

Council in 1657. They were not unanimous however, several learned and pious men protesting against the decision which was drawn up in the following propositions:—

1.—They that according to Scripture are members of the visible Church, are the subjects of Baptism.

2.—The members of the visible church according to Scripture, are confederate, visible, believers in particular Churches, and their infant seed, i. e. children in minority whose next parents one or both are in covenant.

3.—The infant seed of confederate, visible, believers, are members of the same Church with their parents, and when grown up are personally under the watch, discipline and government of that Church.

4.—Those adult persons are not therefore to be admitted to full communion, merely because they are and continue members, without suitable qualifications, as the word of God requireth thereunto.

5.—Church members who were admitted in minority, understanding the doctrines of faith, and publicly professing their assent thereto, not scandalous of life, and solemnly owning the Covenant before the Church when they give themselves up and their children to the Lord, and subject themselves, to the government of Christ in the Church, their children are to be baptized, &c. See *Mathew's Magnalia*, Book 5, p. 64.

Most of the New England Churches after a time acquiesced in this decision. It has been called very commonly the Halfway Covenant; "a name which itself indicates" says D. Wisner, "that religion and the observance of its sacred rates were extensively becoming, in the estimation of the people, a sort of halfway business, and of course its energy and vitality dying away." According to the provisions of this arrangement, persons, who, confessedly, had not given their hearts to God, for the purpose of obtaining access to the, (in such a case) mere ceremony of baptism for their children, were permitted and encouraged to come and "profess before God, angels, and men, to give themselves up to God, the Father as their chief good; to the Son of God as their mediator, Head and Lord, relying upon Him as the Prophet, Priest and King of their Salvation; to the Holy Spirit of God as their Sanctifier, Guide and Comforter, to be temples for him to dwell in," were permitted and encouraged to come and make the most solemn of all professions, when they did not regard themselves, and those around did not regard them, as having at all in heart given themselves to God, and trusted in Christ and yielded themselves up to be temples of the Holy Ghost. And as to the promises which were annexed, of educating children in the fear of the Lord, and submitting to the discipline of the Church, on the one hand, and of watchful care on the other, they soon came to be alike disregarded both by those who exacted and those

who made them; parents did not, and soon were not expected to fulfil their engagements, in form so significant and solemn; and children did not, and were soon not expected to fulfil theirs. Thus the most solemn and impressive acts of religion came to be regarded as unmeaning ceremonies; the form only to be thought important, while the substance was overlooked and rapidly passing away.

And now another and still more fatal step was taken in this downward course. Why should such a difference be made between the two Christian Sacraments, which reason infers from the nature of the case, and the Scriptures clearly determine, require precisely the same qualifications? And why, if persons were qualified to make, in order to come to one ordinance, the very same profession, both in meaning and in terms, required to come to the other, why should they be excluded from that other. The practical result, every one sees would be, that if the innovation already made were not abandoned, another would speedily be introduced. And such was the fact. Correct moral deportment, with a profession of correct doctrinal opinions, and a desire for regeneration, came to be regarded as the only qualification for admission to the Communion. This innovation, though not as yet publicly advocated by any, there is conclusive proof had become quite extensive in practice previously to 1679. The Churches soon came to consist very considerably of unregenerate persons—of those who regarded themselves, and were regarded by others as unregenerate. Of all these things the consequence was, that within 30 years after the commencement of the 18th century, a large proportion of the clergy through the country, were either only speculatively correct, or to some extent actually erroneous, in their religious opinions, maintaining regularly the forms of religion, but in some instances having well nigh lost, and in others it is to be feared, having never felt its power.

Thus was abandoned by the New England Churches extensively that principle, viz: that particular Churches ought to consist of regenerate persons—the letting go of which soon after the apostolic ages, a distinguished writer (Dr. Owen,) has affirmed and proved was the occasion and means of introducing all that corruption, in doctrine worship, order, and rule, which ensued and ended in the great apostasy.

It should be added that the Halfway Covenant, is now universally abandoned, by the Evangelical Congregational Churches of New England, and that if retained at all, it is at present found only among the Unitarians.—*Religious Cyclopædia*. P. K.

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John B. Gough and his Work.

On the 30th day of October, 1842, John B. Gough, a bookbinder, residing in Wor-