

PRESBYTERIANISM
THE
TRULY PRIMITIVE
AND
APOSTOLICAL CONSTITUTION
OF THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST.

✓
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Manual has been prepared at the particular request of the Tract Society of the Synod of Philadelphia. A polemical spirit in the Church of God is by no means commendable. And even when different denominations of professing Christians are compelled, either in public teaching, or in social intercourse, to recur to the points in regard to which they differ, it ought ever to be done with as much mildness and inoffensiveness as can be reconciled with fidelity. It is doing no more than justice to Presbyterians to say, that they have ever been remarkable for their freedom from a proselyting spirit. Assuredly, there is no denomination of Christians in the United States, from whose pulpits so little is heard of the nature of vaunting their own claims, or impugning the peculiarities of others, as in those of the Presbyterian Church. Seldom is a sentence uttered in their public assemblies adapted to invade the tenets of any evangelical Christian; almost never, indeed, unless in defending themselves against the attacks of other denominations.

In the meanwhile, several other numerous and respectable denominations habitually act on a different policy. Their preaching, their ecclesiastical journals, and their popular Tracts, are characteristically and strongly sectarian. Of this no complaint is made. We live in a free country, where all denominations, in the eye of the civil government, stand upon a level. May it ever continue to be so! But there is a point, beyond which silence in respect to our peculiarities, may be censurable. We are bound to defend ourselves against unscriptural attacks, not merely for our own sakes, but for the sake of others. It is incumbent on us to show to those within our pale, or who may be inclined to unite with us, that we "have not followed cunningly devised fables."

This, and this only, is the design of the following Manual. It is not intended to invade the precincts, or assail the members of other religious communities; but solely for the instruction of Presbyterians; and to satisfy them that the system by which they are distinguished, is, throughout, truly primitive and apostolic. Inquiries are frequently made by young people and others of our denomination, why we differ, as to a variety of particulars, from some other churches. Is it wrong; can it be deemed inconsistent with the most scrupulous Christian charity, and even delicacy, to provide a manual adapted to answer these inquiries? Surely, this is a debt which we owe to our children. And as Presbyterian ministers are seldom heard to preach on the peculiarities by which our beloved and truly scriptural Church is distinguished, there seems to be the more propriety in putting into the hands of our youthful and less instructed members, a summary of the arguments by which they may be enabled to meet the attacks, and repel the insinuations, of those unwearied worshippers of sect, who cease not to insist that they alone are entitled to the character of true Churches.

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PRESBYTERIANISM.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE Church of God, in the days of the Apostles, as is well known, was not divided into different denominations. Even then, indeed, there were parties in the Church. The restless and selfish spirit of depraved human nature soon began, in different places to display its unhallowed influence, either in the form of judaizing claims, philosophical speculations, or turbulent opposition to regular ecclesiastical authority. In the Church of Corinth, though planted and nurtured by "the chiefest of the Apostles," there were factious and troublesome members, who contended among themselves, and said, one to another, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." Still the Church was one. The names, "Presbyterian," "Episcopalian," "Congregationalist," &c. &c., were unknown. All professing Christians, "though many, were considered as one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." The only popular distinction then recognised, as far as the professed followers of Christ were concerned, was between the Church and the heretics.

Not long after the Apostolic age, when heresies had become numerous, when each of them claimed to belong to the Church, and when convenience demanded the adoption of some term which might distinguish between the true or orthodox Church, and the various sects of errorists—the title of Catholic (or general, as the term Catholic signifies,) was applied to the former; while the latter were distinguished by various names, derived either from the nature of their distinguishing opinions,

or from the original authors or promoters of those opinions. It is well known, indeed, that the blinded and superstitious followers of the Bishop of Rome claim the title of Catholic, as exclusively applicable to themselves. In their own estimation, they are *the Church*, the *only true Church*, the *Catholic*, or *universal Church*; and all the other classes of nominal Christians, throughout the world, are *heretics*, out of the way of salvation. This claim, however, in the estimation of all enlightened Christians, is as presumptuous as it is vain. That department of nominal Christendom, instead of being the only true Church, is considered by many as too far gone in corruption to be comprehended under the Christian name at all; and instead of there being no salvation out of her communion, the danger of eternal perdition is rather to those who are found within her pale. It is not doubted, indeed, that there are many pious individuals within that pale; but it is believed that they are placed in circumstances deplorably unfavourable to their growth in grace; and that the multitudes around them, in the same communion, are immersed in darkness, superstition, and dreadful error, which place them in the utmost jeopardy of eternal perdition. This is that "Antichrist," that "Man of sin," and "Son of Perdition," who exalteth himself above all that is called God, and who is yet to be "destroyed with the breath of Jehovah's mouth, and with the brightness of his coming."

No particular denomination of Christians is now entitled to be called, by way of eminence, the Catholic, or universal Church. There are Churches, indeed, which bear a nearer resemblance to the Apostolical model than others; and which deserve to be favourably distinguished in the list of Christian communities. But the visible Catholic Church is made up of all those throughout the world, who profess the true religion, together with their children. The Presbyterian, the Congregationalist, the Methodist, the Baptist, the Episcopalian, the Independent, who hold the fundamentals of our holy religion, in whatever part of the globe they may reside, are all members of the same visible community; and, if they be sincere believers, will all finally be made partakers of its eternal blessings. They cannot, indeed, all worship together in the same solemn assembly, even if they were disposed to do so. A physical impossibility forbids it; and, in many cases, prejudice and folly widely separate those who ought to be entirely united. Still, in spite of all the sects and names by which professing Christians are divided, there is *a visible Church Catholic*. There is a precious sense in which the

whole visible Church on earth is *one*. All who "hold the Head," of course belong to the body of Christ. Those who are united by a sound profession to the same divine Saviour; who embrace the same precious faith; who are sanctified by the same spirit; who eat the same spiritual meat; who drink the same spiritual drink; who repose and rejoice in the same promises; and who are travelling to the same eternal rest—are surely *one body*:—*one* in a sense more richly significant and valuable than can be ascribed to millions who sustain and boast a mere nominal relation.

But while we thus maintain the doctrine of the unity of the visible Church Catholic; and while we rejoice in the assured belief, that sectarian names, as they were unknown in the Apostolic age, so they will be unknown among the members of the Redeemer's glorified body; still, in this militant state, there *is* a separation, not merely nominal, but real and deplorable; a separation which interferes most deeply with the communion of saints, and which lamentably mars those precious opportunities of proximity and intercourse, which too often, alas! become incentives to contention and strife, rather than to Christian love.

Amidst this diversity of sects and names, it becomes, to every intelligent and conscientious Christian, a most interesting question—Which of the various denominations which bear the name of Christian Churches, may be considered as approaching nearest to the New Testament model? We freely acknowledge, indeed, as Churches of Christ, all who hold the fundamentals of our holy religion, and consider it as our duty to love and honour them as such; carefully avoiding all treatment of them that tends to the increase of strife and division, and that is contrary to "godly edifying." Still, it cannot be doubted, by any rational man, that *some one* of these denominations is nearer to the Apostolic model, as a Church of Christ, than any of the rest. Which of the whole number this is, is a most serious question in the view of every one who wishes to know the will of Christ, and who desires to be found walking in that way which was trod by inspired Apostles, and in which they left the Church harmoniously walking, when they ceased from their labours.

It is the sincere belief of the writer of these pages, that the *Presbyterian Church*, as it now exists in these United States, entirely unconnected with the civil government, and taking the word of God as its "only infallible rule of faith and practice," is more truly primitive and apostolical in its whole constitution, of *doctrine, worship, and order*, than any

other Church, now on earth. An humble attempt to evince the truth of this position, will occupy the following pages.

For the fulfilment of the purpose in view, I shall endeavour, very briefly, to consider the *History* of Presbyterianism; its *doctrine*, its *order*, or *form of government*; its *worship*; and its *comparative advantages*. In each of these respects, unless I am deceived, it will be easy to show that it approaches nearer than any other Christian denomination, to the Apostolical mode.

To prepare the way more fully for the ensuing discussion, it may be proper to state, that there are four distinct forms of Church order, each of which claims a scriptural warrant; the Papal, or spiritual *monarchy*—the Episcopal, or spiritual *prelacy*—Independency, or spiritual *democracy*—and Presbyterianism, or spiritual *republicanism*. The first maintaining the necessity of one supreme, universal, infallible Head of the whole Christian body throughout the world, as the authorised vicar of Christ. The second, contending for an order of clerical prelates, above the rank of ordinary ministers of the Gospel, who are alone, in their view, empowered to ordain, and without whose presiding agency, there can be no regular Church. The third, holding that all ecclesiastical power resides in the mass of the Church members, and that all acts of ecclesiastical authority are to be performed immediately by them. While in the fourth and last place, Presbyterians believe, that Christ has made all ministers who are authorised to dispense the word and sacraments, perfectly equal in official rank and power: that in every Church the immediate exercise of ecclesiastical power is deposited, not with the whole mass of the people, but with a body of their representatives, styled Elders; and that the whole visible Church Catholic, so far as their denomination is concerned, is not only one in name, but so united by a series of assemblies of these representatives, acting in the name, and by the authority of the whole, as to bind the whole body together as one Church, walking by the same principles of faith and order, and voluntarily, yet authoritatively governed by the same system of rule and regulation.

Presbyterianism, then, is a term which primarily refers to the form of Church government. That is a *Presbyterian Church*, in which the *Presbytery* is the radical and leading judicatory; in which Teaching and Ruling *Presbyters* or *Elders*, have committed to them the watch and care of the whole

flock ; in which all ministers of the word and sacraments are equal ; in which Ruling Elders, as the representatives of the people, form a part of all ecclesiastical assemblies, and partake, in all authoritative acts, equally with the Teaching Elders ; and in which, by a series of judicatories, rising one above another, each individual church is under the watch and care of its appropriate judicatory, and the whole body, by a system of review and control, is bound together as one homogeneous community. Wherever this system is found in operation in the Church of God, there is *Presbyterianism*. Though there may be much diversity in the names of the several judicatories ; and though, in the minuter details of arrangement, some variety may exist, still it is essentially the same. Thus the Reformed Churches in France, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Scotland, and Geneva, are all Presbyterian, notwithstanding some minor varieties in the names and regulations of their judicatories. Wherever ministerial parity ; the government of the church by Elders, instead of the mass of the communicants ; and the authoritative union of churches under courts of review and control, are found, there we have that ecclesiastical system which it is the object of the following pages to explain and recommend.

But although the term Presbyterian has a primary reference to the form of Church government ; yet Presbyterian Churches were originally agreed, and have been commonly, in all ages agreed, in a variety of other matters, which we believe are all warranted by the Holy Scriptures. It is to the whole system, then, of doctrine, government, and mode of worship, which now distinguishes the Presbyterian Church in the United States, that the attention of the readers of these pages is requested ; and which, it shall be my aim to show, is set forth in the Word of God, “the only infallible rule of faith and practice.”

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY OF PRESBYTERIANISM.

The essential principles of Presbyterian Church order were of very early origin. Those principles are the authoritative binding of the whole Church together as one body ; and conducting this government, not by the entire ecclesiastical popu

lation, but by representatives, elected by, and acting on behalf of the whole. That this mode of administering the affairs of the visible Church was adopted long before the coming of Christ, is certain, and can be doubted by none who intelligently and impartially read the Old Testament Scriptures. Even before the institution of the ceremonial economy, while the covenanted people of God were yet in bondage in Egypt, we find that they had their Elders, that is, their men of gravity, experience and wisdom, who were obeyed as heads of tribes, and rulers among the people, Exodus iii. 16. The powers committed to them, and exercised by them, are not particularly specified; but we may take for granted, with confidence, that their office was to inspect and govern the people, and to adjust all disputes both of a civil and ecclesiastical nature. Before the publication of the law from Mount Sinai, and anterior to the establishment of the ceremonial economy, Moses chose wise and able men out of the tribes of Israel, made them rulers over thousands, over hundreds, over fifties, and over tens. Exodus xviii. These rulers are elsewhere, in almost every part of the Old Testament, styled Elders. To them, as we are expressly informed, all the ordinary cases of government and discipline were committed. The same mode of dispensing justice and order among the people, seems to have been employed after the institution of the Aaronic priesthood; during the time of the Judges, and of the Kings; during the Babylonish captivity; and after the return of the captives from Babylon. At whatever time the Synagogue system was adopted, it is evident that the plan of conducting government by means of a body of Elders, was universal, through all the land of Judea, up to the time of the Saviour's advent. The synagogues were the parish churches of the Jews. There the ordinary worship and instruction of the Sabbath were conducted; and the excommunication of an individual from the body of the professing people of God, was expressed by "putting him out of the synagogue." In these synagogues the essential principles of Presbyterianism were universally established. The similarity, as to every important point, was exact. In short, during the whole tract of time embraced in the history of the Mosaic economy, we have complete evidence that the ecclesiastical government, as well as the civil, was conducted, under God, the Supreme Ruler, by boards of Elders, acting as the authorized representatives of the people. To this mode of government, as is notorious, every city, and every synagogue was accustomed. In no instance, in either Church or State, is a case recollected in which the population was called together to settle a dispute,

or to dispense justice between persons at variance. The representative system was universally in use. The work of administering justice was always done by a body of rulers or officers, commonly styled, amidst all the changes of dispensation, "Elders of the people."

Nor was this all. As each particular synagogue was governed by a bench of Elders, of which the Bishop or "Angel of the Church," was the presiding officer; so also, as the whole Jewish body was one;—one Catholic Church,—there were always appeals admitted, in cases of alleged incorrectness of judgment, to the "great synagogue" at Jerusalem, where an opportunity was given for redressing what was done amiss. Nothing like the independency of particular synagogues was admitted or thought of. A system which bound the whole community together as one visible professing body, was uniformly in operation.

The first converts to Christianity being all native Jews, who had been always accustomed to the exercise of government by benches of "Elders," in the manner just specified; and this representative plan being so equitable, so wise, and so convenient in itself; no wonder that the same plan was adopted by the apostles in organizing the primitive Church. Accordingly, as in the account which the inspired writers give of the Jewish constitution, we read continually of the "Rulers of the synagogue," and of the "Elders of the people," as a body distinguished from the priests; so, when they proceed to give us an account of the organization and proceedings of the New Testament Church, we find the same language used in cases almost innumerable. We read of "Elders being ordained in every church;" of an important question being referred to a synod, made up of "Apostles and Elders;" of "Elders who ruled well, but did not labour in the word and doctrine;" of the "Elders of the Church being called together" to consider ecclesiastical questions; of the "Elders of the Church being called for to visit and pray over the sick," &c.

The question, whether the exact mode of conducting the government and discipline of the Church, which we find delineated in the New Testament, is obligatory on Christians now, is one concerning which there is no small diversity of opinion. That an entire conformity to that model, in every minute particular, is essential to the existence of the Church, will be maintained by few; and certainly by no Presbyterians. None can doubt, however, that it is most expedient and safe to keep as near as may be to that plan of Church order, which inspired men approved and left in use, when they ceased from

their labours. As to what that plan was, it would really seem almost impossible that intelligent and impartial readers of the New Testament should entertain different opinions. The moment we open the inspired history of the apostolic age, we find a style of speaking concerning the officers of the Church, and a statement of facts, which evince, beyond all controversy, that the model of the synagogue was that which was then adopted, and which was left in universal use when inspired men surrendered the Church to their successors. We find preaching the Gospel, "feeding the sheep and the lambs" of Christ, and administering the Christian sacraments, the highest offices entrusted to the Ministers of Christ. We find a plurality of "Elders," by divine direction, ordained in every church. In no instance, in the whole New Testament, do we find an organized congregation under the watch and care of a single officer. Further, we find "Bishop" and "Elder," titles given, interchangeably, to the same persons; plainly showing that the term "Bishop," in the apostolic age, was the title which designated the pastor or "overseer," of a single flock or church. We find in the New Testament history, no trace of prelacy. All priority or pre-eminence among the ministers of Christ is expressly rebuked and forbidden. There is evidently but one commission given to the authorized ministers of the word and sacraments. When the Saviour left the world he commissioned no higher officer in his Church, speaks of no higher than he who was empowered to go forth and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The ordaining power is manifestly represented as possessed and exercised by ordinary pastors, and as performed by the "laying on of the hands of the Presbytery." There is not a solitary instance to be found in all the New Testament, of an ordination being performed by a single individual, whether an ordinary, or extraordinary minister. In all the cases which we find recorded, or hinted at, a plurality of ordainers officiated. When Paul and Barnabas were designated to a special mission, it was by a plurality of "Prophets and Teachers of the Church in Antioch," Acts xiii. When they went forth to preach and organise churches, we are informed that they together, "ordained Elders in every church." Timothy was ordained by the "laying on of the hands of the Presbytery." 1 Tim. iv. 14. And even when the Deacons were set apart to their office, it is plain, from the narrative, Acts vi. 1—6 that a plurality laid hands upon them with prayer and fasting. It is plain too, that the whole visible Church, in the apostolic

ge, whether in Jerusalem or in Antioch, in Philippi or in Ephesus, was regarded as *one body*, all governed by the same laws, subject to the same authority, and regulated by the same judicial decisions. Thus, when a question arose which interested and affected the whole Christian community, it was decided by a synod of the "Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem," and the "decrees" of that synod were sent down to "all the churches," to be registered and obeyed. Here was evidently an assembly of Ministers and Elders, acting as the representatives of the whole Church, and pronouncing judicial decisions, which were intended to bind the whole body. If this be not Presbyterianism, then there is nothing of the kind in Scotland or in the United States.

When we pass from the New Testament to the earliest records of uninspired antiquity, the same form of church order is every where apparent. The plan of ecclesiastical government disclosed by the Epistles of Ignatius, as actually existing in his day, is manifestly Presbyterian. He represents every particular church of which he speaks, as furnished with a Bishop or Pastor, a bench of Elders and Deacons; he continually employs language which implies that these officers were present in every worshipping assembly; and he most evidently gives us to understand, that these Elders, with the Pastor or Bishop at their head, conducted the government and discipline of each church. Clemens Romanus, contemporary with Ignatius, speaks in language of similar import. He represents Bishops and Presbyters,—the Episcopate and the Presbyterate, as the same; and expressly states that the Presbyters were "set over the church" by the choice of the Church; and that to rise up in rebellion against them, was considered as highly criminal. The testimony of Irenæus, who lived in the second century, is no less decisive in favour of our system. He continually applies the title of Bishop and Presbyter to the same men; speaks of "the succession of the Episcopate," through the Presbyters and through the Bishops, as the very same; nay, represents the apostolical succession, the Episcopal succession, and the Presbyterial succession, as all identical. In short, he could scarcely have kept a more scrupulous and exact balance, than he does between the dignities, powers, and duties connected with each title, and ascribed interchangeably to all. I might go on to quote Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, and other early fathers, as speaking a language of equivalent import. But there is no need of going into further detail. The truth is, for the first two hundred years after Christ, it is certain

that neither Prelacy nor Independency was known in the Church of Christ. There is not a single record within that period, which either asserts or implies it; but every thing of a contrary aspect. Every flock of professing Christians had its Pastor or Bishop, with its bench of Elders, by whom the government and discipline were conducted; and its body of Deacons, by whom the funds collected for the relief of the poor, were received and disbursed.

In the third century after Christ the aspect of things began to change. Some seasons, in this century, of exemption from persecution and of comparative outward prosperity, were marked by very sensible departure from the simplicity and purity of the preceding times. Heresies and schisms began to distract the congregations of God's professing people. The Ministry and Eldership of the Church declined both in zeal and faithfulness. The clergy became ambitious and voluptuous, and, as a natural consequence, full of intrigue and contention. The pictures given of their cupidity, mutual encroachments, and degrading strife, by Cyprian, by Origen, and by Eusebius, as in full operation in the third century, are truly of the most revolting character. Some have said, indeed, that the Church, in the Cyprianic age presented, on the whole, one of the most satisfactory models of ecclesiastical perfection. Those who can entertain this opinion must judge of what is desirable in a Church, by a very different criterion from that which the Bible furnishes. Let them impartially read the statements given by the writers just mentioned, and they will speedily alter their opinion. Among such a clergy, an undue aspiring after preferment, titles and places might be expected, as a matter of course. Indeed, in such circumstances, it would have required a constant succession of miracles to prevent prelacy from arising. Nor was this all. As the Church declined from her primitive simplicity and purity, some of her more serious ministers thought themselves warranted in resorting to other forms of attraction for drawing the populace into the Church. For attracting the Jews they began to adopt some of the titles, ceremonies, and vestments of the temple service. They began to call the Christian ministry the "priesthood;" and, as a natural consequence, to speak of "priests" and "high priests," and "altars," and "sacrifices," &c. &c.; for all which, in reference to the Christian economy, there is not the smallest warrant in the New Testament. Other ecclesiastical leaders, for the purpose of conciliating and attracting the Pagans, introduced a variety of rites from the ceremonial of the heathen, intended

to make the Christian ritual more splendid, dazzling, and alluring to those who had been the votaries of dumb idols, and whose chief objection to the religion of Christ was, that its worship was too simple and unadorned. The consequence was, that, toward the close of the third century, Prelacy was gradually and insidiously introduced. All orders of ecclesiastical men partook of the spirit of ambitious encroachment. The Deacons, whom the Apostles had appointed to be guardians of the poor, and of the temporalities of the Church, became too proud to discharge the appropriate duties of their office, employed "sub-deacons" to perform their official work, and, after a while, claimed, and had conceded to them, the power of preaching and baptizing. The Presbyters or Elders partook of the same spirit, and although the greater part of them had been chosen and set apart for ruling only, yet as the discipline of the Church became relaxed and unpopular, and finally in a great measure abandoned, they all aspired to be public teachers, and turned away from their original work, to what they deemed a more honourable employment. The Bishops, who had been originally overseers or pastors of single flocks, claimed authority over the congregations in their neighbourhood, which had branched out from their original charges; so that, by little and little, they became prelates;—a new office covertly brought in under an old name. Nor did the principle of ambitious encroachment stop here. Metropolitans and Patriarchs began to "lord it" over Bishops. And to crown the gradations of rank, the Bishop of Rome, seduced by the imperial splendour which surrounded him, and countenanced by imperial power and munificence, came to be acknowledged as the supreme head, under Christ, of the whole Church upon earth, and the infallible interpreter of the Saviour's will.

This statement is confirmed by early Christian writers of the highest character, and who were nearly contemporary with the criminal innovation of which they speak. Thus Ambrose, who wrote about the year 376 after Christ, in his commentary on Ephesians iv. 2, has the following passage: "After churches were planted in all places, and officers ordained, matters were settled otherwise than they were in the beginning. And hence it is that the Apostles' writings do not, in all things, agree with the present constitution of the Church; because they were written under the first rise of the Church; for he calls Timothy, who was created a Presbyter by him, a Bishop, for so, at first, the Presbyters were called." This passage is so plain, that it requires no comment. Still more

unequivocal and decisive is the language of Jerome. "Among the ancients," says he, "Presbyters and Bishops were the same. But by little and little, that all the seeds of dissension might be plucked up, the whole care was devolved on one. As, therefore, the Presbyters know, that by the custom of the Church, they are subject to him who is their president, so let Bishops know, that they are above Presbyters more by the custom of the Church, than by the true dispensation of Jesus Christ!" And in order to establish his position, that, in the apostolic age, Bishop and Presbyter were the same, he quotes precisely those passages of Scripture which Presbyterians have been accustomed, for three hundred years, to adduce in attestation of the same fact. The testimony of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, is to the same amount. In writing to his contemporary Jerome, who was a Presbyter, he expresses himself in the following language: "I entreat you to correct me faithfully when you see I need it; for, although, according to the names of honour which the custom of the Church has *now* brought into use, the office of Bishop is greater than that of Presbyter, nevertheless, in many respects, Augustine is inferior to Jerome." *Oper. Tom. II. Epist. 19. ad Hieron.* It is worthy of notice, that Bishop Jewel, in his "Defence of his Apology for the Church of England," produces this passage from Augustine, for the express purpose of showing the original identity of Bishop and Presbyter, and translates it thus: "The office of Bishop is above the office of priest, not by authority of Scripture, but after the names of honour which the custom of the Church hath now obtained." *Defence*, 122, 123. And, finally, to the same effect is the testimony of Chrysostom, who wrote toward the close of the fourth century. In his eleventh Homily on the Epistles to Timothy, he speaks thus: "Having spoken of Bishops, and described them, Paul passes on to the Deacons. But why is this? Because, between Bishop and Presbyter there is not much difference; for these also, in like manner, have committed to them both the instruction and the government of the Church; and what things he has said concerning Bishops, the same, also, he intended for Presbyters; for they have gained the ascendancy only in respect to ordination; and of this they seem to have defrauded the Presbyters." This passage of the eloquent father needs no comment. If there be meaning in words, Chrysostom distinctly conveys the idea, not only that ordination was the only point in respect to which Bishops, in his day, had gained precedence over Presbyters, but that they had gained even this by fraudulent means. This is the undoubted

import of the word which he employs, and which we translate defraud. The same word is employed in 1 Thessalonians iv. 6. "That no man go beyond and *defraud* his brother in any matter," &c. And again, 2 Cor. vii. 2. "We have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have *defrauded* no man." And be it remembered, no individual in the fourth century was more competent, in every respect, than Chrysostom to say whether the pre-eminence which had been gained by Bishops in his day, rested on a divine warrant, or had been fraudulently obtained.

Thus it is evident—the ancients themselves being our witnesses—that, in the apostolic age, Bishop and Presbyter were the same; that, the Bishops were parish ministers; that, in every parish, a body of Elders, with their Pastor at their head, conducted the government and discipline; that, of course, Presbyterian parity in the Gospel ministry universally prevailed; that the rite of ordination was equally the prerogative of all who were empowered to preach the Gospel, and administer the sacraments; that it was habitually performed "by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery;" that matters continued in this situation for more than a hundred years after the close of the apostolic age; that then clerical pride, ambition, and cupidity began, more sensibly than in preceding times, to disclose their native effects; and that the pastors of the more opulent towns claimed special pre-eminence and powers, as peculiarly the successors of the Apostles, which, by little and little, were admitted, and at length, permanently established. Thus were parochial Bishops, or the pastors of single congregations, gradually transformed into diocesan, or prelatial Bishops, and, under an old and familiar title, a new office artfully introduced; until, in the fourth century, when Christianity became the established religion of the empire, when the clergy were pampered by imperial bounty, defended by imperial authority, and their honours arranged according to the gradations of rank which were obtained in the state; all traces of primitive simplicity and purity were lost in the plans and splendour of worldly policy. Bishops became "lords over God's heritage," rather than "examples to their flocks."

We are not to suppose, however, that this departure from the apostolic model of church order was universal. There were "witnesses of the truth," who, in humble retirement, bore a faithful testimony to the original system of discipline as well as doctrine. The simple-hearted Paulicians, in the seventh century, testified against the encroachments of pre-

lacy. They were succeeded, not long afterwards, by the Waldenses and Albigenses, who still more distinctly and zealously protested against all encroachments on Presbyterian simplicity. This is freely acknowledged by many of the advocates of prelacy, as well as others. *Aeneas Sylvius*, afterwards Pope *Pius* the II., declares—"They, (the Waldenses,) deny the hierarchy; maintaining that there is no difference among the priests, by reason of dignity or office." *Medina*, a learned prelatist in the council of *Trent*, asserted that the doctrine of ministerial parity had been condemned in *Aerius*, and in the *Waldenses*, as well as in others specified by him. *Bellarmino* acknowledges that the *Waldenses* denied the divine right of prelacy. The Rev. Dr. *Rainolds*, an eminently learned Episcopal divine, professor of Divinity in the university of *Oxford*, in the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, in writing on this subject to Sir *Francis Knollys*, declares—"All those who have, for 500 years past, endeavoured the reformation of the Church, have taught, that all pastors, whether they be called Bishops or Priests, are invested with equal authority and power;—as first, the *Waldenses*; next *Marcilius Petavinus*; then *Wickliffe* and his disciples; afterwards *Huss* and the *Hussites*; and last of all, *Luther*, *Calvin*, *Bullinger*, *Musculus*, &c." Their own historians, *John Paul Perrin*, and Sir *Samuel Morland*, make statements, and exhibit documents which fully confirm this representation. For although in some of the records of the *Waldenses* certain *Seniors* are mentioned who performed particular duties for the sake of order; yet we are explicitly informed that *they claimed no superiority by divine right*. Accordingly *Peter Heylin*, a bigoted Episcopalian, speaking of the Bohemian Brethren, a branch of the same people, and who are known to have received ministers from them—says, that "they had fallen upon a way of ordaining ministers among themselves, without having recourse unto the bishop, or any such superior officer as a superintendent."—History of Presbyterianism, pp. 409, 410. The Rev. *John Scott*, the pious Episcopal continuator of *Milner's Ecclesiastical History*, in giving a particular statement of the tenets and practices of the *Waldenses*, addressed by *George Mauzel*, one of their most devoted ministers, to *Æcolampadius*, the celebrated Reformer, in 1530, represents that minister as stating, in the most unequivocal manner, that the different orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, *did not exist in their ministry*. Vol. I. 139. The Rev. *Adam Blair*, one of the latest and most profound writers on the history of the Wal

denses, asserts and shows, with the utmost confidence, that their ecclesiastical government was not Episcopal. *History of the Waldenses*, in two volumes octavo, 1833. "Like Presbyterians and Independents," says this writer, "they denied the establishment of the different orders of ministers then received in the Western Church, such as Bishops, Archbishops," &c. I. 176. Again he says—"No form of ecclesiastical government in Great Britain, seems *exactly* the same with the ancient Waldenses." Viewing them as having a constant moderator, Episcopalians think him like a Bishop. But in regard to Episcopal consecration, Mr. *Acland*, an Episcopalian, informs us, that "this ornament of our church establishment, as justly cherished by us, is unquestionably no longer preserved among the *Vaudois*." Viewing them as having a Synod, and having a Consistory, or session, in each congregation, they are Presbyterians; yet with this difference, that, in our country, Synods and Presbyteries have a new moderator every year, and the lay-elders are sent by the session in each congregation; while the Waldensian congregations meet and appoint the elder. The visits of the moderator to the different congregations, as appointed by the court, have nothing in them inconsistent with Presbytery. Mr. *Gilly*, (also an Episcopalian) admits that the present Vaudois are nearer to Presbyterians, than to any other form of church government, only not so rigid." Vol. I. 540, 541. But the undoubted fact, which places this whole subject beyond all question, is, that after the commencement of the Reformation in *Geneva*, the Waldenses not only held communion with that Church, which we all know was strictly Presbyterian, but also received ministers from her, and of course recognised the validity of her ordinations in the strongest practical manner. This they could never have done, had they been in the habit of regarding the subject in the same light with modern prelatists.

But the Waldenses were not merely Presbyterian as to the point of ministerial parity. According to their own most authentic writers, as well as the acknowledgment of their bitterest enemies—they resembled our beloved Church in almost every thing. They rejected all human inventions in the worship of God,—such as the sign of the cross in baptism; fast and festival days; the confirmation of children and youth; the consecration of edifices for public worship, &c. We are also told that all their churches were bound together by Synods, which assembled once a year; that these Synods were composed of Ministers and Ruling Elders, as in the Presby-

terian Church; that their business was to examine and ordain candidates for the ministry, and authoritatively to order every thing respecting their whole body. We may say, then, with strict regard to historical verity, that, in the darkest and most corrupt periods of the Church, Presbyterianism was kept alive in the purest, and indeed, in the *only* pure churches now known to have then existed.

When the Reformation from Popery occurred, it is at once wonderful and edifying to observe, with what almost entire unanimity the leaders in that glorious enterprise, concurred in proclaiming and sustaining Presbyterian principles. Luther, Melancthon and Bucer, in Germany; Farel, Viret and Calvin, in France and Geneva; Zuingle and Œcolampadius, in Switzerland: Peter Martyr, in Italy; A. Lasco, in Hungary; Junius and others, in Holland; Knox, in Scotland; and a decided majority of the most enlightened and pious friends of the Reformation, even in England,—all, without concert, concurred in maintaining, that in the apostolical age there was no prelacy, Bishop and Presbyter being the same; that the government of the Church by Ruling as well as Teaching Elders, was plainly warranted in Scripture; and that individual congregations were not to be considered as independent communities, but as so many members of the body to which they belonged, and to be governed by representative assemblies, for the benefit of the whole. It is true, these different leaders of the Reformed Churches did not, all of them, actually establish Presbyterian order in their respective ecclesiastical bodies; but while all the Reformed Churches in France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Geneva, and Scotland, were thorough Presbyterians, not only in principle, but also in practice—even the Lutherans universally acknowledged that ministerial parity was the order of the apostolic Church, and also, that in the primitive times Ruling Elders conducted the government and discipline in all the Churches. Still many of them holding, as they did, that the Church was not bound to adhere, in every respect, to the apostolic model of government and discipline, but was at liberty to modify it according to exigencies, and as they might deem, for edification; they adopted forms of regulation and discipline, differing from each other, and differing, as they did not hesitate to confess, from the plan actually in use in the days of apostolic simplicity. The Church of England was the *only one in all Protestant Christendom*, which, at the Reformation, adopted the system of Prelacy. This was occasioned by the fact, that in that country the Bishops, the court-clergy, and the monarchs, took the lead in

reforming the Church ; and, as might have been expected, chose to retain the system of ecclesiastical pre-eminence which had been so long established. It is notorious, however, that this was done originally, without any claim of divine right ; with a spirit of affectionate intercourse and communion with all the non-episcopal Churches on the continent of Europe, and after all, contrary to the judgment of large numbers of the most eminently pious and learned friends of the Reformation in that kingdom.

It is very common for the more uninformed opponents of Presbyterianism to assert, that this form of ecclesiastical order was invented by Calvin, and first set in operation in the Church of Geneva. The ignorance of those who can make this allegation is indeed surprising ! Passing by all that has been said of the palpable existence of Presbyterian order in the apostolic age ; of its plain delineation in the Epistles of Ignatius, and in the writings of other fathers succeeding the pastor of Antioch ; and waiving all remark on its acknowledged establishment, as we have seen, among the pious Waldenses ; it was undoubtedly in use in Switzerland and in Geneva long before Calvin had appeared as a reformer, or had set his foot in either of those countries. The Rev. Mr. Scott, the Episcopal continuator of Milner's Ecclesiastical History, before quoted, explicitly states, that as early as 1528, when Calvin was but nineteen years of age, and was wholly unknown in the ecclesiastical world, "the Presbyterian form of church government was introduced into Switzerland," and that the doctrine of ministerial parity had been uniformly taught by Zuingle, before the time of Calvin. In Geneva, likewise, before Calvin ever saw that city, his countrymen, Farel and Viret, had gone thither and commenced the Reformation upon Presbyterian principles. There, when he consented to cast in his lot with them, he found a "Presbytery" established ; and all that he had to do was to complete the system by adding the bench of Ruling Elders for conducting the discipline of the Church ; and even this he did not invent, but confessedly borrowed from that branch of the Waldenses called the Bohemian Brethren ; although he evidently considered, and represented it as distinctly warranted by Scripture.

Presbyterianism, as it has long existed in Scotland, Holland, France, Geneva, and Germany, is, in substance, the same system, differing only in these several countries, in minor details, and chiefly in the names and arrangements of their several ecclesiastical assemblies. As those who com

menced the Presbyterian Church in America, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, were chiefly emigrants from North Britain and Ireland, so the Church of Scotland was more than any other, their model. Our whole arrangement of judicatories, and our whole ecclesiastical nomenclature, are with few exceptions borrowed from Scotland. What our ecclesiastical Mother and we call the "Church Session," most of the Presbyterians on the continent of Europe call the "Consistory;" and what we call the "Presbytery," they call the "Classis." But in general principles, we are all entirely agreed.

Although it is well known that Presbyterianism, in some parts of the old world, has been, and continues to be connected with the State; as in Scotland, Holland, Geneva, and some parts of Germany; yet this is by no means a necessary, or even a natural connection. It is deeply to be lamented that such a connection was ever formed in any case; having proved, it may be safely affirmed, in all cases essentially injurious. This form of ecclesiastical order existed in the days of the Apostles, not only without any alliance with the civil government, but in the midst of its most unrelenting persecution: and this continued to be the case for more than a hundred years after the last Apostle had gone to his reward. The same may be said of this form of ecclesiastical order, as it existed among the pious Waldenses. It was the object, in no case, of state-patronage, but of unceasing persecution. It is much to be regretted, that any portion of the Church of Christ, under any form of organization, has ever sought to be united with the state, or consented to receive support from the civil power. Such a union has never failed to be followed by disastrous consequences to the best interests of religion. It is undoubtedly better—far better for the spiritual welfare of the Church that she should be persecuted, rather than supported by the civil government.

Happily, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, has never formed or sought any kind of connection with the state. Nay, she has gone further. When, after the establishment of our national independence, it became proper to revise and modify our ecclesiastical formularies, our fathers threw out of them every thing relating to the interposition of the civil magistrate in the affairs of the Church, and introduced, in place of what was thus excluded, a solemn declaration against any particular class or denomination of Christians receiving any species of religious establishment, or preference from the civil government. So that our public standards contain an' open, solemn,

and permanent Protest against any claim or attempt on the part of our own, or any other Church, obtaining the least patronage or pre-eminence from governmental favour. Nor is there any point concerning which a more firm and deep-rooted sentiment prevails, than on this point, throughout the Presbyterian Church. It is universally regarded as a settled principle, that scarcely any greater calamity could happen to our body, than that it should be, in any way, directly or indirectly, connected with the state.

It would be doing gross injustice to Presbyterianism not to state, before closing this historical sketch, that it has been found, in all ages, friendly to "the rights of man;" conducive to the advancement, rather than the destruction of civil and religious liberty. In making this statement, it is not meant to be maintained, that no Presbyterian has ever been chargeable with the spirit or practice of persecution; but simply to say, that the general characteristic of the Presbyterian Church, as a denomination, is, that it has ever shown itself friendly to the diffusion of knowledge, to the rights of conscience, and to the enjoyments of rational liberty. It has often, very often, been a *persecuted, but never a persecuting Church*. The few examples of a contrary aspect which have appeared, were, in almost all cases, traceable, either to individual mistake and infirmity, or to a momentary impulse of retaliation on bloody persecutors, when unexpectedly placed in the power of those who had been recently the victims of the most cruel oppression. The death of Servetus (even allowing all the agency in his death on the part of Calvin, which the enemies of that illustrious man have been fond of ascribing to him, but which every well informed and impartial person knows cannot be allowed) had no real connection with Presbyterianism. The cases of undue severity exercised towards others, by Presbyterians in Great Britain, in the course of the seventeenth century were almost all referable to the maxim, that "oppression makes even wise men mad;" and seldom rose much above the point of self-defence.* And as to the fierce and unrelent-

* It is truly wonderful that intelligent and conscientious men, while they make such a hideous outcry concerning the affair of Servetus, and study to place in so odious a light the severities indulged towards some of the Episcopal clergy, by the Independents, in England, during the period of the Commonwealth, should entirely forget the instances of persecution, a hundredfold more frequent and more severe, practised by Prelacy. Archbishop Cranmer was immediately active in dragging at least *four* persons to the flames, of whom two were women. Let the flames which consumed the body of the amiable and pious Ann Askew, kindled through the misguided zeal of that prelate, confound those who would represent Calvin as the prince of persecutors. More than this,

ing oppression recently experienced by evangelical men in Geneva, it is notoriously the spirit and the work of Unitarianism; the same spirit which, in the sixteenth century, prompted the leading Scenians, when Francis David, one of their own number, who believed with them the mere humanity of Christ, and therefore thought that divine worship ought not to be paid him,—to throw him into prison, where he died.

Especially may it be said that, in our own country, during the one hundred and thirty years in which it has existed in an organized form, Presbyterianism has uniformly proved herself the friend of civil and religious liberty; and though often herself persecuted, has never been, in a single instance, chargeable with invading the rights of others. Nay, to the present hour she is, on every side, bitterly reviled and calumniated, as “narrow,” “sectarian,” “ambitious,” “aspiring at a civil establishment,” &c., when it is notorious, that there is not a single denomination in our country so exempt from narrow sectarianism; so free from a proselyting spirit; so ready to unite with all evangelical denominations in enterprises of benevolence; and which has been so signalized by the most solemn protests, public and private, against every species of connexion between the Church and the civil government. When, with these unquestionable facts before our eyes, we hear the calumnies before referred to proclaimed on every side, can the most unbounded charity imagine that they are really believed, or that the motive which actuates their propagators can be a regard to truth?

in the reign of Edward VI., he is also confessed by the historians of his own church, to have “procured the death” of Joanna Bocher and George Paris, labouring, and with success, to overcome the scruples of the young king, in signing the warrant for burning them. Again: during the reign of James I., about twenty-five persons were hanged, drawn, and quartered for their religion, in England. (See *Brook's History of Religious Liberty*, Vol. II. p. 403.) During the same reign, (A. D. 1612,) Bartholomew Legate, and Edward Wightman, were burnt to death for the same cause; the former under the immediate administration and authority of Dr. King, Bishop of London, and the latter under the direction of Neile, Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry, who are acknowledged to have had an immediate agency in bringing them to the stake. One would think, that in more than half a century after the affair of Servetus, the prelates of England might have become a little more enlightened with regard to the rights of conscience. But the miserable oppressions and cruelty exercised by prelacy, and especially by Archbishop Laud and his coadjutors; and the still more cruel ejections, imprisonments, and massacres, both in North and South Britain, which marked the reigns of Charles II. and James II., are enough to sicken the heart, and ought for ever to impose silence on prelacy, with regard to persecution.

CHAPTER III.

DOCTRINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

The Presbyterian Church has been distinguished, in all ages, for laying great stress on the maintenance of PURE DOCTRINE. Such was eminently the case in primitive times, when it was enjoined upon them to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." And such was no less remarkably their characteristic when, under the name of *Waldenses*, for five or six hundred years before the Reformation, they maintained a noble testimony in favour of the truth, in the midst of the deplorable darkness and corruption of the Papacy. At the period of the Reformation, the same zeal for the true doctrines of the Gospel of Christ, led the faithful servants of God, in different parts of the Church, to form and publish their "Confessions of Faith," which remain to the present day as monuments of their fidelity to their Master's will. The people of whom we speak, evidently regarded the pure doctrines of the Gospel as lying at the foundation of Christian character and hope; and while they attached no small importance to the government and discipline of the Church, they regarded, as of far more vital importance, those great, fundamental principles of our common salvation, which enter essentially into the character and life of Christian experience.

The system of doctrine of which the Presbyterian Church has solemnly declared her acceptance and belief, is comprised in the "Westminster Confession of Faith," and the "Larger and Shorter Catechisms." These we believe contain a summary of the doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures; and, on this account alone, we profess to receive them, and require a solemn assent to the "Confession of Faith" on the part of all who are admitted to the pastoral office, or that of spiritual ruling in our body. This system of doctrine has received the distinctive title of *Calvinism*. Not because *Calvin* invented it; but because, among all the modern advocates of it, he was, undoubtedly, the most profound and able; and because it has suited the policy of some to endeavour to convey the idea that the system in question was unknown until *Calvin* began to propagate and defend it.

In the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, there are many doctrines in which we entirely agree with our brethren of other denominations. In regard to all that is embraced in that formula concerning the being and perfections of

God; the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; the divinity, incarnation, and atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, &c., we may be said to hold, substantially in common with all sects who deserve the Christian name. But with respect to the true state of human nature before God; the doctrine of sovereign unconditional election to eternal life; the doctrine that Christ died in a special sense for his elect people; the doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone; of sanctification by the special and invincible power of the Holy Spirit, and of the perseverance of the saints in holiness,—we differ very materially from many who bear the Christian name. In short, with regard to what are commonly called the “five points,” discussed and decided in the Synod of *Dort*, our Confession is opposed to Arminianism, and coincides with the Calvinistic system maintained by that body.

It may be safely said that no theological system was ever more grossly misrepresented, or more foully and unjustly vilified than this. It has been by multitudes defamed, as an abominable system, revolting to every dictate of reason; dishonourable to God; unfriendly to Christian comfort; adapted to beget discouragement and despair on the one hand, or presumption and licentiousness on the other. The gross misrepresentations with which it has been assailed; the disingenuous attempts to fasten upon it consequences which its advocates disavow and abhor; and the unsparing calumny which is continually heaped upon it, and its friends, have scarcely ever been equalled in any other case in the entire annals of theological controversy. Those who have been accustomed to listen to this blind and unhallowed abuse, are respectfully requested to weigh with serious impartiality the following considerations:

1. It is but justice to ascertain *what the real system is which Presbyterians believe*. The opponents of this system are wont to give the most unjust and shocking pictures of it. Whether this is done from ignorance or dishonesty, it would be painful, as well as vain, at present, to inquire. They allege, that it represents God as really the author of sin, and man as laid under a physical necessity of sinning, and then as damned for it, do what he can. They insist that our doctrine of depravity, and the mode of inheriting it, if true, destroys moral agency, reduces our race to the condition of mere machines, and, of course, makes all punishment of sin unjust and absurd. In short, they contend that the view which we give of the plan of salvation, makes it a system of heathenish fate, or of refined Antinomianism, equally destructive of holiness

and of comfort; and that, under the guise of free grace, we build up a fabric of favouritism on the one hand, and of fixed necessity on the other, at once making God a tyrant, and man a passive subject of his arbitrary will. But is it true that Presbyterians embrace any such system as this? Nothing can be further from the truth. It is a shameful caricature, which has no correspondence with any thing but the perverted pictures of prejudice and bigotry. We abhor such sentiments just as much as our uncandid accusers.

The truth is, it would be difficult to find a writer or speaker who has distinguished himself by opposing Calvinism, who has fairly represented the system, or who really appeared to understand it. They are for ever fighting against a *caricature*. Some of the most grave and venerable writers in our country, who have appeared in the Arminian ranks, are, undoubtedly, in this predicament. Whether this has arisen from the want of knowledge, or the want of candour, the effect is the same, and the conduct is worthy of severe censure. The writer of these pages is fully persuaded that Arminian principles, when traced out to their natural and unavoidable consequences, lead to an invasion of the essential attributes of God, and, of course, to blank and cheerless atheism. Yet in making a statement of the Arminian system, as actually held by its advocates, he should consider himself as inexcusable, if he departed a hair's breadth from the delineation made by its friends. The system itself is one thing; the consequences which may be drawn from it, another.

Without pretending to go over all the points of Calvinism in detail, let it suffice to say, that the system which Presbyterians profess to receive, is of the following character and amount:—That the Gospel finds all men by nature dead in trespasses and sins, destitute alike of the image and favour of God, and incapable of regaining either, in virtue of any strength or resources within themselves; that the plan of man's recovery from this state of rebellion, depravity, and ruin, is, from beginning to end, a system of mere unmerited grace; that it was the wonderful, unprompted grace, or undeserved love of God, which, in the eternal counsels of peace, contemplating man as fallen, devised a stupendous plan of redemption from the guilt and power of sin; that in these eternal counsels and purposes he regarded the whole human race as equally fallen, and as equally undeserving on account of their sins; that, however, in his sovereign mercy, he resolved to save a portion of them; that he was prompted to this choice, not by any foresight of faith and obedience on the part of the

elect, because their faith and obedience are his own sovereign gift; but by the mere good pleasure of his will, that they might be to the praise of the glory of his grace; that God was under no obligation to provide deliverance for any of our race; that he might justly have left us all to perish in our iniquity, as he did the fallen angels, toward whom he was, surely, guilty of no injustice; that he was pleased, however, in the exercise of amazing mercy, to provide a plan of pardon, and of restoration to life and blessedness; that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but obtain everlasting life. We believe further, that not only the providing of this Saviour, but the disposition, in each individual, to accept of him, is all of grace, that is, the free, unmerited gift of God. We have no doubt that all mankind, left to themselves, would reject this great salvation, and that it is discriminating and all-conquering grace which inclines any to receive it. We are persuaded, further, that, as salvation is all of grace, and, as it is evident from Scripture and from daily observation, that all men are not believers, and, of course, that all are not saved, so it was not God's original intention to save all; for it is granted that he does not actually save all; and that which he now does, if he be such a God as the Bible represents him, he always intended to do. We believe that known unto God are all his works and ways from the beginning; and that all the dispensations of his grace, as well as of his providence, and among the rest, the effectual calling and salvation of every believer, entered into his plan from all eternity; "yet so, (as our Confession of Faith declares,) as that thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." In short, the sum of our belief in reference to this great economy, may be expressed in one sentence—"All that is evil in man is of himself, and to him belongs the blame of it; and all that is good in him is of God, and to him belongs the praise of it." We are aware that this system of belief may be perverted, misrepresented, and made perfectly odious, by drawing consequences from it which we utterly reject and abhor. For such perversions and unjust inferences, the advocates of no creed are responsible. Let any one carefully and dispassionately read over the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, and he will soon perceive that the professed representations of it which are daily proclaimed from the pulpit and the press are wretched slanders, for which no apology can be found but in the ignorance of their authors.

2. Consider *the ample support of this system which is found in the Word of God.* The first question which every sincere and devout inquirer after truth will ask, is, "what saith the Scripture?" Our own reasonings and cavils, when thrown into the scale against revelation, are nothing. "Let God be true and every man a liar." Now it is confidently believed, that when we reverently open the book of God, and impartially examine what it teaches concerning the important points which distinguish our doctrine from other forms of belief, we shall find the divine authority clearly and strongly in favour of that creed which Presbyterians profess to receive.

Those who doubt this, are requested seriously, and with prayer, to ponder the following Scriptures :

By one man sin entered into the world. By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners, Romans v. 18, 19. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law, Romans iii. 24—30. By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For if it be of works, it is no more of grace, otherwise, grace is no more grace, Ephes. ii. 5. Rom. xi. 6. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world, Acts xv. 18. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed, Acts xiii. 48. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter i. 2. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, Ephes. i. 4—7. Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we say, then, to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ

that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. viii. 29—39. Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel, according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 2 Timothy i. 8, 9. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, Philippians i. 6. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand, John x. 27, 28. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee, Isa. liv. 10. Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou hast not received? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? 1 Cor. iv. 7. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil, John xvii. 11, 15. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world, John xvii. 24. Even so, then at this present time, also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Rom. xi. 5—7. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, Psalm cx. 3. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you; and I will

take away the hard and stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. Ezekiel xxxvi. 26—28.

The reader of these pages is earnestly requested to ponder seriously the foregoing Scriptures; to examine them in their connection; to interpret them with the same candour and simplicity with which he is wont to interpret other writings, and then to say whether they do not manifestly support those peculiar doctrines for which Presbyterians are so much reproached and vilified? The question is, not whether the ingenuity of biblical criticism may not torture these passages into a different meaning; but whether the plain, natural, and obvious meaning be not that which will sustain the system in support of which we are wont to quote them? If it will, the controversy is at an end; for whatever is plainly contained in Scripture, we are bound to receive.

3. It is worthy of notice that the system of doctrine maintained by the Presbyterian Church, is *the same in substance with that which was maintained by the Witnesses for the truth, and by the great body of the Reformers, and which has generally been styled, "the doctrines of the Reformation."*

There is probably no class of professing Christians more remote than Presbyterians, from a disposition to appeal to human authority as a test of truth. Our ecclesiastical formularies, as well as our history, proclaim that we consider the *Scriptures* as the infallible rule of faith and practice; and that we are distinguished from Prelatists and others, by contending for this principle, in reference to every department of the Christian system. Yet it is, undoubtedly, an interesting fact, well worthy of being noticed, and adapted to confirm our confidence in the system which we have embraced, that *all* the great and good men who took the lead in bearing testimony against error, and in reforming the Church from the corruptions of the Papacy, however diverse in their views on other points,—agreed, with scarcely an exception, in adopting and maintaining that system of doctrine which is popularly denominated Calvinism, and which many of its bigoted opponents are so ignorant as to imagine that Calvin invented. The Waldenses, those far-famed witnesses of the truth, whom all Protestants profess to venerate, but whom few, alas! appear to understand and follow; not only adopted in substance, the whole Presbyterian government and discipline, as we have seen in a former page; but also, all the leading features of our system of doctrine. The following extract

from one of their confessions is conclusive. The eleventh article is in these words: "God saves from that corruption and condemnation, into which all have fallen, those whom he has chosen from the foundation of the world, *not for any disposition, faith, or holiness which he foresaw in them, but of his mere mercy in Jesus Christ his Son; passing by all the rest, according to the irreprehensible reason of his free will and justice.*" And in one of their ancient Catechisms, they tell us, that the real Church of Christ consists

of the *elect of God*, from the beginning to the end of the world, by the grace of God, through the merit of Christ, gathered together by the Holy Spirit, and *foreordained to eternal life.*" (See Gilly's "Narrative of Researches among the Waldenses," Appendix. See, also, Sir Samuel Morland, p. 40, 48, &c. Milner, iii. p. 440, 441.) The same general system was undoubtedly adopted by John Wickliffe, the "morning star of the Reformation;" by John Huss and Jerome of Prague, his companion in faith, and in martyrdom. "The distinguishing tenet of Wickliffe in religion," says Milner, "was, undoubtedly, the election of grace." And the same writer gives an account of Huss and Jerome, which precludes all doubt that, in their general system, they followed Wickliffe, who was a disciple of Augustine.

When we come down to the time of the Reformation, the same general fact continues to be unquestionable. It is notorious that Luther, long before Calvin was known as a Reformer, or even as a theological writer, publicly maintained the doctrines of the divine decrees, and human impotence, as thoroughly as Calvin ever did. The proof of this is so complete, that no one well informed in the history of those times will dare to deny it. Melancthon, the friend, coadjutor, and survivor of Luther, also held in substance the very same system. Those who read the statements, and the extracts from his writings, which appear in the pages of the Rev. Mr. Scott, the Episcopal continuator of Milner's Ecclesiastical History, can no longer doubt of this. Melancthon assured Calvin that he concurred with him in his creed; and Calvin, in his Preface to Melancthon's book of "Common Places," recommends the work as one, in the doctrines of which he concurred. Zuingli, the apostolic reformer of Switzerland, it is well known, adopted the same system. After all that has been alleged to the contrary, nothing is more certain than that he maintained the doctrines of the depravity and moral impotence of human nature, the sovereign election of grace,

and the perseverance of the saints in holiness, as decisively, and zealously as any of his contemporaries. Yet Zuingle died before Calvin was ever heard of as a friend to the Reformation; and before he had published a sentence in reference to it. Of course, the Swiss reformer was indebted for no part of his creed, to the ministry or the writings of the illustrious pastor of Geneva. The same may be said of Bucer, of Peter Martyr, of Bullinger, of Bugenhagius, of Junius, and, in general, of all the leaders of the Reformation on the continent of Europe.

When we pass over to Great Britain precisely the same fact appears. Hamilton, Wishart, Archbishop Cranmer, Bishops Ridley, Hooper, and Latimer, Archbishops Grindal and Whitgift, John Knox, and, in short, *all* the Reformers of any name, both in North and South Britain, were *doctrinal Calvinists*. This fact, indeed, has been denied; but not by any candid, well informed man. The proof of it is complete. Let any one read the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, especially the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and seventeenth,—let him particularly, ponder well the last mentioned article, which treats directly of the doctrine of Predestination, and ask, whether it is possible fairly to give it any other than a Calvinistic interpretation. I am not, indeed, ignorant that prejudice and bigotry have sometimes contended that this seventeenth article is decidedly Anti-calvinistic in its import; and as proof of this, the qualifying clause toward the end of it is cited as sufficient evidence. Now, it so happens that that qualifying clause is nearly copied from Calvin's Institutes; and the latter part of it is a literal translation of that Reformer's caution against the abuse of this doctrine! Again: let him who entertains a doubt on this subject, read the celebrated Catechism of Dr. Nowell, which was reviewed, corrected, formally approved, and ordered to be published, as containing a summary of true doctrine, by the same Convocation which formed and adopted the Thirty-nine Articles, and which is acknowledged by the bitterest enemies of Calvin to be decisively Calvinistic. Let him read the Lambeth Articles, drawn up and signed by Archbishop Whitgift, and also subscribed by the Archbishop of York, and at least three other leading prelates, and by them transmitted to the University of Cambridge, as containing doctrines "corresponding with those professed in the Church of England." Let him recollect, that for more than half a century after the Reformation was established in England, Calvin's Body of Divinity, commonly styled his "Institutes

of the Christian Religion," was publicly received and studied as a standard of orthodoxy in both the Universities; and that by a Convocation held at Oxford, the work was recommended to the general study of the nation.

Now, is it not remarkable that all the great and good men who took the lead in the Reformation, men of different languages, habits, and prejudices; many of them absolute strangers to each other, not merely in Geneva, but in Great Britain, in France, in Germany, in Holland, in Switzerland—nay, wherever the darkness of the Papacy was dissipated, and her corruptions abandoned—all—all, with scarcely an exception, should become advocates in substance, of that system, which we denominate Calvinism; that appealing to the Bible, as the common repository and standard of Gospel truth, they should with almost entire unanimity, without concert, and however divided as to other points, be so harmoniously united in the great doctrines of sovereign grace, that they have ever since been styled emphatically, '*the doctrines of the Reformation?*' How shall we account for it, that brethren who claim to be well informed, should represent this system as originating with Calvin, and peculiar to him and his followers, when, to say nothing of its Scriptural authority, every one knows it was, in substance, espoused by Augustine, a thousand years before Calvin was born; by all the witnesses of the truth, during the "dark ages," and by all those venerable men, whose piety, wisdom, and devotedness, have been the theme of gratitude and praise, for three hundred years? Above all, how shall we account for it, that brethren, who find no language too strong by which to express their profound veneration for the spirit, the opinions, and the services of Cranmer, Parker, Whitgift, and other distinguished prelates, who, under God, conducted and completed the Reformation in England; while they are never tired of vilifying the character, and denouncing the creed of the venerable Calvin, whose name those very lauded men never mentioned but with epithets of the highest honour; whose writings they made their text books for students of theology, and whose person and ministry they regarded as among the most glorious lights of Christendom?

4. As the system of doctrine taught in our Confession is most in accordance with Scripture, and was common to all the Reformers, so it has, to say the least, *quite as few difficulties attending it as any other system.*

It is not pretended that the Calvinistic system is free from all difficulties. When finite creatures are called to scan either the works, or the revealed will of an Infinite Being, they

must be truly demented, if they expect to find nothing which they cannot comprehend. Accordingly, when we undertake to solve some of the difficulties which that system of Christian doctrine, usually styled Calvinism, presents, it cannot be denied that "such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it." How to reconcile what the Scriptures plainly reveal, on the one hand, concerning the entire dependence of man, and on the other, concerning his activity and responsibility; how to explain the perfect foreknowledge and predestination of God, in consistency with the perfect freedom and moral agency of his intelligent creatures, is a problem, which no thinking man expects fully to solve. But the question is, are there fewer difficulties attending any other system? Especially, are there fewer difficulties attending the Arminian or Pelagian systems, which are commonly the resort of those who reject Calvinism? There are not: nay, instead of being less, they are greater, far greater, both in number and magnitude. The writer of these pages rests in the Calvinistic system with a confidence daily increasing, not only because the more he examines it, the more clearly it appears to him to be taught in the Holy Scriptures; but also, because the more frequently and impartially he compares the amount of the difficulties on both sides, the more heavily by far they seem to him to press against the Arminian and Pelagian schemes.

It is easy, and in the estimation of the superficial and unreflecting, it is conclusive, to object, that Calvinism has a tendency to cut the nerves of all spiritual exertion; that if we are elected, we shall be saved, do what we *will*; and if not elected, we shall be lost, do what we *can*. But is it not perfectly evident that this objection lies with quite as much force against the Arminian or Pelagian hypothesis? Arminians and Pelagians grant that all men will not be actually saved; that the salvation or perdition of each individual is distinctly foreknown by God; and that the event will certainly happen as he foresees that it will. May not a caviller then say, with quite as much appearance of justice in this case, as in the other; "the result as to my salvation is known and certain. If I am to be saved, no anxiety about it is necessary; and if I am to perish, all anxiety about it would be useless?" But would Arminians consider this objection as valid against their creed? Probably not. Yet it is just as valid against *theirs* as against *ours*. The truth is, Arminians and Pelagians, by resorting to their respective schemes, do not really get rid of one particle of the difficulty which they allege against the Calvinistic system; they only place it *one step further back*, but must meet it in

unimpaired strength after all. If there be a God, who is endowed with perfect foreknowledge, and who is, and always has been, acting upon a *plan*, of which he knew the end from the beginning;—and there is such a being, or there is no God,—then all the difficulty which lies against the doctrine of sovereign, unconditional predetermination, lies equally and in all its unmitigated force, against the doctrine of foreknowledge, and certain futurity; and all the shocking consequences with which they charge our system of belief, are quite as legitimately chargeable on their own.

No other proof of this is needed than the subterfuges to which Arminians and Pelagians have resorted in order to avoid the difficulties which they have felt pressing on their schemes. Some have denied the possibility of God's foreknowing future contingencies, alleging that such foreknowledge cannot be conceived or admitted, any more than his power of doing impossibilities, or doing what involves a contradiction. Others have denied the plenary foreknowledge of God, alleging that there are many things which he does not choose to know; the latter making the divine ignorance of many future things voluntary, while the former consider it as necessary. Pelagians, to get rid of the same difficulties, take refuge in the principle that the Most High is deficient in power as well as in knowledge; that he would be glad to have less natural and moral evil in his kingdom than exists; would be glad to have many more saved than will be; but is not able to fulfil his wishes, and is constantly restrained and thwarted by his own inability.

Those who wish to see a specimen of the difficulties to which good men feel themselves reduced in the course of their opposition to Calvinism, may see a remarkable one in the Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. There they will find an amiable and pious man driven to the necessity of borrowing from the Socinian camp, a *denial of the essential omniscience of God*, because he saw that this attribute, if admitted, would unavoidably land him in the peculiarities of Calvinistic theology! A more painful example of prejudice, and of subserviency to the dictates of a favourite system, can scarcely be produced in the annals of Christian piety!

Are not these consequences even more shocking than the worst which its adversaries charge on the Calvinistic system? Do not the allegations, that God is not omnipotent; that he is not omniscient; that he is not acting upon an eternal plan; that his purposes, instead of being eternal, are all formed in

time; and instead of being immutable, are all liable every day to be altered, and are, in fact, altered, by the changing will of his creatures; that there is no certainty of his predictions and promises ever being fulfilled, because he can neither foresee nor control future contingencies; that it is his express design to save all men alike, while yet it is certain that all will not be saved; that he purposes as much, and does as much for those who perish, as for those who are saved; but is, after all, baffled and disappointed in his hopes concerning them; that he is certain of nothing, because he has determined on nothing, and is not able to do all his pleasure;—I say, do not these allegations shock every serious mind? Are they not equally contrary to Scripture, to reason, and to all the hopes of the pious? Yet they have all been either actually avowed by the opponents of Calvinism, or they follow unavoidably from the principles which they assume. The truth is, the moment we abandon the ground that Jehovah is acting upon an infinitely wise and eternal plan; that he is ordering all things according to the counsel of his own will; and that his people are not their own saviours, but indebted to his sovereign grace for every real good which they possess or hope for; the moment we abandon this ground, we abandon all that is solid and tenable, and if we would follow up unavoidable consequences, must plunge into the gulf of Atheism.

The same train of remark may be applied to the difficulties which attend the doctrine of original sin. The humiliating *fact*, that all men are by nature sinners; that their nature is corrupt; that is, that there is such a tendency to sin in all the children of men, that no mere man of all the human family ever failed of falling into it;—is not only taught in Scripture, but is notorious to universal observation. Now the question is, how shall we account for this fact? Presbyterians, speaking the language of Calvinism, of their Confession of Faith, and, above all, as they think, of the Bible, say that Adam was constituted the covenant head of his posterity, that they were to stand or fall with him; that when he fell, all his posterity in that first transgression, sinned in him, and fell with him; in other words, that the guilt of this sin, in virtue of a sovereign and righteous constitution, was imputed to his posterity—that is, it was set to their account; they incurred the same forfeit as if they had themselves committed it. And hence, as Adam, by that transgression, became mortal, lost the moral image of God, and incurred the penalty of a corrupt nature—so all his posterity, in consequence of their covenant relation to him, came into the world mortal^l depraved, and guilty, and liable

to the same penalty, in all its extent, which fell upon him. This, Presbyterians profess to believe, is the meaning of those Scriptures which declare, "in Adam all die," 1 Cor. xv. 22. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation," Romans v. 18, 19. They do not suppose, indeed, that there is here any transfer of moral character, or any transfusion of Adam's act into his posterity; but that, in consequence of the covenant relation in which he and they stood, they are treated *as if* they had themselves committed the sin by which our race fell. This, and this only, is the imputation of the sin of our first parents for which Presbyterians contend.

Pelagians, revolting at this view of the subject, hope to remove all difficulty by saying that man's nature is not corrupt; that all men come into the world in the same state of entire innocence that Adam was when first created; and that to suppose men to be born with a corrupt nature, would be dishonourable to God, and inconsistent with moral agency. They acknowledge, however, that all men are in fact, sinners; and that all begin to sin as soon as they become capable of moral action. But is any difficulty which is supposed to attend the Calvinistic doctrine really removed, or even diminished, by this hypothesis? Is it more honourable to God, or less revolting to our sense of justice, to represent the whole human family, without the adoption of any covenant arrangement, or representative principle, as brought into being, and placed by their Creator in circumstances in which not one of their number ever fails of falling into sin?

Arminians, or semi-Pelagians, also rejecting the Calvinistic doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, but at the same time, perceiving that the Pelagian hypothesis is utterly unscriptural, take another method of removing the difficulty. They tell us that Adam was not constituted the covenant head of his posterity, and that the guilt of his first sin was not imputed to them; but yet that, in virtue of their connection with him, and descent from him, they come into the world mortal, and infected with a sinful nature; but that it is on account of their own sin, and not that of Adam, that they are guilty, and exposed to any penalty. Is it not plain, however, that this hypothesis, instead of removing the difficulty which its advocates suppose to lie against the Calvinistic doctrine of original sin, rather increases it? On what principle is it, according to them, that mortality, and a depraved nature descend from Adam to his posterity? Not, it seems, in virtue of any covenant relation between them; not on the principle

of representative headship; but of an arbitrary constitution, ordering it so by a mere act of authority. And while they reject the doctrine of imputation, they are constrained to confess that in consequence, somehow, of Adam's sin, all his posterity come into the world with a depraved nature, which, if not removed, must lead to everlasting destruction. And is this no evil, no penalty? But if being born in this condition be a penalty, and a heavy penalty too, why was this penalty inflicted upon them? It cannot be said that it was on account of their depravity; for this would be to make their depravity the procuring cause of itself. No imputation of our first father's sin! and yet acknowledge that in consequence of that sin, some of the most awful inflictions are sent upon us that can affect moral and immortal beings! No imputation! Whence, then, the fact, that all the posterity of Adam are born depraved, and liable to death? How came this calamity upon them? Surely, while the term is rejected, we have here the essence of all the imputation for which we contend! Alas! we never fail to augment difficulties, and introduce additional perplexity, whenever we deviate from the simple statements of God's word!

5. The very *same objections were made in Apostolic times* to the doctrines of grace, as taught by the inspired Paul. In the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the doctrine of sovereign, distinguishing grace, is discussed professedly and at length. The Apostle boldly announces the language of God to be, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." He then asks, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." Still the Apostle is aware that a blind caviller may continue to object. He therefore adds—"Thou wilt say, then, unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" The very language and scope of this objection show that the Apostle meant that his doctrine should be understood in a Calvinistic sense, for upon any other ground, the objection would be irrelevant. How does he reply to it? Does he retract or disavow that view of the subject on which the cavil is evidently founded? Not at all. He attempts no mitigation or softening. His reply is—"Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing

to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" Here the Apostle has anticipated the whole force of the Arminian objection. It cannot be pushed further than he has carried it in a single sentence. No addition has ever been made to its force by the most ingenious gainsayer. Yet the Apostle answers it, not by an attempt to explain, to bring down to human comprehension, or to show that his statements had been misconstrued. Nothing like it. He resolves the whole into the supremacy, the sovereignty and the incomprehensibility of God and his counsels, and calls upon all to yield to this great and all governing principle; closing as he does in another place, when on the same subject, with that memorable exclamation—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

6. It is a strong argument in favour of that creed which the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church exhibits, that every serious, devout professor of religion, however decided as an Arminian or Semi-Pelagian he may be, in preaching, or in conversation, *never fails to be a Calvinist in prayer*. So far as my observation has gone, the most zealous advocates of Arminianism almost always lay aside their favourite opinions, when they pour out their hearts in prayer, under a feeling sense of their dependence and their unworthiness. How many examples have we of this in thousands of pulpits, and in thousands of published volumes, in which the preaching is decidedly semi-Pelagian, while the prayers are quite as decidedly Calvinistic! The reason of this inconsistency is perfectly evident. In preaching and conversation, errorists argue to maintain a point; in prayer, they supplicate grace. In the former, they are actuated by the spirit of controvertists; in the latter, they feel their entire dependence as creatures, and their lost and perishing conditions as sinners. "A prayer," says one, "upon Arminian principles, and into which the peculiarities of that system were introduced, we have never seen, and never have heard. It would be a theological curiosity sufficiently daring in its structure; but we venture to say, no man of Christian humility and devotion will be found to carry it into the presence of his God." There,—there the sinner ever acknowledges his weakness and depravity; disclaims all merit; confesses his multiplied sins; adores the sovereign unmerited mercy of God; ascribes to his grace every good de-

sire and hope; glorifies his universal government over all his creatures and all their actions; and ascribes the plan, the execution, and the consummation of that deliverance for which he hopes, to the sovereign undeserved grace of God abounding through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Now here is the very essence of Calvinism. Not, indeed, of those monstrous absurdities and impieties in which its adversaries are ever fond of dressing it up; but of that sober and scriptural system which is found in our formularies, and for which all whom we acknowledge as Calvinists, have ever contended.

7. Finally, it is worthy of serious inquiry, whether *the moral influence of the Calvinistic system has not been found in all ages, more pure and happy, than that of any other.* For this appeal no apology is necessary. That system which is ever found connected with larger measures of the spirit of prayer, and of humble, habitual, deep devotion; that system which is ever productive of more holy living, and more active Christian benevolence than any other, we may confidently say, without presumption, is most agreeable to Scripture, and, of course, most worthy of being embraced. This allegation, it is presumed, will not be denied. For, although the opponents of this system, at one time, charge it with having a tendency to promote licentiousness; yet much more frequently and unanimously they charge it with being austere, over strict in its abstinence from worldly pleasures, and standing unnecessarily aloof from the various forms of public amusement. Is it not notorious that the followers of *Augustine*, of the Paulicians, of *Claudius of Turin*, of the Waldenses, and of *Wickliffe*, *Huss*, and *Jerome*, in the dark ages, were far more pure in their morals, devout in their habits, and separated from a corrupt and idolatrous world, than any of their contemporaries? Will it not be granted by every intelligent reader that, during the first half century after the Reformation was established in England, when no one doubts that nineteen twentieths of the Protestant clergy in that kingdom, were avowed Calvinists, the state both of piety and of morals was unspeakably better, than during the latter half of the seventeenth century, when Arminianism had, among the majority, taken its place? What was the character of the two thousand "ejected ministers," in the reign of Charles II. who were almost to a man Calvinists? Were they not, characteristically, as a body, the most pious, pure, diligent, and exemplary servants of Christ, that England ever saw? Is it not universally admitted, that the state of piety and of morals

has ever been far more pure in Scotland, than in England, and pre-eminently, in those districts and congregations in Scotland, in which Calvinism has maintained a steady reign? And can any part of the world be named, in which, for nearly a hundred years after its settlement, purer morals reigned than in New England, in which, as every one knows, during the greater part of that period, a Calvinistic creed almost universally prevailed?

The following remarks by a distinguished divine of the Church of England, who professes not to be a Calvinist, are as just as they are striking.

“Does not this opinion (of the immoral tendency of Calvinism,) in a great measure originate from a mistaken conception of what Calvinism is? Those who would impute all these practical evils to the operation of Calvinism, appear to suppose that the belief of the Calvinist, by which he admits the doctrine of personal election, necessarily includes also an assumption of his own election. The Calvinist, *properly so called*, is no enthusiast. He believes, indeed, in the eternal purposes of God, as to the salvation of the elect; but as to the hopes of his own salvation, and of his individual interest in those purposes, he professes to obtain it by the evidences which he possesses of his being himself in a renewed and justified state. He knows from the word of God that the saints are ‘chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit,’ no less than ‘the belief of the truth,’ that they are ‘predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ,’ and ‘created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them.’ And hence he feels that it is only so long as he experiences the sanctifying influences of the Spirit in his own heart, so long as he himself in some degree reflects the image of Christ, and walks imperfectly indeed, but yet sincerely, in good works, that he can have any scriptural grounds for concluding that he is one of God’s elect, and will have his portion with the saints. This is true Calvinism. And where is the tendency of this doctrine to make its followers slothful or confident, negligent of the means of grace, or inattentive to moral and relative duties? While the practical evils which Calvinism is charged with producing, are so prominently and studiously exhibited to view by many of its opponents; let us not omit, on the other hand, to do justice to this calumniated system, nor forget the abundant good which it is not only capable of accomplishing, but which it actually does accomplish. I have no doubt, but that some of the sublimest feelings of

pure and spiritual delight which are ever experienced on earth, are those of which the Calvinist partakes, when in his secret retirement with his God, "the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit," and shining on his own gracious operation on the heart, he meditates on the wonderful and unspeakable privileges to which, through Christ, he sees himself entitled; and resolving all the blessings which have been already received, or are prepared for him hereafter, into the eternal purpose, and electing love of God, his Father, and absorbed in a holy contemplation of the divine counsels and perfections, he lies prostrate before the throne of grace, in deep humiliation, and with overwhelming joy. I do not say that others have not their peculiar feelings of spiritual delight; but these are his. And does he rise from such communion with his God, without enlarged desires and resolutions of more seriously devoting himself to the divine favour, of more decidedly overcoming the flesh and the world, and of more faithfully doing the will, and advancing the glory of his Lord and Saviour? Facts and experience reply to this inquiry. Among no denomination or description of professing Christians, is there to be found a larger portion of humble, pious, and devoted servants of God, persons of a truly Christian spirit, zealous of good works, and exemplary in every duty and relation of life, than among those who hold the Calvinistic tenets. I am sure that your observation and your candour will fully justify this statement. And, therefore, so far as this system is to be judged of by its actual effects, I think that, on a candid reconsideration of the subject, you will be induced to abandon your objection, and to admit that it was founded on an erroneous and partial view of the subject."*

In the same general strain, Bishop Burnet, who was avowedly, a moderate Arminian, expresses the following opinion as to the practical advantages of Calvinism. "A Calvinist is taught by his opinions to think meanly of himself, and to ascribe the honour of all to God; which lays in him a deep foundation for humility: he is also much inclined to secret prayer, and to a fixed dependence on God."

A very able and learned foreign lawyer, the author of the article *Predestination*, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, though he is evidently no friend to Calvinism, makes the following declaration: "there is one remark which we feel ourselves

* "Letters addressed to a Serious and Humble Inquirer, &c." by the Rev. *Edward Cooper*, Rector of Hamstall Ridware.

bound in justice to make, although it appears to us somewhat singular. It is this : that, from the earliest ages down to our own days, if we consider the character of the ancient Stoics, the Jewish Essenes, the modern Calvinists and Jansenists, when compared with that of their antagonists, the Epicureans, the Sadducees, the Arminians, and the Jesuists, we shall find that they have excelled in no small degree, in the practice of the most rigid and respectable virtues ; and have been the highest honour of their own ages, and the best models for imitation to every age succeeding. At the same time, it must be confessed, that their virtues have in general been rendered unamiable by a tinge of gloomy and severe austerity."

After all, however, that can be said in favour of that doctrinal system which it is our happiness and honour, as a Church, to receive ; however demonstrative its scriptural support, and however manifest its deduction from the character of an infinitely great, wise, and good Governor of the universe ; it will never cease, while human nature remains as it is, to be hated, reviled, caricatured, ridiculed, and rejected by a large majority of the professedly religious world. It is too humbling to human pride ; it calls for too much self-denial, self-renunciation, and submission of the mind and the heart to heavenly teaching ; demands too much spirituality and withdrawal from worldly pleasures and amusements, not to be opposed by the mass of mankind, and even by the mass of professing Christians, who have little taste for the Spirit of the Gospel. These very doctrines were thus treated in the days of the inspired Apostles, who first taught them in their fulness ; and, even in our own communion, those of our members who are most tinctured with the worldly spirit, are ever found most apt to quarrel with the peculiarities of our creed. The most deeply humble, enlightened and spiritual Christians are, in all ages and churches, ever found to be those to whom the doctrines of free and sovereign grace, for substance, as collected in our Standards from the Scriptures of truth, are most precious, and in whose view they are most glorious.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

THE Church, being a social body, called out of the world, and constituted by the authority of Jesus Christ, indispen-

sably needs a form of government. No Society can exist in purity and peace without order. And no order can be maintained without authority, laws, and a set of officers to apply the laws, and administer the form of order which may have been adopted. Our Master in heaven has commanded "his body, the Church," to preserve within her borders purity of doctrine, and holiness of conversation; and for this purpose to "warn the unruly;" to admonish the careless; reclaim the wandering; and to cut off those who are obstinately corrupt, either in faith or practice. All this she was commanded to do, and actually did perform, while all the civil governments of the world were leagued against her, and the fires of martyrdom were kindled on every side. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. It has nothing to do with earthly governments, and ought to be maintained in entire disconnexion and independence of them all.

Now, it is obviously impossible for the Church to fulfil these obligations, without such an ecclesiastical constitution, such a system of laws, and such a body of officers, as will enable her to apply to her members that authority which her Master has vested in her, "for edification and not for destruction." Hence, the necessity of organizing the Church under some distinct and definite form. It is not asserted, or believed by us, that any one form of government is essential to the existence of the Church; but, simply, that if purity and peace be maintained, there must be some form adopted; and that that form which is derived from the word of God is, undoubtedly, the best, and binding on all.

The Presbyterian Church claims to derive her form of government from the Holy Scriptures. She is persuaded that the New Testament most distinctly presents, as existing in the Apostolic Church, all the three features which constitute the peculiarities of her ecclesiastical polity, viz: the parity of her ministers; the government of the Church by Ruling Elders; and the attainment of unity and cooperation by courts of review and control. She aims to avoid the unauthorised pretensions of Prelacy on the one hand, and the lax, inadequate scheme of Independency on the other; and to adopt that system of ministerial equality, and efficient representation in the government of the Church, which at once guards, as far as possible, against the encroachments of clerical ambition; secures the rights of the people, and provides for the exercise of pure and wholesome discipline in the most edifying manner.

I. In the first place, we reject the claim of *Prelacy*.

Our Episcopal brethren contend that in the Christian Church there are three orders of clergy,—Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons; that the first only have power to ordain, and the last to preach, and administer the sacrament of baptism alone. We maintain, that all ministers of the Gospel who are empowered to administer the word and sacraments, are *officially equal*, and authorized to perform the highest acts of ecclesiastical power. We believe, in a word, that there is but one order of Gospel ministers authorized in the New Testament; that the title of Bishop was constantly applied in the apostolic age, and for a considerable time afterwards, to the ordinary pastors of particular churches; and that setting up a superior under this title, as exclusively possessed of the power of ordaining, is a departure from the primitive model; a usurpation for which there is not the smallest warrant in the word of God.

Our Episcopal brethren, indeed, freely acknowledge, that the title of “Bishop” is never employed in the New Testament, in a single instance, to designate that class of officers to which they now exclusively apply it. They, with one voice, grant, that all that we read in the apostolical writings concerning Bishops, is to be regarded as pertaining to Presbyters, or the ordinary pastors of churches; in other words, to what they call the “second grade” of ministers. They allege, however, that the Apostles occupied a place of ecclesiastical pre-eminence in the primitive Church; that they alone, while they lived, were endowed with the power of ordination; that, as they deceased, their pre-eminence was transmitted to certain successors; that to these successors of the Apostles, the title of Bishop, which had before, while the Apostles lived, been given to Presbyters, began to be appropriated; and that ever since the apostolic age, this title has been confined to Prelates;* to those who succeeded to the apostolic pre-eminence, and who, like the Apostles, exclusively possess the power of ordination.

But, to no part of this claim does the New Testament afford the least countenance. It is manifest, that ordination was not confined to the Apostles, officially, and technically so called; for nothing can be plainer, than that Barnabas, Timothy, and Titus, who were not Apostles in the appropriated sense, were invested with the ordaining power, and actually and abundantly exercised it. It is equally manifest, that when the Apostles ceased from the Church, they left no suc-

* See Bishop Onderdonk’s “Episcopacy tested by Scripture.” p. 12.

cessors, in that peculiar and pre-eminent office, which they filled during their lives. "The apostolical office," says Dr. Barrow, an eminent Episcopal divine,—“The apostolical office, as such, was personal and temporary; and, therefore, according to its nature and design, not successive, nor communicable to others, in perpetual descendance from them. It was, as such, in all respects extraordinary, conferred in a special manner, designed for special purposes, discharged by special aids, endowed with special privileges, as was needful for the propagation of Christianity, and founding of churches. To that office, it was requisite that the person should have an immediate designation and commission from God; that he should be endowed with miraculous gifts and graces; that he should be able, according to his discretion, to impart spiritual gifts; and that he should govern in an absolute manner, as being guided by infallible assistance, to which he might appeal. Now such an office, consisting of so many extraordinary privileges, and miraculous powers, which were requisite for the foundation of the Church, was not designed to continue by derivation, for it contained in it divers things, which apparently were not communicated, and which no man, without gross imposture and hypocrisy, could challenge to himself.*

Such is the judgment of this learned and able Prelatist, concerning the foundation of the whole argument before us. There is not the semblance of support, then, to be found in Scripture for the alleged transmission of the pre-eminent and peculiar powers of the Apostles to a set of ecclesiastical successors. As men endowed with the gifts of miracles and inspiration, who were, prior to the completion of the New Testament canon, constituted the infallible guides of the Church: they had no successors; nor can the remotest hint be found in Scripture, that they had, or were ever intended to have, any such successors. But as ministers of Christ, empowered to go forth preaching the Gospel and administering Christian sacraments, they had successors, and these successors were, manifestly, all those who were empowered to preach the Gospel, and administer the sacramental seals of discipleship: for, in the final commission which the Saviour gave to the Apostles, and which must be considered as embracing their final and highest functions, they are sent forth to disciple all nations, and to baptize them “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” and it

* Pope's Supremacy, p. 79.

was in immediate connexion with the command to discharge these ordinary duties, that the promise which is considered as pointing to the ministerial succession, was given:—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." If the friends of Prelacy could produce even the semblance of testimony from Scripture, that the ordaining power is something more sacred and elevated than that of dispensing the Gospel, and administering sacraments; if they could produce the least hint from the New Testament, that the powers possessed by the Apostles were afterwards divided, and that one class of ministers succeeded them in certain pre-eminent powers, not mentioned in their final commission, while another class succeeded them only in respect to lower and more ordinary functions; their cause would rest on some plausible ground; but there is not a syllable in Scripture which gives the most distant intimation of either of these alleged facts. It is not so much as pretended, that a passage is to be found, which gives a hint of this kind. Accordingly, when we ask the advocates of Episcopacy whence they derive their favourite doctrine, that diocesan Bishops succeed the Apostles in the appropriate powers and pre-eminence of their apostolical character, they refer us to no passages of Scripture, asserting or even hinting it; but to some equivocal suggestions and allusions of several Fathers, who wrote within the first four or five hundred years after Christ. The writer most frequently quoted by our Episcopal brethren for this purpose, is *Theodoret*, who flourished about the middle of the fifth century, and who speaks thus: "The same persons were anciently called Bishops and Presbyters; and those whom we now call Bishops, were then called Apostles. But in process of time, the title of Apostle was appropriated to those who were called Apostles in the strict sense, and the rest, who had formerly the name of Apostles, were styled Bishops. In this sense Epaphroditus is called the Apostle of the Philippians; Titus was the Apostle of the Cretians, and Timothy of Asia." On this testimony, several remarks may be made: 1. It is not the testimony of Scripture, but the dream of a writer four centuries after the apostolic age, in whose time the Church had become very corrupt, and in whose works much superstition and error are found.

2. No one doubts that in *Theodoret's* time, Prelacy had obtained a complete establishment, and that he alleges principles and facts in relation to the priesthood in his day, which none but Papists are prepared to sanction.

3. It is very certain that the Fathers who flourished nearest

to the apostolic age, generally represent Presbyters, and not Prelates, as the successors of the Apostles. Ignatius, in particular, who was contemporary with the last of the Apostles, expresses himself again and again in the following language : "The Presbyters succeed in the place of the bench of the Apostles ;" and again, "in like manner, let all reverence the Presbyters as the sanhedrim of God, and college of the Apostles ;" and again, "Be subject to your Presbyters, as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ our hope." And once more, "Follow the Presbyters as the Apostles." Which shall we believe, Ignatius or Theodoret? Beyond all doubt, neither is to be trusted in relation to a matter which receives no countenance from Scripture. It is notorious, too, that Irenæus, a Christian father, who flourished toward the latter part of the second century, repeatedly speaks of Presbyters as being the successors of the Apostles. In other places he speaks of the same persons as Bishops, and under that title also represents them as the successors of the Apostles. And this he does, not once only, but several times, as if his object were to show that, according to the representation of the New Testament, Bishop and Presbyter were the same.

4. Augustine, a writer earlier than Theodoret, more learned, and of higher authority, expressly declares, that the apostolical office was above that of any Bishop. *De Baptis. contra Donatis.* ii. 1.

5. And after all, to what does Theodoret's statement amount? Why, only that in the fifth century, such claims and such language as he presents, were common. Who doubts this? But does he say that the New Testament authorizes any such statement? He does not. Nor, if he had, could we possibly believe him with the Bible in our hands. The truth is, no such fact as this argument supposes, is stated or hinted at in Scripture. It every where represents the Apostles as extraordinary officers, who, in their peculiar qualifications and authority, had no successors; but who, in respect to that office which is perpetual, are succeeded by all regularly authorized ministers of the Gospel. And to give any other view of the subject, is an imposition on popular credulity. Accordingly, this whole argument for the superiority of Bishops, drawn from the plea, that they are the peculiar and exclusive successors of the Apostles in their official pre-eminence, has been wholly abandoned by a number of the most distinguished divines of the Church of England, as invalid and untenable.

The next argument commonly urged by our Episcopal

brethren in support of Prelacy is, that Timothy was evidently, in fact, Bishop of Ephesus, and Titus of Crete; and that this furnishes, of course, a plain example of an order of ministers superior to common pastors. This alleged fact is a corner stone of the Episcopal fabric, and unless it can be supported, the whole edifice must fall to the ground.

But for this alleged Prelacy of Timothy and Titus, there is not only no positive proof, but there is not even a shadow of it, in the whole New Testament. There is no evidence whatever, that either of them ever had a fixed pastoral charge at Ephesus or Crete. There is no evidence that either of them ever performed the work of ordination alone. One of them, while at Ephesus, was expressly directed to "do the work of an evangelist," and there is not the slightest intimation that either acted in any higher character. There is no hint that they performed any act, to which any regular minister of the Gospel is not fully competent. In short, the whole Episcopal argument drawn from the charge to Timothy and Titus, is destitute of the semblance of proof from Scripture. All the premises on which it is founded, are taken for granted without evidence. All that appears to have been done by these evangelists, is done every day by evangelists authorized and sent forth by the Presbyterian Church; and no reason can be assigned for ascribing to the missionaries to Ephesus and Crete any higher character, than that the Episcopal cause demands it. In truth, when thrown into the form of a regular syllogism, its amount is neither more nor less than the following: "None but diocesan Bishops can ordain ministers, and 'set in order' churches; but Timothy and Titus, discharged these offices; therefore, Timothy and Titus were diocesan Bishops." But is not the very thing to be proved, viz: that diocesan Bishops alone can ordain, &c., here taken for granted? Can there be a more gross begging of the whole question than this argument exemplifies?

It is hardly necessary to inform any intelligent reader of the Bible, that the postscripts, at the close of the second epistle to Timothy, and of the epistle to Titus, and which speaks of the former as "the first Bishop of Ephesus," and the latter as "the first Bishop of Crete," are of no authority. It is acknowledged by all learned men, that they make no part of the sacred text. They were, no doubt, interpolated by officious transcribers, more than four hundred years after the date of the epistles. They are not found at all in the most authentic copies of the original. They are not the same in the copies in which they are found. They were excluded

from all the earliest English translations. And for a long time after their introduction, they were printed in a different type from the received text, to indicate that they formed no part of the authentic Scriptures. But when our present translation of the Bible, in the reign of James I., was executed, as the translators were all Episcopalians, they, very improperly, suffered these postscripts to occupy the place in which we now find them, without any mark to distinguish them from the authorized text.

Such is the amount of the argument drawn from the alleged Episcopal character of Timothy and Titus. It finds no countenance whatever in the New Testament. Every fact which is stated in the inspired history concerning those pious evangelists, is not only perfectly reconcilable with the Presbyterian doctrine, but agrees far better with it than with the Episcopal hypothesis. Accordingly, the eminent Episcopal divine, Dr. Whitby, with all his zeal for Prelacy, speaks in his commentary in the following language: "The great controversy concerning this, and the epistles to Timothy is, whether Timothy and Titus were indeed made Bishops, the one of Ephesus, and the proconsular Asia; the other of Crete. Now, of this matter, I confess *I can find nothing in any writer of the first three centuries, nor any intimation that they bore that name.*" And afterwards he adds, concerning the whole argument; "I confess that these two instances, absolutely taken, afford us no convincing arguments in favour of a settled diocesan Episcopacy, because there is nothing which proves they did, or were to exercise these acts of government rather as Bishops than evangelists." It is true, this learned writer, while he acknowledges that no evidence in favour of the Episcopal character of these missionaries, is to be found within the first three centuries, expresses an opinion, that there is testimony enough to establish it in writers of the fourth and fifth centuries. This, however, is not Scriptural testimony; and what is not found in the Bible, is surely not binding on the Church. Besides; this testimony of the fourth and fifth centuries, when impartially examined, and compared with other contemporaneous testimony, will be found perfectly worthless, and, of course, unavailing to the cause in support of which it is adduced, because it is not consistent either with itself, or with the New Testament.

Another argument from Scripture, commonly urged by our Episcopal brethren, is derived from the "Angels" addressed in the Epistles to the Seven Churches of the Lesser Asia.

“In each of those Churches,” say the advocates of Prelacy, “an individual is addressed under the title of ‘Angel,’ which is a very strong argument against ministerial parity, and in favour of Episcopacy.” But this argument is just as powerless as any of the preceding, or rather, it is destitute even of their degree of plausibility. The term “Angel” signifies messenger. As an ecclesiastical title, it is derived from the Old Testament. In every Jewish Synagogue, or worshipping congregation, there was an “Angel of the Church,” whose duty it was to preside and take the lead in public worship. This title was evidently transferred from the Synagogue to the Christian Church. And if we suppose each of these “Angels” to be the ordinary pastor of a single church or congregation, it will perfectly accord with every representation concerning them found in the epistles in question. But he who looks carefully into the addresses to the several churches contained in these epistles, will find much reason to doubt whether individual ministers are at all designated by the title of “Angel.” Some have supposed that collective bodies of pastors were intended. Of this opinion a number of the most eminent Episcopal writers have been the advocates. There is absolutely not a shadow of proof that prelates or any thing like them, are referred to. Some of the most learned and zealous advocates of prelacy have acknowledged this; and the whole argument really amounts to nothing more than a mere gratuitous assumption of the point to be proved.

One more argument may be briefly adverted to, which our Episcopal brethren sometimes urge in support of their cause. They say that the Apostle James was evidently the Bishop of Jerusalem. This they attempt to prove by telling us that he spoke last, and gave a very pointed sentence, or opinion, in the Synod of Jerusalem; that Peter, after his release from prison, said to certain persons, go show these things unto James and to the brethren; and that when Paul visited Jerusalem, it is said concerning him—and the day following, Paul went in with us unto James, and all the Elders were present. On these, and other occasions, the advocates of Episcopal claims tell us, James was spoken of as a distinguished man, and treated with marked respect; and from this circumstance it is inferred that he was the Bishop of Jerusalem.

This argument, when stripped of all its decorations, stands thus: “James was the last speaker, and gave a decisive opinion in an ecclesiastical assembly; therefore, he was superior to all others present, and, of course, the Bishop of Jerusalem! Peter requested an account of his release from prison to be

sent to James; *therefore*, James was the Bishop of Jerusalem! Paul and his company went to the house of James in Jerusalem, and there found the Elders convened; *therefore*, James was the ecclesiastical governor of that city!" 'This is absolutely the whole of the scriptural argument drawn from the character of James! Surely, a more singular instance of the gratuitous assumption of what ought to be proved, was never exhibited!

So utterly groundless, then, do we find the claim of our Episcopal brethren, when brought to the test of Scripture. Their claim, it will be observed, is positive and explicit. It is, that the New Testament holds forth, as existing in the Apostolic Church, and intended to be perpetual, an order of men superior to ministers of the word and sacraments; that this order is alone empowered to ordain; and, of course, that without ordination by this order of men, there can be no ministry, no Church, no valid ordinances, no "covenanted mercy," to any of the children of men. In short, they would persuade us, not only that the New Testament bears them out in maintaining the actual existence of such an order in the apostolic Church; but also that it warrants them in contending for it as perpetually and indispensably necessary. The burden of proof lies on them. They have not proved and cannot prove either. That the power of ordaining was not confined to the Apostles while they lived, is manifest to all who read the Bible without prejudice. That the extraordinary powers of the Apostles were to be transmitted to successors, can no more be proved from the word of God, than that inspiration and miracles are still continued, and transmitted from man to man in the Church. That Timothy and Titus were prelates, because they were appointed to "ordain Elders," and "set in order the things that were wanting" in Ephesus and Crete, when it is utterly uncertain whether either of them performed a single ordination alone—is no more proved, or even probable, than that modern Presbyterian missionaries to frontier settlements are prelates, because they are commissioned to perform similar work. And so of all the other alleged sources of proof from Scripture. They are just as destitute of force, and just as delusive as the Popish doctrine, that the primacy of St. Peter, and the transmission of that primacy to the Bishops of Rome, may be proved from the word of God.

Some of the most learned advocates of Episcopacy, however, while they have freely confessed that their favourite system could not be established from Scripture, have confidently asserted, that it is abundantly and unquestionably supported by

the testimony of the Fathers. Into this field it is not judged proper here to enter, for the following reasons :

1. The *Bible* contains the religion of Protestants. It is the only infallible, and the sufficient rule of faith and practice. Even if Prelacy were found unequivocally represented as existing, by the Fathers, in fifty years after the last Apostle, yet if it be not found in the Bible, as it assuredly is not, such testimony would by no means establish its apostolic appointment. It would only prove that the Church was very early corrupted. We know, indeed, that no such testimony exists ; but if it did, as long as we have the Bible, we ought to reject it.

2. We know that human inventions, and various forms of corruption did in fact very early obtain currency in the Christian Church ; and that several practices, quite as likely to be opposed as the encroachments of Prelacy, were introduced and established within the first three hundred years.

3. This is a kind of testimony very difficult to be brought within a narrow compass. For, while some detached passages from the early Fathers have the appearance at first view of favouring Prelacy ; yet, when carefully examined, and compared with other passages from the same Fathers, and others of equal credibility—their testimony will be found utterly unfavourable to Prelatical claims. He who reads what the learned Jerome, in the fourth century, declares concerning Prelacy, as having no foundation in Divine appointment, and as gradually brought in by human ambition, will begin to see that the testimony of the Fathers on this subject is very different from what sanguine and ardent Prelatists are accustomed to represent it. So the testimony of Jerome was understood by bishop Jewel, by bishop Morton, by archbishop Whitgift, by bishop Bilson, by bishop Stillngfleet, and by a number of other divines as learned and able, as ever adorned the Church of England. And with respect to the testimony of Ignatius, early in the second century, who is commonly regarded and resorted to as the sheet-anchor of the Episcopal claim ; we could scarcely wish for a more distinct and graphic description of Presbyterianism than his Epistles represent as existing in all the churches which he addressed. Ignatius speaks expressly of a Bishop, Elders, and Deacons existing in every worshipping assembly which he addressed. Is this the language of Prelacy ? So far from it, nothing can be plainer than that this language can be reconciled with the Presbyterian system alone. Presbyterians are the only denomination who have, in every worshipping assembly, a Bishop, Presbyters, or Elders, and Deacons.

But it cannot be too often repeated, or too constantly kept in view, that whatever the Fathers may say on this subject, is not to decide respecting it. If Episcopacy, when brought to the test of Scripture, cannot stand, we may very willingly leave its support from other sources to those who may feel inclined to "receive for doctrines the commandments of men." This principle formed one of the great dividing lines between our fathers, the Puritans of England, and the Prelates and others by whom the Reformed Church was organized in that land. The Puritans contended that the Bible was the only infallible rule of faith and practice; that it ought to be regarded as the standard of church government and discipline as well as of doctrine; and that the Church, as it stood in the days of the Apostles, is the proper model for our imitation. But the bishops and the court clergy openly maintained that the Scriptures were not to be considered as the only standard of church government and discipline; that the Fathers and the early Councils were to be united with them as the rule; that the Saviour and his Apostles left the whole matter of church order to be accommodated to the discretion of the civil magistrate, and to the form of polity in the state; and that the form of church government adopted in the third and fourth centuries, and especially in the civil establishment under Constantine, was really to be preferred to that which existed in the days of the Apostles, which they considered as peculiarly fitted to the infant state of the Church, while depressed by persecution. And upon this plan it is notorious that the men, who took the lead in reforming and organizing the Church of England avowedly proceeded.

But we can not only prove a negative; that is, we can not only establish that there is no evidence in favour of diocesan Episcopacy to be found in Scripture; but we can go further, and show that the testimony in favour of ministerial parity found in the New Testament, is clear and strong. Nothing is plainer than that our blessed Lord severely rebuked, and explicitly condemned all contests among his ministering servants about rank and pre-eminence. It is acknowledged, by the great mass of learned and pious men, of all Protestant denominations, that it is plain, from the apostolical writings, that the ecclesiastical order of the Synagogue was transferred by inspired men to the Christian Church. It is evident, on the slightest inspection of the New Testament history, that the names and functions of the church officers appointed by the Apostles, were derived, not from the Temple, but from the Synagogue. It is explicitly granted by our Episcopal brethren

ren themselves, that in the New Testament the titles, Bishop and Presbyter were used interchangeably to designate the same office, and that the names were then common. Nothing is plainer than that the Elders of the Church of Ephesus, are spoken of as its Bishops, Acts xx., and, of course, that there were a plurality of Bishops in the same Church, which is wholly inconsistent with the doctrine of Prelacy. It is manifest, that Timothy received his designation to the sacred office "by the laying on of the hands of the *Presbytery*." We find that such men as Barnabas, and Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, none of whom, it is evident were Prelates,—were commanded to lay their hands on Paul, and one of their own number, and "separate them" to a special ministry, on which they were about to depart; "and when they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them away." But it is contrary to all order, human and divine, for an official inferior, authoritatively to bless, and by imposition of hands, to send forth an official superior. And, finally, it is evident, that the mere silence of Scripture, as to the claim of our Episcopal brethren, affords positive and conclusive proof that it cannot be well founded. The advocates of Prelacy, especially the more zealous and determined of their number, make their claim a fundamental one. According to them, as before said, there can be no covenanted Church, no valid ministry or sacraments, without ordination to the sacred office by Prelates. Now, can it be believed, that a matter so important, nay, vital, should not be laid down in Scripture in explicit terms, and with incontrovertible evidence? Surely, if the claim were well founded, whatever else was left in doubt, the prerogative of the Bishop might be expected to be set forth with reiterated and unquestionable evidence. But our Episcopal brethren themselves acknowledge, that this is not the case. Their scriptural testimony is, in no one instance, direct and explicit, but all *indirect, and remotely inferentiul*. They do not pretend to quote a single passage of Scripture which declares, in so many words, or any thing like it, in favour of their claim; but their whole reliance, in regard to scriptural testimony, is placed on facts, and deductions from those facts, which many of the most learned of their own denomination pronounce utterly unavailing for their purpose. Now, can any rational man believe, that our blessed Lord and his Apostles could possibly have regarded the doctrine of Prelacy in the same light, and laid equal stress upon it with our Episcopal brethren, and yet have left the whole subject, to say the least, in so inex-

placit and dubious a posture? He, who can believe this, is prepared to believe any thing that his prejudices may dictate.

In conformity with the foregoing statements, it is well known that, at the era of the Reformation, the leaders of the Church of England *stood alone* in reforming their Church upon Prelatical principles. Luther, Melancthon, Zuingle, Bucer, and Peter Martyr, as well as Calvin and Knox, as stated in a preceding chapter—all—all—scattered throughout every part of Europe, without concert, interpreted the New Testament as plainly teaching the doctrine of ministerial parity, and regarded every kind of imparity in the Gospel ministry as the result of human contrivance, and not of Divine appointment. In short, in every part of Protestant Christendom, out of England—however the leaders of the Reformation differed, and differed sometimes with ardour on other subjects, here they, with scarcely a single exception, were all agreed, that, in the Apostles' days, Bishop and Presbyter were the same, in fact as well as in name; and that, even when it was thought proper to allow to any ministers a degree of pre-eminence, it was to be defended on the ground of human prudence alone. How shall we account for this fact, but by supposing that the plain and obvious construction of the word of God on this subject, is favourable to Presbyterian parity, and unfriendly to Prelatical claims?

But while our Episcopal brethren depart from the primitive and apostolic model in regard to Bishops, so they equally depart from that model in respect to the Deacon's office. They contend that Deacons are one of the orders of clergy, and are authorized, by Divine appointment, to preach and baptize. Let any one impartially read the first six verses of the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and then say whether there is the smallest warrant for this opinion. The Apostles say to the people, "It is not meet that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Can it be supposed, in direct opposition to this whole statement, that these very Deacons were appointed, after all, not to take care of the poor, but to labour in "the ministry of the word?" This were an inconsistency, nay, an absurdity so glaring, that the only wonder is, how any one can possibly adopt it after reading the inspired statement. The circumstance of Philip, sometime after his appointment as Deacon, being found preaching and baptizing in Samaria and

other places, does not afford the smallest presumptive evidence against this conclusion. Are not cases frequently occurring in the Presbyterian Church, in which young men, after serving a year or two as Ruling Elders or Deacons, are set apart as ministers of the Gospel? Soon after Philip's appointment to the deaconship in Jerusalem, the members of the Church in that city were chiefly "scattered abroad by persecution." He was, of course, driven from his residence. Now, the probability is, that about this time,—seeing he was "a man full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," and, therefore, eminently qualified to be useful in preaching the Gospel, he received a new ordination as an Evangelist, and in this character went forth to preach and baptize. He is expressly called an "Evangelist," by the same inspired writer who gives us the account just recited of his appointment as Deacon. Acts xxi. 8. Until it can be proved, then, that he preached and baptized as a Deacon, and not as an Evangelist, the supposition is utterly improbable, and wholly unworthy of credit.

The truth is, the primitive and apostolical office of Deacon was to take care of the poor and "serve tables." By little and little, several centuries after the apostolic age, the occupants of this office usurped the functions of a higher one; which usurpation was afterwards confirmed by ecclesiastical custom. So a number of the most respectable of the early Fathers clearly understood the matter. Thus Origen, in his commentary on the 21st chapter of Matthew, speaking of the corruption which prevailed among the Deacons in his day, represents them—not as neglecting to preach or baptize—but as "neglecting the poor, and converting to their own use the Church's charitable funds." Again, the same Father tells us, *Tract 16, in Matt.* "The Deacons preside over the money-tables of the church." And again, "The Deacons were appointed to preside over the tables of the church, as we are taught in the Acts of the Apostles." Ambrose, in the fourth century, in his commentary on Ephesians, expressly declares, that, in his day, "the Deacons ordinarily were not authorized to preach." Chrysostom, in the same century, in his commentary on Acts vi. *Homil. 14*, tells us, that in his time "there were no such Deacons in the Church as the Apostles ordained," and, in the same connection, gives it as his opinion, that it ought to have been then as it was in the Apostles' days. Jerome, in his famous letter to Evagrius, expressly calls the Deacon, "a minister of tables and widows." The "Apostolical Constitutions," commonly referred to the fourth or fifth century, contain (book II. chapter 27,) the following passage :

“Let the Deacon give nothing to any poor man without the Bishop’s knowledge and consent.” And in the sixth general council of Constantinople, *Can. 16*, it is declared, that “the Scriptural Deacons were no other than overseers of the poor, and that such was the opinion of the ancient Fathers.”

But parity among her ministers is not the only feature which distinguishes the government of the Presbyterian Church. Her mode of conducting discipline in each church by a bench of Elders, acting as the representatives of the members at large; and by courts of review and control, admitting of appeals, where parties feel aggrieved, and binding all the particular churches together as one body, walking by the same rules of truth and order, and subject to the same uniform constitutional authority, are among her peculiar advantages. In regard to both these points, Presbyterians differ from Independents and Congregationalists, as well as from Episcopalians, and, indeed, from most other denominations of Christians. To these, our attention will next be directed.

Independents and Congregationalists commit the whole government and discipline of their churches immediately to the body of the communicants. In some of their churches all the communicants, male and female, have an equal vote; in others, the males only take a part in discipline. In the estimation of Presbyterians this mode of conducting ecclesiastical discipline is liable to most serious objections. They consider it as wholly unsupported by Scripture; as “setting those to judge, in many cases, who are least esteemed in the church;” as extremely unfavourable to the calm and wise administration of justice; nay, as, of all the forms of ecclesiastical discipline, most exposed to the sway of ignorance, prejudice, passion, and artful intrigue: that, under the guise of liberty, it often leads to the most grievous tyranny; and is adapted to exert an injurious influence on the characters both of the pastor and the people.

In the Presbyterian Church, the government and discipline in each congregation is committed to a bench of Elders, consisting of eight or ten of the most pious, enlightened, wise, prudent, and grave members of the church. They constitute, with the pastor at their head, a judicial body, who maintain an official inspection over the members of the church, and deliberately sit in judgment on all those delicate, and yet momentous cases which are connected with receiving, admonishing, rebuking, suspending, excommunicating, and dismissing the members of the flock committed to their care. Our

reasons for conducting in this manner the government and discipline of the Church, are the following:

1. It is certain, that in the system of the Jewish Synagogue, according to the model of which the Christian Church was undoubtedly organized, the whole government and discipline was conducted by a bench of Elders, and not by the body of the people.

2. It is manifest that government and discipline were so conducted in the Apostolic Church. We read that, in every church under the direction of the Apostles, a plurality of Elders were ordained; and we find a class of Elders distinctly spoken of, who “ruled well,” but did not “labour in the word and doctrine,” 1 Tim. v. 17.

3. We find this class of Elders, as bearing rule in each Church, very distinctly and frequently alluded to in several of the earliest Christian Fathers, and by none more clearly than by Ignatius, the pious pastor of Antioch.*

4. The pious witnesses of the truth, who kept alive the true doctrine and order of the Church during the dark ages, more especially the Waldenses and the Bohemian brethren, uniformly governed their churches by means of Ruling, as well as Teaching Elders, as we have before seen.

5. All the leading Reformers on the continent of Europe, with scarcely an exception, though separated from each other by different names, and strong prejudices, agreed, without concert, in teaching the Divine authority of Ruling Elders, and in proof of it, referred to the same Scriptures which we are accustomed to cite for establishing the same thing. The Reformers in England stood alone, in excluding this class of officers from their Church; and even some of their number, among the rest, Archbishop Whitgift, as we have seen, acknowledged that there were such officers in the primitive Church; but that, in the then existing circumstances, it was not necessary or expedient to retain them.

6. Such officers are indispensably necessary to the maintenance of sound and edifying discipline. Without them, discipline will either be wholly neglected, or carried on with

* This is explicitly acknowledged by a number of learned Episcopalians. Among the rest, Archbishop Whitgift expresses himself thus:—“I know that in the primitive Church, they had in every church certain seniors, to whom the government of the congregation was committed; but that was before there was any Christian prince or magistrate that openly professed the Gospel, and before there was any Church by public authority established.” *Defence against Cartwright*, p. 638. 651.

popular noise and confusion; or conducted by the pastor himself—thus often placing him in circumstances adapted to make him either a tyrant, partial to favourites, or a political temporizer. This has appeared so manifest to many Independent and Congregational churches, that they have appointed each a committee, consisting of six or eight of their most pious, enlightened, and grave members, on whom was devolved the whole business of preparing, arranging, and managing every case of discipline, so that the body of the communicants might have nothing more to do than to give their public sanction, by a vote, to what had been virtually done already by this judicious committee. Could there be a more emphatic acknowledgment of the importance and necessity of this class of officers?

Finally: Independents and Congregationalists consider each particular church as entirely independent of every other church. They suppose that the authority exercised by the communicants of each church, is supreme and final; and that no courts of review and control, formed by the representatives of a number of co-ordinate churches, and invested with judicial power over the whole, ought to be admitted. Hence, when any member of an Independent, or of a strictly Congregational Church, is considered by himself, or by his friends, as unjustly cast out, or as in any way injuriously treated, he has no remedy. The system of Independency furnishes no tribunal to which he can appeal. He must sit down, while he lives, under the oppressive sentence, unless the body, originally pronouncing it, should choose to remove it. The same essential defect in this system also appears in a variety of other cases. If a controversy arise between a pastor and his flock, acting on strict Congregational principles; or if a contest occur between two Independent or Congregational churches in the vicinity of each other, their ecclesiastical constitution furnishes no means of relief. The controversy may be subjected to the decision of a civil court, or to the judgment of selected arbitrators, just as may be done when controversies occur among secular men. But their system of Church order affords no remedy. Recourse must be had for relief to those worldly instrumentalities, which are equally painful to the pious heart, and dishonourable to the cause of Christ.

But, for all these difficulties, Presbyterianism, in her essential constitution furnishes appropriate, prompt, and for the most part, adequate relief. Her system of government and discipline contains, within its own bosom, the means of ad-

justment and of peace. Every species of controversy is committed for settlement, to a grave and enlightened judicial body, made up of the representatives of all the churches in a given district; a body, not the creature of a day, which, when its work is done, ceases to exist; but organized, permanent, and responsible; whose decisions are not merely advisory, but authoritative; and from whose sentences, if they be considered as erroneous, an appeal may be taken to a higher tribunal, embracing a larger portion of the Church, and far removed from the excitement of the original contest.

We find the principle on which these courts of review and control are founded, strikingly exemplified in the New Testament history, and our practice abundantly warranted by New Testament facts. When a question arose at Antioch, respecting the obligation of Jewish observances, the church in that place did not attempt, as a body of Independents would, of course, have done, to decide the matter for themselves, leaving the other churches to do as they pleased. But they felt that, as it was a question which concerned the whole Christian body, so a general and authoritative decision of the question, binding on the whole body, ought to be made. They, therefore, empowered special delegates to carry up the question to "the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem," to be by them conclusively settled. There, accordingly, it was debated and decided upon in full Synod; and that decision, in the form of "decrees," (*δογματα*) that is, authoritative adjudications,—sent down to all the churches to be registered and obeyed. Can any one conceive of a more perfect example of a Presbyterian Synod, convened as a judicial body, and pronouncing a decision, not as a mere advisory council, but as a judicatory of Christ, invested with judicial power to declare the path of duty in a given case; not for a single congregation merely, but for the whole visible Church?

There is no doubt, indeed, that this system of authoritative decision, not for one congregation only, but for a number of churches belonging to the same visible body, may be weakly or wickedly managed. Like every thing in the hands of man, and even like the Gospel itself, it may be unskilfully administered, and sometimes even perverted into means of oppression and mischief. So may the most perfect system in the world, civil or ecclesiastical. So may Independency and Congregationalism. For, as an eminent Independent, (the Rev. Robert Hall,) remarked, in speaking on this very subject, "While power is dangerous in the hands of a few, wisdom is seldom with the multitude." The fault, however, is not in the system, but in the administration. Here is a form

of ecclesiastical polity, complete in all its parts ; fitted to obviate every difficulty ; not indeed armed with civil power ; not permitted to enforce its decisions by civil penalties, (in which every friend of genuine Christianity must rejoice) ; a polity to which folly, caprice, or rebellion may refuse to bow ; but, so far as happy adjustment, and moral power can go, better adapted to promote the union, and the harmonious counsel and cooperation of all the churches which are willing to avail themselves of its advantages, assuredly, than any other that Christendom presents.

Such is a cursory view of the argument in favour of Presbyterian church government, and of the peculiar advantages attending that form of ecclesiastical order. It is better adapted than any other to repress clerical ambition ; to prevent clerical encroachments and tyranny ; to guard against the reign of popular effervescence and violence ; to secure the calm, enlightened, and edifying exercise of discipline ; to maintain the religious rights of the people against all sinister influence ; and to afford relief in all cases in which a single church, or an inferior judicatory, may have passed an improper sentence, from either mistake, prejudice, or passion. It establishes, in all our ecclesiastical borders, that strict, republican, *representative* system of government, which has been “ever found to lie at the foundation of all practical freedom, both political and religious ;” and which, under God, affords the best pledge of justice and stability in the administration. It affords that inspection over the lives and conversation of church members, which is ever indispensably needed, and which is at once vigilant, parental, and judicious ; and when faithfully carried into execution, is better fitted than any other to bring the whole Church to act together, and to unite all hearts and hands in Christian beneficence. And, finally, it is better fitted than any other to maintain a wise, impartial, and faithful inspection over the lives and ministrations of the body of the clergy. How much better is a venerable Presbytery adapted to discharge this duty to edification, than a single Bishop, who, to say nothing of other faults, may indulge in the grossest favouriteism or tyranny, without the possibility of adequate control ! This form of church government cannot, indeed, of itself, infuse life and activity into an ecclesiastical body ; but where vitality, and zeal, and resources exist, there is, undoubtedly, no form of ecclesiastical organization so well adapted to bind together a body consisting of many parts ; to unite counsels ; to invigorate efforts ; and to cause a large and extended mass of professing Christians to walk by the same rules ; to mind the same things : to

speak the same language; and to feel that they are in fact, as well as in name, one body in Christ, and every "one members one of another."

Our Methodist brethren refuse to admit any representation from the laymen of their churches, into their Conferences, to which the exercise of ecclesiastical authority is committed: and by this refusal, as well as on account of some other things of a similar nature, they have occasioned a serious schism in their body. Our Episcopal brethren, yielding to what appeared to them the necessity and importance of introducing a lay representation into their ecclesiastical assemblies, have "lay deputies" in the lower house of all their "Conventions." For this feature, however, in their organization in this country, they do not pretend to offer any divine warrant. It is well known that there is no such feature in the Church from which they derive their origin; and it is without the shadow of support from any other principle in their system than that which grows out of the supposed right of the Church to institute, at her pleasure, both rites and offices which the Master never sanctioned. On the contrary, for every part of her system, the Presbyterian Church claims a scriptural warrant. She maintains, that no Church is at liberty to appoint officers, or to exercise authority which cannot be found in Scripture. She vests Ruling Elders with the function of overseeing and governing in the Church—not because they are convenient and useful, or even necessary; but because she finds ample evidence of their institution in the Apostolic Church. She commits to appropriate judicial assemblies the authoritative regulation of all her affairs, under the laws of Christ; not merely because she sees many human advantages resulting from this system; but also, and chiefly because she finds in the Scriptural principles of the essential unity of the visible Church, and in the decisive example of the Synod of Jerusalem, the fullest inspired warrant for this plan of ecclesiastical polity. Let Presbyterians rejoice, that even those denominations which reject, in theory, her scriptural representative system, are compelled, after all, to resort to it in fact, and cannot without it preserve either unity or order.

CHAPTER V.

THE WORSHIP OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

A fundamental principle of the Presbyterian Church, in forming her "Directory for the Worship of God," is, that

here, as in every thing else, Holy Scripture is the only safe guide. One of the earliest practical errors which gained ground in the Christian community, was the adoption of the principle that the ministers of religion might lawfully add, at their pleasure, to the rites and ceremonies of the Church. In consequence of the admission of this error, Augustine complained, as early as the beginning of the fifth century, that for one appointment of God's, ten of man's had crept into the Church, and formed a burden greater, in some respects, than was the ceremonial economy of the Jews. The fact is, for the sake of drawing both Jews and Pagans into the Church, many rites and ceremonies were adopted from both, that they might feel more at home in the Christian assemblies. This evil increased, until, before the Reformation, it had reached that revolting amount of superstition which now distinguishes the Church of Rome.

It was in reference to this point, that our Fathers, both in Scotland and England, had many conflicts, when their respective Churches, in those countries were organized and settled in the sixteenth century. On the one hand, the Prelates, and other court clergy were in favour of a splendid ritual, and were disposed to retain a large number of the ceremonies which had been so long in use in the Church of Rome. On the other, the Puritans in England, and the corresponding body in Scotland, contended that the Scriptures being the only infallible rule of faith and practice, no rite or ceremony ought to have a place in the public worship of God, which is not warranted in Scripture, either by direct precept or example, or by good and sufficient inference. In Scotland the advocates of primitive simplicity prevailed, and established in their national Church the same mode of worship which we believe existed in the apostolic age, and which now obtains in the Presbyterian Church in that country, and in the United States. In England, our Fathers, the Puritans, were not so happy as to succeed in establishing the same scriptural system. Under the influence of the monarch and the court clergy, they were outvoted. Still it is undoubtedly certain that a large portion of the most pious and devoted of the clergy of the Church of England, during the reign of queen Elizabeth, and some of her most worthy dignitaries, when the character of that Church, under its reformed regimen, was finally fixed, did importunately plead for laying aside in public worship, every thing to which Presbyterians, at the present day, object, as having no warrant in Scripture. And although they failed of securing their object in the national Church, yet the descendants of

the Puritans, both in that country and our own, have been permitted to realize their wishes as to most of the particulars on which they then insisted. On some of the principal of these particulars it is proposed now to dwell, and to assign, with regard to each, our reasons for adhering to them in our system of worship.

But before we proceed to this detail, it may be useful to offer a general remark or two, which will serve to show why we object to all human inventions and additions in the worship of God.

1. Christ is the only King and Head of the Church. His word is the law of his house. Of course the Church ought not to consider herself as possessing any power which that word does not warrant. If, therefore, she cannot find in Scripture, authority, either direct, or fairly implied, to the amount contended for, she does not possess that authority.

2. We think that such inventions and additions are expressly forbidden in Scripture. The significant question asked by God of his ancient people, when speaking on this very subject, Isaiah i. 12, "Who hath required this at your hands?" seems to be decisive. "Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," is spoken of, Matt. xv. 9. by our blessed Saviour as highly offensive to him. It would seem tacitly to imply, that we are wiser than God, and understand the interests of the Church better than her Head and Lord.

3. If we once open this door, how or when shall it be closed? The Church, we are told, has power to decree rites and ceremonies; that is, a majority of the ruling powers of the Church have power at any time, as caprice, or a love of show, or superstition, or any other motive may prompt, to add rite after rite, and ceremony after ceremony, at pleasure, to the worship of God. Now if this power be really inherent in the Church, what limit shall we put to its exercise? If she have power to add ten or twenty new ordinances to her ritual, has she not equal power to add a hundred, or five hundred, if a majority of her ministers should feel inclined to do so? And was it not precisely in this way, and upon this very principle, that the enormous mass of superstition which characterizes the Papacy, gradually accumulated? Surely, a power which carries with it no limit but human caprice, and which has been so manifestly and shockingly abused in past ages, ought by no means to be claimed or exercised in the Church of God. But to be more particular.

SECTION I.—*Presbyterians reject prescribed Liturgies.*

We do not, indeed, consider the use of forms of prayer as

in all cases unlawful. We do not doubt that they have been often useful, and that to many this mode of conducting public devotions is highly edifying. If any minister of our Church should think proper to compose a form of prayer, or a variety of forms, for his own use, or to borrow those which have been prepared by others, he ought to be considered as at perfect liberty so to do. But we object to being *confined* to forms of prayer. We contend that it is of great importance to the edification of the Church, that every minister be left at liberty to conduct the devotions of the sanctuary as his circumstances, and the dispensations of Providence, may demand. Our reasons for adopting this judgment, and a corresponding practice, are the following :

1. We think it perfectly evident that no forms of prayer—no prescribed Liturgies were used in the apostolic age of the Church. We read of none ; nor do we find the smallest hint that any thing of the kind was then employed in either public or social worship. Will the most zealous advocates of Liturgies point out even a probable example of the use of one in the New Testament? Can any one believe that Paul used a prescribed form of prayer when he took leave of the Elders of Ephesus, after giving them a solemn charge? Acts xx. 37. Can it be imagined that he used a Liturgy when, in bidding farewell to a circle of friends in the city of Tyre, who had treated him with kindness, he kneeled down on the sea shore and prayed with them? Or can we suppose that he and Silas read from a book, when, at midnight, in the prison at Philippi, they prayed and sang praises unto God? Again; when Paul exhorted Timothy to see that “kings and all in authority” were remembered in public prayer, is it not evident that the Church had no Liturgy? If she had been furnished with one, and confined to it, such direction would have been unnecessary, or rather absurd; for they would have had their prayers all prepared to their hand. In short, when we find prayer spoken of in the New Testament on a great variety of occasions, and in a great variety of language, is it not passing strange, if Liturgies were then used, that no turn of expression, giving the remotest hint of it, should be employed? Surely, if forms of prayer had been regarded in the days of the Apostles, as not only obligatory, but so highly important as some Protestants now profess to regard them: who can believe that the inspired writers would have passed over them in entire silence? The very least that we can infer from this circumstance is, that the use of them is not binding on the Church. The primitive Christians had indeed, pre-

composed Psalms and Hymns, which they united in singing, and probably, a uniform method, derived from the example and letters of the first ministers; of administering the sacraments, and blessing the people; but so have Presbyterians, and various other ecclesiastical bodies, who yet are not considered as using a Liturgy. These, of course, have no application to the present inquiry.

2. The Lord's Prayer, given at the request of the disciples, forms no objection to this conclusion. It was, evidently, not intended to be used as an exact, and far less as an exclusive form. It is not given in the same words by any two of the Evangelists. As it was given before the New Testament Church was set up, so it is strictly adapted to the old rather than the new economy. It contains no clause, asking for blessings in the name of Christ, which the Saviour himself afterwards solemnly enjoined as indispensable. After the resurrection and ascension of Christ, when the New Testament Church was set up, we read nothing more in the inspired history concerning the use of this form. And it is not until several centuries after the apostolic age, that we find this prayer statedly introduced into public worship. Accordingly, it is remarkable, that Augustine, in the fourth century, expresses the decisive opinion, "that Christ intended this prayer as a model rather than a form; that he did not mean to teach his disciples what words they should use in prayer, but what things they should pray for."

3. No such thing as a prescribed form of prayer appears to have been known in the Christian Church, for several hundred years after Christ. The contrary is, indeed, often asserted by the friends of Liturgies, but wholly without evidence; nay, against the most conclusive evidence. The most respectable early writers who undertake to give an account of the worship of the early Christians, make use of language which is utterly irreconcilable with the practice of reading prayers. They tell us, that the minister, or person who led in prayer, "poured out prayers according to his ability;" that he prayed, "closing his bodily eyes, and lifting up the eyes of his mind, and stretching forth his hands toward heaven." Surely, in this posture, it was impossible to "read prayers." Socrates and Sozomen, respectable ecclesiastical historians, who wrote in the fifth century, both concur in declaring, that, in their day, "no two persons were found to use the same words in public worship." And Augustine, who was nearly their contemporary, declares, in relation to this subject,—“There is freedom to use different words, provided the same things

are mentioned in prayer." Basil, in the fourth century, giving directions about prayer, remarks, that there were two parts of this service; first, thanksgiving and praise, with self-abasement; and, secondly, petition. He advises to begin with the former, and, in doing it, to make choice of the language of Scripture. After giving an example of his meaning, he adds, "When thou hast praised him out of the Scriptures, as thou art able, (a strange clause, truly, if all had been prepared before hand, and read out of a book,) then proceed to petition."—*Clarkson on Liturgies*, p. 120. Would not all this be manifestly absurd, if public prayer had been by a prescribed Liturgy in Basil's days? The truth is, it is evident that extemporary or free prayer was generally used in the primitive Church, and continued to be used until orthodoxy and piety declined, and the grace as well as the gift of prayer greatly diminished. Then ministers began to seek the best aid that they could procure. The Church, however, at large, even then, provided no Liturgies; but each pastor, who felt unable to pray extemporaneously, procured prayers composed by other individuals, which he used in public. Accordingly, Augustine tells us, that some ministers in his day, (a period in which we have complete evidence that many of the sacred order were so uneducated as to be unable to write their own names) "lighted upon prayers which were composed not only by ignorant babblers, but also by heretics; and through the simplicity of their ignorance, having no proper discernment, they made use of them, supposing them to be good." Surely, this could never have happened, if the Church had been accustomed at that time to the use of prescribed Liturgies. In short, the very first document in the form of a prayer-book, of which we read, is a *Libellus Officialis*, mentioned in the proceedings of the council of Toledo, in the year 633 after Christ; and that was, evidently, rather a "Directory for the worship of God," than a complete Liturgy. There is, indeed, evidence that, before this time, ministers, deficient in talents and piety, either wrote prayers for themselves, or procured them from others, as before stated; but the first hint to be found of an ecclesiastical body interposing to regulate the business of public prayer, appears about the middle of the fifth century.

With respect to the boasted Liturgies of St. Mark, St. James, &c., of which we often hear, all enlightened Protestants, it is believed, agree that they are manifestly forgeries; and as to the Liturgies attributed to Chrysostom, Basil, and several others of the early Christian Fathers, bishop White,

an English prelate, who lived in the seventeenth century, delivers the following opinion:—"The Liturgies," says he, "fathered upon St. Basil and St. Chrysostom, have a known mother, (to wit, the Church of Rome;) but there is (besides many other just exceptions) so great a dissimilitude between the supposed fathers of the children, that they rather argue the dishonest dealings of their mother, than serve as lawful witnesses of that which the adversary intended to prove by them."—*Tracts against Fisher, the Jesuit*, p. 377.

4. If the Apostles, or any apostolic men, had prepared and given to the Church any thing like a Liturgy, we should, doubtless, have had it preserved, and transmitted with care to posterity. The Church, in this case, would have had one uniform book of prayers, which would have been in use, and held precious, throughout the whole Christian community. But nothing of this kind has ever been pretended to exist. For let it be remembered, that the prayers, in the Romish and English Liturgies, ascribed to some of the early Fathers of the Church, and even to apostolical men, supposing them to be genuine, which, by good judges, as we have just seen, is more than doubted,—were not Liturgies, but short prayers, or "collects," just such as thousands of Presbyterian ministers, who never thought of using a Liturgy, have composed, in their moments of devout retirement, and left among their private papers. Who doubts that devotional composition is made by multitudes who reject the use of prescribed forms of prayer in public worship? Accordingly, when Liturgies were gradually introduced into general use, in the sixth and subsequent centuries, on account of the decline of piety and learning among the clergy, there was no uniformity even among the churches of the same state or kingdom. Every Bishop, in his own diocese, appointed what prayers he pleased, and even indulged his taste for variety. Accordingly, it is a notorious fact, which confirms this statement, that when the Reformation commenced in England, the established Romish Church in that country had no single uniform Liturgy for the whole kingdom; but there seems to have been a different one for the diocese of every Bishop. And when, in the second year of king Edward's reign, the principal ecclesiastical dignitaries of the kingdom were directed to digest and report one uniform plan for the public service of the whole Church, they collated and compared the five Romish missals of the several dioceses of Sarum, York, Hereford, Bangor, and Lincoln, and out of these formed a Liturgy for the Protestant Episcopal Church of England. So that the Prayer-books which had been used

in five Popish bishoprics, constituted the basis of the first Liturgy of king Edward, and consequently of the book of Common Prayer, as now used in Great Britain and the United States. This Liturgy, at first, contained a number of things so grossly Popish, that, when it was read by Calvin and others, on the continent of Europe, to whom copies were sent for obtaining their opinion, their severe criticisms led to another review, and a considerable purgation. Still a number of articles were left, acknowledged on all hands to have been adopted from the missals of the Church of Rome, which, as stated in various parts of this chapter, exceedingly grieved the more pious and evangelical part of the Church; but which the queen, and the ecclesiastics more immediately around her person, refused to exclude. Their antiquity was plead as an argument in their favour.

5. Confining ministers to forms of prayer in public worship, tends to restrain and discourage the spirit of prayer. We cannot help thinking, that the constant repetition of the same words, from year to year, tends to produce, at least with very many persons, dullness, and a loss of interest. We are sure it is so with not a few. Bishop Wilkins, though a friend to the use of forms of prayer, when needed, argues strongly against binding ourselves entirely to such "leading strings," as he emphatically calls them, and expresses the opinion, that giving vent to the desires and affections of the heart in extemporaneous prayer, is highly favourable to growth in grace.—*Gift of Prayer*, chap. II. p. 10, 11. Accordingly, it is remarkable that, when those who were once distinguished for praying extemporaneously with fluency and unction, lay aside this habit, and confine themselves to stunted forms for many years, they are apt to manifest a striking decline in the spirit of devotion, and are no longer able to engage in free prayer without much hesitation and embarrassment.

6. No form of prayer, however ample or diversified, can be accommodated to all the circumstances, exigencies, and wants of either individual Christians, or of the Church in general. Now, when cases occur which are not provided for in the prescribed forms, what is to be done? Either extemporaneous prayer must be ventured upon, or the cases in question cannot be carried before the throne of grace, in words, at all. Is this alternative desirable? Cases of this kind have occurred, approaching the ludicrous, in which ministers have declined engaging in social prayer in situations of the deepest interest, because they could find nothing in their Prayer-book adapted to the occasion! Nay, so common and so interesting a ser-

vice as the monthly concert in prayer, on the first Monday evening of every month, can never be attended upon by an Episcopal pastor, in an appropriate and seasonable manner, without indulging in extemporary prayer. This has been, more than once, confessed and lamented by ministers of that denomination.

7. It is no small argument against confining ministers and people to a prescribed form, that whenever religion is in a lively state in the heart of a minister accustomed to use a Liturgy, and especially when it is powerfully revived among the members of his church, his form of prayer will seldom fail to be deemed an undesirable restraint; and this feeling will commonly either vent itself in fervent extemporary prayer, or result in languor and decline under restriction to his form. The more rigorous and exclusive the confinement to a prescribed form, the more cold and lifeless will the prevailing formality generally be found. The excellent Mr. Baxter expresses the same idea with more unqualified strength:—"A constant form," says he, "is a certain way to bring the soul to a cold, insensible, formal worship."—*Five Disputations, &c.* p. 385.

8. Once more: prescribed Liturgies, which remain in use from age to age, have a tendency to fix, to perpetuate, and even to coerce the adoption and propagation of error. It is not forgotten, that the advocates of Liturgies urge, as an argument in their favour, a consideration directly the converse of this, viz., that they tend, by their scriptural and pious character, to extend and perpetuate the reign of truth in a Church. Where their character is really thus thoroughly scriptural, they may, no doubt, exert, in this respect, a favourable influence; but where they teach or insinuate error, the mischief can scarcely fail to be deep, deplorable, and transmitted from generation to generation. Of this, painful examples might be given, if it were consistent with the brevity of this sketch, to enter on such a field.

On the whole, after carefully comparing the advantages and disadvantages of free and prescribed prayer, the argument, whether drawn from Scripture, from ecclesiastical history, or from daily experience, is clearly in favour of free or extemporary prayer. Its generally edifying character may, indeed, sometimes be marred by weak and ignorant men; but we have no hesitation in saying that the balance is manifestly in its favour. For, after all, the difficulty which sometimes occurs in rendering extemporary prayer impressive and edifying, is by no means obviated, in all cases, by the use of a Prayer-

book. Who has not witnessed the recitation of devotional forms conducted in such a manner as to disgust every hearer of taste, and to banish all seriousness from the mind? As long as ministers of the Gospel are pious men; "workmen that need not be ashamed;" qualified "rightly to divide the word of truth," and "mighty in the Scriptures," they will find no difficulty in conducting free prayer to the honour of religion, and to the edification of the Church. When they cease to possess this character—they must have forms, they ought to have forms of devotion provided for them. It was precisely in such a state of things that the use of Liturgies gradually crept into the Christian Church in the fifth and sixth centuries. But it is manifestly the fault of ministers, if extemporary prayer be not made, what it may, and ought ever to be,—among the most tender, touching, and deeply impressive of all the services of the public sanctuary.

SECTION II.—*Presbyterians do not observe Holy-days*

We believe, and teach, in our public formularies, that "there is no day, under the Gospel dispensation, commanded to be kept holy, except the Lord's day, which is the Christian Sabbath."

We believe, indeed, and declare, in the same formula, that it is both scriptural and rational, to observe special days of Fasting and Thanksgiving, as the extraordinary dispensations of Divine Providence may direct. But we are persuaded, that even the keeping of these days, when they are made stated observances, recurring, of course, at particular times, whatever the aspect of Providence may be, is calculated to promote formality and superstition, rather than the edification of the body of Christ.

Our reasons for entertaining this opinion, are the following:

1. We are persuaded that there is no scriptural warrant for such observances, either from precept or example. There is no hint in the New Testament that such days were either observed or recommended by the Apostles, or by any of the churches in their time. The mention of Easter, in Acts xii. 4. has no application to this subject. Herod was a Jew, not a Christian; and, of course, had no desire to honour a Christian solemnity. The real meaning of the passage is,—as the slightest inspection of the original will satisfy every intelligent reader; "intending after the passover to bring him forth to the people."

2. We believe that the Scriptures not only do not warrant

the observance of such days, but that they positively discountenance it. Let any one impartially weigh Colossians ii. 16 and also, Galatians iv. 9, 10, 11; and then say whether these passages do not evidently indicate, that the inspired Apostle disapproved of the observance of such days.

3. The observance of Fasts and Festivals, by divine direction, under the Old Testament economy, makes nothing in favour of such observances under the New Testament dispensation. That economy was no longer binding, or even lawful, after the New Testament Church was set up. It were just as reasonable to plead for the present use of the Passover, the incense, and the burnt offerings of the Old economy, which were confessedly done away by the coming of Christ, as to argue in favour of human inventions, bearing some resemblance to them, as binding in the Christian Church.

4. The *history* of the introduction of stated Fasts and Festivals by the early Christians, speaks much against both their obligation, and their edifying character. Their origin was ignoble. They were chiefly brought in, by carnal policy, for the purpose of drawing into the Church Jews and Gentiles, who had both been accustomed to festivals and holy-days. And from the moment of their introduction, they became the signal for strife, or the monuments of worldly expedient, and degrading superstition.

As there were no holy-days, excepting the Lord's day, observed in the Christian Church while the Apostles lived; and no hint given, that they thought any other expedient or desirable; so we find no hint of any such observance having been adopted until towards the close of the second century. Then, the celebration of Easter gave rise to a controversy; the Asiatic Christians pleading for its observance at the same time which was prescribed for the Jewish Passover, and contending that they were supported in this by apostolic tradition; while the Western Church contended for its stated celebration on a certain Sunday, and urged, with equal confidence, apostolic tradition in favour of their scheme. Concerning this fierce and unhallowed controversy, Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, who wrote soon after the time of Eusebius, and begins his history where the latter closes his narrative; speaking on the controversy concerning Easter, expresses himself thus: "Neither the ancients, nor the fathers of later times, I mean such as favoured the Jewish custom, had sufficient cause to contend so eagerly about the feast of Easter; for they considered not within themselves, that when the Jewish religion was changed into Christianity, the literal observance of the

Mosaic law, and the types of things to come, wholly ceased. And this carries with it its own evidence. For no one of Christ's laws permits Christians to observe the rites of the Jews. Nay, the Apostle hath in plain words forbidden it, where he abrogates circumcision, and exhorts us not to contend about feasts and holy-days. For, writing to the Galatians, he admonishes them not to observe days, and months, and times, and years. And unto the Colossians, he is as plain as may be, declaring, that the observance of such things was but a shadow. Neither the Apostles nor the Evangelists have enjoined on Christians the observance of Easter; but have left the remembrance of it to the free choice and discretion of those who have been benefited by such days. Men keep holy-days, because thereon they enjoy rest from toil and labour. Therefore, it comes to pass, that in every place they do celebrate, of their own accord, the remembrance of the Lord's passion. But neither our Saviour nor his Apostles have any where commanded us to observe it." Socrates, Lib. 5, cap. 21.

Here, then, is an eminent Christian writer who flourished early in the fifth century, who had made the history of the Church his particular study; who explicitly declares, that neither Christ nor his Apostles gave any command. or even countenance to the observance of festival days; that it was brought into the Church by custom; and that in different parts of the Church there was diversity of practice in regard to this matter. With respect to Easter, in particular, this diversity was striking. We no sooner hear of its observance at all, than we begin to hear of contest, and interruption of Christian fellowship on account of it; some quoting the authority of some of the Apostles for keeping this festival on one day; and others, with equal confidence, quoting the authority of other Apostles for the selection of a different day: thereby clearly demonstrating, that there was error somewhere, and rendering it highly probable that all parties were wrong, and that no such observances at all, were binding on Christians.

The festival of Easter, no doubt, was introduced in the second century, in place of the Passover, and in accommodation to the same Jewish prejudice which had said, even during the apostolic age, "Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Hence, it was generally called *pascha*, and *pasch*, in conformity with the name of the Jewish festival, whose place it took. It seems to have received the title of Easter in Great Britain, from the

circumstance, that, when Christianity was introduced into that country, a great Pagan festival, celebrated at the same season of the year, in honour of the Pagan goddess Eostre, yielded its place to the Christian festival, which received, substantially, the name of the Pagan deity. The title of Easter, it is believed, is seldom used but by Britons and their descendants.

Few festivals are celebrated in the Romish Church, and in some Protestant Churches, with more interest and zeal than Christmas. Yet when Origen, about the middle of the third century, professes to give a list of the fasts and festivals which were observed in his day, he makes no mention of Christmas. From this fact, Sir Peter King, in his "Inquiry into the Constitution and worship, &c. of the Primitive Church," &c., infers, that no such festival was then observed; and adds, "It seems improbable that they should celebrate Christ's nativity, when they disagreed about the month and the day when Christ was born." Every month in the year has been assigned by different portions and writers of the Christian Church as the time of our Lord's nativity; and the final location of this, as well as other holy-days, in the ecclesiastical calendar, was adjusted rather upon astronomical and mathematical principles, than on any solid calculations of history.

5. But the motives and manner of introducing Christmas into the Christian Church, speak more strongly against it. Its real origin was this. Like many other observances, it was borrowed from the heathen. The well known Pagan festival among the Romans, distinguished by the title of Saturnalia, because instituted in honour of their fabled deity, Saturn, was celebrated by them with the greatest splendour, extravagance, and debauchery. It was, during its continuance, a season of freedom and equality; the master ceased to rule, and the slave to obey; the former waiting at his own table upon the latter, and submitting to the suspension of all order, and the reign of universal frolic. The ceremonial of this festival was opened on the 19th of December, by lighting a profusion of waxen candles in the temple of Saturn; and by suspending in their temple, and in all their habitations, boughs of laurel, and various kinds of evergreen. The Christian Church, seeing the unhappy moral influence of this festival; perceiving her own members too often partaking in its licentiousness; and desirous, if possible, of effecting its abolition, appointed a festival, in honour of her Master's birth, nearly about the same time, for the purpose of superseding it. In doing this, the policy was to retain as many of these habits which had prevailed in

the Saturnalia as could in any way be reconciled with the purity of Christianity. They made their new festival, therefore, a season of relaxation and mirth, of cheerful visiting, and mutual presents. They lighted candles in their places of worship, and adorned them with a profusion of evergreen boughs. Thus did the Romish Church borrow from the Pagans some of her most prominent observances; and thus have some observances of this origin been adopted and continued by Protestants.

6. It being evident, then, that stated fasts and festivals have no divine warrant, and that their use under the New Testament economy is a mere human invention; we may ask those who are friendly to their observance, what limits ought to be set to their adoption and use in the Christian Church? If it be lawful to introduce five such days for stated observance, why not ten, twenty, or five score? A small number were, at an early period, brought into use by serious men, who thought they were thereby rendering God service, and extending the reign of religion. But one after another was added, as superstition increased, until the calendar became burdened with between two and three hundred fasts and festivals, or saint's days, in each year; thus materially interfering with the claims of secular industry, and loading the worship of God with a mass of superstitious observances, equally unfriendly to the temporal and the eternal interests of men. Let the principle once be admitted, that stated days of religious observance, which God has no where commanded, may properly be introduced into the Christian ritual, and, by parity of reasoning, every one who, from good motives, can effect the introduction of a new religious festival, is at liberty to do so. Upon this principle was built up the enormous mass of superstition which now distinguishes and corrupts the Romish Church.

7. The observance of uncommanded holy-days is ever found to interfere with the due sanctification of the Lord's day. Adding to the appointments of God is superstition. And superstition has ever been found unfriendly to genuine obedience. Its votaries, like the Jews of old, have ever been found more tenacious of their own inventions, of traditionary dreams, than of God's revealed code of duty. Accordingly, there is, perhaps, no fact more universal and unquestionable, than that the zealous observers of stated fasts and festivals are characteristically lax in the observance of that one day which God has eminently set apart for himself, and on the sanctification of which all the vital interests of practical religion are suspended. So it was among the Israelites of old. As early as the fifth

century, Augustine complains that the superstitious observance of uncommanded rites, betrayed many in his time, into a spirit of irreverence and neglect towards those which were divinely appointed. So it is, notoriously, among the Romanists at the present day. And so, without any breach of charity, it may be said to be in every religious community in which zeal for the observance of uncommanded holy-days prevails. It is true, many in those communities tell us, that the observance of holy-days, devoted to particular persons and events in the history of the Church, has a manifest and strong tendency to increase the spirit of piety. But if this be so, we might expect to find much more scriptural piety in the Romish Church than in any other, since holy-days are ten times more numerous in that denomination than in the system of any Protestant Church. But is it so? Let those who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, decide.

If the foregoing allegations be in any measure well founded; if there be no warrant in God's word for any observances of this kind; if, on the contrary, the Scriptures positively discourage them; if the history of their introduction and increase mark an unhallowed origin; if, when we once open the door to such human inventions, no one can say how or when it may be closed; and if the observance of days, not appointed of God, has ever been found to exert an unfriendly influence on the sanctification of that holy-day which God has appointed, surely we need no further proof that it is wise to discard them from our ecclesiastical system.

SECTION III.—*We reject God-fathers and God-mothers in Baptism.*

It is well known that the Presbyterian Church differs from Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, in regard to sponsors in baptism. We differ in two respects. First, in not requiring or encouraging the appearance of any other sponsors, in the baptism of children, than the parents, when they are living, and qualified to present themselves in this character; and, secondly, in not requiring, or even admitting any sponsors at all in cases of adult baptism. And we adopt this principle and practice for the following reasons:

1. There is not a shadow of evidence in the New Testament, that any other sponsors than parents were ever admitted to answer for their children in baptism in the apostolic Church; nor is any text of Scripture attempted to be adduced in its support, by the warmest friends of this practice. When the jailor at Philippi was baptized, "he and all his straight-

way;" and when Lydia and "her household" were baptized, we read of no sponsors but the heads of these families, whose faith entitled them to present their households to receive the appropriate seal of faith.

2. We find no trace of any other sponsors than parents during the first 500 years after Christ. When some persons, in the time of Augustine, who flourished toward the close of the fourth, and the beginning of the fifth century, contended that it was not lawful, in any case, for any, excepting their natural parents to offer children in baptism, that learned and pious Father opposed them, and gave it as his opinion, that, in extraordinary cases, as, for example, when the parents were dead; when they were not professing Christians; when they cruelly forsook and exposed their offspring; and when Christian masters had young slaves committed to their charge; in these cases, (and the pious Father mentions no others,) he maintains that any professing Christians, who should be willing to undertake the charge, might, with propriety, take such children, offer them in baptism, and become responsible for their Christian education. In this principle and practice, all intelligent and consistent Presbyterians are agreed. The learned Bingham, an Episcopal divine of great industry and erudition, seems to have taken unwearied pains, in his "Ecclesiastical Antiquities," to collect every scrap of testimony within his reach, in favour of the early origin of sponsors. But he utterly fails of producing even plausible evidence to this amount; and at length candidly acknowledges, that in the early ages, parents were, in all ordinary cases, the presenters and sureties of their own children; and that children were presented by others only in extraordinary cases, such as those already stated, when their parents could not present them. It was not until the council of Mentz, in the ninth century, that the Church of Rome forbade the appearance of parents as sponsors for their own children, and required this service to be surrendered to other hands.

3. The subsequent history of this practice marks the progress of superstition. Mention is made by Cyril, in the fifth century, and by Fulgentius, in the sixth, of sponsors in some peculiar cases of adult baptism. When adults, about to be baptized, were dumb, or under the power of delirium, through disease, and, of course, unable to speak for themselves, or to make the usual profession; in such cases, it was customary for some friend, or friends, to answer for them, and to bear testimony to their good character, and to the fact of their having sufficient knowledge, and having before expressed a desire

to be baptized. For this, there was, undoubtedly, at least some colour of reason; and the same thing might, perhaps, be done without impropriety, in some conceivable circumstances now. From this, however, there was a transition soon made to the use of sponsors in all cases of adult baptism. This latter, however, was upon a different principle from the former. When adults had the use of speech and reason, and were able to answer for themselves, the sponsors provided for such never answered or professed for them. This was invariably done by the adult himself. Their only business, as it would appear, was to be a kind of curators or guardians of the spiritual life of the persons baptized. This office was generally fulfilled, in each church, by the Deacons, when adult males were baptized; and by the Deaconesses, when females came forward to receive this ordinance. Hence, in the Roman Catholic, and some Protestant sects, the practice was ultimately established of providing god-fathers and god-mothers in all cases of adult baptism.

4. Among the pious Waldenses and Albigenses, in the middle ages, no other sponsors than parents were in common use. But where the parents were dead, or absent, or unable, on any account, to act, other professors of religion who were benevolent enough to undertake the charge, were allowed to appear in their place, and answer and act in their stead.

5. If, then, the use of god-fathers and god-mothers, as distinct from parents, in baptism, has no countenance in the word of God; if it was unknown in the Church during the first 500 years after Christ; and if it was superstitious in its origin, and connected with other superstitions in its progress; we have, undoubtedly, sufficient reason for rejecting the practice. When the system is to set aside parents in this solemn transaction; to require others to take their places, and make engagements which they alone, for the most part, are qualified to make; and when, in pursuance of this system, thousands are daily making engagements which they never think of fulfilling, and, in most cases, notoriously have it not in their power to fulfil, and, indeed, appear to feel no special obligation to fulfil, we are constrained to regard it as a human invention, altogether unwarranted, and adapted, on a variety of accounts, to generate evil rather than good.

According to one of the canons of the Church of England, "Parents are not to be urged to be present when their children are baptized, nor to be permitted to stand as sponsors for their own children." That is, the parents, to whom God and nature have committed the education of children; in whose

families they are to grow up; under whose eye and immediate care their principles, manners, and character are to be formed, shall not be allowed to take even a part in their dedication to God, nor encouraged even to be present at the solemn transaction! In the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, "parents shall be admitted as sponsors, if it be desired." But in both countries, it is required that there be sponsors for all adults, as well as for infants.

SECTION IV.—*The Sign of the Cross in Baptism.*

This is one of the additions to the baptismal rite which Protestant Episcopalians have adopted from the Romanists, and which Presbyterians have always rejected. A large body of the most pious and learned divines of the established Church of England, in an early part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when the Reformation of that Church was about to be conclusively settled, earnestly petitioned that the sign of the cross in baptism, as well as stated fasts and festivals, god-fathers and god-mothers in baptism, kneeling at the Lord's Supper, bowing at the name of Jesus, &c., might be abolished. When their petitions to this amount were read, and their arguments heard, in the lower house of Convocation, the vote was taken, and passed by a majority of those present; forty-three voting in favour of granting the prayer of the petitioners,—in other words, in favour of abolishing the rites complained of, and thirty-five against it. But when the proxies were called for and counted, the scale was turned; those in favour of the abolition being fifty-eight, and those against it fifty-nine. So that, by a solemn vote of the Convocation, the several rites regarded and complained of, as Popish superstitions, and the sign of the cross among the rest, were retained in the Church only by a majority of one.

In the objections at that time urged against the sign of the cross in baptism, by those learned and venerable Episcopal divines, Presbyterians have ever concurred. These objections are the following:

1. Not the smallest countenance is to be found in Scripture for any such addition to the baptismal rite. Nothing of this kind is pretended to be produced by its most zealous advocates. All acknowledge it to be a human invention.

2. In the records of the earliest writers by whom it is mentioned, it appears associated with so much superstition as cannot fail to discredit it in the view of all intelligent Christians. From the very same sources from which we gather the information that, in the second and third centuries, the sign of

the cross was added to the rite of baptism, we also learn that there were added to the same ordinance a number of other human inventions—such as “exorcising” the candidate for baptism, to drive away evil spirits; putting into his mouth a mixture of milk and honey, as a symbol of his childhood in a new life; anointing with spittle and with oil, and the laying on of hands for the purpose of imparting the Holy Spirit. These are all deemed, by Protestants, unwarranted additions to Christ’s simple appointment; and in what respect does the sign of the cross stand upon better ground?

3. Tertullian, one of the earliest writers in whom we find any mention made of the sign of the cross as a religious rite, represents it as used in his day with a degree of superstition scarcely credible in such an early age, and which ought to operate as a permanent warning to all succeeding ages. “Every step,” says he, “that we take, when we come in, and when we go out; when we put on our clothes or our shoes; when we bathe, eat, light up candles, go to bed, or sit down,—we mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross. If for these, and other acts of discipline of the same kind, you demand a text of Scripture, you will find none; but tradition will be alleged as the prescriber of them.”—*De Corona*. cap. iii. The sign of the cross was thought, by those deluded votaries of superstition, a sure preservative against all sorts of malignity, poisons, or fascination, and effectual to drive away evil spirits. The principal fathers of the fourth century affirm that it was the constant and undoubted means of working many miracles. “This sign,” says Chrysostom, “both in the days of our forefathers and our own, has thrown open gates that were shut; destroyed the effect of poisonous drugs; disarmed the force of hemlock; and cured the bites of venomous beasts.”—*Tom.* vii. p. 552. A.

4. When we consider the miserable superstition with which the use of the sign of the cross is constantly marked by Roman Catholics; that they regard it as essential to the validity of the ordinance of baptism; that they adore it; that they apply it in every step and act of religious life; that many of them consider no oath as binding which is taken on the Bible without the figure of the cross upon it; and that they rely upon it as a kind of talisman, connected with every blessing;—surely, when we see this degrading system of superstition connected with this sign,—acknowledged on all hands to be a mere human invention,—it is no wonder that enlightened and conscientious Christians should feel constrained to lay it aside.

SECTION V.—*We reject the Rite of Confirmation.*

In the Apostolic Church, there was no such rite as that which, under this name, has been long established in the Romish communion as a sacrament, and adopted in some Protestant Churches as a solemnity, in their view, if not commanded, yet as both expressive and edifying. In giving the views of Presbyterians on this subject, it is not at all intended to condemn those who think proper to employ the rite in question; but only to state with brevity some of the reasons why the venerated fathers of our Church thought proper to exclude it from our truly primitive and apostolical ritual; and why their sons, to the present hour, have persisted in the same course.

1. We find no warrant for this rite in the word of God. Indeed, its most intelligent and zealous advocates do not pretend to adduce any testimony from Scripture in its behalf.

2. Quite as little support for it is to be found in the purest and best ages of uninspired antiquity. Toward the close of the second century, indeed, and the beginning of the third, among several human additions to the rite of baptism which had crept into the Church—such as exorcising the infant, to drive away evil spirits—putting a mixture of milk and honey into his mouth—anointing him with spittle and with oil, in the form of a cross; it became customary to lay on hands, for the purpose of imparting the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This laying on of hands, however, was always done immediately after the application of water, and always by the same minister who performed the baptism. Of course, every one who was authorized to baptize, was also authorized to lay on hands upon the baptized individual. As this was a mere human invention, so it took the course which human inventions are apt to take. It was modified as the pride and the selfishness of ecclesiastics prompted. When Prelacy arose, it became customary to reserve this solemn imposition of hands to Prelates, as a part of their official prerogative. As soon as convenient after baptism, the infant was presented to the bishop, to receive from him the imposition of hands, for conveying the gift of the Spirit. Jerome, in the fourth century, bears witness, however, that this was done rather for the sake of honouring their office, than in obedience to any Divine warrant. But, in process of time, another modification of the rite was introduced. The imposition of the bishop's hands did not take place immediately after baptism, nor even in the infancy of the baptized individual, but was postponed for a number of

years, according to circumstances, and sometimes even till adult age. Then the young person, or adult, was presented with great formality to the bishop for his peculiar benediction. Among many proofs that this was not the original nature of the rite, is the notorious fact, that throughout the whole Greek Church, at the present time, the laying on of hands is administered, for the most part, in close connection with baptism, and is dispensed by any priest who is empowered to baptize, as was done in the third and fourth centuries, before the Greek Church was separated from the Latin. In like manner, in the Lutheran and other German Churches, where a sort of confirmation is retained; although they have ecclesiastical superintendents or seniors, the act of laying on hands is not reserved to them, but is performed by each pastor for the children of his parochial charge.

3. The rite of confirmation is not only altogether destitute of Divine warrant, but it is also superfluous. As it was plainly, at first, a human invention, founded on the superstitious belief that, by the laying on of hands, the special gifts of the Holy Spirit were to be continued in the Church; so it is unnecessary. It answers no practical purpose which is not provided for quite as well, to say the least, in the Presbyterian Church, which rejects it. It is said to be desirable that there should be some transaction or solemnity by which young people, who have been baptized in their infancy, may be called to recognize their religious obligations, and as it were, to take upon themselves the profession and the vows made on their behalf in baptism. Granted. There can be no doubt that such a solemnity is both reasonable in itself, and edifying in its tendency. But have we not just such a solemnity in the Lord's Supper; an ordinance divinely instituted; an ordinance on which all are qualified to attend, and ought to attend, who are qualified to take on themselves, in any scriptural or rational sense, their baptismal obligations; an ordinance, in fact, specifically intended, among other things, to answer this very purpose, viz. the purpose of making a personal acknowledgment and profession of the truth, the service, and the hopes of Christ;—have we not in the Sacramental Supper just such a solemnity as we need for the purpose in question simple, rational, scriptural, and to which all our children may come just so soon as they are prepared, in any suitable manner, to confess Christ before men? We do not need confirmation, then, for the purpose for which it is proposed. We have something better, because appointed of God; quite as expressive; more solemn; and free from certain objectionable features which are next to be mentioned.

4. Finally ; we reject the rite of confirmation in our Church, because, in addition to all the reasons which have been mentioned, we consider the formulary prescribed for its administration in the Church of England, and substantially adopted in the Episcopal Church in this country, as liable to the most serious objections. We do not think it a duty to administer, in any form, a rite which the Saviour never appointed ; but our repugnance is greatly increased by the language in which the rite in question is dispensed by those who employ it. In the "Order of Confirmation," as prescribed and used in the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, the following language occurs. Before the act of laying on hands, the officiating bishop, in his prayer, repeats the following sentence : "Almighty and ever living God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants, by water, and the *Holy Ghost*, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins," &c. &c. And again, in another prayer after the imposition of hands, he speaks to the Searcher of hearts thus : "We make our humble supplications unto thee for these thy servants, upon whom, after the example of thy holy Apostles, we have now laid our hands ; to certify them by this sign of thy favour and gracious goodness toward them," &c. And also, in the act of laying on hands, assuming that all who are kneeling before him already have the holy sanctifying Spirit of Christ, he prays that they "may all daily increase in this Holy Spirit more and more."

Such is the language addressed to large circles of young people of both sexes, many of whom there is every reason to fear are very far from having been "born of the Spirit," in the scriptural sense of that phrase ; nay, some of whom manifest so little seriousness, that any pastor of enlightened piety would be pained to see them at a communion table ; yet the bishop pronounces them *all*, and he appeals to heaven for the truth of his sentence—he pronounces them *all* regenerate, not only by water, but also by the *Holy Ghost* ; certifies to them, in the name of God, that they are objects of the divine "favour ;" and declares that, being already in a state of grace, and reconciliation with God, they are called to "grow in grace," and to "increase in the Holy Spirit more and more."

An enlightened Presbyterian minister would consider himself, if he were to use such language, to such a circle, as encouraging radical misapprehensions of the nature of true religion ; as perverting the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit ; and as speaking a language adapted fatally to deceive the souls of those whom he addressed. Surely, with such

views, we should be highly criminal were we to adopt such a rite, and dispense it after such an example.

SECTION VI.—*We reject Kneeling at the Lord's Supper.*

This is another part of the Romish rituals, which a large body of the most pious and learned divines of the Church of England, at the period of the Reformation, were earnestly desirous of having laid aside; but they were overruled by the Queen, and the court clergy, who chose to retain it; and it has ever since found a place in the Protestant Episcopal Church. It is well known, that Presbyterians differ, in this respect, from their Episcopal neighbours. They prefer what has been commonly called "the table posture," for such reasons as the following:

1. It is granted, on all hands, that the posture in which the Lord's Supper was first administered by the Saviour himself, was that in which it was customary to receive ordinary meals. It is not known that any one denies or doubts this. The Evangelists are too explicit in their statement of this fact to admit of doubt. The Evangelist Matthew declares; "Now when the evening was come, he *sat down* with the twelve. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples," &c. But if the Saviour himself chose this posture, as most agreeable to his will, may we not conclude, that it is, on the whole, the wisest and best?

2. It is very certain that kneeling at the Lord's table was unknown in the Christian Church for a number of centuries after the apostolic age. Indeed, in the second, third, and following centuries, it was accounted unlawful even to kneel on the Lord's day; this posture being reserved for days of fasting and humiliation. This is asserted by Tertullian; and the Council of Nice passed a solemn decree to the same amount, because on that day is celebrated the joyful remembrance of our Lord's resurrection. This posture, both of public prayer on the Lord's day, and of receiving the communion, was invariably standing. The proof of this is so complete as to preclude the possibility of doubt. The most ardent friends of kneeling do not pretend, so far as is now recollected, to find any example of this posture, in the whole history of the Church, prior to the thirteenth century. That is, not until the Papacy had reached the summit of its system of corruption. And, accordingly, in the Greek Church, which separated from the Latin, before the doctrine of Transubstantiation arose, kneeling at the communion is unknown. In short,

kneeling at the Lord's table was not introduced until Transubstantiation arose; and with Transubstantiation it ought, by Protestants, to have been laid aside. When men began to believe that the sacramental elements were really transmuted into the body and blood of the Redeemer, there was some colour of apology for kneeling and adoring them. But when this error was abandoned, that which had grown out of it ought to have been abandoned also.

The essential nature of the Eucharist renders the attendance upon it in a kneeling posture incongruous, and, of course, unsuitable. This ordinance is a feast, a feast of love, joy, and thanksgiving. The very name, Eucharist, implies as much. It is intended to be a sign of love, confidence, and affectionate fellowship, between each communicant and the master of the feast, and between all the members of his body. It is also intended to be an emblem, and a means of that spiritual nourishment which is found in feeding by faith, and, in a spiritual sense, on the body and blood of the Redeemer, set forth in this ordinance as crucified for us. Now, it has been often asked—"In what nation is it thought suitable to kneel at banquets?" Where do men eat and drink upon their knees? True, indeed, humility and penitence become us in every approach to God; and certainly in no case more peculiarly than when we celebrate the wonders of grace and love manifested in the Saviour's dying for us. Yet it is equally true, that, as the ordinance is, characteristically, a feast of confidence, fellowship, joy, and thanksgiving, so the exercises and the posture most becoming the attendance on it, are those which indicate gladness, gratitude, and affectionate intercourse. He must be strangely prejudiced in favour of a superstitious precedent, who can persuade himself that kneeling is the most suitable expression of those exercises.

4. Finally; the abuse and the misapprehension of the practice of kneeling at the Lord's Supper, are considerations of no small weight in the minds of those who reject this practice. As it originated in gross error, so it is adapted to nourish error and superstition; and however understood by intelligent Christians, it has been misapprehended, and will be, as long as it shall be used, misapprehended by many ignorant minds. Accordingly, as before stated, when the English Liturgy was revised, and about to be ultimately settled, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, some of the most pious and learned divines of that Church entreated that kneeling at the Eucharist might either be abolished altogether, or, at least, left optional or indifferent. When the divines, appointed to report on the sub-

ject, brought in a report which left it indifferent, the Queen drew her pen over the lines which represented it, and made the practice binding. And all that the friends of abolishing the practice could obtain, was a rubric, or marginal advertisement, declaring that by communing in this posture, no worship of the elements was intended. This obstinate adherence to the practice in question, greatly grieved the foreign Protestants, and the learned Beza wrote to Archbishop Grindal on the subject, in a style of respectful, but firm remonstrance. "If," says Beza, "you have rejected the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and the practice of adoring the host, why do you symbolize with Popery, and seem to hold both by kneeling at the Sacrament? Kneeling had never been thought of had it not been for Transubstantiation." The archbishop replied, "That though the Sacrament was to be received kneeling, yet the rubric accompanied the service-book, and informed the people that no adoration of the elements was intended." "O! I understand you," said Beza; "there was a certain great lord who repaired his house, and having finished it, left before his gate a great stone, for which he had no occasion. This stone caused many people in the dark to stumble and fall. Complaint was made to his lordship, and many an humble petition was presented, praying for the removal of the stone; but he remained long obstinate. At length he condescended to order a lanthorn to be hung over it. 'My lord,' said one, 'if you would be pleased to rid yourself of further solicitation, and to quiet all parties, order the stone and the candle to be both removed.'"

SECTION VII.—*We do not Administer the Lord's Supper in Private.*

Few ordinances have been more misapprehended and perverted than the Lord's Supper. Before the close of the third century, superstitious views of its efficacy, and its necessity to salvation, began to be adopted, and led to a corresponding practice. Entirely mistaking the meaning of John vi. 53, many Christians of that day supposed that no one could die safely without having participated of this ordinance. Accordingly, it was not only administered to all adult persons, who professed to be the disciples of Christ; but also to infants, soon after their baptism. Nay, to such an extravagant height was this phrensy of superstition carried, that when any one had died suddenly, without having partaken of this sacrament, the consecrated elements were, in many instances, thrust into the mouth of the lifeless corpse, in hope that it might yet not

be too late to impart a saving benefit to the deceased. This delusion soon produced, or rather strongly implied the Popish doctrine, that this sacrament, as well as baptism, carried with it an inherent efficacy, (an *opus operatum*, as they expressed it,) which insured a saving operation in all cases in which it was regularly administered. From this, the transition was easy to the notion, that the consecrated elements, when exhibited, cured diseases, and accomplished many other wonderful miracles. Hence, these elements, before the commencement of the third century, after being dispensed in the public assembly, were sent, generally by deacons, to those who, on any account, were absent. Not long afterwards, the sick, the dying, and those who were confined, on any account, to their dwelling, had a portion of the elements despatched to them, either by ecclesiastics, or, if more convenient, by the hands of laymen, and even children. Some, on receiving the elements in church, contrived to carry away with them a portion, and were in the habit of taking a small part of this portion every day, for thirty or forty days together. Nay, some carried a portion of the sacrament (as they expressed it,) with them on long journies and voyages; had recourse to it as a defence in cases of danger; and inserted some portion of it in plaisters for healing wounds and ulcers. All this under the impression that these sacramental elements had an inherent energy of the most potent and beneficial kind. No wonder, that wherever these sentiments prevailed, private communion, if such an expression may be allowed, was universal. The sacrament, in a great measure, lost its character as a social ordinance; and the symbols of the Redeemer's broken body and shed blood were considered as invested with a sort of magical influence, wherever they appeared; to be carried about the person as an amulet, for defence; and resorted to as a medicine of sovereign power.

It is true, some of these views and habits were checked by the rise of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. When the elements were believed, by the consecrating prayer, to have been transmuted into the real body and blood of Christ, it was thought indecent to carry them home, to deposit them in a chest or cupboard, and to swallow a small portion every day. Still the most humiliating superstitions, as to the consecrated elements, continued to prevail.

When the Reformation took place in the land of our fathers, many of these views and habits, and especially the more gross of them, were happily corrected. Still it is to be lamented, that the Reformation in the Church of England, in respect to

this ordinance, as well as some others, was not more thorough; and that after all the remonstrances and importunity of the most venerable and pious divines of that Church, a number of things were left in use, which it were to be wished had been laid aside. Of these the habit of private communion is one.

The Eucharist is administered, by the clergy of that Church, every day, to the sick and the dying, with scarcely any scruple, whenever it is requested. To the worldly, the careless, and even the most profligate, it is freely carried, when they come to die, if they desire it; indeed, some have supposed that any minister who should publicly refuse to administer this ordinance to a sick person, when requested, would be liable, in that country, to a civil prosecution. Suffice it to say, that such a refusal is very seldom given. Even criminals of the most profligate character, just before their execution, always have this sacrament administered to them, if they are willing to receive it, and that when no appearance whatever of genuine penitence is manifested.*

Presbyterian ministers, in all ordinary cases, decline administering the Lord's Supper to the sick and the dying, and generally in private houses, for reasons which appear to them conclusive. They are such as these:

1. They consider this ordinance as social and ecclesiastical in its very nature. It is a communion, in which the idea of a "solitary mass," as admitted among Papists, would seem to be an absurdity.

2. We find no warrant for private communion in the New Testament. It is true, we read of Christians, in the apostolic age, "breaking bread from house to house;" but that is, evidently, a mode of expressing their ordinary worshipping assemblies. They had no ecclesiastical buildings. They worshipped altogether in private houses, in "upper chambers," &c. There, of course, they administered the communion to as many as could come together. And, as they could not occupy the same apartment stately, or, at any rate, long together, on account of the vigilance of their persecutors, they went "from house to house" to worship, as circumstances invited; or in a number of houses at the same time, where Christians were too numerous for a single dwelling. We read of no instance of the sacramental symbols being carried to an individual on a sick bed. On the contrary, when the inspired Apostle gives directions that the sick be visited and

* See the cases of the hardened Despard and Bellingham, mentioned in the *Christian Observer*, vol. xiii. p. 6.

prayed with by the "Elders of the Church," James v. 14, he says not a word of administering to them the communion.

3. If persons, on their dying beds, earnestly desire this ordinance to be administered to them, as a *viaticum*, or preparation for death, and as a kind of pledge of the divine favour and acceptance, we believe that, on this very account, it ought to be refused them. To comply with their wishes, at least in many cases, is to encourage them to rely on the power of an external sign, rather than on the merit of the Saviour himself. Such views being, manifestly, unscriptural, false, and adapted to deceive and destroy the soul, ought by no means to be countenanced. But what can tend more directly to favour, and even nurture these views, than to hasten with the sacramental memorials to the bed-side of every dying person who desires them? Ought the evident propensity of careless and ungodly men to fly to this ordinance as the last refuge of a guilty conscience, to be deliberately promoted by the ministers of religion?

4. If this practice be once begun, where is it to end? All men are serious when they come to die. Even the most profane and licentious, in that crisis, are commonly in no small degree anxious and alarmed, and disposed to lay hold of every thing that seems favourable to the smallest hope. Yet every wise man, who has lived long, and observed much, is deeply suspicious of the sincerity of death-bed penitents. What is a conscientious minister to do in such cases? How is he to draw the line between those who are, and those who are not, in his judgment, fit subjects for this ordinance? Is it not unseasonable, as well as distressing to have any thing like arguing or disputing with the sick and the dying on such a subject? On the one hand, if we faithfully refuse to administer the ordinance where the dying man gives no evidence of either knowledge or faith—shall we not agitate the patient, distress his friends, and give against him a kind of public sentence, so far as our judgment goes, of his reprobation? And, on the other hand, if we strain conscience, and, in compliance with earnest wishes, administer the ordinance to those who give no evidence whatever of fitness for it—shall we not run the risk of deceiving and destroying souls, by lulling them asleep in sin, and encouraging reliance on an external sign of grace? Will not by-standers be likely to be fatally injured? And shall we not, by every such act, incur great guilt in the sight of God?

5. By declining, in all ordinary cases, to administer this ordinance on sick beds, either to saints or sinners, we avoid

these embarrassments so deep and trying to a conscientious man. We avoid multiplied evils, both to the dying themselves, and their surviving friends. And we shall take a course better adapted than any other to impress upon the minds of men that great and vital truth, that the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Redeemer, imputed to us, and received by faith alone, are the only scriptural foundation of hope toward God:—that, without this faith, ordinances are unavailing; and with it, though we may be deprived, by the providence of God, of an opportunity of attending on outward ordinances in their prescribed order of administration, all is safe, for time and eternity. The more solemnly and unceasingly these sentiments are inculcated, the more we shall be likely to benefit the souls of men; and the more frequently we countenance any practice which seems to encourage a reliance on any external rite as a refuge in the hour of death, we contribute to the prevalence of a system most unscriptural, deceptive, and fatal in its tendency.

It was remarked, that Presbyterians take this ground, and act upon these principles in all ordinary cases. It has sometimes happened, however, that a devout and exemplary communicant of our Church, after long enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, has been confined for several, perhaps for many years, to a bed of sickness, and been, of course, wholly unable to enjoy a communion season in the ordinary form. In such cases, Presbyterian ministers have sometimes taken the Elders of the Church with them, and also invited half a dozen other friends of the sick person—thus making, in reality, a “church,” meeting by its representatives—and administered the communion in the sick chamber. To this no solid objection is perceived. But the moment we open the door—unless in very extraordinary cases indeed—to the practice of carrying this sacrament to those who have wholly neglected it during their lives, but importunately call for it as a passport to heaven, in the hour of nature’s extremity; we countenance superstition; we deceive souls; and we pave the way for abuses and temptations, of which no one can calculate the consequences, or see the end.

SECTION VIII.—*We reject bowing at the name of Jesus.*

Those who have frequently witnessed the worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church, have no doubt observed, that when the name Jesus occurs, in repeating the Apostle’s Creed, there is a sensible obeisance, or bowing of the knee, which occurs in pronouncing no other name in the public ser-

vice. This obeisance is, in many cases, confined to the pronounciation of the name as it occurs in the Creed. The same name may be pronounced in the other parts of the Liturgy, or in the sermon, without being accompanied with any such act of reverence. Presbyterians have never adopted this practice, for the following reasons:

1. We find no semblance of a warrant for it in Scripture. Some Episcopal apologists, indeed, for this practice, of the inferior and less intelligent class, have cited in its defence Philippians ii. 10; but this plea has been abandoned, it is believed, by all truly learned and judicious friends of that denomination. Dr. Nichols, one of the most able and zealous advocates of the ritual of the Church of England, expressly says—"We are not so dull as to think that these words can be rigorously applied to this purpose."

2. It seems unaccountable that the obeisance in question should be so pointedly made at this name of the Saviour, and not at all when his other titles are pronounced. When his titles of God, Redeemer, Saviour, Christ, Immanuel, and even Jehovah, are pronounced, no such testimonial of reverence is manifested. Can any good reason, either in the Bible or out of it, be assigned for this difference? We feel as if, with our views of the subject, it would be superstition in us to adopt or countenance such a practice.

3. Is not the habit of such observances, without warrant, and, as would seem, without reason, plainly adapted to beget a spirit of superstition, and to occupy our minds with the commandments of men, rather than with the ordinances of Heaven? It will, perhaps, be said in reply, that we surely cannot pronounce the name of Jesus, our adorable Saviour, with too much reverence; why, then, find fault with an act of obeisance at his glorious name? True; every possible degree of reverence is his due. But why not manifest the same at the pronounciation of all his adorable and official names? Suppose any one were to single out a particular verse of Holy Scripture, and whenever he read that verse were to bow his head, or bend his knees, in token of reverence; but wholly to omit this act of obeisance in reading all other parts of Scripture, even those of exactly the same import as the verse thus distinguished? Should we not consider his conduct as an example of strange caprice, or of still more strange superstition? Such, however, precisely, is the case before us. And if this mode of reading the Scriptures were enjoined by ecclesiastical authority, we should, doubtless, consider it as still more strange. Even this, however, is done in the case

now under consideration. For the eighteenth canon of the Church of England contains the following injunction:—
“When in the time of divine service the Lord Jesus shall be mentioned, due and lowly reverence shall be done by all persons present, as it hath been accustomed.”

This practice of bowing at the name of Jesus, was never heard of in the Christian Church, so far as is now recollected, until the *fifteenth century*. Some trace it to the Papal reign of Gregory X., in the thirteenth century. It may possibly have existed then; but the earliest authoritative injunction of it that is remembered, is that of the council of Basil, in 1435. The deplorable state of the Church at that time, both in respect to superstition and profligacy, will not furnish, it is presumed, a very strong recommendation of a rite which then took its rise. A more worthy origin of it is unknown.

As to the practice of praying toward the east, and that of wearing in the reading desk, or during the prayers, a white surplice, they are too inconsiderable to be made the subjects of particular discussion. Nevertheless, as this manual is intended to give a comprehensive view of the points in which we differ from surrounding denominations, it may not be amiss to say, in passing, that both the practices last mentioned were borrowed from the Pagans. And although plausible reasons soon began to be urged in their favour; reasons which were made to wear a Christian aspect, yet their heathen origin is unquestionable. True, there is no sin in them. They are little things; too little to be formally animadverted upon. Yet they are among the things which we think it our duty to reject. And when asked, as we sometimes are, why we do not adopt them? we have only to say, that our desire is to keep as closely as we can to “the simplicity that is in Christ;” that to indulge superstition in trivial things, is as really censurable, in principle, as in things of more importance; and that “the beginning of evil is like the letting out of water.” And especially when we recollect, that three centuries have not elapsed, since some of these very things were made terms of communion in the land of our fathers; and some of the most pious and venerable men that ever lived in that land, were fined, imprisoned, and ejected from office, because, according to the popular language of that day, they “scrupled the habits,” or the prescribed dress, we shall see the evil of tampering with uncommanded rites.

SECTION IX.—*We reject the reading of Apocryphal Books in public worship.*

The Church of Rome considers a number of the books of the Apocrypha as canonical; that is, as belonging to the inspired canon, and as of equal authority with any of the books of the Old or New Testament; and accordingly orders them to be read in her public assemblies, just as the inspired Scriptures. Protestants, with one voice, deny that the Apocryphal books make any part of the sacred canon, or form any part of the infallible rule of faith and practice.

In the Church of England, however, large portions of the Apocryphal books are read in her public assemblies, and appealed to as if they were canonical books. It is true, the Church, in her sixth article, declares that these books are not appealed to as any part of the rule of faith; and they are not read on Sundays. But on holy-days they are read continually.

The Episcopal Church in this country has adopted the same practice, under the same restrictions.

Presbyterians object to this practice, and refuse to adopt it for the following reasons.

1. Because they are persuaded that nothing ought to be read under the name of Holy Scripture, but that which is regarded as the inspired word of God. To do this, is to depart from an important Protestant principle, and open the door for endless abuse.

2. Because those Apocryphal books, out of which the lessons referred to are taken, evidently contain some false doctrines, some misstatements, and not a few things adapted to promote ridicule rather than edification.

3. Notwithstanding, in the 6th Article of the Church of England, it is expressly stated, that these Apocryphal books are not read as any part of the rule of faith, still in her Homilies they are spoken of in language of a very different aspect. Baruch is cited as the Prophet Baruch, and his writing is called the word of the Lord to the Jews. The Book of Tobit is expressly ascribed to the Holy Ghost, in the most unequivocal terms, as follows: "The same lesson doth the Holy Ghost also teach in sundry places of the Scriptures, saying; mercifulness and almsgiving purgeth from all sins, and delivereth from death, and suffereth not the soul to come into darkness," &c. (See Homily against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion, part i. p. 475; and Homily on Alms-deeds, part ii. p. 328.) Surely, if "the Holy Ghost teach-

eth" what is written in this book, it is an inspired book, and ought to be considered as a part of "the rule of faith." It is worthy of notice here, that the Article and Homilies here quoted, make a part of the formularies of the Episcopal Church in the United States, as well as in that of England.

4. The practice of reading these lessons in public worship, from writings acknowledged not to be canonical, and from writings which contain much exceptionable matter, was early protested against by many of the most learned and pious dignitaries, and other divines of the Church of England, and has been, at different times, ever since, matter of regret and complaint among the most valuable members of that body; but in spite of these remonstrances and petitions, it has been maintained to the present day. This fact shows, in a strong light, the mischief of commencing an erroneous practice: and how difficult it is to get rid of any thing of this kind, when it is able to plead established custom in its support.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION.

SUCH are the considerations which satisfy Presbyterians that their Doctrine, their Ecclesiastical Order, and their Worship, are truly primitive and scriptural. We condemn not our neighbours. To their own Master they stand or fall. Our only object, in what has been said, is to "render a reason" for our own belief and practice. The names of other denominations would not have been so much as mentioned, or alluded to, in the foregoing statements, had it been possible, without doing so, to exhibit our own peculiarities, and to show wherein and why we differ from some of our sister churches. But firmly believing that all the leading features of the Presbyterian system are more in accordance with the word of God, and with the usage of the purest and best ages of the Christian Church, than any other, we feel bound to maintain them; to teach them to our children, and to bear testimony in their favour before the world. We deny to none, who hold fast the essentials of our holy religion, the name of Christian Churches. It is enough for us to know that we adhere to "the simplicity that is in Christ;" that we walk in the footsteps of the primitive Christians. We forbid none who profess to cast out devils, "because they follow not with

us." Let them do all the good they can in their own way. We claim the same privilege; and only beg to be permitted, with the *Bible* in our hands, to ascertain "what saith the Scripture;" and how Apostles and martyrs glorified God. We "call no man master; one is our Master, even Christ." And, therefore, throughout the foregoing pages, our primary appeal has been to his *Word*, the great statute book of his kingdom. However plausible in theory, or attractive in practice, any rite or ceremony may appear, we dare not adopt it, unless we find some warrant for it in the only infallible guide of the Church. If, then, Presbyterianism, in all its essential features, is plainly found in the word of God; if it maintains, throughout, the great representative principle which pervades the kingdom of God; if it guards more perfectly than any other system, against clerical assumption and tyranny, on the one hand, and against popular excitement and violence on the other; if it provides, in itself, for complete concert in action, without the necessity of resorting to extra voluntary associations; if it furnishes the best means for maintaining pure and energetic discipline, and bringing the whole Church in doubtful and difficult cases, to give a calm and equitable judgment; and if it presents the most effectual means of purging out error, and correcting abuses; then, surely, we have no small evidence that it is from the God of truth and order, and ought to be maintained in all the Churches.

Let it never be forgotten, however, that, as Presbyterianism, in all its leading features, *was, undoubtedly, the primitive and apostolic model of the Church*; so, in order to the maintenance and execution of this system to the best advantage, *there must be a large portion of the primitive and apostolic spirit reigning in the Church*. No sooner did Christians lose the spirit of the first and purest age, than they began to depart from the simplicity of Christ's institutions. Having less spirituality to present, they thought to compensate for this defect by outward show and ceremonial. Uncommanded rites and forms were multiplied, for the purpose of attracting both Jews and Pagans into the Church. Purity of doctrine gave way to the speculations of philosophy. Purity of discipline became unpopular, and yielded to the laxity of luxurious and fashionable life. Prelacy, as we have seen in a former chapter, gradually crept into the Church; and with it many inventions of men to allure and beguile those who had lost all relish for primitive simplicity.

Now, just so far as we retain the simple devoted spirit of the apostolic age, we shall love, retain, and honour Presbyte-

rianism. Those who possess most of this spirit, will be most friendly to this system. But just in proportion as that spirit declines, Presbyterian doctrines will be thought too rigid; Presbyterian worship will appear too simple and naked; and Presbyterian discipline will be regarded as too unaccommodating and austere. Let Presbyterians, then, learn a lesson of wisdom from this consideration. Let them remember that their system will never appear so well, or work so well, as in the midst of simple, primitive, and devoted piety. This is its genial soil. As long as such a soil is furnished, it will grow. When such a soil is not furnished, it will still live, and do better than any other system, on the whole; but its highest glory will have departed, and something else will begin to be thought desirable by the votaries of worldly indulgence, and worldly splendour. The friends of our beloved Church ought to know, and lay to heart, that their happiness and their strength consist in cordial and diligent adherence to that vital principle, the language of which is, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

THE END.