The Lord's Supper: its nature, ends, and obligations, and Mode of Administration

by

Houston, Thomas, 1803-1882

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With Christian regards and kind wishes of

MRS. HOUSTON.

Hueckbrachen,
March, 1884.
WORKS, DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL
OF THE
REV. THOMAS HOUSTON, D.D.

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every step in their career, and leaves little more to be desired in the way of sound advice. The treatise cannot be too strongly pressed on the rising generation. It will act like a faithful friend and mentor in many of the difficulties that must inevitably beset their path. The work on "Fellowship Meetings" is a healthful and useful Manual for all who are called on to lead in such assemblies. Their history is narrated in terms of much interest, and will repay careful study. We can imagine that, during times of religious excitement, this sober, wise, and thoroughly practical production, will be of essential service. If good, but sometimes unwise people would be guided by its counsels, there would be greatly less of the froth which so often rises to the surface, and greatly more of solid and lasting benefit to the Church."—Northern Whig.

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THE LORD'S SUPPER:

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THE LORD'S SUPPER:
ITS NATURE, ENDS, AND OBLIGATION;

AND

Mode of Administration.

BY

THOMAS HOUSTON, D.D.

EDINBURGH:
JAMES GEMMELL, 15 GEORGE IV. BRIDGE.
1878.
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ERRATA.

For Chapter VIII., p. 239, rend Chapter X.
For Chapter IX., p. 239, rend Chapter XI.

Some other slight Errata, which have occurred through the Author's distance from the press, can be easily corrected.
INTRODUCTION.

The necessity of full instructions on the nature of the Lord's Supper, the doctrines and duties connected with its observance, and the great ends which its institution contemplate, has been felt and acknowledged in the church in all past ages. This appears from the numerous works, both ancient and modern, theological, controversial and practical, that have been emitted concerning it. The catechisms and directories on the sacrament of the Supper—of greater or less size, would of themselves form a considerable library of pastoral teaching; and not a few of them will always be of permanent value to the youth of the church in leading them to make due preparation for sealing a public profession of Christianity; while from the proper use of such manuals, even advanced Christians may derive edification and comfort.

It is not to be wondered at that there should be in existence such a multitude and variety of works on the great ordinance which was appointed by the Founder of Christianity, in the most solemn and affecting circumstances, to perpetuate the remembrance of His death, until the time of His second coming and glorious appearance. None of the institutions of our holy religion bring more vividly into view the glory of the Saviour's person—the perfection of His atoning work, and the preciousness of His offices—His matchless condescension, and the endearing relations which He sustains to His redeemed people. There is none in which are more fully displayed the church's high and honourable privileges, and in which are enforced, by more powerful and constraining motives, our obligation to cultivate with the whole household of faith the fellowship of brethren—to shine as lights in the world—and to live as heirs and expectants of the heavenly glory.

As the ordinance, moreover, is designed to be the great standing monument to attest the fundamental fact of Christianity—the death of Christ for the redemption of the world—to present in embodied action an epitome of the chief doctrines of the religion of Christ—and to be the means of conferring eminent spiritual blessings upon the faithful, it is of the last importance that its distinctive character should be clearly
exhibited—the obligations to observe it taught and enforced by scriptural motives—the due qualifications for approaching to it, diligently inculcated, and the privileges to be enjoyed in connexion with its faithful administration fully set forth.

The perversions and corruptions of the Lord’s Supper, arising from the enmity of Satan, the old Serpent, against the Saviour and His truth—the pride and ambition of ministers of the church—and the ignorance, unbelief, and ungodliness of the world began early, and have continued in various forms till our own day. Justly has it been observed, that there is no ordinance that has been so marred and perverted in apostate and backsliding churches, so as to present the vilest caricature of Christ’s original institution, or that is more liable to be dispensed and observed for low unworthy ends. Yet is there cause for abundant praise and rejoicing, that, through the singular favour of the church’s glorious Head, the sacrament of the Supper is still administered, in many instances, with as much simplicity and purity as in the apostolic age, and is accompanied with like evident tokens of blessing.

The chief object of the following Treatise is to present a clear scriptural, though not exhaustive view of the Lord’s Supper in its diversified aspects—as a testimony of great value for precious truths—as the means of enjoying distinguishing privileges, and as in its faithful and diligent observance, designed in coming ages to promote in a much higher degree than in the past, the revival of true religion, the church’s unity and faith and love, and the universal prosperity of the church of Christ. During a somewhat lengthened ministry, in which he has sought, and to some extent realized, the blessing from above in the administration of sealing ordinances, and in which he has regarded as his highest privilege on earth, the enjoyment of near fellowship in such ordinances with brethren in Christ—many of whom are now in glory, he aimed to study with some care, guided by the light of the Word, the nature of the ordinance in all its parts—to give special instruction to those who were admitted to it—to vindicate it against prevailing abuses and perversions—and to urge continually upon the members of the church their solemn responsibility to exhibit in fruits of righteousness the salutary effects of spiritual dedication. A number of the most godly elders and members of the flock to which it was the privilege of the author to minister, urged him to give to the public some
Introduction.

portions of the instructions which he tendered in connexion with the administration of the seal of the covenant. Several distinguished brethren also in the ministry, in whose judgment he had all confidence, a considerable number of years ago, concurred in recommending him to prepare and issue a work on the Lord's Supper, somewhat after the manner of the author's Practical Treatise on Baptism; which, while setting forth fully the scriptural doctrine of the institution, would contain suitable practical directions for its administration, and be adapted to give expression to the experience of faithful witnesses for truth, and of believers, who have the seal and earnest of the heavenly inheritance. For a number of years, these requests from brethren, who had peculiar claims to be heard with high respect, were revolved occasionally in private, without any definite purpose formed to carry them into effect—through a sense of the importance and greatness of the work proposed, and the difficulty of finding leisure from pastoral and other labours for executing it in a becoming manner. Brought now, through the singular favour of that blessed Master, whose he is and whom he desires to serve, to life's evening period—and near the close of half a century of pastoral labour, the author has, after some serious thought, been led to regard it as his duty to issue, among his last works for the exhibition and defence of the Saviour's truth, and the edification of the church, this doctrinal and experimental Treatise on the sacrament of the Supper. The aim which he has sought to keep steadily in view in the preparation of the following Treatise, was to present a comprehensive exhibition of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, as it appears in its primitive institution and in apostolic practice; and as it is held forth in the symbolic books of the purest Protestant churches.

In a number of important particulars, the ordinance is treated of in aspects in which it is rarely contemplated in modern treatises on the subject—such as when the church is regarded as a covenant-society—and the sacrament is considered a seal of the covenant. The necessity of unity of faith and practice is, besides, insisted on in connexion with its administration and reception; the duty of pastoral training and discipline; and the fruits of sacramental dedication, are, because of their intrinsic and relative importance, discussed with some fulness. Perversions of the sacrament—Romish—Lutheran—and Anglican, have been deemed deserving of special, careful consideration; and abuses
Introduction.

which have of late been spreading throughout various sections of the Protestant churches—arising from the formality, worldliness and relaxed discipline of modern times, appeared to demand specific notice. All care should be taken to dispense the ordinances of the house of God in strictest accordance with scriptural principles. The abundant effusion of the Spirit may alone be expected in connexion with a clear display of truth, and with entire subjection to the supreme authority of the church’s exalted Head.

In treating on the perpetual obligation of the Lord’s Supper, it has been deemed important, not only to discuss the leading positions of the Society of Friends on this subject, but likewise to advert to a practice which, in recent years, has been spreading in Presbyterian churches, especially in America, by which numbers who are connected by profession with the church, and are admitted to other ordinances, refrain habitually from partaking of the sacrament of the Supper. The views advanced in relation to frequency of communion—the times devoted to preparatory services—terms of communion—and simultaneous partaking, may to some appear novel. While the author offers them—after a somewhat careful examination of scripture testimony, and of the sentiments of many eminent lights in the church, with the conviction that they are deserving of serious consideration, and that their general adoption would be beneficial, he submits them with much diffidence and humility, desiring that, in these and other matters, the unerring guide followed should be the law and testimony left in Israel.

As a chief design of this Treatise is to furnish to ministers, elders, and members of the church, a Scriptural Directory for the administration and observance of an ordinance which so fully reflects the Redeemer’s glory, and which is so intimately connected with the increase of faith and hope in the people of God, the author commends it to the prayers of brethren in Christ, throughout the different sections of the church. Should this humble attempt be owned by Zion’s King, in any measure, to preserve from neglect and perversion the institution that commemorates His dying love, and to minister direction and spiritual comfort to any of Zion’s travellers, He will enjoy an abundant recompense of reward.

Knockbracken, January, 1878.
CHAPTER I.

THE CHURCH A COVENANT-SOCIETY.

The dealings of God with the human family have ever been in the way of a Covenant. Wondrous condescension, and unmerited grace characterize all His dispensations. Promises of good are given—stipulations made, and conditions proposed, on the performance of which the promised benefits are enjoyed. This was clearly displayed in the Covenant of Works given to man in innocency. The first human being has been justly regarded as a Covenant-Head, or federal representative; for with him God made a covenant, including in its provisions all his natural posterity, and securing to him and them, in the fullest sense, life and its countless blessings, on the condition of his perfect obedience, during an allotted term of probation. The transaction on God's part was most condescending,—in His entering into covenant with a being infinitely beneath Him; and it was, at the same time, most gracious, in that He bound Himself, by an absolute promise, to reward the obedience of His creature; and inasmuch as the reward promised—eternal life to millions of the human race—vastly transcended in value one man's obedience. In the quaint but expressive language of some of the old divines, "there was much grace in the Covenant of Works." The security was purely of God's sovereign favour, and man's endless felicity was guaranteed by a Divine gracious promise.

When, by abusing his liberty, man violated the compact, and forfeited the promise to himself and his posterity, God revealed a way of pardon and acceptance, through a covenant of more extensive and glorious grace. The first promise given on the back of the Fall (Gen. iii. 15) clearly revealed a
way of deliverance from the curse, and of restoration to Divine
favour. It proclaimed life springing from death, and blessings
of the highest value to be enjoyed through substitutionary
suffering and sacrifice—and these not the portion of individuals
merely, but of a community gathered out of all nations, and
existing throughout future ages. The woman's seed spoken of
in the comprehensive promise, was not only the personal
Saviour to come, but consisted, too, of all who were to be
redeemed by His blood, and united to Him by a living faith.
It is the Church chosen and called out of the world—a pur-
chased, holy, peculiar people—designed to show forth His
praises who hath called them, and to inherit all New Covenant
privileges and blessings. From the date of this fundamental
promise, throughout its whole history till the advent of the
Messiah, there is abundant evidence that the church, gathered
out of the world, was placed under special dispensations of
God's covenant of grace. Thus was it in the age of the Patri-
archs, both before and after the Flood; and so was it likewise
under the Mosaic economy—the dispensation of types, pre-
figurative of the higher, substantial blessings of the Gospel.

After the Fall, when true religion was diffused throughout
the world among the descendants of Seth, those who professed
it appeared as a Covenant-Society, separate and distinct from
others—having ordinances as means of grace—under Divine
special protection, and enjoying the fulfilment of gracious pro-
mises in all Covenant blessings. In the days of Enoch, men
"began to call on the name of the Lord,"* associating for reli-
gious fellowship, and the observance of ordinances, social and
public; and they were known and designated as the Lord's
people, distinguished from others by peculiar profession and
privileges.

The Covenant transactions with the ancient patriarchs, so
frequently recorded in the Old Testament history, bring into
distinct view a peculiar select society—the object of Divine
favour—designated to eminent blessing, and distinguished by
holy obedience. All these federal deeds were based upon the
covenant of redemption made between the Persons of the
blessed Godhead from eternity. Each of them was a discovery

* The original expression may be rendered, as in the margin of the
authorized version, "Then began men to call themselves by the name of
the Lord." This would indicate that they appeared more openly as a
separate covenant people.
or dispensation of God's Covenant of Grace, revealed by the Mediator, as the principal party to such as were taken into the gracious compact. None of these covenants were made with individuals alone for their own sakes, but they all had respect to social communities, which they were taken to represent. The Eternal covenant, containing absolute, free promises, was made with the Mediator and Surety on behalf of the elect. Contemplating them chiefly, it secures to them benefits and blessings of every kind, both for soul and body, and for time and eternity. The covenant-transactions recorded in the Scriptures have respect to the Visible church on earth, consisting of those who, in all ages and places, profess the true religion and their children. This society is called and incorporated by its exalted Head to profess His truth—exhibit its sanctifying influence—and to labour after the nearest conformity to the church invisible of real believers. Its privileges as a covenant-society are extensive and most valuable. It has the privilege of "being under God's special care and government, of being protected and preserved in all ages, notwithstanding the opposition of all enemies—of enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation, and offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the Gospel, testifying that whosoever believes in Him shall be saved, excluding none that will come unto Him."*

The covenant with Noah, of which the bow in the cloud was the significant token and seal, guaranteed gracious preservation and providential blessing—not on the ground of human merit, but solely as the fruit of sovereign favour. While its outward benefits extended to the human race in general, it provided spiritual blessings for those who by faith, as Noah, "condemned the world and became heirs of righteousness which is by faith." The covenant with Abraham was evidently a revelation of the covenant of grace, securing privileges the most excellent, not only to the Patriarch, but to his seed after him. In it God revealed Himself under gracious titles and in gracious relations. "I am God Almighty." El-Shaddai. "I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee." "I am thy shield and exceeding great reward." It contained "exceeding great and precious promises," which were to have their fulfilment in future ages, on to the end of time. "Though including temporal benefits, these were chiefly spiritual—

* Larger Catechism, Quest. 63.
mainly pointing to Christ, the promised Seed to come—to multitudes of believers, who by faith, are children of Abraham, and to a covenanted inheritance on earth and in heaven, of which the land of Canaan was a type. The covenant with Abraham was one—a dispensation of the same grace which was exhibited in the promise given in Eden on the back of the Fall. The foundation of all the blessings offered was the comprehensive proposal—"I am thy God," "I will be a God to thee and thy seed." The promises given were substantially one grant,—containing a variety of blessings, temporal and spiritual, adapted to the circumstances and necessities of the patriarch and his seed. In delivering them, God is exhibited in the same gracious character, as that by which He makes Himself known to sinners through Christ—as their covenant God and Portion—the Source and Fountain to them of all good. The seal and ratification of the covenant with Abraham were spiritual, and had a plain and pointed reference to the grace manifested through the Saviour, and to the great things of eternal salvation. Circumcision, the token and seal of the covenant, was a religious rite, designed to be a pledge of holy obedience, and to confirm the enjoyment of spiritual blessings and privileges. The sacrifices offered, when God renewed the promise to Abraham, were the appointed means of ratifying the covenant, and referred to the one great sacrifice of atonement; and the oath annexed to the promise (Gen. xxii.) was the highest sanction added to the federal transaction, and the fullest assurance of the accomplishment of all that God had promised. "Because he could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, that, by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us."*

The promise to Abraham and his seed regarded them as a visible Church related to God in covenant (Gen. xvii. 7). "I will establish my covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee." This emphatic and comprehensive declaration—here used for the first time, but afterwards often repeated—sums up all the temporal and spiritual blessings that had already been guaranteed to the patriarch by repeated promises. The foundation and security of the enjoyment of all promised blessings are laid in the

* Heb. vi. 18, 19.
The Church a Covenant-Society.

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covenant relation—"I will be thy God," "I will be the God of thy seed." Instead of regarding the promise as expressive of a mere temporal relation between God and Abraham and his seed, it is plain that it implies a spiritual visible church relation to God in covenant. A principal characteristic of the visible church is that it is a spiritual society, divinely organized, holding a special relation to God in covenant, and established for spiritual purposes. God is the Founder of the church. He appoints to her laws and ordinances, which are spiritual, as the means of revealing His grace; and He sets up ministers and other officers to administer these laws and ordinances, that so the grace of the covenant may be communicated to the heirs of salvation. The fundamental declaration—"I will be a God to thee"—proposes the most exalted and blessed relation, and secures the enjoyment of the highest spiritual privileges for time and eternity.

The seed of Abraham became more fully and formally organized as a National Church under the Mosaic economy; and it was still dealt with as a covenant-society. A priesthood, divinely called, was set up, and ordinances were appointed as channels of life and salvation to the heirs of promise. Jehovah condescended to stand to Israel in a peculiar honourable relation, as their God in covenant and theocratic King. This secured to them the highest privileges, and constituted their highest excellence. They thus became a "holy nation," a "peculiar treasure to God above all people," a "kingdom of priests."* Through the whole period of the Mosaic institute, God treats Israel as a people in covenant with Him. His dealings towards them are marked by special condescension and favour. He separates them from all other people on the face of the earth. He appoints them laws and ordinances, and promises them manifold blessings in their due observance, and according as they walk in the way of holy obedience. The covenant relation is ever exhibited as the ground of Jehovah's claim to their supreme homage and submission. "I am thy God," "ye shall be to me a holy nation," a "peculiar treasure," a "people of inheritance." "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"†

* Ex. xix. 6.
† Deut. iv. 7, 8.
In the frequent federal transactions between God and His servants, recorded throughout the Old Testament history, and predictions, the church is uniformly represented as a covenant-society, and privileges and blessings are alone conferred in this connection. A covenant of privilege is the foundation of a covenant of duty—blessings being enjoyed in the way of holy obedience, and chastisements being sent as the fruit of dealing deceitfully in the covenant. Posterity was included with their ancestors in ancient federal engagements. Throughout subsequent generations, God remembers His covenant to them for good, and rewards their fidelity to solemn vows; while, in inflicting judgments, he assigns breach of covenant as the chief reason of their punishment and rejection. “Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.” “He hath remembered His covenant for ever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations.” * When Divine judgments are sent to waste and scatter churches, and to bring down nations, breach of covenant engagements is frequently assigned as the principal cause of these retributive visitations. (Deut. xxix. 24) “Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the Lord God of their fathers,” etc. “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace.” †

The visible church, founded on the Abrahamic covenant, continues to exist under the Gospel, and includes in its fellowship, the Gentiles called and believing in Christ. This federal transaction with the Patriarch may be regarded as “the Charter of the visible Church,” under both economies. This is frequently declared in the plainest and most positive terms in the Pauline Epistles of the New Testament. “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise.” “So then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” ‡ The church is one spiritual body, united to one living Head, under both dispensations of the Law and the Gospel,—incorporated by one covenant under different administrations,—having

* Lev. xxvi. 42. Ps. cv. 8. † Jer. xi. 3, 4. ‡ Gal. iv. 28; iii. 9.
"one faith and baptism."* Believers under the old economy are circumcised into this one body; they are now baptized into it. A profession of faith in the Messiah to come, as the Author of salvation, rendered the church visible under the Old Testament—the like profession of faith in Christ already come, distinguishes the visible church under the Gospel. The Saviour Himself, and His apostles, plainly teach that the church of the Old Testament founded on God's covenant with Abraham and the church of the New Testament are one and the same. "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."† This foretells the rejection of the Jews—the lineal descendants of Abraham, and the calling of the Gentiles. "The children of the kingdom" are the Jewish people. When they shall have been expelled, because of their unbelief and rebellion, the Gentiles are admitted—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, at the same spiritual feast—in the enjoyment of all its high and honourable privileges. So again—"The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."‡ Here there is a manifest transfer of possession and privileges from one people to another. This evidently did not refer to a typical or secular kingdom. It was the ceasing of the church-state of the Jewish people, or of "the adoption" on which they set so much value, and its allotment to those of the Gentile race. This plainly implies the identity of the church under both dispensations. The people who constitute its membership, and enjoy its privileges, are of different races and nationalities, but the incorporated society exists unchanged, and its distinguishing privileges are the same. The Apostle Paul repeatedly, in various emphatic declarations, teaches the unity of the visible church under the former and later economies, and represents the promise to Abraham as the charter of all its privileges—"The covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."§ The covenant here referred to, is God's covenant with Abraham, of which Circumcision was the sign and seal. This, the Law, or the Mosiac dispensation, could not disannul or make void. When the typical institutions are superseded by the blessed substance in Christ and the

* Eph. iv. 5. † Matt. viii. 11. ‡ Matt. xxi. 43. § Gal. iii. 17.
Gospel, it stands in full force—all the significance of its promised blessings will be enjoyed on to the end, by all who by faith become the children of Abraham. Again, it is declared—"He (Christ) is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." *

Here, under the figure of a house, Jews and Gentiles are represented as dwelling in one large building, but wholly separated, the one from the other, by a strong "wall or partition." This was the Mosaic ritual, which, while it existed, kept the two effectually parted asunder. This is now completely broken down through the atonement of Christ. The old covenant is set aside, and "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" is abrogated. The church appears constituted in its full glory and excellency on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant—composed of Jews and Gentiles—"both one in Christ."

In another very vivid and beautiful representation,† the apostle sets forth the same important truths—the unity of the church under the old and new dispensations, and the identity of the foundation of all its privileges. It is represented as a "good olive tree," wide-spreading and fruitful, with its natural and engrafted branches. ‡ The "root" is one and holy, as being separated and consecrated by covenant dedication. From the apostle's reasoning, this is evidently Abraham—"the father of the faithful" and of "many nations." The natural branches are Israel—the offspring of Isaac. The "olive tree" was their church-state, and their "fatness" was all their covenant-privileges, the blessing announced in the grand promise—"I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed," and appropriated by the Patriarch's faith. Of the natural branches, many because of their unbelief were broken off and rejected. Among such as remained, the Gentiles believing in Christ were engrafted in, and were brought to partake of the fatness of the good olive tree. The Jewish and Gentile church is thus one; and when, in the day of future revival and blessing, through the conversion and ingathering of Israel, the natural branches will again be engrafted in, it will be into "their own olive tree." The "olive tree"—the one indestructible church, under its blessed Head, is still "their own"—even during the time of their excision and rejection, and remains such for their

* Eph. ii. 24.
† See a quotation from Cyprian, in Millar on the "Ruling Eldership."
‡ Rom. xi. 16.
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re-admission and enlarged blessing. This is the ground of the
blessed hope of the salvation of Israel and of the fulness of
the Gentiles coming to Christ. "Blindness in part is hap-
pened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.
And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written—There shall
come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodli-
ness from Jacob."

The visible church especially appears as a covenant-society,
under the clearer enlarged dispensation of the Gospel. Nu-
umerous predictions that were designed to mark their fulfilment
in New Testament times, speak of this as its prominent char-
acteristic. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I
will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with
the house of Judah.† "Also the sons of the stranger that
join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the
name of the Lord, to be His servants, and that keepeth the
Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant."‡
"In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the
language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts. And the
Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know
the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea,
they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it."§ "In
those days, and at that time, the children of Israel and the
children of Judah shall come . . . they shall ask the
way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and
let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant
which shall not be forgotten."‖ These bright predictions were,
in part, accomplished, at the opening of the New Testament
economy, and in the first organization of the Christian church.
They are in process of enlarged fulfilment, during the whole
progress of the Gospel; and at the close of the dispensation, in
the future conversion of the nations, the restoration of the
Jewish people, and the universal outpouring of the Spirit, the
bright predictions of the Word will be unfolded in their most
glorious and wondrous accomplishment. The first Jewish con-
verts to the Christian faith—the first members of the Christian
church are addressed as the spiritual seed of Abraham, and as
sharing with their fathers the privileges of God's covenant—
"Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant
which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And

* Rom. xi. 25, 26. † Jer. xxxi. 31. ‡ Isa. lvi. 6.
in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."* This contains the precious assurance that, identified with believers under the Patriarchal and Mosaic economies, the church of the New Testament shares the same spiritual privileges as the covenanted heritage of the faithful in bypast ages. The primitive church founded by the apostles recognized God's covenant with their fathers, as the charter of all their privileges; and on it they rested as the basis of social dedication and of all holy obedience. The Macedonian church manifested to others an example of enlarged liberality, in a season of trial, as the fruit of covenant-dedication. Beyond the expectation of the apostle—"they first gave their own selves to the Lord, and then" to His apostles, "by the will of God," for the ready performance of any service to which they summoned them.† Down to the end of the apostolic age, and till the canon of Scripture closed, the Christian church exhibited all the characteristics of a covenant-society. They were gathered out of the nations, and were incorporated into one mystical body—a separate, peculiar people. For this society were provided precious ordinances, and all covenant privileges—in blessings of grace and in providential rule and benefits. The existence, extension, and universal establishment of the church in the earth are the fruit of Jehovah's sovereign favour. Her high and honourable privileges are secured by covenant-stipulation. And her mission in the earth is to do the work assigned her in the purpose of Infinite wisdom; to which she has pledged herself by solemn engagements, and for the performance of which all grace and strength in the covenant are guaranteed. Herself blessed of the Lord, she is set up as a blessing in the earth, in accordance with the promise to Abraham—"In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

The special ordinances given to the Church by her glorious Head, that have been designated symbolical and sealing, exhibit her as a Covenant-Society—a "holy nation," set apart to the Lord and owned by Him—by solemn voluntary vows, frequently renewed, displaying the character and doing the work of a covenant people in the earth. These ordinances were instituted for the purpose of teaching, by significant and impressive symbols, the great fundamental truths of the scheme of human redemption, and of confirming to the heirs of promise the

* Acts iii. 25.  
† 2 Cor. viii. 5.
enjoyment of all precious New Covenant blessings. Circumcision given to Abraham as "a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith,"* was the great ordinance of initiation in the covenant; as the Passover, afterwards appointed, was the ordinance of nourishment in the covenant, instituted as the memorial of deliverance, and the prefiguration of spiritual redemption through the promised Saviour. Baptism, now taking the place of the former, is significant of the same spiritual blessings and privileges, and a like seal, confirmatory of their enjoyment to believers. And the Lord's Supper, supplanting the ancient Passover, is the perpetual memorial and exhibition of the one great Propitiatory Sacrifice, to which all preceding types looked forward, and the ordained seal and ratification to believers of the covenant-inheritance.

* Rom iv. 11.
CHAPTER II.

THE REDEEMER'S HEADSHIP OVER THE CHURCH.

Col. i. 18—"He is the Head of the Body, the Church."
Eph. i. 22—"And gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church."

The grand design of the establishment of the church on earth is the manifestation of the Redeemer's glory in the salvation of sinners. This is the glory of His person, character, and work, and chiefly of His extensive regal dominion. The Headship of Christ over His church and over all things in the universe for her benefit, is a fundamental article of the faith that was once delivered to the saints—the cardinal principle of a martyr-testimony—the great truth required to be known, believed and held fast, if ordinances are to be preserved pure, and the blessing from on high is to accompany their administration. The plan of human redemption, devised in the eternal counsel of the Trinity, stands intimately connected with the Redeemer's dominion. He was "set King upon God's hill" from everlasting. His "goings forth," as Ruler of Israel, were "from of old, from everlasting." The dispensation of grace—introduced after man's apostasy, displayed the Mediator invested with royal authority; and all that was done in the history of the world, from the Fall till His manifestation in the flesh—in founding the church, appointing her laws and ordinances, preserving her in existence, and in originating, controlling, and subduing nations—was effected through the government being on His shoulders. While engaged in the work of obedience and suffering which He came to accomplish—even in His state of lowest abasement, the Saviour gave the clearest evidence of His royal Headship and supreme mediatorial authority. The proper reward of His obedience unto death—a work of transcendent merit—was His investiture with boundless dominion. "For the suffering of death, He was crowned with glory and honour." "He became obedient to the death of the cross; therefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name" (Heb. ii. 8; Phil. ii. 8, 9).
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As a Divine Person, the Redeemer has essential, necessary, and universal dominion. The Son of God was King from ages all, from eternity. In the matchless glory of His person, He is displayed as the Creator and First Cause as well as the Last End of the material universe. "All things were created by Him and for Him." "By Him all things consist." They stand in harmony and comely order by His sustaining power—are preserved from falling into confusion and non-existence—and made to subserve the great ends of their creation. "All things that He has called into being have their continued subsistence in Him." Creation and sustentation presuppose the right of universal dominion. The glorious First Cause has inherent authority to dispose of all things for His own glory. As one of the Persons of the Godhead, "His kingdom ruleth over all." He is "the King eternal, immortal, and invisible."

The Saviour's Divine glory is intimately connected with His Headship over the church—it is essential to its exercise, and to His dominion over all things throughout the universe for her benefit. In the close of a passage in Colossians, first chapter, which presents the most vivid view of the Divine dignity and excellence of the Redeemer, and of the church's surpassing privilege in her relation to One so highly exalted, He is declared—verse 18—to be "the Head of the Body, the church; who is the Beginning, the First-Born from the dead; that, in all things, He might have the pre-eminence." This passage explicitly declares that the absolute control and direction of the universe and of all that is in it are under the Mediator for the benefit of His church. All creatures and elements, all changes in Providence, all rulers and organized systems—material, moral, and spiritual,—angels in heaven, in their various ranks and orders, and devils, are in subjection to Him as their sovereign Lord. He is the directing, controlling, governing Head over all; and all, under His powerful dominion, are made to contribute to the present and eternal welfare of the church of the Redeemer. He is "the Beginning," the First Cause and Source of existence of the moral as well as of the material creation. He is likewise the Beginning, as He is the End of all salvation blessings. The whole of this bright representation is designed to show that "in all things" the Redeemer has the pre-eminence." As the "Image of the invisible God,"—the Author and last end of Creation—the Ruler in Providence—the living and life-giving Head of the Church, and, at the same time, the
Head of all things for her benefit, none can be compared to Him. His office and dignity excel in glory. While He is the Creator of the universe, and all creatures therein reflect His glory, His incarnation and death cast a new lustre over His original glory. The Lord of the universe is the “Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne.” A new and attractive splendour is shed around His inherent Majesty by His mediatorial crown. The First-Born from the dead is the Head of His body, the church;—to her, the Fountain and Centre of life, the Source and Bestower of all saving and eternal blessings. Subdued by His gracious power, His people yield to Him the homage of their hearts; and in their affections, confidence, and praises, as well as in the devoted service of their lives, He has in all things, as He is above all—“the pre-eminence.”

The Deity of the Redeemer constitutes his pre-eminent fitness for possessing and exercising absolute universal Dominion, and for being the church’s glorious and exclusive Head. He has omnipotent power to restrain and conquer all enemies, and to overcome all opposition. With infinite wisdom, He can employ the most suitable means for effecting His gracious purposes. His mercy and love are unfathomable and everlasting. In the greatness of his condescension and tender compassion. He regards the lowly and saves the children of the needy; while in holiness and justice, He breaks in pieces those that oppress them. He is faithful to all His promises, and He keeps truth for ever. He never changes; and as the church’s Head, he is subject to no weakness or decay. His throne is for ever and ever. He is the same, and His years have no end.

The universal dominion of Christ—as it is usually exhibited in sacred Scripture, is connected with the Divine purpose and plan of human redemption. By the royal Headship of the Redeemer, is meant His sovereign mediatorial dominion—all that power and authority which was delegated to Him by the Father, in the covenant of redemption, for the salvation of a ransomed people. This was given to Him by covenant-stipulation, and assigned to Him as the reward of His finished work. It comprehends His absolute dominion over “all things.” He is expressly said to have “all power in heaven and earth given Him” (John xvii. 2), to be “Head of every man” (1 Cor. xi. 3); “Head of all principalities and powers”
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(Col. ii. 10); "Head of the heathen" (Ps. xviii. 43); and "Head over all things to His church" (Eph. i. 22). In most expressive and significant terms, it is declared—"Thou crownedst Him with glory and honour, and didst set Him over the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him" (Heb. ii. 7, 8).

The glory of the Saviour's universal Headship is seen chiefly in two aspects, in relation to two associations—1 The Church; and 2, the Nations of the Earth, or Civil Society. As Mediator, He is the sole and exclusive Head of the church; and He is, at the same time, Head of all principality and power—"King of kings and Lord of lords," and "Governor among the nations." As the church of God is the most important society in existence—the grand instrument for promoting the Divine glory throughout the world, and for bringing elect sinners to heaven, the Headship of Christ over this society exhibits Him in the most attractive view of His person, and office, and character, and is fraught with issues the most momentous and salutary.

Of the universal dominion of the Mediator, a principal part is the church which He purchased with His own blood, and which He takes into the nearest and most endearing relation to Himself. The Westminster Confession explicitly declares—"There is no other Head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ." In the Scriptures, the church is uniformly represented as having one King, one Governor, one Husband—one glorious Head and Lord. He has, besides, all power and authority over all that affects her interests. He is distinguished by the highest moral worth. He is an ever-living and unchangeable Head (Song v. 11; Ps. lxxxix. 6). Not only is Christ Jesus the sole and exclusive Head of the church, He is likewise her Head, in the largest sense of the term, of the Invisible church, which is the whole body of the elect, who are chosen by grace, renewed by the Spirit, and made heirs of glory. He is her vital Head—as He communicates life to all the members, and every part of the body depends upon Him for its support, increase, and perfection. He is to them the fountain of grace and felicity. "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John i. 16). He is, moreover, the governing legislative Head of the church, and the Head of honour and glory. Christ is the Foundation laid in Zion, tried, elect, precious; and of the building in its progress
and completion, He is the "Headstone of the corner" (Ps. cxviii. 22; Zech. iv. 7).

Of the Church visible, which consists of those who, gathered into a church-state, profess faith in Him and obedience to Him, with their children, He is the exclusive Head. This community He organizes. He is the Author of its ordinances and government. He enacts its laws, and appoints and upholds its office-bearers. All its immunities and privileges are conferred by Him. "The government is upon His shoulder" (Isa. ix. 6). "He walks amid the golden candlesticks, and holds the seven stars in His right hand" (Rev. i. 20). He is, moreover, Head of the church local. Wherever a community professing the Gospel is gathered out of the world, and formed into a congregation of worshippers, Christ is the author of its privileges—both outward and spiritual. He gives to it pastors and teachers, and the administration of ordinances according to His word; and these He makes the means of grace and blessing to His people. Finally, Christ is the Supreme Head of the Church representative. The officers that rule in His house are His, as their designation, calling, and qualifications are from Him; and He owns and accepts their work, for the promotion of His glory. He appoints the laws which they are to administer, and by which the affairs of His house are to be regulated. He endows His officers with gifts and delegated power. He sanctions their judicial procedure, ratifying their decisions as His own. To the rulers in His church called by Him and acting in His name, He declares,—"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19). And, again, on the eve of His ascension, He said,—"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. . . . Whose soever sin ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John xx. 21-23).

Christ, the living Head of the church, is its glorious Founder. He gives existence to the church which He purchased with His blood, and organizes it as a Covenant-Society (Gal. iii. 17). It exists still, under every change of dispensation to the end of time. The church owes her whole origin to Christ. "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it" (Isa. xiv. 32). "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem. He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel" (Ps. civii. 2). The
church founded by Christ in the earth derives its government and officers from Him—receives from Him its constitution and laws—accepts at His hand ordinances—draws from Him spiritual grace and influence—acts in His name, and is subject to His authority in all its proceedings.

He is also its everliving Administrator. In His church, Christ, her King, is at all times graciously present, as the Source of life and influence—of word and doctrine—of order and blessing. Is the church distinguished for spiritual life? Christ is its Fountain, Support, and glorious end. Is it doctrine that characterizes the Church's profession? The word is Christ's, and testifies of Him. He, the infallible Teacher, continues with His approved instrumentality, and imparts all saving knowledge by His Word and Spirit. He presides in ordinances, and renders them the channels of spiritual blessing to His people. All the grace and blessing bestowed upon the members of His mystical body flow to them from Him. The church, thus replenished with the fulness of her Head, becomes a living and gracious power in the earth. As the ever-present Administrator of power and authority in the church, Christ speaks through its voice, binds by its decisions, and makes its government and discipline felt in the conscience. The continual presence and power of her Divine Head is everything to the church. He is her Teacher, King, Lawgiver, and Judge. She has no government but what was ordained by Him, and no authority separate from His. Whatever saving grace is dispensed in Zion, is through the virtue and power of His Spirit. There is no blessing that does not flow from His hands. The glory of all the "excellent things" spoken of Zion redound to her exalted King for evermore. "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee" (Isa. xii. 5, 6).

As the Supreme Head and Administrator of the church, the Lord Jesus is present with the office-bearers whom He has appointed—sustaining and giving efficacy to their power and authority. As the Church cannot exist without government, so it indispensably needs officers. The different kinds of these—their appointment, qualifications, and functions, are all matter of Divine prescription. This is the case both under the Old and New Economy. "No man taketh this honour unto himself but
he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. v. 4). Ministers and other ecclesiastical officers are called, qualified, and ordained by the institution of Christ, as King and Head of the church; and none are to be regarded as His ascension-gifts who are destitute of such an investiture. We have no right to dispense with an office that Christ has instituted. The Divine blessing may certainly be expected with officers who are set up by His appointment, when they act in His name, according to the rule of His word, and when they aim in all their official procedure to advance His glory. He "clothes His priests with salvation." He "will bless the house of Aaron." He promises to be with the ministers of the word bearing His commission, "Even to the world." "He that heareth you heareth Me, and He that heareth Me, heareth Him that sent Me." The King of Zion comes with His Ambassadors, giving effect to the overtures of mercy and peace which they make, and rendering them "the ministry of reconciliation." He presides among assembled elders. The assurance that "where two or three are met in His name," He is graciously present (Matt. xviii. 20), has primary and special respect to the judicatures of the church, for it stands immediately connected with the infliction and removal of ecclesiastical censures. His presence is with His approved servants to ratify their judicial acts—to render them binding upon the conscience, and a means of grace and blessing. Whatever the minister binds on earth He binds in heaven, and whatsoever it looses on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Further, in the exercise of Headship over the church, the Redeemer blesses the administration of ordinances, and renders them effectual to salvation. The doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church are all designed for the salvation of souls. Their sanctifying and saving effects all flow from the power and grace of the church's glorious Head. The special efficacy of the word and ordinances is through the power and energy of the Holy Spirit. He is sent by the ascended Redeemer, and His mission is the grand proof that Christ has risen, and that He reigns in glory. The word spoken and blessed is "the word of a King in which there is power." As the blessed Head of the church, the Redeemer presides in ordinances that are faithfully dispensed in His name. As the King sits at His table, whether in the gospel or sacramental feast, the "spikenard" of His people's graces sends forth its
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fragrance. Through the word and ordinances which He blesses, He confers pardon—speaks peace to the conscience, gives the sense of His love, and imparts strong consolation. He subdues spiritual enemies. He makes the place of His feet glorious. His house He fills with His gracious presence; and “upon all the glory there is a defence.” Concerning Zion, it shall be said, “This and that man was born in her; and the Highest Himself shall establish her” (Ps. lxxxvii. 5). “And the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there” (Ezek. xlviii. 35).

Finally, the Headship of Christ over the Church secures universal diffusion and perpetuity to all generations. The church is destined to the widest extension. “The mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains”—(Isa. ii. 2). “The ‘Little Stone,’ cut out without hands, becomes a great mountain, and ultimately ‘fills the earth’” (Dan. ii. 35). The Mediator, invested with universal sovereignty, will, in due time, put forth His power for the church’s wide extension. The gospel—“the word of the kingdom”—shall be preached “to every creature.” Zion’s light shall be diffused throughout the nations, till “the vail of the covering” that envelopes them shall be rent asunder. The outward ordinances of visible Christianity shall be dispensed universally and in purity; and the means of grace shall be rendered effectual by the outpouring of the Spirit. Idolatry, superstition, error, and oppression shall be removed. The power of Antichrist shall be destroyed, and Mahommedan delusion shall cease. All Israel shall be saved. The fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. “The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ” (Rev. xi. 15). “He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth” (Ps. lxxii. 8). By the power of her exalted King, the Church shall be perpetuated on the earth. Other dominions have in them the seeds of decay and decline, and are doomed to perish; but this endures throughout all ages and to eternity. “He shall reign over the house of Judah for ever.” “His name shall be continued as long as the sun—Men shall be blessed in him—all nations shall call him blessed” (Ps. lxxii. 17).

The last stage of the church’s history on earth is the brightest. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. ii. 14). “The light
of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of
the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days" (Isa.
xxx. 26). There shall arise no fifth world-power in the earth
—instead, Christ's kingdom of power, symbolized by "the
Little Stone" having become "a great mountain," shall fill the
whole earth.

The terms of prophetic announcement respecting the uni-
versality and perpetuity of the Redeemer's kingdom are singu-
larly expressive and emphatic. Dan. vii. 14—"Behold, one
like the Son of man was brought to the Ancient of days . . .
and there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,
that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him;
His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass
away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

The Dominion of Christ over nations and over the invisible
world, which has sometimes been termed His "subsidiary
kingdom," is necessary to his Headship over the church, and
essential to the enjoyment by His people of the benefits re-
sulting from it. Their eternal salvation could not be effected,
if the Redeemer had not direct and absolute control over all
persons, events, and things that could oppose or frustrate it.
The church's enlargement and final universal establishment
could not be accomplished, if her exalted Head was destitute of
authority and power to render everything in the universe sub-
servient to these glorious ends. Zion's children have the
highest reason to be joyous in their King (Ps. cxlix. 3). His
people may ever rejoice that He reigns over all, and that there
is nothing that is not put in subjection under Him. The world's
peace and happiness are inseparably connected with the
church's stability and prosperity. The enthroned Mediator
reigns to put down opposing power and authority. By spirit-
ual conversion or by judgments poured out, He will effect
the entire subjection of man everywhere to His sceptre of
righteousness. The whole earth shall be filled with His glory.
The royal Headship of the Redeemer is fully adequate to ac-
complish these important ends.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper exhibits in the most
attractive aspects the glory of the Saviour's person, offices, and
finished atonement. It especially displays the lustre of His
crown and sceptre, as the King and Head of the church. As
her living Head and Husband, He condescends to maintain
the nearest communion with His people, and to confer upon
then honourable privileges. Right views of His supreme and exclusive Headship would guard and protect the ordinance from all unscriptural perversions and conceptions, and would render its observance the means of extensive blessing to the church—and of the future establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth. It is only by the due confession of the Saviour's Mediatorial Headship that the abundant benefit of the sacrament of the Supper to the church as a Covenant-Society can be realized. In our apprehension, the purity, power, and rich fruits of this distinguishing ordinance can never be fully known and enjoyed, save in connection with the grand article of a blood-sealed Testimony—the supreme universal Mediatorial Headship of the Redeemer over the church and over all things for her benefit. The call to the enjoyment of the highest privilege is, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart" (Song iii. 11).
CHAPTER III.

THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

The Scriptures teach plainly and everywhere that human salvation is wholly of God’s sovereign free grace. Being of Divine favour alone in its origin, and in all the provision made for its accomplishment, its actual enjoyment is through a gracious work in the heart—especially by faith whereby we become partakers of Christ, and all the benefits of redemption. The faith which is saving unites to Christ, and appropriates Him in all His offices and blessings, and is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, in the use of certain ordained means. Through His agency, the soul dead in sin is quickened, and sinners are born again. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* The Saviour, in His discourse with Nicodemus, declares the indispensable necessity of faith, equally as of the New birth, in order to salvation. “Ye must be born again.” “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”†

Though the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart—renewing and transforming the moral nature, is direct and immediate, it is by means of the truth revealed in the Word. We are “born again of incorruptible seed by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.” “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”‡ The grand and eminent means by which faith works, and realizes its end—the salvation of the soul, is “the Word of truth”—and as subsidiary, and confirmatory of the word—the sacraments of the Covenant. Our Westminster Standards teach that we can only “escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin,” and come to the enjoyment of life eternal—“through faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life”—as the internal work of grace in the heart, and by “the diligent use of the word, sacrament, and prayer”—as the external means by which are “communicated

* John iii. 6. † John iii. 7, 14, 15. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 23; Jas. i. 18; Rom. x. 14.
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the benefits of redemption." This is briefly and comprehensively stated in the words of the Hiedelberg Catechism—"The Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel, and confirms it by the use of the Sacraments." The Gospel is thus presented as the Divine testimony which we are required to believe; and the Sacraments are provided for the confirmation and assurance of this testimony to our hearts. In the expressive words of Bishop Jewell, "As the seals of princes confirm and warrant their deeds and charters, so do the Sacraments witness to our consciences that God's promises are true, and shall continue for ever. Thus doth God make known His secret to His Church: first, He declareth His mercy by His word; then, He sealeth and openeth it by His sacraments. In the word, we have His promises, in the sacraments, we see them."

The term Sacrament is not found in the Scriptures, but is a word of Latin origin, used by the early Christians to designate the confirming ordinances of religion. It was at first, applied, in a civil sense, to whatever was consecrated or set apart for a sacred purpose. Money deposited as a pledge by contending parties was so termed, because, in the case of forfeiture, it was handed over to sacred uses. An oath made in the name of some deity was styled a sacrament; and especially the oath of a Roman soldier to his general, in which he bound himself to obey his commands, to follow him in victory or defeat, and never to desert his standard, was thus designated. The special ordinances of the New Testament are sometimes represented as receiving the name of sacraments, in allusion to the military oath, because they involve a solemn vow of a like kind to the Captain of salvation. There is, however, no evidence that the primitive Christians had any reference to this usage when they employed this designation. With much greater propriety, it may be shown that the term is derived from the Latin rendering of the Greek word (μυστήριον) mystery, which is found in various passages of the New Testament—and applied to anything sacred or consecrated—and not infrequently to a sign that had a secret import, the knowledge of which could only be acquired by the initiated.* In this sense, a sacrament may be regarded, in general, as a sign or symbol of

* In the Vulgate, the word μυστήριον is rendered Sacramentum in Eph. i. 9; iii. 9; Col. i. 27; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Rev. i. 20. In Eph. v. 32—"This is a great mystery," etc.—Vulgate—"Hoc est magnum sacramentum." So 1 Tim. iii. 16—"Great is the mystery of godliness,"—Vulgate—"Magnum est sacramentum," etc.
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a thing sacred. Viewed in various aspects, the name may be taken to indicate simply the external signs or rites, or the internal things signified by them, or, as embracing both the external and internal parts—the sign and the thing signified. In its fullest and widest sense, a Sacrament denotes a sign and seal of the Covenant of grace made between the Father and the Son for the benefit of the church.

All the Sacraments were instituted by Christ, the King and Head of the church, for conferring on her the highest blessings. In every case, they are to be regarded as signs, having in general and in all their parts, a holy or religious character. Of the sacraments of the Old Testament, Circumcision denoted the putting away of the sins of the flesh, as the Passover was an impressive sign of deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and prefigured redemption through the sacrifice of Christ. Under the New Economy, Baptism is emblematical of spiritual cleansing, and the Lord’s Supper of spiritual nourishment.* The water in baptism denotes the blood of Christ, as its effusion points to the work of the Spirit, applying it for purifying the heart and cleansing the life. The bread and the wine in the Supper point to the provision made for sustaining the spiritual life of the believer through the obedience and atoning death of the Redeemer. Designed to be perpetual, the sacraments were appointed to be a most significant and impressive means of instruction—to convey the blessings of life and salvation to those who by faith receive them, and to be seals of God’s covenant of peace for confirming and strengthening the faith and hope of believers. Not inappropriately, though rather vaguely, one of the schoolmen defines a sacrament to be “a visible sign or form of an invisible grace.”† The definition given in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is expressive and singularly comprehensive—“A holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein by visible signs, Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are represented, sealed and applied to believers.” We are thus taught, that, in order to an ordinance being a sacrament, an illustrative sign is absolutely required; and that

* In Maestricht’s learned work—“Theoretico-Practica Theologia,” Tom. ii., the subject of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper is discussed with much fulness, under the heads of the Sacrament of Initiation and of Nutrition.
† Peter Lombard—“Sacramentum invisibilis gratiae visibilis forma.” Augustine also says—“An external offering is a visible sacrament of an invisible sacrifice, that is a holy sign.”—City of God, B. x. c. 5.
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this sign is designed to be, in some sort, a representation of the objects of our faith. The washing of water in baptism is a designed figure of the purification of our souls by the blood of Christ, as the participation of the outward elements in the Supper symbolizes our spiritual nourishment by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and our communion with the members of His mystical body.

The sacraments, moreover, are not mere signs and representations, however vivid or impressive—they are likewise seals, ratifying the Divine Covenant and confirming, to those who are interested in it, the blessings which it provides and confers. Thus, the sacrament of Circumcision was appended to God's Covenant with Abraham, and was "a sign and seal of the righteousness by faith."* To the father of the faithful it was God's own seal to the truth of the promise, as it separated and distinguished his seed from the world lying in wickedness, and assured them of the possession of all the blessings provided in the Covenant. So, the sacraments of the New Testament, which have superseded those of the Old, assure those who rightly receive them of their interest in the promise, and seal to them the enjoyment of all salvation blessings. As, by circumcision, the seed of Abraham became "debtors to fulfil the whole law," so, in both the sacraments under the Gospel, we seal our solemn engagement to be the Lord's.

The sacrament is a sign and seal of the grace of God—appointed by God, and instituted by Christ, the Mediator, as King and Head of the church. To God alone it belongs to prescribe the manner in which He will be worshipped; and, therefore, it is wholly unlawful, on the one hand, to neglect the observance of ordinances which he has appointed; and on the other, to bring aught into the sacraments which He has not commanded. The Lord Jesus as sole and sovereign Head of the church, claims the exclusive prerogative of prescribing all His ordinances, as He presides over all the administration. He alone gives the word, and accompanies it with saving power. To it He appends the sacraments, and when they are observed as He instituted them, He renders them efficient for the grand designs of His wisdom and love in His people's salvation. Not unsuitably, therefore, does Augustine declare—"He hath joined the word to the element or sign, and it is made a sacrament."

* Gen. xvii. 10; Rom. iv. 11.
The *Ends* for which the sacraments have been instituted by the Redeemer are, in the highest sense, important and beneficent. They are given to nourish and confirm our faith in the Gospel. This they do by the working of the Spirit in them who truly partake of them, in various respects. They *represent* to our outward senses, by lively and significant emblems, the great truths of the system of grace. They thus aid our weakness, in bringing down Divine mysteries to the level of our minds. The water applied in baptism thus becomes the significant means of fixing our hearts upon the necessity of the application of the blood of Christ for pardon and sanctification, and of the power of the Spirit in renewing the heart. By the word, our souls are nourished up to life eternal; and the sacrament of the Supper, by presenting bread and wine to our outward senses, powerfully reminds us of our entire dependence upon Christ's atoning sacrifice, for the food and life of the soul. The sacraments were designed to be *badges* to the Lord's people of their separation from the world, and of their union in the same mystical body to Christ, the living Head. The church of Christ is a "sacramental host," separated from the world—lying in the Evil one—gathered together to witness for all Christ's truth, and to fight against all the enemies of His cause in the earth. The sacraments are the badges of their solemn profession—the visible marks of their separation from the ignorant and ungodly. By these, they openly attest that they are on the Lord's side, and are identified with His people. In Baptism, the believer dedicates himself and his offspring to the Lord. In the Lord's Supper, he ratifies his vow of fidelity to Christ and His cause; and by the use of sacred symbols, he professes the nearest and most loving brotherly fellowship with saints in heaven and on earth. These holy ordinances are appointed as tokens of Christ's perpetual gracious presence in the church. In the observance of Circumcision and the Passover of old, God condescended to dwell with His people Israel; and as He met with them in these ordinances, the "Tabernacle was sanctified by His glory."* In the institution of Baptism as a sacrament, He declared to His servants dispensing it, in the Great Commission—"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."† And in the Lord's Supper, He renews and confirms His Covenant to His people, assuring them that He will ever

* Ex. xxix. 43. † Mat. xxviii. 20.
dwell among them, and that in "all places where His name is recorded," He will be with them, to bless them. Showing forth Christ's death, till He come again, believers have the visible sign of His special presence now, as they enjoy bright visions and foretastes of His glorious presence in His everlasting kingdom. The Doctrinal Symbols of the Reformed Churches give full and harmonious expression to such views of the nature and ends of the sacraments. In the Twenty-Fifth Article of the Church of England, it is declared—"Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession; but rather they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace, and of God's will towards us, by which He doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him." In the Heidelberg Confession (Art. xxxiii.) the following full and explicit statement is made—"We believe that our gracious God, on account of our weakness and infirmities, hath ordained the sacraments for us, whereby to seal unto us His promises, and to be pledges of the goodwill and grace of God toward us, and also to nourish and strengthen our faith, which He hath joined to the word of the Gospel, the better to present to our senses, both that which He signifies to us by His word, and that which He works inwardly in our hearts, whereby assuring and confirming in us the salvation which He imparts to us."

And in the Westminster Confession, "Sacraments" are described as "holy signs and seals of the Covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His benefits, and to confirm our interest in Him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His word."

Augustine thus expressly sets forth the ends of the Sacraments—"God hath gathered together the fellowship of a new people by Sacraments, very few in number, very easy in observance, very excellent in signification—as is Baptism, consecrated in the name of the Trinity, and the Communion of His own body and blood."—(Aug. Ep. 118, ad. Januar.)*

* In the Irish Articles of Religion (1615), the nature and ends of the Sacraments are succinctly stated—"The sacraments ordained by Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather certain sure witnesses and effectual and powerful signs of grace, and of God's good will towards us, by which He doth work invisibly in us, and not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him."
CHAPTER IV.

THE LORD’S SUPPER—ITS INSTITUTION—THE TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCES—THE LESSONS TAUGHT BY ITS APPOINTMENT.

The sacramental seals of the Old Testament—CIRCUMCISION and THE PASSOVER—had a like general significance with those of the New Economy—BAPTISM and the LORD'S SUPPER—which have replaced them. Circumcision, like Baptism, was a sign of initiation in the covenant; and the Lord's Supper, equally with the Passover, is symbolical of nourishment in the covenant. Both these New Testament ordinances are simpler in their elements and in the mode of their observance: they are designed for more universal observance, and with greater clearness, they exhibit the spiritual blessings which they are the ordained means of communicating.

The Historical account of the institution and first observance of the Lord's Supper, as given by the different Evangelists, details the circumstances at the close of the Saviour's personal ministry with singular simplicity, in the most vivid and affecting manner. Six days before the last significant Passover celebrated on earth, our Lord came up from Jericho towards Jerusalem, where He was to suffer and die; and arrived, probably late on Friday evening, at Bethany, the house of Lazarus and his sisters. There, in the retreat of a loving and beloved family—and in sanctified friendship, the Redeemer of the world spent His last earthly Sabbath. In the evening of the day—either in their own house, or in one near, whose owner owed to the Saviour the miraculous love which restored him to society, they made Him a supper—all seeking to put honour upon Him as a Divine Guest and their blessed Benefactor. Martha serves: Lazarus sits at the table with the Lord—the fresh proof of His Omnipotence; while Mary gives expression to her gratitude and heartfelt affection in a way which, though blamed by the disciples, was approved by Christ, as a memorial of devoted piety to all succeeding generations.

The next day—the first of the week, was that of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. There, by an act of authority, He cleansed the Temple, wrought miracles of healing, and