

A

BRIEF INQUIRY

INTO THE

ORIGIN AND TENDENCY

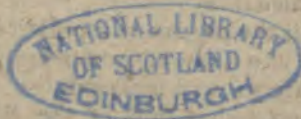
OF

SACRAMENTAL

PREACHING-DAYS.

To which is added,

AN ADVICE TO YOUTH.



KILMARNOCK :

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Sacramental Preaching-Days.

IT is well known that in all the Presbyterian connexions in this country, national and dissenting, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is attended with a number of extra preaching-days. The previous Thursday is *wholly* devoted to fasting, and prayer, and preaching. The previous Saturday is considered as a day of preparation, to assist in which, two sermons are ordinarily preached. The following Monday is regarded as a day of thanksgiving, to assist in which exercise, two sermons are also preached. Besides, on the Sacrament Sabbath, especially in country places, there is usually an extra congregation, collected from the surrounding neighbourhood, to whom a number of discourses are delivered in rotation, from morning till evening. Few people, however, are aware that this practice is entirely peculiar to Scotland, and that, except among the descendants of emigrants originally from this country, it is quite unknown beyond the boundaries of ancient Caledonia.

What then is the ORIGIN of a practice so singular, and of which the body of professing Christians in this country are so very tenacious?

1. It has no foundation in the Bible—neither precept nor example can be found there to countenance it. This is so universally admitted, that it would be unnecessary to stay and prove it. No one now pretends to find any thing in the Bible

bearing the most distant resemblance to a modern Sacrament.

2. This practice did not originate with the Scottish Reformers, the founders of the Presbyterian system in Scotland. In proportion as professors decay in vital religion, in that proportion do they become fond of external splendour and show—of a multiplicity of ceremonies and holy-days, in religion. Accordingly we find, that, as vital godliness declined in the primitive churches, ceremonies and holy-days were introduced and multiplied, till, at length, every trace of the primitive Christian worship disappeared; and the public profession of Christianity becoming a mass of the most ludicrous mummery—of the most childish rites, retained nothing of the religion of Heaven but the name. When the churches of the Reformation withdrew from Rome, they brought away with them, and still retain too many of those meretricious ornaments, in which the man of sin arrayed the religion of Jesus. To the honour of the Scotch Reformers it must be remarked, however, that they were in this respect in a great measure singular. They rejected all unscriptural ceremonies and holy-days, and adopted a mode of worship sufficiently simple, and well adapted to all the ends of instruction and edification. Of such a religious festival, as is now called a Sacramental occasion, they never dreamed. The directory for public worship, adopted by them, is not only silent on it, but inconsistent with it. Dr. McCrie in his *Life of Melville*, speaking of the attempt of King James to establish a religious anniversary to commemorate his escape from the conspiracy of the Earl of Gowrie, on the 5th of August 1600; says, “This appointment was at variance with the principles of the Church of Scotland, which, ever since the Reformation, had condemned and laid aside the observance of religious

anniversaries, and of all recurring holy-days, with the exception of the weekly rest."* This system then did not originate with the Reformers—was not part of the Presbyterian worship as originally adopted in Scotland, and approved of by them.

3. It is not the result of the collective wisdom or combined sagacity of any of the great deliberative courts, that usually regulated the affairs of religion in Scotland, in former times.

Though we meet with acts, almost innumerable, civil and ecclesiastic, enacting—enjoining—ordaining various things relative to religion, yet we look in vain for an Act of Parliament—of Assembly—of Synod or of Presbytery, enjoining that the administration of the Sacrament be attended with a routine of preaching-days. "It is to be observed," says Mr. Douglas, "that these days were not all introduced at once, nor in consequence of any general consent or pre-concerted plan; for they are the mere offspring of incidental circumstances, and can claim no relation to wisdom and counsel as their parent†."

How then, it will be asked, were they introduced? I answer, strange as the answer may appear, no one knows with certainty when or how! Were we tracing to its origin, one of those customs which took their rise in the midnight darkness of popery, disappointment were naturally to be expected; but that a custom that cannot boast of two hundred years standing—that has obtained so universally—and of which, the body of the people are so tenacious, cannot be traced, but by conjecture, to its rise, is not a little curious! They were introduced," says Dr. Mason, "like all other unwarranted rites—by stealth. They originate, per-

* Life of Melville, vol. ii. page 171.

† Dialogues on the Lord's Supper,—Dialogue 5th page, 116.

aps, in accident; they are continued without design; the popularity of a name recommends them to respect; one imitates another: and thus, or ever we are aware, they glide into the worship of God, and usurp the dignity of his institutions." And again, "It seems evident that they crept into the church by *degrees*; that *custom*, regardless of the reason of things, and equally tenacious of the wrongs of the right, transmitted them to posterity; and that undistinguishing habit, and the belief of the cradle, have numbered them with the ordinances of *ESUS CHRIST*."*

It is more than probable, that they were gradually introduced during the prevalence of Episcopacy, and of the cruel persecution by which it was introduced and established against the general sentiment of the nation, during the first forty years of the 17th century. In the course of this period, many godly conscientious ministers were banished to Ireland, where they preached with great success, and from whence they occasionally visited their native land, to preach to their countrymen. On those occasions, the people crowded from all parts of the country to hear them, and to enjoy the Lord's Supper in the way to which they had been accustomed. Nothing was more natural than that the people, who had literally a famine of the word of God, should on those occasions eagerly desire as many sermons as could be afforded; and that those godly men should, as far as possible, gratify them. Saturday and Monday sermons, were therefore, exceedingly natural, when crowds were collected at the appointed places, on, or before Saturday, who could not retire to their homes till the following week. —It is indeed probable, that such occurrences, occasionally at least, took place previously to the

* Letters on frequent Communion, —Letter 6th.

height of the persecution which drove them into banishment. While many of their brethren fell in with the prevailing practice, the people would naturally follow those who held by their own beloved system, and suffered persecution for conscience' sake; and the attachment of the body of the people to them, and their aversion to the Episcopalian and temporizing Presbyterian clergy, would naturally increase the violence of the persecution against them.

In Ireland, the zealous labours of those men produced a considerable revival of religion. "During this time," says Mr. Randal, "one sermon on Saturday, and one on Monday, was all that they had; and generally but one minister assisting during the whole."* From this extract it appears, that a practice to which persecution had given rise in Scotland, was continued, probably without the same necessity, in Ireland. We may, therefore, conclude, that when those good men returned to their native land, about the year 1638, they imported this practice into their former scene of labour, where it has continued with various modifications to this day.

The late Dr. Erskine, speaking of the origin of this plan, says, "I know no certain account of that matter. It began, says one, in the persecuting times, when many ministers under hiding, and the whole Presbyterians of a country, by stealth, got together. And when they met together for this end, (to eat the Lord's Supper,) it may be once in several years they knew not how often to preach; and the people had a boundless appetite to hear, so long as they could subsist and be safe."†

As to Sacramental Fasts, Mr. Randal suppose

* Letter to a minister of the church of Scotland from his friend concerning frequent Communicating.—Postscript.

† Dissertation on frequent Communicating.

that they are also from Ireland. During the residence of the Scotch ministers in that country, they jointly held a monthly meeting for fasting; and frequently the Lord's Supper was celebrated in one or other of their parishes, on the following Sabbath. "I know," says, Mr. Randal, "no such likely beginning to our Fasts before our Sacraments as this is."*

It is true, that Mr. Livingston preached on the Monday after the Sacrament at the Kirk of Shots, in the year 1630, but this sermon being preached at the particular request of Lady Culross, and with some reluctance on his part, proves that it was not then customary, nor understood to have any connexion with the Lord's Supper.

The foregoing conjectures of various writers, who have enquired into the subject, furnish us with the only probable origin of this system; and had it been laid aside when the cause which gave rise to it ceased to operate, it had been well. But the continuance of it without any adequate cause, or rational use, has done no little injury.

Before entering on the second part of the inquiry viz. the TENDENCY of this system, I must premise two things.

1. That I have no objections to week-day sermons *as such*. It is the duty of preachers to "be instant in season and out of season;" and where people are ready to hear, the opportunity ought to be eagerly embraced; and may be expected to be followed with happy effects.

2. That I have no doubt, that Sacramental preaching-days may have been made useful on many occasions, in the conversion of sinners, and building up of believers in faith and holiness. God has promised that his word shall not return unto him

* Letter, &c.—Postscript.

void; and wherever dispensed according to his own institution, his blessing may be expected with it. Yet notwithstanding these concessions, I maintain, with Dr. Mason, that this system is “attended with great and serious evils.”* These evils, may perhaps be comprehended under two heads—putting the Lord’s Supper out of its proper place, and contributing to its profanation.

1. The system of preaching-days has put the Lord’s Supper out of its proper place among gospel institutions. That the Lord’s Supper, made a part of the public worship of the primitive churches, *every first day of the week*, admits not of rational doubt. What else would any man unfettered by system, infer from the following passages, Acts ii. 42. “They continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers.” Here, the breaking of bread is mentioned, not as an extraordinary occurrence, but as a part of the ordinary duties of stated public worship. Acts, xx. 7. “On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.” Here, it is evident, that one special design of their coming together, on the first day of the week, was to break bread: 1 Cor. xi. 20. “When ye come together, therefore, unto one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.” This shews that the *avowed* design of their coming together was to eat the Lord’s Supper; but that their *manner of doing it* was inconsistent with this design. These passages, mutually illustrate and confirm one another; and it would be a violent wresting of them, to compel them to speak any other language.

Nor was this the practice of the apostolic churches merely, but continued for ages the invariable practice

* Letters on frequent Communion. — Letter 7th.

of all Christian societies. The late Mr. Randal, after having minutely investigated the records of the primitive ages of Christianity, on this subject, thus concludes; "Consider then antiquity in what view you please, the elder or the later accounts;—consider it among enemies or friends;—view it in its truth or in its lies;—in its simplicity or in its superstitions;—consider all the accounts, which all sorts of men have given; take the evidence from as distant corners of the world, and opposite characters in it as you please, from those who have no bias but to the truth, or from such whose opinions and interests would lead them to give this subject a colour if it could bear it,—and all with one voice shall declare, that to come together on the first day of the week to break bread, was from the beginning and for many ages, the custom, the uninterrupted, unquestioned, undisputed practice of all Christian churches: as much so, as it was their practice to sanctify the Lord's day, or to pray, praise, or preach the apostles' doctrine on it:—that as this was the most distinguishing part of their worship, so was it what they and their worship was described by, and the action by which among themselves, the Lord's day was known, what consequently they would least and last of all have omitted, while any degree of the purity of the gospel remained among them."*

The late Mr. Brown of Haddington, is equally decisive on the subject. "That the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," says he, "was generally administered every Lord's day, for the space of three hundred years, is beyond dispute."†

* Letter to a minister of the church of Scotland from his friend, concerning frequent Communicating.

† Apology for the frequent administration of the Lord's Supper, page 6.

It appears that the Reformers were generally of the same mind on this subject, although from the rude materials on which they had to work, they were obliged to temporize. Calvin says, expressly, that "the Lord's table ought to be spread for his children every Lord's day." The Genevan Reformers introduced it monthly into their church, and it appears that the Scotch Reformers, as was to be expected, followed their example; for the "Book of common Order," supposes that the Lord's Supper was administered once a month. But with the present preaching appendages, it is impossible to make any thing like an approach toward the primitive practice. Thus a set of unscriptural holy-days—the mere inventions of men, have put the Lord's Supper out of its own place among gospel institutions—have driven it into a corner. Nor, let it be remembered, is the view of this subject maintained in this Inquiry, peculiar to those who act upon it. Presbyterians, both in and out of the establishment, have lately advocated the cause of weekly communion, by arguments that cannot be refuted. The writings of RANDAL and ERSKINE in the Establishment, of DOUGLAS and HUTCHESON among the Relief, and of BROWN and MASON among the Seceders, are well known, and well worthy of the attention of all who would inquire into this subject. I am glad to know, that a respectable Presbyterian congregation in Paisley, have been for years in the habit of eating the Lord's Supper monthly. I trust, they are aware, that "they have not yet attained, neither are already perfect"—that they have no more Bible authority for monthly, than they have for yearly communion; except that the one is *nearer* the Divine rule than the other.

2. The system of preaching-days has put the Lord's Supper out of its place, in point of solemnity and importance.

The Lord's Supper is a very solemn, a very important ordinance; but that it is so in a manner or in a degree peculiar to itself, is without proof in reason or in Scripture. What Paul says to the Corinthians on this subject, (1 Epistle chap. xi.) arises not from any peculiar solemnity in this ordinance, but from the manner in which they prostituted and profaned it. All the ordinances of the Lord are solemn and important, and to profane any of them is highly criminal. The ordinance of Baptism, for instance, is instituted by the same authority, and designed to represent the same truth—the salvation of sinners by the death of Christ; must it not then be equally solemn, and equally important; and must not the abuse or profanation of it be equally criminal. Yet how few are there, even among Christians, who view the subject in this light—who would not shudder at the thought of placing baptism on a level, in point of solemnity and importance, with the Lord's Supper. Now whence does this supposed disparity arise? Not from the language of scripture on the subject of these institutions, surely. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," is, to say the least of it, just as solemn and impressive, as, 'Do this in remembrance of me.'—'As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.' Not from the nature of these institutions, for if they are enjoined by the same authority—distinct parts of the same religious system, and designed to represent the same important truth, they must be alike solemn in their nature, and alike entitled to our reverence and veneration. It must arise therefore, principally, from the spurious glare thrown around the latter by a parade of holy-days, and a train of prescribed exercises, by means of which every other ordinance is thrown into the shade, and dwindles into comparative insignificance!

3. The system of preaching-days has put the Lord's Supper out of its proper place, in the affections of the Lord's people.

These preaching-days have now been so long, and so closely appended to it, that they are viewed as an *essential* part of it; so much so, that to propose to lay them aside, would, in the esteem even of serious Christians, be nearly as bad as giving up the Lord's Supper. In fact, it is not eating the Lord's Supper, but the preaching-days, that in the estimation of the bulk of Christians constitute the *Sacrament!* It is these that constitute its main importance—its principal charm; hence appropriately enough called *the preachings*. Strip it of these external decorations—exhibit it in its native and primitive simplicity—introduce it as a part of the public worship of every Lord's day, and it will require no little training, to bring the minds of many Christians in this country, to view it without contempt. Such is the baneful influence of attempting to improve on the plans of Divine wisdom, and of adding to the institutions of the Lord! Besides, the false and fearful solemnity thrown over the Lord's Supper by these unscriptural appendages, contributes greatly to mar the peace and destroy the confidence of serious Christians in this delightful service. In place of eating the Lord's Supper with the confidence and freedom of children placed around their heavenly Father's board, they frequently approach with fear and trembling, their minds are possessed with fearful apprehensions of displeasing him, and so incurring his wrath; and their service is thus destitute of enjoyment, and their worship is often attended with a 'spirit of bondage unto fear,' unsuitable to their character, displeasing to God, and not a little distressing to their own minds. Now, with such apprehensions, and feelings, and views, the Lord's Supper cannot be approached with delight,

nor regarded with affection. The preaching-days may be attended with pleasure, and with profit; but the table of the Lord is rather an object of fear, than of delightful anticipation—a scene of fear and trembling, rather than of filial confidence and joy in God. Now, this state of things, which is by no means uncommon, must, in the case of Christians, arise in a great measure from the distorted views of its nature and design which these extra days, with their usual services, are calculated to inspire. Whereas, when viewed in its native simplicity, unencumbered with human inventions, as a commemoration of the death of Christ, and a symbolical representation of the fellowship of all the children of God with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with one another in the enjoyment of the common salvation, it is calculated in the highest degree, to inspire the Christian's mind with confidence, and joy in God.* But, not only have the preaching-days put the Lord's Supper out of its proper place in every point of view; but they have

2. Greatly contributed to its profanation.

This is no doubt a serious charge. a charge that would need to be well supported, seeing they are professedly designed to prevent this evil: yet, I am

* From the misapplication of such passages, (Exod chapters xix. and xx.) many of the best of Christians approach their reconciled God and Father with a slavish fear like that of the Israelites when approaching the mount that burned with fire; or that of Peter when he said, "depart from me, for I am a sinful man." They sit down at the table of the Lord, with as great terror as the high priest entered the holiest of all.—"Doubtless, the seldom dispensing this ordinance has led many of the less judicious, into such melancholy superstitious apprehensions, and roused such terrors in their minds, that they could not attend upon God in this institution without distraction, and thus were deprived of much of the comfort and benefit, which otherwise they would have reaped from it."——Etskine's Dissertation on frequent Communicating.—Section 3d.

persuaded, the charge will be found but too easily made out.

To profane a religious ordinance is, either to render it contemptible in the eyes of men, or to apply it to purposes for which it was not designed. Now, in both these respects, the Lord's Supper is greatly profaned by this unscriptural system.—It is rendered contemptible in the eyes of all thinking men, whether religious or otherwise.

Contemplate, for a moment, the scene of a country Sacrament Sabbath. A number of the neighbouring ministers must attend, to assist—their parishes, or congregations, if Dissenters, are left vacant—should the day be favourable, the bulk of the population of these parishes crowd to the Sacrament; many, no doubt, from pious motives, but the multitude, principally youth of both sexes, for the same purpose for which they would go to a fair or a market.—amusement and diversion, to see and be seen. Look at the bustle and confusion which the village presents; the roads, and streets, and lanes, crowded with comers and goers all the day long: look at the public-houses; the ordinary number in some places will not do: the publicans hire their neighbours' houses, and employ waiters to sell their spirits; every window presents some significant mark, to indicate what is going on within. Think of the bustle, the confusion, the noise, that this state of things must create; not to speak of the drunkenness, the quarreling, and even fighting, that sometimes ensue; think on these things, notoriously true, and say, can this be a religious ordinance, a Christian institution? Is it not much more like a popish carnival, than a gospel ordinance? In fact, it is undeniable, that the scenes of a country Sacrament have furnished a late profane wit with materials sufficiently appropriate for his 'Holy Fair.' What a degrading, what a contemptible view, do

these scenes present to thinking men, of the holy institution of the Lord's Supper!! What must sceptics, and infidels, and scoffers of all descriptions, think of that religion, of which they are supposed to be a part! I know, it will be said that these abuses are no part of the ordinance of the Supper. I know they are not. But why, then, are they associated with it? Why are they appended to it? Why is a system continued, calculated to produce and perpetuate such abuses? Would the simple observance of the Supper produce such effects, if these unscriptural appendages were given up? Impossible. While this system is continued, these abuses will follow it; and all attempts to persuade men of the difference between these abuses, and the system that gives birth to them, will prove vain and fruitless.

In an overture of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, dated Oct. 5, 1748, we find the following remarkable declaration, in exact unison with what has been said above:—'That the manner in which this holy ordinance (of the Supper) is administered among us, greatly obstructs the more frequent administration of it; and particularly, the number of sermons on such occasions, and the many parishes thereby laid vacant upon the Lord's day, are accompanied with several great inconveniences, if not also, too often, with *scandalous profanations of that holy day*. —That it would be for the interest and *honour* of religion, that some method were devised, whereby these abuses might be avoided, and the Lord's Supper more frequently administered, agreeably to the word of God, to the apostolic practice, and to the practice of the primitive church,*

But this system tends to the profanation of the Lord's Supper in another, and a still more serious

* See Dialogues on the Lord's Supper, p. 49,—Note.

light; it becomes the grand means of prostituting it to carnal, unrenewed men.

The Lord's Supper is intended for those only who are his disciples, who love the Lord Jesus, who feel interested in his death, and who therefore can remember that death with those grateful and pious feelings that are suited to the exercise, pleasing to God, and profitable to the soul. All others, be they outwardly sober or profane, moral or immoral, are without any right to it, without any just views of it, without any advantage from it, and consequently only prostitute, and profane it. But it is notorious, that multitudes, who give not the most distant evidence of conversion to God, will be found seated at the communion table, on the Sacrament Sabbath. Now, to this prostitution of this sacred ordinance, these services greatly contribute. The design and meaning of them, is to assist intending communicants in a train of previous preparation, to fit them for this important service. Hence the announcing of the Sacrament, some weeks before, becomes a sort of distant warning of the necessity of beginning preparation. But, on the preparation Sabbath, a number of duties and exercises, in the view of the approaching ordinance, are prescribed; which, from their immediate connexion with it, are not understood to be necessary on ordinary occasions. Now, from what is ordinarily said on these occasions, people, even the most careless and irreligious, commonly infer two things—that going to the Lord's table is an important duty, a duty which it would be very criminal and dangerous to neglect, and which, being performed, will be attended with some special, though mysterious advantage, such as, eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ, &c.; and, that a regular attendance on the public services of the week, and some attention to the personal exercises prescribed,

will prepare for the due performance of this necessary duty. With the idea thus impressed on their minds, that the would-be holiness of a week will compensate for the unrighteousness of a year, and secure the favour and approbation of God, what is to be expected, but that multitudes, without faith, without repentance, without holiness, without love to God, to his law, to his Son, or to his people, should, after a few formal prayers, and other prescribed duties, during the Sacrament week, be found at the communion table, on the Sacrament Sabbath, in the expectation of clearing scores with their Maker, who will as naturally, and as certainly, turn again to their vices, as the dog to his vomit, or the sow to the mire!

It is impossible not to see what a ruinous lure this must become to multitudes of precious souls, what a sad and fearful prostitution of a sacred ordinance, and what a distorted view of the simple and holy religion of Jesus, it must present to the world. Whereas, let it be exhibited in its scriptural frequency and simplicity, let it be divested of the parade of extra services that now mar its beauty, and obscure its meaning; let people be taught that it is not any course of prescribed preparation, but the possession of a previous character, that gives right to it, and benefit from it, and it will, by the blessing of God, go far to prevent these evils.

‘Frequent and simple communion,’ says Dr. Mason, ‘will probably purge the church of unworthy members.’ Perhaps there could not be devised a more effectual expedient for getting rid of them, than employing them in spiritual work. With abundance of formality, they may attend to the notorious *externals* of religion: and as a bridle to conscience, and a set-off to character, they may have no objection to the communion, *if it be not too often*. Once or twice a-year will do. But strip this pre-

scious ordinance of the additions that nurture legality, and flatter pride; let it be as plain as the Bible made it, and as often as a believer needs it; let there be nothing to render it impressive, but its subject, or alluring, but its spirituality; and mark the consequence. The former zealot will cool: Novelty, decency, example, may secure his compliance for a while; but it will be strange if his impatience do not at last get the ascendancy. Without affection to Jesus Christ, he will tire of his Supper. Without a principle of spiritual life, he will count spiritual worship intolerable; the more spiritual, the more intolerable; and the holy communion, the most intolerable of all. His soul will loathe the heavenly manna, and by degrees he will drop off.*—‘Are there not many now,’ says Mr. Randal, ‘who bear the fatigue of waiting on a yearly Sacrament, for different reasons, who would tire of an habitual continuing in what they have no relish for, or a church tire of them?’†

The late of Mr. Brown of Haddington, accounts, in the following rational manner, for the original deviation from the primitive frequency and simplicity of the Lord's Supper.—‘When the church began to share the smiles and support of the Emperor, and his court, multitudes, influenced by carnal motives, thronged into it, and they were easily admitted, though indeed many of them were far from being visible saints. These carnal and court Christians disliked being from week to week employed in self-examination, and other preparatory work, or living under the impression of so frequent and solemn approaching to God. They also disliked the simplicity of this, as well as other gospel ordinances, and were mightily fond that the Chris-

* Letters on Frequent Communion, Letter 9.

† Letter to a Minister, &c.

ian worship should be modelled as near the Pagan and Jewish forms as possible. The clergy, possessed with the same vitiated taste, and besides being very solicitous to procure themselves the favour of the great, transformed the Christian worship according to these patterns.* To the same purpose, speaks the late Dr. Erskine—‘In the fourth century, defection from the primitive purity of the church, began more and more to appear. The most probable cause I can assign for this, is, that till then the religion of Christ being persecuted, few professed it, who had not felt the power of it on their hearts. But soon after, Christianity becoming the established religion of the empire, a greater number of hypocrites, from views of worldly interest, intermingled themselves with the true disciples of Christ; and in a century or two more, this little leaven leavened the whole lump.’—‘Such nominal Christians could have no just sense of the use and benefit of the Lord’s Supper, and the obligations to frequent it. Having only the form of godliness, without the power of it, it is no wonder that the frequent return of religious exercises should be uneasy and disagreeable to them. Their example would soon be followed by lukewarm Christians, who had fallen from their first love.’†

From the foregoing extracts, we see to what these respectable Presbyterians attribute the first departure from the simplicity of Christian worship—to the introduction of crowds of unrenewed men into fellowship with the churches; and if similar causes produce similar effects, wherever this practice is continued, all attempts at scriptural reformation will be defeated by these characters. We need not wonder that the Reformers, with all their influence, could not carry their reformation, on this

* Apology for Frequent Communion, p. 11.

† Dissertation, &c. Section 2,

head, to any thing like the Bible pattern, or to what they themselves saw to have been the primitive practice : when we consider that multitudes embraced the reformed doctrines, who gave no evidence of conversion to God, and that all who became Protestants, were admitted to fellowship with the Protestant churches. Principal Baillie, of the University of Glasgow, one of the Commissioners from Scotland, to the Westminster Assembly, in one of his Letters, says, that not one in forty of the members of the best reformed churches, gave any evidence of true grace and regeneration! How is it possible that such churches could be reduced to any thing like scriptural order of discipline, or that such fearful crowds of unconverted men could be brought under the influence of the authority of Christ, or of the love of his simple and holy institutions? And in proportion as this state of things continues, in that proportion is reformation, in regard to the Supper, or any other point of scriptural order, unattainable. I am persuaded that there are now very few godly ministers, who have thought at all on this subject, who are not convinced in their consciences, that the Lord's Supper was designed, and continued for ages to be a weekly institution of the Christian dispensation; and that, consequently, sacramental preaching days are not only unscriptural inventions of men; but also the cause of much delusion, the source of much self-righteousness, and the occasion of a dreadful prostitution of this sacred ordinance.

But then, as most churches are now composed and constituted, they are aware that any reformation, worthy of the name, is quite out of the question. Hence they endeavour to make the most and the best of things as they are. Indeed, when men prove to a demonstration, that the Lord's Supper was for ages a weekly institution with the

followers of Christ, with what grace can they insist, as Randal, and Erskine, and Brown, and others, have done, on a reformation that would only carry it to three or four times a year! There is something so incongruous in it, that thinking men rather let it alone altogether, than lay themselves open to the charge of such inconsistency.

On the whole, if sacramental preaching-days be in their origin modern, in their nature unscriptural, in their tendency injurious—if they have put the Lord's Supper out of its place, and surrounded it with a spurious solemnity—if they have marred its native simplicity, and obscured its genuine meaning—if they become the grand means of alluring carnal, unconverted men, to prostitute this sacred institution, and to deceive and ruin their own souls—if they give the world an unscriptural view of Christian institutions, and become an effectual barrier to reformation on this head, (and Presbyterians have often acknowledged, and deplored as much,)—if so, it is high time they were laid aside; and it is high time, too, that Christians, and especially Christian ministers, were seriously inquiring, how they shall be able to answer to God, for supporting and countenancing a system, so unscriptural in its nature, and so hurtful to saints and sinners, in its tendency; and that too, it may be in direct opposition to the convictions of their own minds! To conclude, let the reader attend to the following queries, by the late Mr. Brown:—Whether is it grace or corruption that most affects to add human devices to God's worship to make it more splendid than Christ has left it? May not persons be as really guilty of popery, by doating on the splendid pomp of divine ordinances, that consists in the variety of days, sermons, and ministers, as by doating on the variety of fantastic ceremonies used in the popish mass? Ought we not to beware of adding to God's

ordinances, as well as of taking from them? Is God content to barter with us on this point, by giving up with frequent communion, if we will annex a few more days, sermons, ministers, and people to it, when seldom administered? Where does he either make, or declare his acceptance of, this proposal?*"—The reader is requested to endeavour to answer these queries, in his own mind, as in the sight of God.

• Apology, &c. p. 87.

Advice to Youth,

ALL in this country bear the name of Christians, and acknowledge the truth of the Bible; yet there is reason to fear, that the revelation of God is in general completely mistaken. Christianity commended as containing an admirable system of morality, while the foundation of this morality is entirely overlooked. Love to God and men is universally acknowledged to be a duty; but men disobey God, and injure one another, from the strength of their passions, in the indulgence of which they endeavour to obtain happiness.

The Bible lays the axe to the root of human corruption. It informs us, that so far as the present life is concerned, our doom is fixed; that, in consequence of sin, sorrow, disappointment and death are our lot in this world; and that we may as well expect to stop the sun in his course, as to escape them. It also informs us, that God so loved the world as

to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. To him we are directed as the only Saviour from sin, and sorrow, and death. We are assured that those who trust in him shall never come into condemnation; that through him God pardons the most guilty; that all believers shall be raised from the dead to dwell with Jesus for ever. The knowledge of this salvation is the foundation of Christian morality. The man who believes this, will no longer pursue happiness where he knows it to be unattainable. In the life and death of Jesus, he has learned the impossibility of escaping what is appointed for all; and now his hopes of happiness centre in being raised from the dead, and sharing the blessings of the kingdom of Christ. This leads him to consider himself a stranger and pilgrim here. He looks for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Here is a lesson which philosophy could never teach. This, says an apostle, is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith, 1 John v. 4.

Reader, are you possessed of this faith? Are you waiting for the appearing of the Son of God? Does the love of Christ in giving himself to die for sinners, constrain you to live not to yourself but to God? if so, happy are you. Your trials will soon be over, and you shall enter into the joy of your Lord. But ah! if this be not the case; if your mind be engrossed with earthly objects; if the love of sin be unbroken in your heart, you have cause to tremble. That Jesus, who once died for sin on Calvary; who came meek and lowly, and having salvation, will shortly come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory to consume all who disregard his authority; and who preferred the enjoyment of the vanities of time and sense to the glorious prospect of inheriting his kingdom.

Reject not this solemn warning. If hitherto you have been careless and worldly minded, now look to the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin. Search the scriptures. They contain the words of eternal life; and this life can only be enjoyed by faith in the Son of God.

You have perhaps often resolved not to give way to your passions. You have reflected on the unsatisfactory nature of earthly enjoyments, and determined to be their slave no longer but you have broken these resolutions, and are still hurried forward in pursuit of that which experience teaches you to be unsatisfactory and vain. Hearken now to Jesus. He invites you to true happiness. He promises you indeed neither riches nor honour in this world. He requires you to take up your cross and follow him; patiently to endure, as he did, the sorrows of this life, under the animating assurance of a glorious resurrection to eternal life.

Reader, reject not the counsel of God against yourself. To Jesus every knee shall bow. If now you submit to him, he will guide and support you while here, and afterwards receive you to glory. But, if you neglect his great salvation, if you now refuse to hearken to his voice, the time is approaching when it will arouse you from your grave, to receive from his lips that irreversible sentence which awaits all who lend a deaf ear to the proclamation of mercy. With this solemn warning, I now take leave of you, appealing for the truth of the contents of this paper to the unerring word of God, to which you at all times have access, and which shall judge you at the last day.

F I N I S.