

set forth, are those fundamental ones on which the whole gospel system is erected.—The universal corruption of human nature and salvation by the death of Christ. The difference between preaching the gospel and the dispensation of a sacrament lies in this, that in the one, those truths are set forth in words, which in the other, are set forth by signs. The gospel takes a wider range than a sacrament. It takes in the whole counsel of God and is addressed to sinners as well as saints. A sacrament confines the attention to one or two truths, but these are the basis of all that the gospel has to say to either good or bad; and also, it can be rightly and properly observed only by a particular class—the friends of Christ. These however, are not in all respects essential differences: the true point of distinction is as has been stated above.

A sacrament is therefore an ordinance in which the great principles of salvation are enshrined. It is the casket which contains the jewels; “the vessel which holds the new wine; the basket which keeps the loaves and the fishes which are to feed the multitude.” If sacraments have any greater efficiency as means of grace than the preaching of the gospel, it must be because in them the attention is directed to a single point, and that point the most important of all; and because the truths presented by them are brought more close to us, being made, as it were, objects of sense. The relative value of the means of grace, consists in the clearness and fullness with which they exhibit Christ to our faith.

There are two inferences plainly deducible from all this. The first is, that no alteration, not even the smallest, ought to be made in these sacred institutions. Every thing in them is appointed by divine authority, and no unholty hand should be put forth to make any alteration in His ordinances. Every thing in them is deeply significant. To make a change in the symbol, is to make a change in the thing signified. The idea of rendering them more impressive by the addition of ceremonies which are not in the bible, is an impiety. Obedience, strict obedience to his revealed will, is religion. The Roman Catholics have added to the sacraments a multitude of observances, to render them more imposing and efficient, by which they have altered the character of both, so that they are no longer the things they were in the days of the apostles.

The second inference is, that sacraments derive no efficacy from those who administer them. The language of our standards on this point is excellent.—“Sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his spirit in them that by faith receive them.” Much is now done in certain quarters to shew that only priests episcopally ordained, and in direct succession from the apostles, have the power of administering valid sacraments. What is the difference between a valid sacrament and a sacrament that is not valid apart from the faith or unbelief of the recipient, it is not worth while to enquire; neither the idea nor the language is scriptural. When the primitive Chris-