

Confirmation: a Sermon.

Concluded.

Let us now see what those denominations say who differ from the Church and do not practise the Apostles' rite; and have introduced others to take its place,—such as compelling all baptized persons, before receiving the Holy Communion, to come and stand before the whole congregation and enter into covenant with God. That is, to believe and do all that the Pastor and Session, or Congregation, require them to believe and do. I will begin with John Calvin, one of the fathers of the Presbyterian denomination, an eminent man, and well skilled in that faith which is based upon his interpretation of the Word of God. He says, in referring to that passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews which speaks of the laying on of hands as among the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and which we have noticed, "this text alone is abundant proof of the Apostolic origin of this rite." And in his Institutes, in the 4th book and 19th chap., the same opinion is held. I next refer to the report of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian denomination. The subject of introducing the rite having been agitated before this body, it was referred to a committee, whose duty it should be to examine the subject thoroughly, and ascertain whether it was practised in the days of the Apostles, and, of course, binding upon those who professed to be followers of Christ. This question was presented, before that large and respectable body was rent and torn asunder; and when it contained some of the ablest men in our land. The committee consisted of the Rev. Dr. James Richards, long known as an eminent Professor of Divinity in the Presbyterian Seminary at Auburn, in the State of New York; the Rev. Dr. Samuel Miller, equally distinguished as a Professor in the Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey; and Dr. John B. Romeyn, an eloquent preacher in the City of New York. After quoting with approbation the opinion of John Calvin, to which I have referred, they say in their report to the General Assembly, "this rite of confirmation thus administered to baptized children, when arrived at competent years, and previously instructed and prepared for it, with the express view of their admission to the Lord's Supper, shows clearly that the primitive Church in her purest days exercised the authority of a mother over her baptized children." Now this is clear and decided testimony from those who differ from us, that it was practised in the primitive Church, and of course must have had the sanction of those who had been trained and instructed by the Spirit of God. We trust that when the days of prejudice and sectarian spirit have passed away these sound views will prevail, and that they will lead them back to the pure Church of Christ. I next quote from the Confession of Faith of the Baptists of England, adopted by

the Baptist Association of this country. It is from this edition of 1827, page 69. It contains the following passage:—"We believe that laying on of hands with prayer, upon baptized believers, as such, is an ordinance of Christ, and ought to be submitted unto by all such persons as are permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper—and that the end of the ordinance is not for the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, but for a further reception of the Holy Spirit of promise, or for the addition of the graces of the Spirit, and the influences thereof—to confirm, strengthen and comfort them in Christ Jesus." We could not ask for more decided testimony than is here furnished. The opinion of John Wesley, the reputed founder of the Methodist connexion, is equally clear. Of course it could not be otherwise, as he declared a short time before his death, "I die a member of the Church of England;" and in this church this rite has always been administered. I conclude this branch of our subject with the testimony of Dr. Adam Clark, a Methodist preacher of great distinction, and an excellent commentator on the word of God. In the first volume of his life, published by the Methodist Book Concern at New York, in 1833, page 94, he gives the following account of his own confirmation. He says, "It was at the time that the Bishop of Bristol held a confirmation at the Collegiate Church. I had never been confirmed, and as I had a high respect for all the rites and ceremonies of the church, I wished to embrace the opportunity to get the blessing of that amiable and apostolic-looking prelate, Dr. Lewis Bagot. I asked permission; several of the preachers' sons went with me, and I felt much satisfaction in this ordinance; to me it was very solemn, and the whole was well conducted. Mrs. S., who was a Presbyterian, pined my being so long held in the oldness of the letter. I have lived nearly forty years since, and upon this point my sentiments are not changed."*

* HAYDEN HALL, June, 1830.

Dear Mrs. Wilkenson—You wish for my opinion on the subject of confirmation. It is supposed to be a rite by which the moral burden is taken off the shoulders of the sponsors, and transferred to those shoulders to which it properly belongs. Now, as long as these opinions and feeling relative to it prevail, in the minds of all parties, I say in God's name, let the rite, duly administered, be humbly received; but the subjects of it should be well informed that by it they have not merely performed a duty, and so far may have an easy conscience, but in addition they have by it taken a strong and perpetual yoke upon their necks, in their vow to "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh, and that they should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their lives." This is no ordinary obligation. This they solemnly take on them when they come to be confirmed, and by the act they come under a new and perpetual covenant to give themselves wholly to God, that they may have a thorough "death unto