

The Nature, Obligation, and Efficacy of the Christian Sacraments Considered;

In Reply to a Pamphlet, Entitled,
An Answer to the Remarks Upon Dr. Clarke's
Exposition of the Church Catechism.

As Also

The Comparative Value of Moral and Positive Duties Distinctly Stated and
Cleared.

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[Spelling selectively modernized. Bible citations converted to all Arabic numerals. Footnotes moved into or near their places of citation, but with only bibliographic information, no Greek or Latin quotations.]

The Nature of the Christian Sacraments Considered.

I have read over and considered a pamphlet, entitled, An Answer to the Remarks upon Dr. Clarke's Exposition of the Church Catechism, printed for Mr. Knapton. The author has superficially touched upon the several matters contained in my Remarks, and I may very probably return him a distinct reply, as soon as I have any reason to believe that nothing more considerable is to be expected from other hands. But there is one particular above the rest, which the author seems most to triumph in, calling [Page 78, 81.] upon me with some earnestness, once and again, to give him satisfaction. I shall endeavour to do so, in the following sheets, and at the same time to satisfy some very worthy persons, who, having no dislike to what I asserted in the Remarks, of the comparative value-of the Sacraments in respect to moral duties, but entirely approving the same, do yet wish to see so important a matter more distinctly drawn out, and more minutely guarded against all cavil and exception. This therefore is what, with God's assistance, I shall here undertake for the honour and service of instituted religion, in general, and for the preserving the dignity of the two Christian Sacraments in particular.

Chapter I.

Dr. Clarke's Sentiments on this Head distinctly opened and ascertained.

As the dispute arises from what Dr. Clarke has laid down in the Exposition, so it will be proper, in the first place, to produce his words, and to fix their precise meaning. Speaking of our Lord's command for receiving the holy Communion, he says thus [Exposition, p. 281, 282]: "Since the command of Christ is express and universal, it becomes all pious persons to remove, as soon

as possible, the ground or occasion of the scruple, whatever it be, and prepare themselves to comply with the command of their Lord. In the doing of which, they are still always to remember, that this and all other positive institutions have the nature only of means to an end, and that therefore they are never to be compared with moral virtues, nor can ever be of any use or benefit without them, nor can be in any degree equivalent for the want of them.”

These are his words; and that part which I found fault with in my Remarks is here printed in *Italic*. His manner of expression is not exact, being indeed elliptical, but his sense will be easily ascertained. He makes a comparison between positive institutions and moral virtues; which is not accurately expressed, because the opposition, thus worded, is not plain and direct. Positive institutions should be opposed to moral institutions; and moral virtues, by which he really means moral duties, should be opposed to positive duties, to make the comparison exact. But in a quick succession of thought, it is easy to run ideas one into another, skipping over the intermediate terms which should keep them distinct. To represent this matter to the eye, let the respective oppositions appear thus:

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|------------------------|---------------------|
| Positive institutions: | Moral institutions. |
| Positive commands: | Moral commands. |
| Positive duties: | Moral duties. |
| Positive virtues: | Moral virtues. |

Now, in strictness, the learned Doctor should have said positive duties and moral duties, to make the comparison clear, and the opposition exact, and to express distinctly what he really means. In his *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, [Page 227. edit. 4.] he has much the same thought as here, but a little more clearly expressed: “Even those positive and external observances, the two Sacraments, which are instituted in the Christian religion as means and assistances to keep men steadfast in the practice of those great and moral duties, which are the weightier matters of the Law; even those positive institutions, I say, are, etc.” Here he rightly has positive observances in the first line, and those he opposes to moral duties; which is justly expressed. Moral virtues often signify the internal habits of the mind only, abstracting from the outward acts, as when we speak of benevolence, justice, charity, and the like. But moral duties signify both the inward habits and outward acts, or the inward habits as exerting themselves in outward acts; as when we speak of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the oppressed, or anything of the like kind. Now the reader may please to observe, that when Dr. Clarke opposes positive to moral duties (for so he must be supposed to mean) he could never intend to oppose the external part only of positive duties to the internal part of moral: for if that were

his meaning, he might as well have opposed the external part of any moral duty to the internal part of the same duty (outward almsgiving, for instance, to inward mercy), which would have been entirely foreign to his purpose: but he must have intended that positive duties taken in the whole, including both the outward and inward parts of them, are never to be compared to moral duties taken also in the whole, including both their outward and inward constituents. The opposition then intended by Dr. Clarke does not lie between outward acts and inward habits (which would be altogether foreign), but between positive duties and moral duties; that is to say, between obedience both outward and inward to positive laws or rules, and obedience both outward and inward to moral commandments.

Such being the case, the Doctor's true sense, and full sense as laid down or intimated in the Exposition, appears to me to resolve into the several propositions here following:

1. That positive institutions, or commands, as positive, are always of slighter obligation than moral. He speaks in the general of "all positive institutions," that they are "never to be compared with moral."

2. That obedience to positive commands or institutions is instrumental only to moral virtue, and is not moral virtue: for he says, that "positive institutions have the nature only of means to an end," by the end meaning moral virtue. And if such be the case of positive commands, then positive obedience must by analogy and parity of reason be understood as means only to virtue, not virtue direct.

3. That obedience to positive commands is never to be compared with obedience to moral commands. I need not nicely distinguish between institutions and commands in this case, since the reason is the same in both, and institutions are nothing else but standing and permanent commands.

4. That, in particular, the two Christian Sacraments are merely positive institutions.

5. That obedience to Christ's law concerning them, or the use of the Sacraments, is not moral virtue, but instrumental only to moral virtue.

6. That therefore the use of the Sacraments is never to be compared with obedience to moral duties, with acts of moral virtue.

These propositions contained in the Doctor's notion appear to me all, or most of them mistakes: and it will next be my business thoroughly to examine and discuss them. I take no advantage of the Doctor's phrase of moral virtues, by which I shall presume he meant evangelical virtues, or Christian graces: only I could have wished he had expressed himself more accurately, lest from the ambiguous name of moral virtues, given sometimes to mere Pagan virtues, any weak persons should think that this high commendation might be passed upon

them, when they are far from meriting anything like it, being mean and low things in comparison, and having indeed, according to the true and express doctrine of our excellent Church, [Article xiii.] “the nature of sin,” as being defective in principle and in direction, and wanting the grace of God. [See Bishop Burnet on the Articles, p. 131, 132. Norris’s Miscellanies, p. 293. Vitring. Observat. Saec. tom. ii. 1. 3. c. 12.] On this account it were better to say Christian virtues, when we really mean such, than to make use of the lower and more ambiguous name of moral virtues. But so long as the ideas are kept distinct and clear, I shall not contend with any man about names or words only. Having premised as much as seemed necessary for the clearing and ascertaining Doctor Clarke’s sense, I may now proceed regularly to the points in debate.

Chapter II.

Of the Distinction between moral and positive Duties.

Custom has, in a manner, authorized this distinction in these terms, though the terms are none of the most proper. Every law, properly so called, is moral, is *regula moralis*, or *regula morum*, a moral rule, regulating the practice of moral agents. But moral law in a more restrained sense signifies the same with natural law, a law derived from God, consonant to the nature and reason of things, and therefore of as fixed and immovable obligation as the nature and reason of things is. Positive divine law, in contradistinction to the other, is not founded in the fixed nature or reason of things, or at least not known to be so; being considered only as prescribed, and as depending on God’s good pleasure either to remove or continue it. There may be some perplexity in determining of several laws appearing in Scripture only, whether to call them natural or positive. Certain it is, that we are bound to several duties, of natural and eternal obligation, which yet are not commonly referred to the law of nature, nor placed among the moral duties or virtues. Scripture has discovered to us another world, in which God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, archangels, angels, and saints, make one blessed society, to which every good Christian bears a relation, as a citizen of heaven. By the first principle of the law of nature, “universal and “active benevolence towards the whole rational system” (as Bishop Cumberland has justly stated it), all the social duties we owe to the several persons making up that blessed society, must be duties founded in the nature and reason of things (discovered by revelation), and of as fixed and unchangeable obligation as any social duties we owe to our own species. Whether our duties to God the Father as Father, and to God the Son in his several capacities, and to God the Holy Ghost, and the duties of respect and love towards angels (when we shall come to know them), have been reckoned among the moral duties or no, I know not: but sure I am, that they

have as much the nature of moral duties, and may be as justly so styled, as any moral duties we owe to one another, and are of as fixed and unalterable obligation. Indeed they are in some respects of more lasting obligation than many moral or natural duties, such as almsgiving, visiting the sick, relieving the oppressed, etc. For these will cease with the present system of things, but the other will abide forever. I am well enough pleased with an observation of a grave and serious writer [S. Collier of Revealed Religion, p. 154, 155.] (whom I could wish to have oftener agreeing with me), that “the faith which the Christian revelation requires in its great Revealer – as importing our acceptance of him for our supreme Lord, is what we were antecedently obliged to by the very law of nature, on supposition that his real Divinity was discoverable by us. In this case, he that believeth not is condemned already, viz. by the law of nature.” Upon this foot, and in this way of reasoning, many of the Scripture duties, which we have otherwise no knowledge of, are yet justly referred to the law of nature, since Scripture has discovered what foundation they have in the nature and truth of things. Thus, for instance, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, [Matt. 6:33.] to confess Christ before men, [Matt. 9:13.] to take up the cross, [Matt. 10:38, 16:24.] to honour the Son even as the Father, [John 5:23.] to set our affections on things above, [Col. 3:3.] to pray without ceasing, [1 Thess. 5:17.] to resist the Devil, [James 4:7.] to contend earnestly for the faith, [Jude 3.] with many more of like kind, are natural and moral duties, of universal obligation to as many as know them, and in their very nature immutable, and eternal as any other moral duties. The same may be observed of the negative Scripture precepts, such as these following: not to deny Christ before men, [Matt. 10:33.] not to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, [Matt. 12:32.] not to defile the temple of God, [1 Cor. 3:17.] not to communicate unworthily, [1 Cor. 11:27.] Quench not the Spirit, [1 Thess. 5:19.] Love not the world. [1 John 2:15.] These are precepts of unalterable obligation, fixed in the very nature and reason of things, according to the discoveries Scripture has made of them. They cannot justly be called positive precepts, because unchangeable, and because they naturally and necessarily flow from the prime fundamental law of nature, universal benevolence, and are essential to the common happiness of the whole system of intelligent beings.

These things considered, I should choose to divide our several duties into their proper classes, somewhat differently from the common divisions. Let them first be divided into natural and supernatural; by natural, meaning those discoverable by the bare light of nature; and by supernatural, meaning those that are discovered by revelation. Then as to supernatural duties, let them again be distinguished into constant and occasional, or, if you please, into moral and positive; meaning by constant or moral, such supernatural duties as are of eternal

and immutable obligation; and by occasional or positive, meaning such as are temporary or changeable. And here I would observe of the supernatural moral duties, that though many of them are materially, or in the outward act, the same with the duties of natural religion, yet formally they are not the same, as being founded in higher principles, and upon better promises, and wrought out by the Spirit, of God. Faith, hope, and charity, for instance, are natural duties, or virtues: but the correspondent supernatural duties or virtues, bearing the same names, are of a much more excellent kind, and so are not formally, or precisely, the same with the other.

As to supernatural positive precepts, or duties, some may be called transient, and some permanent. Of the transient sort was the first law given to Adam, and of like kind were several occasional precepts given by God to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob: Moses, Joshua, Saul, David, and to the Prophets. Of the permanent kind were the ritual, and some judicial precepts given to the Jews, which were to last as long as the Jewish polity should last. Of the like permanent kind are the precepts concerning the two Christian Sacraments, which shall continue as long as the Christian Church, or as the world shall continue. I would further observe of positive precepts, that though we are used. to consider them merely as prescribed, and to resolve them commonly into the mere will and pleasure of the Legislator, yet they are always founded upon reasons, known perhaps in part to us, but perfectly known to God; and so they are ultimately resolvable into infinite wisdom and goodness. Having premised these general things as preparatory to the main questions I am to go upon, I now proceed more directly and closely to what I intend.

Chapter III.

Of the comparative Value, Excellency, or Obligation of moral and positive Precepts, or Duties.

Dr. Clarke and his followers lay it down for a rule and a principle, that positive precepts or duties are never to be compared with moral. I suppose they mean as to their value, or excellency, or strictness of obligation. I see no ground or foundation for this general rule: but it appears to rest only upon a false presumption, and to resolve at length into a want of just discernment, into an unperceived confusion of ideas I believe it will at last be found, that the *πρωτον ψαυδας*, the fundamental error in this whole affair, has been the confounding external with positive, as if the words were tantamount, and the not Considering that positive duties have both an inward and an outward part, both a formal and a material constituent, as well as moral duties have. To make this plainer, let us

consider almsgiving, a moral duty. There is the outward act, or material part, giving to the poor: which if done for ostentation, or vanity, or without a true principle of piety and charity, is no virtue, is nothing worth in moral account. Next, let us consider receiving the holy Communion. a positive duty. There is the *opus operatum*, as the schools speak, the outward act, or material part of the duty, which if performed in hypocrisy, without faith, reverence, or repentance, is nothing worth in moral account. But if it be performed as it should be, it is as truly an act of moral obedience, and as much an exercise of virtue, as almsgiving, having all the requisites proper to make it real virtue. It is not the material outward part of any act that makes it virtue; even the brutes themselves in bearing burdens, etc. do many things materially good, tending to the general good of mankind: but it is the inward principle, the choosing what is materially good, in conformity to a divine law, this is what constitutes the action morally good, and gives it both the name and nature of virtue. In positive duties, though the matter in itself considered is indifferent, yet the obedience is moral, and disobedience in such cases is immoral; because it is an eternal and unchangeable maxim, that God is to be obeyed in whatsoever he commands. Obedience in this case is acting for the common happiness, as the common happiness is nearly and deeply concerned in keeping up the reverence due to Divine authority; and disobedience, on the other hand, is acting against the common happiness, since nothing can be more destructive to the common good of the universe, than the contemning or slighting the authority of its high Lord and lawgiver. Seeing therefore that the morality or immorality of an act, in respect even of moral or natural duties, lies in the obedience or disobedience to a Divine law; and since there is the like obedience or disobedience to a Divine law in cases of positive duty, and that the obedience or disobedience in either case is equally moral or immoral; it will from hence follow, that the judging of the value or the obligation of the Divine precepts merely from their positive or moral nature, is making a false estimate, and going by a wrong rule. For positive or moral makes no difference at all, either as to the weight of the command, or the morality of the action, or the obligation of the precept, which must be judged of by other rules, and measured by other circumstances, as shall be shown in the sequel. But to be a little more distinct and particular, I may draw out what concerns this matter into the following propositions.

I. Positive commands of God are as strictly obligatory, as any other commands whatever, for the time being.

II. There may be as great virtue (or greater) in obeying positive precepts, as in obeying moral ones.

III. There may be as great (or greater) iniquity and impiety in disobeying

positive precepts, as in disobeying moral ones.

IV. The comparative value of any duties above other duties depends not upon their positive or moral nature, but upon their relation to or connection with the general good of the whole rational system, taken in its largest compass, both of extent and duration.

These several propositions may want some proofs, or some explication, among common readers; and therefore I shall take the pains to treat of them severally, and more at large, in their order.

I. I say, positive commands of God are as strictly obligatory as any other commands whatever, for the time being. All obligation arises from some law, and it is the Divine law that constitutes moral good and evil. Things may be naturally good or bad, that is, may have a natural tendency to promote happiness or misery, may be materially good or evil, that is, useful or hurtful, previous to any law: but they cannot be formally and morally good and evil without respect to some law, natural or revealed; for “where no law is, there is no transgression.”

I know some persons, and Dr. Clarke himself [Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 35. fourth edit.] among others, have fancied I know not what obliging and binding force in the nature and reasons of things, considered as previous or antecedent to all laws, natural or revealed. But it will be hard to make any good sense or consistency of such a notion. Obligation antecedent to all law is a contradiction and flat absurdity. Wherefore those who have looked deeper into the case have rightly resolved all obligation into some Divine law, natural or revealed. If the reader would see the contrary notion thoroughly examined and confuted; he may find it done to his hands in a very ingenious treatise which I refer to at the bottom of the page. [The Foundation of Morality in Theory and Practice considered in an Examination of the learned Dr. Samuel Clarke’s Opinion concerning the Original of Moral Obligation, etc. by John Clarke, Master of the Public Grammar School in Hull.] If therefore all obligation resolves into the force of Divine law, and if positive duties derive their obligation from the very same source that all other duties do, it is very manifest that positive precepts are as strictly obligatory as any moral ones can be, considered merely as moral, other circumstances being equal. The authority of the same Lawgiver is the same in both, and so the commands are alike obligatory for the time being. For though one be permanent or perpetual, and the other transient or temporary, yet it is as much the will of God that we should obey the temporary command for the term it is intended for, as it is that we should obey the other for any given duration, or for ever and ever. Upon the whole, we may affirm, that it is always our bounden duty to obey the commands of God, be the matter of them moral or positive: and it will be always sinful to disobey the commands of God, whether they be

occasional or perpetual. God may, in some circumstances, insist upon obedience to a positive command, more than upon obedience to the moral: and when he does so, the positive command carries the stricter and stronger obligation. Whatever it be, moral or positive, which for the time being God most strictly requires, that is the most obligatory; and to disobey in that instance is the most heinous impiety. For the will of God in these cases is our immediate rule to go by, and is the ground and measure of all obligation. Unerring wisdom has reasons by which it constantly steers; and we cannot doubt but where God lays the greatest stress, there are the greatest reasons: but it will be enough for any creature, in such cases, to know that Divine Wisdom insists upon it, and strictly requires it: for that alone is sufficient, without knowing more, to create the strictest and strongest obligation.

II. The second thing which I undertake to maintain is, that there may be as great virtue (or greater) in obeying positive precepts, as in obeying moral ones. This may be made appear divers ways. If a positive command be more difficult, requiring a greater degree of self-denial if the good intended by it be of a more excellent kind, or more diffusive, or more lasting; in all such cases there may be greater virtue in obeying the positive command than in obeying moral. I have before intimated that obedience to positive precepts is really moral (though the matter be indifferent), and is properly virtue: and now I am to show that it may be in some cases (I do not say that it always is) greater virtue.

1. If the positive command be more difficult, requiring a greater degree of self-denial. It has been sometimes the method of an all-wise God, to prove, exercise, and perfect his most faithful servants by some additional positive precepts, over and above what he expects or requires of common men. Thus he proved Abraham by two very extraordinary positive commands; one to leave his own country and his father's house, which he meekly, humbly, implicitly obeyed, "not knowing whither he went"; the other, to sacrifice his most dearly beloved son, in which also Abraham was all obedience. I need not say what a complication of virtues, and what elevated degrees of each, were shown in those two instances of his obedience, much beyond any thing that ever was or ever could be shown in the ordinary way of mere moral duties. The nature of the thing itself speaks it, and the Scripture encomiums given of Abraham's faith, hope, and resignation, abundantly confirm it.

It was with a view to Abraham's case, and any other the like cases, that I observed in my Remarks, (p. 425.) "that obedience to positive institutions is sometimes the noblest and best exercise of the love of God, showing the greater affection, and prompter resignation to the Divine will." Adding these words, "He is a proud and a saucy servant that will never obey his master but where he sees

the reason of the command. It is reason enough for obeying, to every modest and humble servant, that his Lord, so much wiser than he, and to whom he owes all his service, has commanded it." Upon these words, the Answerer thus comments, p. 80. "The reader is from hence to imagine that our Saviour has required an implicit blind resignation to his will, in the institution of his Sacraments." But what I said, referred to positive institutions or commands, in the general, as I expressly noted, p. 425, and not to the Sacraments in particular: and by Lord, I understood God as giving positive precepts to Adam, to Abraham, etc. and not Christ as instituting the Sacraments. I never said nor thought, that the reasons of the two Sacraments are not assigned in Scripture; I intend to show that they are, and that those reasons are as weighty and as considerable as those upon which moral duties are founded. But that God may and does upon special occasions require an implicit resignation to his commands, and that the paying such implicit resignation to God (as did Abraham) is a noble exercise of faith, and of the love of God, I thought had been unquestionable. Our author by twice calling it "blind resignation," and by his signifying that it would be a "real injury to our Lord's character," to represent him "as acting in this manner," in "requiring such affection, such blind resignation"; I say, by all this, he seems to think, that God has no right to require any such implicit, or, as he calls it, blind resignation. Which if it be his principle, as I am willing to hope it is not, it is what he ought to repent of, for it is not only proud and irreverent, but indeed horribly profane.

As to what our Lord has undoubtedly commanded in the New Testament, we ought most certainly to comply with it, whether we know all or any of the reasons for his commanding it, or no. Implicit resignation is due to all his certain commands: and if he himself has given us the reasons, it is a favour that he has done so. But I do not observe that he always gave reasons: particularly when he instituted the form of Baptism in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I do not remember that he assigned the reasons for joining Son and Holy Ghost with the Father: but he expected to be obeyed therein presently, leaving it to the Apostles afterwards to intimate the reasons by the doctrine they taught. But to proceed.

Sometimes positive precepts have been given by God, and not complied with, or not without great reluctance, by men that would readily have practiced all moral duties: which shows how much greater a perfection it may be, in some cases, to comply with positive, than with moral commands. The case of Moses's being ordered to appear before Pharaoh, and that of the Prophet Jonas, and a third of the young man in the Gospel, are known cases. Had they all readily complied with the positive Divine orders given, how vastly more perfect had

they thereby shown themselves, than by being merely good moral men?

2. If the positive precept aims at some benefit of a higher kind, or more diffusive, or more lasting; then also obedience to such positive precept is preferable to moral. The command given to the Apostles to “preach the Gospel to every creature,” was, I suppose, a positive command: the good intended by it was the salvation of mankind hereafter, as well as their temporal felicity here. There could not be any benefit of a higher kind, or more diffusive, or more extensive in duration, reaching to all eternity: therefore obedience to such precept, though only positive, was of greater value and excellency than moral virtues; low attainments, low works in comparison. What is feeding the hungry, a few only at most, clothing the naked, relieving the widow and orphan, or the like, if compared with bringing life, eternal life and happiness, to a whole world? As to cases or instances wherein positive duties may be preferred to moral, that depends upon the time and place, and other circumstances. When pious Mary expressed her devout affection toward our blessed Lord by anointing his head (a positive duty as I conceive), our Lord approved and commended it above charity to the poor (a moral duty) at that time, giving this reason: “The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always.” [Matt. 26:2. John 12:8.] When Martha desired the assistance of her sister Mary, which in common cases would have been kind and friendly, and moral duty, our blessed Lord commended Mary for attending rather to good instructions relating to a better world, preferring the positive duty, calling it, in those circumstances, the “good part,” and the “one thing needful.” It depends therefore, as I said, upon the circumstances, and requires good judgment and discretion to determine well and wisely, when to prefer a positive duty, and when a moral one: but enough has been offered to show that the positive duties are sometimes preferable, and carry more virtue in them.

III. But I further promised to show that there may be as great, or greater, iniquity and impiety in disobeying positive precepts, than in disobeying moral ones. There may be greater contempt of the Divine authority, greater profaneness shown in this way, than in the other. I do not say there always is, but that there sometimes, or very often, may be. When God in an extraordinary manner is pleased to send out his precepts, by an express from heaven, that is a circumstance which gives uncommon weight to the command or prohibition; and disobedience to it then carries a degree of contempt and defiance in it, more than common breaches of the law of nature does. In fact we find, as I before observed in my Remarks [Remarks, p. 425.] (and no reply has been hitherto so much as attempted to it), that the violating one positive precept first brought in sin, and thereupon a flood of misery into the world, which we yet feel at this day. I may

further mention the case of King Saul, who though he was in many respects an immoral man, yet never offended so highly as in the breach of a positive precept, which is called rebellion, [1 Sam. 15:23.] and is represented in as black colours as possible, ranked with witchcraft, iniquity, and idolatry, the most heinous provocations: and it was for this principally he was rejected from being king, and forfeited both his life and his kingdom. [1 Sam. 28:17–18.] His disobedience in that particular was striking at God's authority, and treating his Maker with contempt, and therefore was highly profane. The two instances already given may sufficiently show how wicked and how dangerous it may sometimes be to violate positive commands. And as to positive institutions, which are permanent positive commands, we may I see, by the penalties appointed by God in the Jewish law for the breach of them, the stress that was laid upon them. Circumcision was bound upon the Jews by stronger penalties than many moral duties: and the gathering of sticks on the Sabbath day was death by Divine appointment, [Num. 15:32, etc.] while theft, and several other breaches of the moral law, were more mildly dealt with. So that if we may judge of a crime by the penalties affixed to it, we have no reason at all to suppose that God was less displeased with the breach of some positive institution, than with transgressions against the moral ones. From all which I may now presume to draw this inference; that the distinction of moral and positive will do us very little service, as to the passing a judgment either upon the comparative value of Divine precepts, or upon the comparative iniquity or danger of transgressing them: but this important problem must be solved, this doubt decided, by quite other resources, and by other rules.

IV. I proceed then, fourthly, to observe that the comparative value of any duties, above other duties, depends not upon their positive or moral nature, but upon their relation to and the connection with the primary law of nature, the general good of the whole intelligent system, considered in its largest compass both of extent and duration. To know the value and importance of any Divine precept, ask not whether it be positive, or whether it be moral, but ask what depends upon paying a conscientious obedience to it. Charity towards men's souls; for instance, is greater charity than relieving only their bodily wants; and the converting men to the true religion, in order to bring them to heaven, is of much higher importance than procuring only their temporal felicity in this life. Moral virtues, strictly so called, look no higher than the temporal happiness of society, of the whole community of mankind: but moral virtues evangelized, or improved into Christian duties, have partly a view to promote the good of human society here, but chiefly to qualify the observers of them for a much more blessed and more enduring society hereafter. Take mankind in their whole

extent, as immortal beings, ordained for eternity, and as designed to make up one society with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with angels also and arch angels, and with one another; and when you have this view before you, and any duties are to be compared together, consider, upon a competent weighing of all circumstances, which is best calculated to promote the common good of the whole, and which may be omitted with least damage to the general felicity. If it be asked, whether I may sometimes neglect the public prayers of the Church, to be employed in relieving widows or orphans, or doing the utmost service I am capable of to my prince, or country, or to mankind; I answer, it is right so to do, upon occasion, or in some particular exigencies; because the honour of God and his ordinances would not thereby suffer, but mankind would be served in it and by it. But if the question be, whether I may totally, or very frequently, neglect the public prayers on any such pretense; I say, no. Such a profane neglect of the Divine ordinances would amount to a contempt of them, and the ill example therein given would do infinitely more hurt to mankind, than all the services of any single man, or any body of men could compensate. More depends upon keeping up a face and sense of religion in the world, than upon any moral virtues. In truth, moral virtues themselves depend upon it, and can never subsist without it. So that any pretense of setting up moral virtues in opposition to religious duties, is undermining morality instead of serving it, and is defeating the very end which it pretends to secure. Enough has been said to show by what rules and measures we may, as occasions happen, judge of the comparative value of one duty above another. I have been forced to fetch a wide compass, in order to clear up this matter to common readers: and now having fixed and settled the principles upon which I proceed, if these principles be true and just, there can be no great difficulty in returning proper answers to all objections.

Chapter IV.

Objections answered.

Objections to the principles before laid down are either drawn from Scripture or from reason. I shall consider both in their order, omitting none that the Answer to the Remarks has hit upon, but supplying some which he has not mentioned, that the readers may have the larger view of what belongs to the question.

I. I begin with the objections from Scripture. The Answer to the Remarks observes that positive institutions, when compared with moral virtues or moral duties, “are treated as mere nothings, [Answer to the Remarks, p. 91.] as things not required at all. “See,” says he, “how the prophets have treated the whole Mosaic

dispensation, when compared with doing justly, and loving mercy; and walking humbly with God.” But the gentleman is much mistaken, if he imagines that this at all affects the question about the obligation of positive commands. “Walking humbly with God” is walking in the way of his commandments, in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Obeying the positive commands of God is walking humbly with him; and, in some cases, as in that of Abraham particularly, is more peculiarly and eminently so: and Saul never acted more proudly, nor ever offended more highly, than when he transgressed against a positive command.

God slighted-sacrifices, one part only of obedience, and hypocritically performed, in comparison of whole and entire, obedience. He slighted them, in some cases, not because they were positive duties, but because they were part only of what God required, and reduced to an external part, separate from that true and sincere piety which ought to have gone along with them. For the like reasons, and in the like circumstances, God will as much slight any moral duties when hypocritically and outwardly performed, upon ill principles, or upon no principles. “Though. I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” [1 Cor. 13:3.] A man may feed the poor for ostentation or vanity, may clothe the naked for his own interest, may visit the sick for his curiosity, may relieve the widow and fatherless for the ends of vainglory and popularity; and those outward moral performances will be altogether as contemptible as the hypocritical sacrifices of the Jews were, which the Prophet so justly censures. Or if they had not been hypocritical, yet if they were offered only as partial obedience, and as a kind of composition in lieu of the whole; in this view also they deserved to be, spoken of with contempt and disdain. And the like may be said also of any moral duties, if amounting only to a partial obedience. If a man, for instance, is charitable to the poor, but yet indulges brutal lust; or if he is sober, chaste, temperate, but exceeding covetous withal and extorting, such partial obedience is as contemptible as were the Jewish sacrifices. “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” [James 2:10.] I say then, that the sacrifices of the Jewish dispensation were not slightly spoken of on account of their being positive institutions, but either on account of their being made mere outward and hypocritical performances, or as being at best no more than partial obedience; in which cases, even moral services are as contemptible as positive. Now let us proceed.

The author objects farther, as follows [Answer to the Remarks, p. 71.]: “The principles laid down by the prophets of old, and confirmed by our Saviour himself in his approbation of the maxim, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*, are

directly contradictory to those which the remarker insists upon.” To which I answer: that maxim, “I will have mercy rather than sacrifice,” [Hosea 6:6. Matt. 9:13, 12:7.] is first applied by our blessed Saviour, by way of justification of himself for preaching the Gospel to publicans. Matt. 9:11. The ritual laws restrained the Jews from conversing familiarly with heathens, or unclean persons; notwithstanding which, our blessed Lord came down to eat with publicans in order to convert them, showing mercy to their souls. I know not whether this kind of mercy will be taken into our author’s list of moral virtues, nor whether he will reckon preaching the Gospel among the positive or the moral duties. If he thinks it positive, then this application made by our blessed Lord in that instance is not to his purpose: for all that it proves is, that one positive duty of great consequence is preferable to another positive duty of slighter consequence. However that be, I will venture to assure him that wherever one duty is preferred to another, it is not because one is moral and another is positive, but because one is more important, in such and such circumstances, than the other. That is the rule to go by, as observed above: the other is mere imagination. I would further observe to him that when King Saul transgressed a positive command, the Prophet in that case applied to him a maxim very like to that of Hosea 6:6 or tantamount to it. “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” [1 Sam. 15:22.] Obedience, we see, is the thing that God requires, be it in a positive instance or a moral. Only we are to judge from the circumstances, in doubtful cases, which is the precept then chiefly to be regarded, which most insisted upon, or necessary to be insisted upon, and so we may learn how to perform the most acceptable obedience:

Had the Jews of old ever been in any disposition to throw off the legal rites, and to abolish the daily sacrifice, we should have had more tragical complaints of it from the Prophets, than of any other of their immoralities or abominations. But indeed they never durst come up to that height of profaneness: for that would have amounted to an open revolt, and a total apostasy from God. Immoralities are high misdemeanors; but throwing off all positive laws, all instituted religion, is all immorality at once, is compendious wickedness, and defiance to the God of heaven. We know that the daily sacrifice ceased under Antiochus Epiphanes; which was a misfortune only to the Jews, and not their fault: and yet even that misfortune is described beforehand in tragical colours by the prophet Daniel, [Daniel 8. See also Jeremiah’s Lament 2:6 of another like case.] as a sad and dismal judgment upon the people. Such is the regard due to positive institutions, while they continue in force, or while they have not been repealed by the same authority that gave them. The Jews, however otherwise wicked, were never impudent enough to leave off their sacrifices and

solemn assemblies which is so far from showing the contemptible nature or slight obligation of those positive observances, that it rather shows quite the contrary. They are the last things that even the wickedest of men will throw off, because the so doing is downright apostasy. It is a step beyond common crimes or great immoralities, and such as none can take till they are mad enough to run any the most desperate lengths. Men may break through the laws of the second table, and there may yet be hopes reclaiming them, while the laws of the first (which are of primary obligation, and the foundation of all the rest) have any hold of them: but if they throw off even the laws of the first table too, they are then lost and gone beyond recovery. But I pass on to what the Objector has to urge farther.

“The Prophets,” says he, [Answer to the Remarks, p. 71.] “tell us, – To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I delight not in the blood of bullocks. — When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts?” [Isaiah 1:11–12.] Very well: and yet these very things which the Prophet here speaks so slightly of, are elsewhere styled a “sweet savour unto the Lord.” [Lev. 1:9.] Which is a demonstration that not the sacrifices themselves, but the bad manner of preparing them, the evil dispositions defiling them, the wickedness that crept into them; these were what the Prophet’s censure was laid upon: and therefore he speaks as slightly of prayers the same chapter [Isaiah 1:11–12.] (though prayer is commonly reckoned among the moral duties), for the prayer of the wicked is an abomination [Prov. 23:9.] in the sight of God. But my Corrector says further, “How easy would it have been to have replied to Isaiah, upon the Remarker’s principle, that obedience to a positive institution is at once an exercise of obedience to the law, and of faith, of worship, and of repentance.” Yes certainly, and so it is, when the obedience is sincere, and duly circumstantiated. And yet the Remarker will not scruple to speak as slightly and contemptibly of unworthy receiving of the Sacrament, as Isaiah spoke of the unworthy offering of sacrifices. Who has required it at the hands of profane men, while such to come to Christian Baptism, or to the holy Sacrament, to defile these sacred mysteries and to increase their own damnation? Nevertheless, worthy receiving is literally what I said it was, and all that I said, as I shall show more distinctly in due time and place. But the Objector goes on. [Answer to the Remarks, p.72.]

“The prophet certainly thought and acted upon a different principle, when having treated, as it were, with contempt, the positive institutions of the law, he adds moral virtues, as the things which should render them acceptable to God. – Wash ye, make ye clean, [Isaiah 1:16–17.] etc.” The Prophet, I presume, had, more sense and more piety than to treat any of God’s ordinances with contempt.

What he condemned was the profanation of those ordinances, not the ordinances themselves; or to speak more strictly, the ordinances as profaned, and not merely as positive ordinances. Any moral performances, if outward only and hypocritical, or if otherwise cancelled by iniquity and disobedience, would have been as worthless as anything the Prophet speaks of. The Prophet bids the people “cease to do evil, learn to do well.” Is not obeying God’s ordinances, whether positive or moral, doing well? How does this exclude positive institutions? But the Prophet adds, “Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” Right, he mentions the particular articles in which the Jews were most faulty at that time. At other times, they are as much blamed for profaning and polluting the Sabbaths, [Ezek. 20:13, 16, 24; 22:8; 23:38.] positive ordinances: and had any of them omitted circumcision, positive ordinance too, they would not have been admonished only by a Prophet, but “cut off from the people.” [Gen. 17:14.] However, I allow that mere outward acts, whether in positive or moral duties, are worth nothing in a religious account. And as soon as the Objector knows how to distinguish between outward acts and positive duties, and between slighting some positive duties, and slighting them as such; he may then easily answer every objection he has raised.

He goes on to St. James, who, as he observes, describing pure religion, “puts it upon moral actions, to visit the fatherless, and widow,” [James 1:27.] etc. No doubt but the duties which St. James there mentions, if performed as they should be, and upon right Christian principles, are parts of pure religion: and so are many other duties both positive and moral, which he has not there named, and which yet are as necessary as the other, and necessary to complete the other; for God will not be served by halves. The same St. James exhorts his converts to “submit themselves to God,” [James 4:7.] which certainly includes submission to all his commandments: and he further advises them, in time of sickness, to call for the elders of the Church, to pray over them, and to anoint them with oil, promising them that the prayer of faith should save the sick, [James 5:14–15.] and that if he had committed sins, they should be forgiven him. Surely St. James had no contemptible opinion of positive ordinances. I may add that he speaks very highly of Abraham’s obedience to a positive precept.

But the Objector has another text which one would not easily have thought of, and it is to show “the efficacy of moral virtue beyond dispute.” It is Rom. 2:25–26 which runs thus: “Circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law, but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.” It is very odd to cite a text to prove the efficacy of the works of the law, against the whole tenor of the Apostle’s doctrine everywhere else. For the Apostle’s professed design, and the whole turn of his argument in several of his Epistles, is

to persuade men not to trust to the efficacy of the works of the law, because indeed no man's works would be or could be perfect enough to trust to; for which reason he advises them rather to trust to the efficacy of faith, that is, to the grace of the Gospel covenant sealed in the blood of Christ, by which alone men might justly hope for salvation. Not that good works were not necessary conditions, though wanting that proper efficacy to salvation which the alone merits of Christ's death supplied.

But to return to our Objector, and to take notice of his marvelous comment. "Positive institutions," says he, "profit, if thou keep the law" (N.B. the Jewish Law, for that the Apostle is plainly speaking of), "they are good means to make men virtuous, and consequently are profitable." The truth is, the works of the Jewish law, both natural and positive (for the Apostle takes all in, ceremonial, moral, and judicial), those works if exactly and to a tittle performed, might have answered some purpose, because, according to promise and covenant, a Jew that should keep the law was to have life therein. [Lev. 18:5.] And therefore circumcision (considered here as the seal of the covenant, rather than as a positive duty), which made a man "debtor to the whole law," [Gal. 5:3.] might be of some use, provided he should keep the whole law, otherwise it would be hurtful, being the taking up a burden that he should not be able to bear. Therefore since no man could wisely trust so far to his own strength, as to hope to be saved by works, St. Paul constantly advises to trust to the grace of God in Christ, which alone could supply the defective obedience even of the best men, and make it acceptable with God. But this part of the dispute may more properly come in under what I intend upon the Sacraments, and is but a kind of digression in this place: only because positive institutions are concerned in it, it was necessary to take some notice of it.

I have now run through all that the Objector had to urge from Scripture, in favour of moral duties, as being absolutely preferable to positive: and it does not appear that he has been able to prove his point.

II. I come in the next place to objections drawn from the nature or reason of the thing.

1. The first and principal, [Answer to the Remarks. p. 75.] in the words of Archbishop Tillotson, is as follows: "Natural and moral duties are approved of God for themselves, on their own account, and for their own sake, upon account of their own natural and intrinsic goodness; but the ritual and instrumental parts of religion are only pleasing to God in order to these, and so far as they tend to beget and promote them in us."

In answer to this plea, I must first observe that the intrinsic goodness here spoken of means natural goodness only, or beneficial tendency, such as appears

in almsgiving, liberality, etc. and which is the same, though the thing be done out of vanity, or ostentation, or other worse principle: it follows the outward act. But our question is about moral goodness, which lies in the obedience to the Divine law, and which is equally seen in an indifferent matter, as in a thing which is naturally and materially of beneficial tendency. I must next observe that obedience to a positive law, as preaching the Gospel, for instance, may be of more beneficial influence, and may therefore have more intrinsic goodness in it than moral duties, because it tends to instruct, enlighten, improve, and save mankind, and that not for the present only, but to all eternity. It must not therefore be said that positive duties, as to their material part, or outward act, have not a beneficial tendency: they generally have, and God ordains them for those outward ends and uses, besides the inward use they have upon the person practicing the same, if he does it out of a good heart. As to the moral goodness of positive duties, that stands exactly upon the same foot with the moral goodness in natural duties. The obedience to the Divine law (which is moral goodness) is alike in both, only more or less excellent, according to the circumstances, as I have more than once observed.

I must further take notice that it is entirely begging the question, to say that all positive duties are instrumental parts only of religion. They may be as direct religion, or even more direct religion, than any moral performances. So long as Adam obeyed the positive precept, his obedience was an exercise of self-denial, faith, hope, and the love of God. And Abraham's obedience to positive precepts (as I have often hinted) was an exercise of the most exalted faith in, and love to, his Maker. What other virtues could those be instrumental to? There could be no greater. I very much suspect that this instrumentality, as commonly stated, is mostly founded in mistake. It is true that all virtues have such a close connection with other virtues that they may, in some sense, be said to be instrumental one to another. But unless we have a mind to set the second table before the first, and to confound everything, we must allow that piety towards God is not so properly instrumental to other duties, or the means to them (for the end is nobler than the means), as it is the foundation of other virtues, which are superstructure only, built upon it. The love of God is, the stock or stem, out of which all other virtues spring forth. The love of God, expanded or branched out into all its divisions and subdivisions, is the whole of virtue, the whole of religion and morality. Let us begin then at the head, and so may we set every virtue and every grace in its due order.

I cannot here help observing of Archbishop Tillotson, whose objection I am now answering, that that great and good man, and, for the most part, excellent Divine, was not altogether so accurate in his notions of the

instrumentality of some virtues to others, as might have been wished. He has a pointed saying in one of his Sermons: [Tillotson, Serm. xix. vol. i. p. 206. fol.] “To separate goodness and mercy from God, compassion and charity from religion, is to make the two best things in the world, God and religion, good for nothing.” He has another near akin to it, a little lower in the same page. “What is religion good for, but to reform the manners and dispositions of men, to restrain human nature from violence and cruelty, from falsehood and treachery, from sedition and rebellion?” The thought is free and bold, and, probably, in some measure shocking to many a serious reader; who may suspect there is something amiss in it; though it is not presently perceived where the fault lies. The truth is, there is an ὑστερον πρότερον, there is a subjecting the laws of the first to the laws of the second table; there lies one impropriety: and farther, God the ultimate end of all, and to whom all things are to be ultimately referred, is considered here as subservient to man, or to the creatures, as if they were the sad, and God was to be referred to them. I cannot say but the turn is pretty, and surprising, as an οξύμωρον: but it might as well have been spared in so lotions a subject, where it much concerns us to have strict and just notions; and not to confound ideas. The love of God is the root of all virtue, and into that all virtue resolves. Piety is not instrumental to social virtues, but it is the source and fountain from whence they flow. We are to be trained up to social virtues here, in order to a social life both in this world and the next. But the Head of all society is God: and the duties that directly terminate in him are the prime duties and then social virtues towards men, springing from the other, and subordinate also to the other, follow in their place. God may in some special cases dispense with our immediate services to him, to give us leisure to serve mankind, and may accept it in such circumstances, as the most valuable service: but still, absolutely speaking, his immediate service is first in order, and first in dignity, and first in obligation, because all the rest depend upon it, and are wrapped up in it. I have spent the more pains in answering this first objection, because it is in a manner all; for the rest are little more than several changes upon it. But I pass on.

2. It is pleaded in the Answer to the Remarks, that moral virtues are “the exact imitation of God himself” [Answer to the Remarks, p. 72.]: and “what can make a reasonable creature acceptable to God, but the imitation of God?” [Ibid. p. 76.] But there is something previous to the imitating of God, and more acceptable to him, which is obeying him: otherwise the duties of the first table would be set behind the second. We may endeavour faintly to imitate God in our benevolence towards man; but the love of God, and all the duties which a creature owes immediately to his Creator, are the prime duties: and they are more strictly and properly the business of every creature, than imitating God. To imitate his

example, is paying him a dutiful respect; but submitting to his authority in all things is most highly honouring him, and shows the profoundest reverence, resignation, and humility.

3. I have met with a more direct and a closer argument for giving the preference to moral duties above positive, and it is this: that positive duties have command only to enforce them, but moral duties are founded upon command as well as the other, and upon eternal reasons too. To which I answer, that I know not whether many, or any positive duties are so founded upon mere command as the objection supposed. Indeed the command makes the obligation upon us; but who knows what reasons infinite Wisdom may have for it, or what weighty consequences may hang upon it? Besides, the reasons of misty moral duties, strictly speaking, terminate in this life, as the duties themselves do, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, etc. Only the general reasons, or duties, love of God, and love of man, abide forever: and into these general reasons all obedience to positive as well as to moral precepts resolves. To this I may add, that obedience to either, equally or indifferently, qualifies a man for the enjoyment of God, equally cherishes good dispositions, equally perfects man's nature, and is fitted to raise men up to an eternal and heavenly state; so that obedience to positive duties is plainly founded in eternal reasons, though the matter of them be in itself indifferent. For it is an eternal principle that God must be obeyed in everything.

4. Another argument of like kind occurs in a late thoughtful writer, whom I have before mentioned, and it is thus: [Colliber of Revealed Religion, p. 150.] "Our obligation by the laws of nature and reason are founded on the nature of God and ourselves, and the necessary relation between him and us, which renders the matter of them necessarily good; whereas our obligation by positive precepts is founded on the free pleasure of God, commanding things which had no moral goodness in themselves, but were of an indifferent nature." But the ingenious author mistakes in thinking that any actions as to their matter have any moral goodness in them. They have a natural tendency to promote the common happiness, which natural goodness, or use rather, they retain when performed by hypocrites, without any moral goodness at all. Moral goodness is choosing and performing those beneficial actions upon a principle of obedience, and out of love to God. And there is just the same moral goodness in obeying God, though the matter of it be otherwise indifferent: and the eternal or unchangeable obligation that every creature lies under to obey his Creator in everything, makes it as necessary for him to obey in one case as in the other: and then all the question is, which of the two precepts, in the present circumstances, God most insists upon, or which, upon the whole, carries the most diffusive and durable good in it. God's authority is a tender point; and if that may be more hurt by

disobeying a positive precept (as in some cases it may) than by disobeying a moral one, the common good will suffer more by the former, than it would by the latter. I grant are cases to be determined by the importance of the precept but then, as I have often said, the importance is to be judged of, not by a precept being moral or positive, but by a due consideration of all circumstances, upon a serious and an extended view of what relates both to this world and the other.

Having thus finished what I intended upon the general question, relating to positive and moral institutions at large, I may now proceed to the particular questions which concern the two Sacraments.

Chapter V.

Of the Two Sacraments considered as positive Institutions.

Dr. Clarke asserts that they are means only to an end, and are therefore never to be compared with mere; duties. What I have to say upon this subject may conveniently be cast into the following method.

I. I assert that the two Christian Sacraments really are, in some sense, means to moral, to Christian virtue, and that both naturally and supernaturally.

II. The right and worthy use of the Sacraments is not only a means to virtue, but is virtue; is part of our moral and Christian holiness, piety, and perfection.

III. The two Sacraments, besides their being means of virtue and of grace, and part of Christian holiness, are further also the instituted ordinary means of applying the benefit of the great atonement to every worthy receiver.

IV. They may be compared to moral duties, and in some cases preferred to them, according as the circumstances direct.

I. I assert that the two Sacraments really are, in some sense, means to moral, to Christian virtue: and I add, both naturally and supernaturally.

1. They are so naturally. They are in their very nature or quality aptly contrived to promote a good life. For, besides what they are in other views, they are federal rites in which we covenant with God through Christ, binding ourselves in the most solemn manner, ever after to obey God in every article of duty, to the utmost of our power. Such sacred stipulations and engagements must, in the very nature and reason of the thing, be of great force and efficacy for the restraining men from evil, and the inciting them to every good work. Accordingly, the author of the Exposition observes of the Eucharist, very, justly, “that by doing this constantly and devoutly, in remembrance of Christ, and showing forth the Lord’s death till he come, we renew and confirm continually our own part in the Christian covenant: we strengthen our faith by meditating

upon the object, and upon the grounds and motives of it we increase our hope by commemorating thankfully the love of God in Christ, and exhibiting and applying to ourselves these memorials of Divine goodness and compassion towards sinners: we enlarge and strengthen, by this communion of Christians, that sacred bond of universal love, charity, and goodwill, which is the end of the commandment.” [Clarke’s Exposition, p. 314.] All this is very right so far, and the author has here well explained and set forth the natural force and efficacy of the worthy receiving the holy Communion.

2. But besides this natural effect, there is also a supernatural virtue and efficacy derived from above upon the worthy receiver, which the author of the Exposition, I know not why, has silently passed over. He has told us what we do in it, not what the Spirit of God does. The Spirit of God works invisibly upon the worthy receivers, to assist, strengthen, and confirm them in all goodness. This is plainly the doctrine of our Church Catechism, where it speaks of the “inward and spiritual grace” going along with the worthy reception of the Sacraments. And it is the doctrine also of our Articles and Homilies, which I thought proper to observe in my Remarks, [Remarks, p. 422, 423.] judging it very reasonable that an exposition of our Church Catechism should be tried by the doctrine of our Church. The same doctrine appears also in our Liturgy: of Baptism, in these words, *We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit*, etc. [Public Baptism of Infants.] and of the Eucharist, more obscurely intimated in these words, that our sinful bodies may *be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood*. [Communion Office.] This is meant of the supernatural sanctifying graces going along with the worthy reception of the holy Communion. It is the plain and avowed doctrine of our Church. And therefore if any of our Divines following the Remonstrants abroad, have herein departed from the principles of our Church, it is high time to take notice of this falling off, and to endeavour to call them back to our old and sound principles. Since I have mentioned the Remonstrants, if anyone has a mind to see in a short compass wherein we differ from them, not only in this, but in some other important points, I refer him [Nicholsii Defens. Ecclesiae Anglicanae, p. 193.] to a little book written by a very judicious Divine of our Church, Dr. William Nichols, about twenty years ago, written in Latin, and since translated into English. And indeed, while Episcopius, Limborch, and Curcellaeus often come into the hands of our young Divines, who may not perhaps readily distinguish between the old and true doctrines, and some novel corruptions, it would be very proper for them to have some such book as Dr. Nichols’s at hand, for a caution to them. But I return.

Perhaps I shall be told, after all, that though such be plainly the doctrine of

our Church, yet it is no Scripture doctrine, and may be called upon for Scripture proofs. The Answer to the Remarks asks me, [Answer to the Remarks, p. 76.] what would I have had more said of the divine graces going along with the Sacraments, “unless I would have had the Doctor (Dr. Clarke) talk enthusiastically?” And in the next page he says, speaking of the Remarker, “He seems to me to speak as if to this Sacrament were annexed certain particular effects, which were produced, not as religious and moral effects are produced, in a natural, ordinary, and intelligible manner, but in a mysterious unintelligible way, of which the Scriptures are entirely silent.” I hope the doctrine of our Church stands clear enough of enthusiasm: and I wish this gentleman would well consider, whether, on the other hand, it be not profaneness thus to ridicule the doctrine of the operations of the Holy Spirit. They are mysterious, it is true, and the manner perhaps of operating unintelligible: for “the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” [John 3:8.] But notwithstanding that, the notion of the Spirit’s operating upon the mind or soul of man is a very intelligible notion, and the thing a certain truth. And as it is a fact that was never doubted of by any Christian of old time, that the Holy Spirit of God sheds his blessed influences upon the worthy receivers of the holy Sacraments, so neither is it altogether destitute of Scripture proofs, as hath been often shown by learned and judicious Divines. [See particularly Ger. Voesius de Sacramentorum VI et Efficacia. Oper. tom. vi. p. 243.] As to Baptism, the fact is proved by the texts here following: “Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:5. “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Col. 2:12. “According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Titus 3:5. It would be tedious to discuss these several texts, and to show distinctly how they prove the point in debate. I shall therefore trust them, naked as they are, with the reader, for the present at least, till I see what further occasion there may be for asserting and vindicating their construction.

As to the other Sacrament, the operation of the Spirit in it and by it may be strongly inferred from the analogy there is between the two Sacraments, and from parity of reason, and from what I shall hereafter prove under my third particular, and from the express words of the Apostle: “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” 1 Cor. 12:13. Upon which, see Dr. Whitby’s comment.

But while I am asserting the invisible influences of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and in the Eucharist, upon the worthy receivers, I very well know how

to guard this doctrine from the rants of enthusiasts. Whatever is done by the Holy Spirit is done in a way suitable to the nature of man considered as a moral agent, and does not exclude the concurrence of human will and endeavour. What is supernatural in it does not destroy natural agency, but helps, raises, and advances it. It cannot be expected that I should here run out into a long detail of this matter: a few hints may suffice for our present purpose. And if the reader wants to see more, Dr. Claget's excellent piece, abridged by Mr. Stebbing, is a well-known treatise upon the subject, and is easy to come at. I shall proceed in my method. I have shown that the Sacraments are, in some sense, means of virtue, and that both naturally and supernaturally. I have said, in some sense means, because, though I have been thus far willing to comply with the common language, yet I do not forget the distinction I made above, about foundation and means. I would rather say that this duty is productive of other duties, than means to them: unless piety towards God is to be called the means of charity towards man; which I think not proper. This duty of coming to the Sacraments, this instance of our obedience, is a duty of the first table, and therefore holds the first rank. Besides, Baptism is the new birth, the entering upon the Christian life; and the Eucharist is the constant renewal of it: on which accounts, these two duties should rather be called primary, than instrumental duties; though I am sensible that both expressions will denote the same thing diversely considered. But this will better be understood by what I have to say further of the use of the Sacraments, under another head.

II. The right and worthy use of the Sacraments has not barely the nature of means to an end (*viz.* to moral virtue), but is virtue direct, is part of our moral and Christian holiness, piety, and perfection. I mean by this, that it is as much a part of virtue, as the performance of any moral duties is; as much as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, etc. is virtue. Some distinguish between virtue and duties, confining the name of virtues to the internal habits and dispositions of the mind. In that restrained sense, we should never call any good works virtue, and upon that foot, all moral duties, as well as positive, would be excluded from the name and notion of virtue. But as it has been the more common way to call moral duties virtues, and I see no harm in it, since custom has authorized it, and it is well enough understood; I shall not scruple to follow the common phraseology: only I must add, that the worthy receiving of the Christian Sacraments is virtue in the same sense as any good moral action is, it is an exercise of many and great virtues.

1. First, it is an exercise of the love of God, shown in the obedience paid to his express commands. It is an act of worship, and of the most solemn and excellent worship that ever was ordained. It is the most peculiar and proper part

of evangelical worship, wherein we do most show ourselves to be Christians. It is the badge of our profession, whereby we profess Christ before men, and eminently distinguish ourselves from Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans.

2. It is an exercise of faith, hope, and charity, all in one, and a very lively expression of all three together. I stand not to prove such plain things: nobody can doubt of it, that ever so slightly considers the nature of it. Only, I must note, that while I speak of both Sacraments together, I must be supposed to mean it in respect of adults only: otherwise, what I say is to be understood of the Eucharist only, of which none participate but adults.

3. The worthy receiving of the holy Eucharist in particular is an exercise of humility, such as the pride of mere moral virtue is a stranger to, and which such virtue wants to render it more acceptable in the sight of God. There is the greatest degree of humiliation and self-abasement that is possible, in thus expressing the sense we have of the all-sufficient sacrifice and atonement made by the death of Christ, and the need we had of it, renouncing our own righteousness.. It is resigning up all the praise, glory, and seeming merit of our moral virtues, and casting ourselves entirely upon the merits and mediation of our great Redeemer; in whom alone, after performing all the necessary conditions, and being still no more than unprofitable servants, we at length hope for salvation. This devout exercise of humility, and thankfulness, and profound reverence towards God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is a degree of virtue much beyond what commonly goes under the name of moral virtue; and is so far from being merely a step to it, that it is an improvement upon it, and a refinement beyond it. But this is no more than virtue still, and so is a condition only; and it wants the all-sufficient merits and intercession of Christ Jena to render it accepted, as all human virtue does.

Enough had: been said to show that obedience to God, in the use of the Sacraments, is as plainly an exercise of virtue, as any act of moral duty can be, and therefore they are not means only. None could ever have suggested such a thought of their being means only, had they not first abstracted in their minds the outward act from the inward piety, which always goes along with the worthy reception of them. And were we so to abstract the outward acts from the inward piety, in any moral performances, there would then be no more direct virtue in them, than some suppose in these positive observances. All the confusion, as I am persuaded that has perplexed. this article, has arisen from the separating the material from the formal part, and not considering both in one, as is commonly done in treating of moral duties. What! is not obeying, loving, serving, fearing, praising God; is not all this direct duty and virtue? What can be virtue, if this be not? All this and more is implied in the worthy participating of the holy

Sacraments. And if the greatest and the highest use of moral duties be to form in us proper dispositions of mind, such as may fit and qualify us for the heavenly society; is there not the very same use in these positive performances, so aptly contrived and calculated to dispose our minds beforehand, first, to a due reverence to, and union with, God the Father, the Head of all, next, with God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, and after them, with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, with whom we join in praises and thanksgivings to God, as often as we devoutly partake of the holy Communion? These are advances in the exercise of holiness and piety much beyond anything in mere natural religion: and therefore it must be thought very strange, that natural duties, founded upon lower views, and not more certain, or more unchangeable relations, shall be called virtues, and these devout exercises shall not, but shall be called, by a diminutive degrading title, means only to virtue, and nothing more. I assert therefore, that they are direct acts of religion and piety, and are duties of the first table, having an immediate respect to God; on which account they ought to come before, and to be placed in the first rank, above the social duties towards man; though both must hang together, and neither can be perfect, or sincere, without the other. But I shall have more to say of the comparative value of these positive duties under another head.

III. The third particular I undertook is, that the two Sacraments, besides their being productive of virtue, and parts of Christian piety, are further also the instituted ordinary means and instruments of applying the benefit of the great atonement to every worthy receiver. In this view, they have a nearer and more immediate influence upon our justification and salvation, than any of our best works can have. Good works are necessary conditions, without which no man shall see God: but yet they have no proper efficacy in themselves for the justifying us. They merit no recompense, they can claim no reward; neither are they perfect enough to be above the need and necessity of pardon. They want favour and indulgence, and many merciful allowances; which indeed shall be made to them; but then it is all in virtue of the meritorious death, passion, and propitiation of our blessed Lord. The author of the Answer, etc. talks in a way, upon this head, which I cannot well understand. He magnifies moral virtues to a strange height. He says, [Answer, p. 72.] “they are in themselves acceptable to God: and a holy, good, and just Being, cannot but approve the man that is governed by them. They want nothing to make them acceptable, nor can anything make them more acceptable than they are. They are already perfection, the exact imitation of God himself; and therefore need no aid to relieve them, nor any thing to improve them.” Upon the reading of this paragraph, I knew not what to think of it, nor whether to call it Popery or Quakerism. it is no Protestant

doctrine, I am sure, unless it be the Quaker's sinless perfection. To pretend that human virtues (for such we are speaking of) "want nothing to make them acceptable," that they are "in themselves" acceptable to God, that they are "already perfection," and the "exact imitation" of God himself, "need no aid" to relieve them, etc. these are strange positions in any one that has either read the Bible, or has studied mankind. Alas! human virtues at the best (for of those the author must be understood, or the whole talk is impertinent), I say, human virtues are very short and defective; they are not perfection in any such sense as not to need relief and pardon: they are no exact imitation of God, but very far from it: they want the all-prevailing merits of Christ to make them acceptable; otherwise no flesh could stand before the high tribunal, could never enter into the kingdom of heaven. I shall not stay to prove these plain things: the New Testament is full of them; and the whole tenor of the Gospels and Epistles shows that human virtues are all light in the balance, and have no proper efficacy in themselves for procuring salvation. Salvation is the free gift of God, and it is given, not for our virtues or deserts, but for the merit and satisfaction of our Saviour Christ.* This first point being thus fixed and settled, I now proceed with what I was going to say of the Christian Sacraments. The Sacraments are the ordinary standing means by which the salutary influences of Christ's passion are conveyed. They are the channels of remission and pardon. Our salvation stands in the Gospel covenant: and the Sacraments are the appointed means of entering into and of renewing that covenant, [This cup is the new testament, or covenant, in my blood, 1 Cor. 11:24.] and consequently, of beginning and carrying on our communion and intercourse with God. Our excellent Church Catechism therefore right judges them generally necessary, not to virtue only, but directly to salvation. For be our virtues otherwise ever so many, or so great, they will still want the additional relief and improvement which the use of the Sacrament supplies. Cornelius was a man of exemplary moral virtues, "a just man, and one that feared God, with all his house, gave much alms, and prayed to God alway." And yet this just and devout man, whom God himself had also cleansed, [Acts 10:15.] wanted to come to St. Peter in order to be saved, [Acts 11:14.] and after receiving the Holy Ghost, was at length admitted to Christian Baptism, and thereby perfected. Baptism is the ordinary means appointed for remission of sins, according to the express doctrine of the Nicene [Constantinopolitan] Creed: and it is so plainly the doctrine of our Church in her other Offices, that I need not now stand to prove it. As to the ancient churches of Christ, Baptism was ever looked upon by them as the grand absolution, [See Bingham's Eccles. Antiq. vol. viii. book 19. chap. 1. p. 177.] a conveyance of a general pardon of sins to every worthy recipient. And the doctrine is sufficiently warranted by many Scripture texts,

some of which I shall barely refer to, [Titus 3:5. Acts 2:38, 22:16. 1 Pet. 3:21. Col. 2:11–13.] that I may hasten to what concerns the Eucharist, about which more particularly our debate is.

*[The doctrine of our Church, upon this head, in Article the 12th, stands thus: “Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment; yet are they pleasing to and acceptable to God in Christ.” See Bishop Burnet upon it, p. 129. Article the 11th says thus: “We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works, or deservings.”]

The Eucharist also was by the ancient churches looked upon as an instrument of absolution, a conveyance or channel of pardon, and was called the *το τέλειον*, the perfection or consummation of a Christian, there being no higher mystery that an ordinary Christian could partake of. [See Bingham’s *Eccles. Antiq.* vol. viii. book 19. p.182.] But because the ancients are set light by, and appeals are often made to Scripture by such as know a great deal less of the true sense of Scripture than the ancients did, we may follow them in their appeal to Scripture, and show how that sufficiently warrants the doctrine both of the primitive churches and ours in this article. St. Paul’s words to our purpose are as follow. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (participation) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (participation) of the body of Christ?” [1 Cor. 10:16.] I understand these words of a real application on God’s part, and a real participation on our part, of the merits or benefits of the great atonement, so far as respects every worthy communicant. To partake of the body and of the blood of Christ is to partake of his broken body and his blood spilled: which, because literally it is impossible, is by an easy figure understood to mean the partaking of our Lord’s passion, that is, of the atonement made by it. The words are scarce capable of any other sense: and therefore the most judicious commentators have generally espoused it. Some perhaps may suspect that the communion of the body and blood of Christ, may mean no more than having fellowship with Christ, or associating with him. That indeed is true doctrine with respect to the Eucharist, wherein we associate with Christ, but it is not all the doctrine expressed in this text. The Apostle means more, otherwise why should he so emphatically speak of the communion of the blood of Christ, and of the communion of the body of Christ, instead of saying communion with Christ? The body and the blood most certainly refer to what was broken and shed for the remission of sins, [Matt. 26:28.] both which are represented in the Eucharist, and therefore cannot be so naturally understood of anything else, as of the partaking of the benefits of Christ’s passion. The context confirms this sense. For verse the 18th, the Apostle observes that the Israelites of

old, who ate of the sacrifices, were “partakers of the altar” in such a sense as Christians now are partakers of the Lord’s table, or of his body and blood. But how were the Israelites partakers of the altar? By partaking of all the expiations of the burnt offerings and sin offerings which were offered upon the altar for the sins of the whole congregation. In like manner therefore as the Israelites then had thereby a partnership in the expiations of the altar, so Christians now (as many as come worthily) have a partnership in the great expiation made by the body and blood of Christ. The reader that desires to see this construction of the text asserted more at large may please to turn to Bp. Burnet’s Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles, [Burnet, Exposit. Article xxviii. p. 316, 317.] whose words I have here mostly used, and whose sense I have abridged. I shall thereto add Dr. Hammond’s sense of this matter, where [Hammond on the New Testament, Matt. 26:28. p. 132.] he tells us, that in the Sacrament “God solemnly reaches out to us, as by a deed or instrument, what was by promise due to every penitent sinner, every worthy receiver, the broken body of Christ, that is, the benefits of his death.” To the Israelites of old, manna was spiritual meat typifying Christ; and the water of the rock was spiritual drink to them, as a typical representation of Christ: and they that ate of the manna and drank of the rock with faith and a good conscience, ate and drank Christ, as St. Paul intimates, [1 Cor. 10:4.] and so fed upon him, and lived by him. In like manner, but with clearer knowledge, and a more lively faith, does every worthy communicant spiritually eat Christ’s flesh, and drink Christ’s blood. They eat them and, drink them in such a sense as that can be done; that is to say, their souls or spirits receive their proper nutriment, food, and sustenance, namely, all the spiritual advantages and comforts arising from the all-sufficient atonement made by Christ upon the Cross. Such being the case, I must take leave to insist upon it, as before, that the worthy receiving of the holy Communion is so far from being a means only to moral virtues, that it is directly a means of salvation; and that it goes beyond and surpasses moral virtues as to its immediate influence in applying and sealing to us that pardon which the best of human virtues want, and cannot claim, and without which no man - can enter into the kingdom of heaven. On this account, I observed in the Remarks, [Remarks, p. 424.] that “the Sacraments are additional improvements upon virtuous practices, and are of nearer and more immediate efficacy for the uniting us to God and Christ. They supply where moral virtues fall short; they relieve where moral virtues cannot; they finish what the other but begin, our justification and salvation.” The Sacraments do this; that is to say, God does it by them. These are his appointed means, his holy ordinances, in and by which he applies Christ’s merits and atonement to the worthy receiver, and seals their pardon. I suppose it might be with a view to these inestimable benefits

that Ignatius (who was St. John's disciple), speaking of the bread broken in the Eucharist, calls it "the medicine of immortality, our antidote, that we should not die, but live forever in Christ Jesus." [Ignat. ad Ephes. cap. xx.] This is expressive of something more than bare means to moral virtue. Faith and repentance are previous qualifications to the Sacraments; they are conditions of pardon, but pardon comes after. It was a stated rule of the Church, as early as we have any records or memoirs of it, that sound faith, and a good life, i.e. moral virtues, or Christian virtues, in some degree, though not yet perfect, should go before the Sacraments, as the necessary qualifications, without which none should be admitted to them. I shall cite only Justin Martyr, of the age next to the Apostles. "This food," says he, "is with us called the Eucharist, which no one is allowed to partake of, but he that believes the truth of the doctrines taught by us, and has been baptized in the laver which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration, and who leads such a life as Christ has commanded." [Just. Mart. Apol. i. p. 96. edit. Lond.] This shows how moral virtues were considered as previous to the Sacraments, and how they were to be improved and rendered acceptable by these Christian performances.

Against this doctrine, the Answer to the Remarks objects, [Answer, etc. p. 69.] that "not one word of it is contained in Scripture." Strange! when it has already been proved from Scripture, and might be done more largely Bull, that God by the Sacraments conveys both grace and pardon; which is the same thing with saying, that the Sacraments are additional improvements upon virtuous practices. They improve them two ways; first, as augmenting them; and secondly, as rendering them saving by the application of Christ's all-sufficient expiation to them. The Objector asks, "Did our Saviour or his Apostles ever treat virtue in this manner?" Yes, everywhere, and constantly. Our blessed Lord teaches us not to confide in our own virtues, but in his mercy and grace; instructs us to call ourselves "unprofitable servants," [Luke 17:10.] after we have done our best, and all that was commanded us: and he lets us know further, that whatever our moral virtues may be, yet "except we eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, we have no life in us," [John 6:53.] that is to say, unless we partake of the benefits of his passion. The Apostle Paul, almost in every Epistle, teaches and inculcates the same doctrine; that no man shall be saved on account of his works, or his moral virtues (though required as necessary conditions), but by the blood of Christ. And St. John says, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." [1 John 1:7.] Can any man call these plain certain principles in question? The Objector goes on: Did our Saviour or his Apostles "ever in any one instance declare, that moral virtues have no proper efficacy towards procuring salvation?" Yes, in the instance of Cornelius, whom I before

mentioned. But besides that, the whole tenor of the New Testament declares, that the blood of Christ, and his merits, have a proper efficacy towards procuring the salvation of men, and that nothing else has. But the Objector wants Scripture proof for my saying; that moral virtues could only lead to the door of salvation, which the use of the Sacrament must at length open. It would be tedious to answer at large every trifling question: it may suffice to say, in short, that let a man's moral virtues be what they will, yet unless "he be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." [John 3:5.] Moral virtues may prepare the way, but Baptism gives entrance, and lets us in. The case is plain: our salvation stands in the covenant, [See the additional note below.] and the Sacraments are the seals of the covenant, the rites of initiation into it, and continuance in it, and without them the covenant either never commences at all, or is never renewed. The Answer further asks (p. 77) how the remission of sins "appears to be promised more to the worthy receiver in the Sacraments, than upon any act of obedience to Christ's moral laws: or in particular; how the promise of it appears more to worthy receiving, than it does to forgiving our brother his trespasses?" To which I answer, that receiving the Sacrament, considered merely as an act of obedience, brings no remission of sins, confers no pardon, any more than other duties, which all want pardon, and confer none. But the Sacraments considered as seals of the covenant, or solemnities by which it is transacted, are the instruments of pardon, or the channels of conveyance, by which God confers it. Forgiving our brother is a condition of pardon, and such as without which we have no forgiveness at God's hands: but it is no seal of any covenant, no instrument of pardon, as the Sacraments are. I have now done with the Objector, having paid a due respect to all his inquiries, as many as came under this head. There remain only two or three slight things, to be taken notice of under the next article.

IV. The use of the Sacraments may be compared to moral duties, and in some cases preferred before them, according as the circumstances direct. I should here premise, that as the commands for the use of the Sacraments are affirmative, not negative, so the comparison ought to lie between them and the affirmative moral precepts only. And now the question is, whether obedience to the Divine commands in respect of these two positive duties be not as strict and as indispensable, and of as great importance, as obedience to moral duties. I maintain that it is so in the general, and shall now give my reasons. Moral precepts and positive precepts are equally divine precepts, so that in that respect there is no difference: obedience to positive precepts is a moral duty, as much as obedience to moral precepts, so in that respect also they are equal. But in order to state the comparative worth and value of any precepts, we must consider their

ends and uses. All the ends and uses, as I conceive, of moral precepts, resolve in these two.

First, The disposing men to such actions as are for the present peace and happiness of mankind. And secondly, The forming in men's minds such good dispositions as shall qualify them for a heavenly state hereafter. Now let us consider whether, or how far, the two positive precepts about the Sacraments are contrived to answer the ends and uses which we have just now mentioned.

1. As the Christian religion is the best religion that ever was given for procuring the peace of society, and indeed for securing and enforcing all moral virtues; and as the Sacraments are the main support of this religion, and serve to keep it alive in the world; on this single account, they must be conceived as highly useful to mankind in this state: and so the same temporal ends and uses are served by a religious performance of these duties, as by a religious performance of moral duties. Whatever can be said in favour of the Christian religion as an useful religion, useful to kings and states, useful to human society, the same may be said of the two Christian Sacraments, the distinguishing badges of the Christian profession. Or if we consider them only as solemn acts of worship paid to that great and good Being, who steers the whole universe, and in whose hands all sublunary things are; and further, how much it is for the present interests of mankind, that all becoming awe and reverence for the Divine Majesty be kept up in the world: in this view, the devout observance of the Sacraments is as useful to the public happiness, as acts of moral virtue. But this is the least and the lowest part of their commendation.

2. As the Sacraments are rites of covenanting with God, are solemn engagements to all manner of virtue, are means of grace, and are themselves exercises of piety, faith, hope, charity, worship, etc. in this view they exceed any two moral duties that can be named, being more comprehensive, and are apt to beget all manner of good and godly dispositions, such as will qualify a person for the heavenly state hereafter. It is true, that these two positive duties will cease with this world: and so will many moral duties also, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, etc. But then the general habits or dispositions of love and charity, learned by the practice of moral duties, will remain: and so will all the pious and virtuous dispositions formed in the mind by the conscientious use of the Sacraments they also will abide forever. Many of the moral duties have an immediate respect to man, and to man considered as an inhabitant of this world only: but the Sacraments raise the mind higher up to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to archangels; and angels, and the whole host of heaven, tending to beget dispositions proper for living in conjunction or union with that blessed society. So that with respect at least to a life to come, the Sacraments

have the advantage above other duties called moral, forming the mind to higher views, and being more perfective of man's nature. In secular duties, secularity is apt to creep in too much, and it is not very easy always, in the performing them, to keep the mind and heart intent upon God, or to perform them upon a purely religious principle, which is the only thing that can make them valuable: but in, the devout observance of the Sacraments the mind is lifted up from earthly things, and is more abstracted from the world; on which account, these duties are preferable, as to forming in us dispositions proper for a heavenly state.

But it is pleaded [Answer, etc. p. 78.] on the other side, that "the law of nature is a harder law to obey than the positive law of the Sacrament is: and if the reward be proportionate to the difficulty of the obedience required, as is reasonably to be expected, then the lifegiving virtue is much more certainly annexed to an obedience which is contrary to all our affections and inclinations, and which must conquer ten thousand temptations, than it is to such external acts as require no difficulty or trouble at all." I imagined the Objector would discover the confusion he is under, before he ended the sentence. He thinks, I perceive, that we have been pleading all the time for external acts, for the *opus operatum* only, of the Sacraments; which is so far from being valuable, that we condemn it as nothing worth, yea, and as hurtful, increasing damnation. But let him state the case fairly and justly. The external act in moral duties is as worthless as in the other, and is as easy also as in the other. A man may give alms for the ends of covetousness, as easily as he may come to the Sacrament merely for an office, and be never the better man for either. But receiving the Sacrament worthily, with a penitent heart and lively faith, is as difficult a matter as performing any moral duties worthily, that is, conscientiously, and out of an honest and good heart. Nay, it is much more difficult than any single moral duty, as requiring an universal obedience, a thorough change of the hearty and the parting with all vices at once, which is more than practicing any one virtue, or quitting any single vice. And this I am persuaded is the true reason of the common aversion men have for the holy Communion, and of the prejudices that are raised against it. Most persons are willing enough to practice, in their way, moral virtues, such as themselves would choose, retaining all the while some darling vices: but to resolve sincerely against all vices whatever, without the doing of which there is no coming worthily to the holy Sacrament, this is a hard lesson, therefore it is that the Eucharist appears to them a cruel ordinance, and becomes their aversion. There is, I am afraid, but too much reason to suspect, that thin crying up moral virtues in opposition to the use of the Sacraments is nothing but an artful fetch, among many others, to reconcile; men's consciences to a lame and partial obedience, and to make as easy a composition as they can with Almighty God,

giving him a part for the whole. It is very well known what a good moral man signifies, in common estimation; something much below a pious and good Christian. And while the Sacraments are thus depreciated below moral duties, religion and piety will of course suffer, and in the end morality too; that is all true, and lively, and properly called Christian morality.

It is further objected [Answer to the Remarks, p. 74.] that St. Peter “treats Baptism as a low thing in itself,” when he says, “The Baptism that saves is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.” [1 Peter 3:21.] But it seems to me that St. Peter treats Baptism as a very high and heavenly institution, since he expressly ascribes salvation to it. It is true, he expects that the inward principle of holiness and piety should go along with the outward performance, as in all other duties moral or positive; which is not treating them as low things. For the purpose: would it be treating motes; duties as low things, if it were said, that the almsgiving, the sobriety, the mercy and charity that saves, is the true and conscientious alma. giving, sobriety, etc. and none other? The external part of moral duties profiteth not, the internal is the chief thing. The observation is equally true both of moral and positive duties. Outward, religion and outward morality are nothing: the inward principle is the life and the spirit of both. And yet the inward principle, if it does not express itself in outward acts, is nothing, or is no true principle; for “faith without works is dead.” This I hint, to obviate another extreme, lest any should imagine that they may lay aside, or throw off, the external part, upon fond presumption that they have the internal, when they really have not. In these cases, both must go together, unless there be some insuperable difficulty which disables a man from acting what he sincerely intends.

There is another objection to the value of the Sacraments, mentioned by a late writer, [A Letter to Dr. Waterland, printed for J. Noon.] which may deserve some notice; and I shall thus far pay him the civility of an answer. Speaking of the Sacrament, he says, “These institutions are not commanded in that strict and absolute manner, nor esteemed so essential to salvation, as the duties of Christianity, as they are not so frequently inculcated upon us; and as they are not commanded in such a manner; that there is great room to doubt, whether one of them, Baptism, was ever designed by our Saviour himself should be continued in use among Christians. But however, if the end is produced without the means prescribed, it is certainly much more commendable than an observance of the means without arriving at the end for which they were appointed.” To all which I answer distinctly, thus: First, It is wrong to say that these institutions are not commanded in that strict and absolute manner as moral virtues are. For what can be stricter than John 3:5 and Mark 16:16. But the author has a restriction, as the

duties of Christianity. By which, I suppose, he means that if there may be a necessity for them, considered as seals of the covenant, as means of grace, or as channels of pardon, yet they are not so strictly enjoined as duties, only the necessity of them, as to the other respects, is declared. If this be his meaning, (or if it be not, I know not what is), it seems to me to amount to the same thing. For the declaring their end, use, and necessity, is enjoining them. Secondly, As to their not being so frequently inculcated, there is a very judicious answer given to that part of the objection by the ingenious Mr. Stebbing, to which I beg leave only to refer, [Stebbing's Defence of the first Head of the Report of the Committee, chap. v. p. 99. fol. edit.] since I can say nothing better, and I have no mind to repeat. Thirdly, As to the doubt whether Baptism should be continued among Christians, first suggested here by Mr. Emlyn [Emlyn's Tracts, p. 429.]; it is a very weak one, and has been abundantly confuted by the learned Dr. Wall. [Wall's Defense of the History of Infant Baptism, p. 27, etc.] Fourthly, The insinuation in the close of the objection deserves particular notice. For the argument from end and means might be carried still farther, even to the laying aside the means entirely, could but the end be secured: and no doubt but those that make the objection think that it may. I must own, it was my apprehension of this very consequence (which too many would be ready to lay hold of), that first moved me to enter a remark upon Dr. Clarke's doctrine in that particular, and made me think it an article of very weighty importance; especially considering the reigning humour of the present times. It was obvious to see that the Sacraments first, and soon after, all instituted religion, would be called means to an end: and as ill-disposed men would flatter themselves that they could effectually secure the end, by a kind of morality of their own contriving, the next step would be to throw aside the means as useless. But to return. As to the objection here made against the Sacrament considered as a means only, it is begging the question; it is taking for granted what can never be allowed. To call them means to virtue at all, is too low a phrase for them, and not very proper, as I have before hinted. They are duties of the foundation, covenant duties, out of which other duties, all other Christian duties, thrive and grow. They are productive of virtues, rather than instrumental, in strict propriety of speech. However, if they may be called means, have abundantly proved that they are more than means, and need not here repeat; and therefore that part of the objection of the Letter Writer hath been already obviated.

I have now run through all the specious pretenses I have hitherto met with for setting the two positive duties, viz. of the Sacraments, below moral duties; and none of them appear to me of any real weight. We need not therefore hereafter be afraid to compare these sacred, solemn, awful, though positive,

duties, with any other prescribed in the Law or in the Gospel. Any designed, professed contempt of these serious and important duties, may be as bad or worse than a contempt of the duties of the second table; because it will be great profaneness, [Faust. lib. xix, p. 319. vol. 8.] and profaneness is in itself a most hideous offence, and besides naturally leads to all immoralities. Do we then destroy morality by maintaining the dignity of the Sacraments? No; we fix morality upon its true basis, and secure the branches by looking well to the root that feeds them.

Any habitual willful neglect or disuse of the holy Communion may be as bad or worse than neglecting to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, and the like; because it is neglecting to renew our covenant and intercourse with God, neglecting to repent and resolve well, neglecting to repair the spiritual life; which neglect gradually, brings on slackness and coldness in other duties, too much secularizes the heart, and in process of time disposes the mind to irreligion and immorality. Besides, the neglect of Christ's ordinances is too plainly a neglect of him; and the very example of such irreverence will have a bad influence upon the state of religion in general, and will do infinitely more mischief to the world, in that respect, than any or all the other services that the best of us are capable of doing for mankind can be equivalents for. But yet, because frequent Communion is a duty of some latitude, and not precisely hound up to times, and seasons, any more than the particular moral duties are, there may be just occasions for delaying it, or postponing it, according as circumstances require. It will be needless to put eases of other precepts occasionally interfering with it: there are proper times for all in their turns; and every honest and sincere Christian may, in matters of this kind, be his own casuist.

But among the supposed cases, I would never put the case of a negative precept, *Do not kill*, against an affirmative one, *Receive the Sacrament*, as a great man does [Archbishop Tillotson, Posth. Sermon. xlix. vol. i. p. 351.]: whose words are, "I had rather never administer the Sacrament, nor ever receive it, than take away any man's life about it; because the Sacrament is but a positive rite and institution of the Christian religion, and God prefers mercy, a duty of natural religion," etc. There is inaccuracy in the comparison, and fallacy also in the argument.

1st. It is wrong to make the opposition lie between an affirmative and a negative precept. Negative moral precepts bind *semper*, and *ad semper*, and *pro semper*, as the Schools speak; that is, universally and absolutely, and are never to be violated in any case whatever, as we are never to commit sin. The author might as safely have said that he had rather never do any good all his life, never

perform any one moral duty, than take away life about it, if by taking away life he meant murder for murder can never be innocent. So that the argument concludes as strongly against all moral affirmative precepts, as against positive; which is overshooting the mark.

But, 2dly, if by taking away life, be meant killing only, and not murder, the argument is inconclusive. What would he have said to Abraham's case, if Abraham had refused to kill his son in obedience to a positive command? Or what to Saul's refusing to kill king Agag, in obedience also to a positive command? Would it have been a justification for either, to have pleaded, that God prefers mercy, a duty of natural religion, before any positive precepts? These instances are enough to show that the foundation of the argument is wrong, as well as the comparison ill stated. And what if St. Peter had said, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, I had rather never preach the Gospel, than take away any man's life about it? Wrong, most certainly. What God orders to be done in all cases, must be done: and the fault only is, in destroying men at any time without a divine law or warrant for it, either moral or positive: and it matters not which it is. But enough of this.

The Conclusion.

Before I take leave of this subject (which I judge to be of as great importance as any can be), it may be proper to hint something of the occasion and rise of this famed distinction between moral and positive duties, or however of its being so much insisted upon, and gradually more and more, till it is at length become one of the most fashionable engines for battering down Christianity. There was a time when the Antinomians and Solifidians, being near akin, joined forces to cry up faith and external religion, in opposition to good works, to the great prejudice of Christian morality. They made a show of sanctity, and great professions of the love of God, while shamefully deficient in the known and plain duties between man and man. In short, many of them had a form of goodness, and nothing more, knowing little of the true power, or life, or spirit of it. To correct this folly, soberer men saw the necessity there was of insisting strongly upon the importance of moral duties, in which they certainly judged right. And had they pressed moral duties in opposition only to exterior performances (the shell and carcass of religion), they had done well and wisely; as it is easy to see now, though it was not so easy at that time. But unhappily confounding exterior with positive (which is widely different), the doctrine ran in favour of morality, as opposed to positive duties, which was stating the case wrong, and following a false scent. For indeed the Antinomians were as deficient

in positive duties, all but the external part, as they were in moral. Had they been really and truly affected with the love of God, and had they sincerely practiced the duties of the first table, those duties must of course have drawn after them universal righteousness. There was no occasion at all for depreciating positive duties, but for recommending true, and sincere, and solid piety in all duties, both moral and positive, in opposition to hypocrisy, and mere external performances.

However, as I said, the turn then taken was to preach up moral duties, in opposition to positive. This naturally tended to bring in low and disparaging notions of the two venerable Sacraments of the Christian Church: which notions have prevailed too much, and have done great disservice to true piety and godliness. But what is still worse, Deism has sprung up out of the same doctrine about moral and positive institutions. For it was not long before men of corrupt minds took advantage of it, first to join in the same cry, that positive institutions were of an inferior nature to moral, as means only to an end; next, to look upon the whole Christian religion, or all instituted religion, as positive ordinance, and subservient only to morality; and, lastly, for the finishing stroke, to give broad hints that the means might conveniently be spared, since the end, they imagined, might be obtained without them. Thus Deism has been grafted upon the famed distinction between moral and positive duties: and this is the most prevailing topic of the Deists to go upon at this day. I have seen the proposals of a treatise now preparing, in two volumes quarto, with this title, *The Gospel a Republication of the Law of Nature*. And among several other wild positions, these are advanced: that “the religion of nature is a religion absolutely perfect,” and that “external revelation can neither add to nor take from its perfection;” and that “the supposing things merely positive to be the ingredients of religion is inconsistent with the good of mankind, as well as the honour of God.” From hence may be seen, that the fashionable plea for infidelity is to extol morality, and to run down all revealed religion under the notion of external and positive institutions. So from one extreme, as it is natural enough, we are tossed and driven to another. The Deists who thus extol morality in opposition to faith, are only doing the same thing, in effect, with what the Antinomians before did, in extolling faith in opposition to morality. Those are only different ways of coming at the same point. Corrupt nature is at the bottom of both: and the connivance of both is nothing else but this, to lighten as much as possible the task which God has set them, to alter his terms, to get off from religious restraints, and, under one pretext or other, to live as they please. Be it Antinomianism or be it Deism (as there are more ways than one of coming at the same thing), the necessity of living a good Christian life is equally defeated by either: and however the two extremes may seem to be at odds upon their first

setting out, they can amicably meet at last, for the destruction of all true and solid piety.

Had those good men, who first opposed Antinomianism by extolling morality, lived to see the turn that has been since taken, they would now have extolled positive institutions as much, were it only to secure true morality: for it is demonstration to every thinking man that morality can never stand in practice, but upon a Scripture foot. This I took notice of before, in the close of my Remarks. [Page 428.] And my correspondent [Answer to the Remarks, p. 82.] is so sensible of the truth and justice of it, that he violently forces a sense of his own upon me, only to have something to say by way of reply. That I may not be again misconstrued, I now say, that however morality might subsist in theory (which I allowed before), it can never subsist in practice, but upon a Scripture foot. And the reason which I before gave, and now repeat, is a very plain one, viz. that Scripture once removed, there will be no certain sanctions to bind morality upon the conscience, no clear account of heaven or hell, or a future judgment, to enforce it: from whence we may easily infer how precarious a bottom morality will stand upon, and that natural religion, in practice at least, will soon be what every man pleases, showing itself in little else besides natural depravity. They therefore that pretend to be advocates for morality, in opposition to. instituted religion, are really betraying it. It is like extolling liberty in opposition to law and government, the best securities of it: which is betraying liberty, and introducing licentiousness; as the other is undermining morality, and paving the way to immorality. If men were in good earnest friends to morality, how could they run against Scripture, which contains the completest system of morality that ever appeared in the world? What would those gentlemen have more than all? If they really are for morality, there they have it, plain, short, and full as can be desired, and so as nowhere else. Mr. Lock, when entreated to draw up a system of morals, returned this very wise and just answer [Lock's Letters, p. 546. fol. edit.]: "Did the world," says he, "want a rule, I confess, there could be no work so necessary nor so commendable: but the Gospel contains so perfect a body of ethics, that reason may be excused from that inquiry, since she may find man's duty clearer, and easier in revelation than in herself." Scripture ethics are indeed the best ethics, and the only ethics that are refined and raised to a due height, set upon a firm basis, directed to right ends, and enforced by prevailing sanctions.

To conclude, the whole of what I intend, and all that I have aimed at, as well in my Remarks before, as now in these papers, is, that both religion and morality may go together, and amicably support and adorn each other; that morality may not be set up in opposition to faith, nor faith in opposition to

morality, which would be dividing friends, and destroying both: that moral duties may not be extolled to the prejudice of positive, nor again positive to the prejudice of moral; but that both may be esteemed according to their due weight and worth, and according to the rank they hold as referred to the love of God: that God be loved in the first place, and man for God's sake, as God has ordained: that the Christian Sacraments be held in due esteem, as Divine ordinances, and as the springs of the spiritual life, productive of moral virtues, and perfective of them: that all extremes be avoided, and the true medium fixed between enthusiasm or superstition on one hand, and irreligion or profaneness on the other. But if I have missed this true medium, I shall be very thankful to any man that shall resume the subject, and shall treat it in a rational and a Christian manner, to strike new light into it; for the service of truth, and the glory of God, and the common benefit of mankind.

An Additional Note

That the two Sacraments are federal rites, that they are seals of the Gospel covenant, one for initiating, and the other for renewing the said covenant, is what I often assert, as known and current doctrine, building in a great measure my argument upon it, for the reciprocal communion between God and man (of blessings on one part, and duty on the other) in the Sacraments. But because some perhaps may doubt of this main principle, or may wish to see upon what Scripture grounds it stands, I shall here briefly show it first of Baptism, and next of the Eucharist.

Of Baptism.

In Baptism, the case is plain, and needs but few words. Baptism succeeds in the room of circumcision, and is styled the Christian circumcision by St. Paul himself. [Col. 2:11–12. See Dr. Wall's Hist. of Infant Baptism, part i. c. 2. p. 11. and Defence, p. 37, 269.] Circumcision, as all allow, was a federal rite among the Jews, and is called the covenant, [Gen. 17:10.] and token of the covenant, [Gen. 17:11.] and a seal of the righteousness of faith. [Rom. 4:11.] Therefore Baptism, succeeding thereto, is a federal rite, is entering into covenant with God.

Of The Eucharist.

As to the Eucharist, that may be proved to be a federal rite, or another method of covenanting, from several topics, as follows.

1. The terms or phrases of the institution itself are mostly federal terms or phrases.

[Greek omitted.] For this [cup] is my blood, the [blood] of the new

covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Matt. 26:28. Mark 14:24.

[Greek omitted.] This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Luke 22:20. 1 Cor. 11:25.

Compare these phrases with the like federal phrases in the Old Testament, as follows.

Of circumcision it is said, [Greek omitted.] This is the covenant, which, etc.

And of the blood of the sacrifices, when the Law was received, it is said, Behold the blood of the covenant. Exod. 24:8.

The phrases used by our Lord in the institution of the Eucharist are plainly parallel to these: and therefore the Eucharist is a federal rite, as was circumcision or sacrifice under the old Law.

2. Another argument of the same thing may be drawn from the Eucharist succeeding in the room of the Passover, or Paschal Supper. Christ is the Lamb of God, the true Paschal Lamb, [John 1:19, 19:36. 1 Peter 1:18.] and therefore called our Passover by St. Paul. [1 Cor. 5:7.] And he is represented in the Eucharist now, as by the Passover before. The rites of the Eucharist, and the phrases used in the institution, are mostly borrowed from the Paschal rites and phrases, as might be shown in many particulars. But for brevity sake, I choose to refer to such authors [Archbishop Wake's Discourse of the Eucharist, p.3. Pfaffius de Oblat. et Consecrat. Eucharist. p. 180.] as have specified them: Now it is certain that the Passover was a federal rite, inasmuch as sacrifices are federal rites. [See Mede. p. 371.] Besides that, the Scripture account of the Passover shows it. [Exod. 13:9, 16. Deut. 16:1-2.] It was a sign and a memorial of God's redeeming his people from Egypt; and by that redemption God covenanted with the people of the Jews to own them for his people, and to be their God. [2 Sam. 12:24.] It is obvious to perceive how these circumstances are applicable to the Christian redemption, and to the Christian Eucharist the memorial of it.

3. I shall only observe farther, that St. Paul in 1 Cor. 10 manifestly supposes that in or by the Eucharist there is the like communion and intercourse between God and every worthy receiver, when Christians feast at the Lord's table, as there was between God and the Israelites, when the Israelites feasted at the altar, and as there was between the devils and their votaries at the table of devils. And if sacrifices in both cases were federal rites, and amounted to covenanting, then we have St. Paul's authority for esteeming the Eucharist a federal rite, a seal of a covenant between God and man. And if it amount to covenanting, then we must admit of a reciprocal intercourse in it between God and man, God shedding forth his grace and blessings, while man makes his

dutiful returns of obedience. And it is very observable, that as no man was to eat of the Passover before he had been circumcised, [Exod. 12:48.] so the rule also is, that no one must presume to partake of the Eucharist before he has been baptized. And as there were strict and severe penalties enjoined by the Law against profaning the Passover, so in the Apostolical age, it pleased God to inflict diseases and death upon such as profaned the Eucharist, [1 Cor. 11:30.] in order to create the greater reverence and veneration for this high and holy solemnity.