

extensive sense. Whatever could be viewed as a symbol of any Gospel truth, might be called a Sacrament; the rites, and ceremonies of public worship, as they were supposed to refer to the spiritual doctrines of Religion, were likewise considered as Sacraments.—*Those signs, says St. Austin, that are connected with Divine things are called Sacraments.** The warm zeal of the primitive Christians prompted them to adopt exterior practices, to render, as it were, visible the principles of their faith; and to be the means of impressing them on their minds; these, being consecrated to religious use assumed a sacred, and mysterious aspect; and were revered as sacred signs. By degrees many allegorical, and mystical rites were introduced, and venerated as Sacraments. Feasts even, that were solemnized to commemorate the mysteries of redemption were regarded as Sacraments.† But we do not find that any of the primitive Teachers of the Gospel doctrine speak of more than two Sacraments, that were appointed by Divine authority; and commended to the observance of all Christians.

If the primitive Churches were competent to establish such rites as in their wisdom, and piety they might think conducive to the edification of the inner man; when these human institutions lose their efficacy by the change of times, and difference of place; when they have degenerated into vain, and unprofitable practices; the authority of any Church may surely abolish them within its limits, and introduce other modes of things as may be more effectual to promote the great ends of public worship. The only things,

* *Signa, quæ ad res Divinas pertinent, Sacramenta appellantur. (Augustinus Marcellino epis. 5.)*

† *Sacramentum est autem in aliqua celebratione, cum rei gestæ ita rememoratio fit, ut aliquod etiam significari intelligatur, quod sancte accipiendum est. Eo itaque modo agimus Pascha, ut not solum in memoriam, quod gestum est revocemus, id est quod mortuus est Christus, et resurrexit, sed etiam cætera, quæ circa ea attestantur, ad Sacramenti significationem not omittamus.—(Augustinus Januario epis. 119.)*