

THE STATUS OF THE BAPTIZED CHILD.

THE SUBSTANCE OF A DISCOURSE

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"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."—ACTS. 2; 39.

"Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."—ACTS. 3: 22, 23.

The foundations of the Church were laid in the Garden of Eden. Its builder, the Lord Jesus Christ; now entering upon the exercise of His mediatorial offices. Its Basis, the Promised Seed of the Woman. Its Doctrines: Salvation originating in free grace; The Incarnation of the Redeemer; The Necessity of His sufferings and death; The Agency of Faith in embracing His finished righteousness. Its Members, our first Parents: fallen, yet restored; guilty, yet justified; lost, yet saved; believing, repenting, obeying. The animals slain in sacrifice, indicate that they looked by faith to the Lamb of God, Who taketh away sin; and the coats of skins with which God clothed them, furnished from those slain animals—their own covering of fig-leaves being insufficient—indicate that their Redeemer's robe of righteousness was upon their souls, clothing, protecting, and adorning them.

The Visible character of the Church in the Patriarchal age is proved by the existence of a chosen community, the people of God, separated from the rest of mankind; by the stated worship of the Sabbath; by the sacrificial altar; by the places set apart for divine worship, where God had more especially recorded His Name—to which the two sons of Adam are said to have "brought their offerings unto the Lord"—to which

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Cain had no more access when he "*went out from the presence of the Lord*"—and to which Abraham resorted, when he "*stood before the Lord*"—the place where prayer was wont to be made.

We find a Public Ministry, also, existing in the Patriarchal Church. Enoch, who walked with God, testified against an ungodly world, and "prophesied" of a coming judgment, as the Apostle Jude informs us. And Noah was, confessedly "a preacher of righteousness", exercising his ministry probably for several centuries, and certainly for 120 years, at least. Methuselah, Lamech, and many other saints lived during this period, and doubtless were profited by the ministrations of this faithful Preacher. And through him, as the Apostle Peter declares, Christ preached to the ungodly world, who rejected the offered salvation, and were lost. In a subsequent age, the ministry of Melchizedeck was given to the church.

Thus did God in that early age "*gather together His Saints, those that had made a covenant with Him by sacrifice.*"

In proportion to the growth of the Apostasy, of which Cain was the head, and the abounding of iniquity, the people of God were separated more and more from the world, the church became more distinctly visible, her organization more compact.

At first, the church embraced all the members of Adam's family, all mankind. Subsequently Cain was expelled—which was the first method taken to preserve the church. His numerous offspring constituted a formidable opposition. The seed of the serpent early discovered its enmity against the seed of the woman. The progress of impiety was constant, and the church was exposed to great danger, down to the days of Enos, the son of Seth, "when men began to call upon the name of the Lord", and to assume as their distinctive title, the appellation "sons of God". Not that men began then, for the first time, to pray, nor that public worship was then first instituted, but that a separation, more marked than ever, was then effected between the people of God and the infidel apostasy. This was rendered necessary by the increasing wickedness of the times. At first, when the church was

embraced within the limits of a single family, her reformation was effected by ejecting the guilty, as in the case of Cain. But subsequently, when the race had multiplied exceedingly, and great multitudes had swelled the ranks of defection, and impiety was rampant, and the name of God profaned, and very many within the church desecrated her ordinances, then the former mode of reform was rendered impossible, and the only resource left to the people of God was to come out from among the profane, gather into separate assemblies, draw the bonds closer which held them together, assume more distinctively the religious profession by calling themselves henceforward, "the sons of God", avoiding all worldly conformity, and giving themselves more earnestly to prayer, as their only refuge. Thus, "when the enemy came in like a flood, did the spirit of the Lord lift up a standard against him".

We have pursued this line of remark, with the design of shewing that *The Church of God* has always existed on the earth—at all times, *visible and organized*; its organization being, of course, more definite and complete at one time than at another, just as its necessities required. We cannot subscribe to the opinion of an eminent Divine*, that "a church of God, organized upon the principle of visible unity, and standing in such relation to Him as it did in after ages; such a church before the vocation of Abram, there was not, nor anything which bore the semblance of it." On the contrary, we think that the sacred narrative, closely examined, exhibits to us the church of God in the primitive ages, standing in the same relation to Him *before* the vocation of Abram, as it did subsequently: the Abrahamic Covenant, however, serving a most important purpose, that of rendering a church already existing, more uniform, more compact, more prominent than it had ever been before, adapting it to its present exigencies; and also extending its privileges.

We proceed now to observe further, that from the beginning

*Dr. John M. Mason. "Church of God."

of its existence, the Church of God was constituted, not of individuals merely, but of *families*. The church, planted in the Garden of Eden, was like the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was within itself. The children of Adam, Cain, Abel, Seth and others, were *born in the Church*. Cain, guilty of an awful crime, was excommunicated by God Himself, and "went out *from the presence of the Lord*"—to return no more. The Seed of the Church was propagated in the line of Seth, embracing successive families down to the time of Noah. In his days, the Great Apostasy occurred, which first deluged the world in wickedness, and, afterwards, with a flood. It was occasioned chiefly by the intermarriages of very many of the "sons of God" with "the daughters of men". Who were these "sons of God"? Evidently they did not belong to the true people of God, to His Elect Seed, for they perished in the Apostasy. They were so designated, then, from their external relations to God, as the members of His Visible Church. *They were the children of the Church, who had apostatized*, first, by rejecting the instituted worship, and then by connecting themselves with the seed of the ungodly. Here then is proof that the Visible Church, in the earliest ages, consisted of Professors of Religion, *together with their children*.

Again. In consequence of this wide-spread Apostasy, the Church was restricted to a single family, that of Noah. Eight souls were saved from the flood. But of this little company, not all were saints in the sight of God. The seed of the serpent was housed in the Ark. Unholy Ham was there. Membership in the Church was the cause of his preservation.

Thus we see, that from the beginning, the church was composed of *families*. The promise contained in the Abrahamic Covenant, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee," did not introduce a *new principle* in the dealings of God with his people, for it was one which had been acted on from the first, and the promise had been realized in the previous experience of the church. But it is now formally renewed with one who was called out of the family of an idolator. With

him it is "established", confirmed. The Abrahamic Covenant rendered the church more distinctly visible than before, its organization more perfect. It made the line of separation between the church and the world more apparent, and broadly marked than before.

In its relations to the future, it occupies a lofty and commanding position. Its provisions, as to its spiritual aspects, appropriate a long track of ages, even down to the end of time, for their fulfilment; for they contemplate and secure a wonderful series of providences to give birth to most wonderful and glorious events: The Preservation of one nation as the depositaries of the true Religion, distinct and separate from all others, for 2000 years: The removal of the Partition-Wall: The establishment of the New Testament Church: The calling of the Gentiles into it; And the filling the wide earth with the Redeemer's Glory.* Hence the frequent references which the N. T. Scriptures make to this venerable Covenant. It furnishes us with a clear proof of the Unity of the Church, as it exhibits both dispensations planted upon a common basis. Its O. T. seal was Circumcision. Its N. T. seal is Baptism. It signally demonstrates the correctness of the principle we are contending for, *that the Church of God includes the children with their parents.*

And it places in a clear light that important subject we now propose to discuss, viz:

THE STATUS OF THE BAPTIZED CHILD: HIS OBLIGATIONS TO THE CHURCH; THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH TO HIM.

We shall endeavor to prove that the Doctrine of our "Book of Discipline" is the Doctrine of the Scriptures: "All baptized persons are members of the Church, are under its care, and subject to its government and discipline, and when they have arrived at the years of discretion, they are bound to perform all the duties of church members."

We have here four propositions: 1st. All baptized persons

*Acts 2: 38, 39—Galatians 3: 8, 14, 29—Romans 11: 24.

are members of the church. 2d. Are under its care. 3d. Are subject to its government and discipline. 4th. Are bound, at a proper age, to perform all the duties of church members. And from these, a 5th necessarily follows, viz: They are liable to Excommunication, if their obligations be stubbornly resisted.

The first proposition secures all the rest. If baptized persons are "under the care" of the church, this can only be, by their being "members of the Church": If baptized persons *are* "members of the church"—then, they are "under its care", "subject to its Government and Discipline"; &c., &c.

We proceed to shew:

I. That the Infants of Church-members are *born* members of the Church. Their baptism is based upon their membership, not their membership upon their baptism. The following considerations are offered in proof:

1. The Abrahamic Covenant, incorporating privileges previously enjoyed by the people of God, but more distinctly expressed than in former covenants, and including others also, may well be considered as the Great Charter of the Visible Church. "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 to thy seed after thee*". This Covenant gave a fuller organization to the Visible Church than it ever had before. It was made with Abraham's *seed*, equally as with himself. It constituted them members of the Visible Church. In token of their being included in the Covenant, its seal was put upon them. Their Circumcision did not *constitute* their membership. It *proved* it. As soon as a new individual of this seed was generated, he was *within the Covenant*, born a member of the Church, and, in this relation, God was his God.

2. God claims such infants *when born* as *His*. "Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters whom thou hast *borne unto me*, and these hast thou sacrificed."—Ezekiel 16: 20. And because they are *His*, He commanded "infants and little ones

to stand before Him, and enter into Covenant with him." These "little ones" are called "people of God," no less than adults.—Deut. 29: 10, 11, 12, 13.

Infants are commanded to join themselves to God's ordinances; "Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the Elders, gather the children; and *those that suck the breasts.*"—Joel 2: 16.

3. The Apostle Peter, addressing the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, exhorts them to "repent and *be baptized*", on the ground that "*the promise was to them, and to their children.*" This was the promise contained in the Abrahamic Covenant, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." If the children were heirs of "the promise," then they were *within the Covenant* which contained that promise. And on this account, they had a right to the New Testament seal of the Abrahamic Covenant, *Baptism*.

The Apostle Paul teaches the same doctrine. 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.*"—1 Cor. 7: 14. He pronounces these children federally holy, *before baptism*. And therefore they were *born* members of the church.

4. If it be denied that such children are born members of the Visible Church, then they are *born members of the Visible Kingdom of the Devil*, for there is no middle territory. And so, no difference exists between such infants and those of the Heathen!

The Apostle Paul reasons thus in his Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph. 2: 12, 13.) proving the accursed state of the Gentiles from the fact that they were "strangers to the covenants of promise, and aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel." He does not prove their state accursed, because they were strangers to *any* covenant, but because they were strangers to *the covenants made with the Israelites*. Now, these covenants included *the children* of Israelites. Hence the great difference between the children of the Jews, and those of the Heathen. But the birth

of these two classes of children cannot be different, if the one class be *born out of the Covenant*, as well as the other.

5. If Christ, whilst an *Infant*, was head of the *Visible Church*, then Infants may be His members. But Christ as an Infant, was Head of the Visible Church: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given, and the Government shall be upon His shoulder". Infants then may be members of the Church.

6. When the Saviour established the N. T. Church, He distinctly recognized the *rights of children*, and commanded them to be brought to Him to receive His blessing, as already by a Divine arrangement interested in the Covenant of Abraham. He came no more to destroy the *Church* than the *Law*. "Of such", said He, "is the Kingdom of Heaven". True, He did not baptize them. Neither did He baptize adults. But He blessed them as *His Disciples*, testifying that they stood in the same relation to Him and His Kingdom, as did the children under the Mosaic Dispensation—a relation which obliged the believer to procure for his children, the seal of the Covenant, whatever that might be. What was the position of these children? Their parents were members of the Jewish Church. They received Christ as the Messiah; which is evident from the fact that *they brought their children to Him*. They were then not to be cut off, nor their children deprived of their former status in the church. "Of such", that is, of the children of church-members, "is the Kingdom of God." But the 'Kingdom of God' is the Church. Then, *of the children of church-members is the church also composed*. What better claim to admission into the church could an *adult* give? He could give a profession of his faith—which *might* be false. In the case of the infant, we have the sure testimony of Christ!

7. Christ's Commission to His Disciples proves this truth: "Go, *gather disciples*, baptizing them, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you". Their duty, then, was 1st, Ascertain who should be regarded as disciples. 2d, Apply the seal of discipleship. True, Infants are not mentioned in the Commission. Neither are Adults. Nor even

Believers. He does indeed say, "he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved", but He does not say, "Believe and be baptized", as though belief were the sole condition of baptism. If it were, then the words above would also prove that belief was the sole condition of salvation. And then what becomes of the dying infant? But if an infant may be saved without belief, then why may it not be baptized without belief—especially as baptism is a symbolical representation of salvation? In the Commission of the Saviour, *Disciples* only are pointed out. Why, may not *Infants* be *Disciples*? The term disciple or scholar, does not mark the *degree of knowledge* already attained, but *the relation* which a person sustains to his Instructor; just as the word 'slave' indicates not the age or strength of an individual, but simply the fact that by the Decree of Providence, he is regarded as belonging to a *master*. Why, then, may not an infant be a disciple of Christ? "What is there in his condition or character which shuts him out from that institution which God has organized for the instruction and salvation of the world. Infants may be slaves on the ground that their parents are in bondage. Infants were disciples of Moses through their parents' connexion with the Jewish Church. Infants may be, and are, included in a variety of provisions made for the promotion of the public good," and why should the Kingdom of God be thought less narrow than the organization of society, or less narrow *now*, than when formerly under the Jewish Dispensation?

8. If the children of church-members are not members themselves, then *what relation* do they sustain to the Church? It is not enough to say that it is a *peculiar* relation—that such children are separated by a Christian rite to the belief and practice of Christianity—that such are marked as future members of the Church, *hopefully*—that a special obligation rests on such to believe, practice and maintain the Christian Religion. The question is, How is such a relation in any way affected by the baptism of a child? Does it *create* the duty of "bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the

Lord"? Should we not look upon Christian families as nurseries of the Church, and calculate upon them, rather than upon the world in general, to perpetuate Religion in the earth, whether baptized or not? Does not a special obligation rest upon a child, born and nurtured under the light of the Gospel, and that reflected from the life of a pious parent, to believe, practice, and maintain the true religion, *independently of his baptism*? If this be all we are to understand by "the relation of children to the Church," then we really do not see *how the Ordinance of Baptism has anything to do with it*. It exists as much *before* as *after* the rite was performed. It exists in respect to all the children of professors, whatever they may think of Infant Baptism. The duty of training up a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is as binding upon a Baptist as upon a Presbyterian; and the duty of believing, practising and maintaining the Christian Religion, is as binding upon the child of a Baptist, as it is upon the child of a Presbyterian. The question is not, What the *future* position, hopefully, of the child will be? But, What the *present* Ecclesiastical position of the child *is*? This question is easily settled by ascertaining what relation a circumcised child held to the Jewish Church. He was a member of that Church in the same sense, and to the same extent, as his parent. Therefore, the relation recognised by Baptism is the same as that which the circumcised child held to the Jewish Church, and therefore he is a *present*, not a *future*, member of the Church. Christ organised the New Church. The Jewish Olive Tree never has been cut off. Foreign branches have been grafted in among the branches, and with them made partakers of the root and life of the Olive, and the time will come when the branches which have been cut off, shall, "if they abide in me," be grafted *in again, into their own olive*. Of course, the children of converted Jews sustain the same relation to the Church, after the regeneration of their parents, as did the children of Jews formerly previous to their excision. As the relation of a child is a

and not a *future* membership, so it is recognized now, by Baptism, as it was formerly by Circumcision.

We have now seen that if the children of Church-members sustain *any* relation to the Church, what that relation must be—if members at all, then present, not future members. We have seen that this was an essential element of the Christian Church in all ages, recognized by Moses, by Christ, and His Apostles. Let us now glance at the views held by the early Christians, as these are exhibited to us in the learned work of Mr. Taylor, entitled “Apostolic Baptism.”

“In the early ages, members of the Church called themselves ‘Disciples,’ ‘Christians,’ ‘The Called,’ ‘The Elect,’ ‘The Illuminated,’ ‘Holy Persons or Saints,’ ‘The Faithful.’ These titles were given to *Church-members only*. None without the Church ever received them. It follows that if these titles be given to Infants or Children, it proves their Church-membership. The appellation “*holy*” is given to Church-members. Paul confessed that “many of the *holy persons* he had shut up in prison.” Again, “I go to Jerusalem to minister to the *holy persons*.” Now, this appellation is given to the *children* of Church-members: “now are your children *holy*.” The following inscriptions upon the tombs of children prove their Church-membership: “Maurentius, son of Maurentia, a most pleasing child, who lived 5 years, 11 months and 2 days, worthy to repose in peace among the *holy persons*;” “Sacred, to the Great God. Leopardus rests here in peace with *holy* spirits;” “Julia reposes in peace among the *holy persons*. A. D. 291.”

The appellation “Faithful” is given to Church-members. First to Adults: The mother of Timothy is called “*A Faithful*.” Again, “What part hath *A Faithful* with *A Non-Faithful*?” “Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example to the *Faithfuls*.” This appellation is given to *children*. The Apostle, describing the character of a Bishop, says, “He must be the husband of one wife; *having children who are Faithfuls*.” His children, of whatever age—no restric-

tion is laid down ; if any, here was the place, for he addresses the whole Christian Church—his children *must be church-members*, recognized as such by the administration of Baptism. It follows, then, from this passage, that all ministers having children not baptized, are, so far, disqualified for their office.

The following inscriptions upon children's tombs also prove their Church-membership : " Cyriacus, *A Faithful*, died, aged 8 days less than 3 years." " Eustafia, the mother, places this in commemoration of her son Polichronio, *A Faithful*, who lived 3 years." " The sepulchre of the twin brothers, Alcinous, and of their cousin Alexander, 3 *Faithfuls*, of 12 years old." "*A Faithful*, descended from *Faithfuls*, here lies Zosimus: He lived 2 years, 1 month, 25 days."

Whence originated the custom of applying such terms '*Holy*,' '*Faithful*' to children? That parental affection should characterize infants as 'innocent,' that is, not guilty of actual transgression, we can conceive. But who could first think of calling infants '*holy*,' an appellation given to Church-members only? Do we call our children "*saints*?" Who could think of denominating infants "*faithful*?" In what had their faith been tried? In what had it *triumphed*? The only satisfactory explanation of these terms, is, that they designate *church-membership*, and being applied to the infants of professors of Religion, *proves them members of the Church*."

The same views have been held by very many of the most eminent Theologians. The strongest lights with which the Church has been blessed, few of these only can we refer here.

The testimony of the Fathers we adduce first. " The children of believers," they have not only recognized that they may thereby be made members of the Church, but if they had before been strangers to it, they have received it, on the contrary, they are received into the Church by a solemn baptism, because they already belonged to the body of Christ, by the promises of the Father.

* *Institutes*, Vol. 2d, p. 493.

We adduce, next, the opinion of that illustrious Body, the Westminster Assembly. The following extract from a Diary of its proceedings, kept by that great man, George Gillespie, puts us in possession of its views.

"April 26th, 1644. The proposition offered by the committee, was, That particular visible churches in the primitive times did consist of visible saints and believers; to wit, such as being of age, did profess faith in Christ, and obedience to Christ, according to the rule of faith and life taught by Christ and His Apostles.

It was objected, that this proposition implies that *Infants* are not members of a visible church.

Dr. Hoyle cited out of Ursinus, that, to infants, Baptizari is Profiteri.

Mr. Gataker said, "*Baptism doth not make, but suppose, membership.*"

Therefore (says Gillespie) it was added in the end of the proposition, "*and of their children.*"*

The opinion of Mr. Gataker, one of the most learned men in that august Body, governed the Assembly. The connexion of the last clause, "and of their children," with Mr. Gataker's opinion, that "Baptism did not make, but suppose, the membership of Infants," is evident. So that the Westminster Assembly held that such infants were *born* members of the Church.

Let us next listen to the words of that able, sound, judicious Divine, Thomas Boston. "He says he, 'supposes the party to have a right to the covenant before, and does not make them members of the church, but admits them solemnly thereto. And therefore they are to be called, nor accounted '*Christians*' before. They are *Christians*: for the infants of believing parents are in the covenant, and so are christians according to the covenant, and by baptism, the right of their membership is acknowledged, and they are solemnly admitted to the possession of church-membership.'" Again,

Gillespie's Works, Vol. II. Notes of Debates, &c." p. 55.

he remarks, "I doubt if there be any that say the child's right is *seated* in the parent, whether it be understood of his right before God, or before the Church."*

We will now close our citation of the views of former worthies, and will only quote, in addition, the remarks of one other writer, one of the most eminent living Theologians, distinguished for the logical exactness and accuracy of his statements.† "When it is asked, Who constitute the Church in the sight of God? we answer, The true people of God. When asked, Who constitute the Church in the sight of man? we answer, The Professors of the true religion, together with their children. When asked, What is the condition of actual church-membership in the sight of God? we answer, Regeneration, or the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. If asked, What is the condition of church-membership in the sight of man? we answer, The credible profession of the true religion, or the filial relation to a parent who professes the true religion. When we assert the church-membership of the infants of believing parents, we do not assert their regeneration, or that they are true members of Christ's body; we only assert that they belong to the class of persons whom we are bound to regard and treat as members of Christ's Church. This is the only sense in which even adults are members of the church, so far as men are concerned. How they stand in the sight of God, is a different question. That is a point we are not capable of deciding. Actual regeneration is not a *sine qua non* for membership in the visible church. This is an undeniable proposition; for there is not a Baptist nor a Brownist on earth, who does not admit that there are unrenewed persons in the Visible Church, who must be regarded and treated as members. The only question is, Are we bound by the command of God so to regard the infants of believing parents? All christendom (Baptists excepted) answer this question in the affirmative, and answer it in such a way as to show that the answer comes

*Boston's Works, Vol. I, 476, and Vol. VI, 153.

†Dr. Hodge. Princeton Review, April, 1858.

from the heart." "In the case both of adults and infants, membership in the Visible Church is founded on *presumptive* membership in the Invisible Church, which consists, as our standards teach "of the whole number of the elect, not only those that have been, or are, but those also that *shall be* gathered into one, under Christ, the Head thereof." It includes, therefore, probably, millions of the unborn, and millions of the unconverted. When we baptize an adult or receive him to the Lord's Table, we presume he is one of the elect. Whether he is truly so or not, we cannot tell; but he belongs to the class, which, by the command of Christ, we are required so to regard and treat. The infants of believing parents belong to the same general class. This presumption of Election is not founded on their Baptism, but their Baptism is founded on this presumption: just as the presumption that Jewish children would take Jehovah to be their God, was not founded on their Circumcision, but their Circumcision was founded on that presumption."

These views, so lucid, so just, so forcible, commend themselves to the judgment of every rational mind. The doctrine contained in the above extract, that "membership in the Visible Church is founded on *presumptive* membership in the Invisible Church," is the doctrine of all the Reformed Churches, and has special prominence given to it in the writings of the most eminent of the older Theologians. That this principle is a sound one, and that this "presumption" is fair and just, will be evident if we consider the *facts* in the case. From whom does God gather chiefly His Elect? *From the families of His people*, who are, professedly, in covenant with Him. From these, the vast majority of His "true worshippers" are gathered, and for the most part, in the days of their youth. This is a fact admitted by all. This is what actually occurs in the course of His Providence.*

* It is so even in Baptist Churches—shewing that the unbelief of men has not made the faithfulness of God of none effect. The children's right to the Covenant, not recognized by the parents through mistaken views of duty, is yet owned of God. Whilst the immense majority of children in Pædobaptist Churches over those in

Now, if what is done in time, was decreed from Eternity, then this admitted fact casts light upon the Divine Purpose, and upon those Providential arrangements which that Eternal Purpose originated. It shews us that it was the determinate counsel of God, that relationship to Christ in the Eternal Covenant should so regulate His Providence, should, as a general rule, so determine and control the relations of His People to each other in this world, as that the great majority who have been given to Christ, should be descended from believing and professing parents. The relations of the Family all point to *Christ*. They were all constructed with reference to Him. They terminate and centre in Him, who is the design of them all. The union between husband and wife, the Apostle Paul teaches us, was designed with reference to the union between Christ and His Church. The relation of parent and child is the type of Christ's relation to His people, as "the travail of His soul", and of His Father's relation to them, through Him; as well as a type of the inbeing of the Father and of the Eternal Word. The relations of the Family both illustrate and subserve that relation Christ's Elect Seed sustain to Him. This being so, God has ordered that such and such persons should sustain a filial relation to pious parents, because of that relation which such and such persons sustain to Christ, to Whom they have been given in the Eternal Covenant. Their relation to the Covenant of Grace and to the Invisible Church determines their relation to the Ecclesiastical Covenant, and to the Visible Church based upon it, and *therefore* determines their filial relation to professing parents. For they belong to God far more than they do to their parents. And the relation between Christ and His Seed will continue, when that between parent and child shall have ceased forever. Jehovah speaks of them as *His*: "The children which ye have borne *unto Me*". His claims are pre-eminent. The parent's subordinate.

Anti-Pædobaptist Churches, who are converted to Christ and profess His Name, affords a sufficient vindication of the Divine Authority for Infant Baptism, and shews the utility of a faithful observance of an ordinance of God.

The parent is to regard the child, first and chiefly, as the child of the Covenant, and, in this sense, the child of God. The Church-membership, and the filial relation to such a parent, with its appropriate nurture and training, is an *appointed means* for executing the Divine Purpose, and fulfilling the provisions of the Covenant of Grace, in the regeneration of the child, and its actual union to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith.

II. We proceed to consider a second proposition, viz: That the children of professing parents are born members of *particular* churches and *not* of the *Church catholic*. A moment's reflection is sufficient to perceive the truth of this proposition. Common sense sanctions the remark of Dr. Reid: "Everything that really exists, is an *individual*. Universals are neither acts of the mind, nor images in the mind." This is evident at once. How can the Universal be reached but through the Particulars? What is it, in fact, but the sum of the particulars? To speak of the Universal Church in contradistinction from the individual churches which compose it, is to adopt, in Philosophy, the theory of the Realist. A baptized child, then, if not a member of the particular church of which its parents are, must, of necessity, be a member of *all the particular churches* which make up the Church catholic, since the Universal is the sum of its particulars!

But still, the putting the baptized child in the Church catholic, beyond the jurisdiction of any particular one, does not remove it beyond the reach of discipline, if we attend to the nature and powers of this Church catholic, as described in our "Form of Government"—"the universal Church consists of all those persons in every nation, *together with their children*, who make profession of the holy religion of Christ, *and of submission to His laws*". The children also, members of the Universal Church, are bound to submit to the laws of Christ. So that, even were we to hold that the Universal is distinct from all individual churches, still the Baptized Child is subject

*Chap. 2d, Sec. 2d.

to discipline. But our standards countenance no such idle distinction, but teach plainly that "a particular Church consists of a number of professing Christians, *with their offspring*, voluntarily associated together for Divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the Holy Scriptures, and submitting to a certain form of Government"*.

The case of the Eunuch, baptized by Philip, is supposed by some to furnish a valid objection to the proposition we are maintaining, and the question has been asked with an air of triumph: "Of what particular Church was the Eunuch a member?" The answer is easy. He was a member of that Church which sent out the Evangelist Philip, the Church at Jerusalem, which the Evangelist in his official acts represented, and he stood precisely in the same relation to that Church, in which the members of churches, who remove to frontier and destitute portions of our country, do to theirs. They continue members of those churches, until in the Providence of God, churches are planted in the community where they reside, with which they may connect themselves.

These two propositions being proved, the others, dependent upon them, necessarily follow, viz: 'Baptized Children are under the care of the Church'—'Are subject to its Government and Discipline'—'Are bound to perform all the duties of members'—And are liable to Excommunication, if their obligations are trampled upon.

These propositions are harmonious, logical, consistent. Those offered, as submitted to the Committee on Revision, "*do not*"—as one of them has remarked—"*do not hang well together*". And it is surprising to find our Baptist brethren claiming that these propositions are as a concession to their principles. How can these propositions as these cohere? "All baptized persons are members of the Church, are under its government and training when they have arrived at years of discretion, they are bound to perform

*"Form of Government," Chap. 2d, Sec. 4th

the duties of members. Only those, however, who have made a profession of faith in Christ, are proper subjects of judicial prosecution."

Here, it is affirmed that *all* baptized persons are "members of the Church, and under its government", and yet that *some* of these may *rebel with impunity!* *All* "are bound to perform *all* the duties of members", and yet, with regard to *some*, the obligation cannot be enforced!

It has been said, that the advocates for inflicting Church-censures upon such baptized persons who refuse to comply with their covenant-obligations, proceed in their reasonings upon the false assumption "that all members are such alike, and on the same footing". And yet the "Revised Book" distinctly affirms that "*all* baptized persons are *bound* to perform *all* the duties of members." If all are not only members, but *all the duties* of membership are incumbent upon all, then are not all members upon the same footing?

A great Divine, justly held in honor by the whole country, in his defence of the excepting clause contained in the "Revised Book", lays down the principle, that, "As Profession qualifies for the privileges of the Church, so Profession also qualifies for the discipline of the Church".* We are unable to subscribe to this proposition to the same extent that he does. The principle holds good, doubtless, with regard to the adult, who, previous to his own personal profession of faith, sustained no relation to the Church. Does it hold good to the baptized child, who born into the Covenant, was also born a member of the Church? In the former case, that of the adult, *why* does it hold good, because his profession has brought him within the Covenant of the Church, and so being within the Covenant he enjoys its privileges, under obligation to its discipline and its discipline. In the case of the baptized child, his initial admission to a Church-member has brought him within the Covenant of the Visible

Church, and so being within the Covenant, he is entitled to its privileges, under obligation to its duties, and amenable to its discipline. His filial relation to a professing parent has brought him *within the Covenant*. His relation to the Covenant has brought him *within the Church*.

The proposition that "As profession qualifies for the privileges of the Church, so it also qualifies for the discipline of the Church" seems to us to *balance* the privileges of the Church against its discipline, overlooking the *antecedent obligation* which rests upon every child of the Covenant *to make that profession itself*, to perform his duties, and enjoy his privileges—a failure to comply with which exposes him to the discipline of the Covenant.

What, in one sense, are Church-duties, are, in another sense Church-privileges. Where the heart is in a proper state, they are so regarded. Now, will it do to affirm, that, whenever a child of the Covenant, whose heart is not right with God, fails to regard his duties as privileges, in such a case, duties cease to be duties, and he is exempt from the discipline of the Covenant?

In an elaborate article which appeared in the Southern Presbyterian Review*, the inquiry is made, "What is there in the nature of Church-membership which makes it inconsistent to exempt a certain class from a specific disability? Must all be subject to precisely the same conditions—to the same pains and penalties? If members of the Church can be excluded from a privilege which others are entitled, without prejudice to the membership, why may they not be exempted from a duty to which others are exposed, without jeopardy to the membership of the Church?"

We reply—Because the obligations which devolve upon them to perform the duties of Church-membership, not only grow out of their covenant relation to God, but are resolvable, back of this, into an essential relation

*October, 1859.

they, as moral agents, sustain to God's Moral Law, and from which, consequently, no power in the universe can release them: Because, Unbelief and Impenitence—a criminal state of heart, out of which their “disabilities spring—are altogether excuseless, unless sin carries with it, its own apology: Because impenitent baptized youth incur not simply *loss*, but *guilt*: And because, *Guilt* necessarily exposes them to the just, deserved censures of the Church.

In the same article, it is stated that the idea which lies at the basis of the new rule, is this: “it is unreasonable to exercise over the baptized child a kind of government wholly unadapted to his condition and circumstances—it is unreasonable to treat a child like a man—a sinner like a saint—an unbeliever like a professed follower of Christ.”

But, we may ask, is it considered unreasonable, either in Church or State, that the government over a child should be just that which *his conduct demands*? Unreasonable, that a youth who has committed great crimes, under circumstances which aggravate the guilt exceedingly, should be deemed worthy of severe punishment? Unreasonable, that an Unbeliever *within* the church, abusing that position which a gracious God had assigned him in his Visible Kingdom, and frustrating all the means faithfully used for his conversion, should be placed amongst the Unbelieving multitude *without the church*? Shall it be said, that, because he “has never heard the voice of the Lord in his soul”, it is unreasonable to visit his disobedience with the same censure that is inflicted upon a disobedient Professing christian? But has not that voice been continually sounding in his ear? And does the want of the “hearing ear”, and the “willing mind”, afford no sufficient ground, under these circumstances, for the church to exclude from her pale the disobedient and rebellious? Does the question of Duty turn on the agency of the Spirit being given or withheld, or, on the *obligations* of the individual? It is our duty to yield perfect obedience to the Law, but we are not able to do our duty. The Scriptures plainly require us to “serve God accept-

ably with reverence and godly fear", and with the same breath tell us, we must "have grace" to enable us to do it. It would, then, be just as reasonable to object, that it was an unjust and cruel sentence which subjected the unbaptized unbeliever to everlasting destruction, because he lacked the grace necessary to enable him to comply with his moral obligations, as to object, that it was an unjust and cruel sentence which subjected the baptized unbeliever to Excommunication, because he lacked the grace necessary to enable him to comply with his moral and covenant-obligations.

We shall devote the remainder of this Discourse to a consideration of the more prominent Objections, which have been, or may be, made to the Doctrine we advocate.

1. It is said that our Doctrine "gives to the Baptized child a right to the Communion-Table without being duly qualified." This is a mistake. Though every child is born a citizen of his country, a plenary citizen, still he is not eligible to office without due qualification. It is the right and duty of the State to prescribe the mode in which a citizen may enjoy his rights. So it is the right and duty of the church to allow none to approach the Lord's Table, who give evidence of not possessing sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's Body. A right in a thing may exist, where its exercise is not immediately enjoyed. A king may be crowned before he is able or qualified to hold the sceptre. Rights vested in infancy may be held in abeyance, until there is a capacity for enjoyment, or until some condition is performed. Every church-member does not, as a matter of course, partake of the Lord's Supper. The Jewish child did not, while an infant partake of the Passover. Calvin remarks, "it (the Passover) was rightly eaten only by those who were of sufficient age *to be able to inquire into its signification*". This is abundantly attested by sacred antiquarians, both Jewish and Christian.

2. We proceed to consider a second Objection, viz: "This Doctrine makes Baptized children members of the Church

without their consent—therefore it is inconsistent with both the dictates of reason, and the teachings of Scripture”. Now, if this be a valid objection, then it has a terrible sweep. It lies with equal force against the principles of the Economy of *Nature*, the Economy of *Providence*, the Economy of *Grace*, as well as against the Economy of a Church-state.

We are born into the world *without our consent*—inhabit this, rather than any other globe, *without our consent*—are constituted moral agents *without our consent*—made candidates for a never-ending eternity, *without our consent*—were born in this land of light and privilege, *without our consent*—born of such and such parents, *without our consent*—born rich or poor, high or low, bond or free, *without our consent*—became members of such a community, such a State, *without our consent*.

The relations into which we have been brought to these, were not of our creating, were *without our consent*, and yet they involve serious responsibilities. So, too, the relations we sustain to the church, may be *without our consent*, and yet we cannot throw off the mighty responsibility.

Every child has its rights, which, in the language of that deep thinker, Puffendorf, “date their validity from the very beginning of their being, and other persons already arrived at the full use of reason, are engaged to such and such performances towards them, as may turn to their benefit, even while incapable of apprehending the favor.”

Children are constantly subject to responsibilities too, without their knowledge or consent. “Covenants made with parents include their heirs. Estates descend, charged with various duties which children neglect at their peril. Without such arrangements, society could never attain its great end and object.”

The principle laid down by Puffendorf is indisputable, viz: “In infants, a presumed consent is judged equivalent to a formal acceptance, it being taken for granted that *no one will refuse what conduces to his benefit*.”*

*Law of Nature and Nations. Book IV, Chap. IV., p. 161.

Now, apply this principle to the case of the Baptized Child. Does it not conduce to his benefit to be in Covenant with God? Is there any temporal blessing worthy to be compared with this? What are treasures of silver and gold—what, the honors of the world—what, the richest inheritance known on earth, in comparison with this precious privilege, to be *a child of the Covenant*? Are covenant-relations to be lightly esteemed? Are precious promises to be despised? Can a Christian Parent do more for his children, than to secure for them this precious privilege, an interest in God's Covenant? And can a child do anything better for himself than to sanction at a proper age, the act of the parent, and personally, consent to the Covenant? Will he refuse to do what conduces more to his benefit than the possession of a world? Nay, will he refuse to do that, the neglect of which will secure his everlasting ruin? Not, if his mind and heart are in a proper state. Not, if he acts as he is bound morally to act. But suppose that it could be foreseen that such and such children would, when arriving at years of discretion, "refuse what conduces to their benefit", still are not the parents bound to contract for them those engagements which are in accordance with the *moral obligations* of their children and therefore with their true interests, however repugnant they may subsequently prove to their *depraved inclinations*? Are we not at liberty to benefit a person without his consent? Suppose that we detect an individual in the attempt to perpetrate suicide, is it not our right to frustrate that attempt if we are able to do it? Nay, are we not guilty of his blood, if we do not do it? And so, the parent is bound to do that for the child which may deliver him from everlasting destruction, and secure for him everlasting life. And God has the right, and the parent has the right to *claim* the consent of the child to that which conduces to his benefit. And this plain principle must hold good until two absurdities are converted into sober truths: The first is, that this moral suicide has the right to determine for himself his own course of action: And the second is, that

he has the right to determine also our own action towards him.

Thus we have seen our Doctrine supported by the Analogies of Nature and Providence, of Society and Government. It is supported too by the analogies of all the *Covenants* made by God with men. The Covenant of Works, made with Adam, was also made with us, but *without our consent*. Still responsibilities were incurred, and the consequences of this transaction remain to this day. The Covenant of Grace, made with Christ, was also made with His Seed, for grace was given them in Christ before the World began. Duties devolve upon them in consequence, and privileges, everlasting privileges are theirs. So likewise, other Covenants made with parents, were made also with their children without their consent: the Covenant of Preservation with Noah, the Covenant of Priesthood with Phinehas, the Covenant of Royalty with David, &c., &c.

So that all analogy upholds the provision of the Ecclesiastical Covenant, by which infants become members of the Church.

Steuart of Pardovan in his "Collections" makes the following just observation: "By that Covenant whereof Baptism is a seal, the Lord promiseth to be our God, and we are in His promised strength to engage to be His people; which engagement, though Christian infants be not capable to come under of *themselves*, formally; yet by parents vowing in their name *on their behalf*, they do thereby become absolutely bound to the performance thereof, because their obligation and duty to *God* were supposed, and previous unto their baptism."

In the ordinance of baptism the obligations of the child, as well as of the parent are *incurred*. The parent enters into engagements *on behalf* of the child, so that the child's repentance, *obedience*, and observance of all Church-*ordinances* "are the *incurred* debts then incurred to be paid *on his behalf*."

To the above views and reasonings the following objection has been made: 'Obligations rest on Unbelievers *as such* and obligations rest on Christians *as such*. These two classes of obligations are distinct, and must be kept separate. The obligations of Christians do not fall on Unbelievers. The obligation of the Unbeliever is to be a Christian, to believe—not to observe Church-ordinances; but being a Christian, then obligation rests on him to observe Church-ordinances.'

This reasoning is specious, but unsound. The true theory is, That upon those who are born members of the Church, Church-obligations rest, whether willing or unwilling. But a prescribed *order* obtains amongst these obligations. Baptized children are bound, *first*, to believe in Christ, *in order to observe* all the ordinances of the Church. A Precept or an Institution may be *positive*, and yet obedience to it is a *moral* duty, if commanded by God. And what else is necessary for the due observance of the Lord's Supper, but a *proper state of heart*? And does not "a proper state of heart" come under the claims of the *Moral Law*, the essential, unchangeable law of our nature? Does not the *Moral Law* require *faith in Christ, love to Him, obedience to His commands*? Was it not *Christ* who gave the Law on Mt. Sinai? Was it not *Christ* who said "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"? And are not "faith in Him, love to Him, and obedience to His commands" the qualifications for a due observance of the Lord's Supper? If then these qualities, which pertain to a proper state of heart, be lacking, does not the Moral Law condemn the absence of them? And therefore condemn the want of qualification for the observance of the ordinance? And if individuals, as individuals, are under that unchangeable law of their being, the Moral Law, then are they not bound to have that moral character which would fit them to observe this ordinance of Christ, wherever He in His Providence should cause it to be observed? So that, their non-observance of it, on the ground of lack of qualification, is condemned by the Moral Law? Now, if this obligation rests on all, does it

not devolve with greater weight upon those who, by a Divine Constitution, are already members of the Church? If the violation of *natural* obligations be attended with great guilt, is not the violation of *Covenant*-obligations attended with still greater?

Again. In every age of the world, we find Positive Institutions existing. Even in the state of Innocence they existed: The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as the trial of Adam's obedience. This First Institution being profaned, he thereby transgressed the whole law of his creation. The disobedience to a Positive Precept, the eating of the Forbidden Fruit, involved the violation of the whole Moral Law, the breaking of each command of the Decalogue. "After the Fall, the Church in the Family, built upon the Promise, was tried in the matter of Instituted Worship. There was no discovery of Cain's wickedness, and of Abel's faith, until proved by the Institution of *Sacrifice*. When Abraham was called, *Circumcision* was given for the trial of his obedience. When his posterity were collected in a new Church-state under Moses, the *Passover* was instituted. To these, many more were added on Mt. Sinai, all as trials of faith and obedience to succeeding generations". In the New Testament, the same rule is observed: Baptism, and the Lord's Supper have been appointed. Dr. Owen makes the following weighty observation: "*In no state or condition of the Church did God ever accept of Moral Obedience without the observance of some Instituted Worship, as the test of that obedience, and the rule of acceptance or rejection of the worshipper.*" This remark draws deep, and deserves to be well pondered.

4. We pass on to another objection: 'This Doctrine obliges to duties without proper qualification—without the ability to discharge duty'. The reply is easy. Does the obligation of God's law turn on the qualification of the subject, and not on the rightful authority of the Lawgiver? Surely, the qualification cannot be the condition of the command, when God commands the qualification itself, however destitute of it

many may be. To affirm otherwise is just to affirm that the command of God obliges men only when they are suitably disposed towards it, and therefore their want of faith and other virtues frees them from the obligation to have them : So that not being qualified to profess the religion of Christ, they are not *bound* to do so, and then so far from incurring guilt, they are even obeying God, and acting aright. To such absurdities does the position lead that there can be no obligation where there is no qualification. To suspend obligation on the giving or withholding of the Spirit's influences, and not on *the nature of the moral agent*, is virtually to impute injustice and cruelty to God in requiring obedience in all cases where the saving influences of that Spirit are not conferred. Wherein does the "inability" of the baptized member differ from the "inability" of any other sinner? His inability is his sin ; the inability of depravity, and nothing else.

If the children of citizens are also citizens, and are bound to discharge at a proper age all the duties of the citizen, so too the children of church-members are also members, and bound to perform at a proper age all the duties of members.

It is objected to this latter proposition, that children being born in sin are not qualified to become church-members, until they are renewed by the Spirit, and believe in Christ.

But it is overlooked that the children of citizens are also born in sin, and it might with equal reason be objected, that they too are not qualified to discharge their duties, as members of the Family, and members of Society ; for the Family and Society are Divine Institutions, and the State is the ordinance of God. The *State* must not be confounded with the *World*. The *World* is the Kingdom of the Devil. The *State* is the Kingdom of God. It is a common mistake to suppose that *Religion* is restricted to the *Church*. *Religion* embraces *all* the ties which bind men to God. Man, in *all* his relations, whether *temporal* or eternal, whether domestic, social, civil or ecclesiastical, is bound to be religious. Religion, of necessity, belongs to every Divine Institution, the Family, Society, the

State, as well as the Church. All these Institutions are from God, all are dependent upon Him, and all are designed for His Glory. The members of the Family, of Society, and the citizens of the State, are all bound to be religious, and, of course, are *bound* to be members of the Church, and qualified for its duties. The same obligation which binds men to be faithful members of the Family, and of the Community, and faithful subjects of the State, binds them also to be members of the Church, and faithful members. And did they possess, *before God*, the qualifications necessary for a faithful discharge of their duties in their individual, social and civil relations, they would also possess the qualifications necessary for church-membership and a faithful discharge of the duties connected therewith. What is the State? It is an Institution of God designed for His Glory, and the *temporal* good of man. And what is the Church? It is an Institution of God designed for His Glory, and the *eternal* welfare of man. The relations of each to God confer upon each its *religious* character, as long as each shall exist. That one is limited to Time, and the other co-extensive with Eternity, has nothing to do with the religious character of either. As Religion is not only profitable, but necessary, for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come, so Religion is necessary for the well-being of the State, to fit it to accomplish its ends. And therefore the State is a Religious Institution. The same holds good of the Family. But these institutions are not only religious, but *christian*. They sustain vital relations to the Lord Jesus Christ. They have nothing to do with an absolute God, for an absolute God has nothing to do with them. They stand related to God the Father only through Christ, the Mediator. They are all subjects of the Lord Jesus. Let us examine this position in the light of Scripture, and it will be apparent, we think, that the Cross is the great Corner-Stone upon which all these Institutions are now built.

Immediately upon the Fall, Adam and Eve hid themselves when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the

garden. The words in the original imply that they separated from each other, and hid, one in one place, and one in another.* They were at enmity. Eve had tempted Adam, and he had charged her before God with being the cause of his ruin. Thus Discord and Enmity arose between them. The Family-bond was now broken. That Institution, upon which all others are founded, was now forfeited by transgression, and threatened with utter extinction. But Christ comes and reconciles Adam and Eve to each other—for He it was that appeared to them—and the bond of union now, is the promise He gives concerning Himself. He reconciles them first to God, then to each other. Thus upon Christ and His Cross, was the Family re-constructed. This was the germ of the state. So, too, Christ reconciles not only family and family, but people and people, nation and nation. No two nations on earth have been so hostile to each other as Jew and Gentile, yet the Cross broke down the middle-wall of partition between them, and reconciled one to another. So, too, all classes in Society, rich and poor, bond and free, though remaining distinct classes, are yet one in Christ. "He hath reconciled *all things* to *Himself* by *His blood—all things*, whether they be things in Heaven, or things on Earth". *Every Relation, through which rights are conferred upon, and benefits enjoyed by man, was originally forfeited by SIN, and subsequently restored by the Mediator, and hence is*

* We avail ourselves here of the learned labours of that eminent Divine, Thomas Boston. His "Essay on the Hebrew text of Genesis", shews that his attainments in the critical knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures were altogether extraordinary. The distinguished scholars of his day looked upon him as pre-eminent in this department of learning. That he was a profound Theologian is known to all the world. His analysis of the 8th verse of the 3d chap. of Genesis, is as follows :

"And they heard, even the voice of Jehovah God, walking in the garden", i. e. the voice walking : for so the words are by the pointing constructed. This voice which they heard walking was the Word, the eternal Son of God, now entering upon the execution of the Mediatory office, and coming to discover the eternal counsel concerning the salvation of sinners. "And the man hid himself, and his wife [hid herself]," for so the pointing shews the words to be constructed. The guilty couple, at hearing the sound of the Voice walking in the garden, ran asunder, he one way, she another, and hid themselves in different places, not together. 'From the face of Jehovah God :' i. e. from the *Shechinah*, the visible sign of the divine presence, the habitation of the divine majesty, from whence they were to have solemn communion with Him.—'In midst of tree of the garden'. In some grove or other, some place where the trees were thick about them. The divine presence, which before was the joy of their hearts, was now become a terror to them, being guilty."—*Boston's Works*, Vol. I, p. 626.

the redeemed property of Christ. Thus, we have seen that the Family was at the very first instituted by the Son of God, and subsequently when ruined, it was redeemed and reconstructed by Him as Mediator, based upon the promise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head". Its very aim and design now, is the establishment of Christ's Kingdom. The Family, then, is the redeemed property of Christ. The original formation of one man and one woman into "one flesh" or conjugal body, contemplated the rearing of a pious offspring. This is clearly shewn by the Prophet Malachi, when he asks, "Did He not make one? Though He had the residue of the Spirit. And why the one? That He might seek a godly seed", or a seed of God. "He did not design it," remarks Howe, "merely that there might be a continual descent of Human Nature, but that Religion might still be transmitted from age to age, and this design He never quits". The Family-Constitution brought to light new views of the Attributes of God. It is a Government owing its existence, now, to the Mediatorial Government of Christ, and also representing that. In the earliest ages, the Father of the Family was also the Priest of his household, as well as its Instructor and Governor. As the Head of the Constitution, the Father was to teach, sacrifice, intercede and rule, as Prophet, Priest and King, and to do everything for God. Who does not see that this domestic Government was embraced in, and illustrated in a narrower sphere, the Mediatorial Government of Christ, and that He was thus shadowed forth as Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church?

The teachings of the New Testament sanction the principle we have laid down, viz. That the Marriage Relation, which now derives to man rights and blessings, was originally forfeited by transgression, and subsequently restored by Christ, and is now the redeemed property of the Lord. Thus it enjoins upon the parties united in the marriage relation to have a regard to the glory and honor of the Redeemer, and to act under the influence of His

grace. "Let him that marrieth, marry *only in the Lord*". Parents are required to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of *the Lord*." And children likewise are commanded to "obey their parents *in the Lord*". Servants are enjoined "to be obedient to them that are their masters according to the flesh, *as unto Christ*". And Masters are required to perform their duties to their servants, remembering that "*their Master* also is in Heaven". In like manner, the *State* is now under the Mediatorial Government of the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him it is responsible. It is a Christian Institution, designed to secure the civil good of man. It owes allegiance to Christ its Divine King, and is bound to respect His Statutes, and observe those which pertain to it. "By *Me*," says Christ, "kings reign and princes decree justice; by *Me* princes rule, and nobles, even all the kings of the earth". "The Kingdom is the Lord's, and *He is the Governor among the nations*". He is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords". "Be wise now, O ye Kings, be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. *Kiss the Son* lest He be angry and ye perish from the way". "The nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory". "*The nation and the kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish.*"

The Moral Law, in all ages of the World, has been administered by Christ. Civil Government is under His Mediatorial control. The Father delivered all things into the hands of the Son. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son". "By Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and FOR HIM". "The Father hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church". "His Kingdom ruleth over all".

This doctrine does by no means confound, or unite distinct Institutions, the Church and the State. The

inconsistency in affirming that two Institutions are under one Divine Head, when, though the relation sustained to the one be much dearer and more intimate than that held to the other, the two are kept to their own appropriate spheres, without interference or collision between them. The planets which belong to our solar system revolve, all, around one common centre, the Sun, and yet their orbits are distinct. In like manner, the Family, the Community, the Church, and the State, are all subject to Christ, the Head of all power, and yet these Institutions are kept, each within its own peculiar orbit; to transcend which and encroach upon that of another, would be to rebel against the authority of their common Head. Christ wears "Many Crowns" upon His brow.*

*The following passages of Scripture are frequently cited for the purpose of shewing, but without success, that the Lord Jesus Christ sustains *no relation at all to the Kingdoms of this world* :

"My Kingdom is not of this world", said Christ to Pilate. The Saviour was here acquainting Pilate with the *nature* of His Kingdom. "He does not say 'not over', but, 'not of this world', i. e. in its *origin and nature*".—Dr. David Brown.

"There is no denial that His Kingdom is *over* this world, but that it is to be established by this world's power."—Alford.

"Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's".

This surely does not imply that *Cæsar himself is not to render unto God the things which are God's*! Cæsar himself is Christ's subject, and is bound to render unto Christ *the things which are Christ's*—the homage due to His Person, the respect due to His commands.

Stier well observes, "seek and maintain *the true unity* in your duty and obligation toward God and Man! Serve Cæsar for God's sake who has placed him over you, as once He did Nebuchadnezzar over your fathers. To be an obedient, dutiful subject of Cæsar and of God, is quite compatible the one with the other, in as far as, and because God has given dominion to Cæsar; consequently, to give Cæsar his own for God's sake, means properly only to obey God". "For conscience sake, pay to Cæsar also *the tribute of testimony to the truth, by reminding him that power has been given him from above, only for righteousness*".

We pay tribute to Cæsar then, when we remind him of his duty to acknowledge the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ! The time will certainly come when "the Kingdoms of this world shall all become Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ". They will still continue "the Kingdoms of this world," and at the same time be "the Kingdoms (not the *'Kingdom'*) of our Lord Jesus Christ". Their moral character will be changed. Christianity will be distinctly acknowledged in their respective *Constitutions* as the religion of the Nations, and all their *legislation* be pervaded by its spirit. For the adoption of Christian sentiments, principles and practices by the great bulk of a people even, is not sufficient to constitute *the Nation, the Kingdom, a Kingdom of Christ*. Something more is necessary. A Nation, as a Nation, expresses its religious character, and makes its profession of Christianity, through its *Constitution and its laws*. When through these it distinctly recognizes Christ's authority, and observes His Statutes (those which relate to nations) and subordinates its interests to the advancement of His Glory, then, and not till then, is it entitled to the distinction of a *Christian Nation*. And the time will come (for God has promised) when not one only, but all nations, all Kingdoms, will thus become "the Kingdoms of our Lord". In that day, all rulers will have the fear of the Lord before their eyes. None who deny His Divinity, question His authority, trample upon His

Neither does this Doctrine give any countenance to the dogma of a Church established by the State. All that it demands is, simply, that *Protestant Christianity, without any legal preference being given to any one of its forms, should be the religion of the State, the religion of the nation.**

laws, will, then, be exalted to office. The Sabbath will no more be desecrated by wicked Governments, self-styled "Christian". The land will no more mourn by reason of swearing. Horrid impiety and crime will no more lift their brazen head. But "righteousness which exalteth a nation" will be the crowning distinction of every people. Let Christians realize the responsibility which devolves on them to do all they can to effect this most desirable consummation! Not the present, but the future, condition of the nations of the earth is their normal condition. Not until "the Kingdoms of this world" shall have become "the Kingdoms of the Lord", will those Kingdoms have fulfilled the end of their existence, and given to Christ the glory which is His due. And not till then, are Christians at liberty to be contented with the religious status of the nations of the earth. But are bound in the mean time, to use all their influence, in every legitimate way, as citizens, to cast the *governments* under which they live, more and more, into the mould of Christianity—to secure, through the constitution and laws of their country, the clear recognition of Christ's Headship and Authority, the faithful observance of His Precepts, and entire freedom from *national* sins, which, sooner or later, bring ruin upon any people. "Them that honor Me, I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed".

* The framers of our Constitution have distinctly recognized our common Christianity as the Established Religion of these United States, though they give no legal preference to any one of its forms over any other. One of the Articles of the Constitution (7th) declares that that instrument is framed "by the unanimous consent of the States present, the 17th Day of September, *in the Year of our Lord 1787*, and of the Independence of U. S. A., the 12th." In the clause "Year of our Lord," the word 'Lord' means the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and the word 'our' preceding it, refers back to the words of the Preamble, viz: "We, the people of the U. S." The phrase, then, *our Lord*, making a part of the dating of the Constitution, when compared with the commencing clause of the Preamble, contains a *distinct recognition of the authority of Christ*, and of course, of His Religion, by the people of these United States. The date of the Constitution is two-fold. First, it is dated by the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; Second, by the Independence of U. S. A. Any argument, therefore, which would prove that the authority of Christianity is not recognized by the people of the U. S., would also prove that the Independence of the United States is not recognized by them! Another Article of the Constitution contains a recognition of the *Christian Sabbath*. In like manner, the Constitutions of the original Thirteen States recognized Christianity, and the Christian Sabbath, and some of them made the *Protestant Religion the Established Religion* of their States. This was the case with South Carolina's First Constitution, drawn up by the immortal John Locke. "The Christian Protestant Religion shall be deemed, and is hereby constituted and declared to be the established religion of this State. That all denominations of Christian Protestants, demeaning themselves peaceably and faithfully, shall enjoy equal religious and civil privileges." The Present Constitution of S. C. recognizes the Christian Sabbath; and in every instance, so far, where the adherents of Judaism have been tried for violating the Christian Sabbath, by keeping open their places of business on that Day, the decisions have been uniformly against them, and in favor of the observance of the Lord's Day. Several years ago, a man was prosecuted by the City Council of Charleston for selling goods on the Lord's Day. The decision was given against him, and in pronouncing the judgment of the Court, Judge O'Neill held the following language: "Our law declares all contracts *contra bonos mores* as illegal and void. What constitutes the standard of good morals? Is it not Christianity? There certainly is none other. Say that cannot be appealed to, and I don't know what would be good morals. The day of moral virtue in which we live, would, in an instant, if that standard were abolished, lapse into the dark and murky night of Pagan immorality. I agree fully to what is beautifully and appropriately said in *Updegraff v.*

Thus, we have seen that there is an obligation resting upon families, communities, states, and nations, to be *Christian*. That this obligation is not generally acknowledged, is only another illustration of the painful truth that Christ still "comes to His own, and His own receive Him not".

And now we resume our argument, the design of which is to shew that if the children of Church-members have no right to membership, because born in sin, then neither have any persons a right before God, to the Institutions of the Family, the Community, and the State, for the very same reason. The argument draws deeper than our Baptist Brethren suppose. Society is the Institution of God, the State is His Ordinance, the Moral Law is over both, and God requires that the duties we owe to Him through these relations be *perfectly* discharged, so that the least defect be not found therein. Now, who does this? No one. The most upright citizen that ever lived, who was placed in the most favorable circumstances, and who enjoyed the best training, has sinned times without number against God, *as a Citizen, as a member of Society, as a subject of the State*. Then it is easy to see that Children, born in sin, in a state of rebellion, opposed to God and His Law, are not qualified *by nature* to be citizens. Hence, God provides a *system of training*, of education, for them. He places them under

Commonwealth (11 Serg. and Rawle, 394) 'Christianity, general Christianity is, and always has been, part of the common law.'

The Constitution of North Carolina allowed no Deist, or Romanist, or Jew to be eligible to any civil office. "No person who shall deny the being of a God, *or the truth of the Protestant Religion*, or the divine authority of either the Old or New Testament, or shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office, or place of trust or profit, in the civil department within this State."—ARTICLE 32.

Maryland, in her Declaration of Rights, says "that no other test or qualification ought to be required, on admission to any office of trust or profit, than such oath of support and fidelity to this State, and such oath of office, as shall be directed by this Convention or the Legislature, *and a declaration of belief in the Christian Religion*."—ART. 35.

The Constitution of New Jersey, formed in 1776, declares "that all persons professing a belief in the faith of *any Protestant sect*, who shall demean themselves peaceably under the government, as hereby established, shall be capable of being elected into any office of profit or trust, or being a member of either branch of the Legislature."—ART. 19.

The Constitutions of the remaining States, with equal or less distinctness, recognize Christianity as the established religion of their respective communities.

the instruction, government and discipline of the Family, that they may be qualified to discharge the duties of citizenship. For, left to themselves, the seeds of insubordination and rebellion within them would inevitably bear their legitimate fruit in the disorders of Society, the prostration of Government, the destruction of the State. So that the instruction, restraint, and government of the Family, and of the Law of the Land, are necessary to qualify the child to become a good citizen. And after all, he will not *perfectly* discharge his duties as a citizen before God, but will be guilty in His sight of many shortcomings and sins. If, therefore, qualification for these duties were antecedently required, none could be, justly, members of the Family, of Society, and citizens of the State. For all have forfeited their right to these blessed Institutions, being sinners by nature against God, and consequently totally incompetent to fulfil the ends of these. But, under the Mediatorial Government of Christ, God having purposes of mercy towards our fallen race, these Institutions are restored to us, as the purchase of our dear Redeemer, and certain conservative influences emanating from His Mediatorial Government are supplied, so that the Family, Society, and the State, may become effectual for the accomplishment of the design of each, when the laws, which regulate each, are obeyed. The child, though born a citizen, is not born *qualified* to be a citizen, for it has a nature which, left to itself, will make it a criminal. But it is expected that after it has had the suitable education and training God has promised for it, it *will be* qualified. In like manner, the child a church member, though born a member, is not born *qualified* to be a church-member, but it is expected that after it receives the training God enjoins, it *will be* qualified—this expectation being based on the promise God has given of the gracious influence of His Spirit, and of the concurrent operation of His Providence.

5. We proceed to consider another objection, viz: "Many of these baptized persons have virtually ceased to be members, and therefore all church-action against them is unnecessary."

and useless." But, let us ask, to whom does it belong to terminate the connection? There is no such thing as a *withdrawal* from the Church. The Church has no right to release any from their covenant-obligations. To consent that her members may withdraw to the world, is just to consent that they may trample upon their covenant. This would make the Church a partaker in the sin of covenant-breaking. She is bound by the authority of her Great Head to hold her members perpetually to the obligations of their Covenant. The only way by which a church-member's connexion with the Church can be dissolved, is by Excommunication. If Unbelief be such a sin that for it the soul will be banished to hell, is it not also a sin which, if persisted in, demands *expulsion from the Church*? Grant that an individual is not guilty of what the world calls immorality, yet is not Unbelief deserving of the censure of the Church of Jesus Christ? Is the Church merely a *moral institute*? Is her standard of morality to be drawn from the world? Can she condemn nothing, but what the world, or Natural Reason, or Natural Conscience condemns? Are the imperfect views even of her own members to be suffered to regulate her conduct, instead of the infallible decisions of the Word of God? Is not Unbelief immorality in the sight of God? Did not Christ pronounce the inhabitants of Capernaum greater sinners than the inhabitants of Sodom? Should not the Church censure a sin which is the parent of all sins, by her discipline, as well as by her teachings? Who gave to her the right silently to drop her members? Is it not an invasion of the prerogative of the Divine Head to open a door of egress which He has not opened? Has she the right to dismiss, any more than to admit, *in a way not authorized*? Does not Christ declare that the Jews, the natural branches, were "*broken off*" (not dropped) for their unbelief? And is not the Church's course of action against those who should be obedient to Christ, by not honoring His ordinances, plainly set down by Moses in the Old Testament, and recognized and confirmed by the Apostle Peter in the New Testament? Thus

speaks the Apostle in his address to the Jews: "Moses truly said unto the fathers, a Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. *And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.*"—Acts 3: 22, 23.

The following lucid exposition of these words by Dr. John M. Mason, deserves a careful consideration. "Who were the *People*?" he asks. Not the *nation* of the Jews. For having committed the crime, they themselves fell under the penalty. Their nation was to be destroyed; whereas, according to the prediction of Moses, it was not the *people* that were to perish; but the disobedient who were to be destroyed from *among* the people; which implies the continuance of that people in the divine protection. It is a people, therefore, which was to survive the rejection of the Jews, and be placed in such circumstances of favour, as to render destruction from among them a great and terrible judgment.

Not the people whom God "hath chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy". For God never "cast away His people whom He foreknew". They who committed the crime before us, never belonged to this people, and so could not be destroyed from among them, and they whom God had thus chosen did not commit the crime. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed". Who then are "the people" from among whom the sinners were to be destroyed? If not the *Jewish* people, if not the *elected* people of God, it can be no other than that *People* whom He owns as His, and who are called by the collective name of His *Church*.

And what was the "destruction"? Not temporal death, for God never ordained this punishment for the sin of unbelief on His Son. Not an exclusion from the communion of the Jewish nation; for unbelief in Christ was to them a recommendation instead of a disparagement; and to be severed from them entirely, was at least as likely to prove a blessing

curse. In what then did the destruction consist? Undoubtedly in having their name and place exterminated from among the people of God; in being cast out of His Church, and exposed to that perdition which shall be the fate of all whom He disowns. This must be the interpretation of the threatening because no other will comport with either sense or fact. ”*

Here then is the Church's Canon. The Disobedient amongst the Baptized—those who will not honor the ordinances of Christ—are to be cast out. And what is the Excommunication of the Baptized Child, but the severing his connection with the Church; not rashly, but after all due nurture and admonition given, but given in vain—plainly seen, abundantly proved that it is in vain, no prospect whatever of amendment being afforded? Severing his connection with the Church, after he has proved to be unworthy of that connection? This connection was instituted by God, and therefore when it terminates, must do so by Excommunication, which is God's sentence through the Church. What just objection can there be to this? Is not the lack of qualification for the duties of Church-membership, a *sin*? Can it then be any *excuse*? Is it not more likely that the binding the obligation to be duly qualified on the conscience of the Baptized Child, even whilst sensible of his unfitness and sinful inability for duty, will be blessed to his conversion, rather than the non-recognition of his obligations? Is not the former mode precisely analogous to the operations of the Spirit of God on the sinner's soul? Whilst convincing him of his inability to keep the commandments, still at the same time binding the obligation to do so, on his conscience, until at length the sinner is led to the Spirit Himself to obtain the qualification he is *bound* to have? Is not the probability of conversion increased, when the sense of obligation is fortified by a clear and deep conviction of the terrible doom to which the unregenerate are exposed?

*Works, Vol. II, p. 364.

And so too, is not the probability of the conversion of the Baptized Child increased, when covenant-obligations, which in his case have been superadded to natural obligations, are guarded and enforced by the solemn sanction of Excommunication? And what is Excommunication? It is not Anathema—not the devoting of a soul to destruction; but it is a means of grace, painful, it is true, and only used when all others have proved ineffectual, designed for correction and recovery from wickedness. If, viewed in one light, it is a punishment, viewed in another it is a blessing. Contrasted with that of which it deprives us, it is a punishment—contrasted with that eternal ruin which it foreshadows, and which by so doing, it is designed to prevent, it is a blessing. It is a desperate *remedy* provided for a desperate case. When Christ's sheep act like wolves, they must be treated like wolves, and excluded from the fold, in order that they may be prepared to enter it as sheep again, and be rendered capable of that discipline which obtains within it. Stier, in his excellent commentary, justly observes, "The Church only binds in order that it may be able again to loose when this is possible. The final exclusion of the incorrigible, in virtue of which they are accounted as heathen and publicans, as it is requisite on its own account, *so at the same time it is only the last and strongest expression of that love which seeks their recovery.*" And Olshausen makes the following remark, to the truth of which many a Pastor is able, from his experience, to testify: "*The only means of help, as well as the sole punishment, is to exclude him (the rebellious member) from the community of believers. Where the higher life has left a soul, the withdrawal of fellowship with kindred minds is often the surest means of rousing its slumbering aspirations.*"

That Excommunication is designed, (in part,) for the correction and recovery, not the destruction of the offender, is the teaching of the Word of God: "Such are delivered up Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus".—1 Cor., 5: 5.

Agreeably to this Scripture, our Standards declare, that "the ends of Discipline are, the removal of offences; the vindication of the honor of Christ; the promotion of the purity and general edification of the Church; and also *the benefit of the offender himself*."—Book of Discipline, chap. 1: sec. 2.

"The design of Excommunication is *to operate upon the offender as a means of reclaiming him*; to deliver the Church from the scandal of his offence; and to inspire all with fear, by the example of his punishment." After sentence has been pronounced, "prayer shall be made that *the blessing of God may follow His ordinance, for the conviction and reformation of the excommunicated person*, and for the establishment of all true believers."—Directory for Wor. chap. 10, sec. 7.

Calvin holds the same view. "The design of excommunication is *that the sinner may be brought to repentance*, and evil examples taken away, to prevent the name of Christ from being blasphemed, and other persons being tempted to imitation." "It is even conducive to their own benefit for their iniquity to be punished, that the stroke of the rod may arouse to a confession of their guilt, those who would only be rendered more obstinate by indulgence. The Apostle intends the same when he says, 'If any man obey not our word, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.' Again, when he says of the incestuous Corinthian, 'I have judged to deliver such a one unto Satan, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord;' that is, as I understand it, that he had consigned him to a temporal condemnation, that the spirit might be eternally saved. He, therefore, calls it *delivering to Satan*, because the devil is *without* the Church, as Christ is *in* the Church. For the opinion of some persons, that it relates to a certain torment of the body in the present life, inflicted by the agency of Satan, appears to me extremely doubtful." "Such as are expelled from the Church, therefore, are not for us to expunge from the number of the elect, or to treat them as already lost. It is proper to consider them as strangers to the Church, and consequently from Christ,

but this only as long as they remain in a state of exclusion. And even then, if they exhibit more appearance of obstinacy than of humility, still let us leave them to the judgment of God, hoping better things of them for the future than we discover at present, and not ceasing to pray to God on their behalf." "Excommunication differs from anathema; the latter, which ought to be very rarely or never resorted to, precluding all pardon, execrates a person, and devotes him to eternal perdition, whereas excommunication rather censures and punishes his conduct. And though it does, at the same time, punish the person, yet it is in such a manner, that, by warning him of his future condemnation, it recalls him to salvation. If he obey, the Church is ready to re-admit him to its friendship, and to restore him to its communion. Therefore, though the discipline of the Church admits not of our friendly association and familiar intercourse with excommunicated persons, yet we ought to exert all the means in our power to promote their reformation, and their return to the society and communion of the Church; as we are taught by the Apostle, who says, yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."*

Dr. Owen holds the same view. "The end of Excommunication is, First, With respect unto the Church, its purging and vindication: Second, With respect unto the person excommunicated, *his repentance, reformation, and salvation.*" "There is such an efficacy assigned unto excommunication, in binding the consciences of men, in retaining their sins, in the destruction and mortification of the flesh, *in the healing and recovery of sinners*, as nothing but the authority of a divine institution can give unto it." "It cannot be proved that the offender was delivered so into the power of Satan, to be cruciated, agitated, and at length killed, as some imagine; nor can any instance of any such thing be given in the Scripture or antiquity, though there be many of them who, upon their rejection out of the Church, were enraged unto an opposition against

*Institutes. Vol. 2, Book 4, chap. 12.

it, as it was with Simon, Magus, Marcion, and others. Yea, it is evident that there was no such thing included in their delivery unto Satan as is pretended : for the design and end of it was the man's humiliation, recovery, and salvation, as is expressly affirmed in the text ; and this effect it actually had, for the man was healed and restored. *Wherefore this delivery unto Satan is an ordinance of Christ for the exciting of saving grace in the souls of men, adapted unto the case of falling by scandalous sins, peculiarly effectual, above any other gospel ordinance.*" *

President Edwards holds the same view. "Excommunication itself is to be performed as an act of benevolence. We should seek their good by it ; and it is to be used as a means of their eternal salvation. But complacency and delight in them as visible Christians is to be withdrawn ; and on the contrary, they are to be the objects of displacency, as visibly and apparently wicked." "The Church may and ought to pray for such ; but they cannot have *fellowship* with such in prayer. The Minister, when speaking in prayer, doth not speak in *their* name ; he speaks only in the name of the *united society* of visible saints or worshippers." " 'Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.' The consideration that he hath been a brother heretofore, and that we have not finally cast him off from that relation, but that we are still hoping and using means for his recovery, obliges us to concern ourselves more for the good of his soul than for those with whom we never had any such connexion ; and so to pray for him, and to take pains by admonishing him. Surely we should be more concerned for the good of those who have been our brethren, and who are now under the operation of means used by us for their good, than for those with whom we never had any special connexion. Thus, there should be more of the love of benevolence exercised towards persons excommunicated, than towards those who never were members of the Church." "Although *what men are to aim at* is only the destruction of

* Owen's Works, Vol 16. True Nature of a Gospel Church.

the flesh, yet whether it shall prove the destruction of the flesh, or the eternal and more dreadful destruction of themselves, is at God's sovereign disposal." "If you strictly follow the rules of discipline instituted by Christ, you have reason to hope for His blessing; for He is wont to bless His own institutions, and to smile upon the means of grace which He hath appointed."*

Additional citations from the writings of other leading Divines of a former age, all presenting the same view, might be made, were it necessary.

It has now been shewn to be the doctrine of the Scriptures, recognized in our Standards, and in the writings of the ablest Theologians, that the design of Excommunication is not the destruction, but the salvation, of the soul. It is a means of grace designed to effect the repentance of the offender. Why then may it not be used for the recovery of the intractable Baptized Youth who stubbornly resists his obligations, from the error of his ways, and for effecting his return to his allegiance? This involves his conversion, and why should not the appropriate means of repentance which his case calls for, be employed? Is not Excommunication adapted to lead him to repentance, setting forth before him, as it does, in such faithful colors, his great guilt, his deep depravity, his awful wickedness, which rendered such a sentence necessary, and foreshadowing, too, his certain, final rejection by God, if he persists in his course of rebellion? Will not the thought that he was cast out of the Church, because his essential obligations to God were trampled upon, thus leaving him without any ground of complaint, and covering him with deserved disgrace, and exposing him to deserved misery, naturally tend to excite compunction in his breast, lead him to a confession of his sin, and induce his return to God, to the Church, and to duty?

Conversion is represented in the Scriptures, not as an end but as a means to an end, and that end—a *life of service*.

*Discourse on the Nature and End of Excommunication.

God's field of labor, the Church—a walking before the Lord in all His ordinances and commandments, blameless—a glorifying and enjoying Him forever. *Connexion with the Church*, then, is an essential pre-requisite to the fulfilling of man's chief end. Now, the Baptized Youth has been constituted already, by God's gracious act, a member of His Church—he is in covenant with God—he has been planted in the Garden of the Lord—the sun shines upon him, the gentle dews fall upon him—the care of the husbandmen is given to him—holy influences are around him—all, all have a voice, and speak to him, reminding him that there is a work for him to do in the Vinyard of the Lord, and calling upon him to do it, for with reference to it were all these given, to fit him for it that so he might bear fruit to the glory of God. And now, if all these have failed to accomplish the object for which they were appointed—if the sun shines, and the dews descend, in vain; if the care of the husbandmen is in vain—if the service of the Lord is declined, and the work refused, *merely because he has no heart for it*—if church-membership is despised, and God's Covenant with him trampled under foot—then, what remains but that the covenant-breaker should be put without the pale of the Church?—what remains but that the rebellious youth should be ejected from his Father's house?—what remains but that the unprofitable servant should be discarded, and made to exchange the best of Masters for the worst?—what remains but that the barren, noxious tree should no more be permitted to cumber the ground, but should be removed from the Garden of the Lord into the wild wilderness? And that this should be done, in order that the Prodigal Son may be taught, in the only practicable manner, by the necessities of his condition, by the drudgery and the hardships of his lot, in the far-off country, the value of those privileges he had despised, and that earnest longings may be excited within him to be admitted to the comforts and the enjoyments, to the profitable service, the precious rewards, the blessed freedom of his Father's House?

Is it not distinctly declared in the New Testament that "*every soul* which will not hear that Prophet—the Lord Jesus Christ—shall be destroyed from among the people"? And does not the Baptized Youth, who will not fulfil his covenant-obligations, refuse to hear that Prophet? Is he not guilty of disobedience, and rebellion against the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Church? And is not that Church *commanded* to excommunicate him for this great sin? Can any law be more explicit, more binding, than this? And is the Church herself free from guilt, if she hesitates to obey the mandate of her King? Why, the Jewish child who was not circumcised, was even, on account of that neglect of the Covenant, excommunicated by God's command.—Gen. 17: 14.

And the Jewish Child who *was* circumcised, was bound to perform all the duties of Church-membership: "Every man that is circumcised is *a debtor to do the whole law*." In the Jewish Church, the little one of eight days became a debtor to keep the Covenant, and to do the whole law of God. And God declared, that the soul that should "*forbear to keep the Passover*, shall be *cut off* from among his people."—Num. 9: 13.

Christ's early attendance upon the Passover, at the age of twelve years, is noticed in the Gospels. At that age, Jewish writers tell us, all persons were obliged to perform *all* the duties of adult church-membership. If the circumcised Infant was a debtor to do the whole law of Moses, why is not the Baptized Infant a debtor to do the whole law of Christ? And as the former was *expected early to observe the Passover, and to be qualified too for its observance*, why should not the latter be also *expected early to observe the Lord's Supper, and to be qualified too for its observance?*

The Passover was not *abolished*, but "*fulfilled*" in the Lord's Supper. "I say unto you I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God", or the New Testament Church. If, then, the neglect of the Passover was punished by Excommunication, so too the neglect of the Lord's Supper, which is the "*fulfillment*" of the former rite,

also be punished by Excommunication. If they who eat and drink unworthily, eat and drink judgment to themselves, so too will they who slight the Institution of the Lord, bring the judgment of the Lord upon themselves. The soul which will not hear the Lord Jesus Christ, should be cut off from among His people.

This is the plain teaching of the Word of God. And that this cutting off is designed, not for the ruin, but for the recovery from ruin, of the offender, is also its teaching, equally plain. When the youth of the Church have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and been made duly sensible of their obligations, and of the solemn sanction which guards them, the cases will be few which call for excision; and with regard to those few, the presumption is that Excommunication will be made the means of restoring the greater number, at least, to the fold of Christ, rather than of driving them off forever. For is not Christ present with His Church? And is not His presence a guarantee that if she strive faithfully to do her duty, she shall not strive in vain?

6. We pass on to consider another Objection, viz: "The adoption of such a course in relation to our Baptized Youth—subjecting them to discipline—would fill our Communion tables with worldlings and hypocrites. It is this which has filled the Church of Scotland with Moderatism, and other churches with formalists."

The assertion made touching the Church of Scotland, is only an assertion, which is not, and cannot be, sustained by proof. The history of that Church shews that the reign of Moderatism is due to the anti-scriptural subjection of the Church to the State, out of which the patronage system arose, by which a Minister is fastened upon a people without their consent, and against their will.* Moderatism, therefore, is found in the *Established Church* of Scotland, and not in the Free Church. As a general neglect of the Duty, whose obser-

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

vance we earnestly advocate, has unfortunately characterized the conduct of the Churches in time past, together with a too general and great neglect in the training due to Baptized Youth, no appeal, consequently, can be made to the practice of any, whereby to determine the nature of the results. The *tendency* of the course we would adopt, it is said, would be to fill the Church with hypocrites. This implies that the fear of the censure involved in Excommunication, has so much stronger an influence with a carnal, unbelieving heart, than its own repugnance and settled hostility to Gospel Truth has, as even to overcome a person's sense of common honesty, and lead him to enter the Church under false pretenses, although he has been made fully acquainted with the danger of doing so, and although he is aware too, on the other hand, that Excommunication from the Church does not affect his social status in the community. This we do not believe. He will be more apt to reason thus: 'As this act of the Church does not affect my position in society, as my character stands just as fair as ever in the estimation of the world, and as I have indeed no love to Christ and to His service, and therefore cannot consistently espouse His cause, and as a hypocritical profession would only make my guilt, and danger, and condemnation, and final doom, the more awful, so that it would be even worse for me within the Church, than without it—therefore, I consent to forfeit a spiritual birthright which I do not value, and to have my connexion with the Church dissolved. And as Excommunication does no more than this, and only places me, by an Ecclesiastical Act, in that position where I had previously placed myself by my own voluntary act, therefore the Church may excommunicate me, if it pleases'.

Such is more likely to be the reasoning of that smaller class, who are not won to Christ by all the faithful nurture of the Church—upon whom all her fostering care is lost—for she has "laboured in vain, and spent her strength for naught."

The *tendency*, then, of the course we urge, is not "

Church with hypocrites"—albeit some such may, indeed, enter it—even as it is the case now.

If the course we advocate be a *scriptural* one, as we think it has been proved to be, then it is manifestly impossible that it should be followed by consequences injurious to the Church. To say otherwise, is just to say that her interests would suffer, ~~were~~ she to observe the rule which Christ has laid down for her conduct, in His Word.

7. Another Objection made to our Doctrine, is, *that it does not recognize the sovereignty of Divine Grace*. It is said that "the Church, recognizing the sovereignty of Divine grace both as to the time and manner of its bestowal, cannot undertake to limit the probation of her Baptized Youth; and say, at any one moment, *now* this matter of your conversion is to be taken into your own hands, and *now* the exhausted patience of the Church refuses any longer to indulge your procrastination."

But, in reply to this, we would ask, what right has the Church to derive her rule of action from, or to frame her course by, the Sovereignty of Divine Grace? God's purposes govern His conduct; God's commands govern our own. Obedience to His precepts, the observance of His ordinances, the enforcement of His rules, furnish us with the only warrant for *expecting* the bestowal of His Grace. The Holy Ghost is indeed sovereign, and may act "when, where, and how He pleases", but yet He Himself has shut *us* up to those ordinances He has chosen as the channels through which He, ordinarily, communicates His influences, and the faithful observance of which entitles us to look for his blessing, and the neglect of which brings upon us His frown. This being so, we need only to inquire, Has not the Holy Ghost laid down for the Church, both in the Old Testament, and in the New, her rule of action towards her disobedient and rebellious children? Has He not ordained, that that soul shall be cut off from among His people, who refuses to hear that Great Prophet Whom God has raised up, and to obey that Great King Whom God has set

over Zion? And are we not told, that this exclusion from Christ's fold is, though a painful, yet a necessary means, designed and used for the recovery of the offender? When, therefore, in the case of any, who have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; the evidence of disobedience and rebellion is plain, what course remains for the Church to pursue but *to obey orders*? And to excommunicate such, with the hope that they may be prepared thereby to receive the saving grace of God? Does not the Holy Ghost proportion His influences, as a general thing, to the fidelity of the Church? And is it not therefore evident, that the probability of the conversion of the rebellious who are cast out of the Church, is greater than the probability of the conversion of the rebellious who are suffered to remain within the Church, slighting her ordinances, and trampling under foot their obligations?

The objection we are considering, if it possesses force, applies with equal weight against the practice of the O. T. Church, as against what we desire to see obtaining as the practice of the New.

The Jewish Church was a body distinct from the Jewish State, and had a government distinct from the government of the State. The Jewish Child, at the age of 12 years, became "a son of the commandment", i. e. one bound to perform all the duties of Church-membership. He was expected to be morally, as well as legally *clean*; to be circumcised in heart as well as circumcised in the flesh. And he was required at this age to observe the ordinance of the Passover; and to be qualified, spiritually, for its observance. But, for this, he was certainly dependent upon the sovereign grace of the Spirit. And yet, if he refused to observe the Passover, he was, by God's command, excommunicated from Israel. Now, then, why not object against this practice of the O. T. Church, that "recognizing the sovereignty of Divine Grace, both as to the time and manner of its bestowal, she had no right to limit the baptism of her *Circumcised* youth; and say, at any one moment

now this matter of your conversion is to be taken into your own hands, and *now* the exhausted patience of the Church refuses any longer to indulge your procrastination?"

If the objection holds good against our Doctrine, it equally holds good against both Doctrine and Practice of the O. T. Church. But, "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways". The practice of His Church was vindicated by the concurrent operation of His Spirit, Whose Covenant-faithfulness was, herein, signally displayed. Divine Grace rendered effectual a Divine Ordinance. Practice corresponded with Doctrine, and God owned both. The Church was *not* "filled with hypocrites", by reason of pursuing this course. It is true that all were not Israel who were of Israel. And the same is deplorably true of the Church of God now.

Again. The objection we are considering, if valid, might also be urged with force against the practice which obtains in the Church now, of excommunicating a communicant who, guilty of some scandalous offence, resists all the efforts which the Church makes to bring him to repentance, disowns her authority, and persists in his contumacious and rebellious course. He is, indeed, bound to repent. But repentance, apart from the sovereign grace of God, is impossible. Then, why not remonstrate against excising him, after his refusal to obey the second citation of the Session, or even the third, the fourth, the sixth citation, were this the rule of the Church, and urge an indefinite postponement of all decisive action, on the ground that the 'Church, recognizing the sovereignty of Divine Grace, both as to the time and manner of its bestowal, dare not limit the Holy Ghost to any given period, within which His influences must be imparted; nor say to the individual at any one moment, *now* this matter of your repentance is to be taken into your own hands, and *now* the exhausted patience of the Church refuses any longer to indulge your procrastination'?

Is not this communicating member of the Church, equally with the non-communicating member, dependent upon the

influences of the Spirit for his sincere repentance? Then if, for this reason, judicial process must not be instituted against the latter, why should it be against the former? But if, on the other hand, *duty is not the less duty*, in either case, because we need the aid of the Spirit to enable us to do it, then why should not the failure to perform it be followed by censure in the latter case, as well as in the former? If, in either case, obligations violated incur guilt, notwithstanding the fact that we are dependent upon Divine Grace in order to fulfil them, then why should not guilt be followed by punishment in the one case, as well as in the other? Shall the one class be subjected to discipline, and the other class be exempt, simply because the former have made a profession, which the latter, though equally bound to do so, never have made; or, in other words, because the former *have recognized pre-existing obligations*, which the latter *never have done*? No such distinction ever received the Divine sanction. Jehovah ordained that *all covenant-breakers should be excluded from His Church*.—Genesis 17: 14; Numbers 9: 13. This fact was constantly kept before the ancient Church, and doubtless exerted a mighty influence for good over the minds of the people. The Jewish child was at an early age made acquainted with his position in Israel, and its accompanying obligations; was instructed as to the entire significance of the Passover, and the spiritual qualifications demanded for that ordinance;* which the Law of the Church required him to possess in order to the due observance of it at the age of 12, which was then binding; and which if he failed to keep, he forfeited his ecclesiastical status, and was “cut off from among his people.” And

*“The Passover did seal the same covenant of grace for the substance which is now sealed by the Lord’s Supper.” “Examination of the conscience, repentance and confession were required in those that did eat the Passover.” “What was the meaning of the bitter herbs with which the Passover was commanded to be eaten? Were not the people of God thereby taught the necessity of repentance in that very action? Finally, read we not of the people’s preparing of their heart to seek God at the Passover, (2 Chron. 30: 19,) which as it could not be without repentance and examination of their consciences, so Hezekiah mentioneth it as that without which the people’s eating of the Passover could not have been in anywise accepted.—*Gill’s Works*, Vol. 2, p. 50.

doubtless this fact being ever present to his mind, viz : that he was liable to Excommunication, if he did not at that age personally assume all his covenant-obligations, would have a powerful influence in determining him early to seek from God that state of mind and heart, which would qualify him for admission to the last sealing ordinance of his Church.

In like manner, the maintenance now of this ancient Law of the Church, which has never been repealed, would impress upon the minds of our Baptized Youth such a sense of the claims of Christ, that the great majority of them would be led betimes to yield their hearts to the Saviour, and their lives to His service. It would present a powerful check to that proud spirit of independence which leads multitudes of them now to despise the bonds of Religion, to trample upon their covenant obligations with impunity, and to pursue without restraint their downward career of heedlessness and rebellion to their eternal perdition.

8. One more objection remains to be considered, viz : That the course we recommend to the Church to pursue would not be sustained by the moral sentiment of society. But, we would ask, is it the sentiment of the community, or is it the Word of God, which is the Church's standard,—her rule of faith and practice? If the course we advocate be *Scriptural*, nothing remains for the Church to do, but to adopt it. The practicability of a duty is properly judged of, not by the appearance it presents to the judgment of men, but by the command of Christ. Whatever difficulties, dangers, or seeming impossibilities attend the performance of His Command, are not really difficulties, dangers, or impossibilities, but only *tests of faith*. The path of duty is, after all, the path of ease and safety.

It is the office of the Church to create, direct and control the sentiment of society on all subjects connected with the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. This she can do, and this she will do, when she is true to her Divine Head and King, and addresses herself to the faithful discharge of commanded

duty. Whenever the sentiment of society is arrayed in opposition to the Church when acting in obedience to her Lord, that sentiment is anti-Christ, and emanates from the kingdom of darkness which it, in turn, supports, and upon it the Church is bound to make war, not with carnal, but with spiritual weapons, not in the spirit of party zeal and bitterness, but in the spirit of devotion to her Divine King, and of love to the souls of men. What tho', in order to rectify the standard of society, and ultimately mould its sentiment, she be called to encounter grievous opposition, to endure reproach, persecution, to have her name cast out as evil, to suffer crucifixion, to sacrifice ease, and comfort, and reputation? Is any thing valuable ever gained without sacrifice? Is she not called to this? Is she not the spouse of a crucified Husband? Is she not always to bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus, and is she not always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in her? If Christ when lifted up on His cross draws all to Him, so must the Church be lifted upon her cross, if she would draw men to Him and to her. She must give up her life for the life of the world. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. It has been well said, that "knowledge is power." And talent is power. And wealth is power. But more than all these, *sacrifice is power*. The Cross has moulded society, and controls the entire Providence of God. Let not the Church then be ashamed of Christ. Let her not decline to follow Him, bearing His cross. If she would reign with Jesus, she must suffer with Jesus. She must drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism, if she would sit at his right hand in His kingdom above. Let her "stand up for Jesus." The Doctrine of Christ's Headship over the World, and the Doctrine of the Spirit, are the standing points of controversy in our day. Let the Church maintain the Kingly office of her Lord. Let her contend earnestly for the crown-right of her exalted King. Let her enforce both by Doctrine and

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

And now, let none suppose that because we advocate the enforcement of an ancient law of the Church, we also advocate any rash or precipitate measures for executing the same. The first call of the Church evidently is, a call to discharge her duty towards her children—a call to a constant, faithful, judicious, parental training of them. To this end

besides the usual teachings of the Sunday School, let there be in every church a special service for them, frequently occurring, when, assembled with their parents, the Pastor shall instruct both touching their mutual relations to the covenant, and their respective obligations growing out of it. Let the fact of their Church-membership be frequently brought to the notice of the children. Let its precious privileges be discovered to them. Let them be reminded of the claims of Christ to their love and service. Let them be urged to seek from the Spirit the qualifications they need for the fulfilment of all the obligations, and the performance of all the duties, connected with Church-membership. And let them be admonished that the Church, as the representative of Christ's rights and claims, *expects* them sincerely to profess faith in Him, and obedience to His commands.

Let this special service for her youth occupy a high place in the estimation of the Church, as one of very great importance. Let it be regarded with a lively, affectionate interest by all her members. Let it be accompanied with the fervent prayers of the people of God. And let the children of the Church be *frequently* remembered in the prayers of the Church.

The officers of the Church have their duty also to discharge towards their youth. Let those who have been constituted by the Holy Ghost shepherds and bishops of soul, be careful to exercise a strict and yet tender watch over the lambs of Christ's flock. This is their bounden duty. To this they are called. And therefore they have the right, and should exercise it, to superintend *parents*, as well as children, and require of them the faithful observance of their solemn vows. The idea that this would be the assumption of unwarranted authority, is simply absurd. The children of the Church are born within the covenant, born church-members, and so born the property of Christ and His Church. "Ye have borne them *unto Me*", says He. His claims are pre-eminent; the parent's subordinate. Or rather, the Parent has no claims, no rights, from Christ's. Hence, the child, being from its birth the

perty of Christ is given up to Him in the ordinance of Baptism (which is its *right* as well as its privilege, to withhold which is sin) and so acknowledged to be His. Thus, the parent acknowledges *the right of Christ, and the right of the Church to his child*, and the consequent right of the child to the ordinance, when he presents it for baptism. And when the Church, by her officers, administers to the child the sacrament of baptism, she commits the child back to the parent to be by him trained up as one of a chosen seed to serve the Lord. The child is now the *acknowledged* property of Christ, and of His Church. And the parent is a *trustee* for Christ and His Church. And his fidelity in fulfilling his solemn trust, is a legitimate subject of inquiry, examination, injunction, and demand, on the part of those who are the representatives of the Master's claims, the governors in His House. And so far is this from being any invasion of the parent's rights, that, on the contrary, *Christ has made it one of his rights to expect and require this official inspection of his conduct, as an incentive to the discharge of an all-important duty.* And the parent has just cause for complaint, if the constituted guardians of the Church's interests fail to exercise a proper supervision over him as a Parent, as well as over his child. He, as well as the Church, is concerned to have the authority of Christ over him and his, made good. For his interests, and the interests of his child, are inseparable from Christ's rights. The former are promoted only when the latter are enforced. For the parent to deny to Ecclesiastical Rulers the right of supervision, is just to deny Christ, to break the covenant, to act the part of a wicked rebel. To vindicate his course by representing such supervision as "an invasion of Nature's rights", is just to babble in the dialect of Infidels, who always oppose "*Nature*" to Nature's God. Such a Parent, the Session has the right to admonish, rebuke, suspend, or excommunicate, as his case may require. If they fail to exercise their just authority, then they are false witnesses for Christ, and have become partakers of men's sins, and the Master whom they have dishonored

and denied, will, in due time, deal with them accordingly. If, in this age of dastardly cowardice on the part of Church-rulers, and bold defiance of authority on the part of church-members, the plea be made, that such is the state of this, that, or the other Church, that Discipline cannot be enforced, then, the solemn remark which Owen makes, has been verified—“*Christ hath forsaken that Church.*”

It is the duty also of Church-officers to exercise a watch, judicious and faithful, over the Children of the Covenant, *directly*, as well as through the medium of their parents. They should, in their official capacity, counsel and admonish them, whenever their conduct requires it. Every right-minded parent will welcome their co-operation as a valuable assistance in performing a difficult and responsible work, and in securing a glorious end, the salvation of his children.* Let the parent gladly avail himself of every means of grace appointed by Christ for their benefit. If a youth proves refractory, and parental admonition has no effect, then let an Elder of the Church be sent for, who, by faithful counsel and admonition, accompanied with prayer, shall endeavor to reclaim the offending youth. Should he be unsuccessful, let another Elder be sent for, or let them conjointly use the proper means, and in a proper spirit, for the recovery of the offender. Should their efforts prove unavailing, then let the Pastor be called in, and his counsels, admonitions, and prayers, be added to theirs. Let their admonitions be repeated as often as is deemed necessary, and if no suitable effects follow, then let the offender be brought before the Session, that he may there be rebuked in love, and this case tenderly and solemnly commended to God in prayer. Let the censure so administered,

* A lady of eminent piety and concern she felt upon this subject. A professing Christian manifested that she was a baptized youth, she expressed that “for her part, she counted it a charge of so solemn a trust. A noble sentiment, worthy of every Christian parent’s heart.”

On conversing once with the Author, discovered the great error. Alluding to the strange aversion which some of the inspection and authority of the Church over her, she expressed surprise at so unnatural and sinful a feeling, adding herself happy in receiving all possible aid in the training of her children for heaven, and for the glory of the Christian mother! Would that it found a more general

be suited to the age, the character, the feelings, the understanding, the state of the youth; everything like unnecessary severity, or harshness, being sacredly avoided. Let the mind of the youth be impressed with the truth, that this censure is a *religious ordinance*, administered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ: so that it carries with it the authority, not of men, but of God. Let all their proceedings be marked with such solemnity, affection, tenderness, as to shew that they are acting under a deep sense of their responsibility to the Head of the Church. And let all that is done, whether by parent, elder, or pastor, be done *in faith*, without which no service can find acceptance with God. Christ has engaged to own the pious efforts of Parents and Church-officers, and therefore respect should be had, in all that they do, to His promise. Let such a course be faithfully pursued, and, in the great majority of instances it will be crowned with success. The Church would have the blessed satisfaction of seeing the greater number of her wayward, offending, rebellious youth, recovered, by this judicious procedure, from the error of their ways, and repaying, in after years, her vigilant supervision, and faithful, loving care, by lives of Christian consistency, stability, usefulness, and devotion to the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

But, if in the case of any ~~other~~ youth, her oversight has proved in vain, and all the means she uses to lead them to comply with covenant-obligations have utterly failed, and these obligations are deliberately, wantonly, wilfully trampled upon, then she is called of Christ to terminate their Church-membership by Excommunication. Accordingly, let some suitable age, after they have reached the years of discretion—the age of *Twenty-One*, for example—be selected, which shall terminate the connection of these apostates with the Church. At this age, all the responsibilities of citizenship are theirs, and at this age, let all the responsibilities of Church-membership be not previously assumed. This would be a suitable, and no charge of hastiness or rashness could justly be brought against the Church for her decisive action then, for long

before that period arrives, *if her youth have received that training which is their due*, the great majority of them will have determined either to "hear", or to "refuse to hear", that Great Prophet Whom God hath raised up; and the most of these will have been led to a cordial submission to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a faithful observance of all His ordinances.

And should there be any who, at the age of Twenty-One, do not as yet profess faith in Christ and obedience to His commands, but who are found upon inquiry to be seriously considering their covenant-obligations, and seeking from God those spiritual qualifications which His ordinances and service demand; in the case of such, the Session would of course forbear all action, and in every way seek to encourage them, even as they do in the case of those doubting Christians who from conscientious scruples, abstain for a time from the Communion-Table. Under such circumstances, and as long as they continued, the Rule of the Church would not be enforced. But it is certainly no reason why a Rule should not exist, and the Church be deprived of the advantages resulting from it, simply because there may be exceptional cases. Let this Ancient Law of the Church, which has never been repealed, be again enforced, and its beneficial influence will be felt throughout the Kingdom of the Lord. The claims of Christ upon our Baptized Youth will be regarded by the Church as possessing a significance and a reality, not fully credited before. She herself will be aroused to the necessity of a faithful performance of her covenanted engagements in relation to her children, and of a more constant, diligent, earnest, prayerful use of all the means appointed for their conversion. And they too will be led to look upon their relations to Christ and to His Church in a light never beheld before. The fatal spirit of indifference and procrastination, which now is the ruin of multitudes, will then receive an effectual check. The necessity of confronting their obligations will put a stop to that seductive indecision, by which hundreds of the youth of the Church are now *lost*. They will be led to banish

unconcern, and to seek earnestly from God the gift of His Spirit, Who restores the soul to its normal state, and fits it to fulfil those obligations, which grounded in its moral nature are ineradicable, and will continue to bind for eternity, in heaven and in hell. Thus, the very existence of such a Law in the Church will, in the case of the great majority of her youth, obviate the necessity of its enforcement, and, under God, prove the means of saving multitudes who are now lost.

A salutary change, then, will be effected in the state of the Church. Instead of ignoring her obligations to her youth, as is the case now to a great extent, she will recognize her responsibilities fully, afford them that nurture which is their due, and exercise over them, and over their parents, a supervision and control which would not be nominal, but real, and which would be sustained by the approval of her Head, the influences of His Spirit, and the co-operation of His Providence.

Under such a system, the youth of the Church would, in general, long before the age of Twenty-One was reached, occupy a decided position, and determine their relations to Christ and His Church,—of allegiance, on the part of the most; of hostility on the part of a few.

With regard to the latter, let the Church reprobate their apostacy, and dissolve their connection with her by Excommunication. Their guilt is open, their crime avowed, and therefore no trial is required. All that is called for is to pronounce sentence against them. Let this be done. The Church has nothing to fear when in the discharge of her duty. It is true that some Christians taking counsel of their fears rather than of their faith, may be alarmed, and predict nothing but evil from such measures. But, *the word of the Lord*—that shall stand. Christ is with His Church. He is her shield and strong defence. He will never leave her without the tokens of His presence and favor, when undertaking to sustain His authority and to execute His laws. All hearts are in His hands. If, after all due training given, and the use of the appointed means, any of the children of the Church refuse to

obey their King, the Church must refuse to acknowledge them any longer as her's. She must disown them. With a heart bleeding from the stroke she inflicts, she must disown them, saying, in the words of Him Whose claims she represents, and Whose feelings she shares—"I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me"—
"How often would I have gathered you together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, *but ye would not !*"

APPENDIX.

The April No. of the Southern Presbyterian Review, recently received, contains a second article in defence of the "Revised Book of Discipline". Our limits allow us only the briefest notice of the reasons presented in it, shewing why Baptized Youth are not amenable to Discipline, to the same extent as Professors are.

It is said that the two classes are not equally related to the idea of the Church—that the class of professors pertains to its essence, whilst that of non-professors is an accidental result of the mode of organization—for there can be no Church at all where there is no professed subjection to the authority of Christ, but there may be a Church, and in the Millennium there perhaps will be a Church, in which all are saints—and hence Discipline, to the same extent, is not equally applicable to both classes.

But though it is true that there can be a Church in which there are none but Professors, it is equally true that *such* a Church does but imperfectly represent "the Visible Church which consists of those who profess the religion of Christ, and submit to His laws, *together with their children*". A community of single individuals would still be a community, (as long as it lasted!) but *such* a community would not be selected as a representative of society. The membership of children is essential to the completeness of the idea of the Visible Church. And in the Millennium, doubtless, the same elements will be found in the Church, as now, Professors and their children. The two classes are equally related to the Covenant of the Visible Church. Children are just as much *in Covenant with God*, as their parents are. They are not church-members simply because they are descended from professing parents, for this, of itself, could never have given them the right to citizenship in the commonwealth of Christ, they are church-members because *God has made his Cove-*

nant with them, as well as with their parents. Wherever they are found, they are component elements of the Visible Church. If they are not essential to the Church, this is not because they are "non-professing," but because they are *non-existing*. That is, there may be a Church consisting of professors only, in which there are no children, but there cannot be a Church in which there are children, that shall consist of professors only. The children of Baptist parents are none the less members of the Church, equally with their parents, because their membership is not recognized. God has put them in the Church, and God only can put them out. Children that are in covenant with God, whether professors or not, are members of the Church. All the duties, all the responsibilities of church-membership are theirs. All the education they need, is due to them. If this be given, and after they have attained to manhood any of them still resist their obligations and refuse to yield obedience to Christ, then they have broken covenant with God, and the Church should disown them.

We reach the same conclusion, if from the stand-point of the Reformers we look upon the Church as "the whole body of the elect considered as united to Christ their Head". Why are any infants found in the Church? Had there been no Covenant made with them, we could not have said whether there was a presumption for, or against, their election. But God *has* made a Covenant with them, and so has brought them into His Church. And hence, say the Reformed Divines, the *presumption* is that they are of the number of the elect, and are to be so regarded, and so treated, until they give indubitable evidence to the contrary. When they have come to years of discretion, and, in the case of any, all the faithful labors of the Church to lead them to acknowledge their obligations have proved unavailing, and they do not profess faith in Christ, love to Him and His ordinances, and subjection to His laws, and so *destroy the presumption of their election*, they are accordingly to be judged as not belonging to the body of the elect, and therefore their proper place is *without*.

church, (which is "the whole body of the elect considered as united to Christ their Head,") and not *within* it. Their connection then with the Church should *terminate*; for the evidences of election are plainly wanting. And it should terminate *in that way* which the case demands. This is the dictate of justice, and of common sense. If the lack of those moral virtues or christian graces, which are the evidences of election, be simply their *misfortune*, then, of course, their connection with the church should terminate without censure, by a *withdrawal* simply. But if the lack of those qualities be a *crime* (and in their circumstances it is a *great crime*) then their church-membership should terminate by *Excommunication*, which not only dissolves the connection, but also passes a deserved censure upon their wicked apostasy. "Holiness to the Lord has been written upon their foreheads, and when they forget the obligations it implies,* and walk in the light of their own eyes, and after the imaginations of their own hearts, they as much despise the covenanted claims of God, as if they had given themselves to His service by their own free act. They have been made vessels of the sanctuary; and in surrendering their being to secular ends, they are guilty of the same species of sin, which he commits who defiles the temple of the Lord." * It is just therefore that the church should disown them.

Once more upon this point. If the argument we have been considering be a sound one, viz: "That the two classes of which the Church consists are not equally related to the idea of the Church; and therefore Discipline is not equally applicable to both, to the same extent", then it condemns as unjust the regulations of the O. T. Church in regard to her youth. The Jewish Church consisted of two classes, professors and non-professors; but if the Jewish Child did not at a certain age make a profession of religion, and observe the ordinance of the Passover, he was excommunicated. Why not object then, that the excision of the unconverted, rebellious Jewish youth was unnatural, unreasonable and absurd? There can

* Thornwell's "Discourses on Truth."

be no reply to this, except by affirming that the Jewish Church was not absolutely a Spiritual Church, and that spiritual qualifications were not required of those who would observe the ordinance of the Passover; to affirm which is to affirm something that contradicts the direct teachings of Scripture. The Jewish Church was a true Church. Christ was its Head, and the enlightening, guiding, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit were given to her, though not in the same liberal, abundant measure, which is now enjoyed by the N. T. Church. Shall it be that because the influences of the Spirit are given in larger measure to the Church now, than formerly, therefore greater liberty is accorded to her youth now, than formerly, to resist their obligations? If the regulations of the Church in regard to the discipline of her youth have been altered, then let this be shewn, and let the Church of Christ be permitted to see her "Revised Book of Discipline", subscribed with a "Thus saith the Lord". The Jewish Youth who broke covenant with God by forbearing to observe sealing ordinances, was disciplined, not by an indefinite suspension, not by an exclusion from the Passover, but by Excommunication. Let it be shewn that the Church now is at liberty to proceed differently against her apostate youth, and to enact that no further discipline is called for in their case, than a discipline to which they have been accustomed all their lives—exclusion from the Lord's Table—albeit, some of them have broken over all bounds of morality and decency, have forsaken the sanctuary and its ordinances, become outlaws, scoffers, infidels, drunkards, and whoremongers.

We pass on to notice, briefly, other objections made to our Doctrine. It is said that these apostates cannot be subjected to judicial prosecution, because that mode of discipline requires that particular offences must be specified, and certain actions singled out; whereas the whole state of non-professing members is unsound, and their whole life a continued sin. But, we reply, no judicial prosecution is called for, no trial needed. Such cases come under the category of "cases with

process". Their guilt is open, their crime acknowledged, avowed by their very position, and by their own confession. *They are covenant-breakers*, and all that is required is to sever their forfeited connection with the Church.

Another objection is this: That if the excommunicated non-professor were subsequently to return, and profess penitence and faith, he must needs be re-baptized. But this no more follows, than that the excommunicated professor should be re-baptized upon his restoration. The one is not necessary and is never done—why should the other be?

Lastly. It is said that our Doctrine is not sustained by the judgment of the Reformed Church.

Even if this were so, still as we have made our appeal to the Scriptures, and profess to find our doctrine *there*, we demand to be confuted out of the Scriptures, and not out of the writings of fallible men, however eminent they may be. But *is it so*, that the Theologians of the Reformation are against us? The distinguished writer in the S. P. Review, whose positions we have been examining, claims that the principle of the New Book of Discipline "has received the consent of the whole Reformed Church, and been either directly or indirectly maintained by its ablest Theologians".

He adds however, "in pleading the consent of the Reformed Church, we do not mean to assert that the proposition for which we contend is found, *tobidem verbis*, in any of the symbols of its faith or discipline. In an earnest age, and among a people who had been trained to regard attention to the eternal rites of religion as the mark by which they were distinguished from Heathens, Turks, and Jews, it is probable that very few reached the years of discretion without making a public profession of their faith by coming to the Lord's Table".

If this were so, then it is evident that the subject we are discussing, and which the Holy Ghost has brought before the Church, in our day, for investigation and determination—"the admission of baptized children to the Church"—would natur-

ally receive but little attention from the Theologians of the Reformation, generally. So far as we have had opportunity for examining into their writings, we find but little expression of opinion on this point. Calvin, Zanchius, Turretine, Witsius, Mastricht, and others, speak of the duty of the Church to her Baptized Children, but do not tell us what course should be pursued towards them, when they have ceased to be children, have come to years of maturity, and yet disown the covenant which God has made with them, are guilty of apostasy, and not unfrequently of flagitious, scandalous practices, besides.

Neither do the writings of Dr. Owen afford us, after a careful search, any satisfaction upon this point. In his treatise on the "True Nature of a Gospel Church", and in other tracts, he speaks of that "due watch over them, and instruction of them" which the Church is bound to give. But nowhere, that we can discover, does he discuss the question, 'Whether the youth of the Church, after they have come to years of maturity, and *have passed from under parental control*, are liable to excommunication, if they disown that covenant within which they drew their first breath?'

He speaks of 'believers' and 'professors' as the only proper subjects of discipline, not as opposed to the baptized youth of the Church, but *as opposed to them that are without*, over whom the Church has no control.

Pictet, likewise, does not in his "Theology" touch this subject. "The objects of excommunication, says he, must be *men*, not *beasts*; the *living*, not the *dead*; the *professors of Christianity*, not *heathens* or *aliens*". The children of the Church are certainly not to be classed with *heathens* or *aliens*; and yet he does not inform us whether he counts them amongst 'the professors of Christianity'—according to that saying of Ursinus, "To be baptized is to make a profession."

And now turning away from all uncertain, ambiguous authorities, we adduce the testimony, clear and unmistakable of some of the most eminent lights which illumined the Church.

of God in former days. The first witness we shall cite, is one of the most learned and accomplished of the Theologians of the Reformation, and one of the most formidable antagonists which Rome ever encountered, *Martin Chemnitz*. "In learning there were few equal to him. There was scarcely a theological controversy in which his counsel was not asked. Romanists themselves acknowledged that no one since the death of Luther assailed their system so fundamentally as *Chemnitz*."

His treatise "*De Baptismo*" contains these memorable words : "It is not to be left free to the choice of those who have been baptized in infancy, when they come to be adult, whether or no they will have that confirmed which was done in their baptism ; as though the covenant of grace, and testament of peace, which is offered and sealed up to little children in baptism, should then first begin to be established, when the consent of their will, when adult, is added thereunto ; for from this wicked foundation the Anabaptists simply have taken away and condemned Pædobaptism ; but such baptized little ones are to be admonished, as they grow up, what a covenant of grace and testament of peace it is, which God hath entered into with them in baptism, and by what promise of gratitude they have likewise obliged themselves unto obedience to God, with the renouncing of the devil. And they are seriously to be exhorted that they render thanks unto God for that wonderful great benefit, that they abide in that covenant of peace, and endeavor to fulfil that obligation, by mortifying sin, and setting upon newness of life, and that they do this freely and sincerely ; or if they shall, through unthankfulness, depart from that covenant and engagement, that then they repent, and return to the covenant, and subject themselves again to that stipulated obedience. But as for them that shall do otherwise, the most severe comminations of the wrath and indignation of God are to be heaped up and set before them, *unto which Excommunication is to be added, for these are the weapons of our warfare.*"

Here then is the voice of one eminent Reformer! The next witness we shall cite is that famous old Puritan, *Thomas Shepard*, who died in 1649. He has been characterized as "an Augustine in disputation, a Chrysostom in the pulpit, and a Timothy in his family, and in the Church." President Edwards acknowledges his obligations to Shepard for some of the profoundest thoughts contained in his "Treatise on the Religious Affections". This eminent Minister addressed a letter to a friend setting forth his views of "the relation of baptized children to the Church", which is justly regarded as one of the very ablest of the many dissertations upon the Church-membership of Children, which came from the pens of the great Divines of New England in her palmy days. The following extracts deserve to be seriously pondered: "God was as holy and as exactly requiring holiness from the Jewish Church as well as from Christian Churches: now do you think that the covenant which then wrapped up the Jews' children into Church-membership was a highway of profaneness and unholiness in the members thereof, and of defiling and polluting God's Church? or was it a way and means of holiness, and to keep them from being profane? To affirm the first is something blasphemous and very false, for it is expressly said (Jer. 13: 11.) that "as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so he caused the whole house of Israel (not grown men only) to cleave to Him, that they might be to Him a people (which was by covenant) and for a name, for a praise, and for a glory". God's name, glory, praise, was the end, and the covenant was the means hereunto; and therefore it was no way or means of unholiness in that Church; but if you say it was a means of holiness, why then should we fear the polluting of churches by the same covenant, which we have proved wraps in our seed also? Indeed they did prove universally profane in the Jewish Church; so they may in ours; but shall man's wickedness in abusing God's grace, and forsaking his covenant, tie the hands or heart of God's free grace from taking such into covenant?

What though some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect. God forbid."

He answers the following objection: "If children be members, then they must come to the Lord's Supper; for you know no difference between member and member in point of privilege, unless they be under some sin". "Yes, verily, there is a plain difference between member and member (though professing believers) in point of privilege, though they lie under no sin; for a man may speak and prophesy in the Church, not women. A company of men may make a Church, and so receive in and cast out of the Church, but not women, though professing saints. A child may receive a promise aforehand of a rich estate given him, and this promise sealed up to him, his father receiving it for him; but it is not fit he should be put to the actual improvement and fruition of that estate until he is grown up, understands himself, and knows how to do it: so it is here, &c."

"But you reply, If so, then they are of the Church when they are grown up, and profane until they are cast out; and to take in profane is sinful. Answer. It is very true; for it is herein just as it is in admitting professing believers; they may prove profane, and continue so in church-membership until they are cast out; but is this therefore any ground to keep out those who are personally holy by their own profession? No, verily; why then should such as are parentally and federally holy be kept out from church-membership because they may prove profane, and being profane must remain members *till they be cast out.*" "As for that which you last say, that they may refuse their parents' covenant at age as well as own it, and so may members go out at pleasure, which is disorder, I answer, that the like may be said of such members as come in by personal profession, for they may renounce their own covenant with God and the Church: one may do so, and so may twenty; yet though this be wickedness and disorder yet the church may proceed against them, *and so it may against* *their children, who are bound to own the covenant made with God,*

and of God with them in their parents, as well as any church-members are to own their own covenant by their own personal profession. What disorder, therefore, will come in as you conceive this way, will come in by your own way, and what course you should take to heal the one, by the same you may heal the other."

"You think that if men only grown up and able to profess faith should be of the Church, then all things would be more clear about children. Truly, I believe the quite contrary, upon the grounds before laid down; for, 1. Hereby pollution of the Church shall not be avoided, but rather introduced, to exclude children from a holy-making covenant, as we have proved. 2. Hereby that good and benefit of their covenant should be lost (not gained) by excluding them out of covenant until they can personally profess and make use of the covenant. *The wisdom of man furthers not the righteousness of God.*"

The Preface to this able Letter was written by the son of the Author, himself a distinguished Minister, Rev. Thomas Shepard. The following weighty remarks, found in it, are well worthy of a careful perusal; "That there is no cessation of the membership of a person in this or that particular Church, unless it be by means of a church act intervening, is a truth of no small importance. And therefore, as for that notion which doth obtain with some, that in particular churches of Christ walking in the order of the gospel, there are such as become ecclesiastically *felones de se*; that is, such church-members, who, by their scandalous sin, do become their own executioners ecclesiastically, cutting themselves off from the Church, so as that they thereby become actually non-members, and that the Church hath no more power over them, either ecclesiastically to admonish them, or excommunicate them; this seems unto me to be but a human invention, and not of divine institution; yea, in truth, destructive to the order of the gospel. *And therefore to apply it (as to members in full communion, so) to these children of the Church whom we now spe*

of, is not of God: 1. Because it is unscriptural. In matters of God's worship a negative argument is conclusive; if that which is asserted be not contained in the Scripture expressly, or by due consequence therefrom, it is to be rejected. To the law and to the testimony. 2. Scripture example leads us to what is contrary to this felony spoken of; witness under the Old Testament, Ishmael's being cast out by Abraham, who was the chief officer in that family Church, &c".

With regard to the excommunication of the apostate children of the Church, he observes: "This is not a principle of innovation and apostasy. [Instances hereof see in the preface to the act of the Synod held at Boston, 1662, touching baptism and consociation of churches] but as it was the judgment of the author of this following letter, (as is therein to be seen, and to manifest which was one special end of the printing thereof) so was it the light which others have held forth, who in their time were stars not of the smallest magnitude, whom we have here seen shining with him at Christ's right hand, but are now set, and shining with that Sun of Righteousness in another world".*

An able Article contained in the 3rd vol. of the "Literary and Theological Review", furnishes the proof that Shepard "was sustained in his positions by the opinions of the wisest and best of our earlier divines; as appears from a very rare pamphlet entitled 'The First Principles of New England, concerning the subject of Baptism and Communion of Churches', collected chiefly from the original manuscripts of the first postors of the New England Churches, by Increase Mather, in 1671. This pamphlet contains the testimony of Cotton, Hooker, Stone, Mather of Dorchester, Norton, Rogers, Shepard, Partrick, Smith, Prudden, and several others—"Chief Fathers", as Mather calls them—and they are unanimous in the opinion that baptized children are truly members of the Church, and ought to be so received and treated.

The following is from a letter written by Nathaniel Rogers

* Shepard's Works, Vol. 3.

of Ipswich, in 1652: "To the question concerning the children of church-members, I have nothing to oppose, and I wonder any should deny them to be members; they are members *in censu ecclesiastico*. God so calls them; the Church is so to account them: and when they are *adultæ ætatis*, though they have done no personal act, yet are to be judged members still, until after *due calling upon*, they shall refuse or neglect to acknowledge and own the covenant of their parents, and profess their belief of, and subjection to, the contents thereof; which if they shall deny, the Church may *cashier* or *disown* them. Now for practice, I confess, I account it a great fault, that we have made no more real distinction between these and others, that they have been no more attended as lambs of Christ's flock; and whether it be not the cause of the corruption and woful defection of our youth, *disquiri permittimus*".

The following observations of Increase Mather will repay the reader for his careful perusal:

"Baptized persons are under the discipline and government of the Church. When a person is baptized he is solemnly admitted into Christ's school; can any one be admitted into Christ's school, and yet not subject to the order and discipline of that school? Again, baptism is the livery which of right appertaineth to Christ's household servants; surely, if a person accept of that livery, he doth thereby submit himself to the laws and government of Christ, which is exercised in Christ's family here on earth. Therefore the persons in question being baptized, may not plead exemption from discipline.

That discipline and government which Christ hath appointed in his Church, hath been exercised towards children according to their capacity, in all ages of the world. So it was when the Church was domestical; and after the Church became national. Now inasmuch as to be under the wing of Christ's government in his Church, is a very high privilege, he that shall affirm that although the children of the Jews were *invested* with this privilege, yet that the children of Christians are *divested* thereof, had need to have strong reasons to prove,

his assertion, and must *show us the repeal from Scripture*, or we cannot believe him. Besides, if due enquiry be made into the catholic practice of the New Testament Church, it will be found that such persons as we are speaking of have ever been looked upon as within the verge of the Church's power and discipline. They that have any acquaintance with the customs of the Church in the ages following the Apostles, know that in those times there were three sorts of persons under the churches' inspection. 1. Catechūmeni, i. e. those who were only instructed in the mysteries of the Christian. 2. Baptizati, persons baptized, but not admitted to higher privileges. 3. Perfecti, or confirmed ones, i. e. such as were admitted to all church privileges. So then, the Christian Church of old, did discipline such children as our question is about, although not presently admitted to the Lord's Supper.

Furthermore, since the anti-Christian apostasy, the Reformed Church hath ever owned this truth. As for those pure churches, which for a long time flourished in Bohemia, Commenius testifieth concerning them, that even children as well as others; were under discipline. Thus also it was in that gathered church which was in London in the days of Edward the Sixth, as their famous pastor, Johannes Alasco hath declared. And in one word, in Reformed Churches generally, yea, even in those of the separation, witness Mr. Robinson in his appendix to Mr. Perkins' catechism; and the churches in Plymouth colony, at this day extend discipline towards their children, and dismiss them also to other churches, although they were never in full communion with any church. Now it is a saying of above a thousand years old, that that which the universal church hold, and hath in all ages been practiced, is to be esteemed as apostolical. But this extending of discipline to the Children of the Church, which we plead for, hath been the catholic practice of the churches of Christ, in all places, and in all ages, which is a great argument to prove that it hath the stamp of *Jus divinum* upon it. And although some now with us are apt to conceive that only parents, and not their chil-

dren, are given to the elders and brethren of the Church, yet the affirmative of this question was so clear in former times amongst us, that children in their catechism were taught thus to believe. Mr. Cotton, in his "Milk for Babes," hath again and again expressed this.

Discipline is our great interest, which we are engaged to assert and plead for. This is *the cause of God in New England* in a special manner. We are the children of the good old non-conformists; now what was it that they did suffer so much for, but that they and *their children* also might be brought under that discipline and government, which Christ hath appointed in His Church? But if the Church hath nothing to do with such, these confessors have suffered many things in vain. Have we for our children's sake left a dear and pleasant land, and ventured our lives upon the great waters, and encountered the difficulties and miseries of a wilderness, and doth it at last come to this that they have no more advantage as to any church care about them, than the Indians and infidels amongst whom we live? When Pharaoh would suffer the children of Israel themselves to serve the Lord in the wilderness, but their *little ones* must not go with them, we know what spirit acted him. We may aver that they who will not suffer the children of Christ's people to come under His government, are not, in that matter, acted by his Spirit.

The neglect of discipline toward the children in question, hath been the woful cause of much evil amongst us. There are many sad complaints against the rising generation, and too much cause for them, but how much sadder would it be if they who make such complaints should be any way with the guilt of these miscarriages, by withholding from this generation that which is, by the Lord's appointment, the means of restraint and recovery out of this evil. This very neglect hath brought a wound upon those churches which—except the Lord be exceeding merciful—is now become immedicable and incurable. *Hinc prima mali labes*; children have been let alone so long, and are become so numerous, and many of

them such Belialists, that it has now become a difficulty, and almost an impossibility, to bring them under the yoke of Christ."

"It is a zealous and diligent attendance to discipline according to the rules of Christ, and not curtailing the covenant, that will keep churches pure. There are two ways practised by men in order to keep churches pure, the one is *human*, the other *divine*. *The human way is to straiten the grace of the Lord's covenant; the divine way is faithfully to attend to discipline.*

Now it will be found in the issue, that the divine way only is that which will attain the end; experience doth testify that churches have been pure or impure according as discipline hath flourished or been neglected by them. Look abroad the world upon the corrupted, collapsed churches that are in many places, and we shall see that they have little more than a carcass of discipline among them, without the life and power of it, which is the true and great reason of their corruption."

We append the following remarks of the Rev. Dr. Albro of Cambridge, Mass., the author of the able article in the Review from which these extracts have been taken:

"In the Jewish Church, those circumcised children, who did not at a proper age perform their appropriate duties, God commanded—after all necessary means had been used to bring them to obedience—should be cut off from His people, and reckoned among the uncircumcised who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. We ought to carry out this principle in the treatment of children of the Church. By stopping short of this, we lose, in a great measure, the benefits of the initiatory ordinance, which we so zealously maintain. We render it of none effect; we expose it to contempt; and while the children see themselves cast out and disowned, without any previous effort of the Church to reclaim and to sanctify them, they will be led to despise their baptism, and their covenant, and many become hopelessly hardened in unbelief and sin. These children upon whom we have sol-

emply placed the seal of God's covenant, and at the same time have refused to recognize as belonging to the household of faith, have ground of heavy complaint against us. Truly are they coldly disowned as if they, like the heathen, were strangers to the covenants of promise? If the seal of the kingdom of heaven is upon them, why are they denied the privilege of that guardianship which belongs to sons in their minority? If they rebel, let them be brought to repentance and obedience, by the holy discipline of the Church, or cut off by the sentence of excommunication; but why are they thrust out privily from their Father's House, without even an effort to ascertain whether they will comply with their covenant engagements or not? If they wander, why does not the pastor, like the good shepherd, go out into the wilderness after them, and bring them back rejoicing, rather than suffer them to perish for lack of vision. They have cause of complaint. And the Great Shepherd who took the lambs in His arms, will, we have reason to fear, apply to us that terrible sentence which was once passed upon the Jewish Church and its pastors, "Ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost. And they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they became meat for all the beasts of the field. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, yea my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or did seek after them."

We add next the testimony of one of the brightest lights with which the Church of God was ever blessed. We refer to *Dr. Jno. M. Mason*.

"The church is to inspect the *conduct* of her youth. I do not mean that she is to encourage hawkers of scandal, nor to entertain legions of spies, for their benefit. Not that she is to put on that dismal visage which petrifies the juvenile

heart ; nor to indulge that morose inquisition which arraigns, as a crime, every burst of juvenile cheerfulness. It is as much a part of God's *natural* constitution that youth should be sprightly, as that age should be grave. To reduce to one size, and one quality, all the decencies of life in all its periods, is the attribute of zeal which never discriminates, of severity which never learns, or of Pharisaism, which finds a righteousness in reprobating enjoyments which it cannot share.

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

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

On the other hand, can any reflecting person doubt, that the seasonable interposition of the church of God, might save many a youth from falling a victim to his own depravity, or to the depravity of others ? Why should a doubt be entertained on the subject ? Is the experiment fairly tried ? Are the churches in the habit of throwing themselves in between ruin and the youth who have not openly professed religion ? Do parents, on the failure of domestic admonition, *ever* resort to this remedy ? Ought they not to do it ? Why should a tender and solemn remonstrance, in the name of the living God, the Creator and the Judge of all, be without its influence in

recovering an unpractised sinner from the error of the wicked? Why should not an *authoritative* expostulation, on the part of the Church of God, brought home to individual feeling, have some effect, as a rational means, in prevailing with the young to consider their obligation to recognize the vows made over them in their baptism? There are more troublesome consciences on this point, among our youth, than we perhaps imagine. Why should they not be told, that continuance in carelessness, or abandonment to iniquity, *will compel the church of God to disown them, and to rank them with those concerning whom she has no promises to plead?* Let it not be said that "the state of religious society forbids such an interference—that parents and children would spurn at it as an encroachment upon their liberty—and that instead of gaining our youth, it would drive them, at once, into the camp of the profane;"—at least, let not these things be said without *facts* to support them. They are the suggestions of fear, unsanctioned by experience. No doubt, in the decayed state of Christian order, much prudence is necessary for its revival: but the necessity of prudence cannot excuse inaction. It is very possible, also, that some young saints would "kick against the pricks." But the same objection lies against the faithful preaching of the word, and against the impartial use of discipline toward professors. There are weighty reasons why a judicious extension of church authority to baptized youth in general, would not be so fruitless and despicable as some suppose.

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

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

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

Fourthly. The providence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His control over the hearts and affairs of men, are especially to be regarded. Perhaps no instance can be shown of contempt upon the discipline of His house not being followed, sooner or later, with most disastrous consequences to the offender. He has promised to own, support, and vindicate it, as solemnly as He ever promised to bless the gospel of His grace. If more stress were laid upon *His* agency in rendering effectual His own institutions; we should both discharge our duty more exactly, and see it crowned with greater success. Let the churches *begin* to look after their youth—let them commit their efforts to their Master's faithfulness. It will be time enough to complain when He 'leaves Himself without a witness.'—*Works, Vol. 2, pp. 445-449.*

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church appointed, in 1811, a Committee consisting of Drs. John B. Romeyn, Samuel Miller, and James Richards, to prepare a Report on the "Disciplining of Baptized Children." The following year, the Committee presented their Report, with which, it is presumed, the Church is familiar. It strongly urges upon the Church, as her duty, the excommunication of her rebellious, apostate youth. "If they do not discharge all the duties of members when they have reached the age of discretion, then let them be dealt with accordingly. If at that age, after having

had all the care and attention already prescribed as necessary, they do not conform to all the institutions of Jesus Christ, there is every reason to suppose that they will commit such open sins as will make it evident to all that they deserve to be cut off; or, if not, they will still deserve to be thus cut off, 1. For not improving their religious education. 2. Slighting warnings administered by parents, teachers, and ministers. 3. Neglecting to fulfil the vows which Baptism imposes. 4. For irreligion, breaking the covenant of their God."

Our work is done. It will now be seen whether the "astounding" claim, recently put forth, that "the Committee of Revision have done nothing more than restore the ancient landmarks, and follow the footsteps of the flock," is indeed supported either by the testimony of the Church, or by the Word of the Lord.

Our Doctrine may be assailed, derided, stigmatized as "folly"; the winds may blow furiously, and the storm may beat upon it, but it cannot fall, for it is founded upon **THE ROCK!**

