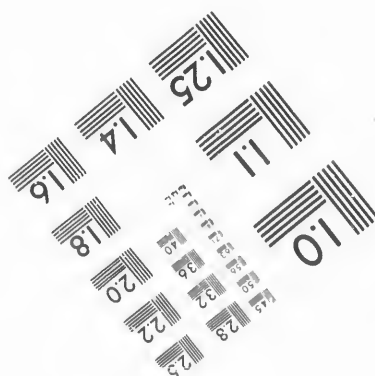
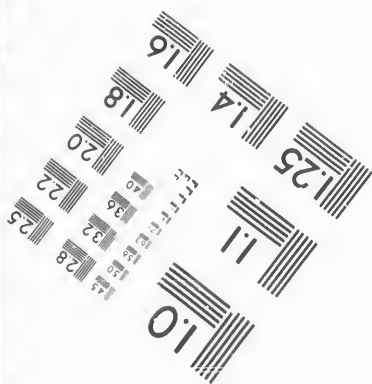
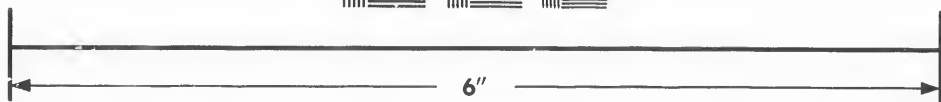
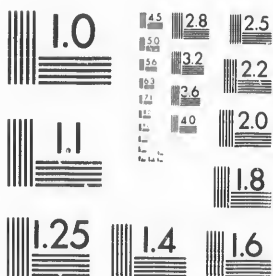


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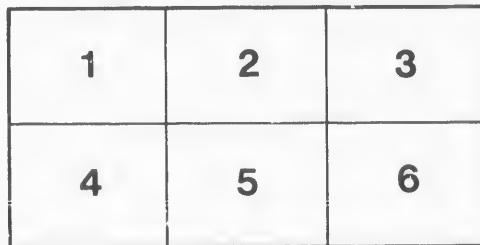
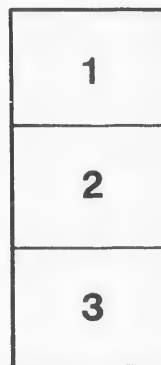
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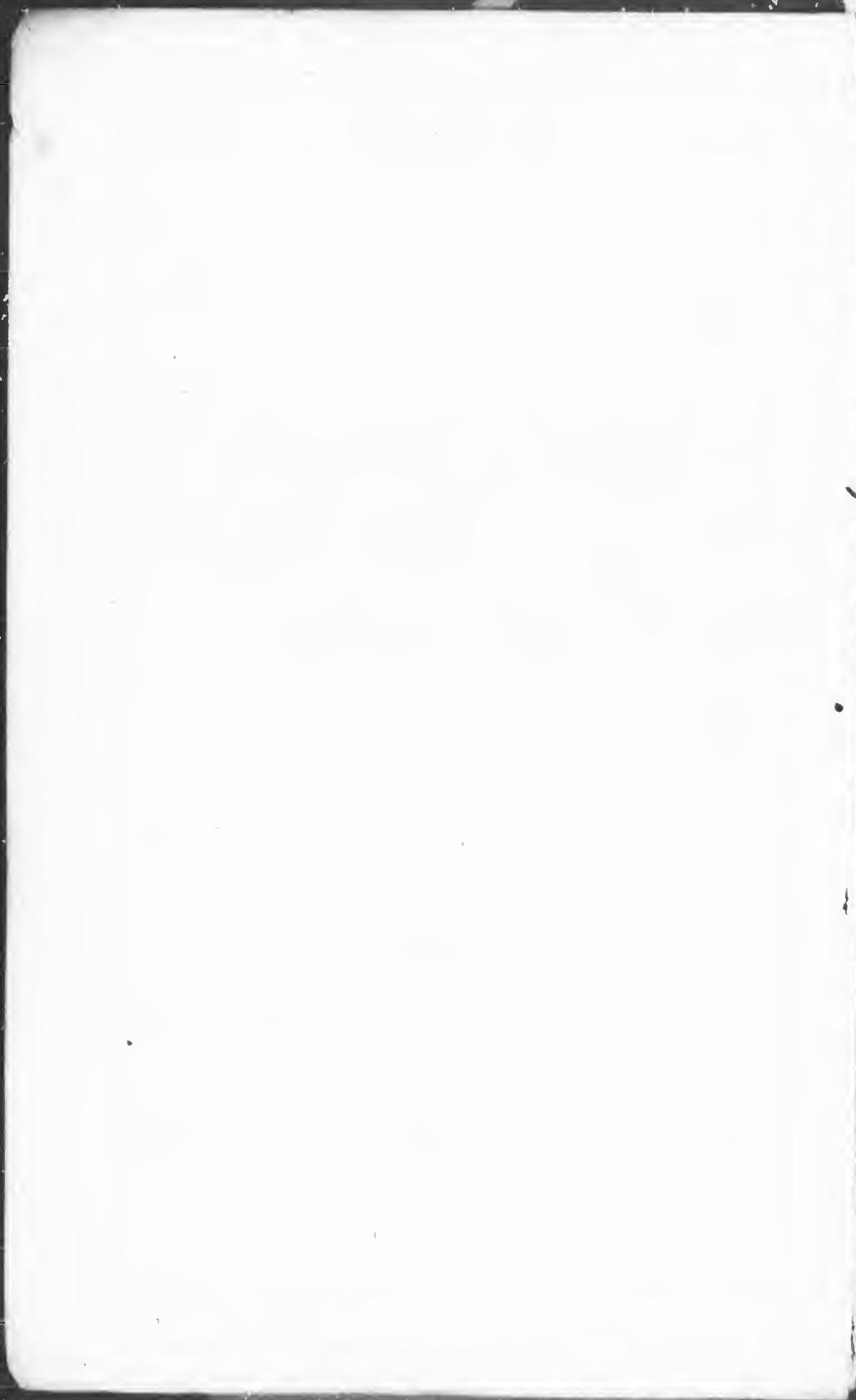
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# ESSAY

ON THE

SCRIPTURAL OBLIGATION

OF

## Christian Churches

TO OBSERVE THE

### LORD'S SUPPER

EVERY LORD'S DAY.



“For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”



HALIFAX, N. S.

*Printed by J. S. Cannabell.*

1831.

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## CHRISTIAN READER.

The remarks in the following Essay, have been compiled solely with a view to the truth, and to contribute as far as possible, to point out and remove unscriptural causes of difference among professed believers, with the earnest desire that thereby all who love the Lord Jesus may become more and more "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments."—1. John, v. 2. 3.—Test what is written by the sure word of prophecy, prove all things, hold fast only that which is true. Remember that the christian can neither assume to himself or concede to others any power over the conscience, beyond mere opinion or advice, this being contrary to that law of accountableness which is essential to a moral action, and which is at the foundation of all religion and obedience to God, and to the truth, that we must call no man master—That one is our master, that to him we must stand or fall—That "every one should be well persuaded in his own mind." If he would "act as to the Lord and not unto men"—that we cannot consider ourselves innocent if possessing the means of correct information we substitute any error by whomsoever taught, in place of a truth, we see distinctly revealed in the word of God—That nothing can be deemed expedient which is not known to be lawful.

"Shew me thy ways, O God, teach me thy paths."

225

ESSAY  
ON THE SCRIPTURAL OBLIGATIONS  
OF  
*CHRISTIAN CHURCHES*  
TO OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER EVERY  
LORD'S DAY.

*Section 1st.*

ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

ALL denominations of Protestants profess to maintain the sufficiency and Supreme authority of Scripture, "that the Bible and that only, is the standard of their faith and practice, and of their doctrine and discipline;" "that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith;"—some, however, limit this to the doctrines of religion merely, imagining, that the form and order of religious worship, are to be reckoned among things indifferent, and to be regulated by human wisdom and expediency. But Protestant dissenters profess to extend their view much further; by them the Holy Volume is regarded not only as the rule of faith, but also as the directory of practice; they expect to find in it the agenda, as well as the credenda of christianity; it is in their opinion the sole statute book of the kingdom of Heaven. They acknowledge in religion but one master, even Christ, looking on the New Testament, as containing an ample disclosure of their Lord's will, with respect to the constitution and ordinances of his Church; they cannot suppose that these are left to the capricious minds of men, or that the Apostles ordained, or the primitive churches practised, what the Great King of Zion



had not prescribed; and they believe the divine law-giver was not only fully competent to legislate for his church, but that his prospective wisdom has been evinced in framing a system at once simple and admirably adapted to answer its designed ends for all classes of society in every age.

Yet such is the pride and presumption of man, that ecclesiastical history exhibits an almost continued propensity among men, to intermeddle with the ordinances of God; so much had this prevailed among the Jews, that the traditions of the elders, had almost supplanted the laws of God; so that it was said of them, "In vain they do worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." And in the christian church, it is well known, that the mystery of iniquity soon began to work, that the church was subject to Christ was quickly forgotten; and will worship, and the plea of expediency, soon produced the utmost diversity of opinion and practice, instead of that unity of judgment and conduct, which might have been expected to result from allegiance to the King of Saints, and conformity to the precepts and example of his word.— "Every word of God is pure, add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar."—Prov. xxx. 5. 6.

The diversity of opinion and practice which has almost always followed, from man's presuming to be wise above what is written, is, perhaps in no instance more obvious, than as respects the ordinance of the Lord's Supper: and consequently no ordinance has been more variously and extensively corrupted. Certain abuses of it had begun under the very eye of the Apostles in the primitive churches, which it required all their influence and authority to correct.—And age after age continued to deface its heavenly and simple character, arising from still more corrupt and anti-christian error, and leading to practices as contradictory as erroneous

from all the extremes of neglect to the idolatrously worshipping the ordinance. The consideration of these errors and abuses, however important, is not the immediate purpose of this tract—its object being intended chiefly, to call the attention of the professed disciples of the Lord, holding consistent and scriptural views of the nature of the Lord's Supper, to the serious inquiry, whether there be not a divine authority and consequent obligation upon christians, when practicable, to observe this ordinance upon every first day of the week, when the churches meet to worship, and to observe the other ordinances of the day. The great diversity of practice which prevails on this head, shews that there must exist some gross misconception of the grounds upon which the question respecting its stated observance rests.—In some communities, it is observed but once or twice a year, and then attended with a load of supererogatory services, preparations, &c. In some, it is observed quarterly—or monthly—with greater simplicity—with many it is still more irregular and still more neglected,—being only observed occasionally as it may appear convenient or expedient to individuals.—In some churches, it is attended to every Lord's day.—It must appear at the first view, a very unlikely circumstance, that the observance of a church ordinance of this nature, should be left thus indeterminate, so as to render it a matter of mere expediency and comparative indifference, whether churches observe it, weekly, monthly, or yearly. It is no question with believers, whether they should be baptized once or oftener, whether as churches, they should assemble on every Lord's day, and worship or not, and yet any one will find it very difficult to point out any superiority, in the evidence which establishes the regular recurrence of these, to that which brings the same conclusion respecting the stated recurrence of the Lord's Supper.—They stand or fall

together, and if it be unlawful to apply the principle of expediency in the one case, it must be no less so in the other.—Diversity of opinion, or practice among christians, can never in itself be a matter of rejoicing; on the contrary, none who have considered the subject, will deny the great importance of unity of sentiment and practice among christians. As, perhaps, there is no greater obstacle to the spread of the gospel, and to the increase of love of the brethren which should prevail among its subjects, than the existing variety of sects and parties; this proves a stumbling block to many, and always tends more or less to alienate christians from each other. All real christians are indeed of one mind in the great truths and essentials of the gospel; but this unity is not always so obvious to the world or to themselves, as their differences are; and seems not therefore by itself a means to accomplish one end our Lord prayed for in their being one “that the world may believe that thou (Father) hast sent me.” John xvii. 22. How much more striking would this effect be, were christians united in the truth, also, all of one mind respecting the ordinances and external worship and discipline of the sanctuary. Some fondly hope and seem vainly to strive for such an agreement among christians, while others think this of little consequence, provided they love one another. But has not every one observed how much even these differences have tended to alienate the disciples one from the other, to chill brotherly affection? But if the New Testament be not explicit on these points, we must expect this diversity to continue, while men’s judgments and views of what is expedient vary, and then it must be our duty sometimes, to give up our practices and to accommodate ourselves to the opinions and prejudices of others.—But we have no promise that any prophet shall hereafter arise to supply what is deficient, and we are taught to call no man master in religious matters,

but one, even Christ. But if Scripture contains a perfect standard, nothing can be better calculated, or is more obviously our duty to produce the unity of the body and to preserve the bond of peace, than diligently and impartially to investigate the word of God, and implicitly and in faith to follow in the path of duty it reveals.--Then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all his commandments. All other devices for promoting uniformity and love have hitherto invariably failed, and it is desirable they should fail, since uniformity merely of man's creating is worthless, that which arises from a love of the truth and a reverential fear of God's word, being alone pleasing to him and profitable to ourselves. In our common concerns of life it is often necessary to give up what we know to be our own right, for the sake of peace, or some greater advantage; but such accommodation in religion seems not to be countenanced in the word of God. "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently." "To obey is better than sacrifice." If our aim be chiefly to model one church after the example of another now existing, we may make but little scriptural progress, and our zeal may not be according to knowledge. But if a model exist in the New Testament, by which all churches ought to be regulated; so far then as each is occupied in conforming to this, just so far will they conform to one another; and so far we might expect the blessing of God to attend his own appointment, in causing the numberless sects and parties among believers which now dishonour religion to disappear, and become more and more of one mind in all things, acknowledging one faith, one Lord and one Baptism. When a number of pupils are taught to write by one master, we expect as they profit by instruction to see a resemblance in their hand writing; but how little progress, or likeness together could be expected, should they instead of conforming to

the model their master set them, be employed in copying from one another.—Finally, when we consider the perfection and fullness of scripture—the influence which good or bad laws necessarily produce in any society, but especially in churches—God’s declared abhorrence of will worship—man’s proneness to err in this respect, and the evil consequences and schism which have always followed from their departing from the word of God. When we consider that God has in every dispensation given directions as to his worship even in things indifferent—the faithfulness of Christ as the prophet of his church—the importance of unity to promote love among christians—and the impossibility of unity taking place if there be no standard. Viewing, these in connection, we have every reason to presume that the New Testament contains instructions, examples or precepts concerning every part of the worship and conduct, the faith and practice of christians, either in their associated state as churches, or as individuals. “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to the word it is because there is no light in them.”

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*Section 2d.*

SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT.

THE scriptural account of the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper is “and as they were eating Jesus took bread and blessed it and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, take eat, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me—and he took the cup, when he had supped, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; drink ye all of it. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of

the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom. And they all drank of it. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord's death till he come, and when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." Mat. xxvi. 26, &c. and Mark, xiv. 22. &c. Luke xxii. 19.—1 Cor. xi. 23—26. Such is the short and simple, yet full and affecting narrative given us in the Bible of the institution of this memorial of our Saviour's sufferings and love for us sinners. The expression "as often," it must be admitted implies frequency rather than the reverse, and as the first day of the week had not yet been sanctified by the Lord's resurrection as his day for his disciples staidly to assemble together and to keep his ordinances, our Lord could not fix the period of its return more distinctly without an anticipation which did not seem to consist with his views or circumstances at the time. After his resurrection the Lord frequently appeared to his disciples and more fully instructed them in the nature and ordinances of the Gospel dispensation; for Luke expressly informs us that he "spake to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, and gave commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen." Acts i. 2. 3. His instructions were to form the basis of their future lessons to the churches, "for they were to "teach" the disciples "to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them." Matt. xviii. 20. And a promise was given that the Holy Spirit should bring to their remembrance what he had said, John xiv. 26. Nothing was to be left uncertain; all was clearly explained—and surely this was quite needful, particularly with regard to the positive institutions of his kingdom. The application of moral precepts must always be regulated by considerations of time, character, circumstances, &c. and a latitude of judgment must be allowed,

so that the spirit of the injunction is preserved. But in positive institutions, which depends entirely on the will of the legislator, the utmost precision and certainty are required. We must not only know what is to be done, but how it is to be done, all depends on the law-giver,—to obey is ours. The Lord's Supper is not like Baptism, confined to one period of the christian's life, it is a standing ordinance, to be constantly and often regarded. But if the Scriptures afford us no information how often it is to be observed an essential branch of the command is left unsettled, and the institution itself is as imperfect and variable in this respect, as we find men (who have chosen to determine themselves the question) have actually thereby made it.

It is important, therefore to remember, that when the Apostles established churches, and appointed the institutions which they were to observe, they gave them the commands which they had themselves received of the Lord Jesus, and the clear remembrance of which was ensured by the gift of the Holy Spirit. It may be further remarked, that a distinct revelation of the very same things was vouchsafed to the Apostle Paul. The servants of Christ did not legislate, but only promulgated their master's will, "he that heareth you" said our Lord, "heareth me," "and he that despiseth you, despiseth me" &c. Ye know said Paul "what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus, He that despiseth, despiseth not man but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit, I have received of the Lord Jesus that which also I delivered unto you. We have the mind of Christ." 1 Thes. iv. 2. 8. He tells the Corinthians "now I praise you brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you." 1 Cor. xi. 2.

The necessary inference from all this is, that

their appointments in the churches are of continued obligation, as the appointed laws of his kingdom, that cannot be moved. And that in obeying the injunctions of the inspired Apostles, and copying the patterns of those churches which they founded, we are obeying Christ.

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THE first account we have of the order of a christian church, respects the one at Jerusalem, on that memorable day when three thousand sinners were pricked in their heart under Peter's sermon; and having gladly received his word, were baptized, and as we are told, "continued stedfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." Acts II. 42. If these words as are generally admitted, describe the stated observances of the newly formed society, we have precisely the same evidence, that this ordinance was a stated part of their worship, as that the church assembled every Lord's day, and observed stedfastly, the other ordinances. All other churches would be formed on the model of this first one at Jerusalem; and had the Supper been attended to with less frequency than the other parts of the service, and some day been especially appointed for that part of worship, we, no doubt, would have some intimation of it.— In Acts xx, 7. we have a distinct example of the day of christian worship, and at all events one of the chief purposes for which the disciples assembled together on that day. "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them"—Paul arrived at Troas on Monday, and notwithstanding his evident haste, tarried there seven days, that he might meet with, and give suitable instruction to, the whole church, when they came together publicly, on the



first day of the week. If it be asked by what authority they did this as the seventh day had been so long the appointed day of rest. The only answer that can be given is, that the churches would not have done it without apostolic direction; nor would the Apostles have enjoined or sanctioned it, without the express commands of the Lord Jesus: and we must equally conclude, that the same authority which enjoined the setting apart of the first day of the week, connected with it, the observance of this ordinance to shew forth the Lord's death till he come; the two institutions, must therefore stand or fall together; if we assemble on the Lord's day, the scriptures instruct us, that it is to break bread, as well as to preach, and pray, and praise.—Dr. Doddridge says "in loco," "It is well known, the primitive christians administered the eucharist every Lord's day; and as that was the most solemn and appropriate act of their worship, it is no wonder that it should be mentioned as the end of their assembling."

The admonitions of the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth, (1. Cor. x. 14--21.) manifestly rest on the principle, that the observance of the Lord's Supper, was the distinguishing badge of the christian profession and fellowship; and that by which they were especially known among the heathen as the servants of Christ—It was the regularity and established frequency of its observance, that gave it this distinction. And the whole tenor of the argument, and the force of the reproof of the Apostles in the xi. chapter, clearly implies that as at Jerusalem and as at Troas, so at Corinth, one of the designed objects of the church coming together on the first day of the week, was to break bread—but on account of the corruptions in that church, as respected the manner of their observing the institution, this their designed object was much obstructed, so that the Apostle declares in v. 20--"When ye

come together, therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper"—What is termed coming together in this verse is called in v. 18, "coming together in the church"—and in v. 20, "coming to one place," and in v. 33, is termed coming "together to eat." Do not these expressions prove, that whenever they thus came together it was designedly to partake of the Lord's Supper. We have already seen that the first day of the week was separated for Christian worship, and that this was the day denoted in this epistle may be also further inferred from chap. xvi. 2, where the disciples are directed to the fellowship. "On the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by in store as God hath prosposed him."— We arrive then from the scriptures at these conclusions—both by direct example and necessary inference, that the observance of the Lord's Supper formed a constituent part of the religious services of the primitive christians, and that the time chosen for those services was the first day of the week.

It is also to be remembered, that there was one rule among all the Christian communities. The same doctrine was preached to all, the same laws and ordinances were established.—"Timotheus" said the Apostle, "shall bring you into remembrance of my ways, which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church." No new revelation will be given, all the injunctions, of the New Testament remain in full force—The Lord's day is the only festival of the christian church, and all Lord's days are alike.

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### *Section 3d.*

#### HISTORICAL VIEW OF WEEKLY COMMUNION.

THE historical view of the subject is highly interesting—for though it be undoubtedly true, that nothing is binding on the churches which cannot be

clearly deduced from the scriptures—yet every one will admit the importance where it can be ascertained of knowing how the laws of christianity were understood and practised in the earliest and purest ages, the first two centuries after the commencement of the christian era—For though the christian community became soon spoiled by philosophy and vain deceit, it was not immediate; so that in the time immediately succeeding the apostolic age, the church yet retained a very near resemblance to the Divine pattern.

It does not appear from scripture, that the churches established by the Apostles, held their general assemblies for worship oftener than on the first day of the week—Parties of christians might meet for prayer and mutual conference at each other's houses whenever they pleased,—and the ministers of the gospel, no doubt, took every opportunity of preaching the truth to their fellow men in the places of public concourse. The Jewish Sabbath, in particular was often chosen for these efforts, as the synagogues were then open, and the Jews were assembled and might be conveniently addressed. But the first day of the week was the only solemn day of the christians, then and then only, they came together to one place, and as has been shewn, then regularly attended to the Supper of the Lord.—After the death of the Apostles, other days were set apart for public service, and on these days also the Lord's Supper always constituted a part of the worship—some churches observing one day, and some another: but whatever might be the variety of practice in this respect, all agreed in the sanctification of the first day of the week, and in the observance of the Lord's Supper on that day—'This may be affirmed of the first three centuries—For this reason Chrysostom styles the Lord's day, "the day of bread." And even in the fourth century, as Mosheim observes, "The christian worship consisted in hymns,

prayers, reading of the scriptures, a discourse addressed to the people, and concluded with the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which was observed in some places two or three times a week; in others, on Sundays only." *Ecc. his. cent. 4 part 2. ch. 4.*—In fact, this topic can receive a more complete chain of proof from all the early writers, than their testimony affords to the original and continued practice of the christian church for the first three centuries—Instead of quoting the language of those writers which contain the proof, the following eloquent passage will shew us the impression which the evidence made on a strong minded minister of the church of Scotland, in which the practice of observing the Lord's Supper weekly, is far from obtaining—"Consider antiquity" he says, "in what view you please, the older or the later accounts—consider it among enemies or friends; view it in its truth or in its lies, in its simplicity or in its superstitions, consider all the accounts which all sorts of men have given; take the evidence from as distant corners of the world and as opposite characters in it as you please, from these who have no bias but to the truth or from such where opinions and interests would lead them, to give this fact a colour if it could bear it—and all with one voice shall declare, that to come together on the first day of the week to break bread, was from the beginning, and for many ages, the custom, the uninterrupted, unquestioned, undisputed practice of all christian churches; as much so, as it was their practice to sanctify the Lord's day, or to pray, praise, and preach the Apostle's doctrine upon it; that as this was the most distinguished part of their worship, so was it what they and their worship was described by, and the action by which among themselves the Lord's day was known; what consequently they would least and last of all have omitted, while any degree of the purity of the gospel remained among

them. How strongly then does all this place this matter before us! How clearly does this appear as the light from the scriptures, and when all antiquity reflects it too, in so direct a manner to us, what can we do, but confess it as a part of the truth coming from Christ, that it is his will and our duty, to continue stedfastly in the breaking of bread, often doing this in remembrance of him."—*Randal on the Lord's Supper.*

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The testimony of the most distinguished of the reformers was decidedly in favour of the practice enforced in these pages and from the same motives;—that it was so appointed by the Apostles, by the commands of Christ.

“In the Lutheran churches, the Lord's Supper is observed every Sunday and holiday throughout the year.”—*Dr. Erskine's Theo. diss. p. 309.*

Calvin—“Every week at least, the table of the Lord should be spread for christian assemblies.”—*Inst. 6. W. C. 17, S. 43, 46.*

The sentiments of Cranmer were precisely the same, and in the English church, provision is made for the celebration of the Lord's Supper every Lord's day in all the cathedral churches.

The early dissenting churches in England, both independent and Baptists, appear to have had this practice at first, and it does not clearly appear when they changed it.

“The Independent churches in England,” says the biographer of Dr. Owen, “at the beginning, observed the Lord's Supper every first day of the week.”—*Orme's Life of Dr. Owen, 502.*

In the Baptist confession of Faith, published in 1611, is the following article, “That every church ought, according to the example of Christ's disciples, primitive churches upon every

first day of the week, being the Lord's day, to assemble together, to pray, prophecy, praise God and break bread, and perform all other parts of scriptural communion for the worship of God, and their own mutual edification and the preservation of true religion and piety in the church.—*Crosby's His. Baptists. Vol. ii. 27.*

Most of the Independent and Baptist churches in Scotland and also some in England and America practice it. The most distinguished men, among the non-conformists have maintained the same views, Dr. Ames, Dr. Owen, Mr. Baxter, Dr. Goodwin, Mr. Charnock, Dr. Watts, Dr. Doddridge and also Dr. Mason, President Edwards, all agree with the reformers, critics and church historians of ancient and modern times, to the the practice being scriptural and in exhorting to its adoption—Indeed time and space would fail to attempt an enumeration—The cloud of witnesses on this subject, is greater than in most questions of a disputed nature; and adds Mr. Orme, the pious and learned author of “the ordinance of the Lord's Supper illustrated” (from whose very interesting and useful work, and Mr. Cramp's “on the Sabbathical observance of the Lord's Supper,” these observations are chiefly compiled,) says, “If I might be allowed to add my own testimony, I would say, that the experience of nearly twenty years in a numerous church where this was the constant practice, made me acquainted with no evils arising out of it; and satisfied me that the benefits of it were great, both to individuals and to the body at large.”

Mr. Baxter, in his christian directory, page 470, has the following pointed remarks on this question,

“Q. How often should the sacrament be now administered, that it neither grow into contempt, nor strangeness?”

“A. Ordinarily in well disciplined churches it should be still every Lord's day, for first we have

no reason to prove, that the Apostles' example and appointment in this case was proper to those times, any more than praise and thanksgiving daily is proper to them, and one may as well deny the obligation of other institutions or apostolical orders as that.—2ndly. It is a part of a settled order of the Lord's day worship, and omitting it maimeth and altereth the worship of the day.—3rdly. There are better means (by teaching and discipline) to keep the sacrament from contempt, than the omitting or displacing of it.—4thly. Every Lord's day is no oftener than christians need it."

Dr. Thomas Goodwin—"For the time of the administration of the Lord's Supper, namely, how often it should be,) there must necessarily be an institution somewhere in scripture left or found; or one at least, that may be drawn from scripture by good consequence. In truth, there can never be invented or supposed any such proper, special occasion requiring this ordinance to be administered upon his Lord's day or that rather than upon another, which might more especially call upon the church for the practice of it.

This being a continual ordinance, and continual ordinances necessarily requiring a time instituted, or fixed some where; the fixed time therefore, neither is, nor can be other than the Lord's day, according to the ordinary course and tenor of the New Testament, which imports that every Lord's day is the instituted time for them." (*On the Constitution, &c. of the Church of Christ, book, vii.*)

Dr. Watts—"If Jesus being dead, and being alive again, is so great and important an article of our religion, and as it were the foundation on which it stands, then how wisely hath he so ordained it in his gospels, that we should have a constant memorial appointed us, both of his death and of his resurrection—Of his death in the Lord's Supper, and of his resurrection in the Lord's day. On the

first day of the week Christ appears in his holy ordinances and saith, peace be unto you, as he did to the Apostles."

"The primitive christians celebrated both these institutions, on every first day of the week, that is the christian Sabbath and the Lord's Supper. We all agree to celebrate one of these, viz. his resurrection, every week on the first day; but how few are there, that celebrate the memorial of his death in a constant attendance at the Lord's Supper. O let us take pleasure in these sacred memorials and practice them, both with steadiness and constancy in remembrance of Jesus, who was dead and is alive!"—*Evangelical Discourses, Dis. 11.*

President Edwards—"Another thing I would also mention, wherein it appears to me that there has been an omission with respect to the external worship of God. There has been of late a great increase of preaching the word, social prayer, &c. yet I cannot understand, that there is any increase of the administration of the Lord's Supper, or that God's people do any more frequently commemorate the dying love of their Redeemer, in this sacred memorial of it than they used to do; though I do not see why an increase of love to Christ, should not dispose christians as much to increase in this, as in their other duties. It seems plain by the scriptures, that the primitive churches were wont to celebrate this memorial of the sufferings of their dear Redeemer, every Lord's day, and so I believe it will be again in the church of Christ in days that are approaching."—*Thoughts on the Revival of Religion, p. 214.*

Dr. Mason of New York---"When we speak of innovation in the church of Christ, we are not to inquire merely, what was done by our Fathers, but what was the order of the church from the beginning? How did Christ ordain? How did his Apostles conduct? In what state did they leave the



churches? Now it is notorious, that during the three first centuries of the christian era, communions were held with a frequency of which, among us we have neither example nor resemblance. It is also notorious, that the original frequency of communion, declined as carnality and corruption gained ground, and it is no less notorious, that it has been urged as a weighty duty, by the best of men and the best of churches, in the best of times---It is demonstrable, that among the primitive christians, the celebration of the Supper, was a part of the ordinary sanctification of the Lord's day. In this manner did the spirit of ancient piety cherish the memory of a Saviour's love. There was no need of reproof, remonstrance, or entreaty," &c.

The preceding citation are produced not as authorities, but as opinions---they are, however, the opinions of the most eminent and pious among men, not merely as to what was the undoubted apostolic practice, but also as enforcing the propriety of the practice in itself; and are evidently entitled to as much regard as can reasonably be given to any who vindicate on the plea of expediency an opposite course of unfrequency, even admitting what has been disproved that the scriptures were silent on the subject, and had left it to be determined by men according to their different views of its fitness. It must be recollected, also, in regard to those men, that nothing but the love of truth could have induced them to send forth into the world, sentiments more or less condemning the common (and perhaps their own) practice. And also that they do not speak of weekly communion, as a matter of doubtful disputation; but considering both the fact and the law as clearly revealed, present them to the notice of the churches and urge their importance.

## Section 4th.

## OBJECTIONS AND MISTAKES—CONSIDERED.

WHEN corruptions have so long existed as to form a part of the established system of the communities in which they are formed, any attempt to restore primitive purity, will be looked upon with a jealous eye, and objections, some of them perhaps very specious will be made to oppose the presumed novelty, but against the objection that the practice here advocated, is an innovation, it has been fully shewn that it is so, in no other sense, than as the doctrine of justification by faith was, in the days of Luther. Those who maintain that we have nothing express in the scriptures on the subject; that the frequency of communion is a matter to be determined by human discretion are referred to the former part of this essay as containing the refutation of such an opinion. The words translated "as often as," 1 Cor. xi. 26, from which the plea is often made. So far from authorising a latitudinarian discretion in men to fix the time at their own pleasure, does in reality determine the precise reverse. The very meaning of the word refers to some well known, acknowledged and established rule of frequency which can be no other than weekly communion."—See *Dr. Smith's Concise View* p. 6.

Some may assert probably, that if weekly communion be admitted, the same principle will lead us to the adoption of some other practices which were observed in the apostolic churches, but have long since fallen into disuse.—This can be no good objection. If besides weekly communion, it could be equally proved from the Bible that Christ commanded and the Apostles instituted any other ordinances which are now neglected, let them be by all means restored.--But all the practices of the first christians were not church ordinances nor univ...

sally prevalent. The community of goods at Jerusalem, for instance as is evident from Acts v. 4. was a voluntary liberality, the spirit of which is still in force and to be imitated. Respecting daily communion, it is at least doubtful whether Acts II. 46. refers to it or to the partaking food at an ordinary meal—but if it meant the former the practice of daily communion was not general as we find from the practice of the churches at Troas. And the Lord's supper it is said was first observed on Thursday. It is not asserted that it is unlawful to obey Christ's dying commandment on any day; but that by the scriptural practice of apostolic churches, it is demonstrated to be the appointment of Christ, that his churches must observe it every first day of the week. So a church may assemble any day and worship, but at all events, if they regard scriptural example and precepts as binding, they must meet on the Lord's day.

“But the argument on which most stress is laid, is, that frequency will lessen the solemnity of the ordinance, and bring it into contempt.” To this I reply continues Dr. Erskine, “If frequent communing is a duty, then danger of doing it with less advantage, does not lessen our obligation to that duty.—For whatever danger there is, God foresaw it, but yet did not see meet to guard against it.—Shall we pretend to be wiser than God? Have we found out better means for securing the honour of his institutions, than the means prescribed and practised by those who were under the infallible guidance of his spirit? Have not attempts of this kind proved the source of the worst corruptions in Popery? Reason has no power to dispense with, or to derogate from the positive laws of God, in pretence of doing them a service.—It is a blasphemous presumption—though it may put on a cloak of humility, to judge that, a sufficient reason to hinder thee from frequent communicating, which our

Lord did not judge a sufficient reason to hinder him from commanding it. "If thou thus judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law but a judge."—Prayer, hearing the word, &c. are not less useful by reason of their frequency—Those who abound in them most, find most benefit in them."

A variety of other mistakes or misapplication of scriptural principles, have also contributed to the neglect of the ordinance.—The supposition that some qualification is necessary to its proper observance, which is not equally so for every other ordinance and christian duty is evidently founded on mistake. If the christian character be not possessed, the difference is small whether we observe or abstain from the ordinances of religion, for "without faith it is impossible to please God,"—and to such are the glad tidings of the kingdom to be proclaimed freely and fully without money and without price, inviting them to have repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and then to attend to whatever the Lord hath commanded them, the things which accompany salvation.

But at the beginning such a thing was perhaps unknown as a professed believer, who was not the member of a church, and an observer of all the ordinances of Christ.

But believers may partake of the Supper in an unworthy, that is, an improper or irreverent manner, and it is to this evil that the language in the xi of Corinthians, seems to apply—Paul is not there so much speaking of the character, or state of feeling of the worshippers, as he is reprehending the grossly improper manner in which they attended to the ordinance.—"In eating" he says "every one taketh before other his own supper—one is hungry and another is full, what have ye not homes to eat and to drink in, or despise ye the church of God," &c. ; this was eating and drinking unworthily, in an irreverent manner and unbe-

coming the ordinance of Christ--The Apostle corrects this abuse by stating the proper manner of observing the ordinance after the example of our Lord--He then adds, wherefore, whosoever after this explanation, "shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty."--

The word translated "damnation" in this epistle on this subject, would seem to be as fully expressed by the ordinary English word, punishment--and the nature of this punishment the Apostles notices, "for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." 1. Cor. xi. 30, but that this had not particular reference to their eternal state, seems evident from what is added, "But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." 32.--

Because christians are required to examine themselves in connexion with observing this ordinance, it is inferred there must be something essentially different in its nature from the other ordinances of the gospel. In 2. Cor. xiii. 5. we are called to examine ourselves in general in reference to our christian character, but in this passage, 1. Cor. xi. 28, it is evident that examination respects the motive and manner of their observing ordinance: Instead of this, it is supposed, that christians must set in judgment on their frames and feelings and if not satisfied with them on all respects to beware of coming to the ordinance--Every thing which deranges the body or perplexes the mind, and interferes with spiritual comfort has thus been brought into conflict with observing this ordinance of the Lord stedfastly--which on the contrary, might prove a means to remove these fears, to strengthen our faith, and supply a motive, to remedy any inconsistencies of temper or conduct, which may assist in preventing christians attending to and enjoying the ordinances of religion.

Many members of a church whenever any thing occurs in the conduct of their brethren to offend them, think themselves at liberty to quit the communion of the church till their difficulties real or imagined, be removed; and to excuse this most unscriptural conduct, as contrary to express precept, as it is to the general spirit of religion, they urge that passage in Matt. 5. 23 “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembereth, that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift.”—In this passage, it is evident that our Lord could not be speaking of the commemorative supper, for it had not then been instituted—But admitting that the case may by analogy, apply to this ordinance, the meaning which is attached to it by the persons of whom we are at present speaking, is directly the reverse of what it contains; the import of the leading clause being quite overlooked—for it is not said, and there rememberest, that *thou* hast ought against thy brother; but that “thy brother hath ought against thee”—It points out the propriety, not of the offended party abstaining from the communion of the church; but of one who has himself done an unkindness, or an injury to his brother losing no time in giving him satisfaction—otherwise, not to consider the ordinance as satisfying his conscience while this plain duty is neglected, and if he does not, the guilt lies with himself. Acting on these benevolent and scriptural principles would prevent much of that irregularity and disregard to all order so dishonouring to religion, and injurious to the brethren. In this way, the passage very much corresponds with the apostolic admonition to the Corinthians, 1. Cor. v. 8. “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

A difficulty of another nature is sometimes stated against the practice of weekly communion which is, that as churches are often destitute of pastors, such churches could not then stately attend to it; the persons making this objection of course considering that it would be improper for any one to administer the ordinance but an ordained pastor; admitting the justness of this conclusion, it can be no argument for churches not attending to it every Lord's day, when practicable — But as the difficulty alluded to, is of frequent occurrence, it becomes practically important, that we may act in faith, to know what the Bible directs as our duty in such cases, for as it would be highly presumptuous and criminal for any one to attend to any ordinance, in circumstances, wherein the word of God forbids it; so it evidently would be equally so, for churches to neglect and set aside so important an institution as the Lord's Supper, for unscriptural reasons, merely of man's devising. — A learned writer on this subject observes, "what they can conceive to be in that ordinance either in the blessing or giving of thanks which accompanies it, or in the distribution of the bread and wine among the disciples, which makes the presence of Elders more necessary to it, than in praise, or prayer or reading, or mutual exhortation, &c. it is hard to say; few principles of scripture seen more plain than this; that there is no church of Christ, where the disciples do not meet together on the first day of the week, to break bread; now if they cannot lawfully do this without Elders, they never can have Elders, and never can be a church. For scriptural Elders never were co-eval with the church, to the oversight of which they were called, but were brethren, proved in a course of previous walking together as a christian church, and found to be fitted for the service; and is it not inconsistent, that a church destitute of Elders is precluded from observing the Lord's Supper, un-

less visited by Elders of another church? the Elders of one church not being officially Elders of another."—*Thoughts on Religious Establishment.*

We shall only further quote the sentiments of Mr. Fuller on this particular point, as his character and intimate knowledge of scripture renders him a competent judge in a subject of this nature, and as his impartiality in that opinion none can doubt, seeing it was opposed to the prevailing practice of himself and his intimate christian friends, with whom he was in connection—It is contained in his life by Morris.—*Boston Edition, p. 286.*

“Propriety of administering the Lord’s Supper without a minister. When Mr. Fuller was in Edinburgh, in the year 1805, he communed with a newly formed Baptist church in that city, not then provided with a pastor, and at their request, he administered the Lord’s Supper among them—Previous to this, they had been in the habit of commemorating the death of Christ in this ordinance, without a minister, but wished to know his opinion on the subject. I told them, says Mr. Fuller, that probably there were few of my brethren who might be of my mind, but I had long been of opinion, that there was no scriptural authority for confining the administration of the Lord’s Supper to a minister—I had no doubt but that the primitive pastors did preside at the Lord’s table, as well as in the reception and exclusion of members, and in short, in all the proceedings of the church, and that where there was a pastor, he should continue to do so, but that when a pastor died or was removed, the church was not obliged to desist from commemorating the Lord’s death any more than from receiving or excluding members, and that it was as lawful for them to appoint a deacon or any senior members to preside in the one case as in the other.”

It is also sometimes objectionally stated, that churches have not prospered or increased that have



adopted the practices here contended for as scriptural and binding. It were a truth to be deeply lamented, that the mere circumstance of stricter conformity to what seems to be of divine authority in these respects, should produce schism and a scattering of the flock; and if true would only evidence how much even with the professed disciples of the Lord the offence of the cross had not ceased.—But admitting the evil effects alluded to, to arise, a very responsible inquiry rests upon us, whether we be not wholly the cause of them, who oppose sentiments, as peculiar and erroneous, some of which at least (if not convinced that they are obligatory) we must know to be of reasonable doubt and inquiry, and to have been held and enforced as scripturally binding by the wisest and the best of men in every age.

Whether we be not strengthening prejudices in ourselves and creating them in others, who themselves careless or uninformed on the subject, rely implicitly on our esteemed truth and knowledge, by the spirit of our opposition or even by our silence when others are reviled for holding these sentiments.

Is it surprising, that those we seem to denounce as holding erroneous sentiments should be avoided by others, in proportion to our influence over these, and that the causes producing the alienation and schism we profess to deplore and desire to avoid should be misunderstood and misapplied.

Thus besides the seeming disingenuousness of such conduct in itself; may we have made (it is believed often unintentionally) our very character for recititude to subserve the purpose of misleading the unwary, of injuring the feelings and impairing the usefulness of many of the Lord's sincere disciples, whose only desire for themselves and others in the conduct objected to, is to know and consistently to practice what they believe (and what is even often conceded to them) to be scriptural.—Ah how much schism and injustice has been directly or indirectly

promoted by such a spirit of proceeding will never be fully developed, till that great day when all secrets shall be made manifest.

Finally—in contending for any truth of God, let us remember that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”—Unless we have a single eye to his glory; and a real desire to promote the unity of his body, the church—our zeal is a vain show—But with a watchful and jealous fear of ourselves, knowing how prone we are to err, and influenced by such motives conscientiously to assert our principles and consistently to act according to them, is at once our duty, and what love to God and man require of us.

The evils which are too often found among christians, do not so much consist in their difference themselves, as they are connected with their state of mind as regards the word of God, and towards one another, induced by or inducing these differences.

It is indeed possible to be unduly occupied about the externals of religion, while we neglect the weightier matters of the law, and so may we perplex ourselves with the most fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and may wrest them to our own destruction—but this is not the consequence of strictly attending to whatever God has revealed for our faith or practice, but to the partial manner and improper spirit in which we do it. It is the will of God that his people should be holy—To promote holiness he has given to sinners a revelation of free grace, that they believing his exceeding great and precious promises, might be partakers of the divine nature—This end is never lost sight of in any precept he delivers and if we lose sight of it, we can derive little benefit from any of the ordinances which he has enjoined—But keeping this in view for any, to imagine that a diligent and prayerful examination of the scriptural order established

in the first churches by Christ and his Apostles would render them less spiritual, and obstruct their growth in grace, is practical antinomianism. Though every part of divine truth be not in itself of equal importance, all is sanctioned by the same divine authority--Tho' they alone are the true circumcisers who worship God in spirit and in truth, rejoicing in Christ Jesus and having no confidence in the flesh--Yet the simple order and mode of worship appointed by infinite wisdom, may be among the means appointed to preserve our spirituality of mind, and to detect error and to lead the mind to the only true object of all worship.

Christians of all denominations are concerned in the subject of these pages--It belongs not to one party merely, nor can it be considered of trifling import by any conscientious disciple whose desire and prayer is, "make me to understand the way of thy precepts, teach me to do thy will."--Those who profess to teach are especially bound to promote every inquiry relative to the truths and injunctions of the kingdom of Christ--from them the churches expect information. "The Priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season." "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

*End of Essay on Weekly Communion.*



*Omission*—Page 16, insert after "Christ's disciples," and the.

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