

## SERMONS ON THE SACRAMENT.

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*Yet they did eat the passover otherwise than was written.—*  
2 CHRON. xxx. 18–20.

IN the words I have observed three parts—(1.) The condition of the people ; (2.) The prayer of Hezekiah ; (3.) The success.

I began with the first part, and therein took notice—

1. Of the people's indisposition—'Many had not cleansed themselves;' and from thence observed—That when much care is had about the due celebration of a sacrament, yet even then there are many that are unworthy.

2. From the people's practice. Notwithstanding their indisposition they did eat the passover—That many rush upon the ordinances notwithstanding their unpreparedness.

3. I shall observe somewhat from the expression, which noteth the fault of their practice—They ate otherwise than it was written.

The point is—That then we offend in our duties when we do otherwise than is written.

Brethren, God's service is written service ; the rule of our obedience is enrolled, it is upon record : if we go beyond it, or come not up to the fulness of it, we do not do as is 'written;' then we offend in our duties. I shall show, first, how many ways we do otherwise than is written, and then prove and apply the point.

We do it two ways—either when we do too little or too much, when we come short of the rule, or go beyond it. There is a pharisaical superstition and an irreligious profaneness. True obedience is adequate to the commandment ; just measure, no more, nor no less. To do more is will-worship, to do less is laziness. God liketh both tempers just alike ; neither pleaseth, for neither doth 'as it is written.'

1. When we do too much. Brethren, the essentials of a sacrament are set down in the institution ; there is the rule. If we seek to patch it up with some zealous additions and pieces of our own, we go beyond the rule ; we do too much, more than God hath required, and therefore more I am sure than he hath promised to accept. *Quis requisivit?* that is all the thanks that we shall have for it—'Who hath required these things at your hands?' Isa. i. 12.

Ay! but you will say, May we do too much in matters of religion? Can God ever have enough of us?¹

Yes, brethren, there may be too much ; if you go beyond what is written, then there is an *nimium* in religion. But here we must distinguish of the inward part of the duty, which is as the soul to it, and the outward part and presence, which is as the corps and body. The heart of duty is in the heart, it lieth in the right frame of that ; and in respect of this, we can never do enough to put the heart in a right posture to meet God in his ordinances. The virgins can never be too long, never be too much in trimming up their lamps to meet the bridegroom. A worthy communicant can never take pains enough to prepare his untuned heart, that he may come with answerable affections and a becoming spirit, that he may embrace his Saviour in the ordinance. Thus all that we can do is little enough to answer God's expectation : all our righteousness cometh far short of it, and is nothing to him, as it were. Thus never enough. But—

2. In the outward part of duty, in corporal service, and in the pomp and solemnity of his worship, there we may do too much, and that which may be superfluous, more than we need to have done. Nature is mad upon its inventions, and therefore loveth to serve God its own way, to have some crotchets of its own in the outward part of his worship ; therefore God loveth to bridle men up. In this respect they must look at what is written. It is connatural, saith Aquinas, for all men to be led with sensible things ; and therefore in these we usually exceed—*Et datur aliquid superfluum cultui Dei*, as he proveth, 2a. 2d. Quæst. 932 Art.

In the worship of God, which is chiefly spiritual (John iv. 24), there may easily be too much of sense brought in, since we are so apt to be led by sense ; therefore we must have recourse to the rule, to what is written. It is an easy matter to be too pompous in a sacrament, and to sin against the plainness of the ordinance. Duties are like your coats of arms, best when they are plainest, and not overcharged with too many fillings ; or like wine, then most generous and sprightly when it is *plenum sui et immixtum alieni*, pure and uncompounded. God's ordinances look better in their own plain coat, without welt or guard, than in all the trimmings and flourishing gaudiness of our own devices. The sacraments were to feed men's hearts, not to please their eyes or tickle their ears ; and plain bread and wine decently distributed by the minister looketh better, and is more seemly, than copes and altars, and golden candlesticks and basins, and all the apish immolations that have been used of late. Prayer is a great deal more comely without the noise of the organs and the pomp of our great churches than with them. Baptism is more like itself without the cross than with it. And so, in all the service of God, you shall find that is best which is written. And the ordinances are most like to themselves when they are divested of all their outward pomp, and brought home to their native colours, to the plainness of the precept. Brethren, we do not come to the sacrament to feed our eyes, but hearts ; therefore it is best to look to what is written. So ordinances nourish most when they come nearest to their primitive institution. We may, then, do too much here. A sense-pleasing religion is dangerous ; it is too, too much suitable to the bent of natural inclinations ; and that is the reason why

country people are so much taken with these shows; they do not love the native beauty that is in duties half so well as they do the painting of them: they love outward service intolerably, and dote upon it when it goeth beyond what is written. Brethren, it is a miserable thing when you will place religion in that for which you have no ground nor warrant. If you will find yourselves work, and not take that which is cut for you, you know who must pay you your wages. Mark that question of our Saviour to the pharisees, Mat. xv. 3, 'Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your traditions?' Transgress, *παραβαίνειν τὴν ἐντολήν*, that is the phrase; why do ye outpass, outdo the commandment? Ye do not keep to the letter of the statute, but go beyond what is written by your traditions. They did overdo in the outward part. And indeed, hence they had their name of pharisees, as Epiphanius, cited by Spanhemius, testifies; they were called pharisees because of their superabundant will-worship, by which they severed themselves from others. They had their *δευτέρωσεις*, as he speaketh, their alterings and patchings which they set upon the commandments. They were not contented with what was written, but must have their own devices to set off the ordinance, as they think, the better. You see they are forbidden there, and so should you be. God will give you no thanks nor reward for outgoing the rule. If you will perform acceptable service, you must keep to the commandment, not go beyond what is written.

But you will say, Shall we observe nothing in the sacrament but what is in the institution? What will you say, then, to the love-feasts used by the primitive church? for they were founded upon no express command in holy writ; it was a mere custom of the church, to which all the poor people were invited upon the charges of the rich. And what will you say to ceremonies among us? to that of the gesture, suppose standing, sitting, kneeling, or whatever it be? Since the institution and scripture is silent as to these things, either we must use no gesture at all, which is impossible, or go beyond what is written—do something at the ordinance that is not commanded.

I shall answer briefly.

1. In general, that certainly whatever is made a medium, or *modus cultus*, a part or a manner of worship, a part of our duties, a way of serving God, without a warrant from the written word of God, is unlawful, and not to be used. *Omnis cultus sine verbo Dei, idololatria est*, saith Mercer, a papist—All worship without footing in the word of God is but superstition and idolatry. Brethren, it is certainly very hazardous to place any religion in that which we have no precept for from scripture. It is not good to mingle our own chaffy conceits and inventions with the ordinances of God, or in our addresses to God to do anything otherwise than it is written. The Lord would have his ordinances speak a pure language: they must be pure, without mixture. If anything be done at the time of worship, it is good to put a difference between it and the duty, and not alike to make conscience of both. If we think the ordinances not perfect when the patch is gone and the ceremony taken away; if we think the purity of religion is gone, as many ignorant people do—they say they have lost religion when the pomp of it is gone—it is a sign we have served

God otherwise than was written, and placed equal holiness in our customs as God's commands. But—

2. I answer in particular—

[1.] To the matter of love-feasts. It is true the christians of the primitive times had their ἀγάπας, love-feasts, before the sacrament. Warrant in the word of God there is none for these feasts that I could ever see. For the rise and ground of them, some make it to be in imitation of the heathens, who, whensoever they had a general sacrifice (that is, when more than one did sacrifice at a time), and a general sacrifice they had once a year for the whole village, did meet, *μετά τὰς τῶν καρπῶν συγκομιδὰς* (as Aristotle speaks in the 8th Book of his Ethics, chap. 9), after the gathering in of their first-fruits, offering their sacrifices and feasting one another. Now, because the sacrament came nearest to this sacrifice and was most like it, the christians would not come behind them; they would have their feasts too; for it is manifest the primitive christians did come as near the customs of the gentiles as possibly their religion would give them leave. Or some say they were in imitation of the Jews, who did always finish their sacrifices with feasts and banquets, as is manifest out of scripture; and therefore some conceive these love-feasts were after the sacrament; but the former opinion is more probable. Again, some think they did this in imitation of Christ, who instituted the sacrament after a full supper; therefore, to express their love one to another, they would have their feasts too. Whether this or that were the cause or rise of it, it matters not much; certain we are there is no ground in scripture for them.

But then you will reply—It is lawful, then, to do many times more than is written, to observe that in our practice which is not prescribed in the institution.

I answer, therefore, further concerning these love-feasts—

1. It is uncertain whether they were lawful or no at that time of the ordinance. It is true, indeed, there is no express prohibition in the scripture against them, and the apostle seemeth rather to reprove the abuse than the use of them; but yet, if you mark it, there is nothing said to encourage the Corinthians to continue them, but rather to give them over, it being but a thing of their own devising, since it was so much abused; for you shall see the apostle speaks somewhat slightly of them; he calleth it their 'own supper,' 1 Cor. xi. 21; that is, a supper of their own devising. He would be sure to set it far enough from the ordinance; it should not claim kin of that, and fetch its descent as high as the Lord's supper; it was their supper — 'every one taketh his own supper.' Besides, in ver. 22, that seemeth to condemn the very use of them: 'Have ye not houses to eat and drink in?' Cannot ye feast at other times? Besides, the apostle Jude speaketh very meanly of them too: Jude 12, 'These are spots in your love-feasts.' He doth not say 'in the love-feasts,' as being an approved, received, grounded custom; but ἐν ἀγάπαις ὑμῶν, 'in your love-feasts;' they are not Christ's feasts, but yours; feasts of your own appointment. But besides, if it be not plain out of the word of God, yet certainly much language may be fetched out of the works of God; for you see he blasted this custom

of theirs by his providence. As soon as ever it was begun amongst them it was corrupted, and within a little while after, it so stank in the nostrils of men that it was altogether given off. It was abused to riot, and excess, and contempt of the poor in the apostle's time as soon as ever it was set up, and afterward no doubt it grew worse; and therefore the church left it off, God providing by his providence that we should only know the name of it and no more. Therefore we may guess it was not very pleasing to God, because he suffered it to rot so timely.

Again, it was no way, as I conceive, a fitting custom for communicants to come with a full gorge and a clogged stomach to the elements. You know we are most apt to feel the comfort of the creature when we are hungry, and so then also most likely to be sensible of that spiritual nourishment which is signified by the comfort of the creature. Therefore, all these things considered will make us suspect that custom, that it was but a will-worship, an innovation of theirs, and that the thing itself was not warrantable. You know what Abraham said to God: Gen. xviii., 'Far be it from thee to slay the righteous with the wicked.' So say I, Far be it from me to confound a righteous custom with the wicked abuse of it; yet these things will make it uncertain whether that were a lawful custom or no. But—

2. If the primitive christians did use this custom amongst them, as ignorant people amongst us do their customs, namely, to think the ordinance is no ordinance without them, then they added to God's institution, and did more than was written; they make it a *medium cultus*, and so it is unwarrantable. I have stayed too long upon this question of the love-feasts.

[2.] To the other part of the objection, concerning ceremonies, I answer in a word. So there be no holiness placed in them, these ceremonies may be used in and about duties. (1.) Such as are necessary and profitable, as a gesture in the sacrament; it is impossible but there must be one. (2.) Such as are grave and serious, without pomp and ostentation, not vain and light, but becoming the ordinance; as lifting up the hands in prayer, covering the eyes, or the like. (3.) Such as have no show and suspicion of evil in them, and not apt to be abused by silly and superstitious men. (4.) For the number, they must be as few as possible, for fear lest they entrench upon christian liberty, and be burdensome to tender consciences; and these, too, not violently enforced as parts of duty, nor superstitiously embraced as of a like authority with the ordinance. Briefly, all those that will come within the apostle's rule, *εὐσχημόνως*, and *κατὰ τάξιν*: 1 Cor. xiv. 40, 'Let all these things be done decently and in order.' I should speak more of the nature and use of these, but I am willing to hasten to something that is more practical. Concerning unwarranted ceremonies, there are places in scripture written on purpose, Col. ii. and Gal. v. And of these things more fully, Calvin in his "Institutes," book ii. chap. 7, book iv. chap. 10; Zanchy, and others in divers places. Besides, these ceremonies must be suitable to the end of the ordinance, otherwise it is too much, as Aquinas, cited before. Thus you have this objection answered, and the question stated. And you have seen the first

way wherein men do otherwise than is written—when they do too much ; when they place too much holiness, or bestow too much care and pomp upon the outward part of God's service ; when we dote too much upon a custom, and think the duty no duty without it. As if there were no baptism without the cross, and no communion without kneeling. To go on now—

Secondly, We do otherwise than is written when we do too little, when we come not up to the fulness of the spiritual part of the commandment. Brethren, you will wonder at the expression, yet it is true ; a wicked man had rather bring a thousand bullocks, whole rivers of oil, for sacrifice, than one drachm of faith. The one many times is in our power, the other not. They had rather tear their flesh with whips than rend their hearts with repentance. They cannot endure the inward part of the law ; therefore, in respect of this, they rush upon ordinances otherwise than is written. Pharisee-like, they look only to the titling of mint, and neglect τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου, the ordering of their ways and humbling of their heart. If the law did only tie the outward man, they could love it, they would do as it is written ; but they cannot endure to hear that ' the word of God is quick and powerful, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit,' Heb. iv. 12. They do not love to hear of the spirituality of duty, of taming of spiritual wickedness. They could present their persons to an ordinance, but they do not like that cry of wisdom, ' My son, give me thy heart.' They cannot endure to hear such an invitatory to these holy mysteries as that of the apostle is in Heb. x. 22, ' Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.'

Briefly, if you would know when we do too little in duty, then you were best see what is written concerning duty, what is required about it. (1.) Something about the heart before duty ; (2.) Something in duty ; (3.) Something after it. I shall refer it to these heads—

1. We do otherwise than is written if we do not something about the heart before duty, and that is preparation. The heart must be fitted to meet God in the ordinance. Hezekiah beggeth for none, ver. 19, ' but those that had prepared their hearts to seek the Lord God.' And certainly God will bless none but those that come with prepared hearts to seek him, prepared to seek the Lord. You know, when a man goeth to seek a thing, he fitteth himself with necessities to find it, a candle, and spade to dig for it, if need be ; and he cometh with longing desires to find it. And thus must we do to prepare our heart to seek the Lord. We must come with faith and repentance, and other qualifications, and we must come with a desire to find him. Faith is to clear our eyes, to make us see the presence of God in the ordinance ; and desires will keep up faith to a search, to look after him till we have found him whom our soul loveth, as the spouse speaketh. Therefore, if we would prepare ourselves to seek the Lord, we must furnish our heart with answerable affections, with such a frame of spirit as will find him out. We must come with desires after him, saying, as David, Ps. xciii. 1, ' O God, my God, early will I seek thee ; my soul fainths for thee, my flesh longeth for thee.' A true communicant cleanseth his stomach beforehand, that he may come with an appetite,

that he may relish the fatness and marrow that is here prepared, that Christ's flesh may be meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, John vi. 55. Brethren, thus it is written, and then you eat the passover according as it is written when you thus prepare your hearts, and fit them for the ordinance ; that you come with a longing after it, and desire to seek God in it, when your affections are suitable to the mystery. But of this preparation I must speak hereafter. I am as yet but in the doctrinal part.

2. There is also something to be done about the heart in duty, and that is stirring of it up ; and therefore, if you would come to the rule, to the commandment, you must not scant God in that neither. Many men make conscience of the work and come to the performance, but they do not do it as it is written ; they do not rouse up their spirits, and stir up their hearts while they are receiving, and shake off that drowsy dulness which casts a damp upon their affections. Brethren, it is not the outward presence that maketh a communicant ; for a man may receive, and yet not receive, as it is too often the case. You may not do what God requireth of him. A duty done without life is as a duty not done at all, because it is otherwise than was written and God hath commanded. Mark that expression, 1 Cor. xi. 20, ' When you come into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.' Dull and dead receivers, they only come into one place ; they do not eat the Lord's supper, even when they eat it, because they do not stir up themselves to see the beauty of the Lord in his worship. We come short of the rule if we come not with holy life and activity, with a working, waiting spirit, that will warm our hearts within us, and make them burn under the ordinances. Mark how the church complaineth : Isa. lxiv. 7, ' There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' They were many that prayed there, but they did not stir up themselves in prayer. Many called upon God, but they did not cry to him. The offence of the duty was because it was not performed as it is written, with zeal, care, and ardency of affection. If a mere repetition of words were prayer, if a dead sitting under the word and ordinances were hearing, and if our actual presence at the sacrament were receiving, everybody would do it as it is written, and none would eat the passover otherwise. No, brethren ; the word requireth more of you. Your hearts must be actuated and spirits quickened. You must not only have graces, but exercise them. You must awaken your hearts and souls. The apostle would have Timothy, *ἀναζωπυρεῖν*, 2 Tim. i. 6, to stir up the gift that was in him ; so must a christian at the sacrament, *ἀναζωπυρεῖν*, stir up the graces of God's spirit in him ; he must blow away the ashes from them, and make them glow and sparkle ; he must rouse them up, as you would a little fire in a brand that is ready to go out. Duties are but dead things without this stirring. We are far below what is written if we do not take pains with our hearts, that they may be quickened at the time of performance. See what a qualification James requireth in prayer, chap. v. 16 ; ' fervent and effectual ' it must be ; in the original it is but one word, *δέησις ἐνεργουμένη*, a prayer animated and actuated with zeal, life, and holy fervency, put up with great affection. As in prayer, so in receiving ; a christian's heart should even sweat with bestirring itself

to lay hold upon the Lord. There is an expression, Acts xxvii. 7, 'Instantly serving God day and night.' In the original it is *ἐν ἐκτενείᾳ*, with the forcible putting to of all their might and strength, with their stretched-out strength. Oh! brethren there can never be too much done in respect of the spiritual part of the commandment. Let us not then lag behind, but aspire to the fulness of the precept, that we may do according as is written.

3. And, last of all, if we would not do too little, there is something to be done after duty; and that is recollecting and running over all the carriage of the heart towards God in the duty, and the gracious intercourse that the soul had with God. Brethren, when we strive to keep to the rule, all will be suspected. Christians will think they have never been vigorous enough in their performances, that all is too little to come near the strictness and spirituality of God's law. Therefore they will call their hearts to an account, call themselves before themselves, that they may be humbled for their failings, and thankful for their supplies of grace. They are afraid they have not kept to the rule, therefore they will beg for pardon of their holiest things, and say, as Nehemiah, chap. xiii. 22, 'Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and save me according to the greatness of thy mercy.' Thus you see, brethren, what is required and what is written; what we must do that we may neither go beyond the commandment nor beneath it; that we must not overlash in the outward part, nor come short of the purity and fervency of the inward.

I shall now propose a few reasons, and they are these—

1. Because God loveth to be the appointer of his own services, and can best prescribe the way of his own worship. Now God's way is a revealed way; he hath written his counsel in his word; therefore, if we do otherwise than is written, we offend, because then we appoint our own service, and so are derogatory to God's wisdom, as if he knew not the best way to be worshipped. The very heathens had some glimmerings of this light, that every deity must appoint his own worship; and therefore all their rights and ceremonies were such as they feigned were revealed unto them by some god or another. *Detur enim venia antiquitati*, &c., saith Livy—You must give leave to all men to feign the inspiration of their laws by some god or another. But, brethren, to come to divinity, God loveth to appoint his own service, to meet with a double corruption in us—pride and laziness.

[1.] Pride. We would fain be *ἀντεξούσιοι*, lords of our own actions, and have religion in our own power. And therefore, if men were left alone to themselves, you should see how religion would turn into rites, and all duties into a ceremony; the purity and power of the ordinances would be lost in a pompous sense-pleasing outside. Every man, saith Luther, is born with a pope in his belly. Natural pride would carve out such religion wherein we were most likely to merit.

[2.] But now, again, to meet with our laziness. An heart so disposed likes the outward part of the duty, but careth not for the soul of it; we had rather give the fruit of our bodies for the sin of our souls than be humbled for it: 'Therefore he hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what he doth require,' Micah vi. 6-8. His service is written service to prevent this corruption. Nay, in the time of the law,



when sacrifices and obedience were chiefly corporal, God set a stint to supererogating and the madness of our nature; he descendeth to the very utensils of his house, that men might not serve him after their own devices. God would have but one altar and tabernacle; it had almost stirred up a controversy in Israel to build another, Josh. xxii. 10. If God should trust to our finding, and his service should be measured in our ephah, not weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, what with pride, what with laziness, he would have but a sorry service of it. Naturally we are rather for the paint than the power of religion.

2. God's word is the only rule and judge of our actions. Therefore, seeing God will appoint his own service, as we derogate from God in the first reason, as if he were not wise enough to appoint, so we derogate from the appointment in his word, as if that were not sufficient. The apostle, when he sets the Corinthians right in the receiving of the sacrament, he goeth to the word: 1 Cor. xi. 23, 'For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.' You see he referreth you to the institution. Brethren, God's appointment is written; if you do otherwise than is written, you derogate from his appointment. It is not custom, it is not tradition, but the written word of God. People are much swayed with that, as if that were the rule of obedience; but then they may safely do otherwise than is written. God would have us take nothing upon trust, but go to what is written. Custom otherwise will become master of our faith, and easily entail upon us coldness and formality. If there were not a standard to measure services by, we should see the ordinances quickly lose both power and purity. Their power; for they would be used but for fashion's sake. Their purity; for then the ordinances would not speak a pure language, but like those mongrel children that came of Jewish parents and Ammonitish mothers, Neh. xiii. 24, half in the speech of Ashdod, and half in the Jews' language. There would be a miserable gallimaufrey of God's ordinances and man's devices, a linsey-woolsey religion. Thus without heed hath a cross slipt into baptism, and many fooleries into the Lord's supper. No matter for the ancientness of these things; we must look to what is written. Let others pretend antiquity; our antiquity must be the scripture. It was excellently spoken of him that said, We must not heed what others say who were before us, but what Christ did who was before all. And as sweetly, holy Ignatius, *ἐμοὶ ἀρχαία ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός*—Jesus Christ is my antiquity. Christ must be our antiquity. Ancientness is no warrant for us. An old custom may be an unwritten one; for there is *vetustas erroris*, as well as *antiquitas veritatis*—error may be mouldy, as well as truth be hoary. The cross in baptism I believe is ancient, yet there is no ground for it in the scripture. As our Saviour saith of the matter of divorce: Mat. xix. 8, 'From the beginning it was not so.' And none plead custom for their practice in the ordinance but those that have very little of the power of religion in them.

To apply it now: Is it so that then we offend in our duties when we do otherwise than is written? It serveth then—

*First*, To direct us where to go for information how to perform the

will of God: to the scriptures; see what is required there. In all duties look to the institution, and measure thy practice by it; walk according to that rule, as the apostle's phrase is, Gal. vi. 26. Oh! brethren, natural light will not teach us how to serve God aright. The wisest men in the service of God became vain in their 'iminations, and their foolish heart was darkened,' Rom. i. 21. Nature teacheth us that there is a God; but how he will be worshipped we know not until we search the scriptures and see what is written concerning it. Therefore in every performance look what is required. And here, to press you to it, let me use these arguments—

1. Nothing is accepted of God but what he hath required. The Lord doth not love to humour us in our pride. You know what he said to the men that came with their oblations: Isa. i. 12, 'Who hath required this at your hands?' Why, the Lord himself for matter, though not for manner. And if he did so to them, that did what he required, though not how he required it, certainly he will much more to you, that do not search the records. Try your obedience by the rule; you may offend in matter as well as in manner, for aught you know; and therefore, how likely is it but that you shall be turned away with a *Quis requisivit?*—Who hath required it? There is nothing so displeasing to man as to have his service refused, or to be rejected when he thinketh he pleaseth most. Oh! brethren, if you do not do duty according to God's will, the Lord will reject you, scorn your obedience: Isa. lxvi. 3, 'He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man, and he that sacrificeth a lamb as if he cut off a dog's neck.' True it is the Lord did command these things, to kill an ox, to sacrifice a lamb; but they did not look to the intent, look to the manner; and therefore their sacrifice was but murder and mocking to God, as the killing of a man and the offering of a dog, a ridiculous thing, an abominable thing to offer to the Lord. Brethren, it is so here; he that receiveth the sacrament unworthily is guilty of murder, of the greatest murder, of crucifying the Lord of life: the Jews' curse lights upon them, the blood of the Lord Jesus is upon their head; the apostle saith so, 1 Cor. xi. 27. The matter is good, the receiving is required; but the receiving unworthily, not in God's manner, that is that maketh it abominable. You do not do it after the Lord's will and in his way; and therefore he will cry, Who hath required it? You shall be as welcome to him as you can expect to be to a loving father whose only son you have killed. Oh! brethren, the Lord will not be served after your way; though you hit right upon the matter of obedience, yet you have not done what is written for the manner, and therefore shall not be accepted. As you would know, then, that the Lord should have respect to your offerings, do you look to the commandment; see what the Lord hath required of you. Reason cannot teach you; our foolish heart is darkened. Custom is but a bad guide; as I have done these many years. You know it is the description of a false fast, Zech. vii. 3. The practice is but a bad rule; the most may err. Go to the word of God, look what is written; and then the Lord will accept the service, when thou strivest to come near the commandment. See what is punctually required, and then diligently set thyself a-work. The Lord will accept weak en-

deavours, so they be suitable to the command ; so you do but endeavour to perform what is written, the Lord will accept it more than all the pomp and outside of those that would supererogate in the outward part ; so thou dost not hand-over-head rush upon the ordinance, but weighest thy services in the balance of the sanctuary, lookest to what God requireth ; though thou dost not come near it but in thy purposes and desires, the Lord will accept thee. All that the faithful could say for themselves in the prophet was, ‘ The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee,’ Isa. xxvi. 8. And all that Nehemiah could urge for the best Jews was that they did desire to fear God’s name, Neh. i. 11. I say, See thou hast prepared to meet the Lord in his own ordinances, and wouldest fain do what is written : remember the death of the Lord Jesus after the due order and right manner, then the Lord will be pleased with thy sacrifice. But if thou comest with unwritten worship, pompous stuff, with a common lazy heart, and not looking to the ends of a sacrament, to the grounds of thy obedience, because thou dost otherwise than is written, the Lord will have no regard to thee and to thy sacrifice. God accepts but what he requireth, and he will not own the requiring of that service which is not agreeable to his word for the manner, though the matter of it be good. Who hath required ? As if the Lord should say—Let him that hath required accept. Thus you see, as we tender the pleasing of God by what we do, we should labour to be directed in the nature of the duty and manner of performance. Look to what is written.

2. The next motive is this, it is the only way to settle the conscience. The scripture is a sure rule ; and when a man walketh by the rule, he need not fear. What is the reason many are troubled ? They are afraid they do not duties after the right manner. Why, brethren, look to the word ; see what is required there. If your service hath the truth of the commandment, though it doth not reach the measures of it ; if you strive after so much as is required, and have this in your desires to do what is written, you will find the Lord will accept you. And indeed, if they would often view the nature of the duty, it would be better with them.

There are but two things trouble the conscience in matter of performance—scrupling what is lawful, and doubting what is acceptable. Now, if we would go to the rule, the conscience would be settled in both particulars.

[1.] For matter of scruple, the word of institution, if it be consulted with, will clear all. I know what is written there, and I am bound to look upon no other thing as a *medium cultus*, as a part of worship. I know what to do, what to forbear ; the Lord hath showed us his will ; and therefore the conscience is every way freed from scrupulous perplexities. The word is a clear, full rule, that satisfieth every man. The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, Prov. vi. 23 ; and every christian taketh it home to direct him in particular, saying as David, Ps. exix. 105, ‘ Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.’ Brethren, naturally we have a dark, misty heart, and therefore may well scruple the way ; but when we take a lantern with us, we may see we are in the path, and so walk on the more boldly : ‘ So shall I not be ashamed, for I have respect to the commandment,’ Ps.

cxix. 6. We should not be wavering and so unestablished if we would often look to the rule of obedience; there is enough to remove scruples.

But you will say—The word of institution is not so full, but, though we consult it, there may scruples remain; as to instance in circumstances, and, to specify them, about the gesture in worship, about the time of receiving, &c.; the scripture doth not determine, and therefore we may scruple still.

I answer—Something for clearing of this I have already said in the doctrinal part, and therefore shall add but little now, only for the circumstances specified.

(1.) Touching the gesture, it is of so small concernment that the scripture doth not descend to determine the fittest, whether standing, or sitting, or kneeling. We are left to our liberty, and only stinted by the general rules of charity and conveniency of gestures; so there be no holiness placed in them, and so made parts of worship, any are lawful. The people of God have used many gestures in the service of God never prescribed in the law, and yet cannot be said to do otherwise than was written, because they had not any superstitious conceit of them, to think the service any whit the more acceptable or effectual. Those solemn gestures accompanied in reading the law, Neh. viii. 5, 6, of the people's standing up and bowing their heads, and worshipping with their faces to the ground, were not prescribed in the law; and yet might be well used, though it be nowhere found in the books of Moses why they should be used. Only idolatrous and superstitious gestures, such as do not suit with the nature of the ordinances, are forbidden.

(2.) For the times of receiving, the scripture is not punctual in that, how often we should do it; but the apostle's *ὡσάκις* implieth a *πολλάκις*: 1 Cor. xi. 25, 'As often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink this cup,' implieth that it should be very often. So for prayer, 'pray continually,' 1 Thes. ii. 15. The Spirit of God doth not assign special times for these duties, but generally shows that we should do it as often as we can, very often. The Lord doth not tie his servants to such times and hours; it may be their spirits may be unfit then; but they should show their obedience to God by coming every time they may have it. Therefore you see there is no reason for scruple; if we look to the institution, we shall be rightly informed. Well, therefore, now to press this part of the motive. As thou wouldst have thy conscience freed from its scrupulousness, that thou mayest know what is lawful and what is seasonable, that thy soul may not be as a skein of ruffled silk, perplexed and entangled, search the commandment, look to that. When we are clearly informed about our duty, and have a right knowledge of the will of God, we may the more freely set about the performance; otherwise we shall sin in manner, Rom. xiv. 14. This is the first part.

[2.] Doubting what is acceptable. What is the reason the people of God are so dejected, and do so doubt of the acceptance of God? It is because they are not acquainted with the nature of the ordinances. Many receive no comfort by the sacraments, because they do not know the use and benefit of them. They do not look into the scriptures to

see what God hath promised to accept. The promise and the commandment are so indissolubly knit together, that whilst we keep to the rule, why should we doubt but that the Lord will be well pleased with our sacrifices: Heb. xi. 4, 'Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.' *Πλειονα*; it does not signify *gratiorem* only, but *uberiorem*, a more beseeching sacrifice: he came nearer the rule, and therefore he had a testimony of his person and performance. Cain did not come to the rule, which was to give the tenth part of the first-fruits, *quod offerebat non recte dividebat*; and therefore he cannot find such comfort. When christians strive to keep to the rule, then they obtain a witness.

But you will say—Doth the searching of the commandment settle the conscience? It filleth it with doubting rather; for when we see the strictness of the institution, and how far we come short of it, we are ready to doubt that we do too little, less than God requireth.

I answer briefly—No; the true soul can comfort itself in the sincerity of its desires; for though God accounts nothing little that springeth from an upright heart, yet they think all is too little because they cannot perfect holiness in the fear of God. And indeed the peace of conscience ariseth hence; because—

(1.) They meet God in his own way. Having searched the institution, they know what God requireth; and therefore will not pay the debt of obedience with their own devices; they offer him a pure worship. Though they cannot be perfect in their services, yet they will make a right choice, serve God after his own manner; not make it up in the pomp what is wanting in the power of religion, as many do; but look principally to the inward part, to the truth of religion. Brethren, he is a better debtor, and more to be trusted, that payeth the creditor in true money, than another that overlasheth in counterfeit coin. One diamond is better than a whole rope of Bristol stones. It is somewhat in God's account when we take the right way to please him, when we love pure ordinance, and had rather serve him for conscience' sake than custom. It is a comfort to a poor soul when he doth but go to the rule; and though otherwise, if he would serve God after man's way, he might do better, yet he would rather bring written service. Certainly, when we submit to God's appointment, the simplicity and plainness of his ordinances, it is a comfort; whereas, on the other side, when men serve the Lord after their own fashion, and satisfy their conscience with the outward part of worship, like those that the Lord speaketh of, Isa. xxix. 13, 'Their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men,' they usually feel no comfort, get no benefit by the ordinances, only lull their consciences asleep by them. All that they get by duty is a false peace, not quickening grace; pride in their excellences, rather than humility for their wants and failings.

(2.) There is comfort in it that they do it upon a good ground. They present true service with a true heart. They do what is written because it is written. They do not come to the sacrament as those Jews kept their fast, Zech. vii. 3, because they had done so for these many years; or as Ezekiel's hearers, chap. xxxiii. 31, 'They come and sit before me as my people.' Not for fashion's sake, because the people of God in the country where they live use to do so; but because God

hath commanded, instituted such an ordinance, and in his holy word invited them. They do it in obedience to God. But of this more by and by.

(3.) They may comfort themselves because they bend all their strength and power to come up to the fulness of the commandment. Though they cannot receive as they ought, yet they will not allow themselves in any laziness. Therefore, before duty they strive to seek God in the ordinance. In duty, they strive to meet God in the ordinance; after the duty, they bless God for admitting them, and humble themselves for their failings. They account nothing too much, and therefore they know God accepteth their little. They use their best endeavour, and therefore there is nothing that may trouble them when they search the rule; for there they know the Lord will accept their endeavours. And if they offer a better sacrifice than Cain, that is, if they come with a better heart, in a better manner, than worldly men (for they will be sacrificers too), and their desires are to the remembrance of God and a due celebration of the communion, that they know the Lord accepteth. But, on the contrary, without a due knowledge of the nature of obedience, the grounds and ends of it, there can be no such comfort. Therefore, as thou dost tender the settling of thy conscience, as thou wouldst not have it entangled with scruples, divided and distracted with a double mind—a wavering double-minded man, *διψυχος*, that is St James's word: James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways;' now of the thought that thou doest well, and then again thinking that thou shalt not be accepted, and so banded and whirried between hopes and fears; seek the word, go to the canon, 'to the law, and to the testimony,' Isa. viii. 20, that thou mayest be directed. Christians are perplexed many times, because they do not ask counsel of the word of God so often as they should. So I have done with the first use.

*Use 2.* Is it so? It serveth then to press us to see whether we do perform duty aright or no. Do we do it as it is written? Here is a mark to try it by, whether we make the word of God both the rule and the ground of our obedience. Everybody will answer, Yea, to the question. And therefore I must a little amplify and take abroad the trial. And therefore, that you may not deceive yourselves, and think that you do no otherwise than is written, I shall lay down a few marks by which you may discover it whether you make the word the ground and rule of your duties. If you do so, then—

1. You will use the ordinances in faith and obedience. This is a principal rule to try yourselves by. And certainly if men would deal impartially with themselves in it, they might know whether they have had a due recourse to the word or no.

But you will say—What is it to use the ordinances in faith and obedience?

For answer, you must know, that every ordinance of God hath a word of institution, which word of institution hath two parts—a command, and a promise; as the Lord's supper, the word, prayer, ever you shall find it hath a word of institution: and every word of institution hath a command and a promise. Now we use the ordinances in faith and obedience when we give obedience to the command and

credence to the word of promise ; when we look to the grounds of an ordinance, and the ends of it ; that God hath instituted it, and to what end ; what benefit we receive thereby, that we may have the commandment for our rule, and the promise for our comfort, and to encourage us with hopes of good success. I shall handle them a little severally, and then give you the drift of the mark.

[1.] We must do it in obedience to the command ; that is, when we set about the duty, because the Lord hath required it of us. So that if it be asked why we do this, and observe that service, as it was said concerning the passover, ‘Why do you observe this?’ Exod. xii. 26, you may give this for a reason—Because God hath commanded us. If you should ask your souls why you do come to the sacrament, your hearts may answer—Because the Lord hath appointed this ordinance for the strengthening of my faith ; because it is a part of the homage that I owe to my creator ; he hath commanded me thus to remember the Lord’s death, 1 Cor. xi. 25.

[2.] We must do it in faith. Look to the promises, that God will make them good unto us, that we shall feel the fruits of the ordinance in our own souls. The acts of faith are three—

(1.) To make us confident that the Lord can make good what he hath promised ; that his body shall be meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, though we see but the plain outward elements. The heart must be constrained to acknowledge God’s power to work by the sacraments ; and say, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean : Lord, it is thy pleasure to appoint this ordinance, for the sealing of the pardon of my sins, the strengthening of my faith, and for the effectual remembering of the death of Christ to my poor soul ; and if thou wilt, thou canst make good all these things unto me.

(2.) It must kindle a desire in our hearts after the accomplishment of the promises, that the Lord would make good to our souls the mercies conveyed by this ordinance. There must be an holy thirst and longing after the benefit of them

(3.) It must stay the heart, and make it wait the leisure of God until he doth make it good unto us. Though we do not see the Lord working as yet for the sealing of the pardon of our sins, the spiritual nourishing and strengthening of our souls, yet there is a command to keep up our obedience and faith, to keep up our expectation. Just as Peter in the Gospel, when Christ bid him let down the net at such a side of the ship, and thou shalt take some fish, Luke v. 5 : the command and the promise is there : ‘Master,’ saith he, ‘I have toiled all night, and caught nothing ; yet at thy command I will let down the net.’ So, brethren, when you have toiled a great while in expectation of the benefit of the ordinances, and cannot sensibly find any, yet if then at Christ’s command—‘howbeit at thy command’—that shall keep up your obedience (and because of Christ’s promise that he should catch fish, he would believe still, and desire that the Lord would accomplish his promises) ; so, because of the Lord’s promise annexed to the duty, you doubt not but the Lord will work for you good in his due time ; for you are confident he is able, and you have desired that he would. This is to do it in faith and obedience. Thus in any duty, as of hearing of the word ; as Isa. lv. 3, there is a word of institution

for the hearing of the word and the promise annexed thereunto: 'Hear, and your soul shall live.' The word of command, 'Hear;' the promise, 'And your soul shall live.' Now, we must hear in obedience to that command; and sue out that promise, by being confident God is able, faithful, willing to make it good; by desiring that he would enliven our souls, and, in the conscionable use of the ordinances, wait upon his good pleasure when he will accomplish it.

Examine, therefore—Do you thus use the ordinances in faith and obedience, at Christ's command, and looking to him for the supply of grace that he hath promised to convey by that ordinance? and wilt thou wait for them, and art thou confident the Lord will be as good as his word? It is a sign that thou dost duties as it is written, that thou hast looked into the institution, and hath conformed to it. If thou canst in thy heart answer for thy appearance at this holy table, that it is because the Lord commanded thee hither, in expectation of such mercies as the Lord hath made over to this ordinance, and doth long for and desire the accomplishment of them, it is a sign that thou dost it in faith and obedience.

2. The next mark is, if thou dost make the word the rule and ground of thy obedience, thou wilt be careful of the purity of the ordinances, that nothing may be mixed with them but what is in the word, in the institution. There will be no doting upon old customs, no superstitious hankering after ceremonies, unwritten rites, that have no ground in the word of God; but thou wilt be willing that all should be gone and done away. Certainly those that are so ready to quarrel for some old fond custom, it is a sign they little prize the institution of the ordinances; they do not search that. Ignorant men, that are least versed in the word of God, are most ceremonious. Their very religion is ceremony, and their duty is but a custom. Certainly if they did it for conscience' sake, they would have looked to the command that bindeth the conscience; and then the love of these things would not have crept upon them, and have possessed their souls. What is the reason many are so disquieted now, when some things are taken away which they were formerly accustomed to? Oh! brethren, they do not make the word the ground and rule of their obedience. Their very religion is custom, that which they have received by tradition, not what was delivered to them in the institution; and therefore they never look to the mixture and tampering of human devices with God's prescription. They do not care for pure ordinances.

Therefore the rule to examine by is how thou standest affected to the purity of God's worship. Thou wouldest fain have nothing done but what thou hast some warrant for; nay, thou wouldest have had no word used which may be an occasion of corrupting the worship of God. Priest and altar do offend, because when such terms are used he beginneth to fear a sacrifice, a mass, to answer them. They have gotten a pure lip; as the Lord saith, 'He would turn to the nations a pure language, a pure lip.' And in another place, 'I will take away the names of Baalim out of their mouth, and thou shalt call me no more Baali, but Ishi,' Hosea ii. 16, 17. They would not have any monuments of superstition left, not a paganish or a popish word in and about the ordinances. Though Baali signifieth Lord, yet God



will not be called so, because that was their term for their idol. And, saith David, Ps. xvi. 4, 'I will not take the names of their God in my lips.' See that command also of Moses, Deut. xxiii. 13, 'And in all things that I have said unto you, be circumspect, and make no mention of the names of other gods: let it not be heard out of thy mouth.' They are careful that such words shall not be used as have a show of idolatry; they will have the Lord's service expressed the Lord's own way. Unwary speaking hath been cause of much corruption; and therefore they are so careful to have things done according to the word, that they do not love such names and words as custom and superstition hath a long time used about the ordinances. You shall see, Num. xxxii. 38, it is said there that the Israelites obtained 'Nebo and Baal-meon (their names being changed) and Shibmah, and gave other names to the cities which they built.' Brethren, these were idolatrous names; their cities were called after their idols. Baal was an idol, Judges vi. 31; and Nebo was an idol: Isa. xlvi. 1, 'Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts.' They change not Shibmah; but Nebo and Baal-meon, such names as were scandalous. So they that are truly careful of coming to the written word, they would have no odd names continued; they would not have the Lord's day nicknamed Sunday. They have a pure lip, and would have no unbecoming word used in the worship of God. Search by this.

*I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.*—CANT. ii. 3.

IN this verse two things are observable—(1.) Christ's commendation; (2.) The church's experience.

1. Christ's commendation, in the beginning of the verse, where he is compared to an apple-tree among the trees of the forest. Some trees yield no fruit at all, as cedars, firs, and elms; some only yield fruit for swine, as oaks bear acorns. The apple-tree beareth variety of comfortable fruit for men. To this we see Christ is compared, and not to an ordinary apple-tree, but to the tree of life, which is in the midst of the orchard and paradise of God, Rev. ii. 7. And mark, in the context, how Christ and the church are bestowing honour upon one another. Christ avoucheth the church to be the best of all assemblies; and the church avoucheth Christ to be the best of all Gods. The bridegroom beginneth and saith, ver. 2, 'My love is as a lily among thorns,' and the bride answereth, 'My beloved is as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood.' *Quis sicut te?* is twice used in scripture of God and of the church, Micah vii. 17, with Deut. xxxiii. 29. The text falleth in with the latter part—the church's eulogy to Christ. Other trees yield little comfort to a poor fainting creature travelling in the wilderness; but Christ is an apple-tree, comfortable for shade, pleasant for fruit.

2. The church's experience—*I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.* The commendation is built on the church's experience. They that have tasted and felt how