

joyed, baptism with water cannot be of any service. For similar reasons they do not observe the sacrament of the supper. The reasons are in themselves extremely trivial, for even a religion purely spiritual may, in the case of such a creature as man—a being compounded both of soul and body, of spirit and matter,—very properly admit of material adjuncts. Thus although prayer is an exercise purely spiritual, the frame of mind may be promoted by the attitude of the suppliant, and the place where he performs his devotions. Praise is an exercise purely spiritual, but who does not feel that the frame of mind may be assisted by that melody of the voice, and those hallowed poetic breathings in which we are accustomed to adore the Creator. In like manner baptism is an outward material sign of an inward spiritual grace, a sign in itself appropriate and impressive, and none but the wildest visionary could seek or wish to reject it on the plea that it is inadmissible in a spiritual religion. But we may take this occasion for remarking that this error of the Quakers has arisen from a principle which has been a fertile source of error in the church of Christ—an undervaluing of God's written word. This sect prefers what they call their internal light to what God has revealed in the scriptures; and it cannot be deemed wonderful that the light which is in them should sometimes prove darkness. Are not the words of the institution peremptory? Why tamper with them? I would scarcely have adverted to this peculiarity in the Quaker practice had it not prevented me from asserting generally that all christian churches have deemed the ordinance of baptism perpetual and obligatory. But indeed this single exception, to which we have thought it proper to advert, is so recent and adhered to by so small a division of the christian family, that it is hardly necessary, on account of it, to limit the assertion that all branches of the christian church in all ages, have with one consent regarded baptism as essential to the christian profession. And this general consent is manifestly founded on the words of the institution. "Go ye therefore and, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The command is co-extensive with the promise.

3. Its nature and design. To elucidate this it may be useful to advert to the history of this rite; for it was not peculiar to the christian system. It existed long antecedent to it, and under very different forms of religion and even of heathenism. The washing with water indeed, seems to be an

emblem suggested by nature itself, expressive of a purpose to abstain from those moral pollutions which may have been contracted. Accordingly we find that those who were initiated into the mysteries or certain forms of heathenish superstition, bathed before their initiation in a particular stream, where they were supposed to leave all their previous errors and defilement, and from which they entered firmly into the belief of new opinions and the participation of sacred rites. This baptizing of proselytes was common also among the Jews, although it was not enjoined in any part of their law. They borrowed it from nature or from those typical washings or baptisms of sacred utensils by which they were cleansed and again made fit for sacred use. Thus when a Gentile sought to become a disciple of Moses, he received the initiatory rite of baptism—the sprinkling or dipping of water—by which he was emblematically purged from his former errors and sins, and made a public profession that he should enter upon a new course of belief and conduct. In conformity with this prevailing practice, John preached the baptism of repentance—that is, he performed the rite upon those who confessed their sins, and as a pledge and symbol of their determination henceforth to forsake them. When our Lord therefore instituted the ordinance of baptism and incorporated it with the ritual of his dispensation, it was, that it might answer a similar intent to that in which it had before been employed. It was the outward badge of those who received it that they had become his disciples, had entered his church, and were henceforth to be instructed by his doctrines, and to be guided by his precepts. When in the early age of the church this rite was administered to a convert to the christian faith, he was not required to give his assent to a long and elaborate confession of faith. "If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ," says an evangelist, "thou mayest be baptised." On his professing faith in this simple truth the initiatory rite was administered to him, he became a member of the church of Christ, and was admitted to a free participation of those privileges by which he might afterwards attain to the full perfection of the christian character. The nature and design of baptism therefore is to denote the baptized person's separation from all other forms of religion to the gospel, from all other masters to Christ, and his admission to that spiritual kingdom of righteousness and peace which Christ came to establish among men. And hence with admirable propriety and comprehensiveness, it is defined in our shorter catechism. "Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify