baillie, one of the Scottish members of the Westminster Assembly, in his letter, speaks with much displeasure of the mode of celebration used by the Independents, who remained in their ordinary seats, while the elements were carried to them by the deacons. If any were disposed, however, to stickle for literal observance, it might be questioned whether the former were not as real a deviation as the latter; since it is as certain that in the first institution, all communicated at one and the same time, as that all communicated at one and the same table. In the Presbyterian churches of France, it should seem that communicants came to the table in succession, and the men and women separately. For, in the Acts

of the Synod of Lyons in 1563, it is recorded, that "a gentleman troubles the church, and wills that his wife come immediately after him unto the Lord's Table, *before any of the men.*" It was a very serious question among the Huguenots, whether any but a minister should give the cup to the communicants; so great was their dread of innovation. Thus, we find the following opinion in the Acts of the Synod above mentioned:

"The brethren of Geneva being demanded, whether pastors at the Lord's Table should only distribute the bread and wine unto the people, do give this answer: That it were certainly best, if it might be conveniently done at all times; but it seems for the present impossible, and for the future wholly impracticable. For in case God should multiply the number of his people, of believers and churches, and there being so great a scarcity of pastors, we see no inconveniency in it, that deacons and elders, being the arms and hands of the pastor, after that he hath consecrated the sacramental elements, and distributed the bread and cup to them that are nearest to him, may come in to his relief and assistance, and distribute them also unto those who are more remote from him."

Yet four years afterwards, the Synod of Verteuil determined "that none but ministers, if possible, shall give the cup." And the 12th chapter of the Discipline expressly declares: "The churches shall be informed, that it belongeth only to ministers to give the cup." Even after this, uniformity was not secured, as appears from the injunction of the Synod of St. Maixant, in 1609: "All pastors are enjoined to abstain from any new or private methods of their own, as of reading the words of institution, between the ordinary long prayer and that appointed particularly for this sacrament, which ought indeed to be read after; nor shall they, whilst reading the words of institution, uncover the bread and wine; nor shall they bring the people up in ranks unto the table, there to sit or stand, whereas they should cause the faithful to pass one after another up unto it; nor shall the exhortations or thanksgivings be made till that the elements have been distributed among the communicants of every table; nor shall the cup be given by the faithful one unto another, it being contrary to the express letter of a canon of our Discipline, which ordaineth pastors, if possible, or if they cannot, the elders to assist the pastor, tired by the multitude of communicants in populous churches,



to deliver it." And, in 1612, the Synod of Privas declared as follows: "This Assembly having maturely pondered whatever was said by both parties, doth confirm the sentence given by the national Synod of Maixant, which allowed elders and deacons, in case of necessity, to deliver the cup, but without speaking—founding this, their decree, upon the example and practice of our Lord Jesus, who only himself spake at his last supper, but yet permitted his apostles to distribute among themselves the bread and the cup." We give these statements, simply to shew the extreme jealousy with which the early Calvinists guarded the simplicity of this sacred rite.

The Scottish Presbyterians, and their descendants in America, have, as we cannot but think, fallen into a serious error, in adding to the length and the number of the services connected with the Lord's Supper. Not only is there an undue protraction of the exercises on the Sabbath, but it has been customary to set apart a day for fasting, in preparation for the ordinance, and a day of thanksgiving after it. Against these appendages, the late Dr. Mason wrote very ably; arguing that they have no warrant in the book of God; that they are contrary to the judgment of almost the whole Christian church; and that they are attended with great and serious evils.\* He maintains, that they establish a term of religious communion which has no scriptural sanction; that they are almost impracticable, without the aid of other pastors; that they banish both the principle and practice of scriptural fasting and thanksgiving; and that they create a pernicious distinction between the sacraments. And he dwells particularly on the point, that the multiplicity of our week-day services is incompatible with such a frequency of communion as is our indispensable duty. "Had it not been for them," says Dr. Mason, "communions would have been much more frequent, both in the church of Scotland and the denominations which have sprung from it." We may add, that the argument has a wider application than to merely week-day services: all services which render the celebration of the Lord's Supper protracted or wearisome, and all instructions and ceremonies which invest it with an unscriptural mystery or awfulness, have a necessary tendency to infrequent communion. Instead of being an attractive and delightful ordinance, it thus becomes fearful and repulsive.

\* *Mason on Frequent Communion*

We agree with Mr. Bayard, in lamenting the dangerous misconception of the passage in the eleventh chapter of first Corinthians, and in commending the interpretation of Doddridge which he cites in his ninth Letter. Let this passage be well understood, agreeably to its intention, and no believer, not even the most timid, can find in the whole Bible a single sentence which represents the eucharist as a fearful or tremendous rite. Alas! how many are the instances in which we have known ingenuous and humble Christians to shrink from this feast of love, with feelings not unlike those with which the heathen regard their mysterious rites! Whatever encourages this temper, in the same degree indisposes ministers and people to frequency of communion. Yet ecclesiastical history affords the strongest presumption that the Lord's Supper was celebrated every Lord's day; and that on the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread.—Acts, xx. 7. In the first two centuries, it was usual to communicate at least once a week; this continued in the Greek church till the seventh century, and such as neglected three weeks together were excommunicated. As the power of religion decreased, and especially as superstitious horrors began to brood over the sacramental table, now a tremendous altar, the love for this ordinance decreased,\* until at length, (as in some churches in America) the Lord's Supper was celebrated only once a year. "And truly, this custom," we may say with Calvin, "which enjoins communicating once every year, is a most evident contrivance of the devil, by whose instrumentality soever it may have been determined."† "It ought to have been," says he again, "far otherwise. Every week, at least, the table of the Lord should have been spread for Christian assemblies; and the promises declared, by which, in partaking of it, we might be spiritually fed." Before we leave this subject, it may be useful to add, from authorities cited by Dr. Mason, that the constitution of the Dutch church, of 1581, appointed this sacrament to be celebrated every other month. The Discipline of the Reformed church of France, after noticing the actual practice to be that of a quarterly communion, recommends a greater frequency, due reverence being maintained, in order that believers, treading in the footsteps

\* See Mason on Frequent Communion.—Lett. iii. Also, the following citations, introduced by him, viz:—Erskine's Theol. Dissertations, p. 262; Plin. Epist. lib. 10, ep. 97, p. 724. ed. Veenhusii; Just. Martyr, Apol. 2da. opp. p. 98, D. Paris, 1636. Also, Bingham, Book xv. c. ii.

† Inst. l. iv. c. 17.

of the primitive church, may be exercised, and may increase in faith by the frequent use of the sacraments. "The church of Scotland, at her first reformation, insisted upon *four* communions in the year;\* and there is every probability that they would have gone farther, but from an opinion that the people, just emerging from the darkness and bondage of popery, were unable to bear it. This conjecture is founded upon what actually took place at the modelling of that plan of doctrine, worship, &c. by the Westminster Assembly, which united in one evangelical communion the churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The directory for public worship, prescribes the frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper: nay, it supposes that it should be so frequent as to supersede the necessity even of a *previous intimation*. 'Where this sacrament cannot with convenience be *frequently* administered, it is requisite that public warning be given the Sabbath day before the administration thereof.' *How* often should it be administered, to render this warning needless? Let this question be pondered by those who think semi-annual communions sufficient; yet that very directory have we adopted, and affect to admire."†

Frequent communion, as already suggested, is rendered less easy in proportion as the services are long or burdensome. There are few Presbyterian churches in which injustice is not done to the feebler members of the flock, whose bodily strength is well nigh exhausted by the time the communion, properly so called, has begun. It is not assuming more than is reasonable, to say that the most solemn and affecting of all our religious observances should not be appended to the very longest service which ever takes place in our churches. Yet we know it to be customary with many pastors, not merely to abridge nothing of the foregoing exercises, but to preach their longest sermons, and make their longest prayers, before a celebration, which, as conducted in some places, itself occupies several hours.

It is to be feared, that many persons regard the Lord's Supper less as a solemn commemoration, than as an awful covenant; a right of which the chief solemnity lies in a vow or oath of new obedience. The error receives confirmation from an abuse of the expressions: "This is my blood of the New Testament."—Matt. xxvi 28; Mark, xiv. 24. "This cup is the New Testament in my blood."—Luke,

\* 1st Book of Discipline, Art. xiii.

† Mason's Works, vol. iv. p. 301.

xxii. 20. The new covenant here mentioned is the covenant of grace, which is sealed with the blood of Christ, and not any additional compact constituted by this ordinance. On this subject, we may quote from Mr. Bayard :

“By theologians, this sacrament is generally styled a *sign*, or *seal* of the *covenant* between God and the heliever. ‘On our part,’ says Bishop Gibson, ‘it is pleading before God the merits and efficacy of Christ’s death for the pardon of our past sins, and for grace to avoid them for the time to come; and on God’s part, it is a conveying and *sealing* of those benefits to every penitent and faithful receiver.’\* ‘The Lord’s Supper,’ says Mr. Willison,† ‘is called a *seal* of the *covenant* of grace, because, like a *sealed* charter, it confirms and assures to us the certainty of the covenant, and all its promised blessings—that God, in and through Christ, is willing to be a God to us, and to take us for his people’

“Perhaps it may more correctly be viewed as a *permanent memorial* of the *ratification* of that *new alliance*, (as it is uniformly called in the French translation of the New Testament,) between God and man, to which the apostle Paul refers in his epistle to the Hebrews, as having been promised by God to the Jews, at the advent of the Messiah. ‘This is the *covenant*, (the *alliance* or *agreement*,) I will make with them, after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their hearts; and in their minds I will write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.’—*Heb.* x. 16. Such is the *substance* of the *new covenant*, (or *alliance*,) of which the apostle has given merely an epitome, and which you will find more fully stated by the prophet Jeremiah, (chapter xxxi. 31–35.) Of this new covenant, the Lord’s Supper may properly be considered as a *token*, or *memorial*.

“Thus when God made a covenant with Noah, that he would no more deluge the earth with water, he appointed the *rainbow* as a ‘*token*,’ or memorial, of this agreement; so that whenever afterwards beheld, it might remind Noah and his posterity, of the Creator’s promise.’—*Gen.* viii. 8–18. So also when God instituted the rite of circumcision, he declared to Abraham that it should be a *token* (or memorial) of *his covenant*, that he should be ‘the father of many na-

\* See Gibson on the Sacrament, &c. p. 26.

† See Young Communicant’s Catechism, p. 21.

tions; that he would be a God to him, and to his seed after him; and that he would give them the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.'—*Gen. xvii. 1–9.*”

In connexion with this sacrament, there doubtless may be, and in true believers usually is, a renewed dedication of themselves to God; but to make this the chief end of the ordinance, is to displace the principal thing. This view of the subject has been favoured by the etymological and historical associations of the term *sacrament*, a word not used in scripture, and in the employment of which we should be careful not to bring along with it any of its secular appendages. If among the Romans the word *sacramentum* signified the formal deposit of money in pledge with the pontifex, in a civil process, which sum was forfeited by the losing party; or, again, the oath which the soldier took to be faithful to his standards; there is no reason why these heathen ceremonies should in the slightest degree modify our notions of a Christian rite. Yet we have heard formal discourses founded on this very misapprehension.

The two states of mind produced by these two considerations are not congenial. If we are engrossed with the remembrance of Christ's death, we shall be less likely to feel that peculiar sense of legal obligation which some have brought into connexion with this ordinance. Accordingly, we have not seldom been present at the administration of this sacrament, in which the secondary view of the transaction has entirely superseded that which is primary. The preaching, the prayers, and the exhortations, were exclusively directed to awaken a sense of mere duty, to rouse Christians to exertion, and to exact of them a sacramental vow of the most awful kind. Every thing was merged in this oath of dedication. The awe-stricken participants, instead of weeping over the emblems of divine love, were trembling under the covenant of works; and the cross, if erected at all, was seen amidst the fire and lightning of Sinai. The death of Christ, if mentioned, was produced in aid of the legal impression. Of his substitution and atonement, there was scarcely one syllable. We have distinctly in remembrance the place and the occasion, where the ordinance was thus conducted by an eminent and popular clergyman, who has since seceded from our church; and we could only say, “This is not to eat the Lord's Supper.”

This error falls in very well with the heterodox teaching of the new divinity on all those points which concern the

propitiation of Christ. If there is no proper sacrifice, no substitution of Christ in the sinner's place, no imputation of the sinner's guilt, no endurance of the sinner's punishment; if atonement is a mere rectoral transaction, declarative of God's hatred at sin in general; if it secures the salvation of none in particular, but merely removes the obstacle out of the way of all; then indeed the death of Christ assumes a new aspect, very unlike that in which the church catholic has always regarded it; to "show forth the Lord's death," having none of its former significancy, must become something else; and accordingly becomes a showing forth of our own submission to God. Again, it is a part of the same system of error, to change the mode of applying to the mercy of God. Having removed the great object of faith, it removes faith itself, at least from the high place which it had occupied. When the expiatory death of Jesus, was the one great object set forth in the eucharist, the belief of this, with consequent affections, was the great act of the soul, in partaking. But let the absolute mercy of God, without satisfaction of justice, be the cardinal truth involved in redemption, and the soul, shrinking in dread, will resort to that mere unconditional submission to divine sovereignty, which has come in the place of precious faith. No wonder, therefore, that in certain pulpits, and certain revivals, and certain sacraments, the perpetual cry has resounded, "Submit to God;" and that we have so seldom heard the invitation, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." At such a communion, celebrated among the very ruins of the old covenant, the contrite believer will be ready to exclaim, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Upon this subject, we take the liberty of adducing the remarks of Dr. Russell, of Dundee, a sound and evangelical theologian:

"The covenant of God, it is evident from the passages I have just referred to, consists of free promises, ratified by the work of the Redeemer. In this ordinance, we are called to commemorate that glorious work, with devout and thankful hearts, and in the sure and certain hope, that not one good word of all that the Lord hath spoken shall fail to be fulfilled. Not the most distant hint of any thing like a vow or oath being the nature of this observance, is given in the word of God. It is true, that our religious services include the solemn dedication of ourselves, and of all that we have, to God, and in the observance of the Lord's Supper, there is

much that is fitted to cherish this spirit; but this is not the same thing as is meant by a vow in its common acceptation. In every act of worship, Christians express their resolution or purpose to be the devoted subjects of the Saviour, and not merely at the Lord's table. Here, no doubt, they ought, in a particular manner, to feel the power of those motives which urge believers to cleave with firm purpose of heart to the Lord; but different ways of expressing their fixed resolution in the strength of divine grace, to abide by him, are adapted to different persons, which, setting aside every other consideration, forbids us to insist on any one as particularly enjoined.

“No doubt, too, the public confession of the truth which is there made, must aggravate our guilt, if we afterwards deny it, or cease to be influenced by it, so that it may be said to lay us under great obligations. But so, in a measure, does our observance of every other divine appointment, all of which are connected with the death of Christ. There is much evidence, to prove that the confining a sense of obligation so much to one institution, has the effect of inducing comparative, and often great indifference as to others. The gospel of Christ, and in particular his death, furnishes the most powerful motives to obedience, and in vain do we think of adding to them. It is not by formal engagements at the table of the Lord, that we can increase the importance of any duty, nor ought such things ever to give us peace, under a sense of guilt, or cause confidence in our steadfastness. If they do, we shall find, to our cost, that they are a false foundation.”

There were few points for which our forefathers contended more earnestly than for the scriptural simplicity of ordinances. Having beheld the dreadful consequences flowing from innovations apparently harmless, and even edifying, but unauthorized by the inspired record, they denounced every appendage to the sacraments, however slightly or solemn, which was not expressed or implied in the original institution. They knew that the rill of unauthorized invention, would soon swell into a mighty river of superstition. Thus, after our fathers, we reject, in Baptism, the exorcism, the salting of the mouth, the sign of the cross, the touching of nose and ears with the priest's spittle, and the oil of catechumens; all which are ordained by the Council of Trent. Thus, also, in the Lord's Supper, we reject the manifold dresses—amict, alb, cincture, sudarium, and chasuble; the

manifold vessels—cruets, patens, chalice, purifier, and corporal; the genuflections, and crossings; the mummings and elevations; and the whole array of pantomime connected with the mass. And this we do, in order to return as nearly as possible to the simplicity of our Lord's institution, and thus to keep our mind undisturbed by any thoughts, however solemn, which do not pertain to the ordinance. In this we cannot be too cautious, for such is the frailty and perverseness of human nature, that while we reject one sort of ceremony we may be busy in bringing in another. It is not enough to warrant the introduction of a new form, that it is decorous, impressive, or even awful. The ever returning challenge from the throne of God is, "Who hath required this at your hands?" We are perpetually engaged in a vain endeavour to improve upon God's prescriptions. They are too bald, too unimpressive; but unless we abide by what is ordained, we cannot well stop short of a cumbrous and superstitious ceremonial. And we cannot go one step towards making a sacrament what it is not, without, in proportion, impairing what it is.

It is upon these principles, that we found an objection to some innovations in the manner of conducting the services connected with the Lord's Supper. The supplementary rites to which we allude are not indecorous in themselves; nay, it is this very seemliness which constitutes the plea for their admission, and which, in many cases, places a new and dazzling object before the eye of the communicant, in the glitter of which the real light of the divine emblems is sometimes lost. Small and insignificant as these matters may appear to some, they are precisely those in which the purity of gospel ordinances has in every age begun to be corrupted: until the accessory has come to be regarded as the principal. Thus the fierce disputes arose about the use of leaven in the sacramental bread; a controversy which some are attempting to rekindle in our western states. Thus there are good men who would think there was no sacrament unless they received it kneeling, and others as good, who could scarcely partake unless at a literal table; and there may be those whose devotions might be disturbed by the absence of that Scottish *numisma*, known in some parts of the church under the denomination of a *token*; while we have known communicants in whose esteem all the significant and commemorative part of the sacrament seemed to fade away, in comparison with the fearful rising in the face of the great



congregation, and assuming the vows pronounced from the pulpit for their acceptance. Whatever they might say, it was this which, in their minds, was the sacrament. This was the solemn act of engagement to be the Lord's, to which the timid looked forward with an apprehension which scarcely left room for any of the legitimate exercises of tender love and faith.

Having alluded to this custom, it may be necessary for us to add some explanation, as the ceremony is one absolutely unknown to our Scottish fathers, inconsistent with the principles of Presbyterianism, and prevalent only in those portions of our church which are near the borders of New England, or which have been settled by Congregationalists, or subjected to a ministry and measures derived from the eastern states. For the sake of those who are not familiar with this addition to the services of the Lord's table, we will state the case as follows: In the religious societies of New England, it has been common to admit persons to the communion of the church, by causing them to accede to a solemn covenant in the presence of the whole congregation. And this suits well with the Congregational theory, according to which the church, or body of believers, already bound together in covenant, receive into communion in a like covenant, all who are added to the church; and do this, not representatively as is the manner of Presbyterians, but immediately, in their primary capacity. For, in all Independent societies, it is the church proper, or associated believers, and not the church representative, or session, who perform acts of government. The manner is this, or something like this: At some convenient moment, prior to the administration of the ordinance, all those who are now to join the communion of the church, are called out and take their stand in the sight of the congregation, just before the pulpit or desk. The minister reads to them a confession of faith, and a covenant, and receives their public declaration of assent to both. These creeds and covenants of course differ in different churches, and sometimes it is found convenient, as in New Haven, to alter the creed, to suit new discoveries. The solemnity, as we have witnessed it, is certainly imposing. On the minds of those chiefly concerned, it must needs produce an impression lasting as life, in comparison with which the subsequent ordinance loses its force, and which is in our judgment injurious in the direct ratio of its solemnity. It is this public covenanting which fills with alarm the soul of the person pro-

pounded. It is this which leads him to regard the solemn oath of allegiance as the very kernel of the ordinance.

It is not enough to tell us, that this is very solemn; deeply affecting the minds both of those who engage in it, and of all bystanders. This we freely admit; but most earnestly do we protest against the principle that we may add to God's ordinances any thing and every thing which is of imposing character; or that we may argue directly from the awfulness or tenderness of an observance, to its value and allowableness; or, still further, that we may introduce a new element into a divine institution, not in harmony with the substantive parts of the ordinance. It was this fallacy which filled our churches with new measures, and which erected what was barbarously called "the anxious-seat" almost into a sacrament. It was this which filled the popish churches with pictures, incense, processions, and all the pageant of the mass. This public covenanting is undoubtedly solemn; it would be more signally so if it were accompanied with sackcloth, ashes, tapers, and the weeping of penitents; or if, as in the ancient church, the *poenitentes* were not allowed to enter beyond a certain line. But are these things, for this reason, to be admitted? It is solemn, but is it commanded? Is it implied in the command? Is it one of those things necessary to the performance of the command? Is it conducive to the spirit of the ordinance? The history of the church abounds in fearful proofs of a disposition to despise simple rites, especially the two sacraments; so that they have been overladen and overwhelmed with solemn additions, besides having five others added to their number. It is but a step from this to expect a blessing *ex opere operato*. Nothing can be more unwarranted than to make the simple, but precious sacrament of the Lord's Supper an instrument for mere effect. It is this which has turned the communion table into an altar, and retained the crucifix in many churches of protestant Germany.

Not less is our objection to the prominency thus given to the idea of a vow, or a covenant, as necessarily belonging to the Lord's Supper. The Covenant of Grace is indeed represented most affectingly in this ordinance, in faith of the accomplishment of its promises. But so little is made of this in our day, that we believe there could be found churches in New England and the parts adjacent, where the word *covenant* is never used in a religious sense of any but this church covenant. It is, to our apprehension, a derogation from the

remembrance of Christ, to change it into an oath of fidelity. It is a memorial, and an emblem, a feast and a communion; but it is never represented in scripture under the special notion of a binding compact, or an awful vow. "Instead of ensnaring or entangling ourselves," says Dr. Russell, "with oaths or formal vows, let us contemplate the cross and character of Christ. Here there is all that is moving in love, affecting in condescension, and engaging in mercy—united with all that can impress us with a sense of the baseness and desert of sin: and in contemplating and celebrating the love of God in the gift of his Son, the unutterable condescension of the Saviour, we shall be powerfully constrained by the innumerable mercies of the everlasting covenant, to present ourselves unto God as a living sacrifice, and to live to Him who for us groaned and died."

There is a plain exception, when unbaptized persons apply for admission into the church. It is proper that they should make a public profession of their faith, in the presence of the congregation; inasmuch as this very profession is an indispensable prerequisite to their being baptized, should immediately precede it, and must therefore take place in the church. But when our Directory, in a chapter expressly allotted to the reception of church members, enjoins this public profession in the case of baptism, and yet makes no similar provision for the other sacrament, the conclusion is unavoidable, that the church never contemplated any such covenant. Indeed, as has been already suggested, it is a rite which has crept into our congregations from New England, and carries with it the supposition of a church covenant; an idea which, however familiar and precious to the minds of Congregationalists, is foreign to our habits of thought.

In addition to the imposing solemnity of such a ceremony, its advocates have sometimes pleaded, that there should be some act of receiving the believer into full communion, and that this is a natural and proper way of establishing his connexion with the church. This is undeniably true of churches on the Independent plan. The body of communicants is the only legitimate acting body; to be consistent, they ought to examine and receive; and the proceeding of which we treat is well fitted to represent and propagate their theory. But why should we, without any acquiescence in this theory, adopt the measures which are built on it? We are Presbyterians: we hold it to be expedient and agreeable to scripture, and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the govern-

ment of each church should be conducted by a bench of elders, who are the representative church.\* This body, called the Church Session, and consisting of the pastor and ruling elders, is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation; and have power, in particular, *to receive members into the church.*† The church itself has delegated this authority. If it be inquired, whether it is not further necessary that there should be a public setting forth of this new connexion, we reply, that it is highly proper that the names of all communicants should be read to the congregation, but that the actual participation in the sacrament is the most solemn and the only needful act declarative of full connexion with the church. This is true even in the case of those who have not been baptized in infancy; but children born within the pale of the visible church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are already under the inspection and government of the church; and when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, ought to be informed, that it is their duty and their privilege to come to the Lord's Supper. Nor do we admit any rite similar to confirmation, between baptism and the Lord's Supper, to qualify one who has been already examined by the session. Let us not, even in seeming, yield to the notion, that it is the part of the communicants, as a body, to receive members into the church, when this power is by an express declaration attributed to the church-session. Having once introduced the accidents of Independency, we shall be the less averse to the substance.

There is another part of this modern ceremony which we regard as evil. It is the rehearsing of a creed, or articles of faith, and the exaction of assent to this from the candidate, in the presence of the congregation. This also has come to us from Independent churches. Now, we do not object to this in those communions where it is necessary or usual, but it is not congenial to our habits. A public profession of faith, is not the object of our strictures, but the manner in which this is effected. Among the Independents, every church is at liberty, of course, to make its own creed, with any number of articles, from one to a thousand. It is natural and proper that those who are added to the original covenanting church should express their adherence to the same formulary. But

\* Form of Gov. chap. viii. § 1.

† Form of Gov. chap ix. § 1. 6.

the same ceremonial becomes preposterous when dragged into the midst of our Presbyterian institutions. Our church has its constitution and confession of faith, solemnly adopted, ratified, and published; it recognises no other uninspired creed. There is no ecclesiastical function more delicate or more momentous than that of constructing a creed. Independency may, if it choose, leave this at the mercy of particular churches; but every principle of our own system must revolt against such a license. In point of fact, there have been hundreds of such creeds, varying with every change of theological latitude, and every wind of doctrine. These mutilated articles have often been printed, and, with the obligations assumed in a public profession of faith, have been incorporated in what is sometimes called the church manual. These creeds have not always contained heresy, but the truth may be sacrificed by omission; and the *suppressio veri* is not less fatal than the *suggestio falsi*. The question has been much agitated of late, how these abridged creeds may be regulated. Such a question could not have arisen in the Reformed churches of Holland or France, or in the Kirk of Scotland; it has come to us from New England. Presbyterianism flourished several centuries without either abridged creeds or congregational covenants. Instead of casting about for means of regulation, the search should be, in our opinion, for means of suppression. We should as soon think of regulating a wen or other offensive excrescence. If, indeed, the highest judicatory of the church should send down to the presbyteries a brief formulary, as an aid for the instruction and examination of candidates, we should think it a regular, even if not an expedient act; but for hundreds of hasty creeds, like Sibylline leaves, to fly through our country, various in their hues as the foliage of autumn, and, in a majority of cases, grossly defective, is an abuse which defeats one of the great ends of having any creed whatever. There is a striking tendency in all such creeds to become more and more meager. The rule for admitting church members seems to be, to remove out of sight all those truths which stain the pride of man, and in their place to introduce new doctrines of a legal kind; sometimes using impressive ceremonies for this purpose: in a word, to make the creed short, and the pomp long.