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## ARTICLE I.

### OUR ECCLESIASTICAL RELATIONS TO FREEDMEN.

The history of the following document is this: The General Assembly which sat at Macon, in 1865, appointed a Committee to take into consideration the relations of our Church to the Freedmen, and to report to the next Assembly. Upon corresponding with the Committee, the chairman discovered that it would be impossible to secure a meeting. He then wrote to each of the members, discussing the question in all its aspects as they occurred to his own mind, intimating his own opinions, and inviting from the Committee an expression of their views. Upon the reception of their replies, he found so great a diversity of opinion existing between the members of the Committee as to make it impracticable to frame a report which would embody the views of the majority. Ascertaining that some of the Committee would be present at the Assembly at Memphis, and being hindered from going himself, he drew up the paper which is subjoined, and sent it to those brethren in the hope that they might adopt it, for substance at least, as their report, and present it to the Assembly. This they did not do; but having kindly informed the Assembly that this paper was in their hands, it pleased that body to permit it to be read, and subsequently to order that it be offered to the Editors of this REVIEW for publication.

The Committee to whom was referred the subject of our relations and duties, as a Church, to the Freed People in their present altered condition, beg leave to present the following report:

They confess that they have been greatly embarrassed by the extreme difficulty of the questions which have encountered them,

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ters, is thus satisfactorily discarded, and the divine authority of ruling elders to impose hands in the ordination of preachers, is placed on an impregnable basis.

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ARTICLE IV.

THE RELATION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO THE  
DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH.

*Being the substance of a Speech before the General Assembly, at  
Memphis, November, 1866. By the Rev. A. W. MILLER,  
Charlotte, North Carolina.*

The Book of Discipline offered by the Revision Committee, is, in many respects, vastly superior to the present Book. The brethren have laid the Church under many obligations for the great pains they have taken in the important work committed to them, and for the very satisfactory character, upon the whole, of its performance. Particularly, all honor is due to them for the attention they have given to the baptized youth of the Church. The several sections devoted to them, contrast most favorably with the bald and meagre statements of the old book. But, in one particular, the old book is better than the new; viz., in the preservation of an important scriptural principle, the relation of *all* baptized persons to the discipline of the Church—a principle which the new has dropped. True, the Revised Book uses the term “discipline” in relation to baptized non-communicants, but in a general sense only, as embracing instruction, training, oversight; not in a technical sense, involving censure or judicial prosecution—the only sense admissible in a “Book of Discipline,” or “Canons of Discipline,” as distinguished from a “Confession of Faith,” a “Form of Government,” a “Directory for Worship;” all of which, especially the “Directory,” treat of the oversight and instruction of the children of the

Church. In a "Book of Discipline," technically denominated, the term "discipline" is used, of course, only in a technical sense. It follows, then, that the Committee's "Canons of Discipline" do really deny the liability of baptized youth to discipline, (and thus contradict the teachings of our present Book,) in denying their liability to it, in its technical sense; and thus, what they say touching the government and oversight of such youth, belongs properly, not to their "Canons," but to the "Form of Government." With what consistency, too, can the "Canons" direct that such youth shall be solemnly admonished by the session, of the sin and danger of neglecting their covenant duties, (chap. 2, sec. 5; "*in connexion with the session, etc., . . . on which occasions . . . they shall be warned of the sin and danger of neglecting their duties,*") since admonition is "a church-censure," "the formal reproof of *an offender* by a church-court?" (chap. 4, sec. 1 and 2;) and when, according to their canons, none but a church-member, professing faith in Christ, can be an offender? (chap. 1, sec. 3.) If the youth of the Church be not liable to "judicial prosecution," then how liable to *the first step, admonition*? And if such youth should offer this as a reason for not obeying the call of the session, then what reply can the session make? And if not liable even to admonition by the session, then of what value is that "*government,*" of which they are the subjects, according to the "Canons"? What is government worth that cannot be enforced? Without discipline, government is mere advice. But after all, nothing is gained by the Committee by putting such youth *within* government, but *without* discipline. According to their "Canons," discipline is the exercise of authority, and *the application of laws* appointed by Christ. (Chap. 1, sec. 1.) And their "Form of Government" teaches that the government belonging to the session involves "the power to call before them offenders—to admonish, rebuke, suspend, or exclude from the sacraments those who are found to deserve censure." (Chap. 6, sec. 3, sub-sec. 6.) The giving two senses to the term "discipline" in the "Canons" seems to have been an afterthought—done in order to cover the doctrine that baptized youth are not subject to ecclesiastical censures.

Such is not the doctrine of our Church, whatever may be the practice. For seventy-eight years it has held that "all baptized persons are members of the Church, are under its care, and subject to its government and *discipline*; and when they have arrived at the years of discretion, *they are bound* to perform all the duties of church-members." According to our "Book of Discipline," then, *the obligations of baptized persons can be enforced by discipline.*

Our respected brother, Dr. Adger, thinks that "it is not certain in which sense the word 'discipline' was used." But surely our standards sufficiently explain themselves! The General Assembly of 1789 affirmed the doctrine of the Book of Discipline, that "baptized *children* are subjects of discipline." The Assembly of 1799, in answer to the following overture: "How far and in what sense are persons who have been regularly baptized in infancy, and have not partaken of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, subject to the discipline of the Church?" replied, "That the public standards of this Church contain a sufficient answer to the question." Surely, that Assembly deemed its Book of Discipline free from ambiguity, admitting of one sense only! The Assembly of 1809 says: "There is reason to apprehend that many of our congregations neglect to catechize the children that have been admitted to the sealing ordinance of baptism, *and do not exercise suitable discipline over them.*"

Again: The Assembly of 1811 appointed an able committee "to report a full and complete answer to the following overture from the Synod of Kentucky: 'What steps should the Church take with baptized youth, not in communion, but arrived at the age of maturity, should such youth prove disorderly and contumacious?'" Now, if "discipline," as used in our Book, implies no more than education, instruction, cultivation," then what need of a committee and a report? Why not cut short the matter at once, by answering the overture, that "no steps, under these circumstances, could be taken?" For the *contumacy* of such youth implies that "education and instruction" had already been given, and been despised too; and if the "discip-

'line' of our book contemplated nothing more, then, what more could be done? Here, then, we are conducted to no doubtful conclusion as to the sense which the Assembly put upon the "discipline" referred to. This committee made a report, which took the ground that such contumacious youth were liable to excommunication. But, if the committee's sense of what was involved in "discipline," was not the sense of the Assembly, why did they "recommend the report to the serious consideration of all the Presbyteries and ministers?" If the distinction made by our Revision Committee had been ever recognised by our Church, then how strange that this subject—the relation of baptized children to the discipline of the Church—should have been discussed in so many Assemblies, for a period covering more than fifty years! Whence the necessity of this protracted discussion, if the doctrine of the Committee were ever held by them? How easy to have prevented all this agitation, by simply saying, "The word 'discipline' has two senses: the one general, the other technical; applicable to baptized children only in the former." But this our fathers did not say. Their standards were modelled after those of the Church of Scotland, which admitted no distinction, as to judicial prosecution, between church-members; and they knew that the constant practice of that Church corresponded to its teachings, as it does even to this day. "The rules of our discipline, and the form of process in our church judicature, are contained in Pardovan's (*alias* Stewart's) Collections, in connexion with the Acts of our own Synod." (Records of Presbyterian Church, p. 519.) The difficulty that beset the subject, in the minds of many in those Assemblies, seems to have been not a theoretical, but a *practical* one. *The general neglect of children, both by the family and the Church, in this country, is a monstrous evil, and the fruitful source of a thousand evils—complained of, again and again, by our General Assemblies, even in the earliest times of our Church. Neglect of instruction, neglect of oversight, must be followed by neglect of restraint, neglect of discipline. If covenant-obligations be not inculcated, they will not, of course, be enforced. Where can be found in our Church a single instance even of parents*

being disciplined for the open violation of baptismal vows? And what an increasing neglect of the baptismal seal do the statistics of the Church exhibit! The lax practice of the Church has engendered the lax condition of society, and this, in turn, has reacted upon the Church with disastrous effect, so that the difficulties in the way of regaining, by the Church, her former hold upon her children, and reviving her ancient discipline of them, long since obsolete, which many would resent as an outrageous intrusion upon their imagined rights, appear to most to be so formidable, that few are willing to encounter them. But in the few instances where the attempt has been made, here and there, the Head of the Church has crowned the effort with encouraging success. Again. According to the Committee, only a *professor* can be an offender, technically considered—the subject of judicial prosecution. Therefore, a baptized person who does not confess Christ, although confessedly a member of the Church, and although arrived at manhood, and although he be guilty of crimes that have brought upon him due punishment by the State, is yet no offender before the Church. But according to the old divines, baptism is profession. “*Baptizari est profiteri*,”—“to be baptized is to make a profession,”—says Ursinus. This sentiment of Ursinus was endorsed by the Westminster Assembly. He goes further, and says, “To be born in the Church is, to infants, the same thing as to make a profession.” (De Bapt. Infant.) In like manner, the learned Vitranga observes that “to be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, signifies that we *name*, that is, publicly *profess* the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as our Master, to whom we are bound by infinite benefits.” (“Baptizari IN NOMEN Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti esse ad id baptizari, ut *nominemus*, h. e. publice profiteamur nomen Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti, tanquam Domini nostri, cui infinitis beneficiis obstricti simus.”—*Observat. Sacr.*

In the earliest ages of the Church, baptized children were designated, equally with their parents, “disciples” “Christians,” “holy persons or saints,” “the faithful.” The following inscriptions upon the tombs of young children shew that the

ancient Church made no distinction amongst its members, whether infant or adult: "Maurentius, son of Maurentia, a most pleasing child, who lived 5 years, 11 months, and two days, worthy to repose in peace among the *holy* persons." "Sacred to the great God. Leopardus rests here in peace with *holy* spirits." "Julia reposes in peace among the *holy* persons. A. D. 291." "Cyriacus, *a faithful*, died, aged 8 days less than 3 years." "Eustafia, the mother, places this in commemoration of her son Polichronio, *a faithful*, who lived 3 years." "*A faithful*, descended from *faithfuls*, here lies Zosimus: He lived 2 years, 1 month, 25 days." (But how denominate infants "*faithfuls*," unless the Church held them to belong to the *professed family of God*? In this light, the venerable Waldensian Church also regarded them. One of their ancient Confessions says: "We have but two sacramental signs left us by Jesus Christ; the one is Baptism; the other is the Eucharist, which we receive to shew that our perseverance in the faith is such as we promised, when we were baptized, being little children," etc. "Infants are rightly called *faithful*," says Augustine, "because they, after a sort, do confess their faith by the words of them that bear them." (De peccatorum remissione.) Calvin observes: "This principle should ever be kept in mind, that baptism is not conferred on children in order that they may become sons and heirs of God, but because they are already considered by God as occupying that place and rank, the grace of adoption is sealed in their flesh by the rite of baptism. But if any one were inclined to refuse them baptism, we have a ready answer: they are already of the flock of Christ, of the family of God, since the covenant of salvation which God enters into with believers is common also to their children. As the words import: I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee. Unless this promise had preceded, certainly it would have been wrong to have conferred on them baptism." (Letters.) The learned Bullinger, held by Calvin in high esteem, observes, in like manner: "Infants are numbered and counted of the Lord himself among the faithful; so that baptism is due unto them—as far forth as it is due unto the faithful."

So also the Scotch Church, as shewn by her standards, and through her theologians. Says Boston: "Ye who are saints by profession, yet only baptized, not partakers of the Lord's table, why do ye continue so?" "Separation from the men of the world lying in wickedness, is the necessary duty of all saints by profession, and particularly of communicants." Says Jno. Brown of Haddington: "All professed Christians, come to years of discretion, are bound by the law of God to partake of the Lord's Supper, and it is their sin, if they be incapable of regular admission to it."

The Scotch Church, in her Book of Discipline, says: "A minor that is a male past fourteen, and a female past twelve years of age, may be called before church-judicatures, when guilty; as for pupils under that age, it will be rare if ever they be concerned as delinquents, except *ubi malitia supplet aetatem*, that is, where strength of nature is as far advanced in them as it useth to be in others of riper years." (Book iv.) "Since minors are punishable for adultery, much more ought they for a rape." "He who writes infamous libels is punishable. If the offender was a minor, or was provoked, or confessed his fault—these things will lessen the punishment." (Book iii.) So also the Reformed Church of France: "What censure should be inflicted on them who marry their children (being minors) to papists? It was resolved that both they *and their children* should be deprived of the Lord's Supper, and do public penance for this their offence." (National Synod at Saumur, 1596.)

Thus we see that the doctrine of the Committee, that a communicant only is a professor and can be an offender, liable to prosecution, is not sustained by the teachings of the Church of all ages. Yea, it is inconsistent with their own directions, requiring minors to appear before the session, that they may be "warned of the sin and danger of neglecting their covenant duties." The doctrine of the Committee introduces a new principle into the kingdom of God. From the beginning, it was held that the child of the covenant was subject to the discipline of the covenant, as well as entitled to its privileges. The child of the Old Testament was bound to be circumcised, which if



neglected, membership was forfeited; parent and child were cut off. But the circumcised child was "a debtor to do the whole law," and was bound, at the proper age, to observe the passover, as well as circumcision. God declared that the soul that should "forbear to keep the passover, should be cut off from among his people." The principle then was, that if *either* seal of the covenant was neglected, the covenant was broken, and church-membership, with all its precious privileges, forfeited. Now, if this principle has ceased, and another principle been introduced, let the proof be furnished. The New Testament Church is based upon the Old. Christ came no more to destroy the Church, than the Law. He recognised the church-membership of children. When believing parents, who acknowledged him as the Messiah, brought their children to him, he received them, laid his hands upon them, as the angel of the synagogue was wont to lay his hands upon the children of the Church, blessed them, owned their membership, saying, "Of such is the kingdom of God;" shewing thus that they stood in the same relation to him and his kingdom, as did the children under the Old Testament—a relation which obliged the believer to procure for his children the seal of the covenant, whatever that might be. But the baptized child, equally with the circumcised child, is "a debtor to do the whole law," and is bound, when reaching years of discretion, to observe the Lord's Supper, which if neglected, the covenant is broken, and church-membership forfeited. For, "the soul that forbeareth to keep the passover, shall be cut off from among his people." But the passover was never abolished, but "fulfilled" in the Lord's Supper. A neglect of the Christian passover, then, exposes to excommunication. "Every soul which will not hear that Prophet—the Lord Jesus Christ—shall be destroyed from among the people," is the law of the New Testament Church. Acts iii. 23. "Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you." Acts iii. 22. Does not the baptized youth, who, at years of discretion, wilfully neglects the Lord's Supper, refuse to hear the great Prophet of the Church? And is he not guilty of rebellion against the great King of the Church? And does he not deserve to be "destroyed

from among the people?" And is not the Church *commanded* to excommunicate him for this great sin? And is the Church free from guilt, if she hesitates to obey the mandate of her King? Why, the Jewish child who was not circumcised, was, even on account of that neglect of the covenant, excommunicated by God. Is God less strict now than then? Is the guilt of covenant-breaking less heinous under the present dispensation, than under the former? Is the New Testament Church, though more spiritual and richer in privileges than the Old, less guarded and protected than it? Is position in the former less responsible than in the latter? Or may responsibilities be ignored, and obligations violated by any, with impunity, in the one, and not in the other? Such was not the doctrine of the Apostolic Church: "The promise is unto you, and to your children. . . . Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me. Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." Upon which passage, Chrysostom pertinently observes: "But he would not be like unto Moses, if so be that every soul that will not hear, should not be destroyed;" *ecclesiastically*, he shews, under the present dispensation, equally as under the former.

In conformity to this New Testament Canon of Discipline was the doctrine of the purest churches of the Christian era. The primitive Church, it is well known, subjected her baptized youth, and even her unbaptized catechumens, to discipline. Thus, too, taught the ancient Bohemian Church, whose illustrious representative, John Huss, suffered martyrdom a century before the Reformation—a Church which Luther affirmed to be the purest and most conformed to the Apostolic Church of all since the days of the apostles, and which Calvin praised for its excellent discipline in these words: "Quod optimâ disciplinâ prædita, quam jure vocare possumus optimum atque adeo unicum retinendæ obedientiæ vinculum." This honored Church of Christ, this faithful witness to the truth, held that church-discipline (in its technical sense,) embraced every period of life, from infancy

to old age: “Disciplinæ subjacent omnes unitate, *ab infante usque ad senem*, a subdito usque ad dominum, ab acolutho usque ad episcopum.” Conf. Bohem.

Coming down to the Reformation period, we adduce, first, the testimony of that illustrious man, JOHN CALVIN. Animadverting upon the Decrees of the Council of Trent, bristling with terrible anathemas, he comes to their Canon XIV, Locus ii., De Baptismo; which treats of the obligation of the rebellious children of the Church, when adult, to discipline: “Whosoever shall say that such infants, when they grow up, are to be interrogated whether they are willing to ratify what their godfathers promised in their name, when they were baptized; and when they answer that they are not willing, that they are to be left to their own will, and not to be constrained to a Christian life in the meantime, *by some other punishment than keeping back from the Eucharist*, and other sacraments, *until they repent*, let him be anathema.” [“Siquis dixerit, hujusmodi parvulos baptizatos, cum adoleverint, interrogandos esse, an ratum habere velint, quod patrini, eorum nomine, dum baptizarentur, polliciti sunt, et ubi se nolle responderint, suo esse arbitrio relinquendos, nec alia interim poena ad Christianam vitam cogendos, nisi ab Eucharistiæ, aliorumque sacramentorum perceptione arceantur, donec resipiscant, anathema sit.”] Upon this Calvin remarks: “I AGREE WITH THEM HERE, so far, but wish my readers to observe, what a deluge of anathemas they have poured forth. What they disapprove, dropt on some occasion from Erasmus, perhaps without much consideration. This I do not deny; and yet a candid interpreter would only desire some correction in the terms, and conclude that the author of them was not fully versant in the government of the Church. No man of equity and moderation will fly at once to the terrors of an anathema.” “In quarto”—he had been considering Canon X, and then adds, “To the next three heads I not unwillingly subscribe. On the fourth, I agree with them, etc.”—“*ea tenus illis assentior, ut lectores interea monitos velim quanto anathematum profluviis diffluxerint. Quod improbant, alicubi Erasmo excidit: parum considerate fortassis. Non nego, etc.*” Calvin, then,

held that the rebellious baptized youth were subject, at the proper age, to discipline beyond mere suspension from the Lord's table, to which they were accustomed all their lives. He attributes the contrary opinion to Erasmus, and in a manner which shews that his lax doctrine *was held by none of the Reformers*. He thinks that such a sentiment inadvertently dropt, even from Erasmus; which, if deliberately entertained by him, would prove "*that he was not fully versant in the government of the Church*"! He condemns, and justly, the Council of Trent for hurling an anathema at Erasmus—and at our Revision Committee—for simply uttering such a sentiment! For "no man of equity and moderation," says he, "will fly at once to the terrors of an anathema."

Concurring with Calvin, are the sentiments of another of the most learned and accomplished of the theologians of the Reformation, Martin Chemnitz. "In learning there were few equal to him. There was scarcely a theological controversy in which his counsel was not asked. Romanists themselves acknowledged that no one since the death of Luther assailed their system so fundamentally as Chemnitz. His famous book, "*Examen Decretorum Concilii Tridentini*" contains, in the section "*De Baptismo*," these memorable words: "It is not to be left free to the choice of those who have been baptized in infancy, when they come to be adult, whether or no they will have that confirmed which was done in their baptism; as though the covenant of grace and testament of peace, which is offered and sealed up to little children in baptism, should then first begin to be established, when the consent of their will, when adult, is added thereunto; for, from this wicked foundation the Anabaptists simply have taken away and condemned pædobaptism; but such baptized little ones are to be admonished, as they grow up, what a covenant of grace and testament of peace it is, which God hath entered into with them in baptism, and by what promise of gratitude they have likewise obliged themselves unto obedience to God, with the renouncing of the devil. And they are seriously to be exhorted that they render thanks unto God for that wonderful great benefit, that they abide in that covenant of

peace, and endeavor to fulfil that obligation, by mortifying sin, and setting upon newness of life, and that they do this freely and sincerely; or if they shall, through unthankfulness, depart from that covenant and engagement, that then they repent and return to the covenant, and subject themselves again to that stipulated obedience. But as for them that shall do otherwise, the most severe comminations of the wrath and indignation of God are to be heaped up and set before them, *unto which excommunication is to be added; for these are the weapons of our warfare.*" He then adds, that "compulsion to the faith by means of corporal punishments, the Church of Christ ignores; for she has only the sword of the Spirit." (*Illis enim, qui in infantiâ baptizati sunt, cum adoleverint, non libera proponenda est optio, utrum ratum habere velint quod in baptismo ipsorum actum fuit, etc. Secus vero facientibus proponendæ et exaggerandæ sunt severissimæ comminationes iræ et indignationis divinæ, quibus clavis ligans, retinendo et alligando peccata, et excommunicationem addere debet. Hæc enim sunt arma militiæ nostræ. 2 Cor. 10. Coactionem vero ad fidem, quæ per externam vim, et corporales poenas fiat, Ecclesia Christi ignorat: quæ tantum habet gladium Spiritus.*")

Chemnitz, as well as Calvin, attributes the contrary opinion—that it rested with the children of the Church, to fulfil their obligations or not—to the time-serving, compromising Erasmus,\* and he shews what use was made of it by the errorists of his age, the Anabaptists, who wounded the Church by their pestilent heresies, which were justly condemned, in the severest terms, by Luther, Calvin, Beza, Melancthon, and all the Reformers. "*From this wicked foundation,*" says he, "the Anabaptists have taken away and condemned pædobaptism." Those who hold with Erasmus, may here see *on whose foundation* they are building, and with how great reason, Baptists now, as Anabaptists formerly, claim (as they do,) the Revision doctrine as a concession to their principles.

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\* "Ad Erasmum ascendo, a quo ultro profiteor me in plerisque dissentire. Quid enim in eo potissimum sequar non invenio, qui ita varius est, ut eum satis appareat quid crediderit dissimulare quam dicere maluisse." BEZA.

In accordance with the views of Calvin, were the regulations of the Genevan Church. "The order which ought to be kept for little children," prescribes, that "when a child shall be sufficiently instructed, and have passed his catechism, then he shall recite solemnly the sum of that which is therein contained, and also shall make, as it were, a confession of his Christianity in the presence of the Church. Item, before this be done, that no child be suffered to receive the Supper of the Lord, and that the parents be advertised not to bring them before that time: for it is a thing most perilous, as well for the children as the parents, to enter into it without good and sufficient instruction. Item, that those which shall be by force constrained to come, shall be called before the seniors, elders or commissioners, and if they will not be persuaded by good counsel, the report shall be made to the Seniory. Also, to take heed to such whether they do their duty or not, and that the commissioners have an eye unto them to take order accordingly." "If any be negligent in coming to church, so that there be perceived in him a notable contempt of the communion of the faithful, or if any shew himself a contemner of the order ecclesiastical, that they admonish him. And if he render himself obedient, that they send him away gently. But if he do persevere from evil to worse, after they have advertised him three times, *that then they shall separate him from the Church*, and declare him to the Seniory." The Laws and Statutes of Geneva, as well concerning Ecclesiastical Discipline as Civil Government.

We have already shewn that the Reformed Church of France, and the Church of Scotland, held their minors amenable to discipline. We shall now shew that they enforced discipline against all non-communicants. "By the Act of Assembly, 3d August, 1642," says the Scotch Book of Discipline, "every presbytery is enjoined to proceed against non-communicants; and by the 11th Art. Cap. 12, of the French Church Discipline, those who have been a long time in the Church, and will not communicate of the Lord's Supper, if they do it through contempt, or for fear of being obliged to forsake all manner of idolatry, after several admonitions, *they shall be cut off from the*

*body of the church*; but if it be through infirmity, they shall be borne with for some time, until they can be established."

Again. Both the French Church and the Scotch Church disciplined communicants and non-communicants, who were guilty of the sin of dancing: "By the Church Discipline of France, (Cap. 14, Art. 27,)" incorporated also in the Scotch Discipline, "those who make account to dance, or are present at dancing, after having been several times admonished, *shall be excommunicated* upon their growing obstinate and rebellious; and all church-judicatures are to see this act put into execution."

Again. The French Church disciplined non-communicants who failed, without sufficient reason, to fulfil their engagements to marry: "In case the offending and deserting party have never communicated at the Lord's table, due admonitions shall be given in the consistory, and, if without effect, his or her obstinacy shall be on three several Lord's days publicly denounced and signified to the people. And on the *fourth*, they shall be publicly informed, that we do repute such a person by name no member of our Church."

The New England Church, in her early days of purity, when illustrious names adorned her annals, included in her discipline the disobedient children of the Church. Thus testifies Cotton Mather in his "History of the New England Churches from 1620 to 1698:" "We judge, that the discipline of our Lord Jesus Christ in our churches ought to be extended to the children baptized in them, inasmuch as these persons are certainly those which the Scripture calls *within*, and not *without*. And the practice of the purest churches has been agreeable to this principle, as well the Primitive before, as others since, the Reformation. Reason also says that where a *privilege* is expected, a *discipline* is to be acknowledged. Although it is a membership in the catholic Church that gives right unto baptism, yet particular churches owe a duty to the catholic Church, part of which duty is the application of discipline unto those baptized persons, whom the providence of God shall cast under their inspection. The discipline which we count owing to these

persons, is, an *instruction* in the laws of our Lord Jesus Christ, an *admonition* upon a scandalous violation of those laws, and upon incorrigibleness in evil, an *open rejection* from all ecclesiastical privileges. And although persons are most clearly liable to this process, when they have actually renewed their baptismal covenant, and recognised their subjection to the government of our Lord, in his Church, and the children of the Church are to be accordingly labored withal, that they may be brought hereunto, yet we do not think that any of the said persons refusing or neglecting thus to do, are thereby exempted from such care of the Church, to bring them unto repentance." Book v. ch. 15. The observations of the learned Increase Mather merit attention: "Baptized persons are under the discipline and government of the Church. When a person is baptized, he is solemnly admitted into Christ's school; can any one be admitted into Christ's school, and yet not subject to the order and discipline of that school? Again, baptism is the livery which of right appertaineth to Christ's household servants. Surely, if a person accept of that livery; he doth thereby submit himself to the laws and government of Christ, which is exercised in Christ's family here on earth. Therefore, the persons in question being baptized, may not plead exemption from discipline. That discipline and government which Christ hath appointed in his Church, hath been exercised towards children, according to their capacity, in all ages of the world. So it was when the Church was domestic, and after the Church became national. So too, the Christian Church of old, did discipline such children, although not presently admitted to the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, since the anti-Christian apostasy, the Reformed Church hath ever owned this truth. . . . The neglect of discipline toward children hath been the woful cause of much evil among us—withholding from this generation that which is, by the Lord's appointment, the means of restraint and recovery out of this evil. This very neglect hath brought a wound upon those churches, which—except the Lord be exceeding merciful—is now become incurable, and incurable. *Hinc prima mali labes*; children have been let alone so long, and many of them have become such



Belialists, that it has now become a difficulty, and almost an impossibility, to bring them under the yoke of Christ. . . . It is a zealous and dilligent attendance to discipline according to the rules of Christ, and not curtailing the covenant, that will keep churches pure. There are two ways practised by men in order to keep churches pure, the one is *human*, the other *divine*. The human way is to straiten the grace of the Lord's covenant; the divine way is faithfully to attend to discipline."

Thus, we have shown that the covenant-obligations of children were held to be enforceable by discipline, even to excommunication, by the Apostolic Church, by the Primitive Church, by the Bohemian Church, by the Reformed Church, (which condemned the contrary doctrine, as the foundation of Anabaptism,) by the Church of France, by the Church of Scotland, (whose discipline has moulded our own,) and by the New England Church in her palmiest days. Our Revisionists, in this discussion, have called for the testimony of the Churches. We here furnish it. And now, confronted with it, what can they say? Will they rebut it by the contrary testimony of other Churches, or even of one single Church of the Reformation? Let them produce it. It is incumbent upon them to do it. But if unable, they are bound in candor to admit, that the doctrine they urge our Church to accept, is a departure from the faith of her ancestors.

We adduce next, the views of some of the most eminent modern divines. And first of all, Dr. John M. Mason—one of the brightest lights with which the Church of God was ever blessed. "The Church is to inspect the conduct of her youth. I do not mean that she is to encourage hawkers of scandal, nor to entertain legions of spies, for their benefit. Not that she is to put on that dismal visage which petrifies the juvenile heart; nor to indulge that morose inquisition which arraigns as a crime, every burst of juvenile cheerfulness. It is as much a part of God's natural constitution that youth should be sprightly, as that age should be grave. To reduce to one size, and one quality, all the decencies of life in all its periods, is the attribute of zeal which never discriminates, of severity which never learns,

or of Pharisaism, which finds a righteousness in reprobating enjoyments which it cannot share.

“But, after every proper allowance and precaution, there is left a large field of juvenile conduct for the eye of the Church to explore. Both in affirming the principles of rectitude, and in resisting the principles of evil, she may and she ought to do much for her youth.

“If a child be exemplary in filial or fraternal affection; pure in behavior among others; diligent in learning the precious truths of revelation; reverential towards the ordinances of public and private worship; fearful of sinning against God; it is no small encouragement to have these excellencies observed, cherished, and honored, by those who bear rule in the Church. Timidity subsides; bashfulness is attempered into modesty; the ductile inclination grows into consistent purpose; and thus, ‘little ones’ are brought to Jesus Christ, and prepared for occupying, in due season, the places of those whose gray hairs announce the approach of that hour in which they are to be numbered with them who have died in faith.

“On the other hand, can any reflecting person doubt, that the seasonable interposition of the Church of God might save many a youth from falling a victim to his own depravity, or to the depravity of others? Why should a doubt be entertained on the subject? Is the experiment fairly tried? Are the churches in the habit of throwing themselves in between ruin and the youth who have not openly professed religion? Do parents, on the failure of domestic admonition, *ever* resort to this remedy? Ought they not to do it? Why should a tender and solemn remonstrance, in the name of the living God, the Creator, and the Judge of all, be without its influence in recovering an unpractised sinner from the error of the wicked? Why should not an *authoritative* exhortation, on the part of the Church of God, brought home to individual feeling, have some effect, as a rational means, in prevailing with the young to consider their obligation to recognise the vows made over them in their baptism? There are more troublesome consciences on this point, among our youth, than we perhaps imagine. Why should they not be told that

continuance in carelessness, or abandonment to iniquity, will compel the Church of God to disown them, and to rank them with those concerning whom she has no promises to plead? Let it not be said, that 'the state of religious society forbids such an interference—that parents and children would spurn at it as an encroachment upon their liberty—and that instead of gaining our youth, it would drive them, at once, into the camp of the profane;'—at least let not these things be said without *facts* to support them. They are the suggestions of fear, unsanctioned by experience. No doubt, in the decayed state of Christian order, much prudence is necessary for its revival; but the necessity of prudence cannot excuse inaction. It is very possible, also, that some young saints would 'kick against the pricks.' But the same objection lies against the faithful preaching of the word, and against the impartial use of discipline toward professors. There are weighty reasons why a judicious extension of Church authority to baptized youth in general, would not be so fruitless and despicable as some suppose:

"1. The mere power of *opinion* which it would employ, could not be easily resisted. It is to be remembered, that a very little quantity of opinion goes a great way with all minds which have not yet acquired self-stability; and *such* opinion as the Christian Church can at all times command, no man living *can* disregard with impunity.

"2 In many instances, this interference would combine with domestic precept and example; and how far their united forces would go, nothing but the event is entitled to pronounce.

"3. Dissolute as the world is, and disposed as multitudes are to scoff at every thing which bears the image and superscription of Jesus Christ, it will be no recommendation even with thoughtless people, that a young person fled away from the voice of kindly instruction; much less that he was thrust out on account of his vices. Some there are, who, to serve the present hour, would applaud his spirit; and, on the first disagreement, would upbraid him with his disgrace. It is not in human nature to stand easily under an excommunication of any sort. Exclusion,

for faults, from any decent society, is, and ever will be, a stigma. Whoever disbelieves it has only to try.

“4. The providence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his control over the hearts and affairs of men, are especially to be regarded. Perhaps no instance can be shown of contempt upon the discipline of his house not being followed, sooner or later, with most disastrous consequences to the offender. He has promised to own, support, and vindicate it, as solemnly as he ever promised to bless the gospel of his grace. If more stress were laid upon *his* agency in rendering effectual his own institutions, we should both discharge our duty more exactly, and see it crowned with greater success. Let the churches *begin* to look after their youth; let them commit their efforts to their Master's faithfulness. It will be time enough to complain, when he ‘leaves himself without a witness.’”

Similar views were entertained by Dr. Samuel Miller: “When they come to years of discretion, let them be affectionately reminded of their duty to ratify, by their own act, the vows made by their parents in baptism, and be urged, again and again, to give first their hearts, and then an humble acknowledgment of an outward profession to the Saviour. Let this plan be pursued faithfully, constantly, patiently, and with parental tenderness. If instruction and exhortation be disregarded, and a course of error, immorality, or negligence, be indulged in, let warning, admonition, suspension, or excommunication ensue, according to the character of the individual, and the exigencies of the case. ‘What!’ some will be disposed to say, ‘suspend or excommunicate a young person, who has never yet taken his seat at a sacramental table, nor even asked for that privilege?’ Certainly. Why not? If the children of professing Christians are born members of the Church, and are baptized as a sign and a seal of their membership, nothing can be plainer than that they ought to be treated in every respect as church-members, and, of course, if they act in an unchristian manner, a bar ought to be set up in the way of their enjoying Christian privileges. If this be not admitted, we must give up the very first principles of ecclesiasti-

cal order and duty." "The truth is, if infant baptism were properly improved, if *the profession, which it includes*, and the obligations which it imposes, were suitably appreciated and followed up, it would have few opponents. I can no more doubt, if this were done, that it would be blessed to the saving conversion of thousands of our young people, than I can doubt the faithfulness of a covenant God. Yes, infant baptism is of God, but the fault lies in the conduct of its advocates. The inconsistency of its friends has done more to discredit it, than all the arguments of its opposers, a hundred fold."

The report of the committee of the Assembly of 1811, above alluded to—Drs. Romeyn, Miller, and Richards—takes the same ground: "If the youth of the Church do not discharge all the duties of members, when they have reached the age of discretion, then let them be dealt with accordingly. If at that age, after having had all the care and attention prescribed as necessary, they do not conform to all the institutions of Jesus Christ, there is every reason to suppose that they will commit such open sins as will make it evident to all that they deserve to be cut off; or, if not, they will still deserve to be thus cut off, 1. For not improving their religious education. 2. Slighting warning administered by parents, teachers, and ministers. 3. Neglecting to fulfil the vows which baptism imposes. 4. For irreligion, breaking the covenant of their God."

Dr. John. H. Rice, of Virginia, held the same view, and reprehended the present practice of the churches, in treating covenant-breaking youth as virtually self-excommunicated: "A majority of our churches, perhaps, fall into another kind of inconsistency, and proceed upon the assumption that those who have been baptized in infancy, excommunicate themselves, when at the age of personal responsibility, they neglect to obey the commands of Christ; and that those persons, thenceforward, cease to be members of the Church until they enter it by another door, *i. e.*, until they are received to the communion of the Lord's Supper. Accordingly, when this is done, they are reported to presbytery as new members, received on examination." (*Evang. and Lit. Magazine.*)

Dr. Hodge, of Princeton, holds the same view: "When baptized children come to a suitable age, and have the requisite knowledge, they should be required to assume for themselves their baptismal vows, and should, as other church-members, be disciplined for any neglect or violation of their covenanted obligations." "There is a great temptation to adopt theories which free from painful responsibilities."

A member of the Revision Committee, whilst he respects the views of the old divines, yet affirms that "the subject of church government is better understood by the men of the present generation, than it was by our fathers." Only to a very limited extent indeed, can this assertion be allowed to be true. On the subject of the eldership, it may be granted, that correct views more generally obtain in our Southern Church now, than were entertained by the churches in preceding generations. But how many years of protracted discussion and controversy were required for this! And yet how much opposition does the revival of what is indeed the doctrine of the Apostolic and Primitive Church, encounter among us! How do our newspapers at this very time, teem with crude effusions of dogmatical, prelatical "Presbyterians!" And if our Southern Church has been led into the old paths, how greatly is she indebted to the torch of a venerable pioneer of a former age, here and there, that has lighted her way! But, on the general subject of the constitution of the Church, and its regimen, and the relations between the Old Testament Church and the New, what misconceptions, what ignorance, exist, even among our eminent divines. What information the great majority of these have upon such topics, has not been obtained by independent study, but picked up from reviews and newspapers. Where is the application, the toil, the culture, the scholarship, the thoroughness, that so generally distinguished the theological world of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? How many of our ministers have any acquaintance with the writings of L'Empereur, Bertram, Leydekker, Buxtorf, Vitringa, Witsius, Gillespie, and many other worthies that might be named? It will be readily admitted by all, that a body equal to the Westminster Assembly could not

possibly be convened in this superficial age. There were giants in those days—and they abounded too! But where shall they be found now? Perhaps, one or two here and there, in all Christendom!

We shall consider now some objections that have been made to our doctrine.

1. It was objected by that eminent man, Dr. Thornwell, that “the two classes of professors and non-professors are not equally related to the idea of the Church: that the former class pertains to its essence, whilst the latter is an accidental result of the mode of organisation; for there can be no Church at all, where there is no professed subjection to the authority of Christ, but there may be a Church, and in the millennium there perhaps will be a Church, in which all are saints; and hence discipline, to the same extent, is not equally applicable to both classes.”

Though it be true that there can be a Church in which there are none but professors, personally, it is equally true that *such* a Church does but imperfectly represent “the visible Church, which consists of those who profess the religion of Christ, and submit to his laws, *together with their children.*” A community of single individuals would still be a community, (as long as it lasted!) but *such* a community would not be selected as a representative of society, which, with the Church, consists of families. The membership of children is essential to the completeness of the idea of the visible Church. And in the millennium, doubtless, the same elements will be found in the Church as now, professors and their children. The two classes are equally related to the covenant of the visible Church. Children are just as much in covenant with God as their parents are. They are not church-members simply because they are descended from professing parents, for this of itself could never have given them the right of citizenship in the commonwealth of Christ; but they are church-members because God has made his covenant with them, as well as with their parents. Wherever they are found, they are component members of the visible Church. There may be a Church consisting of professors only, in which there are no children—an imperfect representative of the visible Church,

however,—but there cannot be a Church in which there are children, that shall consist of professors only. The children of Baptist parents are none the less members of the Church, equally with their parents, because their membership is not recognised. God has put them in the Church, and God only can put them out. Children that are in covenant with God, whether professors or not, are members of the Church. All the duties, all the responsibilities of church-membership are theirs. All the education they need is due to them. If this be given, and after they have attained to manhood, any of them still resist their obligations, and refuse to yield obedience to Christ, then they have broken covenant with God, and the Church should disown them.

We reach the same conclusion, if, from the stand-point of the Reformers, we look upon the Church as “the whole body of the elect considered as united to Christ their head.” Why are any infants found in the Church? Had there been no covenant made with them, we could not have said whether there was a presumption for or against their election. But God *has* made a covenant with them, and so has brought them into his Church. And hence, say the Reformed divines, the *presumption* is, that they are of the number of the elect, and are to be so regarded, and so treated, until they give indubitable evidence to the contrary. When they have come to years of discretion, and in the case of any, all the faithful labors of the Church to lead them to acknowledge their obligations have proved unavailing, and they do not profess faith in Christ, love to him and his ordinances, and subjection to his laws, and so destroy the presumption of their election, they are accordingly to be judged as not belonging to the body of the elect, and therefore their proper place is *without* the Church, (which is “the whole body of the elect considered as united to Christ their head,”) and not *within* it. Their connexion then with the Church should terminate; for the evidences of election are plainly wanting. And it should terminate in that way which the case demands. This is the dictate of justice and of common sense. If the lack of those moral virtues or Christian graces, which are the evidences of election,



be simply their misfortune, then, of course, their connexion with the Church should terminate without censure, by a withdrawal simply. But if the lack of those qualities be a crime, (and in their circumstances it is a great crime,) then their church-membership should terminate by excommunication, which not only dissolves the connexion, but also passes a deserved censure upon their wicked apostasy. "Holiness to the Lord has been written upon their foreheads, and when they forget the obligations it implies, and walk in the light of their own eyes, and after the imaginations of their own hearts, they as much despise the covenanted claims of God, as if they had given themselves to his service by their own free act. They have been made vessels of the sanctuary; and in surrendering their being to secular ends, they are guilty of the same species of sin, which he commits who defiles the temple of the Lord."\* It is just, therefore, that the Church should disown them.

Again: If the argument we have been considering be a sound one, viz., "That the two classes of which the Church consists, are not equally related to the idea of the Church; and therefore discipline is not equally applicable to both, to the same extent," then it condemns as unjust the regulations of the Old Testament Church in regard to her youth. The Jewish Church consisted of two classes, professors and non-professors; but if the Jewish child did not at a certain age make a profession of religion, and observe the ordinance of the Passover, he was excommunicated. Why not object then, that the excision of the unconverted, rebellious, Jewish youth was unnatural, unreasonable, and absurd? There can be no reply to this, except by affirming that the Jewish Church was not absolutely a spiritual Church, and that spiritual qualifications were not required of those who observed the ordinance of the Passover—to affirm which, is to contradict the word of God. The Jewish Church was a true Church. Christ was its head, and the enlightening, sanctifying, influences of the Holy Spirit were given to her, though not in the same liberal, abundant measure, which is now enjoyed by the

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\* Dr. Thornwell's "Discourses on Truth."

New Testament Church. Shall it be, that because the influences of the Spirit are given in larger measure to the Church now than formerly, therefore greater liberty is accorded to her youth now than formerly, to resist their obligations? "*He hath broken my covenant,*" is the reason God gives for excommunication. The reason is a *moral* one, and so universally applicable, under every dispensation. Such a crime in the New Testament Church, is far greater than it was in the Old Testament Church, in proportion as the light and privileges of the former exceed those of the latter.

If the regulations of the Church in regard to the discipline of her youth have been altered, then let this be shewn, and let the Church of Christ be permitted to see her "Revised Book of Discipline," subscribed with a "Thus saith the Lord." The Jewish youth, who broke covenant with God, by forbearing to observe the last sealing ordinance of his Church, was disciplined, not by an indefinite suspension, not by an exclusion from the Passover, but by excommunication. (Numbers ix. 13.) Let it be shewn that the Church now is at liberty to proceed differently against her apostate youth; and to enact that no further discipline is called for in their case, than a discipline to which they have been accustomed all their lives—exclusion from the Lord's table—albeit some of them have broken over all bounds of morality and decency, have forsaken the sanctuary and its ordinances, become outlaws, scoffers, infidels, drunkards, and whoremongers.

That Dr. Thornwell was not satisfied with his own argument, is apparent from the following remarks, taken from his review of a work of Dr. Breckinridge: "Our Book evidently makes the distinction between the visible and invisible Churches to be, that in the one, the profession, in the other, the possession, of faith is the indispensable condition of membership. The two do not, therefore, seem to correspond. The one is not an imperfect exhibition of the other, but a different, though a related institute. Where the specific difference is not the same, there can be no identity of species. Then, again, the constitution of the visible Church, through families, many of whose members never become

saints, would seem to intimate that the visible Church is something more than the communion of saints made apparent. The whole subject is encompassed with difficulties, and we should have been glad if Dr. Breckinridge had devoted to it a larger share of his attention. It is undergoing a warm and vigorous discussion in Germany, and we hope the result will be the clearing up of difficulties which still embarrass many earnest minds." S. P. R., Oct. 1859.

2. It is objected, that "as profession qualifies for the privileges of the Church, so also profession qualifies for the discipline of the Church." A Baptist would readily assent to this proposition, and would only suggest that the word "all" should be placed before "privileges." *How* does the profession made by an adult qualify him for the privileges of the Church? Thus: His profession has brought him within the covenant of the Church, and so being within the covenant, he is entitled to its privileges, under obligation to its duties, and amenable to its discipline. But *the child* of the professor, God himself has put within the covenant of the Church, even before its birth. It was born a member of the Church, because born within the covenant; and being within the covenant, the child also is entitled to its privileges, under obligation to its duties, and amenable to its discipline. The Baptist principle is, No baptism without profession. The Revision principle is, No discipline without profession. Why not, then, with Baptists, deny that infants can *covenant* with God? If no discipline without profession, why a covenant without profession? But if a covenant, then why not a covenant for *discipline*, as well as for *privilege*? No enforcing obligation without profession, say the Revisionists. But if the profession itself be included in the obligation, then, of course, the profession cannot be made the condition of enforcing the obligation! The qualification cannot, surely, be made the condition of the command, since God commands the very qualification itself! What, in one sense, are church-duties, are, in another sense, church-privileges. When the heart is in a proper state, they are so regarded. Now, will it do to affirm, that, whenever a child of the covenant, whose heart is not right

with God, fails to regard his duties as privileges, in such a case duties cease to be duties, and he is exempt from the discipline of the covenant?

It has been said: "If some members of the Church can be excluded from a privilege to which others are entitled, without prejudice to their church-membership, why may they not be exempted from a penalty to which others are exposed, without jeopardy to their relations to the Church?" We reply: 1. Such privileges as are also duties binding upon all members equally, none can be excluded from, "without prejudice to their church-membership." It is impossible. The obligations to perform all the duties of church-membership not only grow out of that covenant-relation they sustain to God, but are resolvable, back of this, into that essential relation, they, as moral agents, sustain to God's Moral Law, and from which, consequently, no power in the universe can release them. 2. Unbelief and impenitence—a criminal state of heart, out of which their "disabilities" spring—are altogether excuseless, unless sin carries with it its own apology. 3. Impenitent, baptized youth incur not simply *loss*, but *guilt*; and guilt necessarily exposes them to the just, deserved censures of the Church.

The doctrine of non-liability to church-censures, *without consent*, would have a terrible sweep—striking, as it does, at the foundation of the economy of nature, the economy of providence, the economy of grace, as well as the economy of a Church-state. We are born into the world without our consent; are constituted moral agents without our consent; made candidates for a never-ending eternity without our consent; were born of such and such parents without our consent; born in such and such circumstances without our consent. Relations have been constituted for us, without our consent, and yet they involve serious responsibilities. So, too, the relations we sustain to the Church, may be without our consent, and yet we cannot throw off the mighty responsibility. Children are constantly subject to responsibilities, without their consent or knowledge. "Covenants made with parents include their heirs. Estates descend, charged with various duties, which children neglect at their

peril. Without such arrangements, society could never attain its great end and object." The principle which Puffendorf lays down is indisputable: "In infants, a presumed consent is judged equivalent to a formal acceptance, it being taken for granted, that no one will refuse what conduces to his benefit." (Law of Nature and Nations. Book iv., chap. iv., p. 161.) So, too, Vitringa: "Semper enim de homine præsumimus, *salutem suam velle*. Sufficit, nos posse præsumere, infantem professioni parentum suorum non renunciaturum quia præsumitur suam salutem velle." (Observationes Sacræ. Tom. 1, p. 328.) And what conduces more to one's benefit than the possession of a covenant-relationship to God, the performance of covenant-duties, and the enjoyment of covenant-privileges?

Our doctrine, then, is supported by the analogies of nature and providence, of society, and government. It is supported too, by the analogies of all the covenants made by God with men. The covenant of works, made with Adam, was also made with us, but without our consent. Still, responsibilities were incurred, and the consequences of this transaction remain to this day. The covenant of grace, made with Christ, was also made with his seed, but without their consent—grace was given them in Christ before the world began. Duties devolve upon them in consequence, and privileges, everlasting privileges are theirs. So likewise, other covenants made with parents—*e. g.* with Noah, with Phinehas, with David—were made with their children, without their consent. So that all analogy upholds the provision of the ecclesiastical covenant, by which children become members of the Church, without their consent. In all these covenants, the presumed consent of children was judged equivalent to their formal consent. Steuart of Pardovan, in his "Collections," makes the following just observation: "By that covenant whereof baptism is a seal, the Lord promiseth to be our God, and we are in his promised strength to engage to be his people; which engagement, though Christian infants be not capable to come under of themselves, formally; yet, by parents vowing in their name and stead, they do thereby become absolutely bound to the performance thereof, because their

obligation and duty to be the Lord's were supposed, and previous unto their being baptized." So too, Matthew Henry: "The child's actual faith, and repentance, and obedience, are thereby made debts then incurred, to be paid at a future time. Baptism is an *obligation* which must be performed. It is the seal of a bond. We are in bonds to God; penal bonds to be the Lord's; which, if we break, we expose ourselves to the penalty." In like manner, the learned Lightfoot observes: "The equity of the obligation lies not in the parties understanding the thing, but in the equity of the thing itself. How come all men liable to Adam's sin? The equity of imputing it to them makes them liable, as they are in Adam's loins and covenant. How do men become bound to perform their duty? Not because able, but from the equity of the thing, because it is equal and fit that they should. So, children at baptism may come under obligation, not because they are able to perform their duty to know it, but the equity of the thing lays it on. They have this natural bond upon them, as creatures, to homage God; if the sacramental bond be added, they are bound, as Christians, to homage Christ. Why should this be so monstrous, since they are as much capable to know one, as the other? Let the objector shew why the uncircumcised child should be cut off from his people, and why God should visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children?" Engagements made for children, that accord with their moral obligations, and therefore with their true interests, are binding, however repugnant they may subsequently prove to their depraved inclinations. The child of a citizen is born a citizen, but is not qualified *by nature* to be a citizen, for it has a nature, which, left to itself, would prove destructive of citizenship, would make him an outlaw, and an outcast. His development requires constant watch, direction, restraint, instruction, culture—in other words, he must be different from what he was by nature, his nature must be changed, (in one sense,) before he is fit to discharge the duties, and enjoy the privileges of citizenship. But suppose that, in the case of any, this change does not take place, character is not improved by the ameliorating, conservative influences of the family and of society; social and

civil obligations are not fulfilled, but discarded and trampled upon; what then? Does the law deem the fact of the lack of the necessary change; the fact of the absence of proper moral qualifications; a sufficient reason for exemption from the penalty—banishment or death? Would it not be monstrous folly, to plead in behalf of an outlaw: “He never owned his responsibility to the law, he never acknowledged his obligations, he never discovered a sense of duty, he never had a heart for the ordinances of society, he never was disposed to be restrained by the bonds of civilisation and government; all the efforts made, at first to train him for duty, and subsequently to correct his errors, to abandon his vicious and criminal career, to reform his character, in a word *to change him*, have all been in vain; he is morally, and socially, *a dead man*; one, who ‘has never heard the voice of the law in his soul;’ it would therefore be most unreasonable and foolish ‘to exercise over him a kind of government wholly unsuited to his condition and circumstances,’ to treat the wicked like the righteous—an outlaw, like a faithful citizen,—and to inflict upon the *dead*, a punishment fit only for the *living*?” How would the law of society “treat” such a plea as this? Only as proving conclusively the justice of the penalty; the absence of moral qualifications for duty, as sealing the condemnation of the criminal. The fact that a change of character was necessary before the man could fulfil his duties as a citizen, the law takes no notice of; for it represents his obligations, not his qualifications, and has respect to the *doing of duty*, and not to what fitted him for it. Now is not this reasoning applicable to the case of the disobedient baptized? Does the fact that a *supernatural* change, wrought by the Spirit, is necessary to fit them for the duties of church-membership, affect their obligations either to duty or to discipline? Whence the necessity of a *supernatural* change, but from the fact that their nature is *spiritually dead*, so that a new creation is required? In the case of the young citizen, the ordinary influences of the Spirit in providence, are necessary to effect the needful change, form a virtuous character, and qualify him for his duties. In the case of the child of the Church, the

extraordinary influences of the Spirit in grace, are necessary to effect the needful change, and qualify him for his duties. The absence of qualification does not excuse from duty, nor exempt from punishment, in the one case—why should it in the other?

The necessity of a supernatural change in the second case, only reveals more clearly than is done in the first case, *the true condition* of our fallen nature—its *radical* depravity, originating its *total inability* to fulfil *moral obligations*, and requiring the agency of the Spirit to restore it to its normal, original state and power,—and therefore only reveals more clearly the utter worthlessness of all apologies made for it, and the perfect justice of the penalty due to those who are false to their own nature, and false to God. The question of duty does not turn on the giving or withholding of the Spirit, but on the obligations of the individual. It is our duty to yield perfect obedience to the law, but we are not able to do our duty. The Scriptures plainly require us to “serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear,” and with the same breath tell us we must “have grace” to enable us to do it. It would, then, be just as reasonable to object, that it was an unjust and cruel sentence which subjected the unbaptized unbeliever to everlasting destruction, because he lacked the grace necessary to enable him to comply with his moral obligations, as to object that it was an unjust and cruel sentence which subjected the baptized unbeliever to excommunication, because he lacked the grace necessary to enable him to comply with his moral and covenant obligations.

It has been argued, that “the obligations of Christians do not fall on unbelievers. The obligation of the unbeliever is to be a Christian, to believe—not to observe church-ordinances; but being a Christian, then, to observe them.” This reasoning is specious, but unsound. The true theory is, that upon all men, willing or unwilling, church-obligations rest. The difference between a professor and a non-professor is not, that obligations rest on the former, which do not on the latter, but the true difference is, that the former *assumes* obligations previously existing, whilst the latter dishonorably *repudiates* them.



A prescribed order obtains among these obligations. Faith in Christ is necessary, in order to the right observance of all church-ordinances. A precept or an institution may be positive, and yet obedience to it is a moral duty, if commanded by God. And what else is necessary for the due observance of the Lord's Supper, but a proper state of heart? And does not "a proper state of heart" come under the claims of the moral law, the essential, unchangeable law of our nature? And is not the "proper state of heart" for *sinner*s, *faith in Christ*, and *love to Christ*, the divinely appointed Saviour of sinners? And then does not the moral law require faith in Christ, love to Christ, and obedience to his commands? And are not these the qualifications for a due observance of the Lord's Supper? And the want of which is therefore condemned by the moral law? So that the non-observance of the Lord's Supper, on the ground of lack of qualification, is condemned by the moral law? Now, if this obligation rests on all, does it not devolve with greater weight upon those who, by a divine constitution, are already members of the Church? If the violation of *natural* obligations be attended with great guilt, is not the violation of both *natural* and *covenant* obligations attended with still greater?

It has been attempted to ridicule our doctrine, by representing it as equivalent to "excommunicating a person for not being regenerated." It is not on this account—the "not being regenerated"—that excommunication is applicable to any. That involves the sovereignty of the Spirit, and this is no ground, either for action or non-action, with the Church. But excommunication is applicable to them, because the moral and covenant obligations, which have been devolved upon them by God, and which will bind for eternity, have been violated. It is true, that their depravity is so entire, that they need the renewing influences of the Spirit to enable them to do their duty. But duty is none the less duty, if those renewing influences are not, in the way of sovereignty, bestowed. Not a particle of responsibility is thereby removed—not the shadow of an excuse is thereby furnished, (for the inability of the sinner, being his sin, cannot excuse,)—nor is amenability to punishment thereby

affected, in the least, both moral and ecclesiastical; for such are liable to ecclesiastical punishment, when ecclesiastical obligations are disowned. If it be objected, that it would be harsh and unnatural to cast out of the Church any "for not being regenerated," why may it not, with equal force, be objected, that it would be unjust in God to cast any into *hell*, "for not being regenerated"—since this was not in their power? If the phrase "for not being regenerated" renders ridiculous the idea of casting out of the Church, on this ground, it also renders still more ridiculous the idea of casting any into hell, on the same ground. What it does for the one, it does for the other. But in neither case is this phraseology accurate. Moral obligation takes hold of the moral states and acts of an individual, without any respect to the supernatural agency, which, since the fall, is now required for the creation of such states and acts as are holy and good. It is not said, "He that is *not regenerated*, shall be damned," but, "He that *believeth not*, shall be damned;"—although, as a matter of fact, it be true that no one can "believe," who is not "regenerated." So too, when the Saviour says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," here is simply the statement of the fact—"he *cannot* see the kingdom of God." Again, he says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!" Faith and repentance are required of sinners. But for the existence of these, regeneration is necessary. And this is not in their power, nor are the acts of faith and repentance. Still, they are *morally bound* to believe and repent. And they are morally bound to serve God. And without faith and repentance they cannot serve him. And if they do not believe, and repent, and serve God, they will perish, and justly; notwithstanding the fact that faith and repentance and true obedience, are not in their own power. Sinners, then, without the Church, that do not believe, repent, and serve, (and the proper field of labor is the Church,) are justly doomed to perish. And so, too, sinners *within* the Church, that do not believe, repent, and serve God, in ordinances and commandments, (which they are bound by covenant to do,) are justly *cast out of the Church*, and, unless they repent, are doomed to perish.

3. It is objected, That excommunication is not applicable to non-communicants, because such are already without the communion of the Church; in that position already in which excommunication places a person. But what is "the communion of the Church?" Surely not the communion table only! The "communion of the Church" is communion in its sympathies, affections, prayers, ordinances, privileges, watchful care, instruction, training, inspection, government, control, and discipline. If the children of the Church are without the communion of the Church, then of course are they without its sympathies, affections, prayers, watchful care, instruction, government, as well as discipline;—which is equivalent to being "without the Church;" for what is the "Church" without its "communion?" So that the theory of the objector "excommunicates" all the children of the Church! But if the children of the Church are not without its communion, as to care, prayers, instruction, and government, who has the right to come in here and separate "discipline" from communion, to which it pertains, as well as do the other elements? Calvin justly observes: "The children of the Church are in the communion of the Church, even before their birth." (In pueris infantibus, qui antequam ex utero prodierint, jam in communione ecclesiæ sunt. Instructio adversus Anabapt.) The baptized child is one of God's visible people. He is in the communion, not of the invisible, but of the visible Church, though not as yet in full communion, which still he is *bound* to be. He has his rights which the Church is bound to respect, and acknowledge. He has his interests which the Church is bound to conserve. He has his obligations which the Church is bound to see fulfilled. God has linked him to her by a tie which God only can dissolve. He participates in those rights, privileges, and benefits, which are found in her alone—such as properly belong to him in his present condition of minority. He is the object of her regard, her sympathy, and her labors. He is under obligation to come to the full possession of all his rights, to the full enjoyment of all his privileges, to the full discharge of all his duties, to the full performance of a covenanted, required service—in short, to the full communion of the Church. For

this, the influences of the Spirit are promised, and the efforts of the Church put forth,—to enable him to meet those moral and covenanted obligations which were upon him from the first moment of his existence. And if all effort has proved in vain, and he becomes, instead of a dutiful child, a guilty rebel, despising his birthright, contemning his rights and privileges, trampling upon his obligations, then it is the duty of the Church to cut him off from her communion, excommunicate him, as one who has broken the covenant of God.

The effect of excommunication is to terminate church-membership. “If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican,” says our Lord. Some have strangely supposed that these words refer to a private trespass between man and man, and not to a public sin against the church;—because it is not said, “Let him be to the church, but let him be *to thee* a heathen and a publican!” According to this view, one individual has the right to treat “as a heathen” him whom the Church treats as a Christian! And one member may be “a heathen” to all his fellow-members individually, and, at the same time, a Christian to the Church collectively! But if “*to thee*” he may be as a heathen, for a private trespass, much more may he be such to the *whole Church*, for a public scandalous sin.

The Jews were denied ecclesiastical, but permitted civil fellowship with heathen—the Canaanites excepted, whom God had devoted to destruction, and the Samaritans, who being once circumcised, and having received the book of the law, afterwards hindered the building of the house of the Lord, and were then excommunicated by the Jewish Church. That civil fellowship was not denied to heathen by the Jews, is evident also from the testimony of Josephus: “Our law doth not admit them (Gentiles) into our solemn or sacred assemblies, but it appointeth to communicate unto them all such things as they need, as fire, water, meat, also to show them the way, and let none of them be unburied.” (Contra Appionem.) Maimonides also shows that it was lawful for the Jews to buy and sell, borrow and lend, and make contracts with heathen. “It is lawful to go to the markets

or fairs of heathen, and to buy from them beasts, men-servants, maid-servants, though they be yet heathen; also houses, fields, vineyards; also for writing (contracts) it is permitted to go to their judicial courts." "With idolaters it is lawful to spend a day in mirth and gladness, (a king's coronation-day, or a man's birth-day,) eating and drinking, and observe the custom—*nevertheless hold it not for a holy day*, (devoted to idolatrous worship.)" Compare with this passage the directions given by the apostle to Christians: "If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake." Have communion with him in his dinner, but not in his idolatry!

L'Empereur ("De Legibus Ebræorum Forensibus") well observes: "'Let him be unto thee as an heathen,' is as much as have no communion nor fellowship with him in the holy assemblies, nor in the temple; for heathen were not permitted to come into the temple; (Ezek. xliv. 7, 9. Acts xxi. 28;) whereupon Paul is accused for bringing Greeks into the temple, and so polluting that holy place: heathen were excluded from *atrium Israelis*, the court of Israel, which was without the court of the priests. There was without the court of Israel, *atrium gentium*, the court of the Gentiles, otherwise called *intermurale*, because it lay between the temple and the outer wall, mentioned Ezek. xlii. 20. Into this outmost court, or *intermurale*, heathen men were admitted to come and worship there, according to 1 Kings viii. 41; 2 Chron. vi. 32. Heathen, though sojourning among the children of Israel, and dwelling within their gates, might not eat of the passover, Ex. xii. 43, 45. Civil fellowship was allowed, but eating of the passover was forbidden. No heathen man, no, not he that was in the priest's house, might eat of an offering of the holy things, Lev. xxii. 10, 13. A sacrifice was not accepted from the hand of a heathen, Lev. xxii. 25. And heathen had no part or portion with God's people, Neh. ii. 20; they were not within, but without the Church, being 'aliens from the commonwealth of

Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.' So that, 'let him be a heathen,' must reach thus far: 'Let him no more partake in the ordinances than a heathen; have no more church communion with him, than with a heathen; let him be no more acknowledged for a church-member, than a heathen; and with good reason, he hath made himself as a heathen, yea, worse than a heathen.' Thus social fellowship with heathen was granted, ecclesiastical fellowship denied. So too with regard to publicans. Of these, there were two sorts; some good and just men, exacting only what was appointed; others unjust, extortioners, and thereby infamous. Some were devout members of the Jewish Church, either native Jews or proselytes; others were infamous for their impiety and wickedness. The former enjoyed, of course, ecclesiastical fellowship with other Jews, and were admitted to the sacrifices and worship of the temple; of such, was the publican in the parable, who "went up into the temple to pray," as the Pharisee's words show; for when he thanks God that he is not as other men, adulterers, unjust, extortioners, he adds, *or even as this publican*; thus preferring himself not only to the infamous and scandalous publicans, but even to this devout publican. The other sort, notoriously scandalous, and justly esteemed as the worst of men—"publicans and sinners," "publicans and harlots," "publicans and gluttons," being synonymous in the gospels—were denied ecclesiastical intercourse with the Jews, and excluded from the temple. To this sort does Christ allude, when he says, "Let him be unto thee as a publican." Philo Judæus, in his treatises, "On Animals fit for Sacrifice," and "On those who offer Sacrifice," has abundantly shewn that all impious persons, those morally unclean, as well as those ceremonially unclean, were excluded from church-fellowship among the Jews. "The law ordains that a person who brings a sacrifice shall be pure both in body and soul." "The temple of the truly living God may not be approached by unholy sacrifices." "The real object taken care of, is not the condition of the victims sacrificed in order that they may have no blemish, but that of the sacrificers, that they may not be defiled by any unlawful passion."

“The lawgiver excludes all who are unworthy from the sacred assembly.”

It follows, that as both heathen and publicans were excluded from ecclesiastical, but not civil communion, therefore, for any one to be to the Church as “a heathen and a publican,” is to be “an alien from the commonwealth of Israel;” his connexion with the Church of God being dissolved. Thus, our Directory refers to this text, as warrant for excommunication, and uses the phrase “the Church’s excluding from her communion,” as equipollent with “*casting out unworthy members.*” The Form of Government has an expression of equal force, “*excluding the contumacious and impenitent from the congregation of believers.*” Our General Assembly uses plain, unambiguous language, that cannot be misconceived, when it says, “Resolved, that no church-session has authority *to dissolve the connexion of a communicant with the Church of Christ, except by excommunication.*” Digest, p. 145.

Excommunication is also signified by “devoting one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” 1 Cor. v. 5. That this phrase cannot denote, as some suppose, the miraculous infliction of physical evil by the apostle, is evident, for it was “a punishment inflicted of *many,*” and so no miracle wrought by the apostle; and there is not a syllable of any other punishment than that inflicted “of many.” And what need of any other, since “*sufficient to such a man is this punishment inflicted of many,*” says the apostle? If delivery to Satan meant not simply excommunication, but something more, Satanic torture, what need of it, if the former was “sufficient?” And if the punishment inflicted by the church was “sufficient,” then what was the punishment inflicted by the apostle? Was it *more,* or *less?* If either, then it was either unnecessarily severe, or good for nothing! But the sufficiency of the punishment inflicted by the Church, is a conclusive proof of the absence of any other—and of the identity of “delivering to Satan” and excommunication.

A long list of authorities could be exhibited to shew that this was the general sense of the phrase from the earliest age of the

Church to the present. A few only we present. First, the venerable Syriac version, so ancient that it was made before the New Testament canon was fully settled, thus renders the passage in 1 Cor. v.: "And I, while distant from you in body, but present with you in spirit, have already, as if present, judged him who perpetrateth this deed; that ye all assemble together in the name of our Lord Jesus Messiah; *and that ye deliver him over to Satan*, for the destruction of the flesh, that in spirit he may have life, in the day of our Lord Jesus Messiah." Here, the delivering to Satan is represented as the act of the Church, the apostle concurring, and consequently was a church-censure, and no miracle.

In like manner Basil, one of the ancient fathers, speaks of some who, in his day, "had been delivered to Satan for thirty years, that they might learn not to carry themselves filthily, yea, unnaturally, as they had done formerly; concerning whom, he advises that now, after so long a time, they might be, upon their spontaneous confession of their heinous offence, received again into the Church." So too, the learned Jerome: "He (the presbyter) has power, if I transgress, to deliver me to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved." ("Ille si peccavero licet me tradere Satanæ ad interitum carnis, ut spiritus salvus sit.") Calvin holds the same view: "He calls it delivering to Satan, because the devil is *without* the Church, as Christ is *in* the Church." Turretine takes the same view. Witsius also, in his able treatise, "*De iis quæ a Paulo gesta sunt Ephesi.*" Owen likewise: "This delivery unto Satan is no more but the casting of a man out of the visible kingdom of Christ, so giving him up, as unto his outward condition, into the state of heathens and publicans, which belonged unto the kingdom of Satan." So too, President Edwards: "Excommunication is a punishment . . . whereby a person . . . is cast out of the Church, and delivered unto Satan." "He is cast out into the wicked world, the kingdom of Satan, where he appears to belong." John Brown of Had-dington, thus expresses it: "Excommunication shuts out from church-fellowship altogether, into the world, or kingdom of



Satan." Dr. Killen: "To deliver any one to Satan, is to expel him from the Church; for whoever is not in the Church, is in the world, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." (Ancient Church.) The Church of Scotland, in her formula of excommunication, employs this expression: "I pronounce thee excommunicated, shut out from the communion of the faithful, debar thee from their privileges, and deliver thee unto Satan for the destruction of thy flesh, that thy spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." "Thereby letting us know how dreadful a thing it is to be shut out from the ordinary means of grace and salvation, and exposed to the temptations of our grand adversary, the devil." (Pardovan's Collec.) The Westminster Assembly, after a long, patient, thorough examination of this passage, as Gillespie shews, decided that it referred to excommunication, and ordered it to be inserted as a proof-text of this doctrine in their Confession of Faith. The Assembly's Notes so explain it: "What it is to be delivered to Satan, the Lord himself declareth, when he saith, 'Let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican,' that is to say, be disfranchised and put out of the right and liberty of the city of Christ, which is the Church." Lastly, our own standards hold the same view. The Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, the Directory for Worship, cite this very passage, this *fifth* verse of fifth chapter of 1 Corinthians, as a proof-text of the doctrine of excommunication. Now then, if excommunication be "counting a person as a heathen and publican," and "delivering him over to Satan," thus "dissolving his connexion with the Church," how can it be affirmed, that to excommunicate the apostate children of the Church, *is just to put them where they are already?* Are they to the Church as heathen? Do they belong to the visible kingdom of the devil? What then becomes of their church-membership? The infant member has a two-fold character—a natural and a covenant character. As to the first, he is sinful; as to the second, he is holy, *i. e.*, devoted to God, God's property. If, in after years, his actual character accords with his covenant character, if he recognises God's right to him by observing his ordinances and obeying his commands,

then his membership in the Church continues. If, in after years, his actual character accords with his natural character, if he continues wicked, not recognising God's right to him, then his covenant character ceases—terminates by Him who constituted it, God—his church-membership is forfeited, he no longer remains within, but is put, by the Church, without.

4. It is objected, that if the excommunicated non-professor were subsequently to return, and profess penitence, he must needs be rebaptized. But this no more follows than that the excommunicated professor should be rebaptized upon his restoration. The one is not necessary, and is never done—why should the other be? The reason is this: Baptism is a sign and seal of two covenants; the covenant of grace, on which is based the invisible Church of all God's elect, and the Abrahamic or ecclesiastical covenant, on which is based the visible Church throughout the world. The covenant of grace is administered *through* the ecclesiastical covenant,—hence, baptism is the sign and seal of *both*. The invisible Church never drops its members. Excommunication never occurs there. Once a member, always a member. Now, the excommunicated non-professor may be, as the excommunicated professor frequently is, a member of the invisible Church; and, if so, his membership is a *sealed* membership, sealed by baptism. And if a member of the invisible Church, his excommunication from the visible Church for his crimes is the means of grace designed for his recovery. Whilst his crimes are not repented of, his remaining in the visible Church avails him little, nay, is injurious to him, for the influences of the Spirit, though not finally withdrawn, are yet temporarily, are suspended, and will continue to be until led to repentance; but for this, the medicine of excommunication is necessary—delivering him over to Satan temporarily, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. And when the medicine has wrought the cure, and, cleansed from his pollutions, and humbled, and penitent, and craving full restoration to his offended Father's favor, and full communion with the Holy Trinity, which is enjoyed only in the full communion of the visible Church, he

applies for restoration, the church, recognising the evidences of his interest in the covenant of grace, and his membership in the invisible Church, re-admits him into that visible Church, which owes its existence to, and derives its value from, the invisible Church of God's elect. But baptism is not repeated, because baptism is a sign and seal of membership in that invisible Church, to which it is evident that he belongs, and from which, of course, he was never excluded. The membership being unbroken, the seal also is unbroken, and still in force.

5. It is objected, That these apostates cannot be subjected to judicial prosecution, because that mode of discipline requires that particular offences must be specified, and certain actions singled out, whereas, the whole state of non-professing members is unsound, and their whole life a continued sin. But, we reply, no judicial prosecution is called for, no trial is needed. Such cases come properly under the category of "cases without process." Their guilt is open, their crime avowed by their very position, and by their own confession. They are covenant-breakers, and all that is required, is to sever their forfeited connexion with the Church.

6. Another objection to the doctrine of our Book, is, That it does not recognise the sovereignty of divine grace. It is said that "the Church, recognising the sovereignty of divine grace, both as to the time and manner of its bestowal, cannot undertake to limit the probation of her baptized youth, and say, at any one moment, *now* this matter of your conversion is to be taken into your own hands, and *now* the exhausted patience of the Church refuses any longer to indulge your procrastination." This is the objection of our highly esteemed brother, Dr. Palmer. In reply, we ask, what right has the Church to derive her rule of action from, or to frame her course by, the sovereignty of divine grace? God's purposes govern his conduct; God's commands govern our own. Obedience to his precepts, the observance of his ordinances, the enforcement of his laws, furnish us with the only warrant for *expecting* the bestowal of his grace. The Holy Ghost is indeed sovereign, and may act "when, where, and how, he pleases;" but yet he himself has shut *us* up to those ordi-

nances he has chosen as the channels through which he ordinarily communicates his influences, and the faithful observance of which entitles us to look for his blessing, and the neglect of which brings upon us his frown. This being so, we need only to inquire, Has not the Holy Ghost laid down for the Church, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, her rule of action towards her disobedient and rebellious children? Has he not ordained, that that soul who refuses to hear the great Prophet whom God has raised up, shall be cut off from among his people? And is it optional with the Church, whether or not she shall *obey orders*?

“To be destroyed from among his people,” or “to be cut off from his people,” was an expression, with which those whom the apostle addressed were perfectly familiar, as it repeatedly occurs in the Old Testament. It signifies excommunication. Turretine observes: “Together with our Calvin, and many other learned men, we judge that the ‘cutting off of a soul from the people,’ which so frequently occurs in the writings of Moses, refers to excommunication, and not to a divine judgment, or to eternal death.” Tom. 3, Quæst. 32, Sec. 10. So also affirm the learned Buxtorf, Bertram, Piscator, Vatablus, and a host of other scholars, Jewish and Christian. Pool, in his Synopsis, says: “Our theologians, for the most part, understand by it, ejection from the Church.” (“Theologi nostri ut plurimum intelligunt ejectionem ex ecclesiâ.”)

Dr. Addison Alexander, commenting on these words, “Every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people,” Acts iii. 23, observes: “The phrase with which the quoted passage closes, ‘I will require it of him,’ is a pregnant one, and means far more than strikes the eye at once. To express this latent meaning, the Septuagint version, ‘I will take vengeance,’ is by no means too strong. In the verse before us, the apostle brings it out still more emphatically, by employing the customary legal formula for the highest theocratic punishment, that of excision from the Church or chosen people.” The renowned Gillespie thus corrects an error, which is still current in our day. “It is but a poor argument whereby

Bishop Bilson would prove the 'cutting off' not to be meant of excommunication, because it is applied even to capital offences, such as the law elsewhere appointeth men to be put to death for; as if it were any absurdity to say, that one and the same offence is to be punished *sub formalitate scandali* with excommunication, and *sub formalitate criminis* with capital punishment; and who knoweth not that a capital crime is a cause of excommunication, which is also sometimes the sole punishment, the magistrate neglecting his duty? If he had proved that all the causes of cutting off in the law were capital crimes, he had said much; but that will never be proved." The following conclusive exposition of these words, "that soul shall be destroyed from among the people," by Dr. Jno. M. Mason, deserves a careful consideration: "Who were the *people*? Not the *nation* of the Jews. For, having committed the crime, they themselves fell under the penalty. Their nation was to be destroyed; whereas, according to the prediction of Moses, it was not the *people* that were to perish, but the disobedient who were to be destroyed from *among* the people; which implies the continuance of that people in the divine protection. It is a people, therefore, which was to survive the rejection of the Jews, and be placed in such circumstances of favor, as to render destruction from among them a great and terrible judgment. Not the people whom God 'hath chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy.' For God never 'cast away his people whom he foreknew.' They who committed the crime before us, never belonged to this people, and so could not be destroyed from among them, and they whom God had thus chosen did not commit the crime. 'As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.' Who, then, are 'the people' from among whom the sinners were to be destroyed? If not the Jewish people, if not the elected people of God, it can be no other than that people whom he owns as his, and who are called by the collective name of his Church. And what was the 'destruction?' Not temporal death, for God never ordained this punishment for the sin of unbelief on his Son. Not an exclusion from the communion of the Jewish nation; for unbelief in Christ was to them a

recommendation instead of a disparagement, and to be severed from them entirely, was at least as likely to prove a blessing as a curse. In what then did the destruction consist? Undoubtedly, in having their name and place exterminated from among the people of God; in being cast out of his Church, and exposed to that perdition which shall be the fate of all whom he disowns. This must be the interpretation of the threatening, because no other will comport with either sense or fact." (Works, vol. ii. p. 364.)

Here then is the New Testament Church's Canon of Discipline. The disobedient among the baptized—those who will not, after all due nurture and admonition given, but given in vain, honor the ordinance of Christ—are to be cast out. And what is excommunication? It is not anathema, the devoting of a soul to eternal destruction; but it is a means of grace, painful, it is true, and only used when all others have proved ineffectual, designed for correction and recovery from wickedness. If, viewed in one light, it is a punishment, viewed in another light, it is a blessing. Contrasted with that of which it deprives us, it is a punishment. Contrasted with that eternal ruin which it foreshadows, and which, by so doing, it is designed to prevent, it is a blessing. It is a desperate remedy provided for a desperate case. Stier well observes: "The exclusion of the incorrigible, in virtue of which they are accounted as heathen and publicans, as it is requisite on its own account, so, at the same time, it is only the last and strongest expression of that love which seeks their recovery." "It is love to men, not hatred," remarks Dr. David Brown, "that prompts such severity against what will inevitably ruin them." What just objection can there be to this? If the lack of qualification for the duties of church-membership be a *sin*, can it be an *excuse*? Is it not more likely that the binding the obligation to be qualified on the conscience of the baptized child, even whilst sensible of his unfitness and sinful inability for duty, will be blessed to his conversion, rather than the non-recognition of his obligations? Is not the former mode precisely analogous to the operations of the Spirit of God on the sinner's soul? Whilst convincing him of his inability to keep the command-

ments, still, at the same time, binding the obligation to do so, on his conscience, until led to the Spirit himself to obtain the qualification he is bound to have? Is not the probability of conversion increased, when the sense of obligation is fortified by a clear and deep conviction of the terrible doom to which the unregenerate are exposed? And so, too, is not the probability of the conversion of the rebellious who are cast out of the Church, greater than the probability of the conversion of the rebellious who are suffered to remain within the Church, slighting her ordinances, and trampling under foot their obligations?

The objection we are considering, is virtually an objection to the law and the practice of the Old Testament Church. The Jewish Church was a body distinct from the Jewish State, and had a government distinct from the government of the State. The Jewish child, at the age of twelve years, became "a son of the commandment," *i. e.*, one bound to perform all the duties of church-membership. He was expected to be morally, as well as legally clean; to be circumcised in heart, as well as circumcised in the flesh. And he was required at this age to observe the ordinance of the passover; and to be qualified, spiritually, for its observance. But for this he was certainly dependent upon the sovereign grace of the Spirit. And yet, if he refused to observe the passover, he was, by God's command, excommunicated from Israel. Now then, why not object against this practice of the Old Testament, that "recognising the sovereignty of divine grace, both as to the time and manner of its bestowal, she had no right to limit the probation of her circumcised youth; and say, at any one moment, *now* this matter of your conversion is to be taken into your own hands, and *now* the exhausted patience of the Church refuses any longer to indulge your procrastination?"

But Dr. Palmer affirms that "the Jewish Church was under a carnal dispensation. Those who conformed to the letter of the Mosaic law, had a right to its immunities, converted or not." This is indeed a strange assertion! If the Jewish dispensation were of the earth, earthy; if it contemplated nothing more than what was evident to the senses, the visible and the material; if

its priests, and altars, and victims, and blood, and washings, and festivals, constituted simply an impressive pageant; if its design and end were merely external privileges and earthly rewards,—then might it properly be termed a “carnal dispensation.” But this was not the case. The entire dispensation represented Christ. He was the head and the soul of the whole economy. The visible pointed to the invisible, the material to the spiritual. The dispensation was spiritual; though not in equal degree to that which succeeded it. Its “elements” were the elements of spiritual truth—which imparted to it all its value. Under it, the decalogue, that summary of the moral law, was given. Under it, the saving influences of the Spirit were communicated to a vast multitude, which now compose the Church of the first-born in heaven. It began with the illustrious “father of the faithful.” And it ended with the illustrious “messenger of the covenant:” Of them that are born of women, none under the old economy hath risen greater than he. Its nature, its end, its results, its qualifications, its privileges, its ordinances, its sacraments, its precepts, its sanctions, and its discipline, were spiritual. “Those who conformed to the letter of the Mosaic law had a right to the immunities of the Jewish Church,” of course, for the “letter” “required truth in the inward parts.” “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and his statutes which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord thy God’s, the earth also with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you, above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked. For the Lord your God is God of gods, a great God, mighty and terrible, who regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.” Deut. x. Conformity to the letter of the Mosaic law would therefore certainly give a just right to all the ordinances of the Jewish Church. What more could be required of us? And what



better qualification could we have for the ordinances of the Christian Church, than strict conformity to the letter of the law? In both cases, conformity implies conversion, and conversion implies the regenerating influences of the Spirit. And therefore, the obligations resting upon Israel required internal qualification, as well as external obedience. Why, even Jews, in modern times, insist upon it, that purity of the heart was the design of all their institutions. Philo, speaking of the sprinkling of the garments of Aaron and his sons, and the altar, etc., remarks: "Moses did this, wishing they should be holy, not only externally and visibly, but internally." (*De Vita Mosis.*) And the great Maimonides devotes a chapter in his "*More Nevochim,*" to proving "that the prohibition of external uncleanness and impurity by the law, is instrumental of and subservient to the purification of the heart." He remarks: "Cleanliness of dress, washing of the body, and the removal of all dirt and squalidness, is certainly the intention of the law; but subordinate to the purification of the conduct and the heart from depraved opinions and corrupt morals. For, to think that exterior purity, by ablutions of the body and the dress can be sufficient, though in other respects a man indulges himself in gluttony and drunkenness, *is the extremest madness.*"

"It is very certain," says Calvin, "that the principal promises of the covenant which God made with the Israelites under the Old Testament, were spiritual, and had reference to eternal life; and that they were also understood by the fathers, as they ought to be, in a spiritual sense, and inspired them with confident hopes of the life to come, towards which they aspired with all the powers of their souls." That terrestrial benefits were also embraced in their covenant is true; but it is also true of us, that "godliness is profitable for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come." The observations of Dr. Graves on this subject, merit attention: "It is frequently charged on the Jewish scheme, and I believe too generally and incautiously admitted, that it represents the Divinity as requiring from his worshippers, outward rites, rather than internal, heart-felt piety; thus leading men to substitute the shadow for the substance, and

attend more to unimportant circumstances, and superstitious observances, than to the great principles of judgment, justice, and truth. That the Jews, in the decline of their religion, did so pervert and corrupt their law, by adopting such sentiments, is true; but most certain it is, they could find nothing in their original law to justify such sentiments or practices. No; they could have found no sanction for mere external and superstitious worship, except in those traditions by which they obscured and perverted the original scheme of their religion. Nothing is more cautiously guarded against in the Mosaic code, than resting in mere outward observances; nothing was more expressly and forcibly required, than internal devotion and practical piety. The Jew was called on 'to love his God with all his heart, and all his soul, and all his might.' 'The words which I command thee this day,' says the legislator, 'shall be *in thine heart*: and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Could anything be more remote from mere outward observance, than that heart-felt and habitual reverence for the divine commands here required? How opposite to mere ceremonious obedience, is that which is enjoined in such precepts as these: 'Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.' 'If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.' "

The striking remarks of that famous old Puritan, Thomas Shepard—who has been characterised as "an Augustine in disputation, a Chrysostom in the pulpit, and a Timothy in his family and in the Church"—should be well pondered: "God was as holy, and as exactly requiring holiness from the Jewish Church, as well as from Christian churches: now, do you think that the covenant which then wrapped up the Jews' children into church-membership was a highway of profaneness and unholiness in the members thereof, and of defiling and polluting God's Church? Or was it a way and means of holiness, and to

keep them from being profane? To affirm the first, is something blasphemous, and very false, for it is expressly said (Jer. xiii. 11) that 'as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so he caused the whole house of Israel (not grown men only) to cleave to him, that they might be to him a people; (which was by covenant,) and for a name, for a praise, and for a glory.' God's name, glory, praise, was the end, and the covenant was the means hereunto; and therefore it was no way or means of unholiness in that Church; but if you say it was a means of holiness, why then should we fear the polluting of churches by the same covenant, which, we have proved, wraps in our seed also? Indeed, they did prove universally profane in the Jewish Church; *so they may in ours*; but shall man's wickedness in abusing God's grace, and forsaking his covenant, tie the hands or heart of God's free grace from taking such into covenant? What though some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect? God forbid." (Shepard's Works, Vol. iii.)

So much for the spiritual character of the Jewish dispensation in general, even in regard to those peculiarities which were designed to be temporary, and which have long since passed away. But we make a stronger case as regards the subject before us, which relates to church-government and discipline. Is it not admitted that the New Testament church is based upon the Old Testament synagogue? If the foundation be "carnal," must not the superstructure be so too? Nay, what is the Presbyterian church, but the Presbyterian synagogue, baptized into the name of Christ; its machinery of government and discipline continuing as before, as Archbishop Whately admits? The censure of excommunication pertained to the Presbyterian session of the Jewish Church. And it was inflicted by Christ's command (the Head of that Church,) upon the covenant-breaking children of that Church. And the apostle tells us, as we have seen, that the same sentence is to be inflicted upon the covenant-breaking children of the New Testament Church. The covenant was broken formerly, by the wilful neglect of the passover, (Num. ix. 13,) and is broken now, by the wilful neglect of the

Lord's supper. Spiritual qualifications were required for the proper observance of the former, equally with the latter. Calvin remarks: "The passover, which has now been succeeded by the Lord's supper, did not admit guests of all descriptions promiscuously; but was rightly eaten only by those who were of sufficient age to be able to inquire into its signification." "Lest the passover should be a lifeless ceremony, God, in this place, enjoins that it shall not be mute; for in these words, 'When your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?' Moses does not mean that they are to wait until their children make inquiry of their accord, and anticipate the zeal of their parents; but he only indicates the age when they are capable of being taught. Yet, at the same time, he indirectly exhorts the children to teachableness, when their age admits of their understanding what the passover signifies, and enjoins them diligently to inquire into the use of the ceremony; that thus religion may be handed down, and may ever flourish among the people." "Moses excludes all strangers who were unclean through their uncircumcision; and then he adds two exceptions, viz., that servants bought with money should be circumcised, (which was a necessary requirement;) and that free and independent persons, if they chose to embrace the same alternative, should also be received to the passover. Hence it appears that this rite was not only peculiar to God's people, but that it was a sign of the future redemption. For strangers could not testify that they were sharers in that redemption which had been promised to the race of Abraham alone; and therefore the ceremony of the sacred feast would have been vain and useless to them. Nor does Moses refer only to that mixed multitude which had followed the Israelites out of Egypt; but prescribes a law respecting all strangers, who for many succeeding ages should come on business into the land. No doubt but that in celebrating the passover, they would have expected another redemption; since that which was already vouchsafed to the children of Abraham had not extended to them. For although they might be reckoned among the people, yet did no portion of the land, in consequence, fall to their lot, nor was their

condition improved as to temporal rights; but it was only that they might become members of the Church."

Gillespie's remarks also deserve consideration: "The passover did seal the same covenant of grace, for substance, which is now sealed by the Lord's supper." "Examination of the conscience, repentance, and confession, were required in those that did eat the passover." "What was the meaning of the bitter herbs, with which the passover was commanded to be eaten? Were not the people of God thereby taught the necessity of repentance in that very action? Finally, read we not of the people's preparing of their heart to seek God at the passover, (2 Chron. xxx. 19,) which, as it could not be without repentance and examination of their consciences, so Hezekiah mentioneth it as that without which the people's eating of the passover could not have been in any wise accepted." (Works, Vol. 2.)

Thus, we see that the passover was deeply significant. It looked forward to the future, as well as backward to the past. It embraced both redemptions, the Jewish and the Christian. And Gentiles, (who were qualified,) as well as Jews, received this sacrament, and were both sealed, as Christians, by the same seal of the covenant of grace; acknowledging thus Christ, their Passover, a sacrifice for them, and themselves sacrifices upon his altar. If Christ and his redemption were not thus signed and sealed by the passover, how could the passover be said to be "*fulfilled*" in the Lord's supper? Jewish children were instructed diligently as to the significance of the sacrament; and when they had reached years of discretion, and were able to discern the Lord's body, (which their numerous sacrifices, together with the passover, constantly held up to them,) and they professed the qualifications required by the law, then were they recognised as in full communion with the Church, by admission to its last sealing ordinance. So constantly and diligently were they instructed, in obedience to the divine command—"And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up"

—that, by the divine blessing upon the faithful use of the means, Jewish children at the age of twelve, professed their allegiance to the angel of the covenant, assumed their obligations, were recognised as in full membership, and so were denominated “sons of the commandment.” [If diligent instruction of the children of the Church, by *Christian* parents, “in the doctrines and duties of our holy religion,” be taken as the test of piety and religious consistency, how would the Christian Church compare with the Jewish? And how high, or how low, would the standard of the former, as to practice, be esteemed?]

That the confirmation of Jewish children at the age of twelve, was not such a “custom”\* as originated with men, but was authorised by God, is evident from the fact that Christ was taken at this age by his parents to the passover at Jerusalem. “And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast.” Why record the fact that he was twelve years old when he first went up to the passover? If this were only an unauthorised custom, would the Head of the Church, acting in his official character, being now “*about his Father’s business,*” have observed it, and sanctioned “for doctrines, the commandments of men?” Did not the same reason take him, at that age, to the passover, that subsequently took him to his baptism? “*It became him to fulfil all righteousness.*” He was now a “son of the law,” and, as such, went to the temple, (not into the sanctuary, where priests only, not doctors, could enter, but into the synagogue in the temple,) and sat with the doctors, the authorised teachers of the people, “hearing them, and asking them questions,” which they permitted to him, as now “a son of the law.” Neander observes:

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\* “And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the *custom* of the feast.” Luke ii. 42. “They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number, according to the *custom*, as the duty of every day required.” Ezra iii. 4. “When the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the *custom* of the law.” Luke ii. 27. “Shall change the *customs* Moses delivered us.” Acts vi. 14. These “customs” were all divine institutions.

“Jesus had attained his twelfth year, a period which was regarded among the Jews as the dividing line between childhood and youth, and at which regular religious instruction and the study of the law, were generally entered upon. For that reason, his parents, who were accustomed to visit Jerusalem together annually, at the time of the passover, took him with them then for the first time.” So too, Alford: “At the age of twelve, a boy was called, by the Jews, ‘son of the law,’ and first incurred legal obligation. At that time, then, commences the *second step* of the life of the Lord—the time when the *τὰ πρέποντα* for him began—his course of blameless legal obedience, in his own person and by his own will.”

The Jewish child was, at an early age, made acquainted with his position in Israel, and its accompanying obligations; was instructed as to the entire significance of the passover, and the spiritual qualifications demanded for that ordinance, which the law of the Church required him to possess, in order to the due observance of it at the age of twelve; and which, if he failed to keep, he forfeited his ecclesiastical status, and was “cut off from among his people.” And doubtless, this fact being ever present to his mind, viz., that he was liable to excommunication, if he did not at that age personally assume all his covenant-obligations, would have a powerful influence in determining him early to seek from God that state of mind and heart which would qualify him for admission to the last sealing ordinance of his Church.

In like manner, the maintenance now of this ancient law of the Church, which has never been repealed, would impress upon the minds of our baptized youth, if early, and diligently, and fully instructed by the Church, such a sense of the claims of Christ, that the great majority of them would be led betimes to yield their hearts to the Saviour, and their lives to his service. It would present a powerful check to that proud spirit of independence which leads multitudes of them now to despise the bonds of religion, and to pursue without restraint their downward career of heedlessness and rebellion to their eternal perdition.

Once more. The objection we are considering, if valid, might also be urged with force against the excommunication of any wicked and contumacious communicant. He is, indeed, bound to repent. But repentance, apart from the sovereign grace of God, is impossible. Then why not remonstrate against his excision, after his refusal to obey the second citation, and urge an indefinite postponement of all decisive action, on the ground that "the Church, recognising the sovereignty of divine grace, both as to the time and manner of its bestowal, dare not limit the Holy Ghost to any given period within which his influences must be imparted; nor say to the individual at any one moment, *now* this matter of your *repentance* is to be taken into your own hands, and *now* the exhausted patience of the Church refuses any longer to indulge your procrastination?"

But, in both cases, of the apostate communicant and non-communicant, the influences of the Spirit are more likely to be given, if given at all, when the Church *obeys orders*, and places both without her pale, but still pleads for them at the throne of grace; for the Church is still bound to pray *for* them, though she cannot now have *fellowship with* them in prayer. "Those whom the Church rejects from the company of the faithful, are delivered to Satan, but only 'for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord;' and hence, Paul would not have them counted as enemies, but admonished as brethren. 2 Thess. iii. 15." Calvin. "The consideration that he hath been a brother heretofore, and that we have not *finally* cast him off from that relation, but that we are still hoping, and using means for his recovery, obliges us to concern ourselves more for the good of his soul than for those with whom we never had any such connexion; and so to pray for him, and to take pains by admonishing him." President Edwards.

7. It has been objected, that the course we advocate would "fill the Church with hypocrites"; that "it is this which has filled the Church of Scotland with moderatism, and other churches with formalists." The assertion touching the Church of Scotland cannot be sustained by proof. The history of that



Church shews that the reign of moderatism is due to the anti-scriptural subjection of the Church to the State, out of which the patronage system arose, by which a minister is fastened upon a people without their consent and against their will.\* Moderatism, therefore, is found in the Established Church of Scotland, and not in the Free Church. The tendency of the course, it is said, would be to "fill the Church with hypocrites." This implies that the fear of excommunication is such, on the part of apostates, as to overcome their sense of common honesty, and lead them to make false professions. This we do not believe. Such will be more apt to reason thus: "As this act of the Church does not affect my social position, and as I have no love to Christ and his service, and therefore cannot espouse his cause, and will not play the hypocrite, therefore I consent to forfeit, like Esau, a birth-right I do not value, and to have my connexion with the Church dissolved. And as excommunication does no more than this, and only places me, by an ecclesiastical act, in that position where I had previously placed myself by my own voluntary act, therefore the Church may excommunicate me, if it pleases." Such is more likely to be the reasoning of that smaller class, who are not won to Christ by all the faithful nurture of the Church, upon whom all her fostering care is lost, for whom she has labored in vain, and spent her strength for nought. The tendency, then, of the course we urge, is *not* to "fill the Church with hypocrites"—albeit some such may, indeed, enter it—even as it is the case now. If the course we advocate be a *scriptural* one, it is manifestly impossible that it should be followed by consequences injurious to the Church. To say that it would, is to say that Christ's Church would suffer from the observance of Christ's rules. But even supposing that many hypocrites would thus be found in full communion with the Church ostensibly, is this so much worse than many rebels and covenant-breakers in half-communication with the Church, as is the case now?—when too, the former are under the discipline of

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\* See Hetherington's History of Church of Scotland.

the Church, whilst the latter are not? Hypocrisy is bad enough, but open impiety, and, as is sometimes the case, scoffing infidelity, are much worse. Dr. Mason well observes: "We hold it to be a maxim almost self-evident, that abounding and impudent wickedness will bring more wrath, and therefore more misery upon a land, than wickedness shut up in the bosom, or driven by the commanding aspect of truth into secret corners." "Could you unmask the hypocrite, and throw him at once out of your fellowship and confidence, all the motives and influence which serve to curb his lusts and limit their mischief would cease to operate; and that fountain of iniquity which is now shut up in darkness, would break out into open day, and pour its poisonous streams in every direction. It is impossible to conjecture how far the law of God's house and liberal intercourse with his people frustrate the worst designs of hell, by *shackling* the depravity of its servants. Some, perhaps, may contend that it were better to see every bad man in his own colors, that we might completely 'purge out the old leaven.' Their zeal is not according to knowledge. They inadvertently reproach the wisdom of God, who does not permit such a discovery to be made. And what would they have? Would it be better that an enemy to God should give scope to his enmity, and spread infection and death all around him, than that the repression of it should tie up his hands, and render him comparatively harmless? Would it be better that he should blaspheme the name of God, than that he should treat it with external reverence?—better to set before his children or companions an example of hideous profligacy, than an example of decorum?—to teach them to swear, steal, lie, profane the Sabbath, deride their Bible, mock the ordinances of religion, than to inculcate upon them lessons of truth, of probity, of respect to the name, the day, the word, and the worship of God? Go a step further, and say that it would be better to lay aside all the control of civil government, and let loose the myriads of rogues and traitors whom the community unwittingly cherishes in her bosom, than to keep them under the salutary awe of the tribunals of justice, of the dungeons and halter!"

8. It is objected, that many of these baptized persons have virtually ceased to be members, and therefore all church-action against them is unnecessary and useless. But to whom does it belong to terminate the connexion? There is no *withdrawal* from the Church. The Church cannot release any from covenant obligations; nor wink at this virtual termination of membership by their own act. God has already decided the matter in his word. He declares that *he* cuts off all covenant-breakers. In the case of all who are evidently such, the Church is bound by covenant to cut them off. If she does not, she herself is partaker in the sin of covenant-breaking. If unbelief be such a sin that it can cast a soul into hell, can it not cast out of the Church? Is the Church merely a moral institute? Can she condemn nothing but what the world, or natural conscience, condemns? Are the imperfect views of her own members even, to regulate her conduct, instead of the decisions of the word of God? Is not unbelief immorality in the sight of God, and the parent of all sins? Did not Christ pronounce Capernaum more guilty than Sodom? Is it no invasion of the prerogative of her divine Head, for the Church to open a door of egress which he has not opened? Has she the right to dismiss, any more than to admit, in a way not authorised? Were not the Jews the natural branches, both adults and youths, "broken off" (not dropped off) for their unbelief?

9. It is objected, that the course proposed is contrary to the practice of the Church. If by this be meant the *present* practice of our Church, this every one knows. But the present practice is, as we have shewn, a departure, and, we believe, a sinful departure from the former and better practice of the Church of God in all lands. It is the revisionists, and all who think with them, and not we, who are in a minority on this point. The Old Testament Church is with us; the Apostolic Church is with us; the Primitive Church is with us; the Reformed Church is with us; the Churches of Scotland, Switzerland, France, Germany, and others, are with us. Our own Church is, in *theory*, as yet with us. And if she should be led, at this late day, to abandon her ancient doctrine, nevertheless

the time will come, sooner or later, when the Head of the Church will lead her back again into "the old paths," and cause her to restore both doctrine and practice. But the objection proves too much, even for the objector. Our standards teach that the children of the Church are members of the Church, and yet it is notorious that the "practice" of the Church is to treat them as *not* members.

Dr. Miller, considering this charge of inconsistency made against Pædobaptists, remarks: "This objection is a most serious and weighty one." The General Assembly has given a similar testimony: "Churches as well as parents have a solemn account to render to God for the manner in which the children, sealed with the seal of the covenant, have been treated. They are reaping the fruits of their negligence in the carelessness and profaneness of multitudes of their youth. On whom then must the blame chiefly descend? *We shudder at the truth.*" (Digest, p. 188.) This testimony has been repeated over and over. And every one knows that it is true to this day. Here then, we have the Assembly's testimony to the "practice" of the Church. The "practice of the Church" would of itself prove that the children of professors are not members of the Church. No wonder then, that it proves that they are not subject to the *discipline* of the Church! So much for this argument, based upon "the practice of the Church." It proves too much, and therefore nothing.

And now it is proposed, not to conform our practice to our doctrine, but to conform our doctrine to our practice. And this new theory of the irresponsibility of the youth of the Church to discipline, is to be incorporated into the constitution of the Church; to become a permanent canon of non-discipline; and thus, so far as in us lies, prevent all future attempts to elevate our standard of practice, by lowering our standard of doctrine: so that it will be impossible hereafter, except by an alteration of the constitution, to lay the hand of Christ, in the way of needful discipline, upon our rebellious, apostate youth, to save them from the ruin that they court. Their blood will be upon us. And Christ's hand in discipline, will then fall upon our Church. Let the

Church be on her guard, and remember the maxim, "*Obsta principiis.*"

10. It is objected, That this course would not be sustained by the sympathies of the fathers and mothers in the Church, nor by the sentiment of society. As to the fathers and mothers in the Church, it is not to be expected that they can sympathise with *any* course of action, in regard to which they have been so little instructed, as in the subject before us. But are the sympathies of the fathers and mothers always a criterion of the righteousness or unrighteousness of a practice? Does it not sometimes happen that the sympathies of the fathers and mothers are *with* the guilty communicant who has been justly excommunicated, and *against* the session? But we answer the objection, directly, by saying that if the sympathies of the fathers and mothers are under the control of the Spirit's influences, they will be given to every course of action sanctioned by his word. There are many fathers and mothers in the Church, aye, and ministers too, who do not sympathise even with every portion of God's word—for example, what are called the "imprecatory Psalms"—and shrink from reading them, and dare to impute to them an "unchristian spirit," and to charge them with being "opposed to the gentle spirit of the religion of Jesus." As if *all* Scripture were not given by inspiration of God; inspired by the spirit of Christ; and as if *all* Scripture were not what the apostle affirms it to be, "*profitable?*" Thus do such objectors prove themselves to be not in full harmony with the mind and will of God. How many objectors too are there, in the Church, to the doctrine of the divine sovereignty, and the other doctrines of grace! And are there not fathers and mothers who rebel against the dispensations of God's providence in removing their children from earth, even though they have satisfactory evidence that they have been removed to heaven? Was not this ancient law of the Church, of which we treat, sustained by the sympathies of the true fathers and mothers in the Old Testament Israel? And will it not be sustained by the sympathies of the true fathers and mothers in the New Testament Israel? Are the latter less godly, less on the side of God, than the former?

And with regard to the sentiment of society not sustaining this course:—Is society to influence the Church, or the Church to influence society? It is the office of the Church to create, direct, and control the sentiment of society, on all subjects connected with the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. What though in order to this, she be called to encounter opposition, endure reproach and persecution: is she not the spouse of a crucified Husband? Must she too not give up her life for the life of the world? And thus secure her true life, and that of the world? Sacrifice is power. The cross has moulded society, and controls the providence of God. The practicability of a duty is properly judged of, not by the appearance it presents to the judgment of men, but by the command of Christ. Whatever difficulties, dangers, or seeming impossibilities, attend the performance of his command, are not really difficulties, dangers, or impossibilities, but only tests of faith. The path of duty is, after all, the path of ease and safety. Let the Church contend earnestly for the crown-rights of her exalted King. Let her enforce both by doctrine and discipline, the claims of Christ to the service of all her youth who are in covenant with him through his visible Church.

And first by doctrine. Let it be distinctly understood that we are the advocates of no rash or precipitate measures. The first call of the Church evidently is a call to discharge her whole duty, as to training, towards her children—a call to a constant, mild, judicious, affectionate, parental training. To this end, besides the usual teachings of the Sunday-school, let there be in every Church a special service for them, *frequently occurring*, when, assembled with their parents, the pastor shall instruct both touching their mutual relations to the covenant, and their respective obligations growing out of it. Let the fact, *that they are already members of the Church*, be frequently impressed upon the minds of the children. Let their precious privileges be discovered to them. Let the claims of Christ to their love and service be pressed upon them. Let them be urged to seek from the Spirit the qualifications they need for the fulfilment of all obligations, and the performance of all duties. And let them be

admonished that the Church, as the representative of Christ, *expects* them sincerely to profess faith in him, and obedience to his commands. Let this service be regarded with a lively, affectionate interest by the whole Church. Let it be accompanied with the fervent prayers of the people of God. And let the children of the Church be *frequently* remembered in the prayers of the Church. Let those who have been constituted by the Holy Ghost, shepherds and bishops of souls, be careful to exercise a constant, strict, and yet tender watch over the lambs of Christ's flock. This is their bounden duty. To this they are called. And they have the right, and should exercise it, to superintend *parents* as well as children, and require of them the faithful observance of their vows. The idea that this would be the assumption of unwarranted authority, is absurd. The children of the Church are God's. "Ye have borne them unto me," says he. The parent has no claims, no rights, apart from Christ's. So far is this superintendence from being an invasion of his rights, that, on the contrary, Christ has made it his right to expect and require this official inspection of his conduct, as an incentive to the discharge of an all-important duty. He, as well as the Church, is concerned to have the authority of Christ over him and his made good. For his interests, and the interests of his child, are inseparable from Christ's rights. The former are promoted only when the latter are enforced. For the parent to deny ecclesiastical rulers the right of supervision, is just to deny Christ and break covenant with God. To represent such oversight as "an invasion of nature's rights," is just to babble in the dialect of infidels, who always oppose "*nature*" to nature's *God*. Such a parent, the session has the right to admonish, rebuke, suspend, or excommunicate, as his case may require. Every right-minded parent will welcome such coöperation as a valuable aid in performing a difficult and responsible work, and in securing a glorious end, the salvation of his children. If a youth prove refractory, and parental admonition have no effect, then let an elder of the Church be sent for, who, by faithful counsel and admonition, accompanied with prayer, shall endeavor to reclaim the offending youth. Should he be unsuccessful, let him

take with him another elder, and let them conjointly use the proper means, and in a proper spirit, for the recovery of the erring youth. Should their efforts prove unavailing, let the pastor's counsels, admonitions, and prayers, be added to theirs. Then, if no suitable effect follow, let the offender be brought before the session, and there rebuked in love, and reminded of the ultimate consequence of impenitence—exclusion from the kingdom of God, on earth and in heaven—and his case be tenderly and solemnly commended to God in prayer. Let the censure so administered, be suited to the age, the character, the feelings, the understanding, the state of the youth; everything like unnecessary severity or harshness being carefully avoided. Let the mind of the youth be impressed with the truth, that this censure is a *religious ordinance*, administered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; so that it carries with it the authority, not of men, but of God. Let all their proceedings be marked with such solemnity, affectionate tenderness, as to show that they are acting under a deep sense of their responsibility to the Head of the Church. And let all that is done, whether by parent, pastor, or session, be done *in faith*, without which no service can find acceptance with God. Let such a course be faithfully pursued, and, in the great majority of instances, it will be crowned with success. The Church would have the blessed satisfaction of seeing the greater number of her wayward, offending, rebellious youth, recovered, by this judicious procedure, from the error of their ways, and repaying, in after years, her vigilant supervision, and faithful, loving care, by lives of Christian consistency, stability, usefulness, and devotion to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. But, if in the case of any of her youth, her oversight has proved in vain, and all the means used to lead them to comply with covenant-obligations have utterly failed, and these obligations are *deliberately, wantonly, wilfully*, disowned; then is she called of Christ to disown them, and terminate their church-membership by excommunication. Let her not shrink from that duty, painful though it be, to which God himself has called her. Let no thought of man—his fear or his favor—intrude, when in the path of duty. It is enough for her to know that she is sustained



by the favor of her divine head, and by the sentiment of that society that surrounds the throne. Let those who bear rule in Christ's house, realise the solemn responsibilities of their position. They are called, not to represent the opinions, the prejudices, the wishes, the unbelief, the worldly-mindedness either of society or of professors of religion; they are called to represent the rights of Zion's King. Let them do this, and they will not be left without the cheering tokens of his presence and his power. His Spirit and his providence will vindicate their course before the world, and crown their fidelity with success. The opposition they encounter will finally be overcome, and the sentiment of society being now regenerated, and baptized by the Holy Ghost, will pronounce its verdict of approval, in accordance with the dictates of sound reason, and the Scriptures of eternal truth. But if, on the other hand, they shrink from the discharge of their duty, through unbelief, timidity, the fear or favor of man, love of ease, love of reputation, love of popularity, and so deny Christ, then, by no doubtful proofs will it appear that Christ has, even here, also denied them. Faith is loyalty, honor, and power. Unbelief is treachery, cowardice, weakness, disgrace, and death. The sentiment of Calvin is just: "Whoever desire either the abolition of all discipline, or obstruct its restoration, whether they act from design or inadvertency, *they certainly promote the dissolution of the Church.*" And the remark of Owen is as true as it is solemn, and deserves to be most seriously pondered: "If any Church be fallen into that state and condition, wherein the discipline appointed by Christ cannot be effectual unto its proper ends, CHRIST HATH FORSAKEN THAT CHURCH."