

GOSPEL CHURCH

P O R T R A Y E D,

A N D H E R

O R D E R L Y S E R V I C E

P O I N T E D O U T—

A

S E R M O N,

Delivered in the City of Philadelphia at the Opening
of the BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

O C T O B E R 4, 1791.

BY O L I V E R H A R T, A. M.

Pastor of the Baptist Church in Hopewell, New-Jersey.

Thou Son of Man, shew the House to the House of Israel.

Ezek. xliiii. 10.

Let all things be done decently, and in Order. 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

T R E N T O N:

P R I N T E D B Y I S A A C C O L L I N S.

M. DCC. XCI.

1791

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P R E F A C E.

TH E following Discourse makes its appearance from the press, at the earnest solicitations of many who heard it from the pulpit; particularly of Messieurs Nathaniel Fitz-Randolph, James Hunt and Zebulon Stout, who have voluntarily offered to sustain the whole expense of its publication. Notwithstanding which, it should have remained among the author's private papers, had he not conceived it calculated, with the blessing of GOD, to be of real service to the Churches of JESUS CHRIST.

Hopewell, New-Jersey,

Nov. 22, 1791.

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S E R M O N, &c.

II. CHRONICLES xxix. 35. ult.

*So the Service of the HOUSE of the LORD
was set in Order.*

A SMALL acquaintance with the history of the kings of Israel may serve to shew how variously they stood affected towards GOD, and the things of religion. Some zealously adhered to the law of Moses, and promoted the worship of JEHOVAH their GOD, to the utmost of their power. Others were not less zealous for the polytheism of the heathen, “ who sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree,” to their idols. Even the temple of the LORD was profaned by altars erected therein, for this service.

THUS there was a continual building up and pulling down, as it were in rotation, and generally in quick succession. The son frequently overturned all that the father had done respecting religious worship. Rueful effects these of absolute monarchy, and the still more deplorable consequences of binding religion in the chains of civil polity.

HEZEKIAH, although the son of a wicked father, and the father of a most flagitious son, was a truly

truly pious prince; and a great reformer. He entered upon his government, by restoring the worship of GOD, as his first and principal object; and ceased not, until the work was completed. He opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them—called the Priests and Levites to their service—cleansed the temple—replaced the holy vessels before the altar—offered a sin-offering, to make an atonement—set the musicians to sing praises in their place, and offered burnt-offerings in abundance—

“ So the service of the house of the LORD was set
“ in order.”

By the *house* of the LORD we are here to understand, that magnificent structure in Jerusalem, built originally by king Solomon, for divine worship, called THE TEMPLE, unto which the twelve tribes were to repair for the worship of GOD, at least, three times in the year.

THE *service* of this house, consisted in the strict observance of all the rituals contained in the levitical or ceremonial law. But as the whole of this service was typical of better things, it was abrogated on the coming of CHRIST; and the temple itself was totally destroyed by Titus Vespasian. What then! Hath the LORD had no house for divine service, since that period? He has; the christian church has ever since been the house of the LORD, and will continue, as such, until the end of time. By the christian church, I mean saints, or true believers in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, properly modified; and not a mere edifice erected by human hands, for the service of GOD. To call such a structure the church, is a grand solecism, if not a prostitution of language. It is, however, diametrically opposite to the phraseology
of

of sacred scripture, as appears from 1 Tim. 3. 15—
“ That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave
“ thyself in the house of GOD, which is the church of
“ the living GOD”—compared with Heb. 3. 6—“ But
“ CHRIST as a son over his own house, whose house are
“ we”—We, who believe in CHRIST, to the saving
of the soul. Thus it appears, that christians compose
the house of the LORD, under the gospel dispensation.

THE *service* of this house comprehends the whole of
social, publick, gospel worship, as pointed out in the
holy Bible. Good *order* is essentially necessary to an
acceptable discharge of this service. The LORD made
a breach on the Israelites, “ for that they fought him
“ not after the due order.” * It is a mere burlesque
on religious worship, to attend on it, in a confused,
clamorous, frantick manner, as some do; insomuch
that the house of GOD among them, seems to be me-
tamorphosed into a bedlam. It is an apostolick injunc-
tion, “ Let all things be done decently, and in order.” †
“ GOD is not the author of confusion.” And we can-
not suppose it agreeable to the divine mind, that the
church should be like the grave, “ without any or-
der.” ‡

YOU need not be reminded, my brethren, that the
exprefs design of your present meeting, is to attend to,
and set in order the service of the house of the LORD.
May you be influenced by the same spirit and temper of
mind, which actuated good king Hezekiah; and may
your attempts be crowned with equal success; then will
the words of our text most beautifully apply—

“ So the service of the house of the LORD was set in
“ order.”

THAT

* 1 Chron. xv. 13. † 1 Cor. xiv. 40. ‡ Job x. 22.

THAT I may contribute my small mite towards the good work, I shall attempt, as GOD may assist,

I. To describe the house of the LORD, as built upon the gospel plan.

II. SHEW, when it may be said that the service of this house is set in order, or what is necessary thereunto.

I. I AM to describe the house of the LORD, as built upon the gospel plan, or, in other words, portray a true gospel church.

My business is somewhat similar to that of the prophet Ezekiel: * To “show the house to the house of Israel, that they may measure the pattern,” and act agreeable thereto. I shall aim at drawing descriptive characters from the unerring rule of sacred truth, and shall begin,

I. WITH the *foundation* of the LORD's house. We may be sure that such a structure is well founded; and this will appear to be a fact, when we consider, that the foundation on which the church is built, is the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Under this character he is frequently spoken of in the Old and New Testaments. By implication, CHRIST is held forth as the foundation in the first declaration of gospel grace—“The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.” Which imports, that, notwithstanding Adam's fall, GOD would have a church in the world, and that this church should be founded on CHRIST, as an incorruptible, impregnable basis. But through mercy, we are not left to such abstruse, figurative hints

hints only. The evangelical prophet is more explicit—
 Ifai. 28. 16—“ Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD,
 “ Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a
 “ tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure founda-
 “ tion.” The testimony of the apostle Paul is not
 less express—1 Cor. 3. 11—“ Other foundation
 “ can no man lay, than that is laid, which is JESUS
 “ CHRIST.” And CHRIST himself hath confirmed
 the point. When Peter made that noble profession,
 “ Thou art CHRIST, the son of the living GOD,”
 our LORD replied, “ Upon this rock will I build
 “ my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail
 “ against it.”

THIS then is the foundation of the church; and
 a glorious one it is. For solidity, splendour, incorrupt-
 ibility, and intrinsic worth, it far exceeds any of
 those precious stones, said to be laid as foundations
 of that “ wonderful city,” spoken of in the book of
 Revelation.

FROM the foundation, I pass on,

2. To speak of the *materials* with which this house
 of the LORD is built.

WE may reasonably suppose, that the materials which
 compose the edifice, will bear some analogy to the founda-
 tion on which they are laid. It would be a great
 blunder in architecture, to raise a superstructure, com-
 posed of raw, uncultivated materials, as taken from the
 quarry or forest, upon an elegant and magnificent founda-
 tion. To the honour of the proprietary founder,
 such a mistake has not here taken place. I confidently
 assert therefore, that the materials with which the house
 of the LORD is built, consist only of persons who are
 B regenerated,

regenerated, converted and sanctified. Or, in a more comprehensive style, of those who are faints. Of what advantage could persons of any other description be, in the church of CHRIST? Influenced as they are, by carnal principles, they could never cordially promote the spiritual interests of the REDEEMER'S kingdom. The bias of their minds is repugnant thereto. Like the profane kings of Israel, they would aim at overturning all the labours of their pious progenitors, and at counteracting the best efforts of their holy cotemporaries. In short, they could be considered in no other light than mere excrescences, which would render the whole body a distorted, putrid chaos. What would you think of a body, consisting of a number of dead limbs or members, in close contact with a living head? Would you not conclude, that unless the members could be animated, the head must die too? Horrid idea! which cannot here apply.

“CHRIST is the head of his body the church.” A living and life-giving head; therefore the members of his mystical body must be living faints, and not dead finners. True, if we view them, in their natural state, they wear the most wretched and unpromising aspect; but if we consider them as fit materials for the heavenly building, they are hewed, squared and polished. “Renewed in the spirit of their mind.” In short—totally changed. “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the LORD.”*

ALTHOUGH I think we might safely rest the topic on these rational scriptural arguments, I shall nevertheless adduce some invincible scripture testimonies to confirm it. The declaration of CHRIST shall lead the van. He assures us, with a double note of affeuration,

* Ephes. v. 8.

affévation, that “unless a man be born again, he
“ cannot see, or enter into the kingdom of GOD.”
Now, if by the kingdom of GOD the gospel church
is intended, or if it is included in the idea, (and
who can say it is not?) then this scripture amounts
to a positive proof of the point.

THE testimony of the apostle Peter, I apprehend, is
also unexceptionably clear: “Ye also, as lively stones,
“ are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood,
“ to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to GOD,
“ by JESUS CHRIST.” Which words are full to
the purpose, and need no comment.

THE apostle Paul addressed his first epistle to the
Corinthians, in the following words: “Unto the
“ church of GOD which is at Corinth, to them
“ that are sanctified in CHRIST JESUS, called to
“ be saints.”

I SHALL add one testimony more, from Luke,
the faithful historian, which proves to a demon-
stration, that truly gracious souls were the only proper
materials of the church, in the apostolick age—
“And the LORD added to the church daily *such*
“ *as should be saved.*” Let those look well to it,
who would add persons of another description.

HAVING taken a view of the foundation of the
church, or house of the LORD, and pointed out
what kind of materials are to be built thereon,
we proceed,

3. To consider the *erection* of this house; or,
in other words, describe the *constitution* of a gospel
church.

NOTHING

NOTHING is more certain than that the church, or mystical body of JESUS CHRIST, has experienced a variety of transmutations or modifications in the world. In the primitive ages, the church was patriarchal. Every pious father was a priest in his family, and might be said to have a church in his house. This mode continued until the giving of the law; when the church became national, and remained so until the death of CHRIST; when there was a change of the priesthood; and "of necessity a change of the law" * respecting it. This rendered a new modification of the church absolutely necessary; and from this period it became congregational; and will continue so until the second coming of CHRIST. In this view I shall consider the church, in all I have further to say respecting it.

THE materials have already been described. To erect the building these materials must coalesce, or be joined together; for while they continue as detached pieces, (although of the mystical body of CHRIST) they cannot, with any propriety, be termed, a church. They become a gospel church, therefore, by confederation, or mutual compact; in which, "they give up themselves to the LORD, and to one another, by the will of GOD;" covenanting by grace divine to discharge all the duties incumbent upon them, in this gospel relation; and to "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameless." Thus they become a body corporate, under CHRIST the head, "from which all the body by joints and bands, having "nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of GOD" †—"in whom
" all

* Heb. vii. 12. † Coloss. ii. 19

“ all the building fitly framed together, groweth
 “ unto an holy temple in the LORD.” *

THE number necessary to constitute a church, is not ascertained; but as CHRIST hath promised his gracious presence “ with two or three, gathered together in his name,” if this may be applied to the gathering of a church, (and I see not why it may not) it must indicate that a few may compose a church, even supposing these two or three are a certain, for an uncertain number. They should not however be so numerous, as not to be able, commodiously, to meet together, for divine service, in one place. †

THE house being erected, let me crave your attention, for a few minutes,

4. AT the *door*. Behold, it stands wide open, as though it invited weary travellers to come in. But of what, think you, is it made? a pearl! yes, “ A goodly pearl”—of extraordinary magnitude—of matchless brilliancy—and of inestimable worth.—This pearl was generated in the ocean of eternity—came down from the third heaven—lay nine months concealed in a sacred repository, and was afterwards exposed to publick view, in various places, for more than thirty years. But, strange to say, was deemed a counterfeit gem; and despised by all, except a few singular characters, who, through the medium of some rare opticks, discovered its splendour and admired its excellence.

IT is *Incaruate Deity*. Read this inscription—consider by whom it was written—and it will confirm all I have said. “ I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” †

I ADMIRE

* Ephes. ii. 21. † I Cor. xi. 19. Chap. xiv. 23.

‡ John. x. 9.

I ADMIRE such inscriptions, as they serve to illustrate matters, which otherwise would remain enveloped in profound mystery. You see then, that CHRIST is the door, which leads into the church. "And he that entereth not by *this* door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

WHILE standing at the door, will you please,

5. To cast your eyes up to the *windows*, and to take a view of them. Precious stones, of various sorts, seem to compose the whole of this building: not only the foundation and walls are of choice, living stones; and the door, a *pearl*, but even the windows are formed of agates. Pliny tells us, "That the singular grace and commendation of an agate is to be clear and transparent like glass," therefore proper for windows, which are to receive and let in the light. The LORD, of old, made this promise to the church, "I will make thy windows of agates;" * which prediction he hath accomplished in the appointment of gospel ordinances. These ordinances, therefore, are the windows of the church; and being exceedingly lucid, let in the most refulgent rays, emitted from the glorious Sun of righteousness; to the great comfort and inexpressible joy, of all who are so happy as to dwell in this house, which often causes them to say, "It is good for us to be here." "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand" elsewhere.

I WILL now invite you within doors: Here,

6. THE

* Isaiah liv. 12.

6. THE first thing that strikes the eye is the pavement. This, you see, is "laid with stones of fair colours;"* "Glittering stones;" such as can never be found in any other pavement. They adhere so closely to each other, that you can scarcely discern a joint, and are so arranged, that one adds lustre to another, and the whole embellishes the house. Now, these petrified materials are humble faints, who, in their own estimation, are the meanest and lowest in the church. Such are generally persecuted, and trampled upon by the people of the world. They are, nevertheless, polished by the gracious influences of the spirit of GOD; and the more they are trampled under foot, the more they shine.

THE next thing which commands our attention, are,

7. THE pillars. Solomon saith, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars."† This house is the church, the LORD'S house, which we are attempting to describe. The seven pillars, according to Pool and other expositors, intend prophets, apostles, and other ministers of the sanctuary. Ministers may be termed pillars in the following respects.

1. PILLARS are erect and lofty. So faithful ministers are not only upright in their outward deportment, but they are also erect, with regard to the doctrines of the gospel. Here they remain unwarped. We are alarmed when we see a reclining pillar—are apprehensive it will fall and prejudice the building. So when a minister inclines to,

and

* Isaiah liv. 11. † Proverbs ix. 1.

and embraces error, he not only "falls from his own steadfastness," but generally brings down others with him, and occasions a terrible breach in the church. Witness the abettors of the doctrine of universal salvation. I observed, pillars are lofty. Pious ministers soar aloft in their meditation. Their "conversation is in heaven," and the doctrines they preach are sublime. 2. Pillars are for the *support* of the building. When Samson had pulled down the two main pillars of Dagon's temple, the whole fabric fell. Ministers are "set for the defence of the gospel," and consequently for the support of the church, which is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," i. e. on the doctrines they preached. Now ministers are to preach and defend these great gospel doctrines, and so build up the church in the "most holy faith." They are to "strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." To "say unto them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong." 3. Pillars are ornamental to a building; for which end they are hewn, planed, painted and varnished. None need be informed how much an able and faithful ministry adds to the beauty, as well as strength of the church. For this purpose they are hewn by the ax of the law—smoothed by the plane of the gospel—painted by the gifts and graces of the spirit, and varnished by human erudition. This varnish, some deem superfluous, although a qualification of great importance, and ought never to be dispensed with, when it can be obtained.

In ancient times, there were schools of the prophets; and they are not less needed now. May such institutions be encouraged. We can do little or nothing else towards preparing these pillars. It

is a pity we should be reluctant in this. I am sorry to say, that several young ministers, of bright natural parts, and gracious endowments, are groaning for want of this advantage.

PERHAPS some of you may be rendered a little uneasy by this digression ; if so, you may find relief,

8. By casting your eyes up to the galleries. They, I am sure, will not only command your attention ; but inspire you with pleasing admiration, and rapturous astonishment.—How splendid ! How well decorated ! How finely finished ! Incapable of any additional elegance or beauty, from the nicest touches of the finest pencil !—Those galleries must have been intended to accommodate persons of high rank. The grandest monarch might, in character, reside there.—But here is an inscription, in capitals—**THE KING IS HELD IN HIS GALLERIES.**—How a propos !—This confirms our conjecture, that these galleries were designed for the accommodation of some grand personages. These things will appear more conspicuous, if we scrutinize the figure before us. These galleries* are the ordinances of the gospel.—The king, who is said to be held in them, is King JESUS—The king of glory—The king of saints. In these ordinances he is held with the cords of love, grace and promise. Here is his abode—here he delights to dwell, and hold fellowship with his saints. Yes. “ Here CHRIST and his people
 “ walk and converse together ; here he discloses
 “ the secrets of his heart to them, leads them into
 “ a further acquaintance with his covenant, and the
 “ blessings and promises of it ; and here they have
 “ delightful views of his person and fullness ; see
 C “ the

* Galleries is a figurative term.

“ the king in his beauty, and behold the good
“ land which is afar off.” *

TIME admonishes me to lead you,

9. To the *roof* of the house. What elegant flights of stairs we ascend! † well worthy of more attention than such a cursory view. But here we must make no halt. May each of us be ambitious of ascending higher and higher in the divine life, until we arrive at the summit of grace and usefulness in the church.

WE are now on an elevated stand ‡—fanned by a serene and wholesome air §—regaled with a glorious prospect ¶—variegated with delightful scenes for mental improvement.

BUT the roof, in order, claims our principal attention. Oh, how transcendently excellent! What symmetry and exact proportion, in all the parts! The balustrade ** is so well constructed, as to render our present elevated station safe and commodious. But of what materials doth this covering consist? The roof of the altar of incense was overlaid with pure gold. †† That was rich and splendid, but this excels. How shall I undertake to describe it? What mortal man is equal to the task? Here an angel’s tongue would falter. I can only say, this house is covered with divinity itself. All the perfections of the DEITY compose the roof. ††† “ Who by searching can find out GOD?” Who can “ find out the ALMIGHTY unto perfection?” §§
“ There

* Dr. Gill on Cant. vii. 5.

† Faith, hope, love, &c.

‡ Divine contemplation.

§ Breathings of the spirit.

¶ Grace and glory.

** Providence.

†† Exodus xxx. 3.

††† Psalm xci. 1. 4.

§§ Job xi. 7.

“ There is no searching of his understanding.” * I must refer you to your own meditations ; for I tremble at the idea of any further description.

“ Come then, expressive silence, muse his praise.”

10. HAVING thus attempted to describe the house of the LORD, as built upon the gospel plan ; perhaps some may expect, that something should be said respecting the *architect*. When we see a magnificent edifice, neatly executed according to the rules of art, we are naturally led to inquire, Who was the builder ? To this, in the present case, I might return a summary answer. “ He “ that built all things is GOD.” † But the apostle addressing the Corinthian church, is more explicit. “ Ye “ are GOD’s building.” ‡ Yes. The triune JEHOVAH was the builder of this edifice. GOD, the Father, chose the materials : GOD, the Son, purchased them with his most precious blood ; and GOD, the Holy Ghost, by his powerful and gracious influences, hews, planes, polishes and fits them for the building. Each of these divine persons is equally concerned in the erection of the house. JEHOVAH then is the grand Architect or Master Builder ; therefore we have no reason to wonder that it is such a magnificent structure. But as GOD works by means, ministers of the gospel may be considered as under-workers, in building the church. “ We then are workers together with Him.” § An honourable employment this ! Therefore the apostle enjoins it upon common members to “ esteem them very “ highly in love for their works’ sake.” || But then ministers should give all the honour of success to the
LORD :

* Isaiah xl. 28.

† Heb. iii. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. iii. 9.

§ 2 Cor. vi. 1.

|| 1 Thef. v. 13.

LORD : For, "Except the LORD build the house, they
"labour in vain that build it." *

I SHALL close this head with an extract from that most excellent expofitor of scripture, Doctor Gill, on 1 Cor. iii. 9—*Ye are God's building*. "Believers in
"a church state, are GOD'S house, in which he dwells,
"and which he himself has built; he has laid the
"foundation, which is JESUS CHRIST; he makes his
"people lively stones, and lays them on it; he raises
"up the superstructure and will complete the building,
"and ought to bear all the glory, and in all which he
"makes use of his ministers as instruments."

PROCEED we now,

II. To shew, when it may be said, that the *service*
of the house of the LORD is set in order, or what is
necessary thereunto.

I HAVE already observed, that the *service* of the
house of the LORD includes the whole of gospel wor-
ship, pointed out in the sacred oracles, so far as it respects
social, publick worship. Now that this service may be
set in due order, it is necessary,

I. THAT the church be *duly organized* with proper
officers. No machine can move regularly, when it lacks
any of its main springs, or most important wheels.
Neither can a church without its officers. Divested of
these, the service of the house of the LORD can never
be set in complete order. There are some parts of di-
vine service which none but proper officers have a
right to perform. Uzzah was struck dead for touching
the ark, which none had a right to do but the priests.
The LORD is a jealous GOD, and will be worshipped in
his

* Psalm cxxvii. 1.

his own prescribed way. It is sinful and dangerous for any one, however zealous, to go beyond his own line of duty, and intrude on another's province. It would be well if those, who are over-fond of thrusting themselves into the ministry, would consider this. Probably you are ready to inquire, "Who are the proper officers in a gospel church?" I answer, Ministers and deacons, and they only. One of the excellencies of the gospel, in my opinion, consists in its simplicity or plainness; being free from parade, or pompous show. Under the Jewish economy, while the church was in a state of infancy, such tinsel ornaments suited the times, and temper of the people: their place of worship, their priests' vestments, and all their numerous rites were pompous and showy. But under the christian economy, gospel worship, in imitation of its humble, yet adorable author and object, puts away these (comparatively) gaudy, childish things; and becomes more plain and spiritual. Religious rites are reduced to two, plain, positive ordinances, baptism, and the LORD's supper; and the officers of the church to the same number, ministers and deacons. By ministers, I mean such as sustain the highest office in a gospel church. Who are indiscriminately termed bishops, pastors, teachers, elders, &c. I have chosen to style them ministers, as being the most common appellation among us, if not in scripture. Their work lies chiefly, in preaching the gospel, administering ordinances, leading and governing the church. Deacons are "helps" to ministers, and their work consists, principally, in managing the outward concerns of the church. Which two officers, as I intimated before, are all that are pointed out in scripture, as necessary, for the due organization of a gospel church. *

2. **MINISTERS** and deacons should not only exist in the

* Phil. i. 3.

the church, but they should be *inducted into office* in a regular, orderly way. There is but little reason to expect that those who set out in a disorderly manner, will ever be reduced to order themselves; and still less, that they will contribute much towards setting the service of the house of the LORD in order. These officers then are to be chosen and set apart to office, by the common suffrage of the church; which certainly hath a right to the improvement of the gifts of all its members; and ought to call forward such as, in their opinion, are qualified for office, and to put them on trial. Thus candidates are to "be proved," and, upon giving sufficient evidence of their qualifications, are to be ordained, or set apart to their respective offices. As to the mode of conducting this business, I shall say but little. It is generally performed by imposition of hands and prayer; but as, in my humble opinion, the essence of ordination consists in the call of the church, and the acceptance of that call, attended with prayer, I look upon laying on of hands as a mere formal rite, not founded on scripture. Doctor Gill saith, "No instance can be given of hands being laid on any ordinary minister, pastor or elder, at his ordination; nor, indeed, of hands being laid on any, upon whatsoever account, but by extraordinary persons; nor by them upon any ministers, but extraordinary ones; and even then not at and for the ordination of them." However, when regularly called and ordained, a minister is vested with the whole power of the ministerial office; and, by virtue of his great master's commission, may preach the gospel, and administer ordinances, in any part of the world, where GOD in his providence may call him; and is then eligible as pastor, of any orderly church that may call him to preside over them.

3. *Preaching the gospel* is an essential branch of
divine

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divine service. The grand design of this institution is to save sinners, of Adam's race, from eternal misery, in a way consistent with the claims of a violated law, and the honour of the divine perfections and government. "It hath pleased GOD, by (what the world esteems) the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." This is the most important service that ever demanded the attention of man. The position of a minister is enough to make a man, of any sensibility, tremble: he stands between the living and the dead—the living GOD and dead sinners. "Who is sufficient for these things?" No man, of himself. Does success depend on the overtures of the minister? No. Were he possessed of the wisdom of Solomon, the firmness of Elijah and the zeal of Phineas, united with the sanctity of John, the engagedness of Paul and the eloquence of Apollos, he would be unequal to the task. A divine energy, only, can render his labours successful. Nevertheless, those who are engaged in this arduous *service*, should attend to it "after the due order." They should preach the pure gospel, and not a mere system of morality. Cautious should they be of blending law and gospel, grace and works. They should preach salvation, through CHRIST, in a way of free, rich and sovereign grace. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." It behoves them to "be instant in season" and out of season," and to speak with so much life and energy as to evince that their whole soul is engaged in the work. Their language should be plain, yet masculine; their reasoning clear, yet nervous; their countenance, open and free; their action, easy and graceful.

4. *Social and publick prayer* is a very material part of the service of the house of the LORD. Hence it is emphatically

emphatically called "An house of prayer," twice in "one verse. Isai. lvi. 7—" Even them will I bring to "my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my *house of prayer*: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called *an house of prayer* for all people." But there could be no propriety in terming the LORD's house, an house of prayer, if prayer were not a considerable part of the service of that house. By a man of the world we understand an exceedingly worldly man. By a man of GOD, a holy, godly man, a man devoted to the service of GOD. So, a house of prayer, is an house devoted to that service. Such was the temple, which was dedicated to the service of the LORD, by a most excellent prayer, offered up by king Solomon; and from that time forward, it was a house devoted to social, publick prayer, for all the tribes of Israel. In like manner, the gospel church is an house of prayer. Hence it is said of the three thousand, who were added to the church on the day of Pentecost, that "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." A clear proof this, that social, publick prayer, was, at that early period, an essential branch of divine service. So it has continued to the present day; and so it will continue to the end of time; for the service of the house of the LORD cannot be set, or kept in order without it.

5. HARMONIOUSLY *singing the praises of God, with united voices*, is also a branch of the service of the house of the LORD; and a delightful employ it is. No part of divine service so much resembles heaven as this. The angels, we are sure, make it part of their service. These "morning stars" sang together, when the foundations of the earth were laid. They also sung an
hymn

hymn of praise when the REDEEMER was born ; and they will unite with the redeemed throng, in singing anthems of praise to GOD and the LAMB, for ever and ever. The light of nature directs to the performance of this service. It is of a moral nature, binding upon all rational intelligences, and has ever been in practice, from the earliest ages, not only among those who have had the advantage of divine revelation, but also among the heathen. " The sweet psalmist of Israel," who was a man after God's own heart, advanced psalmody to a high pitch of glory. In his opinion, this service was more pleasing to GOD than offerings and sacrifices;* and he was anxious that all the inhabitants of the earth should join in this service.† Good king Hezekiah, when restoring the worship of GOD, was careful to set this service in order ; so that " when the burnt-offering " began, the song of the LORD began also." Neither was this glorious part of divine worship omitted in the gospel church. At the institution of the Lord's supper, the solemnity was concluded by singing an hymn. A divine precedent this—sanctioned by the direction of CHRIST, who, no doubt, joined in chorus with his disciples. The apostle Paul, in two distinct epistles, exhorts the churches to the practice of speaking to themselves, or " teaching and admonishing one another, " in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and " making melody, with grace in their hearts, to the " LORD."‡ Now the apostle might have saved himself this labour, had it not been the duty of the churches to sing praise to GOD, with united voices. I would ask for what purpose the ALMIGHTY has endowed us with organical powers of melodious symphony, or a concordant harmony of voices, if not publickly to sound forth his praise ? Methinks the winged choristers of the

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grove,

* Psalm lxi. 30, 31. † Psalm xcvi. 1, 2.

‡ Ephes. v. 19. Col. iii. 16.

grove, which sing among the branches, * reproach the silence of those people, who do not make singing the praises of GOD, an important branch of the service of the house of the LORD. “ Blessed are they that dwell “ in thy house; they will be still praising thee. “ Selah.” †

6. ADMINISTERING *gospel ordinances* is an essential branch of the service of the HOUSE of the LORD: I mean *baptism* and *the Lord's supper*. These are plain and positive institutions of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, never to be dispensed with. *Baptism*, if not an initiating ordinance, as it is frequently called, it is an essential pre-requisite to admission into the church. Read over the apostolick account of gathering and settling churches, or receiving members into communion, and you will find that it was the uniform and invariable custom, (from which we ought never to swerve) first to baptize, and then receive persons into the church. The administrators of this ordinance are regular, ordained ministers of the gospel; the only proper subjects of it are men and women, ‡ professing repentance towards GOD, § and faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST; || the mode of administration is immersion, or dipping the party in water, ¶ in the name of the FATHER and of the SON and of the HOLY GHOST. ††

THIS rite is emblematical of the death, burial and resurrection of CHRIST; and, unto the party baptized, is a sign and obligation of his death unto sin, and resurrection to newness of life. †† And, according

* Psalm civ. 12. † Psalm lxxxiv. 4.

‡ Acts viii. 12. § Mark i. iv. || Acts viii. 37.

¶ Many Pedobaptists have acknowledged this is the scriptural mode. †† Mat. xxviii. 19. †† Rom. vi. 3, 4.

ording to Theodoret, as quoted by Witfius, " It
 " is an earnest of good things to come, a type of
 " the future resurrection, a communion in the suf-
 " ferings, and a participation of the resurrection of
 " our LORD."

THE *Lord's supper* was instituted by CHRIST, immediately after eating the passover, on that sorrowful night in which he was betrayed; and is to continue in the church until he shall come the second time, without sin, unto salvation. The grand design of this institution is to commemorate the death and sufferings of the blessed JESUS. The great Witfius defines this ordinance thus: " The LORD's
 " supper is the sacrament of education, or nou-
 " rishment in the New Testament church, wherein,
 " by the symbols of bread broken, and the wine
 " poured out, the dreadful sufferings of CHRIST
 " are represented to believers; and the promises of
 " the New Testament and enlivening communion with
 " CHRIST, made perfect by sufferings, both in grace
 " and glory, are signified and sealed unto them." The apostle Paul terms it, " The communion of
 " the body and blood of CHRIST;" intimating, that believers have fellowship with CHRIST, in this ordinance, in the benefits of his death and sufferings; or, that they participate in the blessings purchased thereby.

THE administrators of this rite are the same as in baptism; the subjects are baptized believers, in a church state, who are to " examine themselves,
 " and so to eat of that bread and drink of that cup;" The symbols are bread and wine, over each of which thanks are to be given separately; when the bread being broken, and the wine poured out, communi-
 cants

cants are to partake, in both kinds, with devout affections; and the solemnity is to be concluded by “singing a hymn or psalm.” This service of the house of the LORD should be carefully set, and maintained in order; for it is of so much importance, that there cannot be an orderly gospel church without it. “This do,” saith CHRIST, “in remembrance of me.”

7. *Discipline* is a necessary branch of the service of the house of the LORD. The design of this institution is to keep the church pure, regulate its concerns, remove disorders, and, as much as may be, prevent their taking place. Considered as a society, or incorporated body, the church adopts, and in effect, subscribes to certain constitutional rules, drawn up by CHRIST, and engrossed in the archives of sacred truth. By these rules the church is governed, and ought never to deviate therefrom, an hair's breadth. The government founded on these rules, is truly republican; so constructed, as not to invade the rights of human nature. Every male member has an equal vote, in all matters of business. The executive power is lodged in the hands of the minister, who is to take the lead in all points of administration; but in no case whatever, is his will to give law. He is the church's “servant for JESUS' sake”—is amenable to her, and must not “lord it over GOD's “heritage.” What I have further to say under this head, will respect the admission of members, their duties as such—offences cognizable by the church, and its dealings thereon. With respect to the admission of members out of the world, none have a right thereto but believers in CHRIST, baptized on a personal profession of faith; such as the church shall charitably judge, are regenerated, or born again; found in the doctrines of the gospel, and of an holy life and conversation.

These,

These, on covenanting to adhere to the rules of the church, are to be received, and to have the right hand of fellowship given them, in token of union, and full communion with the church, in all the rights and privileges thereof. Members moving from other churches, may be admitted on producing letters commendatory and dismissive. Any excluded for offences, should be re-admitted on a credible profession of repentance. Thus persons become free denizens in the city of the living GOD, and ought to be entirely devoted to his service. Besides their general obligations, as christians, there are some special relative duties, which concern, and oblige them, as members; such as, “Brotherly love” *—Christian forbearance †—Esteem and care one for another ‡—Frequent exhortation §—Tender rebuke ||—To esteem, honour and support their ministers ¶—To contribute cheerfully and liberally to the exigencies of the church**—And, constantly to attend meetings for business or worship, in their own place. †† Now, were all the members of churches conscientiously to attend to these and similar duties, there would be but little call for the use of discipline as a rod. But there are unworthy characters in the purest churches, who fail not to occasion trouble. “It is impossible but that offences will come.” ††† Here I am naturally led to point out offenders, cognizable by the church, and shew how they are to be treated. The following may be deemed such offensive characters as to call for notice. 1. Men of turbulent passions unsubdued, who are always *contentious* and *troublesome*, disturbing the peace of the church, and often causing divisions. §§ 2. Those who do not keep their place

* Heb. xiii. 1. † Ephes. iv. 2.
 ‡ Phil. ii. 3. † Cor. xii. 25. § Heb. iii. 10.
 || Lev. xix. 17. ¶ 1 Thes. v. 13. † Tim. v. 17, 18.
 ** 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7. †† Heb. x. 25.
 ††† Luke xvii. 1. §§ 1 Cor. xi. 16. Gal. v. 12.

place in the house of GOD, but neglect assembling with the saints for worship or business.* 3. Indolent, disorderly persons, who, "working not at all," provide not for their own families, but are busybodies in other people's matters, whispering and backbiting. † 4. Such as are notoriously guilty of atrocious crimes, or immoral actions. ‡ 5. Erroneous persons, who swerve from the truth, and substitute damnable heresies and doctrines of devils. § Now such characters ought certainly to be dealt with. But, how? Not implicitly, on bare report. Substantial proof is necessary to conviction. || Neither should any be proceeded against with rigorous severity. Strict discipline ought to be maintained, yet justice should be tempered with mercy. ¶ How much less should any be proceeded against with rancour and malice in the heart, to gratify passion, by way of revenge.* A too hasty procedure is by no means justifiable. Is it not more eligible to imitate the Almighty, who is long-suffering and waiteth to be gracious! I apprehend, therefore, that the process against an offending brother, should, in general, be carried on nearly as follows. The delinquent should be cited to appear before the church, and have a fair hearing, with the liberty of making his defence. Should he make a free and open confession of his fault, with expressions of hearty remorse, a word of admonition might suffice, as censure, unless the crime should be of an atrocious nature; and even then, should the offender give evident marks of true contrition, a suspension, for a prudential time, from the LORD's table and the rights of government,

* Jude xix. † 2 Thef. iii. 11, 12, 14.
 ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 20. § 1 Cor. v. 11. ¶ Rom. xvi. 17.
 † 2 Pet. ii. 1. † 1 Tim. iv. 1. || Deut. xix. 15.
 † Mat. xviii. 16. ¶ Gal. vi. 1. * Ephes. iv. 31.

ment, might be deemed sufficient punishment. I can no more approve of the excommunication of a true, humble penitent, than I can of the amputation of a distempered member of the body, which time, and proper applications, might restore. To me an excision of such a brother would appear inhuman, unprecedented, and unwarranted by scripture. But should the offender be contumacious, and appear hardened under discipline, exclusion must and ought to take place; leaving the event to the wisdom and mercy of GOD. In case of private personal offence, the rule laid down by our LORD, Mat. xviii. 15, 16, 17, ought to be invariably adhered to.

8. THE *communion of churches* may contribute much towards setting the service of the house of the LORD in order.

ALTHOUGH churches are independent of each other, with respect to power and government, yet the gospel they profess binds them to hold communion, in brotherly love—fellowship—gifts—council and property. Brotherly love is essential to christianity, and necessarily exists, not only between believers, as individuals, but between gospel churches; especially those of the same faith and order. These ought to hold fellowship with each other, occasionally, at the LORD's table. Those who have a stated supply of ministerial gifts, should communicate to those who are destitute. A council of churches, is sometimes needful to settle disputes; and a communication of property to indigent churches, is but a reasonable service.

BUT that the communion of churches may ripen to maturity, they should associate, and become an ecclesiastical

affical body ; to meet, by their delegates, periodically, for the transaction of business.

SUCH an association has been countenanced by the custom of the churches in all ages of christianity, and is sanctioned by an apostolick precedent.* And as “ In the multitude of counsellors there is safety,” there appears to be the greatest utility in such a union of the churches, that they may consult the general good of the whole, consistent with the honour of CHRIST and interest of religion. They are all embarked in one common cause, and their united efforts are most likely to promote it. “ Two are better than one, and a three, a thirty, “ or a forty-fold cord is not quickly broken.”

THE advantages arising from the association of churches, are too many to be here enumerated. I shall instance only in a few particulars. 1. Hereby a more general knowledge of the state of the churches is obtained—a desirable object this, in itself, and serves as a directory in our prayers and intercessions for the body at large. 2. These interviews are not only the means of forming acquaintances, but of promoting brotherly love, and uniting each to other, in the bonds of christian affection, and esteem. And oh! “ How good and how “ pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” 3. Nothing can have a more direct tendency towards an establishment in the doctrines of grace. To hear so many letters read from churches so widely extended, breathing the same language ; and so many mouths speaking the same things, must be confirming. 4. Hereby a noble standard is erected against error, heresy and all innovations in doctrine and worship. 5. Cases too difficult for determination in a particular church, may here be fully and satisfactorily solved. 6. Destitute churches,

churches, on application, may receive supplies. 7. A fund may be raised for educating candidates for the ministry and other valuable purposes. In one word, no institution can be founded, that will have a greater tendency to set the whole service of the house of the LORD in order.

9. A DUE attention to the *time* allotted for social worship, may contribute much towards setting the service of the house of the LORD in order. The oracles of truth inform us, that GOD hath appointed one day in seven, to be observed as a sabbath, or day of rest, from all worldly avocations; and wholly devoted to divine service, to the end of time. This is a primordial law—the first made for man. Its author and antiquity give it energy and lustre. *It is written in the volume of THE BOOK*—nearly at the head of the inspired volume—Gen. ii. 2, 3—“ And on the seventh day GOD ended his work, “ which he had made, and he rested on the seventh “ day from all his work, which he had made. And “ GOD blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, “ because that in it he had rested from all his work, “ which GOD created and made.”

HERE we have the origin of the sabbath, exhibited in a concise, but solemn manner; well comporting with the dignity of the subject. Shall I adventure a short paraphrase, by way of elucidation? Moses says, *And on the seventh day GOD ended his work.* Or had ended, for he wrought none on the seventh day. Hence it follows, *which he had made.* In the preceding six days, GOD completed the whole work of creation. *And he rested the seventh day from all his work.* Not as being weary, but he ceased working, and took a complacency in the things he had formed, as being perfect

perfect in themselves, and a mirror of the divine perfections. *Which he had made* is repeated, to command attention, and to excite pleasing admiration, at the stupendous works of creation, which none but **H E**, the **G R E A T G O D**, could have effected. *And G O D blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.* He pronounced it a good and a happy day; which then was, and thenceforth should be appropriated to the most blessed purposes of praising and adoring **J E H O V A H**; and should prove a blessed day to all true worshippers. Therefore he *sanctified it.* Not by infusing holiness into it; of which a day is incapable. But he set it apart, by a *positive institution*, to be observed as a sabbath entirely devoted to sacred services. The reason assigned for this appointment is, *because that in it he had rested from all his work, which G O D created and made.* This supposes, that the sabbath was instituted in commemoration of the work of creation—that it should be kept as a day of sacred rest, and that this rest should succeed every six days labour.

FROM these premises we learn, that the sabbath was instituted so early as the seventh day of the world, immediately succeeding the six days of creation. And that the same day was celebrated as a sabbath, by all rational intelligences; in the most solemn, magnificent and inimitable manner. **G O D** himself sabbatized, in a peculiar manner, on that day; *for he rested from all his work*—An event, which never again took place. The angels seem to have led the service of the day, “When the morning stars sang together, and all the “sons of **G O D** shouted for joy.” * Our first parents, arrayed in robes of righteousness and holiness, joined with angels in the song; adoring and praising **G O D**, for that visible display of his perfections, in the work of creation.

* Job xxxviii. 7.

creation. Neither did they forget the tribute due for their own formation. Thus was the first sabbath solemnized. We further learn, that this law of a weekly sabbath was, from that period, binding on Adam and all his posterity, to the latest ages of time. It was observed, I doubt not, through the patriarchal age, until the Mosaick economy took place, when it received a new edition, in awful majesty, from mount Sinai; and was the fourth article in the decalogue, inscribed by the finger of GOD, and handed to the children of Israel, on two tables of stone. The attention paid to this precept, by that people, is notorious. Nevertheless, as the *time* for religious worship, absolutely depends on the sovereign will of the great Legislator, it was subject to mutation; as all positive institutions, in their own nature, are. Witness the Jewish rites, now done away. Hence it follows, that GOD, who instituted the seventh-day sabbath, in commemoration of the stupendous work of creation, might, without infringing on the rights of morality, appoint the first day of the week, to be observed as a sabbath; in commemoration of that still greater and more glorious work of redemption. I say, GOD *might*, consistent with his honour and dignity, effect such a change of the sabbath. And that this event did actually take place, on the resurrection of CHRIST, I hope now to make appear. The words of the apostle Paul, Hebr. x. 4. in my humble opinion, elucidate and confirm this point. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as GOD did from his." In which words there is a note of similitude too emphatical to be overlooked. He also, i. e. CHRIST, hath ceased from his own works, as GOD did from his. Query: How did GOD cease from his works? It would be extremely vague, and an unpardonable tautology, simply to say, He left off working. The truth is, he
 ceased

ceased from his works by sabbatizing. He instituted a sabbath, which, as we have heard, was immediately celebrated, by Himself—by angels, those morning stars, which sang together, and by the progenitors of mankind, in their primeval state. Thus, GOD ceased from his works. And so, in like manner, CHRIST ceased from his, when he rose from the grave; by resting from his suffering work—by instituting a new sabbath, and celebrating the same, amidst the acclamations of attendant angels, and with his dear mourning disciples, whose hearts were made glad by his presence, and that cheering salutation, “Peace be unto you.” Thus, CHRIST entered into *his* rest, or sabbath, as GOD did into his. And from that period, the first day of the week became the christian sabbath. There is not, I think, a single instance, in all the New Testament, of the christian church assembling, for divine worship, after this, on the seventh day of the week; although many, of their so assembling on the first; and of CHRIST’s favouring them with his personal presence. Moreover, the learned have made it appear, that the day of Pentecost, that year, happened, by divine pre-ordination, no doubt, on the first day of the week; when it was confirmed as a sabbath, not only by the meeting of the disciples for worship as usual, but much more, by the extraordinary effusion and miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST. Besides, the apostle Paul seems to speak of this as a settled point, when he gave general directions to the churches, to make their collections on the first day of the week; which must suppose, that they were wont to meet together on that day, for religious worship. And, to add no more, John had his visions and revelations on that day, which he dignifies by emphatically styling it THE LORD’S DAY. What can he mean by this, but that it is the sabbath of CHRIST the LORD? I must conclude then, that
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the first day of the week is the christian sabbath—the *time* in which we ought to worship, that we may set the service of the house of the LORD in order.

10. THE last thing I shall mention, as necessary towards setting the service of the house of the LORD in order, is the *spirituality* of religious worship. This, though last mentioned, is of the greatest importance; and should pervade the whole circle of our enumerated particulars; as that which alone can give life and energy to every branch of worship. However necessary it may be, to set the external service of the house of the LORD in order, it is internal, spiritual, experimental religion only, that will be of any avail—the religion of the heart—to this the LORD looks—this he requires—“ My son, give me thine heart” *—“ For “ bodily exercise profiteth little.” †

THE form of godliness, without the power, is like a body without a soul—a dead carcass. “ GOD is a “ spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him “ in spirit and in truth :” † “ For the Father seeketh “ such to worship him.” Now, in order to this spiritual worship, there must be a divine principle implanted in the heart. A carnal, unregenerate man, as such, can never be a spiritual worshipper. None but those, whose hearts are circumcised, can “ worship God in the spirit.” And as there must be a divine principle, in order to spiritual worship, so that principle must be drawn out into action. There must be the exercise of grace, in faith, hope, charity, and in the whole assemblage of christian virtues. This necessarily calls for the continued influences of the holy spirit; for without his aid, we can do nothing. Upon the whole, I apprehend, the spirituality of worship

* Prov. xxiii. 26.

† 1 Tim. iv. 8.

‡ John iv. 24.

ship consists in communion with GOD, through CHRIST, by the operations of the HOLY GHOST—I am sensible there are many who discard the doctrine of divine influences, as enthusiastical; but I look upon it as the quintessence of religion, without which there can be no spiritual—no acceptable worship at all. O, may we experience more of these divine influences! that we may be more spiritual in all the parts of religious worship! So may we hope to contribute, in our measure, towards setting the service of the house of the LORD in order.

THUS have I gone through with what I proposed. You may readily perceive, that being confined to so small a scale, while treating on such an extended and diversified subject, has greatly cramped me, in a variety of instances—which loudly calls for all the candour and benevolence of the venerable Association I have once more had the honour to address.

“ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us—unto him be glory in the church by CHRIST JESUS, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

F I N I S.