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CHEAP TRACTS No. 19.

(Second Edition.)

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A SHORT ILLUSTRATION  
OF THE  
**COMMISSION**

GIVEN BY

*Jesus Christ*

TO HIS APOSTLES.

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PART SECOND,

WHAT BELIEVERS ARE CALLED TO PRACTISE.

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READER, if it is the conviction of your mind—that JESUS is the CHRIST the Son of GOD—and that, as such, he is ordained king and head of his Church, and endowed with all power and authority to make laws for the regulation of his kingdom in this world,—the following pages will excite in your mind the greatest interest, and be read with the most anxious attention: and although there may be Doctrines and Duties presented to your notice in a way which it is very probable you have not been accustomed to view them, you are earnestly entreated not on this account to reject them as unfounded and untrue, but to try them by the Scriptures, how far they differ or agree with the Law and the Testimony; and so far as they agree or are opposed to the Word of God, in so far will it be your duty to receive or reject them.

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THE COMMISSION GIVEN BY JESUS CHRIST  
TO HIS APOSTLES.

MATTHEW xxvlii.—18. 19. 20.—And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

PART SECOND,

*What Believers are called to practise.*

IN directing the reader's attention to these words in a former Tract, we endeavoured to set forth the dignity and power of the Lord Jesus Christ as king and law-giver in his Church,—the import of that Commission he gave his Apostles,—its extent,—the manner in which they executed it,—and what it was they taught the nations. They were to PREACH REPENTANCE and the REMISSION OF SINS IN HIS NAME, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;\* and to BAPTIZE such, and ONLY SUCH as professed to RECEIVE their testimony.

In comparing the two dispensations of Moses and Christ,—there is no point in which the contrast or difference is more obvious than in that which respects the number and nature of their peculiar ritual observances. The former, containing in itself “a shadow of good things to come,” abounding with numerous ceremonial institutions, imposed upon the worshipers A YOK

\* Luke xxi. 47.

OF BONDAGE which they were scarcely able to bear. In the kingdom of Christ, the ritual observances are only two—BAPTISM and the LORD'S SUPPER. It may also be remarked, that, whereas the meaning and import of the former was, in many cases, very obscure, it is the glory of the New Testament ordinances, that they were designed to embody the leading facts and doctrines of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and so by means of external signs "to make our sense assist our faith." In their fewness and simplicity they correspond with the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and with its designed universality. Few and simple as they are, however, they have been much misunderstood and grossly perverted by the greater part of professing christians. This has in a great measure arisen from not seeking information as to the mode and import of christian ordinances in the New Testament, but in the Old; and this has been particularly the case in respect to BAPTISM. It must have been matter of remark to all who have witnessed the celebration of the Lord's Supper,—that in bringing forth the authority for attending to this ordinance, the minister does not refer his hearers to that portion of Scripture in Exodus,—where the institution of the Passover is described, but to those passages in the New Testament where the Lord's Supper is mentioned,—such as Mat. xxvi. 26. or 1<sup>o</sup> Cor. xi. 23. This is right; and were the same mode adopted in reference to the ordinance of Baptism, much mistake and

error on that subject would be avoided. An idea has been entertained that the ordinances of Jesus Christ have succeeded certain Jewish observances, and an analogy or resemblance has been traced betwixt Circumcision and Baptism; but while the MODE, the TIME, and the SUBJECTS of the former have been clearly understood, these circumstances as to the latter have been totally misapprehended. In reading the institution of Baptism by our Lord, we find it to be no less distinct than that of Circumcision: the SUBJECTS are expressly pointed out to be "those who believe the gospel:" the TIME of its being attended to, — WHEN THEY BELIEVE; while the MODE, or manner of attending to it, is described by the name of the ordinance. We shall in the first place consider, what is the MODE OR MANNER of Baptism.

BAPTIZE is a Greek word, which the translators of the Bible have only given an English form, but not translated. It properly signifies to DIP, PLUNGE, or IMMERSE; and that in distinction from every other mode of WASHING, as well as from SPRINKLING, or POURING, which are expressed, in the original, by other words: and that such is its meaning is evident from the examples recorded. Jesus, having been baptized in Jordan, "went up out of the water," which shows he had been into it. Philip and the eunuch had already come unto a certain water, we are told, "they went both down into the water," that he might baptize him; and when this was performed, "they came up out of the water."

Now there was no need for MUCH WATER, or GOING DOWN INTO IT, in order to pour or sprinkle a little of it on the face.\*

We shall now briefly enquire to whom this ordinance is to be administered. That only believers of the gospel are the proper subjects of baptism, appears evident from the words of the commission given to the apostles: There you will notice, that TEACHING precedes baptism; and in the parallel passage, it is preceded by believing.†

But if there were any ambiguity in the tenor of the Commission, it is amply cleared up by the subsequent practice of the apostles; which we find to be in perfect conformity to this law—Peter began to preach the gospel to the Jews, on the day of Pentecost, and none but they “who gladly received his word were baptized.‡ —Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans, and it was not till “they believed the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus,” that they were baptized, “both men and women.” || See also the instances recorded in Acts ii. 37. x. 47. xvi. 5. and 33.

Such is the plain and concise account which the New Testament presents to us respecting the MODE and SUBJECTS of this christian ordinance; and to a mind unprepossessed by the general practice, unfettered by human authority, and able to read the Scriptures without bias or prejudice, it cannot but appear strange, that

\* Mark i. 5. John iii. 23. † Mark xvi. 16. ‡ Acts ii. 41.  
|| viii. 12.

an opinion and corresponding practice has been adopted by the great majority of christians, completely opposed to these plain declarations of the word of God ; and that opinion, too, entertained and defended by men of learning and piety, who, in every other matter regarding the will of Christ, have clear and scriptural views ; but who, in endeavouring to make the Scriptures suit their preconceived (but doubtless sincere) views on this subject, have obscured the meaning and perverted the design of an ordinance full of important instruction to the believer ; nay, we will venture to assert, that the arguments used to establish their opinions, are subversive of a fundamental principle in the christian system. (See † page 8)

Our limits will not permit any lengthened examination of those arguments by which such (we will say) an unscriptural practice is supported ; we will nevertheless briefly notice some of them, and leave the reader to judge how far they agree with Scripture authority on the subject.

Though the advocates of infant-baptism generally acknowledge that there is neither “express precept” or “indisputable example” in the Word of God, in support of it, yet they think it may be established by ANALOGY and INFERENCE. It certainly evinces a great poverty of argument where nothing better can be produced. It is no less than a reflection on the wisdom of the Institutor. Has HE appointed an ordinance to be observed by his followers, and does he leave them to the uncertain deduc-

tions of analogy and inference to ascertain HOW, or BY WHOM, it is to be observed? It is absurd to bring forward parts of Scripture which do not treat of baptism at all, and urge them as the ground of Infant-baptism. They are of no avail to warrant it. Baptism is, clearly, a positive ordinance; not like NATURAL or MORAL duties, which may be inferred from the nature and relation of things, but depending entirely upon the will of Him who instituted it.

At a very early period in the history of the Christian Church, we find an attempt was made to engraft Jewish Institutions among the commands of Jesus Christ. At the beginning of the 15th chapter of Acts we have a remarkable instance of this, and the decision then given has happily done away all idea of the rite of circumcision being a condition of Salvation; but still, this Judaical rite has nevertheless obtained a strong hold over the minds of many, and something analogous, as to its subjects, has been supposed necessary in the christian rite of baptism; and the warm appeals to the feelings and affections in behalf of infants, have doubtless tended much to confirm the idea, (more especially in the minds of those who have made little enquiry on the subject) that Baptism has, as to its subjects, come in the room of Circumcision. This, however, is a mere gratuitous assertion, to which the Scriptures give no support whatever. It has indeed been with much seriousness urged against those who hold adult baptism, that they "cut off their infants from the everlasting

covenant.” If the enquiry is made as to what covenant they refer, it is readily defined to be that which the Apostle calls the New Covenant;\* but if the enquiry be further made—Are any of the human race born with an interest in this covenant? an answer in the affirmative, it is evident, would be in direct opposition to what the Scripture testifies of the natural state of every individual.† That the Jews should boast of their DERIVATIVE holiness, as descendants of Abraham, was not very strange; but this we find the Baptist commands them to renounce, as of no avail, and calls upon them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, as well as those whom they accounted the vilest of society. He describes those who had power to become the Sons of God, as being “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.‡ The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.¶ They that are of faith the same are the children of Abraham.§” These declarations are all in strict harmony with the testimony and promise contained in the Commission,—“he that believeth shall be saved;” and how it can be made out, from such passages as these, that infants are in “a certain sense holy,” and, as such the subjects of an ordinance designed to exhibit to the baptized the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and communion with,

\* Gal. iii. iv.    † Psal. li. 5.    Rom. iii.    ‡ John i. 12. 13.  
 ‡ Gal. iii. 22.    § Gal. iii. 7.



and conformity to him therein, seems to be quite inconceivable.

Jesus says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." From this it is argued, that since the infants of believers belong to the kingdom of God, they must have a right to baptism. But this passage does not DISTINGUISH the infants of believers from those of infidels, nor conclude for the baptism of the one more than the other. The KINGDOM OF God to which little children are declared to belong, is his real INVISIBLE KINGDOM, which will not truly appear until Christ's second coming;\* for it is that kingdom which none can enter but such as receive it as a little child,† and are really converted and born again. But there is no room for much reasoning on this passage. Either these infants were baptized, or they were not. If they were, the controversy is at an end, if they were not, then they ought not. That they were not then baptized is evident; they were not brought for that purpose, "but that he should put his hands on them and pray." Jesus himself did not baptize them, for he baptized none; nor did he order his disciples to do it; nor would they have prevented them if they had known any thing about infant baptism. If, therefore, while Jesus was rebuking his disciples for forbidding infants to come unto him; if, while he was declaring infants to be of his

\* 2 Tim. iv. 1.

† Mark x. 15.

kingdom; taking them up in his arms and blessing them; if while he had such a fair opportunity of being explicit as to their baptism, and of setting an example of it that might have prevented all the disputes which he foresaw would arise on that subject; but, if on such an occasion, he neither baptized them himself; nor commanded them to be baptized, nor so much as gave the least hint of his will that such should be baptized in future; what can we reasonably infer from all this, but that infant-baptism is no institution of his, nor was ever intended by him? We may also learn from this passage what some do not seem to understand, viz. that infants may be acknowledged of Christ's kingdom, brought unto him, and obtain his blessing, without being baptized.

Peter, addressing the convicted Jews, says, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."\* Hence it is pleaded, That since the promise of salvation is made unto the infant children of believers as well as to themselves, therefore they ought to be baptized.

But this argument is grounded upon a complication of mistakes. The PROMISE here referred to is not the promise of salvation in

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\* Acts ii. 38. 39.

general. but the promise of the Spirit in particular, which he had before cited from Joel ii. 28—32,\* and which includes the extraordinary gifts which were peculiar to the first age of the gospel. This promise began to be accomplished on the day of Pentecost, as the Apostle shows, verse 16, 33, and was made in the first place to the Jews and their children. The CHILDREN to whom this promise is made must of necessity be the very same that are mentioned in the promise itself, and who are there termed “your sons and your daughters;” and therefore cannot signify infant children, for they are such as should PROPHECY upon receiving the Spirit, as we see was actually the case.†

The Apostle says, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.”‡ The argument from this is, That as the children even of one believing parent are holy, as being in covenant with God; therefore they ought to have the seal of that covenant in baptism.

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† Had this promise respected infant children, and been understood as a warrant for their baptism, then they must have been immediately baptized with their parents: but we read of none receiving baptism on this occasion, but such *as gladly received* Peter’s word, were the same day *added* to the church, and continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in *breaking of bread*, and in *prayers*;\* even as the multitude baptized in Samaria are expressly declared to be believing *men* and *women*.† It is the extremity of folly and perverseness to argue against plain facts.

(\*Acts ii. 41, 42.) (†Chap. viii. 12.)

\* Acts ii. 16—32 † Acts ii. 4. x. 46. xix. 6. and xxi. 9.

1 Cor. xii. 8—12. ‡ 1 Cor. viii. 14.

But the Apostle had no such thing in his eye; nor would this sense of the passage have suited his purpose, or have satisfied the scruples of the believing Corinthians. Their question was not—Are our children possessed of new-covenant holiness, and so entitled to baptism? but (as appears from the answer) it was this—May we lawfully retain our unbelieving wives, or must we put them away, as Old Israel were obliged to do by the law of Moses? \* To this he answers, “If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away,” &c. And he gives this reason for it, “For the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband,”—This SANCTIFICATION of the unbelieving wife to the believer, being opposed to the legal uncleanness of an alien to a Jew, must relate purely to the marriage relation, and signify that she was a lawful wife to him, even as the meats formerly held unclean by the law of Moses were now sanctified to him, or made lawful for his use. † And what other sanctification or holiness can we suppose an unbeliever, while such, capable of? He farther observes, that unless their unbelieving wives were thus sanctified, their children would also be unclean. The UNCLEANNESS of the children being stated as a consequence of the supposed unlawfulness of the unbelieving party, must necessarily signify ILLEGITIMACY; for though they were begotten in marriage, yet

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\* Deut. vii. 3. Ezra x. † 1 Tim. iv. 3—5.

upon supposition that the marriage itself were unlawful, they must of consequence have been an UNLAWFUL ISSUE. This HOLINESS of the children can signify nothing more than LEGITIMACY; because it is opposed to their uncleanness, as above explained; and because it is stated as an EFFECT of the sanctification of the unbelieving parent, without which, the Apostle affirms, they would be unclean; it must therefore be a holiness of the same kind; for spiritual holiness can never depend upon, or flow from, the sanctification of an unbeliever. As the unbelieving party is sanctified, or made holy, only in respect of her being a LAWFUL WIFE to the believer, so the children can have no holiness in consequence of this, but that of being a LAWFUL ISSUE, which affords no argument for their baptism.

We read that Lydia was baptized, and "her household;\*"—that the Jailer "was baptized, he and all his, straightway;†" and that Paul "baptized also the household of Stephanas.‡" These passages are urged as exhibiting examples of baptizing infants, taking for granted that those houses contained infants who were baptized upon the faith of their parents.

But this is only begging the question in debate. It must first be proved that there were infants in the houses mentioned, for there are many houses without them: and though this were done, which it never can, it still remains to

\* Acts xvi. 5. † Verse 33. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 16.

be proved that they were baptized; for the universal expression of "all the house," sometimes signifies only the adult part of it.\* But the scripture account of those baptized houses demonstrates that they were not infants. ALL the house of Cornelius "feared God, and received the Holy Ghost.†" Lydia's household were COMFORTED AS BRETHREN.‡ The word of the Lord was SPOKEN TO ALL in the Jailer's house;§ and they ALL REJOICED, BELIEVING in God as well as himself.¶ ALL the house of Crispus BELIEVED on the Lord,\* and the house of Stephanas "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.†" Now if these things, which are affirmed of all the baptized, will not apply unto infants, then it is plain there were no infants baptized in those houses.

In respect to the MODE or manner of Baptism, an argument for SPRINKLING, in opposition to IMMERSION, has been drawn from the blood of Christ having been thus said to be applied to the soul. We can hardly be persuaded, that those who use this argument, will seriously assert, that there is a material application of the Redeemer's blood to the souls even of believers, although their language indicates something of this kind, when they say. "if the blood of bulls—SPRINKLING the unclean sanctifieth,—is not the blood of Christ sufficient, when applied "the same way," to purge the conscience

\* Judges ix. 6.    † Acts x. 2, 44, 47.    ‡ Acts xvi. 40.  
 § Ver. 32.    ¶ Acts xvi. 34.    \* Chap. xviii. 8.    † 1 Cor. xvi. 15.

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The apostles speak of the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, of the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel. But this language is highly figurative; and he that would interpret it literally, would not only profane the holy scriptures, but conceal the grand and glorious truth intended to be conveyed. This language is borrowed from the law, and is designed to shew that in Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, every prefiguration of him is fulfilled; that the Israelites had the shadow, but that christians have the substance. To contend that the mode of baptism is to be sought for in the language of the law, figuratively applied to the sacrifice of Christ and its glorious effects, is as absurd as to seek for the living among the dead. Because his blood is spoken of as sprinkled, is it a fair conclusion, that this is the pattern for baptizing? This is founding it upon a mere single of words. Where do we find the least authority for the doctrine, that because the atonement is represented by various figures, therefore baptism must be an external representation of these figures? Besides, in none of the passages quoted is there the least mention of water baptism, except in Heb. x. 22. and here it is the "bathing of the body with pure water." To seek for the mode of baptizing where it is not so much as spoken of, is a strange way of establishing a plain institution, and shows the sophistry that is necessary to support an unfounded practice.

Having considered the Mode and Subjects of Baptism, we come now to shew what is its IMPORT and DESIGN,—and this is a branch of the subject but too little attended to. The universal practice of sprinkling infants, with the arguments used in support of that human invention have, in a great measure obscured its signification; so that it is amazing to observe the ignorance of professors on this head. Amongst the various views entertained as to this,—some conceive it to be a CHRISTENING, or making them christians; hence their anxiety to have them sprinkled betimes, lest they should die pagans. Others, again, view it as a sign whereby their infants are initiated into the VISIBLE CHURCH though they are neither agreed as to what that church is, nor admit them into the full communion of any visible church. If we consult the word of God, we shall find that this divine ordinance is intended to be a sign of REGENERATION, or that the person baptized is born of the Spirit. Jesus says to Nicodemus,—Except man be born of Water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. WATER here undoubtedly means the water of baptism for it is distinguished from the Spirit; so that to be BORN OF WATER, is to be baptized, even as to be “born of the Spirit,” is to be regenerated; and as the former is connected with the latter, and termed a birth in reference to it, it must be the visible sign or representation of the spiritual birth. This is farther evident from Titus iii. 5. This ordinance also represents t



the repenting believer, the remission or washing away of his sins in the blood of Christ. Accordingly Peter exhorts the convicted Jews, -- Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. In Acts xxii. 16. Ananias in his address to Paul expresses this still stronger. "This manner of speaking will appear very extravagant to many now-a-days, who look upon baptism as a mere empty rite or arbitrary precept.\*

Baptism exhibits the DEATH, BURIAL, and RESURRECTION of Christ, whereby he fulfilled all righteousness, together with the Christian's COMMUNION with, and CONFORMITY to him therein. The Apostle expressly declares and chiefly insists upon this, in Rom. vi. 4. and Col. ii. 12. to which the reader is requested to turn. These passages exhibit to us in a figure, what the gospel declares by way of Testimony: that Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. † This is what was represented by his own baptism, as appears from the reason he assigns to John, -- "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

Our limits will not permit entering farther into this branch of the subject; but those who wish to enquire into it more largely, may consult with much profit the late Mr A. M'LEAN'S Illustration of the Commission, (from which the greater part of these pages have been extracted;)

\* 1 Peter iii. 21.

† Rom iv. 25.

also INNES' "Eugenio and Epenetus," where the arguments on each side of the question are with much candour discussed; or COX "on Baptism," in which the reasonings of modern writers in defence of Infant Baptism are replied to.

We come now to consider that teaching which has for its object BAPTIZED DISCIPLES, gathered out of the nations; and we have in a preceding Tract considered some of Christ's commandments to them as individuals, and shall proceed to notice some others which they are to observe in their united capacity, and in a state of separation from the world. It is not meant that they should withdraw themselves from human society which would be to render themselves useless in the world. Our Lord and his apostles kept up a free converse with mankind.\* Christians are members of civil society, and ought to be useful and exemplary in the discharge of the duties which belong to their different stations and relations therein. But the separation from the world which the word of God enjoins Christians, is to break off all religious connection with such as do not appear to be real believers in Christ, and subject to his authority,—having a form of godliness but denying its power. From such the solemn call to the people of God is "to turn away,—Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues.† This separation is not only a duty itself, but a situation necessary to the keeping many of the

\* 1 Cor. v. 9. 10. † 2 Tim. iii. 3. ‡ Rev. xviii. 4.

commandments of Christ, which cannot be observed in a mixed communion with the world; such as his new commandment of brotherly love, the ordinances of his house, the faithful and impartial exercise of its discipline; and in order to their observing all things whatsoever he hath commanded, they must be united together in a visible church state.

The word CHURCH, signifies any kind of assembly or congregation; but when used in a religious sense it signifies the whole body of the redeemed, whether in heaven or in earth, and is that church for which Christ gave himself. At present it is invisible to us, and will not appear until Christ's second coming. It is to the visible members of this church that baptism belongs.

The word also signifies a particular congregation of visible believers, with its bishops (i. e. elders) and deacons, regularly assembling in one place, for the performance of religious worship, and the observation of Christ's institutions.—It signifies a SINGLE CONGREGATION: such was the church at Jerusalem, Antioch, &c.—Each of these societies were composed of VISIBLE BELIEVERS, or such as by their profession and walk appeared to be saints and faithful.\* It had a plurality of ELDERS or BISHOPS to rule and labour in the word and doctrine;† and also of DEACONS to take care of the poor and serve tables ‡—It regularly assembled in one PLACE.¶

\* I Cor. i. 2. Eph. i. 1. Phil. i. 1. Col. i. 2.

† Acts xiv. 28. xx. 17. Phil. i. 1. Tit. i. v. 1 Tim. v. 17.

‡ Acts vi. 1.—7. Phil. i. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 8—14. ¶ Acts ii. 1, 46. iv. 31. and v. 12. 1 Cor. xi. 18, 20.

The end of its assembling was to perform SOCIAL WORSHIP and observe Christ's INSTITUTIONS.

These are the outlines of a visible church of Christ, such as the apostles planted in every place where there was a sufficient number of disciples to compose it. Such a church, with its office-bearers, is an organized body, complete in all its parts,\* and has the full power of government and discipline within itself. It is a visible representation of Christ's true catholic church, which is at present INVISIBLE, and therefore is designed by the same epithets, such as God's building, habitation, temple, house, Christ's body, spouse, &c. † To such a church were the ordinances delivered, ‡ as also the instituted discipline;|| and it is only in such a society, separated from the world, that they can be observed according to their primitive institution.

This union of believers is represented in the Scriptures, as being a connection of the most close and intimate kind,—a union, which, when formed is not to be dissolved but upon grounds the most important. The closeness of this union we find an apostle frequently illustrating by the sympathy of feeling which subsists among members of the human body. “We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”§ And as a means of preserving this unity of principle, the grounds of it are

\* 1 Cor. xii. 27. † 1 Cor. iii. 9, 16, 17. Eph. ii. 22.  
 ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 15. 1 Cor. xii. 27. 2 Cor. xi. 2. † 1 Cor. xi. 2.  
 § Mat. xviii. 15.—21. 1 Cor. v. § Rom. xii. 5. 1 Cor.  
 xii. 12, 13.

clearly defined. "There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all &c."\* This union can only become visible in their joint confession of the one faith and hope of the gospel, and declared purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord and to one another, in submitting to his authority. By this they discern one another to be of the truth, and hearing Christ's voice, and upon this ground they are knit together in love for the truth's sake.

Out of this union many relative duties arise, which all have for their object the mutual benefit and edification of the whole, and exhibit the practical exercise of love, answerable to the various circumstances of each other. A new commandment, says Christ, I give unto you, that ye love one another; and in so far as they practised this, were they to be known as his disciples; † and the motive enforcing it is the example of the love of God to them;—if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. ‡

The ordinances which the Apostolic Churches observed on the first day of the week, or the Lord's day, may be gathered from the practice of the church at Jerusalem. Having gladly received the word, and being baptized and added to the church, it is said; "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in the fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers, praising God, &c. § They not only held fast the doctrine which the apostles taught them, but constantly attended to their public ministry, that they might be further confirmed and edified in these things connected with the faith, hope, and practices of the Gospel; and to this end the Scriptures were regularly read in their assemblies. Preaching and expounding

\* Eph. iv. 4. † John xiii. 34. ‡ John iii. 16. Rom. v. 10.  
 § Mat. xviii. 15. 21: § Acts. ii 41.

the word was another means of edification, and was the proper work of elders or pastors; but all the public instruction of the church did not devolve on these teachers, the *mutual exhortations of the brethren*, was another means expressly and repeatedly enjoined in their stated assemblies. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together; but EXHORTING one another." None of the members who have any gifts are exempted from this duty, except women who are enjoined to keep silence in the churches. Thus the various gifts of the members have room for exercise, that "speaking the truth in love, they may grow up unto him in all things who is the Head; and thus we see that an assembly of believers, having the Scriptures among them, can never be without the means of edification and comfort.

They continued stedfastly in the *fellowship*, and contribution for the poor, and other necessary purposes, agreeable to the apostle's injunction;—"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him."||

They also continued stedfastly in the *breaking of bread*, or observance of that ordinance which Christ instituted on that night in which he was betrayed, and which is more generally called the Lord's Supper. In this ordinance, by the significant actions of eating bread and drinking wine, believers are called to commemorate his dying love, when he gave his body to be broken and his blood shed, in order to effect their salvation; and so often as they did this they would shew forth the Lord's death until he came. § With respect to the frequency the ordinance is to be observed, the example of the church at Troas may be deemed satisfactory evidence:—"Upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together BREAK BREAD."\* If this passage proves that the first churches statedly assembled for worship every first

\* Heb. x. 24. † 1 Cor. xiv. 34. ‡ Eph. iv. 15. || 1 Cor. xvi. § Mat. xxvi. 26. Mark. xiv. Luke xxii. 1 Cor. xi. \* Acts xx

day of the week, it proves also that it was for the purpose of breaking bread.

Such is the plain account which the Scriptures present to us as to the form and design of this ordinance. That it is a solemn institution no believer will question; for every service connected with the duty and worship we owe to God as our Creator, our preserver, and merciful redeemer, must be solemn and important; but it will be found, that in so far as we exalt any particular religious duty, we are very much in danger of depreciating others. The Lord's Supper has been distinguished as the most solemn approach to God, as a sealing ordinance, or devoting ourselves to the Lord. Nothing of this kind is indicated in the Scriptures. If we turn to that institution in the Old Testament, the PASSOVER, which is considered as analogous to that in the New Testament, we find it was expressly appointed to commemorate that deliverance granted to the Israelites, when the destroying Angel passed through the land of Egypt, and slew all the first born of the Egyptians. In like manner Jesus wrought out a great deliverance for his people, in redeeming them from the curse of that law which they had broken. In the character of the sinner's substitute, he obeyed the law in all its precepts: he magnified it and made it honourable, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, in which Jehovah is well pleased, and by which the ungodly are justified. The Lord knew the hearts of his disciples, he knew how readily they might forget him and his work,—and he knew also, that unless they kept them in memory, they neither would live by him nor to him; therefore he appointed this ordinance, not for any complex or mystical design, but, simply as a *remembrancer* of his dying love.

This ordinance, like Baptism, has been awfully perverted by superstition; and like it has been deeply involved in obscurity and error. Within the course of a few centuries, we find the simple rite of an assembly of Christians eating bread and drinking wine, in

grateful commemoration of the expiatory sufferings, and death of Christ, converted into a splendid and complicated ceremony. In the church of Rome, one deviation produced another, till the Lord's supper ended in the idolatrous sacrifice of the mass. In Protestant countries it is still called a *sacrament*. It is observed so seldom by many calling themselves christian churches, and attended to with so many appendages of preaching days, &c. that every unprejudiced person, in comparing such practices with what the New Testament says concerning it, would at once pronounce, in the words of Paul, "This is not to eat the Lord's Supper."

They likewise continued steadfastly in the *prayers*. Prayer is also a solemn service, inasmuch as it is an address presented unto God in the name of Christ, the great High-priest and Advocate, through whose mediation alone there is access unto the throne of grace with acceptance. It is the duty of Christians every where, and in every situation,\* and a most important branch of public worship. As prayers are mentioned in the plural, there must have been a number of them put up at every meeting of the church, and it is probable they were distributed or interspersed among the other parts of divine service. But it does not appear that all the prayers in the public assembly were put up by the pastors only. †

*Singing praise* to God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, is another branch of public worship. Those who through the Spirit believe the gospel of the grace of God, are furnished with the most solid grounds of thankfulness, gratitude, and joy; and singing is not only the natural expression of these happy and devout affections, but also the appointed means of exciting and strengthening them; and in so far as believers attend to this and every duty He hath commanded, in the way appointed in His word, in so far will they experience the accomplishment of the Promise, "Lo I am with you alway."

\* 1 Tim. ii. 8. † Acts i. 14.