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A

PRACTICAL TREATISE

ON

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

IT was originally the Author's intention to have given at the end of this work, in a separate form, a few brief expositions of passages of Scripture which immediately refer to Baptism, and to have appended a few Addresses, to parents and others, founded on Scripture declarations, as connected with the administration of the ordinance. The size of the work, however—exceeding considerably the limits which he had at first assigned to it—has induced him to withhold this matter at present. He may hereafter publish it, either in a Second Edition, should it be called for, or in a separate form. He would have desired, moreover, to have offered a fuller discussion of some of the views which have been propounded, concerning the state of infants, as connected with the atonement, or as affected by baptism, than has been attempted in the Chapter on Infant Salvation, and in the Appendix. The design of the Treatise being practical, made him, however, reluctant to give a controversial aspect to any part of the subject; and the limited space reserved for the illustration and defence of doctrine, must plead his apology for not introducing some topics to which he would gladly have adverted, and for handling some others so slightly. On a subject on which so much has been written as Baptism, and on which the sentiments of professed Christians have been so much divided, the Author can hardly expect that this little work will afford any thing like full satisfaction to many into whose hands it may come. He can truly declare, that he would not willingly employ any form of expression that would wound the feelings of those whom he esteems as brethren in Christ, even when controverting senti-

ments which he believes to be erroneous. His anxious desire has been to speak the truth in love; and he shall feel truly happy if aught that he has advanced prove the means of leading the members of the Church, while holding the truth as it is in Jesus, to adorn it, by a consistent, godly practice. Our Lord's rule will prove in the end, the grand way of arriving at unity of heart and sentiment in a Christian profession—"IF ANY MAN WILL DO HIS WILL, HE SHALL KNOW OF THE DOCTRINE WHETHER IT BE OF GOD."

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INTRODUCTION.

“**HOLINESS TO THE LORD**” is the appropriate motto of all gospel institutions. Designed to display the authority of the King and Head of the Church, they are, at the same time, appointed as channels for the conveyance of his grace to the heirs of salvation; and the fruit and evidence of deriving benefit from their observance, is growing conformity to his moral likeness. “Beholding,” in the glass of sacred ordinances, “the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

It has been justly remarked, that any truth professed which does not influence the heart and life is not in reality believed. The strongest denial—the most injurious rejection of the truth, is an inconsistent and unholy practice. The doctrines of the Word are doctrines according to godliness. The grace that brings present, and issues in final and complete salvation, effectually “teaches to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”

That use of religious ordinances which does not purify and elevate the moral nature, is a practical denial of their obligation and beneficial design—dishonouring to their glorious Author, and tending to confirm men in despising and rejecting them. There are none

of the institutions of our holy religion whose nature has been more misunderstood, or that have been more perverted from their proper use, than those which are designated the Sacraments of the New Economy. While it is admitted by all classes of Christians—save the peculiar Society* who deny that material elements are in any way to be employed, and who thus virtually abolish the Sacramental Institutions altogether—that these are to be regarded as the most solemn and significant of the ordinances of Christianity, there are very marked and wide differences of sentiment in relation to their nature and designs. A large number of professed Protestants appear to have imbibed Rome's cardinal error, and to regard the sacraments as an *opus operatum*; and to view them, irrespective of faith in the word, or any right moral character, as the channels for conveying grace, and an infallible means of final salvation. Others entertain the most vague and confused notions on the subject; and, from superstitious feelings, imagine that there is some virtue in the sacraments themselves, and some mysterious benefit to be derived from them, though they are unable to tell how this virtue is communicated, or wherein the special benefit consists. Again, there are others—and among these are divines of high standing—who regard the Christian Sacraments as being only outward badges of a profession, or as merely commemorative institutions, and not in any sense as means for communicating grace to the heirs of salvation.

Need we wonder that, with such diversified and erroneous views of the nature and ends of the Sacraments, their proper practical use should so generally be overlooked, and that their abuse should be so extensively prevalent? Without referring particularly to the other sacrament—the Lord's Supper—it must

* The Society of Friends.

be apparent to any thoughtful observer, that, at the present day, comparatively a small number, even in the Protestant churches, entertain right views of the solemn nature and signification of Baptism, even when they seek access to it, or recognise afterwards the weighty obligation which it imposes, or labour habitually to make a suitable improvement of the ordinance.

Amidst "the falling away" that is represented as characteristic of the last days, and in "the perilous times" that are predicted to come, it seems not improbable that erroneous doctrinal sentiments in relation to the ordinance of baptism, and the perverted use of it, may become widely prevalent. "One Lord—one Baptism," are two main articles of the faith once delivered to the saints—two essential and leading principles of our holy religion. The grand device of the enemy is to lead Christians away from subjection to Christ the Lord, and this he does by introducing diverse and conflicting opinions in relation to baptism—equivalent to manifold and opposing baptisms—and by perverting the ordinance in practice.

What is the figment of Baptismal Regeneration but a subtile and powerful device of the father of lies, to lead men to regard their salvation as infallibly secured by connexion with the church, and by means of a ritual service; and to deny the necessity of a spiritual renovation of the heart and life through faith in the word? Should those who avow this unscriptural dogma obtain the ascendancy in the National Church of England, then a chief article of the Reformation—the grand doctrine of justification by faith—Luther's article of a standing or a falling church, will have been abandoned, and the national profession of "the chief of Protestant nations" will be conformed in one of its cardinal principles to the Romish apostacy. If the highest authority recognised in the English church

should pronounce baptismal regeneration to be the doctrine which all her ministers are bound to maintain and teach, in virtue of their connexion with the Establishment; and good men, in consequence, become liable to be denuded of their office, and be exposed to civil penalties for holding a contrary sentiment, then the Puritan persecutions may be again renewed, and the maintenance of a good conscience may subject evangelical confessors to severe trials. However much such events are to be deplored, the recent hesitating decision of the Committee of Privy Council—the restless activity of the Puseyite party—the feeble and powerless resistance of the bench of bishops to the inroads of vital error, with its open avowal by some of them—changes in political parties—and the exercise of the royal supremacy through the Minister of the day, render them not unlikely to occur under the last assaults of Antichrist.

It need not be thought strange that evangelical clergymen of the Church of England, who, even while they held their station as ministers of the Establishment, could not swallow the dogma of Baptismal regeneration in the Puseyite sense of the phrase, should, on leaving the church, come to entertain strong objections to Infant Baptism. The sentiments taught in some of the formularies of the church on this head are so repugnant to Scripture—the abuses are so flagrant—and the delusion of resting on a mere external rite for salvation, is so fearful, that the consciences of men enlightened by the word of God cannot but revolt from them; and they are naturally led to question or deny the utility of an ordinance which is administered without distinction to the children of believers, and to those of the openly profane, and in which both are equally represented as, by participation in the baptismal rite, made children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. This appears to us to account for the fact—

observable of late, that esteemed ministers of the Church of England, when compelled, through tenderness of conscience, to relinquish her fellowship, have not unfrequently, at the same time, separated themselves from the doctrine of the universal church on the subject of the baptism of the infant children of Christians, and have joined themselves to a party that, however estimable many of its ministers and members, is, on this point, not identified with the churches of the apostles, or of the reformation. Thus a great *practical abuse* of the Baptismal ordinance, equally with a gross doctrinal error in relation to it, has served to mar the unity of the church, foment dissensions, and, what is still worse, tends to lull vast multitudes in a fatal delusion, with regard to the matters of their eternal salvation.*

There are various other practical evils arising from ignorance of the nature and design of baptism, and from neglect of recognising its obligation and privileges, which loudly call for a remedy. While great numbers have no right ideas whatever on the subject, and their reception of baptism must be viewed as a grievous desecration of a holy ordinance, it is to be feared that not a few, even of the best classes of church members, likewise err, either through not duly considering the solemnity and importance of the initiatory Sacrament, or through not improving it aright, after they have been admitted to its participation. Almost universally throughout Christian congregations, it is observable that much less solemnity accompanies the administration of baptism than the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Parents, when seeking the ordinance for their children, are less careful to make preparation for coming to the institution, and other members of the church do not regard themselves as having any deep

* On Baptismal Regeneration--See Appendix.

personal interest in the matter. The young who witness the celebration hardly inquire what is meant by the service; and few think afterwards of betaking themselves to the performance of the duties which the baptismal ordinance plainly inculcates. In some cases, so little solemnity is attached to the initiatory sacrament of the church, that it is dispensed by Presbyterian ministers in private,—the avocations of the world hardly being suspended for a few minutes—or as a mere appendage to a convivial entertainment.

How few Christian parents properly lay to heart the high privilege to themselves and their children of baptism; or consider seriously, after obtaining it, their solemn and weighty obligations to special parental duties! How few make baptismal dedication a subject of fervent pleading at the mercy-seat; or employ it as an argument for obtaining the blessings which they supplicate for their children! Of the young, who are baptised in infancy, how few there are who become early conscious of their obligation to be the Lord's, or who claim its exalted privileges; or who, in the spring-time of life, walk worthy of the covenant of their youth!

If we inquire after the source of these manifold evils, we apprehend it may be traced, in a great measure, to the want of proper instructions on the nature and design of baptism. While the Institution has been discussed *controversially*, and much pains have been taken to determine who are the proper *subjects* of baptism, and the *mode* of its administration, it is to be deeply regretted that the practical value and improvement of the ordinance have seldom been handled, according to their intrinsic importance, either in the pulpit or from the press. The church has, in consequence, suffered much. The import of one of the most impressive and significant rites of our holy religion has been sadly overlooked or misapprehended; the weighty

obligations which it involves have not been felt; and the holy confidence and consolation, which a due consideration of baptismal dedication are so well fitted to inspire, are not enjoyed. The excellent Cotton Mather relates of himself, that he was accustomed frequently to give thanks to God for his baptism, as well as to make it an argument in prayer; and Matthew Henry, the Commentator, speaks of his early dedication having been to him the source of unspeakable blessings. The experience of all devoted servants of God has been similar, as often as they have reflected on the privileges and obligations resulting from their baptism. This institution they have regarded with endearing and fond interest, as manifesting towards them the singular condescension and compassion of its glorious Author. They have recognised it as designed to separate and distinguish them from others, and to set them apart to be the Lord's; and they have regarded it as pledging them, in the most solemn and formal manner, to be "holy in all manner of conversation." The baptismal vow has furnished one of the strongest and most prevalent pleas at the Mercy Seat, when they sought blessings for themselves and their children; and their sweetest consolations, and most joyful hopes have sprung from reflecting on the nature and design of the sacred rite by which they were engaged to be the Lord's, and in which He graciously presented himself to them as their God and Portion.

If such experience is more rarely to be met with in our day than in former times, this may be ascribed, in a great measure, to the circumstance that definite practical views of the Baptismal rite are not inculcated, or entertained; and that, in consequence, the special duty of improving our baptism, for edification or comfort or confidence, is greatly neglected. As not unfrequently happens, in doctrinal discussions about the nature or objects of faith, the *actual exercise of faith* itself is for-

gotten, so controversies about baptism have often served to turn away the attention from that which is of primary importance—the connexion of the ordinance with the renovation of the heart and with holiness of the life.

The design of the following Treatise is to supply a desideratum which must have been often felt by faithful ministers when called to administer baptism, and by godly parents, when reflecting on their own obligations and on those of their children; and by others who are concerned for the prosperity of the church, and for the interests of vital godliness, when urging young persons to Christian devotedness. It is intended to be a Manual of preparatory instruction for Christian parents, when about to undertake baptismal vows in behalf of their children. It aims to furnish to them practical directions concerning their future duties in the family. Scriptural views are presented, in relation to some topics which must always be felt to be of absorbing interest to Christian parents—the salvation of infants and their future condition when removed by death. The special duties of the church—ministers, office-bearers, and people—to her baptized children, are exhibited with a minuteness and particularity of detail which the intrinsic importance of the subject, as well as the infrequency of its discussion may well excuse. And, finally, the baptized youth of the church—a most important class of her members—are instructed in the necessity of an early recognition of their baptismal dedication, and directed how the ordinance may confer a blessing in the way of a suitable improvement.

The Author is fully persuaded that nothing can produce godly practice but the truth spoken in love. He has aimed, therefore, to present Scriptural statements and arguments in relation to the nature and design of Baptism, in all simplicity and plainness; and though he was sincerely anxious not to give a controversial aspect to the discussion, he felt that he could not properly

withhold some notice of the *subjects* of baptism, and of the *mode* and *place* of administration. He may be allowed to say that his earnest desire has ever been to know the mind of the Spirit, and to bow implicitly to the authority of God speaking in his word. As his great aim has been to exhibit an important ordinance of the church, as an eminent manifestation of the wisdom and condescension of her exalted Head, and as a means of universal holiness, he indulges the hope that even those who may see cause to differ from some of the doctrinal views advanced, may yet find in this Treatise matter which they will regard as suited to promote the edification of the Church, and the revival of true religion.

That the King of Zion may render the work subservient to the promotion of his glory—the conversion of sinners, and the establishment and consolation of the people of God, is the earnest desire of

THE AUTHOR.



CHAPTER I.

THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

THEIR NATURE — INSTITUTION — IMPORT AND DESIGN.

THE Word of the Gospel is the grand means of communicating to the children of men, the blessings of eternal salvation. To magnify his own grace, and in condescension to human infirmity, God has appointed, besides, other ordinances, by which He confirms his good-will to his people, and confers upon them spiritual and eternal blessings. These are the Sacraments of the Church—institutions which have existed from the earliest ages, and have always been regarded as of peculiar significancy and importance.

The term *Sacrament* has been employed with considerable variety of meaning and allusion, when applied to the ordinances of the Church. It has been regarded as expressive of the peculiarly *sacred* character of the institutions which it designates. The word, of Latin origin, has been supposed by some to be borrowed from the *Military Oath* which the Roman soldiers took to their general, which was called *Sacramentum*; and religious rites are thought to be thus named, as implying special devotedness to Christ, the Captain of salvation.* It appears more likely that the term came

* The Bishop of Lincoln, in his able work on Tertullian, contends for this derivation of the term. He thinks that the word being used to signify the promise or vow in baptism, came to denote the rite itself, and afterwards it included every religious

to be used by ecclesiastical writers in a peculiar sense, from the circumstance, that in the Vulgate and older Latin versions of the New Testament, the term *μυστηρίων* was most usually translated into the word *Sacramentum*. And as the ancient “*mysteries*” were considered peculiarly solemn rites of worship, so the term *Sacrament* was viewed as suitably employed to designate ordinances, which contain a sacred representation of spiritual things, and which are to be approached with peculiar feelings of holy awe and reverence.*

It is essential to a sacrament that there should be an outward and sensible sign, representing things spiritual, in connexion with a Divine promise. Hence it has been concisely defined by Augustine, as a “*Visible sign of an invisible grace.*” Applying the term in a wide sense, various appointments under the Old Testament have been designated Sacraments—as Noah’s Ark—the Rainbow—the Manna in the wilderness—the Levitical sacrifices, &c. Whether such an application is proper or not, it is evident that these were extraordinary and temporary, and limited in their nature and design. The Church on earth, however, has never wanted, and never will be without ordinary sac-

ceremony, and actually expressed the whole Christian doctrine.—See Kaye’s Tertullian, p. 356.

The early Christian Fathers call Christians as their favourite appellation, “soldiers of Christ; Christ is styled their Commander—the world, the flesh, and the devil their enemies—Christian graces are their armour, martyrdom their crown, the baptismal promise, or the Eucharistical profession their oath of allegiance.”—See Halley on the Sacraments, Part I. p. 14.

* In Ephesians i. 9, God is said, in the Vulgate version, to make known “*Sacramentum volitionis*”—the ‘sacrament of his will.’ In Ephesians v., when the apostle, speaking of marriage, says, “This is a great mystery,” the Vulgate has it, “*Magnum Sacramentum*”—a ‘great sacrament’—and in 1 Tim. iii. 16,—“Great is the mystery of godliness” is rendered “Great is the sacrament of godliness.”

raments, assuring and confirming to her true members the favour and love of her exalted Head, and sealing them to the day of redemption. There are no sacraments in the Church triumphant in glory. None are needed; for the presence of the Lamb, and the blessed fruition of God himself supply the place of all media of intercourse and communication. But from the beginning to the end of time, these sacred appointments have been in use in the Church on earth, and have subserved to her the most valuable purposes. Under the "Edenic Dispensation," the TREE OF LIFE was the sacramental pledge of the promise of life to Adam and all his posterity, on the performance of the conditions of the federal engagement. *Circumcision* was the appointed sacrament of initiation under the patriarchal economy, and it, together with the Passover, continued as "signs and seals" to ancient believers, as long as the Church existed under the Mosaic dispensation.

The New Testament sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper—the one the badge of discipleship, and the other the ordinance of nourishment, are appointed to continue in the Christian Church till Christ's second coming. Thus, from the dawn of time till the consummation of all things—during the whole period of man's continuance on earth, and of the world's history, sacraments exist as means of intercourse with God, and of blessing to the Church. Though no sacraments are *absolutely necessary* to salvation—though they were not designed to bring man into a state of salvation, but rather suppose him to be already the subject of Divine favour, they display the admirable wisdom, condescension, and love of their glorious Author, towards those for whose benefit they are appointed. He knows our frame, and has wisely and graciously adapted his method of intercourse and communication to our condition and circumstances. We are capable of receiving more powerful impressions

from objects presented to the outward senses, than merely from words spoken; and a well-executed picture will often affect us more forcibly, and leave more lasting traces on the mind, than an abstract statement, or a description however exact and appropriate. Besides, the blessings of redemption are provided for our bodies as well as our spirits, and it is therefore suitable that they should be communicated, in part, by sensible signs, and that there should be visible marks of our consecration, and of our inheritance of eternal life. We are here in a state of childhood—as heirs in their minority; and in condescension to our weakness there are given to us confirmations of the Divine faithfulness, fitted to impress our senses, and to represent the grand truths of salvation and our personal interest therein. And, as our faith is weak, God in the sacraments has condescended to give us such pledges of his faithful word and sure covenant, as are used among men to confirm a promise and ratify a solemn engagement. Thus “by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie,” they have “strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.”

The sacraments have been designated “signs and seals” of the covenant of grace. This blessed compact—the “Counsel of peace”—is the foundation of all God’s merciful dealings with the human family—the charter of eternal salvation. It is “ordered in all things and sure”—embracing every thing that concerns the interests of the heirs of salvation, in soul and body, and for time and eternity. The enjoyment of saving blessings is inseparably connected with the administration of the covenant of grace. Sinners are delivered from condemnation when they are brought into “the bond of the covenant.” Awakened to a sense of their perishing condition, by faith they “take hold” of it. In the dispensation of Gospel privileges, they come to the Medi-

ator, and He “shows them his Covenant.” The believer triumphs in death, when, with the sweet singer of Israel, he is enabled to declare, “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, * * * and this is all my salvation and all my desire.” And the glory and fellowship of the redeemed in heaven will be to serve before the throne, encircled by the bright token of the Covenant—a “rainbow in sight like unto an emerald.”*

The sacraments are instituted to be visible signs and seals of this gracious transaction. As *signs*, they exhibit symbolically the spiritual provision made for human salvation, and present the different parts of it to the mind in an affecting and impressive manner. The sacraments are visible representations, having a spiritual significancy, and pointing to things unseen and eternal. They have no natural or necessary connexion in themselves with the objects or blessings which they symbolize; but yet, as being of Divine appointment, they are instructive spiritual symbols—adapted to shadow forth, and significantly to display the objects of faith and Christian hope. Like a well-executed and striking picture, they impress the mind as with a present reality, and in them, as through a glass, we behold the glory of the Lord, and the riches of the grace of the covenant. They are suited to man’s nature and condition, bodily and mental, and are distinguished by the most comprehensive significancy. Hence an early Christian father styles the sacraments—“*a visible word*,”†—and they may be properly termed—“THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN SYMBOL—A SACRAMENTAL GOSPEL.”

The sacraments are likewise “seals” of the covenant of grace. Abraham is said to have received circumcision, “*a sign and seal of the righteousness of*

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; Ezek. xx. 37; Isaiah lvi. 6; Heb. xii. 24; Psalm xx. 14; Revelation iv. 3.

† Augustine.

faith.”* Of the various uses of seals, the principal is to confirm and ratify. For this purpose, the seal is appended to a public document, attesting its validity, and confirming its contents to those to whom it refers. The sacraments are, in like manner, God’s visible seals, designed to confirm the faith of the Church in his everlasting Covenant, and to ratify to them who are actually in the covenant, all spiritual blessings. They are properly *seals on God’s part*, as in believing, we set to our seal that God is true. The sacraments as *signs*, address the senses: as *seals*, they encourage and strengthen faith. The covenant of redemption has been properly styled, “*a cluster of precious promises.*” The sacraments may be said to be the authoritative confirmation of the good word spoken—the visible pledge appended to the gracious promise, displaying the kind intentions of Him who makes it, and securing its enjoyment to those for whom it was designed. They are given that we “might have strong consolation.” Like a father showing to his child the title-deeds of the inheritance which is secured to him, so God, in the sacraments, confirms immutably to his people the blessings of the covenant. Or, as the royal seal appended to a public document, they hold forth a chartered salvation, sealed and sure to all who have “fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.”†

A sacrament being appointed to aid our apprehension of spiritual things by means of sensible objects, necessarily consists of two parts—the *sign*, and the

* Romans iv. 11.

† In accordance with the view which is given above, Luther appositely says, “In the sacrament of baptism, God binds himself to thee in a covenant full of grace and consolation;” and again—“God is faithful to his promises, the sign of which I have received in baptism.”

thing signified, which are sometimes styled the *matter* of the sacrament. The sign is something positive and visible, and is appointed to hold forth to us spiritual objects. The outward signs, or material elements in the sacraments of the New Testament are *water* in the one, and *bread and wine* in the other. Christ and the benefits of the covenant of grace are the things signified by these sacramental symbols.

The connexion between the signs and the spiritual objects denoted by them, constitute the *form* of the sacraments. This connexion is neither *corporeal*, as between two objects placed in contact, nor properly *spiritual*, as that which exists between Christ and his people; but is *sacramental*, depending wholly on the institution of Christ, by which a divine command, imposing an obligation to observe the ordinance, is connected with a Divine promise of blessing upon the observance. Between the sign and the thing signified there is thus established a *moral* relation and union, by which he who rightly uses the sign becomes partaker of the spiritual benefits which it represents. In virtue of the Divine appointment and promise, faithful recipients are assured that they will not partake of the sacraments in vain. Their faith is confirmed and strengthened, and they enjoy, with the material elements, spiritual and eternal blessings.

From the union of the outward elements, and the things which they denote, arises *sacramental phraseology*, by which the terms denoting the sign and the things signified are used interchangeably. Thus Christ is termed "our Passover"—Circumcision is called "the Covenant"—the Bread in the Lord's Supper is named the "body" of Christ.* The sacramental union so connects the objects that, by a figure of speech common to all languages, the one may be predicated of the

* 1 Cor. v. 7; Gen. xvii. 11; Mat. xxvi. 26.

other. Hence, throughout the Scriptures, we find the sign designated by the thing signified. As when sanctification of heart is called circumcision, (Rom. xi. 29). The effect of the thing signified is ascribed to the sign, as to Baptism is ascribed Regeneration, (Tit. iii. 5); and what is proper to the sign, or to the thing signified, is interchanged in the application. The *breaking* of the bread is applied to Christ's body, and *remission of sins*, which is the fruit of grace communicated, is ascribed to external baptism, (Acts xxii. 16). This phraseology, which, when understood figuratively, is proper and expressive, has often been grossly misapplied, in a literal sense, to support the dogma of baptismal regeneration, and even to make out the change of the material elements into the substance of the spiritual objects, in transubstantiation. Such a mode of interpretation is utterly opposed to the received usage of all languages, and amounts to a manifest perversion of the sacred writers.

The *Author* of the sacraments is God himself; and as they are seals of the covenant of grace under every dispensation of that blessed transaction, they are to be regarded as instituted immediately by the exalted Mediator. Thus, the Divine appearance which was made to Abraham, when circumcision was appointed, was a manifestation of the Redeemer to come. The "God of glory," who appeared to him in Mesopotamia, and who again conversed with him on the plains of Mamre, was the same that, in declaring the covenant, said, "I am God Almighty—walk before me, and be thou perfect." "I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee." * It was the same glorious Personage who instituted the Passover, for He it was who redeemed Israel out of Egypt, and to whom is ascribed every part of the wondrous deliverance. When the

* Genesis xvii. 1, 8.

Redeemer had finished his work on earth, and as He stood on the threshold of his Mediatorial throne, He spoke with royal authority—"Go ye into all the world, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost—and lo, I am with you always." And at an era, distinguished for the most solemn and affecting events that ever occurred in the history of our world,—the night in which he was betrayed, He instituted the Sacrament of the Supper. Thus all the Sacraments of the church have a Divine origin, and are the appointments of the glorious King of Zion. God is primarily to be recognized in these sacred institutions. They display the perfections, and show forth the glory of their Author, and are appointed for *ends* worthy of Him who ordained them.

II.—THE ENDS OF THE SACRAMENTS.

The ends of the sacraments are diversified and important. While some are specific and peculiar to each sacrament, there are others common to both. Thus Baptism is a sign of *entrance into the covenant*, and *initiation in the church*; and is, in consequence, only *once* to be applied. The Lord's Supper is symbolical of *nourishment, invigoration, and comfort*, and is, therefore, to be *frequently* observed, inasmuch as the renewal of these benefits is always needed, and should constantly be desired.

Of the *common ends* of the sacraments, it may be mentioned that,

1. They represent and offer to us, by sensible signs, *the Covenant of peace, its blessed Mediator, and all its benefits*. They invite and encourage to accept of Christ and salvation through him by a living faith; and to those who so receive him, they confirm and secure the *righteousness* of the covenant, and all its concomitant *blessings*. The Sacraments thus not only seal the

grand promise on God's part—"I will be thy God"—but on ours likewise, they ratify the engagement to be the Lord's. They are the seal of our profession—the "confirmation of our professed subjection to the gospel of Christ." *

2. They are, moreover, an expressive testimony of the *union and communion* which saints have, not only with Christ their Head, but also with fellow-saints as members of the same mystical body. These ordinances declare our gathering together into the one "family which in heaven and earth is named after Christ," and our joint participation in all the privileges that pertain to the adoption of sons.

3. They serve, furthermore, to *perpetuate the remembrance of God's Covenant* and of its distinguishing blessings. As a lively memorial of the purpose and plan of eternal redemption, and of the wonderful accomplishment of that purpose by the death of the Mediator, they preserve and transmit the record of the most important events that have taken place in the universe. The covenant and redemption finished centre in Christ, and the Sacraments are specially appointed as memorials of him, to continue to the end of time. They are memorials of love, erected by the hands of devout worshippers, each of whom joyfully professes, as he observes them—"I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever." †

4. Again, the Sacraments may be regarded as *distinctive badges* of the Church of Christ, and of a profession of true religion. In observing them, we profess the Christian faith—declare that we are joined to his people, and openly avouch the Lord to be our God. Thus do we evidence that we have become separate from the rest of the world, and that we have chosen

* 2 Cor. ix. 13.

† Psalm xlv. 17.

our lot with the Lord's people. "One shall say, I am the Lord's." *

5. They are, besides, *symbols of dedication and devotedness to Christ* and his service. As the Israelites were "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea," when they were devoted to the observance of all the ordinances of the ritual of Moses, so, in the Christian Sacraments, those who observe them are solemnly given up to God to be his, and for him wholly and for ever. The name of Christ, the glorious Captain of salvation, is impressed on these ordinances, and on those who have recourse to them, to attest that they have enlisted under his banner, to fight against his enemies—the devil, the world, and the flesh—to renounce every other master, and to "serve God in holiness and righteousness" all the days of their life. The subjects of both Sacraments professedly give themselves to God as a "living sacrifice," which is their "reasonable service," and they "yield themselves to God, as alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness." Self-dedication is a principal and essential part of holiness; and the Sacraments, as appointed and eminent means for this end, conduce to advancement in sanctification. Those who partake of the Christian Sacraments should always regard themselves as *dedicated* ones—solemnly bound to walk in newness of life, and pledged to all holy obedience.

6. They *confirm and strengthen the faith and hope of eternal life*. The covenant and promises which they seal, provide eternal felicity for the heirs of salvation. The blood of Christ, which they represent and exhibit, is the ransom price of the inheritance; and the spiritual provision which they minister is designed to nourish up the soul unto life everlasting. Through these

* Isaiah xlv. 6.

ordinances, as through glasses exquisitely prepared, believers obtain glimpses of the King in his beauty, and the far distant land. "The king is held in the galleries." The faithful are "sealed till the day of redemption," and obtain preparation for the second coming of the Lord, as with fervent desires and elevated joy they anticipate his appearance.

Contemplated in their institution, significance, and ends, how precious and valuable are the Sacraments of the New Covenant! With affecting simplicity, and attractive lustre, they display the dignity, grace, and condescension of their exalted Author. As the Church's Head—King of kings and Lord of glory, He has ordained them to be the expression of his ineffable love to sinners—to perpetuate the remembrance of his wonderful works—and to be the means of communion with himself, and of conferring boundless blessings upon his chosen people. He knows our frame, and remembers we are dust; and, in the sacraments, He adapts the symbols to our state of infirmity; and through our external senses, conveys impressive instruction to our minds in relation to Divine mysteries—things spiritual and heavenly. He thus confirms to us his gracious word—accepts our humble and imperfect acts of obedience—owns us as his, and seals us till the day of final redemption. In the one sacrament, the Lord of heaven, in amazing condescension, stoops down to notice the condition of helpless infancy, and to provide and secure for the seed of his servants the choicest and most enduring blessings. When, as exposed in the open field, they are lying in their blood, and no eye to pity them, in the ordinance of baptism He passes by—in their "time of love," He spreads the skirt of his garment over them, and says to them, "live." He enters into covenant with them, and they become his.* They are introduced to his visible church,

* Ezekiel xvi. 6, 8.

and securities are entered and taken for their education and training for God's service here, and for the work and enjoyments of heaven. In the other sacrament, through the symbols of "a feast of fat things," prepared in the mountain of the Lord, believers are admitted to communion with the King of glory. They remember his love more than wine, and He comes down to have fellowship with him. He brings them into his "Banqueting House," while his "Banner of love" is displayed around them. Christ Jesus, the Beloved, is set before them, evidently crucified among them. He shews them his Covenant, confirms to them his love, and those exceeding great and precious promises, through which all New-Covenant blessings are conveyed to the heirs of salvation. The benefits of Christ's purchase are hereby sealed and made sure to the redeemed. They are enabled to rejoice in the remission of their sins, and to exult in the consolations of true religion. The secret of the Lord is with them. Faith and Hope, and all holy graces are invigorated—corruptions are mortified, and spiritual enemies subdued; and obtaining the earnest and pledge of future bliss, they lay hold on eternal life, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Such being the uses and high ends of the Sacraments, Christians should regard them with deep and heartfelt interest, and should diligently labour to promote their proper observance. They were instituted by the sovereign authority of the King and Head of the Church, and were designed for the manifestation of his glory. Christians should attend upon them in professed subjection to their exalted king—adoring his majesty, and seeking the blessings of his throne and kingdom. They exhibit and bring near the Covenant of free grace; and to the people of God, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, they confirm its precious promises, and ratify the possession of its blessed provisions. By

means of these ordinances, believers should take hold of God's covenant, and visibly join themselves to the Lord, to be his servants for ever. To the Church of Christ, the Sacraments are seals and distinct badges of membership, and ordained media of nourishment and establishment. Therefore should her faithful members greatly value these institutions, and labour diligently to promote their right celebration. To the saints, they are not only the distinctive mark of their separation from the world, and of their heavenly vocation, but are also the channel for conveying to them the richest blessings.

It is peculiarly incumbent, therefore, on all the followers of the Lamb, to entertain clearer views of the nature and design of these holy ordinances, and to endeavour that others too should adopt just sentiments respecting them, and should wait upon their observance with right ends, and in a right spirit. Prevailing abuses to be rectified, and the eminent benefits to be enjoyed by the Church and by individuals, should excite to earnest concern on this subject. The honour of Zion's King, the purity and prosperity of the Church, and the spiritual improvement of her members, all demand that these sacred ordinances should be diligently guarded against neglect and corruption, and that all prayerful efforts should be employed to diffuse the blessings connected with their Scriptural administration. The Redeemer's promises, appended to the command given at their institution, guarantee to those who duly observe them, the highest and most desirable blessings. "LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS TO THE END OF THE WORLD." "*Until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*" "That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

* Matthew xxviii. 20; xxvi. 29; Luke xxii. 30.

CHAPTER II.

INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM.

PRE-INTIMATIONS—PREPARATIONS FOR IT.

WHILE both the sacraments of the new dispensation were instituted by Christ in his kingly character, there is an observable and remarkable difference in the time and circumstances of their institution. On the night in which He was betrayed—that night of deep and absorbing interest—He appointed the Lord's Supper; and after partaking of the Paschal Feast with his disciples, He gave this proof of his unspeakable and unchangeable love, in appointing, to be observed till his Second Coming, the New Testament Passover. The ordinance of Baptism was instituted after the Redeemer had risen from the dead, and on the eve of his ascension to glory. Having purchased eternal redemption, and instructed his apostles in the things pertaining to his kingdom, ere He ascended to his Father's house clothed in our nature, and entered upon his lofty administration in glory, He gave them his parting charge, and included in it the rite of Baptism. The command to disciple and baptize is nearly connected with the injunction to preach the gospel to every creature. It is a part of the "GREAT COMMISSION,"—the foundation of the Christian ministry, a summary of Christian doctrine, the charter for the propagation of the Gospel, and the extension of the Church throughout the world. The blessed promise which is appended to the command is the stay and hope of faithful ministers, and the cheering assurance of the Redeemer's gracious presence in his Church, to the end of time.

If the Lord's Supper impressively reminds us of our Lord's condescension and love in suffering, and presents to us in lively symbols the crucified Saviour as the foundation of pardon and acceptance, the ordinance of baptism, in the circumstances of its institution, fixes the mind upon the Saviour's triumph and subsequent glory, assures us of the success of his cause in the world, and joyfully proclaims that of the "increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." If in the one sacrament we should seek to be with our Lord in his "temptations," and to have fellowship with him in his sufferings, till our hearts are melted by the wondrous display of his love, and we learn to hate sin with a perfect hatred: in the other, we are called to rejoice that He has ascended up on high most gloriously, leading captivity captive—to receive and dispense gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them.*

Before considering the import of the last Commission, as it relates to the rite of initiation, a brief reference to the *preparation* which was made for the appropriation of the ordinance of Baptism to the Christian economy may not be unsuitable, especially as it may serve to illustrate the nature and design of the institution. Under the former economy, there were "*diverse baptisms*," as the original phrase signifies.† Jewish writers tell us that proselytes, in the later period of the Hebrew Commonwealth, on being admitted to the fellowship of the Church, were required not only to submit to the rite of circumcision, but that they were also washed in water, as emblematical of separation from heathenism, and cleansing from moral impurity.‡ When John, the forerunner, was sent to

* Psalm lxxviii. 18.

† Hebrews ix. 10.

‡ See Halley on the Sacraments, pp. 111—166. Beecher on Baptism, pp. 38—40.

prepare the way of the Lord, he was styled by way of eminence, *the Baptist*. Adopting a rite, with the design of which his hearers had previously been familiar, he baptized the multitudes who resorted to him, thus designating them as a people prepared for the kingdom which was about to be established. John's ministry was not properly the commencement of the New Dispensation. It was supplementary to the former economy; and, like the dawn before the risen day, it was the harbinger and preparation for the enlarged light and liberty of the gospel. His was "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," and it was connected with the confession and forsaking of sin. "They were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."* John's baptism, though in some respects of the nature of a sacrament, was not designed to be permanent, and it did not supersede circumcision. His office was to direct men to the Saviour who was then come, and to prepare them for the spiritual kingdom that was shortly to be established. Hence he baptized all his disciples, male and female, even though Jews, and irrespective of their previous character. He thus impressively taught the necessity of moral purity to admission to the kingdom of the Messiah, and pointed to cleansing in that Fountain which was to be opened by the sufferings and death of the Redeemer.

Our Lord himself voluntarily submitted to the baptism of John. Of this significant transaction, which may be regarded, too, as a preparation for the Christian Sacrament, the evangelist Matthew relates: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righ-

* Matthew iii. 6.

teousness. Then he suffered him.”* Immediately after John had warned his hearers against resting in mere external purifications, and had explicitly declared the character and office of Christ, the Saviour came, and submitted himself to the preparatory rite. He was perfectly without sin, and was therefore incapable of some of the chief ends of John’s baptism, for which it was administered to others. But as he voluntarily bore our sins, he did not refuse the baptism of repentance and the remission of sins. He honoured a Divine ordinance, and received it as an appropriate consecration to his public work and offices. Chiefly, he designed by his baptism, to show his intimate and full fellowship with his people. As in his circumcision, he openly testified that he was made under the law, and had communion with the Church of the Old Testament, so in his baptism, he proclaimed his fellowship with his saints still, in all acts and ordinances of holy obedience.† Hence, when the Baptist objected against baptizing Christ, because of his personal dignity, he replied: “Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” It is observable that our Lord never used the *plural* form in speaking of himself. When He therefore said “it becometh us,” he meant John and all his genuine followers; and He recognized them as his fellow-servants in the kingdom of God. While He, as our blessed Surety and Substi-

* Matthew iii. 13—15.

† Archbishop Ussher, in his tract on “Immanuel,” judiciously remarks on this part of our Lord’s conduct: “However *circumcision* was by right applicable only unto such as were dead in sins, and the uncircumcision of their flesh, (Colossians ii. 11, 13,) yet He in whom there was no body of the sins of the flesh to be put off, submitted himself, notwithstanding, thereunto, not only to testify his communion with the fathers of the Old Testament, but also, by this means, to tender unto his Father a bond signed with his own blood, whereby he made himself, in our behalf, a debtor to the whole law.—Gal. v. 3.”

tute, offered a perfect obedience to the law of God, and magnified and made it honourable by his sufferings and death, “the righteousness of the law is fulfilled” in his people in their sanctification, by walking in all divine institutions and commandments blamelessly. Thus our Lord’s baptism, though not identical with the sacrament which He afterwards instituted, ministers to us important practical instruction. It exhibits the Redeemer honouring Divine ordinances. Thus He was publicly consecrated to the great work which He undertook from eternity; and though He was the Son, He is displayed in his baptism as the bond-servant of the Father; and He is seen holding intimate and endeared communion with his people, in the whole course of holy obedience.

In connexion with the sacred rite, as administered to the Saviour at Jordan, was the descent of the Spirit, by a visible symbol; and the voice from the excellent glory proclaimed, at the same time, the Father’s approval of his person and work. From the Redeemer’s conduct and expressions in this scene of singular grandeur and solemnity, we should learn to set a high value on holy ordinances; and recognizing our baptismal engagement, we should, as pledged servants of God, esteem it an unspeakable honour to be associated with our blessed Lord and Master in the work of holy obedience.

The baptisms by our Lord and his disciples were preparatory, too, to the institution of the Christian Sacrament. Soon after he had entered upon his public ministry, it is said by the Evangelist *—“After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them and baptized.” And, in the beginning of the fourth chapter of the same Gospel, we are told concerning the

* John iii. 22.

baptisms by our Lord and his disciples — “When, therefore, the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John; though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.” Multitudes had been baptized by John, but more were baptized at the Saviour’s command, by his own disciples. This baptism was not identical with that which our Lord prescribed on the eve of his ascension to glory. It was simply preparatory, as was the baptism of John, and was intended to carry forward what the forerunner had begun. It furnished at once a striking testimony in favour of the ministry of the Baptist, and declared loudly the importance and necessity of moral purity, to true discipleship, and the enjoyment of the privileges of the kingdom of God. In this preparatory rite, the Saviour “baptized not, but his disciples,” that He might appear not so much the *Author* as the *Object* of Christianity; to intimate that He entrusted the whole establishment and organization of the Church to his servants, acting under his instructions; and to prevent his disciples afterwards from attaching undue importance to the ordinance, as being administered by the hands of the Redeemer. In a like spirit, the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, earnestly declares: “I thank God, I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.” Thus did our Lord and his apostles guard the Church against that excessive overvaluing of outward rites, which afterwards so generally marked the declension of vital godliness, and the decay of the primitive churches, and which forms a principal trait of the corruption of some modern churches.

Although the act of singular and affecting condescension performed by our Lord immediately before his last agony—that of washing his disciples’ feet—does not properly refer to Christian Baptism, yet it

was calculated to fix the minds of the apostles on the significancy of washing with water, and on the nature and design of a symbolical rite. To Peter's objection, expressive of his views of the Redeemer's dignity, and of his own unworthiness, our Lord impressively said—"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;" and afterwards, when the Apostle, in the overflowing of fervent affection, sought to have various parts of his body washed, He declared, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit, and ye are clean, but not all."* Thus the Saviour impressively taught that the spiritual privilege of which washing with water was an appropriate symbol, is essential to an interest in Christ and his salvation. The importance of the outward sign is shown by connecting it with the highest privilege which any can enjoy. And the nature of the symbol is clearly explained, when our Lord declares that total immersion is not required to constitute it, and that the ablution of a small portion of the body is as emblematical of perfect cleansing by his blood, as the washing of the whole person.

By such previous intimations—by such plain and repeated declarations and significant actions, were the minds of the disciples and apostles of our Lord gradually led forward to the institution of the initiatory Sacrament of the New Economy. A due consideration of the observances to which we have referred may be of use to give Christians right views of the design of the ordinance of Baptism, as well as to lead them to its practical improvement. Above all, let us ever remember, that if we are not washed in that precious blood of which water in baptism is the symbol, we have no part in Christ or his salvation. Sanctification alone constitutes the evidence of union to Christ, and a meetness for the heavenly inheritance. If by an

* John xiii. 10.

outward rite we have been dedicated to God by the affusion of a few drops of water, none may call in question the validity of such a baptism, for our Lord declares that those who are washed in one member, or by the application of a small portion of the liquid element, are "clean every whit." This ordinance, as well as that which was preparatory to its introduction, declares, in the loudest and most solemn terms, the grand fundamental truth—"WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD." Moral purity—the spiritual cleansing of the whole heart and life—is indispensable to the enjoyment of the Divine favour, and all real blessing here; and devoid of it, none enter the kingdom of glory.

The preparations which we have noticed, formed a most natural introduction to the appointment of Baptism with water, as a standing ordinance in the Church. The Redeemer, having completed his great work, and given commandment to his apostles whom He had chosen, just before his ascension to glory, instituted the ordinance of Baptism, to accompany the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, and as a rite fundamental to the profession of Christianity, and to all right obedience to its precepts. Why the two Sacraments should be instituted by our Lord in his own person, while He tabernacled on earth, and their appointment not deferred till the descent of the Spirit, and to the period when the Church was placed under its potent influence and direction, we may be unable fully to declare. As the apostles were *witnesses* of all that Jesus taught and did, it was suitable that to them especially there should be entrusted the first administration of sacred rites, which contained a seal of dedication, and a public profession of faith, and which held forth a lasting memorial of the great facts of human redemption. The apostles were the accredited witnesses of the doctrines to be believed. They were ap-

pointed to transmit the report of the Gospel; and they were either present at the wondrous events connected with the Redeemer's last sufferings, or had heard them frequently declared by their exalted Master in public by signs, by prophecies and parables, and multiplied allusions.* There was, therefore, an obvious propriety in the Lord himself personally instituting these sacramental ordinances; and committing them, before his departure, to be dispensed by his apostles, and by their genuine successors—faithful ministers of the gospel—till the end of time.

The *Divine appointment* of Baptism, as recorded by one Evangelist, is in these terms—“GO YE, THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU; AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD.”† Another of the sacred writers, the evangelist Mark, varies the terms of the Commission, probably referring to another occasion, prior to the Saviour's departure, when He spoke to his disciples of their future service—“*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*”‡ The connexion of the institution with the Commission to “disciple all nations,” and with the practical directions which the ministers of Christ are enjoined to inculcate, as well as the terms employed in appointing the ordinance, suggest some of the most important practical views of its nature and design. Baptism, as appointed by the Redeemer, was evidently intended to be the badge of separation from the world, and the

* See Hind's History of the Rise and Early Progress of Christianity, pp. 109, 110.

† Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

‡ Mark xvi. 15, 16.

seal of discipleship. It furnishes the proper basis and starting point of all right religious training, and supplies the most powerful motives to all consistent holy obedience:—"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." A solemn pledge is given on the one hand, that the baptized shall be thus taught, and they on the other, are engaged to the strict observance of all holy precepts and institutions.*

The baptismal rite is ordained to be administered "in the name," or "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This evidently implies a professed dependence on the glorious Object whose name is named upon us in baptism, and devoted subjection to him. This object is a Triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—the co-equal and co-essential persons of the blessed Godhead. Baptism, placed by its Divine Author at the entrance into the visible church, as the rite of initiation, is thus a solemn profession of belief in the DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY—the grand fundamental article of revealed religion. Wherever the Church is planted, and as long as it exists on the earth, it is ordained that this public confession be made of God in his essential glory, and New Covenant relations. Every member of the Church, by having instamped upon him the name of the blessed Trinity, becomes a standing witness to the mysterious doctrine which is fundamental to every part of the Christian system, and a belief of which is essential to all true godliness.

Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, does not merely mean that those who are commissioned to administer it, have their authority from the persons of the Godhead, nor alone that the Divine name is invoked in the ordinance. The rite adminis-

* Ursini Doctrinæ Christianæ Compendium, pp. 563, 564.

tered in this threefold Name implies a cordial belief in the Covenant relation of each of the persons of the Godhead. It is the dedication of the subject of baptism to a Triune Godhead, and a profession of entire dependence upon this glorious Being for acceptance, with earnest desire and expectation of the actual and present enjoyment of the blessing.

God the Father is revealed in Scripture as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as the Head of the Covenant of grace, on heaven's part, in the economy of human redemption. He is the God of mercy and peace. "*God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son.*" He appointed the Mediator,—gave the redeemed, as first chosen and loved by Him, into the hand of Christ, to be ransomed from the curse. He brought the First-begotten into the world—sustained him in his arduous undertaking—accepted his vicarious sacrifice—set him at his own right hand, and conferred upon him all ascension-gifts to bestow upon the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them. His is eminently the endearing character of Father; and concerning Him, the Saviour said after his resurrection—as if to give his people the sweetest encouragement to approach Him in the paternal relation—"I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."* By being baptized in the name of the Father, we profess our belief in the new and well-ordered Covenant, and declare it to be all our salvation and desire. We approach to, and confide in, not an imaginary deity of our own fancy, or the God of nature and providence merely—but the God of love, the God of all grace. Taking hold of his Covenant, we profess to lay aside our enmity, and to embrace and delight in him as our Salvation and Portion. First of his gracious proposals in

* John xx. 20.

the Covenant is the declaration—"I am thy God." "I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." In baptism, we joyfully embrace the offer, and from the heart respond, "I am the Lord's." "Thou art my Father—my God, and the rock of my salvation," The Love—the Peace—the whole blessings of the Covenant are centred in this Father, who "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all." In the baptismal act, we virtually embrace this love, and appropriate this peace and blessing. Dedicating ourselves to the Head of the Covenant, and the Father of mercies, we solemnly vow to serve him, "as a son his father." Instead of regarding him as a sin-avenging God, or an incensed Judge, we come to him as our loving Father, who has yearning bowels of overflowing pity, and who keeps truth and mercy for ever. We engage to be his, and for Him alone—to perform the duties of adopted sons and obedient children. His favour we profess to be to us better than life; and we devote ourselves to him to please him in all things—to promote his honour, and to live alone to his glory. Believers by baptism are placed among the children, and they learn to cry from the heart, "My Father, thou art the Guide of my youth." "Thou shalt call me my Father, and shalt not turn away from me."

Again, the *name of the Son* is named upon us in baptism. This implies that we receive and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ in all his excellent offices and endearing relations—that we rely upon him for all blessing—and that we cheerfully and fully surrender ourselves to his service. The Redeemer is "All and in all"—in relation to human salvation and happiness. He was set up from everlasting, and is the only and sure foundation laid in Zion. God's proclaimed and unalterable purpose is that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." When the

name of Christ is named upon us in baptism, we declare that we accept of the Lord Jesus as our Prophet, Priest, and King; and that we depend upon Him, and him alone, as “the Lord our righteousness,” for pardon, acceptance, and complete salvation. Thankfully we accept of Christ as the Father’s “unspeakable gift,” and welcome in faith the proclamation from the excellent glory, “THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM.” We receive him as *our Prophet*—and submit our minds to be taught by him, taking his word to be a light to our paths, and our unerring directory in all things. Lamenting our ignorance, and refusing to lean upon our own understandings, we rest on the blessed promise to Zion’s children, “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children;” and we plead in earnestness, “Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths. Lead me in truth, and teach me; for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.”* And while we place ourselves under Divine teaching, we engage to search the Divine word, and to follow its instructions in all things. The baptized are called to embrace Christ Jesus as *the Great High Priest of their profession*; and by the act of dedication, they profess to rely on his atoning sacrifice—to have recourse to his blood for pardon and cleansing—and to depend always on his powerful and all-prevailing intercession. We submit to him too as *our Almighty King*. Our hearts are surrendered to him, to be subdued to the obedience of faith; and our enemies are put into his hands, to be restrained and destroyed. We profess to recognize his authority in all things; and to make his laws the rule of our life, and our songs in the house of our pilgrimage. We acquiesce in his sovereign appointments, and delight in observing his ordinances,

* Psalm xxv. 4.

as expressions of his authority, and as appropriate means of blessing. This exalted Saviour we avouch to be our Lord and God. We resolve to glory only in his Cross, and to rely on Him alone for all we need, and as the only and sure Foundation of all our hopes. His name is a Strong Tower. He is his people's Treasure and all—the Alpha and Omega of all their praise. While we thus embrace him and cleave to him with the heart, we joyfully declare of him, “Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;” and constrained by his love, we learn “to live not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us, and rose again.”* Jesus is made of God unto us, “Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”† Accepting him for these ends, we glory only in the Lord; and by our baptism, we become pledged to live as his faithful servants, to walk as obedient children, and to act befitting the high character of heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ of life everlasting.

The *name of the blessed Spirit* is, finally, named upon us in baptism. We are thus taught to recognize him as a person in the glorious Godhead, and in the important offices and relations which He sustains in the great affair of human redemption. In the glorious plan of salvation, the Holy Spirit has intrusted to him the whole application of covenanted and purchased blessings. His office is to take the things which are Christ's, and effectually show them to us. He quickens those that are dead in sin—renews their nature—enlightens their minds, and seals them to the day of redemption. He is the Divine Sanctifier and Comforter. In the hearts of the saved, He takes up his abode, and their bodies and spirits become temples of the Holy Ghost. He is “in them a well of water springing up to life everlasting;” and all comfort, peace, hope, and

* Isaiah xlv. 24; 2 Corinthians v. 14.

† 1 Cor. i. 30.

joy spring from his gracious influence. He is the Spirit of grace and supplication; He helps our manifold infirmities in prayer; and as the Spirit of adoption, by him, "we cry, Abba Father." Without this blessed agency, the word cannot quicken, enlighten, or save, and none can truly call Christ Lord, but by the Spirit. He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and is the *earnest*, now enjoyed, of the heavenly inheritance. When we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, we surrender ourselves to him in these endearing relations and salutary offices, and we profess dependence upon him for all his gracious operations. The water sprinkled in baptism is the emblem of the Spirit purging the conscience from dead works; and by the application of the external symbol we are pointed to the all-powerful and effectual baptism of the Holy Ghost, as with fire. Dedicated to the Spirit, we surrender ourselves to his teaching, guidance, and sanctifying and comforting influence. Our profession is to "walk in the Spirit"—to manifest the workings of his grace—to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit—to honour and to depend on him for the progressive renewal of our hearts and lives, until He conducts us, perfected in holiness, to the land of uprightness. The Third Person of the blessed Godhead perfects the New Creation, as his omnific operations completed the Old.* In dedicating ourselves to Him, therefore, we joyfully embrace the whole wondrous plan of salvation. We seek to stand complete in Christ, advanced to the stature of perfect men, and we confide in him to perfect whatsoever concerns us. Thus, in our baptism, we are solemnly given up to a Triune God—to love, obey, and delight in him. As chosen, redeemed, and sanctified by the blessed Trinity, we own special

* See Owen on the Holy Spirit and his Work, Vol. II. ch. IV. p. 96. Edit. 1826.

obligations and duties to each of the Divine persons, and we engage "to walk worthy of God to all pleasing."* We accept of God the Father, Son, and Spirit as our God and Portion—our Father, Saviour, Sanctifier and All. While we declare that we are his, we profess to rely on him alone—as all our confidence and expectation. Believing with the heart, we joyfully profess, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." "We will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." We "will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song; He also is become our salvation."†

The ordinance then in this first view—baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is to be regarded as an eminent privilege—as involving an obligation to the highest duties—and as holding out all encouragement to their faithful performance. To such as rightly receive it, the designation of the Divine name is a solemn public claiming them to be the Lord's. It is the visible sign of their separation from the rest of the world, and of their enrolment with the people of God. It significantly points to the grand mystery of godliness—oneness with God in his gracious purposes, works, and character—God dwelling in us and we in him. It symbolizes the beginning of a life of holiness and blessedness; and exhibits the distinguishing character which Christians should ever sustain—that of a separate, sanctified, peculiar people, wearing God's name, and transformed into his moral likeness.

A due consideration of this lofty privilege is fitted to excite and animate to all holy duties. Baptism impressively teaches to its subjects the grand practical truth—"Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his." They bear the Divine name, and

* Col. i. 10.

† Ps. cxliv. 15; Micah iv. 5; Isa. xii. 3.

have received the sign of God's covenant in their flesh. They are thus bound to walk worthy of God, who has called them to his kingdom and glory. In all things, they should aim to promote the Divine honour, to display the mind of Christ, and to show forth his praises who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The "exceeding precious" promise appended to the Apostolic Commission may be taken as an assurance of the highest favour and blessing, in connexion with the right administration of baptism—"LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE WORLD." The Saviour does not only guarantee to his servants in preaching the gospel, and in discipling all nations, safety, protection, and a blessing, in all their work, and perils and conflicts. He assures them also of his gracious presence in baptizing into discipleship in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. With ministers who dispense the ordinance faithfully, He is present, rendering it effectual as a means of blessing—accepting the surrender and dedication which are made to him, and baptizing with the Holy Ghost as with fire. The same gracious promise is extended to Christian parents; and they have reason to expect the Redeemer's special presence, when they come, in a believing manner, to devote their offspring to God. His Spirit's grace will help them to take hold of God's covenant, and his presence with them always will enable them to remember their solemn engagement—to discharge faithfully all parental duties, and to desire earnestly, and to anticipate humbly and joyfully the blessed recompense of the reward. And the young who have partaken of Christian baptism, have, in virtue of their early dedication, the warrant to plead as Moses—"If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence;" and are encouraged to rest upon the all-comprehensive promise given to the youthful patriarch—"In all places

where thou goest, I will be with thee; and I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”*

CHAPTER III.

SPECIAL ENDS OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

IN coming to any ordinance of Divine appointment, it is requisite that the worshipper should have distinct and worthy ends in view; and especially in the observance of the sacraments is this necessary to preserve from gross abuse, and to realize the spiritual benefits which these sacred rites are designed to confer. There is reason to fear that the ordinance of baptism is degraded in our day by multitudes who have recourse to it, entertaining erroneous sentiments concerning its nature and design, and proposing to themselves unworthy ends, in attending upon its administration.

Without adverting to fundamental errors on the subject, which may afterwards be noticed, we may mention two or three low ends which are very commonly proposed by persons even within the pale of the church, who seek baptism for their children, which indicate a deplorable degree of ignorance on the whole subject, and discover the prevailing ungodliness of many who make a Christian profession. First—Many parents seek baptism for their children, merely in compliance with an established custom, *to keep up the credit for themselves or their families that they are Christians.* Living without having made any proper profession of the gospel—ignorant of its distinctive doctrines, and neglectful of its plainest duties, they yet cherish the fatal delusion that the Christian name alone is sufficient to make them Christians, and think themselves

* Genesis xxviii. 15.

sure of the Divine favour, and safe for eternity, without possessing a particle of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Such persons, however, under the strong power of self-delusion, are exceedingly tenacious of the mere name of Christian, and would be greatly offended, if either it was denied them, or if it was hinted that with it, after all, they may be none of Christ's. These deluded creatures appear quite anxious to obtain baptism for their children, and would be very indignant if it were refused them.

The Popish error that it is by baptism we become Christians, irrespective of any moral change, and the employment in its administration of oil as well as water, have led to the use of the term *Christen*, instead of baptize—indicating a marked departure from the Divine institution. The persons to whom we refer very generally employ this phraseology, and speak of the *Christening* of their children as by no means to be omitted; and congratulate themselves on obtaining for them all that is desirable, if they are admitted to the ordinance. Few things are more fearful than such self-deception. The end proposed is to help forward, and seal a delusion which is most fatal—equally to parents and their children. Ministers of religion who lend themselves to foster such perverted views, are deeply criminal; and those sections of the church in which they are entertained, or which are not at pains to instruct parents aright in this matter, have resting on them a fearful responsibility; and cannot fail to suffer the sad consequences, from the ignorance and irreligion which will in time overspread their membership.

Some, again, regard Baptism as *a mere ceremony for giving a name to the child baptized*. Under the Jewish economy, it was customary to declare the name of the child at the time when it was circumcised. Hence it is usual to pronounce the Christian name of

a child, or of an adult convert, at baptism. But when such a low and unworthy view is entertained, that baptism is only intended for conferring a name, the practice of declaring the name should either altogether be dispensed with, or so changed as to afford no countenance to the vain fancies of ignorance or superstition. Scarcely any thing can be conceived more dishonouring to God, or deadening to the conscience, than to degrade a holy ordinance, by observing it, with an end so irrational and unworthy.

There are others—and it is to be feared that, even in Protestant churches, the number is not few—who regard Baptism as a kind of charm, that protects infants from evil influences, and that is especially needed to secure their safety when dying. They have only confused, incoherent notions on the subject, and they have never been at pains to inquire what is the testimony of the Scriptures in relation to the ends of baptism, or to form right sentiments respecting it. Among such persons, if the child is sickly, or apparently in danger of death, there is the utmost anxiety to obtain baptism, and if it dies unbaptized, their distress will rise into agony. On the other hand, they will avow, without hesitation, that their children are certainly happy, if they have obtained baptism previously to death.

Against cherishing ends so low and unsuitable, all should be warned and guarded; while all pains should be taken to impart clear and full Scriptural instructions on this article. Christian parents should be familiar with the high ends which the ordinance presents, both as they regard themselves and their children. Besides the ends which the Sacraments have, in common, we may notice, as among the *special* ends of Baptism, the following:—

1. *Baptism is a visible mark appointed by God, by which the Church is distinguished and separated from all nations.* In instituting this ordinance, the Redeem-

er contemplated the universality of his holy religion. All nations were to be discipled—the gospel was to be preached to every creature. But the church in all ages was to consist of persons redeemed out of the world. Its individual members were to come out and be separate—to relinquish the society and friendships of the world, and to be ever distinguished for nonconformity to its customs, spirit, and pursuits. The honour, privilege, and safety of the true members of the Church lie here. They are a holy nation—a royal priesthood—a peculiar people. The words of the dying Lawgiver declare this distinction and privilege—“Israel then shall dwell in safety alone. The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also his heavens shall drop down dew.” * The visible mark of this separation is Baptism, and this was a chief end designed by its glorious Author in its institution. Those who were to be called out of the nations were to receive this mark of discipleship in all lands where the gospel should be preached, and that to the end of time. Accordingly, in the days of primitive Christianity, the outward sign was always applied to those who received the faith of Christ, and who thus openly declared their renunciation of their former connexions. It was not less the badge of their profession of a new Master and a new relation, than a declaration, by means of a sensible sign and a palpable action, that they had fully abandoned the world, and its evil customs and pursuits. On the memorable day of Pentecost, the multitude of converts were at once baptized. Afterwards, as the kingdom of Christ extended, and believers were added to the church—converted Jews and Gentiles—they received, by baptism, the impressed seal that marked their forsaking of former courses, and their rejection of all that had hitherto constituted the

* Deut. xxxiii. 28.

ground of their trust and dependence. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized—Cornelius and his family, and the Jailer and his house. Thus was it distinctly and loudly proclaimed, that they had wholly parted from the Judaical ritual, and from Gentile idolatry, and that they had willingly gone without the camp to Jesus, bearing his reproach. This is still the primary design of Christian baptism. If we are Christ's, and to be in his company on Mount Zion, we must wear the mark of those who are "redeemed from the earth," and who "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes." Vital Christianity is intimately connected with maintaining a holy separation from the world. And not only is it the Redeemer's design, by giving them the ordinance of baptism, to obsignate their separation, his people must willingly profess it. Parents should propose, as a principal end of the baptism of their children, their incorporation with those that are redeemed from the earth; and our baptism should ever remind us of our solemn pledge and sacred vow to live as not of the world—to overcome it by faith, and to seek a better country, even an heavenly.

2. *Another end of baptism is introduction to the visible Church, and participation in its fellowship.* In the Westminster Confession, it is declared that Baptism is "a Sacrament of the New Testament, for the solemn admission of the person baptized into the visible Church." This view of the ordinance accords with the uniform testimony of sacred Scripture. Baptism does not *make* children members of the visible church, but only recognizes, in a solemn and public manner, their membership. The infants of believing parents are born within the covenant, and they ought to be regarded as members of, and entitled to the privileges of the visible church. In the initiatory rite, they are openly enrolled in the fellowship of the Church—their right of admission is acknowledged, and they are received to all the

church's privileges.* To Christian parents, and their children, this end is most valuable. To the visible church pertain the covenant and its promises—the means of grace, purchased benefits, and special providential protection and blessing. All who are within the Church may not come to enjoy eternal salvation; but to all it is freely offered; and even those who shall not be finally saved, inherit many distinguishing favours, through their connexion with the visible redeemed society. By admission to this fellowship, they share in the dispensation of the word and ordinances—the appointed means of life and salvation. They have an interest in the prayers, counsels, and sympathies of God's people; and the eyes of Divine care, and the arms of Almighty power are over and around a people separated from the world, to be the heritage of the Lord and his pleasant plant.

As Noah's ark—prepared for the salvation of his house, and an apposite emblem of the church—enclosed the only true worshippers of God that were then in the world, and afforded safety from the Deluge to all the patriarch's family; so by baptism, visibly connecting us with the Lord's people, we enjoy many important privileges. “The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”† The baptized receive the seal of fellowship with the highest incorporated society in the world. All of them enjoy the doctrine of God's word—have the light of Divine revelation—and profess faith in Christ; and some of them are, in the amplest sense, the excellent of the earth—heirs of salvation, and kings and priests to God and the Lamb. From this chosen society, prayers are ascending continually into God's temple, and by them sacrifices of praise are dai-

* See Boston's Complete Body of Divinity, Vol. III. p. 307.

† 1 Peter iii. 21.

ly laid upon God's altar. Their holy works are acknowledged of God, and are blessed for the advancement of his glory in the earth. The eyes of the Lord are upon his church perpetually, and her walls are continually before him. Angels, the invisible guard of the covenant, encamp around her; and all providences bright and dark are made subservient to her purification, prosperity, and ultimate salvation. Here souls are born to Christ, and saints are nourished and prepared for glory. "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her."* "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." †

To such fellowship, and to the privileges consequent upon it, Baptism is the appointed means of introduction. Christian parents have thus a very high motive to seek it for their children, and baptized youth have ground to remember their baptism with interest and delight. The baptized are, by the washing of water, enrolled in the brotherhood of faith. They are publicly recommended to the prayers of God's people, and placed under the tutelage of the church as their spiritual mother. While they are pledged to the offices of holy fellowship, they have a warrant to lay claim to all the privileges of the house of God. As to the Israelitish people placed under the covenant of circumcision, so to them are committed the lively oracles of God; and to them pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. ‡ Rejoicing in the heritage of God's people, a subject of Christian baptism may say, "The lines have fallen to me in a

* Psalm lxxxvii. 6.

† 1 Corinthians xii. 13.

‡ Rom. iii. 4; ix 4.

pleasant place, yea, the inheritance I have got excels in beauty.”

3. *Baptism is a striking exhibition of the Divine method of cleansing the soul, and renewing the whole man by the blood of Christ, and by the work of the Holy Ghost.* We shall have occasion to speak of these great truths afterwards, under the head of the *doctrines* inculcated by baptism. But we notice them now, as one of the principal ends of the institution and observance of the ordinance. The Lord's Supper was appointed to be a standing memorial of Christ's death; and a chief end of its devout observance is to perpetuate the lively remembrance of the Redeemer's atoning sacrifice till his second coming. Baptism, like circumcision, which it supplanted, denotes the putting away of the sins of the flesh; and exhibits, in a lively manner, the grand and only way of moral purification. The ordained outward element is exclusively water—the medium of cleansing, and a means of refreshment and fertility. For the purpose of exhibiting impressively the pollution of our nature, and the absolute need of moral purification to all who are born of Adam, children are brought to a rite which loudly declares their defiled condition, and points to the only way in which they can be restored to the lost image of God, and renewed in the spirit of holiness. There would be no meaning in the application of water to the subjects of baptism, if they were not regarded as sinful and defiled; and while its use in the ordinance strikingly proclaims that children are not innocent—that none who are admitted to baptism are without sin, it forcibly declares, too, the grand method which God has provided for cleansing the heart and conscience, and bringing depraved human beings to shine forth in the beauty of holiness.* Water is the appropriate Scriptural em-

* Socinians and Arians are in the habit of teaching, that children are born into the world entirely spotless. Their favour-

blem of the Holy Spirit, and his powerful grace is frequently and beautifully compared to the salutary influence of this element. "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed—my blessing upon thine offspring." "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon them, and they shall be clean; and from all their filthiness, and from all their idols will I cleanse them."* "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink: He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "And this," says the Evangelist, "spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not

its illustration is, that the minds of infant children are like a sheet of white paper. It need not be told that such a view is utterly opposed to the plain and reiterated testimony of Scripture on the subject, which declares human beings to be conceived in sin, and born in iniquity, and represents it as impossible for man that is born of woman to be clean. While this sentiment subverts the gospel, it is equally opposed to sound reason and true philosophy. Unitarians try to vindicate their system by alleging in its favour the well-known doctrine which Locke has incontrovertibly established, that *the mind has no innate ideas*. But though this is freely admitted, it is undeniable that the mind has innate, natural propensities; and if these are not evil—if there is no previous bias and original taint, how does it happen that, of the millions of human beings that are born into the world, all, without exception, discover the disposition to follow evil example—all are ignorant of God, and inclined to wickedness? A constant and universal imitation of evil proves an original bias—a universal taint of moral depravity. The Arminian view of original sin, which denies the federal headship of Adam, and the imputation of his primeval offence to his posterity, and which does not admit the total and helpless depravity of the nature, is at once opposed to the statements of the Word—especially to the Apostle's cogent reasoning in Romans, fifth chapter—contradicts the experience of convinced sinners, and is injurious to the glorious remedy provided in the gospel.

* Isaiah xliv. 3; Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” * Water is likewise an emblem of the blood of Christ—the grand means of moral purification, as the Spirit is the blessed Agent of sanctification. These two are inseparably connected in the spiritual renewal and purification of the heirs of salvation. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.” This precious blood was shed that thereby the Redeemer might sanctify his church, and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. † It is applied for purification by the Holy Spirit; and in his hands it becomes “the blood of sprinkling.” ‡ “We are saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost.” § Of all the redeemed who come to glory it is declared, without exception, “They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” || The grand medium of purification was the blood of Christ; the blessed Agent that effectually applied it was the Holy Spirit; saved sinners themselves were active in sanctification—“they wash their robes”—and are co-workers with God in their renewal after the image of holiness. The necessity of this renewal is impressively declared in the significant rite of baptism, and the method divinely ordained by which it is effected is strikingly foreshadowed.

4. *Baptism exhibits the unity of the Church, and the baptized are publicly presented in the ordinance to enjoy the benefits of this fellowship.* There is one body—one faith—one baptism. However widely dispersed,

* John vii. 37—39.

† Ephesians v. 27.

‡ The mixing of the blood of the ancient sacrifices with water previously to its being sprinkled, was not only to preserve it liquid, but had also a plain allusion to the Spirit as connected with the application of the blood for purification.

§ Titus iii. 5.

|| Rev. vii. 14.

however different in forms of outward profession, administration, and other circumstances, the church of God is essentially one, in all lands and in all ages of the world. There is one glorious living Head; one system of revealed truth—the faith once delivered to the saints, to be believed and professed; a common salvation to be enjoyed; and one blessed animating hope, of which all faithful members are partakers. “We being many are one body and one bread, as we are all partakers of that one bread.” * A Christian Father beautifully expresses this unity, “The Church is *one*, which, by its fruitful increase, is enlarged into a multitude. As the rays of the sun, though many, are yet one luminary; as the branches of a tree, though numerous, are all established on one firmly-rooted trunk; and as many streams springing from the same fountain, though apparently dispersed abroad by their overflowing abundance, yet have their unity preserved by one common origin;—so the Church, though it extends its rays through the world, is one Light. Though every where diffused, its unity is not broken. By the abundance of its increase, it extends its branches through the whole earth. It spreads far and wide its flowing streams; yet it has one Head—one Fountain—one Parent; and is enriched and enlarged by the issue of its own fruitfulness.” †

The visible church under the Old Testament—the charter of which was God’s covenant with Abraham—is likened by the Apostle Paul, to a stately, wide-spreading olive-tree. ‡ The race of Israel, incorporated in the church, were the natural branches; converted Gentiles are the branches grafted in; and when Israel shall turn to the Lord, the natural branches shall be again restored; and the one goodly olive tree

* 1 Corinthians x. 17.

† Cyprian—De Unitate Ecclesiæ.—Sect. iv.

‡ Romans xi.

—verdant and beautiful—shall overspread all lands, and shall embrace, under its shadow, the people of all nations. Circumcision of old was the symbol of connexion with this exalted society. It is true, it was but a sign—for they were not all Israel who were of Israel; but still it was an expressive and significant exhibition of the joyful truth, that the Church of the First-born is one holy fraternity, separated from the world—one mystical Body, united to the same living and glorious Head. Baptism teaches the same fundamental truth; and participation in the rite is intended to proclaim this unity, as well as to present the privileges which result from it, to the subjects of baptism. Denominational differences, and diversity of forms, do not destroy this unity. Those who profess the true religion, with their children, however separated by place, or name, or outward form, are to be regarded as equally belonging to the one blessed society—the Church of Christ, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Independent—who hold Christ the Head, who profess the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and exemplify their profession by a holy life, are members of this visible community, and partakers of its spiritual privileges and external blessings. The one baptism in the name of a Triune God, introduces the baptized to this fellowship, and is a public confirmation of that important article of the Church's Creed, "I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH." It is unscriptural and monstrous to limit the church only to one particular section, and to maintain that connexion with the Church of Christ is the exclusive privilege of those who receive baptism from a favoured order of administrators, or of such as submit to a peculiar mode of administration.*

* The sentiment expressed above is not designed to maintain the validity of baptism as administered by such classes as Romanists and Unitarians. Though the leading Reformers taught that

Of the benefits of fellowship with this one Church, *two* are of special interest to those who are the subjects of baptism. They are recommended to the prayers of the faithful; and the officers and members of the church become pledged for their spiritual training and scriptural instruction. These benefits shall be considered afterwards; but, meanwhile, their manifold advantages as ends in baptism cannot be overestimated. Children are in baptism publicly recommended to the prayers of God's people, and a solemn guarantee is given that they shall be educated for God and for heaven. What a blessed privilege for Christian parents! What an eminent advantage, or rather what a well-spring of benefits, to the children of Zion! They are thus brought to the altar of God—placed under the shelter of the Mercy-seat—and blessings are sought on their behalf by those who have an interest at the throne of grace. They are entered in Christ's school; and a guarantee is publicly given that they shall be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

the *matter* of the Sacrament exists where the words of institution are employed; and though the Reformed Churches have, generally, in practice, admitted the validity of such an administration, at least so far as not to require the ordinance to be dispensed anew—we think there are strong grounds to plead that Baptism from the hands of those who are identified with Antichrist, and from those who, denying the doctrine of the Trinity, have essentially a different religion, and ought not to be called Christians—should be regarded as invalid. The pretence of Puseyites that baptism is only valid when administered by a minister episcopally ordained, would unchristianize at once a vast majority of the Protestant community, and is unscriptural as it is intolerant and uncharitable. The Baptist tenet, that there is no right baptism but by immersion, is justly liable to a similar charge. The sentiment inculcated in the text is in marked contrast to such illiberal views; and is the doctrine taught in the various symbols of the Reformed Churches, and by all the eminent leading Reformers.

5. This ordinance, furthermore, *is a testimony of our duty to God, and obliges us to the knowledge, worship, and service of Him into whose name we are baptized.*

The name of God impressed in baptism declares us to be his professed and pledged servants. It was customary, in ancient times, for soldiers to have the name of their general enstamped on their right hands, to testify that they were absolutely under his authority—bound to fight under his standard—to be concerned for his honour, and in all things to obey his commands. Idolaters, too, had the mark or symbol of their gods impressed on their foreheads or hands. In allusion to this practice, the adherents of Antichrist are said to have his mark in their foreheads and on their right hands;* and, on the other hand, the redeemed, the approved servants of Christ, are declared to have the Father's name written in their foreheads.† The Israelites, when they passed through the Red Sea, and followed their glorious Leader through the wilderness, are said to have been “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” ‡ This means that they were solemnly engaged to observe the institutions of Moses—of which their extraordinary baptism by the spray of the sea, and by the moisture that distilled on them from the cloudy pillar, was a visible seal and pledge. In like manner, Christian baptism publicly proclaims its subjects to be God's servants. It separates and distinguishes them from others; it marks them as the Lord's. Ratifying the great truths which inculcate the knowledge of his character and works, and itself a distinguishing part of divine worship, it engages the baptized to walk worthy of God, who has called them to his kingdom and glory. There is a community in the world that is eminently designated “the people of

* Revelation xiii.

† Revelation xxi. 4.

‡ 1 Corinthians x. 2.

God ;” distinguished by peculiar privileges, and appointed to special holy service. Every privilege which they enjoy lays them under obligation to a corresponding duty. The covenant, which is the charter of all blessing, as they take hold of it, becomes to them an engagement to duty. The truth which they profess is to be exemplified in all holy living. And the seals of their discipleship—baptism and the Lord’s Supper—are an open testimony to all men, as well as a public engagement that they are not their own ; but that they are servants of a glorious Master,—bound to honour him by a course of uniform and devoted obedience. Baptism is thus an important means of engaging to holy decision in religion, and may ever afterwards be suitably improved to excite to activity and diligence in God’s service. When duly considered, it is calculated to minister support and spiritual consolation in the duties and trials of life. Justly may the baptized say, My highest privilege and early dedication called and engaged me to be the Lord’s. His name was named upon me, and I was enlisted in his service. I wear in my sealed profession the mark of a glorious Master—a mark which I have no desire to conceal, and which, I trust, no power of hell or earth shall prevail to efface. Whatever others do, be it mine to serve the Lord. His service is perfect freedom. Whatever difficulties I may have to encounter—however weak and unworthy I am, He whose I am, and whom I serve, can and will sustain me in the work to which He has called me. I rely on his all-sufficient grace. I desire to be wholly his ; to serve him in newness of life, and to walk before him in all holy obedience. “Lord, I am thine, O save me.” I rest on his blessed assurance, as my exceeding great reward, “Where I am, there shall my servant be.”

Lastly, *Baptism has for its special ends, the participation of the grace of salvation, and the enjoyment of glory.*

The ordinances of our holy religion are not merely to be regarded as appointments, to be observed, from a sense of duty, irrespective of any spiritual benefit which they are the means of conferring. They are not empty signs, or visible badges only of a profession. They are not improperly termed “means of grace,” as they are ordained channels for conveying the blessing, and appointed means for making us partakers of the grace of the covenant. The blessings of salvation are sometimes communicated through reading and hearing the word. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The praises and prayers of the Sanctuary, not only affect the heart and elevate the mind—they are accepted as acts of religious worship, and in answer to them, spiritual and eternal blessings descend from the Throne. The Redeemer’s gracious presence is guaranteed to a few meeting in his name; and the Holy Spirit is promised to be given, and is actually conferred on them that devoutly seek his influence. The ordinances which are designated *sealing* are an eminent means of blessing. Observed, it is true, they may be, and yet no real grace be exercised, and no spiritual benefit be enjoyed, either at the time or afterwards. No mere external services can of themselves infuse right moral feelings or spiritual habits. “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but a new creature.” Yet we have reason to look for the blessing in connexion with the dispensation of holy ordinances. God has promised to make his people joyful in his house of prayer, and there to accept of their sacrifices and burnt-offerings.*

Is any time more suitable for expecting the blessing, than when we draw nigh to Him who dwells in Zion—who hears prayer, and who waits to be gracious? We deny not, that in the dispensation of the covenant

* Isaiah lvi. 7.

of peace, the stream of mercy and love may run, for a considerable time, underground; and that saving benefits may result to individuals from participating in holy ordinances, a length of time after they have had access to them. But still—considering the connexion of these institutions with the covenant of grace, and the design of their appointment—there is strong reason to regard them as, in many cases, the prescribed way of conferring spiritual blessings, which are actually enjoyed in their administration. That this is the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, their published Confessions amply testify. In the Westminster Confession, it is declared “That baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life.”* And again, “The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God’s own will, in his appointed time.” Similar is the statement of the Church of England in one of her Articles, “Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not Christened; but it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed, faith

* Westminster Confession, Chap. XXVIII. Sect. 1.

is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer unto God.”*

From these declarations—and such are the uniform testimonies of all the Reformed Churches—it is evident that children are “fit and capable subjects of Divine grace, and that they are included in the covenant of redemption.” They may have “the *principle* implanted in infancy, while yet they are incapable of its exercise.”† The ordinance of baptism regards children as having a prior interest in the covenant; and therefore to them is administered the sacred rite, which is a sign and seal of their union to Christ—of the remission of sin, and of their engagement to be the Lord’s. Does not this warrant the expectation that, at the time of baptism, in some cases, children may become the actual recipients of grace; and that, in others, grace may be afterwards imparted, flowing from the ordinance as remote streams from a refreshing fountain, or as healing waters issuing from a well of salvation. The Scripture expressions on the subject obviously pre-suppose, in many instances, an intimate connexion between the outward rite, and the spiritual blessings which it represents or is designed to convey. “Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death?”‡ “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”§ “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”||

* Articles of the Church of England—Art. XXVII., Vol. II., pp 482, 492.

† See Dr. Owen’s Works.

‡ Romans vi. 3.

§ 1 Corinthians xii. 13.

|| Acts ii. 38.

Instead therefore of regarding baptism as a naked sign, or an empty form, it is to be looked upon as “a true sacrament, and a real channel of grace.” The grace offered, as expressed in the passages of Holy Writ which we have quoted, comprehends the prime blessings of salvation. Flowing from the sovereign favour of God, they include a state of reconciliation and friendship with God, peace with heaven, renewal after the Divine image, the implantation of holiness, and the hope of eternal felicity. We have ground at least to plead for these blessings, and to hope that they may be conferred in baptism, or that they may afterwards be enjoyed, as the fruit of early dedication to God. Grace and glory are inseparably connected; and the grand promise made to believing parents, “I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee,” originally given in connexion with the institution of circumcision, and still appended to the initiatory ordinance of the New Economy, includes all saving blessings for time and eternity. We present children to the God of the covenant, that He may bless them. Encouraged by the gracious command of Him who is King in Zion, and who instituted the ordinance, “Suffer the little children to come unto me,” we bring them to him for the blessing. While, in his own appointed institution, parents take hold of the covenant, in an act of solemn dedication of themselves and their offspring to God, and while others are praying in their behalf, may they not expect the blessing that descends as the dew on the hill of Zion, even life that shall never end?

Such are the important ends of baptism. The subjects of it are thus visibly marked, as distinguished and separated from the rest of the world;—they are introduced to the visible church and a participation in its fellowship;—there is a striking exhibition made of the Divine method of cleansing the soul, and of the renewal of the whole man by the blood of Christ, and

the agency of the Holy Ghost—the unity of the Church is strikingly displayed, and the baptized are called to enjoy the benefits of its fellowship, in the prayers of the faithful offered on their behalf, and in the solemn pledges given for their religious training. They give besides, in their baptism, a public testimony of their obligation to all holy obedience; and a chief end to them of the institution is the enjoyment of the grace of salvation, and of eternal glory. To subserve these high purposes has this important ordinance been instituted. These should be the great ends proposed in its observance, and there cannot be a doubt that to many who come as the redeemed of the Lord to heaven, having the Father's name inscribed on their foreheads, all those ends have been realized, as the pleasant and precious fruit of their baptismal dedication.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOCTRINES EXHIBITED IN BAPTISM.

THE Sacraments of the Church are impressive means of spiritual instruction; and when rightly understood and applied, they exhibit the grand fundamental truths of Christianity in a manner at once edifying and affecting. The mode of communicating the knowledge of Divine things by these sacred rites is that of visible representation or external symbol; and this may be regarded as the *natural* method of teaching, as distinguished from instruction by *oral* language, which is the *artificial*. Not by one sense alone, but by several, is important truth conveyed to the mind; and when we consider that the Sacraments are established by Divine appointment, and that their teaching is superadded to that of the inspired Word, we can easily perceive that they

are admirably adapted to be a powerful and standing testimony to truths which are of infinite moment for us to know; and that they are fitted to impress these truths in the most powerful manner on the heart and conscience of those to whom they are addressed. The external symbols themselves represent spiritual objects, and their use and application either plainly declare many of the great doctrines of our holy religion, or clearly imply their reception and belief. By significant signs addressed to the different senses, Divine things are brought very near, their reality is felt, and their value and importance are taught, so as to leave an indelible impression. To the sight, as well as to the ear, Divine mysteries are exhibited; and by the sight and touch, and even by the sense of taste, the eternal verities of the Christian faith are symbolically apprehended. Such a mode of imparting spiritual instruction displays remarkable Divine condescension, and is singularly adapted to our present state, as conversant chiefly with objects of sense, and as having imperfect apprehensions of things spiritual and heavenly. In the sacraments, God speaks at once to the external ear, and eye, and organs of taste and touch; and that his instructions may be felt in all their importance, and may make a permanent impression on the memory and heart and conscience, He addresses all the faculties of the soul. Before those who participate in these holy ordinances, "Christ Jesus is set forth, evidently crucified among them," and sincere worshippers can say, as the result of enjoying them, concerning Christ and his salvation, "That which we have seen and heard, which our ears have heard, which our eyes have seen, which we have looked upon, which our hands have handled of the word of life."*

Viewing the ordinance of baptism as a "compendi-

* 1 John i. 1.

ous Gospel," as Augustine has expressively designated both sacraments, we notice some of the great doctrines which it clearly exhibits and impressively teaches.

1. Baptism strikingly declares the cardinal doctrine of revealed religion—THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

Every baptized member of the Church is by a divinely-prescribed form, designated after the name of a Triune God. The words, if they have any meaning, imply a distinct act of solemn worship addressed to each of the glorious persons named, and express consecration to his service. It were evidently most blasphemous and idolatrous to regard one of these names as that of supreme Godhead; and the others—the one of a creature however exalted, and the other of a Divine attribute. Instead of the scriptural names, let the terms by which Unitarians expound them be substituted in the baptismal formula, and the revolting absurdity and blasphemy of the sentiment will be at once apparent. The Christian faith, however, is built on too solid a foundation to be shaken by the shallow sophistries or daring perversions of those who exalt proud human reason to be the judge of revelation, and who deny the only Lord God and our Saviour. In baptism, the Church solemnly and publicly confesses her Lord; and every individual who is admitted to her fellowship, bears upon him the blessed name of a Three-One God. This is the grand article of a Christian profession—the fundamental truth with which is inseparably connected, and from which flows, the whole system of revealed religion. No provision could possibly be made more suitable for proclaiming the doctrine of the Trinity; and while the Church lasts, till the end of time, and in all lands, those who bear the Christian name, are constituted perpetual witnesses for the scriptural character of the glorious object of worship—One in essence, three in person—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. How important it is to have right views of the Author of revela-

tion—the exalted Being whom we adore, and from whom we expect all blessing! And how admirably is instruction on this fundamental article communicated in the initiatory rite of the Christian profession! Baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, when our Christianity is first publicly declared, we can never deny the doctrine of the Trinity, or refuse Divine homage to the Saviour or the Spirit, without renouncing our Christianity, or substituting a cold and cheerless Theism for the life-inspiring and transforming system of revelation.

2. The COVENANT OF REDEMPTION is not obscurely exhibited by baptism.

Even the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity could supply to guilty and defiled creatures no comfort, and could inspire them with no joyful hope, were not God revealed in his covenant-character, providing salvation for lost sinners, and securing, with infallible certainty, the enjoyment of its blessings. Of this Covenant the appointed seal is baptism. Like circumcision, under the ancient economy, it confirms to believers, the heirs of salvation, the grand promise, “*I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee.*” It is a “sign and seal of the righteousness of faith”—the *condition* of the Covenant. The external element employed is an emblem of the precious blood which ratifies the covenant; and our duty and privilege in baptism are to “behold the blood of the Covenant, which God has ordained,”* as the only medium of obtaining all spiritual and eternal blessings. Nothing is of higher importance for us to know aright than the doctrine of the Covenant of grace. This compact of mercy is the origin of human salvation, and from it flows all blessings that can be enjoyed by the sons of men. It is the “Lamb’s book of life,” in which are inscribed the names of all the

* Exodus xxiv. 8.

saved, and none are admitted to glory who are not found written therein. God has promised to show to the fearers of his name his Covenant. With peculiar impressiveness is this done in the ordinance of baptism. It is the visible seal on God's part affixed to them who are regarded as the seed of the covenant—the seed of promise. It confirms to them the love and mercy, the grace and truth of Him who, sustaining a covenant relation to his people, declares, "I am your God;" and it claims them as his by free sovereign choice, as well as by the most wondrous purchase. In baptism, believers "take hold" of God's covenant, and they are assured of a name and a place within his walls, better than that of a son or a daughter.* In connexion with a due consideration of their baptismal dedication, they may, through the Spirit, be assured of their interest in God's eternal love, and his gracious designs of mercy. By "two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie"—the word and oath of Jehovah in covenant—"they may obtain strong consolation."†

3. The doctrine of *human depravity* is likewise taught in the ordinance of baptism. The element of water is the means of cleansing from outward pollution; the blood of Christ, which it represents, can alone cleanse from moral defilement; and the application of the material symbol in baptism denotes the purification of the nature from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. When the subjects of baptism are infants, the great fact of original and total depravity is exhibited in the strongest light. In themselves weak and helpless, and incapable of the commission of actual transgression, they are yet brought to an ordinance which loudly proclaims that man that is born of woman cannot be clean; and that, as indispensable to the enjoyment of all holy privilege, the soul must be purified, and in-

* Isaiah lvi.

† Heb. vi. 19.

herent defilement must be purged away. In various other ways, the cardinal doctrine of man's original depravity is proclaimed, as well by the history of human character, and the administration of the Divine government, as by the explicit declarations of revelation. The original bias to evil is early developed in the human being. The moral taint of the fallen nature discovers itself in the whole man, and in his every future disposition and action. Infants suffer pain from their tenderest years—many of them die in infancy, and some are cut off by Divine judgments inflicted on guilty communities. These visitations loudly proclaim that infants are guilty and depraved, and that the whole human race is dealt with as a collection of condemned criminals. Under a righteous moral government, an innocent being cannot suffer; and the pain and death of infants declare that all have sinned—even those who are incapable of actual transgression, and that the proper demerit of sin of every kind is death. The same solemn truth is declared in the ordinance of baptism. The affusion of water rendered, by Divine prescription, essential to the sacrament of initiation, and placed at the door of admission to the fellowship of the church, proclaims that none are free from moral depravity. The application of water to the person is a declaration of the Author of the institution—"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." At the threshold of the church, it declares to all who would enter in, "Holiness becomes God's house for ever;" and "without holiness no man"—no human being, whether infant or adult—"shall see the Lord." All, without a single exception, need cleansing, by a means and agency which they themselves could never provide; even before, by voluntary acts, they become transgressors of the divine law. Every baptized individual, in baptism, openly confesses, "I was shapen in sin, and in iniquity did my mother conceive me."

And the sacred rite powerfully teaches, at the same time, that, if saved at all, it must be “by the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost.” An early Christian Father thus speaks of the baptism of infants as indicating their original defilement—“Let it be considered what is the reason, that whereas the baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness of sins, infants also are, by the usage of the Church, baptized, when, if there were nothing in infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them.”*

4. Another important doctrine declared by baptism is the *propitiation* made for sin through Christ’s blood, *and the remission of sin which it has procured.*

By baptism, we publicly and joyfully declare, “We have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins.” As the application of water implies that the subject is defiled and needs cleansing, so it explicitly points to a Divinely-appointed method of purification. This has been graciously provided through the sufferings and death of the Mediator. The irrevocable decree of heaven is, that “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Provision ample and sufficient for the removal of human guilt, and for the purification of the soul, has been made in the finished atonement. “Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it by the washing of water.” He is the “propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” † The ransom is complete in the death of Christ—the atonement is perfect; “He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” These glorious and joy-inspiring truths are loudly proclaimed, and impressively taught in the ordinance of baptism.

* Origen—Homily on Leviticus xii.

† Ephesians v. 25; 1 John ii. 2.

A crucified Saviour is presented as the Author of eternal salvation. As the ark was salvation to Noah and his family from the waters of the deluge, “the like figure, baptism, doth also now save us,” by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The sacrifice of Christ is at once the most affecting and wondrous display of the love of God to sinners, and the accepted and all-sufficient ground of pardon, and sanctification, and peace. By the application of Christ’s blood, we are completely justified—sin is blotted out fully and for ever. Being in Christ, there is for us no condemnation; and if justified, we shall be also glorified. Baptism is designed to have an intimate connexion with the doctrine of the remission of sin through the death of Christ, and with the precious hope which the atonement originates. In the Apostle’s sermon on the day of Pentecost, the multitude were exhorted, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.”* Similar is the command of Ananias to Saul on his conversion, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”† It need scarcely be remarked that external washing of itself can have no influence in effecting the pardon of guilt, or the removal of moral defilement. But, like as the uncleanness of the flesh is taken away by water, so the pollution of the soul is removed by Divine forgiveness. Baptism represents the heaven-appointed method of cleansing—it is the sign and pledge of forgiveness: it may be the means of its actual enjoyment, as it is intended to assure our hearts of the invaluable blessing. To confirm our hearts in the propitiation which God has set forth, and in our own interest in its blessed fruits, baptism brings us into the nearest contact with the lively symbols of these great realities. It is much

* Acts ii. 38.

† Acts xxii. 16.

more than the mere offer of forgiveness through Christ's blood; it represents a close, personal, individual application of that blood which cleanses from all sin, and of the benefits which it has procured. To all who have access to the ordinance, rightly administered, it offers a personal interest in the propitiatory sacrifice of the Lamb of God; it holds out, and brings near, the free and full remission of sin.* To believers it actually seals and confirms these blessed privileges; and enables them to say, in joyful triumph, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." †

5. Besides these great doctrines of *objective* Christianity, Baptism emphatically teaches likewise the principal *subjective* truths of vital religion. It exhibits,

* "Not that the external act can produce that result, or benefit the soul in any sense; for baptism is "not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God;" but even in the impenitent and unbelieving, the purpose of God standeth sure. The ordinance is a sign of spiritual blessings; it is a sign of God's willingness to blot out iniquity, of freedom from guilt by Christ's atoning death, from pollution by his blood, and from the dominion of indwelling sin by his grace. It proclaims, to the eye of faith, this cheering truth, that a sponge of extinction may pass over the catalogue of our offences—the condemning hand-writing for ever blotted out, (Col. ii. 14); and the baptismal act thus *represents or signifies* the actual imparting of the fruits of Christ's death to the soul. Whenever there is faith in the heart, these benefits are imparted; and to be thus baptized is to be baptized with the Holy Ghost."—The Sacrament of Baptism; its Nature, Design, and Obligations. By Rev. W. K. Tweedie.—pp. 19, 20.

† 1 John iv. 10; Ps. ciii. 2—4.

by significant figure and symbol, the commencement of true religion in the soul, and its progress and completion. It compendiously displays the Christian's internal privileges, and points distinctly to his future blessed hopes—sealing him externally as the Spirit does internally and really, to the day of redemption. Of these internal spiritual privileges, and as principal parts of subjective religion, may be mentioned—union to Christ—regeneration—adoption and sanctification—the hope of glory, and the resurrection of the body; and all these are more or less strikingly exhibited and taught in Baptism.

1. *By Faith we are united to Christ as our living Head.*

Our whole person, soul and body, is joined to the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the bond of this union, which can never be dissolved, and which is intimate and glorious beyond expression. We become one with Christ. He dwells in us, and we in him. We are one spirit—“members of his flesh, of his body, and bones.” So close is this vital union, that whatever Christ did and suffered, we are regarded as having, in some sort, passed through the same; and whatever He is and has becomes really ours. From this union springs a holy fellowship, and its precious fruits are reaped in all gracious dispositions and affections—extend even to the body in death, and comprehend the bliss of eternity. Baptism distinctly exhibits this spiritual union. “So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death.” In the ordinance it is clearly set before us, and we avouch faith in the blessed provision. Thus by a significant symbol, are we publicly incorporated and ingrafted into Christ. The Lord thus seals our spiritual marriage to Himself, and we obtain the mark of being espoused to one husband, even Christ—of being betrothed to Him in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in loving-kindness, and in judgment, even for ever.

2. *Regeneration and adoption* are, moreover, taught in Baptism.

Baptized into Christ's death, buried with Him in Baptism, we likewise rise with Him to newness of life. The baptismal institution is, beyond doubt, referred to when this great change is said to be "the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Ghost;"* and when, in our Lord's discourse to Nicodemus, we are said to be "born of water and of the Spirit."† The ordinance is not itself, nor can it possibly be regeneration, nor is this great change inseparably connected with it.‡ But yet the outward act is significant of the inward grace; it denotes being born of the Spirit, and created anew in Christ Jesus. Circumcision denotes the putting away of the sins of the flesh, and was the symbol of the circumcision of the heart—its renewal in the Divine image, and its transformation to a new life of holiness. In baptism, the devil, the world, and the flesh, are renounced, and the baptized publicly declare that to them, "Old things are passed away—all things are become new." In the fullest sense, the institution is a family ordinance, and bringing, as it does, in its right administration and reception, invaluable blessings to the members of Christian families, it strikingly exhibits connexion with a higher family, "the household of faith"—the one family in heaven and earth that is named after Christ. It is the visible badge, the sign and pledge of our sonship by regeneration and adoption. The profession that we make in baptism is that we have come out and are separate—that God is our father, and that we are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Quickened together with Christ, we thus declare that we shall henceforth walk with Him in newness of life. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." "We have not received the spirit of

* Titus iii. 5. † John iii. 5. ‡ See Appendix.

bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.”*

3. *Our sanctification and hope of glory*, are moreover distinctly taught in baptism.

Baptism, as being a significant and expressive symbol, is itself said to a “washing away of sin.” While it forcibly declares the necessity of moral purity; it exhibits the means by which it may be obtained, and it seals the persons baptized to holiness of heart and life. Every part of the work of sanctification is distinctly and impressively declared in this ordinance. It intimates separation from the world lying in wickedness, and fellowship with the family of God, who are designated, “a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people.” It represents symbolically the great doctrine of “ingrafting into Christ”—the root of living influences, from whom all growth in holiness is derived; and it holds forth the baptism of the Holy Spirit, “as with fire,” by which corruption is destroyed, and the whole nature is renewed after the Divine image. It proclaims the mortification of sin, for we are dead with Christ in baptism, and buried with Him; and it expressively points out “the newness of life” to which we are raised “through the faith of the operation of God.” In fine, there is no view of the great work of moral renovation, from its commencement in regeneration, to its completion at death, that is not expressively and beautifully displayed in this ordinance. We are consecrated to God in baptism, and visibly sealed to be saints. Every thing in the sacred solemnity has upon it the impress of holiness to the Lord. The place and scene of dedication—the thrice holy name into which we are baptized—the element employed—the acts of worship performed—and the blessings expected—all proclaim in the most emphatic manner that baptism is appointed to declare

* Romans viii. 14, 15.

the necessity and nature of moral purity, and that it is itself an eminent means of sanctification. While it teaches that the subjects of the sacred rite should be holy in all manner of conversation; it furnishes the most powerful motives to cultivate purity of heart and life. It has thus a *moral* influence to excite to holiness, and to animate to new obedience. To all who are sprinkled with water in baptism, and named with the Divine name, it loudly proclaims, "BE YE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY," and in the hand of the blessed Spirit, it has a *gracious* influence upon the heirs of salvation, to lead them to depart from all iniquity, and to transform them into the moral likeness of Him who created them.

The ordinance, too, is fitted to declare and inspire the *hope of final salvation*. The dedication made to God in baptism, we have encouragement to hope He will graciously accept. When little children were brought to the Saviour in the days of His flesh, that he might touch them, in affecting condescension, He exceeded parental requests. "He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them:" * and to assure Christian parents of his abundant goodwill to their offspring, He said, "Of such is the kingdom of God." This cannot merely mean that all who shall be made partakers of the kingdom of God, must receive it with the spirit of little children; for this declaration, however true and important, did not meet the requirements of the applicants. It declared that children in infancy might be subjects of the Saviour's grace, and that some of this class would be heirs of His future kingdom of glory. Such a blessed hope, the sacrament of baptism is strikingly fitted to inspire and sustain in believers. The individual baptized obtains by means of it "a good hope through grace." Reflecting on his early dedication, he may say, "I was

* Mark x. 16.

solemnly given to the Lord : He was graciously pleased to permit me to be brought near to Him, and to provide a religious ordinance for this purpose. He will not cast out any who come to Him, and what has been committed to Him, He will keep against that day." Baptism seals the believer's hope in relation to all future good, whether as it respects deliverance from evil, or blessing to be enjoyed in soul or body, in life or death, or throughout eternity. The Lord remembers to His people the covenant of their youth, and the love of their espousals. He will deliver them from every evil work, and preserve them unto His everlasting kingdom.

4. Not only the future glorification of the soul, but also the *blessed resurrection of the body* is exhibited and sealed to the faithful in baptism. The Apostle Paul, in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, connects the doctrine of the glorious resurrection of the saints with their baptism. "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"* Whatever may be the special allusion of the apostle's inquiry, it clearly implies that if there were no blessed resurrection of the righteous, there would be no use of baptism. The baptized are exposed to sufferings and perils, and shall be brought to death. But their baptismal dedication symbolized the union of their whole person, in soul and body to Christ, their living Head. This union death cannot dissolve. Their flesh, on which the baptismal element was sprinkled, shall rest in hope; and the spirit that was given to God, he will keep and sanctify, and when separate from the body, receive to himself in glory.

Of these great doctrines, and precious privileges, baptism is the compendious, but significant and assured pledge. "It is," says a distinguished expositor, "a

* 1 Corinthians xv. 29.

sign, evidence, and assurance, both of the blessing promised by that God who appointed this ordinance, and of man's obligation to the duties required."* It is an explicit and continual testimony to great truths, which are of vital interest, and important to every human being. It has this peculiarity—it is instruction addressed to a number of the senses at once; and by its publicity and impressive character, it is eminently fitted to arrest the attention, and to excite inquiry. Spectators of the administration of baptism, even if unawakened, can hardly fail to ask, "What mean ye by this service?" and may receive from it many lessons of the most solemn and weighty kind. The true members of the Church will be instructed by it impressively in truths, which are the principle of their spiritual life, the means of their spiritual nourishment and comfort, and the foundation of all their blessed and joyful hopes. Above all, believers by their baptism are, through the agency of the Spirit, assured of their special interest in God's covenant, and of their enjoyment of His everlasting and unchangeable love. The ordinance is the visible seal of the Covenant; the seal of the righteousness of faith. When God has thus graciously provided for the introduction of His people into His Church, they have a pledge from His own hand that His thoughts towards them are peace, and His designs mercy. They have the strongest evidence that He wills that they should not perish, but have everlasting life. He thus assures them that He loved them with an everlasting love; and that therefore He draws them with loving kindness. Meditating on this provision of redeeming mercy, and considering their high and distinguishing privileges, they may grow up to a blessed and stable assurance, that nothing shall separate them

* Poole.

from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord. Enjoying the present hope of salvation, and having it sealed by their baptism, they may lay hold on eternal life, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

CHAPTER IV.

SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

THE question, Who are the proper subjects of baptism? has led to not a little controversy in the church, and even till our day, this topic furnishes occasion of keen and protracted discussion. As our object in this treatise is not controversial but practical, we shall not be drawn aside to matters of mere polemical warfare; while, at the same time, we regard it as a sacred duty to vindicate the right of a large class of the members of the Church to admission to the initiatory seal of the covenant, and to show that the privileges and obligations of the ordinance, pertain to them as well as to others. Towards many of those who deny the doctrine of infant baptism, we desire to cherish no feelings inconsistent with the charity that thinketh no evil, or with the love of the brethren; as however mistaken we regard their views, and however much we lament their tendency and influence, we readily admit that among them are those who give evidence of being genuine disciples of Christ, and who have done much for the advancement of the glory of His name, and the interests of His kingdom.

Our Westminster Confession declares, in brief and comprehensive terms, who are the proper *subjects* of baptism. Chapter xxiv., Sect. iv., "Not only those that do actually profess faith in, and obedience unto

Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents are to be baptized." This is the sentiment of all the reformed Churches, as expressed in their doctrinal symbols; and it was maintained by all the reformers as a precious article in the faith which was once delivered to the saints, and only opposed by a small fanatical sect, called Anabaptists, which sprung up in Germany, with, which we would be sorry to identify the Baptists of the present day.* In the statement from the Westminster Standards, which we have just quoted, *two* classes are declared to be fit subjects of baptism:—1. Those who "do actually profess faith in, and obedience unto, Christ;" and, 2d. "The infants of believing parents." Concerning the right of the former class to the sacrament of baptism, there is no difference of opinion among any parties in the Church. Those who deny the right of the infant children of the members of the Church to baptism, equally with those who maintain it, admit that adults are to be baptized, on evidence of their faith and repentance, and on their profession of the doctrine of Christ. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, alone, under the pretence of maintaining the spirituality of the Gospel dispensation, and, while cherishing fanati-

*Jones, in his "History of the Waldenses," labours to prove that these early witnesses for evangelical truth, maintained not the doctrine of Infant Baptism; and that they, in practice, refused to allow their infant children to be baptized—but this view is certainly unsupported by sufficient historical evidence. Because the Waldenses, in many cases, refused to admit, with their Romanist persecutors, that children dying unbaptized, perished eternally, and would not receive the ordinance from the hands of the Romish priesthood, therefore were they held as maintaining the sentiment that infants are not proper subjects of baptism. The attempt to identify the Waldenses with the Antipædobaptists, is only sustained by the charges of enemies against them; and the allegation is amply refuted, both by the Scriptural sentiments which they faithfully maintained, and by their recorded practice, as exhibited in different periods of their history.

cal views of the Spirit's work, set aside the sacraments, as material and carnal ordinances.

Throughout the church generally, and in all ages, the symbol of admission to fellowship, and the seal of her spiritual privileges, has been baptism. We who advocate the practice of infant baptism are as ready to administer the ordinance to Christian proselytes, converted heathens, or Jews, or Mahommedans, or to those who seek admission to Church membership, and who were not baptized in infancy, as the opponents of this doctrine. When they allege that all the cases of baptism recorded in the New Testament are those of adults, and employ this as an argument against the baptism of infants, we object at once to the conclusion as wholly unwarranted from the premises. The cases of baptism administered by the apostles, and first ministers of Christianity, were evidently those of persons who, like the converts from Jew and Gentile under the ministrations of Christian Missionaries in our own day, were convinced by the power of the truth, and embraced it; and were, in consequence, baptized as the badge of their profession, and the seal of their privileges. But we have not on record in the New Testament, a single instance of the child of a Christian parent being allowed to grow up to adult age, before being baptized; while there is strong presumptive evidence to the contrary.

In adult baptism, it is required as a pre-requisite that the candidate "profess faith in Christ and obedience unto him;" and though a few in England and Germany attempt to set aside such a profession as unnecessary, yet the instances of baptism contained in the Scriptures, whether of Jewish proselytes, or of John the Baptist, or of the apostles, were plainly connected with a definite and public profession; and the terms of the apostolic commission, as well as the design of baptism, obviously imply that a profession precedes

the rite of admission to membership.* When the Saviour, on the eve of his ascension to glory, instituted the ordinance of baptism, He commanded his disciples first to “disciple all nations,” and then to baptize them.† A visible profession of discipleship, then, entitles to the ordinance of baptism. Of the state of the heart, and the reality of faith, God alone is judge; and this can never, without daring presumption, be assumed by man as the ground of admission to the church and its privileges. An intelligent profession of faith, a competent knowledge of the gospel, and a walk in accordance with such a profession, must be deemed sufficient to admission to the fellowship of Christ’s people. Less cannot be regarded as compatible with the Christian name; and no person having due respect to the authority of the Redeemer can properly refuse admission to the fellowship of the church to those who possess these qualifications.

The right of the other class—the infant children of Christians—to baptism, has been contravened, and vehemently opposed, and it requires, therefore, a fuller statement and elucidation. We feel the need of “contending earnestly for the faith” on this article,

* Dr. Halley in his “Lectures on Baptism” says—“There are those who baptize all applicants whatsoever, provided the application does not appear to be made scoffingly and profanely, for that would be a manifest desecration of the service, and all children offered by their parents, guardians, or others, who may have the care of them. These interpret the Commission in the widest sense, and most literally explain ‘all the nations.’” This view of the subject of the ordinance Dr. Halley advocates with all his power. See Remarks on it in the Appendix.

† Bloomfield, in his Greek Testament, says—“The Commission embraces *three* particulars—μαθητευω, βαπτισειν, and διδασκειν—i. e. 1. To disciple them to the faith; 2. To initiate them into the church by baptism; and 3. To instruct them, when baptized, in the doctrines and duties of a Christian life.”

inasmuch as we regard baptism as a precious privilege, of which those who deny infant baptism would deprive believing parents and their children, and as fraught with many and valuable benefits to the dedicated youth of the church. As a very large proportion of the human family die in infancy and childhood—according to some, not fewer than *one-fourth* or *one-fifth*—it must appear to be a matter of very grave importance to determine clearly whether the children of Christian parents are, in infancy, to receive the visible seal of God's covenant, and to be openly admitted to the fellowship of the church, or to be excluded from these privileges.

Before exhibiting the evidence in proof of the right of the infant seed of believers to the ordinance of baptism, it may be requisite to advert briefly to the mode of argument by which this right is established. It is fully conceded that there is not a positive command, in direct terms, for baptizing infants. Antipædobaptists generally contend that as baptism is a *positive rite*, nothing less than an express precept can suffice to warrant its application to children in infancy. They reject inferential reasoning on the subject, and assert that, in this instance, it is wholly inadmissible. Yet it may be clearly shown that there is no proper ground of refusing assent to a proposition established by fair and legitimate inference. Some of the most profound reasoners have laid it down as a principle that “a strong presumption,” or just inference, is sufficient to decide a question of the greatest practical importance. Bishop Butler declares, “To us probability is the very guide of life;” and again, “In questions of difficulty, where more satisfactory evidence cannot be had, if there appears on the whole any, the *lowest presumption* on one side, and none on the other, or a greater presumption on the one side, though in the *lowest degree* greater, this determines the question, even in

matters of speculation ; and, in matters of practice, will lay us under an *absolute obligation* to act upon that presumption." * Even Dr. Carson, a celebrated Baptist writer, says, "I receive what is made out by inference, just as I receive the most direct statement."

The opponents of infant baptism, in objecting against the mode of argument employed by its friends, have recourse to a principle which cannot be maintained in the ordinary affairs of life ; and which, if admitted, would go far to deny some of the essential doctrines of Christianity, and to reject some of its recognized usages. In the most important points of the practical business of life, men decide and act, as Butler has remarked, on probability rather than positive evidence ; and, in courts of justice, where *positive* and *direct* proof is not to be had, persons are convicted and punished, and life is even taken away, on circumstantial evidence.

Antipædobaptists themselves are forced to admit many truths that are established as truths, by "plain and necessary inference," from other principles or truths that are clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Thus the genuineness of several of the books contained in the canon of Scripture—the observance of the Sabbath from Adam to Moses—the Divine institution of the Christian Sabbath—and the admission of females to the Lord's Supper, are fully admitted by the opponents of infant baptism, and yet none of these can be proved by express positive injunction ; they are to be received, as of Divine prescription, on evidence, which, though inferential, is satisfactory and conclusive. The principle, therefore, assumed by Antipædobaptists, in objecting against the mode of proof adduced in favour of

* Butler's Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion.—Introd. p. 5.

infant baptism, is opposed to the laws of sound reasoning, and subversive of important truths of Divine revelation, and of usages which have always been observed in the Church of Christ. Those who object against reasoning by inference, on the subject of infant baptism, are themselves obliged to have recourse to it in many other cases, some of which are similar. The conclusion to which their inconsistent conduct inevitably leads is, that blinded by system, they have had recourse to principles which are altogether untenable. By dogmatical assertion, instead of legitimate argument, they labour to get rid of the proof in favour of a valuable privilege to an important class of the members of the church.

That the infant children of believing parents are to be admitted to baptism, we argue from the following considerations:—

1. The infant children of members of the church were once, by Divine prescription, *admitted to the fellowship and privileges of the church by a public religious rite.* Throughout the whole of the Divine dispensations towards the church, parents and their children are regarded as closely associated. This has been the method of the Divine government in every age. Man is, by his constitution, a social being; and true religion takes hold of the social principle, and purifies and elevates it. From the earliest period, God included children with their parents in the covenant of peace, and in the promise of blessing. He did so to Noah, to Abraham, and to other Old Testament patriarchs. The Apostles declared the same divinely established connexion. “*Thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*” “*The promise is to you and your children.*” The rite of infant dedication results from this relation between parents and their children; it is its outward expression, and declares loudly that children are admissible with their parents to the church of Christ,

and to the bond of his Covenant. When God appointed circumcision at first, it was for parents together with their children; though, from express injunction, the infant children of Jewish parents alone were afterwards to be circumcised. This rite, it deserves to be remarked, did not originate in the Mosaic ritual; but in the family of Abraham, who is expressly declared to be “the father of all that believe,” whether Jew or Gentile.

The rite of circumcision was evidently *spiritual*, and was connected with a Covenant, which, though it guaranteed temporal benefits to the descendants of Abraham, mainly held out to the faithful spiritual blessings. It confirmed the grand fundamental promise, “I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee;” and the Divine Spirit expressly exalts it above a mere temporary ratification to a spiritual and significant symbol, when He declares it was “a seal of the righteousness of faith which Abraham had while he was uncircumcised.”* We are thus instructed, by an unerring Teacher, to regard the rite as a solemn confirmation of a grant of spiritual privileges of the most valuable and extensive kind, and as a token or badge of admission to the select society to which these privileges pertained. The express appointment of such a rite for infant children, at one period of the church, proves that there is not only nothing unsuitable in such an ordinance still, but would seem to be founded on the natural relation between parents and their children, and on the identity of parents and children as subjects of blessing or punishment, which has always been a fundamental principle of the Divine government.

2. *Children, with their parents, were included in the Abrahamic Covenant.*

This important transaction is distinctly recorded in

* Romans iv. 11.

Genesis, chapter xvii., and is afterwards particularly referred to in Genesis xxii. It occurs in these gracious terms, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." * A simple-minded reader of the Scriptures cannot fail to discern in this gracious transaction a revelation of the covenant of redemption—the blessed plan devised by the persons of the glorious Godhead for the salvation of sinners of the human family. The exalted Being who, under the august title, *El-Shaddai*—"God Almighty," entered into covenant with the patriarch; the grand fundamental promise, "I will be a God to thee, and unto thy seed after thee;" the obedience required, prescribed in the command, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect;" and the blessings guaranteed—Abraham to be "the father of many nations;" Jehovah to be the God of their seed, and an "everlasting" possession in the promised land;—these certainly indicate not a *temporary* transaction, but refer directly to those spiritual blessings which are the peculiar inheritance of the saints in all generations.

The opponents of Infant Baptism, as if apparently conscious of the force of the reasoning in favour of the admission of the children of professed believers to the seal of the fellowship and privileges of the church, taken from the Abrahamic Covenant, have laboured to show that that transaction was merely a national covenant, including only the natural descendants of Abraham, and that it held forth only temporal privileges, such as the possession of Canaan, and outward prosperity. When pressed in argument, and unable to reconcile this low view of the Abrahamic Covenant with the gracious declarations and promises made to

* Genesis xvii. 7

the patriarch, they sometimes maintain that there were two covenants with Abraham—one referring to his spiritual seed, and the other to his natural descendants; or that the same covenant referred, in one view, literally to his fleshly seed, and in another, typically, to the spiritual seed. It is sufficient to remark, in relation to this latter view, that it is wholly conjectural, and that it is obviously introduced to meet the necessities of a system which is palpably at variance with the plain and reiterated statements of the Divine word. In the inspired account of God's covenanting with the Father of the faithful, there is not the slightest mention of two covenants,* nor any reference to a twofold seed; and no distinction is, in the least, hinted at, as if one set of the promises pertained to the natural posterity of Abraham, and another set to spiritual seed. Moreover, that the blessings promised to the spiritual seed of Abraham were only typical is a gratuitous assumption, without any proper foundation or warrant in the Scriptures. Though the people of Israel were, in one view, typical, and the privileges they enjoyed were "shadows of good things to come," yet

* It might as well be maintained that God made *six* covenants with Abraham as two, inasmuch as we read of federal transactions occurring at different times in the life of the patriarch; as in Gen. xii. 1—3, and in ver. 7; again, in Gen. xiii. 14—17; Gen. xiv. 4—18; Gen. xvii. 2—14; and in Gen. xxii. 16—18. But the truth is, these were only different exhibitions of the one gracious federal transaction—the blessings promised being variously expressed to meet the circumstances of Abraham, and his seed. The promise held forth in the first of these federal engagements, mentioned in Gen. xii. guaranteed the same spiritual blessing as that stated in Gen. xvii., to which the rite of circumcision was annexed. This point is very fully illustrated, and the argument in favour of Infant Baptism, taken from the Abrahamic Covenant, is very satisfactorily stated in "Four Discourses on the Abrahamic Covenant," contained in "Theological Discourses on Important Subjects, Doctrinal and Practical," by the late Rev. James Thomson, of Quarrelwood.

to believers of the Jewish nation pertained *real*, and not typical blessings, equally as to believers under the New Testament—the portion of the fearers of God—an inheritance among all those that are sanctified.

Even were it admitted that the covenant made with Abraham was of a temporal character, and had only respect to the patriarch and his natural descendants, and secured to them temporal blessings alone, it would still show that parents and their children were regarded as interested in the same covenant; and as these blessings were gracious providential benefits flowing from God as a Father, that they enjoyed a heritage of Divine favour distinguished above the rest of mankind.* But to an attentive and prayerful reader of the Bible, there can be no doubt that the Abrahamic Covenant was a special revelation of the Covenant of redemption, substantially the same under which believers now are, and have always been placed. “I WILL BE THY GOD” is still the grand promise of the Gospel—the offer and guarantee of all gracious privileges—an epitome of all saving and eternal blessings. We admit that the Covenant secured to Abraham and his seed various temporal blessings, but these were subordinate and subsidiary to the spiritual. It proclaimed the same connexion in the participation of gracious benefits—the fruit of Divine favour, as yet exists under the New Testament economy: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” “The Lord God is a sun and shield; He will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good from them that walk uprightly.” “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up to the death for us all, how will He not with him freely give us all things?”†

* See Lectures on Baptism, by Thomas M^cCrie, D.D.—p. 56.

† Mat. vi. 33; Psal. lxxxiv. 11; Rom. viii. 32.

The Abrahamic Covenant being thus, in substance, the Covenant of grace, in the hand of the glorious Mediator, and conveying, as it did, to the patriarch the comprehensive assurance, "In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed," is properly to be regarded as the great *charter of the visible church*. During the whole period that elapsed from the transaction on the plains of Mamre, till the coming of Christ, and the setting up of the new economy, the visible church was to be exclusively confined to the descendants of Abraham, in the line of Isaac. Whoever of other families came into connexion with it, were to become incorporated with the Abrahamic race, and, as proselytes, to receive the visible mark of the Covenant. And the external rite is to the same church, and the same charter of privileges, and will be so till the end of time. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye all are one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." * The apostle's reasoning in the preceding verses makes it exceedingly plain that the Abrahamic Covenant was of no temporary character, and that it is still the charter of the visible church, and that in which all believers have a solemn personal interest. In verse 14th, he states the gracious design of Christ's death, that of conferring the blessing promised to Abraham upon all believers, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Again, in verses 17 and 18, He declares emphatically, "And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of

* Gal. iii. 28, 29.

none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise." This plainly declares that the transaction at Sinai, which took place 430 years after God covenanted with Abraham, was of a temporary nature, and did not set aside, or make void the Abrahamic Covenant; in other words, that it remains still in force. It was "confirmed before of God in Christ," and was that covenant which never waxes old; of which all believers are "heirs according to the promise."

To every unprejudiced person, it must appear exceedingly manifest that this Covenant with Abraham, was therefore a dispensation of the Covenant of grace, holding forth, and confirming the Church's chartered privileges, and securing to believers, the heirs of salvation, the enjoyment of all blessings. It is equally plain that infants were joined with their parents in this beneficent arrangement; and we are thus warranted to conclude that the right of those who are interested in the same covenant to its outward seal, is indisputable—that those who have fellowship with the same chartered society, are entitled to the badge of incorporation.*

* The promise made to Abraham, and his seed, is still endorsed to us and our children. Peter's discourse on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 38), was spoken in connexion with the command, "Repent, and be baptized." The right of children to baptism appears to us plainly taught in the Apostle's declaration. The parent's interest in the promise is stated as a reason why he should be baptized; and the assertion that the promise pertains to the children, too, certainly proves that there is as good a reason why *they* too should be baptized. To suppose otherwise, would be, in effect, to make the apostle declare, "The promise is to you, therefore you should be baptized; and the same promise is to your children, but they must *not* be baptized. The Spirit, however, does not thus speak incoherently and absurdly. The promise when first given, included infants with their parents; and to confirm it both were circumcised. It still, under the ministration of the Spirit, refers directly to children in infancy, as well

3. Circumcision, the visible seal of the Abrahamic covenant, was a religious rite, designed to signify spiritual blessings and privileges, and Baptism has the same character and significancy. *Infants had a right to circumcision under the Old Testament, therefore are they entitled to the ordinance which has come in its room, and which denotes substantially the same privileges and duties.* That the rite of circumcision was appended to a covenant of spiritual blessings,—however this is denied by the opponents of infant baptism—would appear to be clearly taught in the inspired account of its first institution. It deserves to be remarked that circumcision was not ordained when God first called Abraham, and entered into covenant with him. It was not instituted till at least *twenty-four years* after God appeared to the patriarch in Ur of the Chaldees, when he renewed the covenant with him, and declared, “I am God Almighty, walk before me and be thou perfect. I will be a God to thee and thy seed.” This comprehensive promise is not mentioned in Genesis xii., when God first appeared to Abraham, nor in connexion with the subsequent manifestation recorded in Genesis xxii. But when it is stated in all the fulness and grace of the blessing in chapter xvii., it is immediately ratified by the rite of circumcision. Mere natural descent from Abraham did not form an undisputed title to membership in the Old Testament Church, or to its offices.* The rite of circumcision was evidently meant to signify *spiritual* blessings, and

as their parents; and, consequently, they are entitled to the rite of confirmation in baptism. See Sermons on the Mode and Subjects of Christian Baptism—by Joseph Lathorpe, D.D., p. 64.

* This point is well illustrated in the very able work of Dr. Wilson on “Infant Baptism, a Scriptural service, and Dipping unnecessary to its Right Administration.”—See p. 393.

not those which were merely carnal and temporary. In the Old Testament it is frequently spoken of as symbolical of moral purity, and as denoting the renovation of the heart. "Circumcise," says God by Moses, "the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked."* And again, God declares in the way of gracious promise, "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."† Speaking of the moral impurity of the heathen, and the corruption of Israel, Jeremiah says, "All the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart."‡ And Isaiah, predicting the purity of the church under the New Testament, says, "Henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised, and the unclean."§ This is the primitive meaning and design of the rite of circumcision, as it was "of the fathers," and before it was incorporated with the institutions of Moses. To this its original design and symbolical meaning, the apostle obviously refers, when he says, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew which is one inwardly : and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."||

By circumcision, as a seal of God's Covenant, the subjects of the rite were pledged to a life of holiness. Every one that was circumcised, the apostle assures us, was "a debtor to do the whole law."¶ Infants, by Divine appointment, were circumcised ; and, therefore, notwithstanding the alleged incompatibility of an outward rite to entail obligation, it is morally certain that

* Deuteronomy xix. 16.

† Deuteronomy x. 16.

‡ Jeremiah ix. 26.

§ Isaiah lii. 1.

|| Romans ii. 28.

¶ Galatians v. 3.

they were pledged to a personal righteousness in the covenant—that they became debtors even at EIGHT DAYS OLD, to do the whole law of God. Baptism occupies now the place of circumcision. They are the seals of the same covenant; they denote the same spiritual blessings and privileges, and they are badges of profession—the one of the ancient religion instituted by God, and the other of that which exists under a dispensation of greater spirituality and higher privilege. With circumstantial diversity,* the two ordinances are identical in their spiritual use and significancy. Circumcision plainly declared the natural corruption of the heart and life, exhibited the necessity of internal purity, and the Scriptural method of its attainment. It was a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith, and represented actual investiture with it in justification. It was the token of admission to God's Church, and while it proclaimed the subjects of it to be "a peculiar people," and a "holy nation," it forcibly exhibited their obligation to obey the Divine law. All these uses are clearly denoted by the New Testament ordinance of baptism; and the Spirit evidently represents the two ordinances as having the same use and signification, when he says, "And ye are complete in him, in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the sins of the flesh by *the circumcision of Christ*; being buried with Him in baptism."† Baptism is here designated "the circum-

* Circumcision was confined to the Jews, and to such as became proselytes of the strictest kind to the Jewish religion; baptism extends to all nations. Males alone were circumcised; while females, as well males, are to be baptized. Bondsmen could only be circumcised with the consent of their masters. Slaves may be fully admitted to baptism. These differences in the administration of the initiatory rite are sufficiently accounted for, from the enlarged privileges and design of the Gospel economy.

† Colossians ii. 11, 12.

cision of Christ," and Christians are reminded that, by the outward seal in baptism, they enjoy the same privileges as did those who were circumcised of old. They are sealed to covenant privilege and obedience, and are marked as being enrolled in fellowship with Christ and his people. To the Hebrew believing parent it was regarded as a high and precious privilege to have his infant seed joined with himself in the same blessed charter of spiritual benefits, and in the inheritance of the same holy privileges. God's method has always been to *extend* rather than to *abridge* the privileges of his people, under successive dispensations of the covenant. If infants are now inadmissible to the seal of the covenant, and the fellowship and privileges of the church, this would be to reverse God's gracious way of dealing with his people. But when baptism is viewed as standing in the room of circumcision, and superseding it, the Divine method of dispensing blessing is beautifully carried out. If children were no longer to be admitted to the seal of the covenant, it would have demanded a clear, authoritative declaration from God that so great a change had been made in the conditions of membership in the church. None such, however, has been given, and the inference is most natural that infants are still to be admitted by a rite similar to circumcision, to the same spiritual privileges as their parents. Enlarged privilege is enjoyed through the Christian rite, in the admission of females as well as males, and in extending it to all nations. To Christian parents, as well as to Jewish, it was declared at the day of Pentecost, "The promise is to you and your children, and to all that are afar off; even as many as the Lord our God shall call."* The Gospel promise is not only to believers, but to their children likewise; and, of course, that which is appointed to confirm and

* Acts ii. 38.

ratify it, pertains to them too. This is manifestly inconsistent with what is implied in the denial of infant baptism—the abandoning of rights formerly secured to them, and casting them out as being in no better condition than the heathen, or than the world lying in wickedness. Under the Gospel, the blessing of Abraham has come upon believing Gentiles. They are heirs of the promise, and their children, as of old, are reckoned with them, as entitled to the same privileges; and they are, therefore, fully entitled to the rite of admission—the seal of actual participation.

4. *The New Testament Church is a continuation of the Old; and this implies that the external manner of admission will not be materially different.*

Those who oppose infant baptism seem not to have correct views of the identity of the church under the Old and New Testament dispensations; and some of them expressly deny it.* The identity of the Church

* In Goodwin's "Redemption Redeemed," there is given a striking and just account of the evil consequences of denying infant baptism, which, although rather lengthened for a note, we give as illustrative of some of the views which are presented above. The author is showing the calamities to which a man is exposed who is wedded to any error. One of these calamities is—the errorist "makes himself a debtor to own and maintain, upon occasion, the whole tribe and family of errors; whereof this is a member, or else he must represent himself as a man inconsistent with himself, and prevaricating with his own principles." In illustration, he refers to the error of Antipædobaptism, and says "He that is entangled with the error of those who deny the lawfulness of infant baptism, stands obliged, through his engagement to this one error, to maintain and make good these and many the like erroneous and anti-evangelical opinions:—

"1. That God was more gracious to infants under the law, than now He is under the Gospel; or which is every whit as hard a saying as this, that His vouchsafement of circumcision unto them, under the law, was no argument or sign at all of any grace or favour from Him unto them. 2. That God never regarded and made more liberal provision for the comfort and satisfaction of typical believers, though formal and express unbelievers, in

under both economies is, however, clearly taught by many express declarations of Holy Scripture, and is fundamental to a right understanding of the Divine dispensations towards the church in all ages. Believing

and about, the spiritual condition of their children, under the law, than He does for the truest, soundest, and greatest believers, under the Gospel ; or which is of a like notorious import, that the ordinance of God, for the circumcising of infants under the law, was of no accommodation or concernment for the comfort of the parents, touching the spiritual condition of their children. 3. That the children of true believers, under the Gospel, are more unworthy, more unmeet, less capable subjects of baptism, than the children of the Jews were of circumcision under the law ; or, which is of like uncouth notion, that God accepted the persons of the children of the Jews, though unbelievers, and rejects the persons of the children of believers under the Gospel, from the same or the like grace, these being under no greater guilt or demerit than those other. 4. That baptism succeedeth not in the place, office, or service, of circumcision. 5. That when the initiatory sacrament was more grievous and burthensome, in the letter of it, God ordered the application of it unto children ; but after he had made a change of it for that which is more gracious, and much more accommodate to the tenderness and weakness of children, as baptism clearly is, in respect of circumcision, He hath wholly excluded children from it. 6. That it was better and more edifying to men under the law, to receive the pledge of God's fatherly love and care over them, whilst they were yet children ; and that it is worse, or less edifying, to men to receive it at the same time ; and better and more edifying unto them to receive it afterwards ; as, viz., when they come to years of discretion. 7. That men are wiser, and more providential than God ; as, viz., in debarring, or keeping children from baptism, for fear of such and such inconveniences ; whereas God by NO LAW, or PROHIBITION OF HIS, interposeth against their baptizing, nor yet insisteth upon, or mentioneth the least inconvenience any ways likely to come upon either the persons of the children themselves, nor upon the churches of Christ hereby. 8. And, lastly, (to pass by many other tenets and opinions, every whit as exorbitant from the truth, and as untenable as these, which yet must be maintained by those who suffer their judgments to be encumbered with the error of Antipædobaptism, unless they will say and unsay, deny in the consequent what they affirm and grant in the antecedent), and that which is more than what hath been said yet ; they must, upon the account of their enthrallment under the said error, main-

members became Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. The natural branches of the goodly olive tree, the fleshly seed of the patriarch, are broken off and rejected—the branches that were wild by nature, are grafted in, and partake of the fat and sweetness of the tree. It is the same green and fruitful olive, existing under different states of the Divine economy, and continuing till the consummation of all things. Into external connexion with the church, infants were formerly brought by an instituted rite, Divinely prescribed. They were expressly recognised as forming a component part of the Old Testament Church, and were thus entitled to the rite of initiation. When Moses addressed the thousands of Israel on the plains of Moab, and, by renewing the national covenant with them, engaged them to be the Lord's, he said, "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God, * * * your little ones,"* &c. The persons enumerated form the different parts of the congregation, and "little ones," are expressly embraced in the privileges and obligations of the covenant. In that solemn transaction, God promised to be a God to His people and their seed; and accordingly,

tain many uncouth, harsh, irrational, venturous, and daring interpretations and expositions of many texts and passages of Scripture, and particularly of these:—Gen. xvii. 7; 1 Cor. vii. 14; Acts ii. 39, and xvi. 15; 1 Cor. i. 16, and x. 2: besides many others, which frequently upon occasion, are argued in way of defence, and proof of the lawfulness of infant baptism. Now, as the Greek epigram maketh it the highway to beggary, to have many bodies to feed, and many houses to build, so may it truly enough be said, that for a professor of Christianity to have many errors to maintain, and many rotten opinions to build up, is the next way to bring him to a morsel of bread; not only in his name and reputation among intelligent men, but, also, in the goodness of his heart and conscience before God. Nor is it of much more desirable an interpretation, for such a man to appear distracted in his principles, or divided in himself."—GOODWIN'S *Redemption Redeemed*, pp. 11, 12.

* Deut. xxix.

in this renewal of it, Moses directly refers to the Divine arrangement with the former patriarchs, “That He may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself; and that he may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee; *and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.*” We are thus distinctly instructed that what was guaranteed to Abraham, is secured to the church in succeeding generations. Infants have a place in the covenant, and are entitled to connexion with God’s sanctuary, equally with the most eminent of the patriarchs—with Abraham and Moses themselves. The “little ones” formed a part of the visible church, and are so recognized. Notwithstanding external changes, the church of the Old and New Testament is essentially the same under different economies. It is by profession and separation “a holy nation, and a peculiar people.” The Gentiles incorporated in the visible church have a right to all its privileges. One of the most valuable of these is this, that parents and their children are alike regarded as members of the church, as a portion of God’s royal priesthood and peculiar people. The promise declared by Peter on the day of Pentecost, to pertain to believers in Christ and their children, extends to all within the church till the end of time. Infants were certainly admitted into the fellowship of the church from the days of Abraham, till the death of Christ; and we neither find Christ nor his apostles ever declaring that they were afterwards to be excluded. The church being one, as the charter of its privileges is the same, its membership is composed of the same classes; and the mode of admission is substantially the same under the one economy and the other.

Our Lord’s welcome to children, pronounced in the days of his flesh, implies their membership, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, * * *
* for of such is the kingdom of God.” The

“kingdom of God,” here evidently means the visible church; and the Saviour expressly declares that infants belong to the church, and are numbered with His disciples. When it is said, “of such,” &c., it cannot merely mean that persons of a childlike disposition compose the kingdom of God, for this would assign no proper reason why infants should be brought to Christ, nor for our Lord’s being displeased with the disciples for seeking to hinder their approach.* If infants are thus declared by our Lord to belong to His Church, then there is certainly no proper reason why they may not be formally and solemnly declared such by baptism. Besides, it cannot be affirmed that they may not have been baptized on this occasion. Our Lord baptized not—but his disciples; and by laying his hands on them, and blessing them, He as solemnly received them as they could have been by the external rite,† which denotes the conveyance of spiritual

* It has been sometimes alleged by Antipædobaptists that these were not infants at all. But the word $\beta\epsilon\epsilon\phi\eta$ employed by the evangelist Luke, and properly translated “infants,” as well as our Lord’s “taking them in His arms,” is decisive on the subject. When it is, moreover, alleged by the same writers that our Lord did not *baptize* but only “*blessed* them,” this makes nothing against the argument that infants form part of the Church of God. The word “*such*,” is often used in Sacred Scripture, not to denote outward *resemblance*, but a *distinction*. “Such an High Priest became us,”—“Such an one as Paul, the aged,”—cannot surely mean persons resembling this High Priest, or Paul, the Apostle. In like manner, the Lord’s declaration concerning infants is tantamount to saying that children, as well as adults, are members of His church.

† Knapp in his Theology, under the head of “Infant Baptism,” makes the following judicious remarks respecting our Lord’s reception of infants:—“That infant baptism, considered as a solemn rite of consecration, cannot be opposed to the design and will of Christ, may be concluded from His own declaration—Mat. xix. 14—“Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them

blessings.* In His discourse to Nicodemus, our Lord declares that none enter His Kingdom but such as are *born of water, &c.* ; and the expression being generally understood to contain an allusion to baptism, would imply that, if children are inadmissible to baptism by water, they are excluded from the kingdom of God. Devoid of membership in the church here, they are cut off from the hopes of eternal salvation—a conclusion this from which, although avowed by some Baptist writers, the pious mind recoils.

The passage in 1 Cor. vii. 14, has an immediate reference to the right of infants to infant-membership in the visible church,—“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.” Under the Old Testament, infants had always been received as members of God’s church. But when, in the days of Ezra, the restored captives had, contrary to an express injunction, contracted marriages with the heathen around ; it was ordained that the children born of such a connexion, with their heathen parents, should be put away as unclean. It seems probable that this gave rise to the question in the Corinthian Church, whether a Christian, or believing husband or wife, should continue with an unbelieving partner. To

not, *των γαρ τοιουτων εστιν η βασιλεια του Θεου ; for of such is the Kingdom of God.*” This is, indeed, no command for infant baptism ; but if children are, and should have a share in the Christian Church, and in all Christian privileges, *βασιλεια του Θεου* it cannot be improper to introduce them into the Christian Church by this solemn rite of initiation. And if, according to the design of Christ, children, from their earliest youth up, are to have a share in the rites and privileges of Christians ; it must, also, be agreeable to His will solemnly to introduce them, by this rite of consecration, into the nursery of his disciples.—Compare 1 Cor. vii. 14.”

* See Lathorpe’s Discourses.—Disc. 2, p. 59.

this the apostle gave an affirmative answer. Believers are indeed only to marry in the Lord ; but when both were unbelieving at the time when they entered into the conjugal state, the subsequent faith of one of the parties does not dissolve the relation. If it did, “then,” says the apostle, “were your children unclean, but now are they holy.” In some sense the children of parents, of which one is a Christian, are holy. This cannot mean, as some Antipædobaptists say* *legitimate*, for marriage is valid, whether the parties are Christian or not. Nor does it intend real internal holiness, for this is not of the flesh, but of the will and grace of God. It is *relative* or *federal* holiness that is intended. The children of professed believers are holy, as the people of Israel were holy, by special covenant relation to God. Under the law the first-born were said to be holy, as they were specially dedicated to God.† The Christian

* This is the opinion of Dr. Gill—See Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity.

† Schleusner says *Ακαθαρτος*, signifies “that which is prohibited by the Mosaic law, or that from which the people of God were required to separate themselves.” On Acts x. 28, he remarks, “A man is there called *ακαθαρτον* *unclean*, with whom the Jews thought it unlawful to have any familiar intercourse.” He quotes the passage in 2 Cor. vi. 17, as confirmatory of this view, *Ακαθαρτου μη ἅπτεσθε*,—Touch not the unclean thing, that is, as the connexion shows, Have no intercourse with Pagans. The text under consideration, he renders, “*Alioquin et liberi nostri remoti essent e societate Christianorum*”—“Otherwise your children also would be removed from the society of Christians.” Lightfoot advances the same views. The words *ακαθαρτα* and *ἅγια*, he says, refer not to legitimacy or illegitimacy, but to the Gentile or Christian state ; that the children of Gentiles or Pagans were, by the Jews, considered as *ακαθαρτα*, *unclean*, and the children of the Jews *ἅγια* *holy*, and that the apostle refers to this well-known sense of the word, that his treatment of the subject does not turn on this hinge

church is designated "the Church of the first-born ;"* and being thus holy, and within his covenant, infant children are surely entitled to the visible mark of membership and federal relationship. The unbelieving partner, in the conjugal state, is sanctified by the other party, not in relation to God, but to his or her yoke-fellow. The children are holy, as opposed to the "unclean," or the heathen, as they are dedicated to God, and admitted to number with a professedly holy people. Thus the church being one in all ages, a portion of its members is infant children, who are fully entitled to any external rite, which has been appointed as the symbol of admission to its fellowship, and of participation in its privileges.

Fifthly, *our Lord's commission*, and the practice of the apostles *in baptizing households*, fully authorize the practice of infant baptism.

whether a child, born of parents, one of whom was a Christian, and the other a heathen, was a *legitimate* offspring, but whether he was a Christian offspring." Whitby, after ably expounding the passage, confutes the rendering, "Else were your children bastards;" by saying, "The word used for bastard by the apostle being *νοθος*, Heb. xii. 8, and the word *γνησιος* being the proper word for a legitimate offspring; had the apostle intended such a sense, he would have used the words which, in Greek writers, are generally used in that sense, and not such words as the Septuagint, and in the Jewish writers, always have a relation to *federal* holiness, or the want of it." Calvin, in his Institutes (Lib. iv., cap. 10), assigns substantially the same meaning to the words of the apostle. "The children of the Jews, because they were made heirs of the covenant, and distinguished from the children of the impious, were called a holy seed; and, for the same reason, the children of Christians, even when only one of the parents is pious, are accounted holy; and, according to the testimony of the apostle, differ from the impure seed of idolators." These authorities, and a number of others, are given in a very clear and satisfactory exposition of the passage in question, in Lectures on Infant Baptism, by Leonard Woods, D.D., of Andover, p. 80-95.

* Heb. xii. 23.

The commission of the Saviour to the apostles, and through them to all the future ministers of his church, was in these terms, "Go ye, therefore, and teach (disciple) all nations, baptizing them in (into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mat. xxviii. 19.) The words in the original might be more forcibly rendered—"Disciple all nations, baptizing them into the name," &c.; and the form of the expression being "baptizing," and not "and baptize," indicates the manner in which the discipling is to be performed—namely, by baptizing. In opposition to Antipædobaptists, who say that infant children are not referred to in the commission, and that they are excluded as not being disciples, and incapable of instruction, we allege that infants are evidently comprised in the "all nations" that are to be taught, as universal usage has always regarded them as a part of the population of a nation, subjects of the sovereign, and under the protection of national law. Again, the opening word in the commission rendered in our version, "Teach," is different from that in the concluding member, which properly signifies to "indoctrinate," and denotes to "make disciples." Infants may obviously be enrolled as disciples, in being entered in the school of Christ, with a view to their future instruction. It is mere gratuitous assertion, and barefaced dogmatism to affirm, as Antipædobaptists do, that infants are excluded in the commission, because they cannot be disciples, capable of receiving instruction.* The children of Jewish parents were re-

* Dr. Carson employs more than his usual dogmatism and confidence of assertion, in maintaining that infants are excluded from the commission. "No command," says he, "no explanation can bring unbelievers into the commission that enjoins the baptism of believers. I would gainsay an angel from heaven who should say that this commission may extend to the baptism of any but be-

garded as disciples of Moses, and were bound by circumcision to keep the whole law. In the New Testament, those are evidently spoken of as *disciples*, belonging to Christ, who are in childhood, as well as those in adult age. "Whosoever shall give to one of these little ones a cup of water in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward."* The dispute that led to the assembling of the first Synod in Jerusalem, referred to in Acts xv., had a plain reference to the recognition of infants as disciples. The Judaizers, who contended that Christians under the Gospel should be circumcised, are said "to tempt God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples," (Acts xv. 10.) Now, these did not contend for the circumcision of adults alone, but likewise that their infant children should be circumcised according to the Hebrew usage, from the days of Abraham. Infants, therefore, are included with the disciples, on whose neck the yoke of ceremonial observances was attempted to be put. Nations, therefore, and infants as a component portion of them, are to be discipled by baptizing them. They are to be enrolled among the scholars of the great Teacher. They are to be openly committed to the tutelage of Him who condescends to be an instructor of babes, en-

lievers. His assertion would imply a contradiction. Here, then, I stand entrenched, and I defy the ingenuity of earth and hell to drive me from my position." Dr. Carson's assertions, for we cannot call them reasoning, would go to prove that the apostolic practice was in opposition to the Commission. For Philip baptized Simon Magus, who was an unbeliever. Even Baptists themselves will not pretend to say that all whom they baptize in adulthood are real believers. Dr. Campbell, a champion of Anti-pædobaptist doctrine, says, "In nine cases out of ten, through error of judgment, we admit unbelievers." The fact must always be that, as mortal man cannot judge the heart, those who make faith a term of admission to membership in the church, can never execute the commission in the sense in which Dr Carson interprets it.

* Mat. x. 42.

trusted to the guidance and government of the most glorious Master, and declared to be his by the visible symbol of the Christian profession. Baptism, it is true, does not make them disciples, but it recognizes as such those who, from their connexion with Christian parents, and their being a part of Christ's Church, stood in this relation before. It is the open badge and seal of their introduction to "wisdom's house," and this the Saviour's commission fully authorizes. A German theologian* judiciously remarks, in relation to our Lord's commission embracing infant children, "If Christ, in His command to baptize all (Mat. xxviii. 19), had wished children to be excepted, He must have expressly said this. For since the first disciples of Christ, as native Jews, knew no other way than for children to be introduced into the Israelitish Church by circumcision, it was natural that they should extend this to baptism, if Christ did not expressly forbid it. Had He, therefore, wished that it should not be done, He would surely have said so in definite terms."

The apostles clearly understood the parting command of their Lord and Master, and acted on the acknowledged right of the infant seed of believing parents to be admitted to the seal of initiation. They had been familiar with the usage of having children, as well as parents, consecrated to God by circumcision. They had, moreover, witnessed proselytes and their children baptized together, on being introduced to the congregation of Israel. These practices of long standing must have greatly influenced their views of the nature and extent of their commission, and must have led them to conclude that, under the new economy, *children*, as well as parents, were to be devoted to God in baptism.

The practice of the apostles, and first ministers of

* Knappe's Theology—published at Halle.

the New Testament Church, there is the fullest reason to believe, was in accordance with this view of the initiatory ordinance. It is admitted that the cases of baptism recorded in the book of Acts are cases of adult baptism; but, without a single exception, the persons baptized were converts from Judaism or heathenism, and such instances prove nothing against infant baptism, as both Baptists and Pædobaptists are equally ready to administer the ordinance to such persons. As well might the opponents of infant baptism argue that the practice of our missionaries to Jew or Gentile, in admitting converts to the church, is contradictory to our principles, as adduce the adult baptisms of apostolic times as a reason against infant baptism. Besides, the silence of the Sacred writers, in relation to the baptism of infants in the days of primitive Christianity is easily accounted for by the circumstance that children had always been accustomed to be reckoned with their parents in the membership of the church, and to be enrolled by a visible significant rite. There was no need specially to record the fact of their admission when this took place, according to a practice long established, the *form* of the ordinance of initiation being only changed.

It deserves, however, to be particularly observed that Antipædobaptists cannot produce from the New Testament a single example of such baptism as they practise—that of a child of a professed Christian parent allowed to grow up to adult age without baptism, and baptized on the profession of his own faith in Christ. The cases of adult baptism in primitive times which they adduce are not in point, since these were of Jewish or Gentile converts, and not of the adult children of Christian parents. There is a plain and obvious reason why the baptism of infants should not be recorded in the inspired history of the primitive church; but Antipædobaptists will not find it so easy on their prin-

ciples to account for the fact, that not a single instance of such baptisms as they plead for is recorded in any part of the New Testament.

Referring to *actual* Apostolic statement and practice, in relation to baptism, we notice first, the address of Peter to the awakened Jews on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 38, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you, and to your children." These words addressed to Jews plainly declare a present interest of children with their parents in the promise; and this is urged as a reason why they should be baptized. It is not said, the promise is to you, and *will be* to your children when they believe; but it is to you, and your children which you now have; it is to them *now*, equally as to you. In virtue of the comprehensive promise, "I will be a God to you and your seed," the parents are entitled to be baptized, and are urged to a participation in the ordinance. On precisely the same ground, their infant children are likewise entitled to the baptismal rite. The interest in the promise is as good a reason why *they* should be baptized as their parents. The promise certainly belonged to the infant seed of Abraham, and thus to the infant children of his spiritual seed. The application of the rite of baptism is co-extensive with the promise. By no proper interpretation of the words, considered as addressed to Jews, can they be taken as referring only to children when they believe. Nor can the last clause, "and to as many as the Lord our God shall call," be taken as "a limitation" of the whole declaration.* The "call" here is not the "effectual call" of the Spirit, but the ordinary call of the gos-

* This is Dr. Carson's view. "The last clause," says he, "is a limitation of the promise with respect to the three classes men-

pel.* The promise, and with it the ordinance of initiation and confirmation, pertained to Jewish parents and their children; and the apostle declares that the same privilege is secured to believing Gentiles, and their seed, as many as would receive the call of the gospel, and come into the gospel-church-state. Thus, then, in the very opening of the new economy, and in the first admission of members to the New Testament church, consequent upon the outpouring of the Spirit, the right of infants to be baptized was plainly declared.

In the inspired history of the apostolic times, we read of the baptism of families, or *households*, on the profession of their respective heads. It has been observed that we have only *nine* cases of baptism recorded in the Acts and Epistles; and *five* of these have respect to families. Of Lydia, it is said, “she was baptized, and her *household*.” The Jailer was baptized, “he and all his”—i. e., all who belonged to him—“straightway.” † Cornelius and his household were baptized; ‡ and Paul says, 1 Cor. i. 16, “I baptized the household of Stephanas.” Now, though we may not be able to prove certainly that there were infants in these families, it can never be shown that there were no infants in them. Under the former dispensation, when families or households joined themselves to the Lord’s people, infants were included, and they as well as adults were treated as consecrated to

tioned, restricting it to such of each as the Lord shall call.”
Baptism in its Mode and Subjects, by Alexander Carson, LL.D.
—p. 204.

* This is the opinion of Calvin, and other eminent expositors of former times. Olshausen takes a similar view of the passage. Dr. Bloomfield, in his Greek Lexicon, understands it figuratively of God “calling and inviting men to embrace the gospel.”

† Acts xvi. 15, 33.

‡ Acts x. 48.

God. The Apostles, accustomed to the established usage, may be regarded as speaking of baptizing households, according to the sense in which families had been understood, as including children. These families are mentioned without restriction. It is not said, Lydia was baptized, and those of her family who believed were baptized; but simply, "Lydia was baptized, and her house." And although, in the case of the Jailer, after his baptism and that of his house, are recorded, it is added, "He rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house;"* yet this does not imply that all his family believed as well as he; for the participle is in the singular number, and can, therefore, refer only to the Jailer himself. It intimates, that after he believed, he solemnly gave thanks before, and in behalf of, his family. The number of *household* baptisms recorded in the New Testament, taken in connection with the Old Testament usage, furnishes a strong presumption in favour of infant baptism. On the principle that infants were baptized with their parents, this summary record is quite natural; on the principle of Anti-pædobaptists, it cannot be accounted for. For *them* to speak familiarly of baptizing *families*, without stating whether they were all adults and believers, would be inconsistent with their avowed principles and practice. The "church in the house" includes infant children as well as their parents; and children are not to be excluded from the salvation which comes into the house, upon the parent, its head, believing in Christ; and therefore are they entitled to the symbol of a believing profession, and of the confirmation of the promise. Thus the whole apostolic practice is in favour of infant baptism, and in no instance opposed to it; and this exhibits the proper interpretation and application of the commission, which embraced children as well as

* Παισινὶ πεπιστευκῶς τῷ Θεῷ.

their parents as heirs of the extensive benefits and privileges of Christianity.*

Sixthly, Infants may be partakers of the spiritual and saving benefits which are symbolically exhibited in baptism, and therefore they are entitled to admission to the ordinance.

We have seen that baptism is a compendious exhibition of the great leading blessings of salvation. It impressively teaches the necessity of regeneration—the remission of sins, and spiritual purification through Christ's blood—separation from the world—communion with Christ and his people, and the enjoyment of eternal life. Now, these benefits of salvation, infants as well as others may certainly enjoy. The judicious Dr. Owen asks, in his "Greater Catechism," "To whom does Baptism belong?" and he answers in these comprehensive terms, "Unto all to whom the promise of the covenant is made; that is to believers and to their seed." † Even those who oppose the practice of infant baptism will hardly refuse to admit that infants may be saved; and it is only some of the party who push the argument recklessly to its utmost extreme, that hesitate about admitting that children dying in infancy may enjoy eternal felicity. Of some we are expressly told in Scripture that they were "sanctified from the womb;" and since salvation is all of grace, and all who become partakers of it are, to all intents, as infants, the passive recipients of its prime blessings, there is nothing to hinder, but much to encourage, the hope that numbers of this class may have implanted

* The following passages of sacred Scripture seem plainly to recognize the practice of infant baptism:—Rom. xi. 16, 17; 1 Cor. vii. 14; x. 2; Gal. iv. A due consideration of the context, and of the design of the inspired writer, will make this obvious.

† Works—vol. v., p. 34—Russel's Edition. He quotes in proof, Acts ii. 39; Gen. xvii. 11, 12; Acts xvi. 15; Rom. iv. 10, 11; 1 Cor. vii. 14.

in them the germ of holy principle which shall expand unto life everlasting.* Without affirming the salvation of all children who die in infancy, it would yet seem to us to be accordant not only with the declarations of sacred Scripture, but also with the sanctified feelings of godly parents, that some of this class are heirs of eternal salvation. If, therefore, they enjoy the thing signified, why may they not be admitted to the sign? It is surely inconsistent and preposterous to maintain that they may have the benefits which a deed conveys, and may not have the seal affixed to the document; to affirm that they may be subjects of the kingdom of heaven, and yet be inadmissible to the church on earth; that they may be heirs of glory, and yet that they may not obtain the distinctive mark of gracious privilege here.

We admit that infants are incapable *of acts of faith*. But if this incapacity disqualifies them for baptism, on the same principle would they be excluded from the enjoyment of all saving benefits. Justification is through faith, and the sanctification of the Spirit is through belief of the truth. The victory that overcomes the world is the conquest of faith, and “the end of faith” is the “salvation of the soul.” The principle, therefore, that would exclude infants from baptism would exclude them from heaven. The fundamental doctrine, however, of those who oppose infant baptism is erroneous. Salvation is not of faith, considered merely as an act of the soul, but is of sovereign

* It is the sentiment of the late Dr. M'Leod, of New York, that all the children of believing parents dying in infancy shall be saved. This he argues chiefly from the apostle's declaration in Acts ii. 39, and says their salvation takes place, not in virtue of a natural connection with their parents, but through a gracious connection. The late Dr. Russel, of Dundee, as well as several other respectable divines, maintain the opinion, that all children dying in infancy shall be saved.—(See Dr. M'Leod's Discourses on the “Life and Power of true Godliness,” and Russell on “Infant Salvation.”)

free grace, of which faith itself is a fruit and effect. Infant children may have the *principle of faith*—spiritual life implanted, though they are unfit to manifest its actings, and their salvation is as secure, on the footing of the new and well-ordered covenant, as that of others in any subsequent period of life. Children inherit, from their parents, a sinful and polluted nature. In consequence of their being under the taint and guilt of original sin, they are exposed to pain, and affliction, and death. The blessings of salvation, with the privileges of the church to godly parents, remove the curse, mitigate the evils of life, and confer victory in death. If parents may enjoy these, why should they be denied to their infant children, who are as a part of themselves, and in whose deliverance from evil and happiness, believing parents must ever feel the deepest concern. There is certainly nothing in the covenant of grace to exclude them; and in the special manifestations of it to Israel of old, little children are expressly embraced as included in the gracious transaction. Deut. xxix. 10—12, “Ye stand all of you this day before the Lord your God; your little ones and your wives; * * * that *thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God.*” So may it still be declared of believing parents and their children. They may enter into covenant with God, and partake together of the benefits of the new covenant—be redeemed from evil—be subjects of renewing and sanctifying grace, and heirs of glory. We do not absolutely say, either that children in infancy are actually regenerated, or that saving blessings are inseparably connected with the outward symbol in baptism. It is but an external sign, and is quite separable and distinct from the thing signified. A baptized person may not be regenerated till long after his early dedication; or may never be regenerated at all. But children, as such, are capable of pardon and regenera-

tion. They may receive the Spirit and be justified and sanctified, and brought to inherit the kingdom of heaven; and there is every reason to believe that at least a portion of these little ones do enjoy all these inestimable blessings. If these benefits may, or do pertain to them, there is certainly no ground for withholding from them the outward symbol of regeneration and sanctification—the visible seal and confirmation of the title to eternal life. In the language of the apostle—and yet with greater emphasis, as we refer not to a temporary and extraordinary dispensation, but to saving and eternal blessings—we may ask, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” *

Finally, we might adduce the constant usage of the Christian church from the earliest ages, and throughout the whole course of her past history, as an additional argument in favour of infant baptism.

The testimony of antiquity is full in favour of the practice; the universal church has observed it; and those who have denied it, have always been regarded as sectarians, and not as persons holding in this article, the faith of the church. The researches of Dr. Wall, in his elaborate “History of Infant Baptism,” fully establish this position, and prove that from the days of primitive Christianity till after the commencement of the Reformation in the 16th century, not a single individual wrote or spoke against infant baptism, save a small sect in France, in the 12th century, that speedily disappeared, which denied the possibility of the salvation of infants, and of course denied their right to baptism. A few instances may be quoted to show how clear and decisive is the testimony of the church in behalf of the baptism of infants:—

* Acts x. 47.

Justin Martyr, who flourished within less than half a century of the apostolic age, says, in one of his "Apologies," "Such persons among us, of sixty and seventy years old, *who were made disciples to Christ from their childhood*, do continue uncorrupt." The term here employed, it is to be remarked, is the same as is employed in the apostolic commission, "Go ye into all the world—disciple all nations." Irenæus, who lived between sixty and seventy years after the apostles, and conversed with Polycarp, who was the disciple of John, says, concerning Christ, "He came to save all persons by himself, who by him are regenerated unto God, infants, little ones, youths, or elderly persons." It is evident that Irenæus uses the term "*regenerated*" in the sense of being baptized, for he says elsewhere, "When Christ gave his disciples the command of *regenerating* unto God, He said 'Go and teach all nations, baptizing them,' " &c.

Origen, who lived about a hundred years after the apostles, says, "The baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness of sins. But why are infants, *by the usage of the church, baptized*, if there is nothing in them that needs forgiveness?" Again, he observes, "The church had, from the apostles, an order to give baptism to infants; for they to whom the divine mysteries were committed knew that there was, in all persons, the natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by water and the Spirit."

At a subsequent period, Gregory Nazianzen taught, "That infants should be baptized, to consecrate them to Christ in their infancy." Ambrose declared, "That the baptism of infants had been the practice of the apostles and of the church till that time." Chrysostom taught, "That baptism had no determinate time, as circumcision had; but one in the bringing in of life, or one in the middle of it, or one in old age, might receive it."

The celebrated Augustine, in his writings, frequently refers to infant baptism as the standing practice of the church. In one place, he declares that this "is a doctrine held by the church universal, and that not as instituted by councils, but as delivered by the authority of the apostles alone." * In his controversy with Pelagius respecting original sin, Augustine frequently refers to infant baptism as the approved practice of the church, and asks, "Why are infants baptized for the remission of sins, if they have none?" And it is worthy of remark that Pelagius, though pressed with the argument, never alleges that infant baptism was an unscriptural innovation, or a partial usage of the church. On the contrary, even though in opposition to the doctrine which he maintained, he bears decided testimony to the existence of infant baptism. Referring to what he regards as a slanderous report that he had denied infant baptism, he asks, "Who can be so impious as to hinder infants from being baptized and born again in Christ?"

The witnesses for Christ, prior to the Reformation, maintained the doctrine, and practised the rite of infant baptism. There is evidence recently brought to light that the "Church in the Catacombs," dedicated its infant members to God in baptism; and the same was the usage of the Waldensian Church throughout all periods of its eventful history. Even amidst severe and protracted persecution and suffering, when the light of the blessed reformation broke upon the different nations of Europe, without any exception, the reformers and reformed churches, while purging out superstitious corruptions from the church, declared the baptism of infants to be the appointment of God, plainly indicated in his word, and designed to be of

* See Wall's History of Infant Baptism, p. 15. Bucan. Instit. Theol., p. 678.

perpetual continuance in his church. The "Harmony of Confessions," on the subject of infant baptism, forms a noble testimony of the Protestant Churches in behalf of an ordinance, not less consolatory to the hearts of godly Christian parents, than fraught with innumerable and invaluable benefits to the Church. Calvin, in his immortal work, the "Institutes," has stated and vindicated the right of the infant seed of the members of the church to the visible seal of God's covenant, with a fulness of statement, and a cogency of reasoning, that have never been surpassed, and that the opponents of infant baptism cannot gainsay or refute. Well might the illustrious reformer say, when summing up his argument in favour of this Scriptural rite, "How sweet it is to godly minds to be certified, not only by word, but also by something to be seen with the eyes, that they obtain so much favour with the Heavenly Father that He hath care, even of their posterity!"

This summary of arguments in behalf of infant baptism cannot better be concluded than in the singular and striking language of Calvin, when refuting the arguments of the opponents of infant baptism in his own day—arguments which are still urged as if they were new, or as if their sophistry and weakness had never been exposed:—"This, verily, Satan intends, in assailing with so great armies the baptism of infants, namely, that this testifying of the grace of God being taken away, the promise by which it is present before our eyes, may at length by little and little vanish away. Whereupon should grow, not only a wicked unthankfulness toward the mercy of God, but also a certain slothfulness in instructing our children to godliness. For by this spur, we are not a little pricked forward to bring them up in earnest fear of God, and in keeping of his law; when we consider that even immediately from their birth he taketh

and acknowledgeth them for his children. Wherefore, unless we list enviously to darken the bountifulness of God, let us offer to Him our children, to whom He giveth a place to them that are of his family and household, that is to say, the members of the church.”*

CHAPTER V.

THE MODE AND PLACE OF BAPTISM.

SECT. I.—THE MODE.

ALTHOUGH the controversy respecting the *mode* of administering the ordinance of baptism has been conducted with unusual keenness, and volumes have been written on the subject, we do not consider it necessary, in a treatise like this, to do more than present a brief summary of the reasons why we regard baptism by sprinkling or affusion as the most suitable method, as well as that which fully meets the requirements of Holy Scripture. Indeed, we would never think of having an argument with brethren on this topic, were it not for the dogmatism and pertinacity of those who deny infant baptism, who resolutely maintain that *immersion* is the only proper mode of administering the ordinance; and who do not hesitate to affirm that that is not to be regarded as baptism at all which is dispensed in any other way.†

The statement of our venerable Westminster Divines evidently implies that baptism may be law-

* Instit. Christ. Rel., Lib. iv., Cap. xvi.

† It is but justice to observe that several respectable ministers and members of the Baptist Churches in England differ from their brethren in this particular. While they practise immersion, and contend for it as, in their view, most Scriptural, they yet profess their willingness to regard baptism by affusion or sprinkling as valid.

fully dispensed by immersion; while, at the same time, it maintains that it is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water on the person. “Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water on the person.”* Professing, as we do, the same liberal and catholic sentiment, we are not disposed to quarrel with those who would prefer *dipping* to sprinkling in baptism, did they not labour with all their might to invalidate the mode of baptism which is generally practised by all the reformed churches—did they not teach and strenuously argue that, by our method of administration, we disobey the requirements of Holy Writ; and that, in consequence, ours is to be accounted no baptism. While candidly stating the grounds on which we vindicate our own mode of administration as Scriptural, we cannot but express regret that Antipædobaptists should adopt the course they have done in speaking or writing on such a subject. To make as the all-important matter, whether a smaller or larger quantity of water is to be employed; and, on this ground, to refuse fellowship with those who cannot subscribe a dogma so exclusive, is sufficiently lamentable. The tendency of such a view is, moreover, to turn away attention from the spiritual import and design of the ordinance, by exalting a mere circumstance in the administration as if it were the entire substance.

Antipædobaptists lay a principal stress upon the original word, which is employed by the Sacred writers, and which we translate *Baptize*. They contend with the most confident assertion that the proper meaning of this term, in its primary sense, in classical Greek writers, and in the Sacred Scriptures, is always to dip or immerse; and that it cannot signify to *pour*

* Confession of Faith, ch. xxviii. Sect. iii.

out or to *sprinkle*. Even were we to grant what is assumed that the word, in its primary sense, signifies to dip or plunge, this would by no means settle the question, as every person knows that among all writers, and by usage, words may be more frequently employed in a secondary sense, than in that which was primarily attached to them. But it is sufficient merely to state to our readers that every position which Baptists have so dogmatically advanced, respecting the meaning and use of the original word for baptize, has been controverted by the most distinguished scholars, and proof has been offered, which only prejudice and attachment to system could resist, that immersion or dipping is not the exclusive original meaning of the term in question; and that it is not exclusively employed in this sense by either sacred or profane writers. The illustrious Dr. Owen, whose critical powers and profound scholarship, will not readily be called in question, declares, “No one instance can be given in Scripture, wherein *Baptizo* doth necessarily signify either to dip or plunge. It doth not signify properly to dip or plunge; for that in Greek is *Embapto* and *Embaptizo*. It nowhere signifies to dip, but as a mode, or in order to washing.”* It signifies the “dipping of a finger, or the least touch of the water, and not plunging the whole. It signifies to ‘wash’ also, in all good authors.” This judicious statement plainly teaches what is unquestionably the fact that “to baptize,” primarily signified to wash or wet, and as objects are usually washed by dipping, this came to be regarded as a frequent, though secondary meaning.

Baptizing and dipping are by no means synonymous; the former denotes washing or cleansing, the latter is only used in a modal sense, and has never in our lan-

* Owen's Collection of Sermons and Tracts, vol. xxi., p. 558—
Russel's Edition.

guage the secondary meaning of washing.* The Sacred writers unquestionably employ the original term *Bapto*, from which *Baptizo* is supposed to be taken, in connexions in which it is plainly impossible that it should be explained in the sense of *plunging* or *dipping*. Thus when the Israelites are said to have been “baptized into Moses in the cloud, and in the sea,” 1 Cor. x. 2, the allusion is evidently to the spray of the sea, and the moisture of the cloudy pillar descending on them, or besprinkling them, and not to their being immersed or plunged in the sea. Nebuchadnezzar is said, in Daniel iv. 33, in the Septuagint version, to have his body wet (*εβάφη*) with the dew of heaven, which it will be admitted, was done by affusion and not by dipping. Referring to a common practice in our Lord’s day, the evangelist Mark says, “The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash (*νιψονται*) their hands often, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from market, except they wash (*βαπτισονται*) they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing (*βαπτισμος*) of cups and pots, brazen vessels and tables. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen (*αυπται*) hands?” Here it is perfectly evident that washing and baptizing are regarded as synonymous in meaning; and washing is baptizing, whether performed by dipping, pouring, or sprinkling. In the Old Testament we are told that Elisha *poured water* on the hands of Elijah; and thus the Jews were accustomed to wash or baptize before meals, and when they returned from market; whereas to dip or plunge in water so often would not only have been inconvenient but impracticable.

* This position is ably sustained by Dr. Beecher, of America, in his learned work, entitled, “Baptism, with reference to its Import and Modes.”

It deserves to be remarked, too, that several of the articles which, in this passage, are said to have been washed, could not properly be dipped or immersed. The word rendered "tables" in the passage quoted from Mark, properly signifies *beds* or *couches*, in which persons reclined at meals, and how these could be *baptized* on the principle of Immersionists, has never been satisfactorily shown. It is easy to understand how the couches could be purified by sprinkling, but to cleanse them daily by submerging them in water, may simply be pronounced to have been impossible, notwithstanding the confident assertions of Baptist writers.*

The terms *baptize* and *baptism* are, moreover, frequently used in the Scriptures in a figurative sense, when there would be an obvious incongruity in regarding the mode, as being by *dipping*. Thus we read often of the baptism of the Spirit. "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high," Is. xxxii. 15. "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring." Is. xlv. 3. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," Ezekiel xxxvi. 25. In the New Testament, the fulfilment of these bright predictions is termed the *baptism* and the *shedding forth* of the Spirit. There is an obvious propriety in this figurative manner of expression, as the New Testament ordinance has a pointed reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in moral purification. "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit evidently

* Dr. Carson, with his usual dogmatism, says, in reference to Mark vii. 4, "Though it were proved that the couches could not be immersed, I would not yield an inch of the ground I have occupied."—Carson on Baptism, p. 76.

descended and rested upon the assembled disciples, and they are said to have been thus “filled with the Holy Ghost:” and Peter in his sermon declared that thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Joel,—“I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” He calls this “shedding forth” the Spirit; and elsewhere, in referring to the same memorable event, he says, “The Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning.”* In all these instances, and in others that might be quoted, every person must see that to render “baptize with the Spirit,” to “dip, or immerse, in the Spirit,” would be incongruous and absurd. Whereas, if the mode of baptism is by sprinkling or affusion, the form of expression is appropriate and significant. If *to baptize* and *to dip*, and *baptism* and *dipping* are, as Baptists affirm, convertible terms, then the one may be plainly substituted for the other. But in many passages of Scripture this would make the language of the Sacred penmen unmeaning and absurd. Thus by supplying the word *dip* or *plunge*, in the following passages:—Mat. iii. 11; 1 Cor. xii. 13; Gal. iii. 27; Luke iii. 3; and reading them, “He shall *dip* you with the Holy Ghost and with fire”—“For by one Spirit are we all dipped into one body”—“Preaching the dipping of repentance,” &c. Every person must at once perceive that the sense is marred, and that the substitution reduces the passages to an absurdity. This follows from regarding the words baptize and baptism as always expressing the *mode*, and not viewing them, as they are very generally used by the sacred writers, to denote *cleansing* or *initiation*, without any reference whatever to the mode of administration. The plain inference from the employment of the terms in question, in the passages quoted, is that they cannot signify dipping or immersion, and that baptism is properly performed by affusion or sprinkling.

* Acts ii. 17; xi. 15.

It may be further remarked that Baptists have never been able to produce a single passage from the Scriptures in which it is clearly proved that any were baptized by immersion. They strenuously argue that *inferential* reasoning is inadmissible in the discussion on baptism, and that positive and express institution is requisite, both in relation to the subjects, and the mode of administration. Now, though it is asserted by this party that our Lord positively appointed baptism to be dispensed by immersion, they are forced to employ presumptive reasoning; and they cannot adduce a solitary case, of all the instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament, in which it is clearly apparent that the parties were dipped or immersed. It is not declared that our Lord was immersed when He was baptized, nor that those baptized by the apostles were dipped. It is only inferred or presumed from the meaning which it is alleged the word baptize can alone have, or from the occurrence of such modes of expression, as going *into*, or going down into the water —“coming up out of the water,”—and “there was much water there,” &c. We have already referred to the import of the original terms that are employed to designate this ordinance. The conclusion drawn from the expressions to which we have adverted is a mere gratuitous assumption;—the foundation is too weak to support the fabric which is attempted to be reared on it. Every Greek scholar knows that the prepositions *εἰς* and *εἰν*, *in* and *into*, which are used in connexion with baptism, denote in innumerable instances *at* or *towards*, and that the preposition *ἐκ* or *ἐξ* *out of*, signifies *from*. The persons concerned in the cases of baptism recorded went in the direction of the water, or approached to it, and afterwards they came away from it. When John is said to have baptized at Enon, “because there was much water there,” it does not prove that the baptized were dipped. The

original words, it has been shown, may be rendered—“There were many waters, or rivulets, there,” and there is no proof that these were large enough for the purposes of immersion. Besides, the impracticability and indecency of the Baptist dipping the vast numbers who resorted to him, must be apparent. In a hot climate, where water is so valuable and necessary an element, there is an obvious propriety in the Scriptural record, that there was a plentiful supply of water for the multitudes who resorted to his preaching and baptism. The case of the Ethiopian eunuch has been appealed to, as proving baptism by immersion, because it is said he and Philip *went down into the water, and came up out of it.** But here the Greek particles only mean—they left the road and descended to the water, and afterwards came away *from* it. According to the mode of exposition adopted by Baptist writers, Philip, as well as the eunuch, must have gone down bodily into the water and been baptized too, for it is said in express terms, “They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch.”†

The passage in Romans vi. 3, though frequently appealed to by Baptist writers, as a convincing proof that baptism is by immersion, has no connexion what-

* Dr. Lardner remarks judiciously on this passage—“I do not see any proof that the eunuch was baptized by immersion. He and Philip went out of the chariot to the water, and stood in the water, and Philip poured some of the water upon him. To be baptized in the chariot was unbecoming the solemnity of the ordinance. It was proper to go out and stand and make a solemn profession of faith, and be instructed by Philip. All the reasonings of Mr. B. and others, for immersion, taken from the eunuch’s getting out of the chariot, have appeared to me inconclusive, not to say weak and trifling: nor do I see reason to think that John the Baptist used immersion, but rather otherwise.”

ever with this point. The apostle says, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" But here he is evidently referring to the spiritual meaning of the ordinance, as importing union to Christ; for burial with Christ in baptism is spoken of as equivalent to grafting or planting into Christ. Nothing whatever is declared respecting the mode; and even were there, the analogy would not hold, as our Lord was not let down into a grave or pit in the earth, as we bury—but laid in a sepulchre, into which persons are said to have gone, and into which they did not need to descend; and as, in truth, he had not proper burial at all, for the Sabbath intervened, and he had triumphantly risen from the dead, when the disciples came to perform for him the accustomed funeral rites.*

* This passage is ably illustrated, and the gratuitous and groundless assumptions of Baptist writers exposed, in "An Essay on Baptism; being an Inquiry into the Meaning, Form, and Extent of the administration of that Ordinance," by the Rev. Greville Ewing, pp. 110, 139. The remarks of Dr. Owen on the same passage are profound and judicious,—"The apostle," he says, "Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5, is dehorting from sin, exhorting to holiness and new obedience and gives this argument, from the necessity of it, and our ability for it, both taken from our initiation into the virtue of the death and life of Christ, expressed in our baptism; that by virtue of the death and burial of Christ we should be dead unto sin, sin being slain thereby; and by virtue of the resurrection of Christ we should be quickened unto newness of life, as Peter declares, 1 Peter iii. 21. Our being *buried* with him, and our being planted together in the likeness of his death, and likeness of his resurrection, is the same with *our old man being crucified with him*, verse 6, and the destroying of the body of sin, and our being raised from the dead with him, which is all that is intended in the place. There is not one word, nor one expression, that mentions any resemblance between dipping under water, and the death and burial of Christ; nor one word that mentions a resemblance between our rising out of the water, and the resurrection of Christ. Our being buried with him by baptism into death, ver. 4, is our being planted together in the likeness of his death, verse 5. Our being planted

The cases of apostolic baptism, recorded in the book of Acts, may be easily shown to be incompatible with the mode of immersion. Thus, on the day of Pentecost, to baptize *Three Thousand* by dipping them, in a thronged city, without any previous preparation, in presence of a promiscuous multitude of both men and women, must have been out of the question; and had even all the apostles taken part in the administration, the time required for the performance of the rite would have far exceeded that which the Sacred narrative assigns to the whole assembly on the occasion.* The baptism of Paul by Ananias, it is every way probable, was in a private house. From his previous agitation of mind, and three days' fasting, he was in no proper state of body to be immersed, and the natural drift of the narrative would seem to imply that he received the rite by the simple affusion of water, and not by dipping. The Jailer and his household were baptized probably at midnight in his own house; and there is not the smallest ground to conclude, either that he had any provision in his

together in the likeness of his death, is not our being dipped under water, but the crucifying of the old man, verse 6. Our being raised up with Christ from the dead, is not our rising from under the water, but our walking in newness of life, ver. 4, by virtue of the resurrection of Christ, 1 Peter iii. 21. That baptism is not a sign of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, is clear from hence; because an instituted sign is a sign of the *Gospel grace participated, or to be participated*. If dipping be a sign of the burial of Christ, it is not a sign of a Gospel grace participated, for it may be where there is none, nor any exhibited."†

* "It has been computed that had Peter continued baptizing for six hours without intermission, according to the system of immersion, he would have administered the rite to about 90 persons."—Dr. M'Crie's Lectures on Infant Baptism, p. 37. At this rate, it would have required the whole number of the apostles several days to baptize 3000 persons.

† *Infant Baptism and Dipping*. Works—vol. xxi. p. 559, Russel's edition.

house for immersion, or that he went forth to a water within or outside the city for this purpose. In like manner, we know nothing of a baptistery in the house of Cornelius. The question of the apostle, "Can any man forbid water?" would seem to imply that water was brought to the company, into the place of assembly, not that they went forth to it: and the Scripture phrase, "the Holy Ghost fell *upon* them that were baptized," has, as it appears to us, an obvious reference to the mode of baptism by sprinkling and not by immersion. Thus, the probability in every instance, is in favour of baptism by affusion, and is opposed to the practice of immersion or dipping. We admit this is not direct and positive proof; but, in the absence of the least hint that immersion was the method resorted to in these primitive baptisms, the considerations which we have mentioned, furnish a strong presumption that the simple mode of sprinkling was employed, and not a method of administration, which if not, in the cases mentioned, absolutely impracticable was, at least, inconvenient and unsuitable.

As direct arguments why baptizing by the sprinkling or affusion of water is to be preferred to immersion, we offer the following:—

1. The due administration of an ordinance *does not depend on the quantity* of the outward element employed.

In the other sacrament of the New Testament, it is generally held that a small portion of the bread and wine are sufficient as symbols of the spiritual provision on which worthy communicants feed by faith. The apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthian Church, exposes and condemns the abuse that carnalized and degraded a holy institution by the partakers eating and drinking to excess. When Peter, instructed by our Lord in the spiritual design of washing his disciples'

feet, cried out in the fervour of affection, "Not my feet only, but likewise my hands and my head," the Saviour's expressive reply was, "He that is washed," that is, he who has only one of his members washed, and a small quantity of water applied for this purpose, "needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."* This plainly imported that full spiritual cleansing is symbolized by the application of a small portion of water to a part of the body, and that it is nowise necessary, either that a large quantity of the purifying element should be used, or that the whole body should be immersed in it. Whether, therefore, we consider the one sacrament or the other, or refer to the spiritual import of the outward element, it is obviously of no moment whether much water is used in baptism, or only so much as is sufficient for sprinkling a part of the body. Reasoning from analogy, the danger of abuse would seem to be rather connected with the employment of a large quantity than otherwise. The judicious Witsius properly remarks, "The communion in the thing signified should not be rated by the quantity of the external sign. A little drop of water may no less seal the abundance of Divine grace in baptism, than a small morsel of bread, and a sparing draught of wine, in the Holy Supper."†

* John xiii. 10. † Witsii *Œcon. Fœd. lib. iv. c. 16, 30.*

The argument from analogy for employing but a small quantity of water in baptism is handled in a very lucid and satisfactory manner in a "Dissertation on the Nature and Administration of the Ordinance of Baptism," by the Rev. W. Soumerville, A. M., Cornwallis, Nova Scotia. Mr. S. is a Missionary from the Reformed Presbyterian Church in this country to the British North American colonies, and is well known as a distinguished scholar, and original thinker. We would much wish to see his "Dissertation" reprinted, and widely circulated in these countries; and likewise, that the esteemed author could find leisure from his engrossing avocations to publish soon the **Second Part** on the "Subjects of Baptism."

2. The *spiritual import* of the ordinance is as fully represented by sprinkling as by any other mode, and *spiritual purification* is, in the Scriptures, most frequently thus represented.

Baptism, we have already seen, declares the necessity of regeneration and sanctification of the nature, and is expressive of the scriptural method of moral renovation. Now sprinkling as a symbol may quite as fully indicate this important design as immersion. It represents washing as fully, and is, moreover, more appropriate as a symbol to the farther idea of the washing of regeneration. In the Scriptures, the figurative expression *sprinkling*, and kindred terms, are continually employed to denote spiritual purification. The Levites of old were purified and dedicated to their office, by “sprinkling upon them water of purifying.”* Ancient seers predicted the redemption that is through Christ, employing the same metaphor. “So shall He sprinkle many nations.” “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.”† Under the new economy, the fulfilment of these predictions is described by similar phraseology. “Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” “We are come to the blood of sprinkling.”‡ “Through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”§ *Pouring* and *shedding forth* are used figuratively to express the mode of communicating the same blessings. Thus it is said, “He shall pour it (the oil) all on the head of him that is to be cleansed.” And Peter declares, in reference to the promised baptism by the Holy Ghost, “He hath shed forth this which ye now see.”||

* Numbers viii. 6, 7. † Isaiah lii. 15; Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

‡ Hebrews x. 22; xii. 24. § 1 Peter i. 2.

|| Levit. xiv. 18; Acts ii. 33.

It is manifest from these passages, and many others that might be quoted, that moral purification is denoted by the figurative terms employed; and therefore are we warranted to conclude that baptism, which represents the renovation of heart and life, is properly administered by sprinkling or affusion. When Baptists sneer, as they frequently do, at the act of sprinkling, it behoves them to reflect that they thus turn into contempt what the Spirit of truth himself has sanctioned. The remarks of the excellent Dr. Owen on this topic exhibit at once his deep sagacity and profound reverence for Holy Scripture,—“This rite, or way of sprinkling, was chosen of God as an expressive token or sign of the effectual communication of the benefits of the covenant to them that are sprinkled (and infants were among them). Hence, the communication of the benefits of the death of Christ unto sanctification is called “the sprinkling of blood,” Heb. xii. 24. And I fear that some who have used the expression with some contempt, when applied by themselves unto the sign of the communication of the benefits of the death of Christ in baptism, have not observed that reverence of holy things that is required of us. For this symbol of SPRINKLING was that which God himself chose and appointed, as a meet and apt token of the communication of covenant mercy; that is, of his grace in Christ Jesus unto our souls.”*

3. The grand blessing of the new dispensation, *the communication of the Holy Spirit*, is generally declared to be conferred in the way of sprinkling or pouring out. The communication of the Spirit is figuratively called “the Baptism of the Spirit,” and this would seem plainly to imply that there is a close resemblance between the mode of dispensing the ordinance, and the manner of becoming partakers of that great blessing.

* Exposition of the Hebrews, Vol. iii. p. 435, Fol.

By Isaiah, it is predicted, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed;" and again, "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high."* Zechariah, "I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication;"† and Joel, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."‡ On the day of Pentecost these last predictions were accomplished by the *descent* of the Spirit, and not by the disciples being dipped or immersed in the Spirit. The apostle Peter expressly declares that this was the fulfilment of the Saviour's promise about the baptism of the Spirit, and likewise of the prophecy of Joel. Immersion in water is surely not in keeping with the language employed by the Sacred writers. If the grand leading idea in the promise is, as has been judiciously observed, that "the blessing of the Spirit is received by us," it is requisite, in order that there may be any proper resemblance between baptism and the communication of the Spirit, that "*the water should be applied to the person, and not the person applied to the water.*"§

Lastly, The mode of sprinkling is *accordant with the simplicity of Gospel ordinances*, and is *adapted to all places and circumstances*, while the method of immersion is, in many cases, *inapplicable and impracticable*. The Divine institution of ordinances is characterized by remarkable simplicity. The spiritual import and blessing are presented as the grand matter; and outward circumstances as to mode, or the quantity of the material element to be used, are regarded as of comparatively little importance. Thus, a small portion of the ordinary bread of the country, and of the wine in common use are, in the Lord's Supper, set apart as symbols of the body and blood of Christ. In like manner, the affusion of a few drops of water in baptism as effectually

* Isaiah xlv. 3; xxxii. 15. † Zech. xii. 10. ‡ Joel ii. 28.

§ M'Crice's Lectures on Infant Baptism, p. 47.

represents the spiritual blessings intended, as plunging in a pond or bath, while it is much the simpler method of applying the purifying element. The mind, too, is directed more to the spiritual import of the ordinance, than when much water is used, and the whole body immersed.

The celebration of the rite in this manner is like our holy religion itself, adapted to all places—the thronged city, and the country, or the desert, the sun-burnt regions, where water is rare, and the cold northerly climate—and to all classes, the tender infant, as well as the aged convert, or the person enfeebled by sickness and disease. The practice of immersion, on the contrary, must, in some cases, be simply impracticable, as in tropical countries, where water is scarce, and at some seasons entirely wanting in extensive districts; while in others, it is hardly consistent with decency, and in others, it must be injurious to health, if not even endangering the life. When these things are duly considered, it must be apparent that the argument for immersion is at once weak and inconclusive. To plead for a practice as essential to the ordinance of baptism, which is destitute of Scriptural warrant, which is not easily reconcileable with the import and design of the institution, and which is unfit for universal use, and incompatible, in any degree, with health and public decency; and, on this ground, to break fellowship in the Church, is surely opposed to the genius of Christianity, and contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. We bewail and condemn whatever would cause schisms and divisions in the body of Christ; and while we stand upon our Gospel liberty, and plead for what exhibits the simplicity and spirituality of the ordinance, we desire to do all things in charity; and we do not therefore refuse to own, as of one body, and Lord, and baptism, those who follow a different mode of administration, provided they do not voluntarily separate themselves

from the communion of the church universal, and repudiate the fellowship of those who cannot receive their dogmas, or accept as proofs their confident and unsupported assertions.

SECT. II.—THE PLACE OF ADMINISTERING BAPTISM.

The proper place for the administration of baptism is that of the public assembly of the church for religious worship. This would seem even to be implied in the terms of the original commission, "Go teach and baptize," as the ordinance is not connected with private instruction, but with public teaching. The nature and design, too, of the institution require that it should not be dispensed in private, but in the house of God, and in the public assemblies of the church. It is the badge of a public profession of the religion of Christ; it is an open joining of the subject of baptism to the Lord's people, and a recognition, on the part of the church, of one who has been added to its fellowship and admitted to its privileges. By its birth, the infant becomes a member of the family; in baptism it is publicly enrolled in "the household of faith." It virtually takes the vow of membership, is presented to the brotherhood of the Church, and recommended to the prayers and instructions of the faithful. The church collective becomes a party in the act of incorporation; and if pledges are tendered on the part of the newly-dedicated member, pledges are likewise given by the office-bearers and brethren that they will faithfully contribute their part to accomplish the design of the solemn dedication. These ends evidently cannot be answered by dispensing the ordinance in a manner unknown to the church, or by a surreptitious admission. The illustrious Calvin declares, that "this sacrament which introduces us into the church, and is a sign of

our adoption, cannot validly be dispensed except in the public assembly of believers. Private baptism," he adds, "agrees neither with the ordinance of God, nor the practice of the apostles."

Whether we consider the benefit of the person to be baptized, or the edification and communion of the church itself, the administration of the ordinance should be public—in the assembly for worship, and not in the family or in private. An engagement is tendered in behalf of the infant dedicated to God by baptism, that it shall be trained in the way it should go, and brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. When this vow is solemnly made in the assembly of the church, and ratified in the house of God, in acts of public worship, we have a much fuller guarantee for its faithful observance than if it were made in private. God himself is said to delight "in the gates of Zion," more than "the dwellings of Jacob;" and not only is the Sanctuary the appointed place of peculiar blessing, but the prayers and lively interest of the members of the church sought, and virtually tendered, in behalf of the baptized entrant into fellowship, are benefits of great value and not to be fully enjoyed elsewhere.

Besides, the church itself derives no inconsiderable advantage from the public administration of baptism. It thereby enjoys the full benefit of its two sacraments, which, like the spouse's "two breasts," display its spiritual beauty, and minister spiritual nourishment. Baptism publicly dispensed is a valuable means of instruction and edification. It presents, in the most affecting and impressive manner, the doctrine of man's ruin and depravity, and of the way of recovery through Christ; it illustrates the wonderful compassion and condescension of the Saviour, and presses the gospel of the grace of God upon the acceptance of all. It exhibits and enhances the fellowship of the church, and supplies the most powerful motives to the faithful performance of

the duties involved in Christian communion. The members of the church, younger and older, are reminded of their own solemn vows, and are excited to consider and renew their engagement to be the Lord's. When the ordinance is faithfully administered in the presence of a congregation of spiritual worshippers, no service can have a more powerful tendency to impress the heart aright, and to excite to holy dispositions, and to the faithful performance of the duties which the communion of saints demands.

On the other hand, the private administration of baptism is followed by injurious consequences to all concerned. It encourages low and superstitious views on the part of parents; it leads to the neglect of proper religious instruction, and countenances or connives at the want of due preparation for attending upon the holy ordinance, and is thus a profanation of the sacrament. In many cases, where baptism is dispensed privately, the parents are either utterly ignorant of the nature and design of the ordinance, or living in irreligion and immorality; while in others, pride, and a criminal feeling of shame, and a low, unworthy view of the privileges of the church, hinder from renewing a profession by the baptismal covenant, or appearing for this purpose in the public assemblies of the church. The church itself, by the practice of private baptism, is deprived of one of the sacraments, and of weighty and impressive instructions on subjects of the highest importance. Acquaintance with its infant members is prevented, and prayerful interest in the lambs of the flock is not felt; nor is there due security given or received that the youth of the church shall be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Thus the church is robbed of several of her most valuable privileges; and the grand motives and incitements to the discharge of several important duties, which are connected with her highest functions in the world, are

virtually taken away. When, as in many instances where private baptism is practised, the ordinance is degraded by a minister dispensing it to please respectable persons, as an appendage to a convivial entertainment, the sacrament is prostituted to the most unworthy purposes, and no blessing may be expected to follow its administration. It is matter of painful observation that error in doctrine of the most serious kind has advanced, in connexion with the private administration of baptism; while other baleful fruits of this practice have been a total abandonment of Scriptural discipline in the church, and the general neglect of all family religion.*

The best sections of the Reformed Church, in the purest times, have been aware of the abuses of *private baptism*, and in their published formularies, and by the writings of their most distinguished men, have laboured to secure the administration of this seal of the covenant, in accordance with our Lord's command, and with apostolic practice. Ecclesiastical historians have shown that, in the age immediately succeeding the apostles, before corruption extensively pervaded the church, baptism was administered in the presence of the assembly convened for public worship. Justin Martyr says, "The congregation, with great

* While it is admitted that, in some special cases, such as in times of persecution, and when the health of parent or child would be seriously endangered by attending upon the ordinance in the place of public worship, baptism may be elsewhere administered, it should, in every instance, be dispensed in connexion with teaching from the Word, and in presence of members of the church, who are notified and encouraged to attend upon the occasion of the administration. We have known instances, even where a testimony is borne for public baptism, and for the purity of ordinances, in which the witnesses were limited to a party invited to a convivial entertainment. We cannot regard this otherwise than a perversion of a holy ordinance, which ought never to be countenanced by ministers and office-bearers of the church.

fervency, poured out their souls in common and united prayers, both for themselves and for the persons baptized, and for all others, all the world over." The Directory for worship, contained in the Westminster Confession, as adopted by the Church of Scotland, declares, "Baptism is not to be administered in private places, or privately, but in the place of public worship, and in the face of the congregation, where the people may, most conveniently, see and hear." This was in accordance with all the former faithful contentings and Scriptural attainments of the Covenanted Reformed Church of Scotland. In the earliest period of the reformation, under the illustrious Knox, it was appointed (1556), "That as the Sacraments are not ordained of God to be used in private corners as charms, but left to the congregation, therefore, the infant to be baptized shall be brought to the church." In the First Book of Discipline (prepared in 1562), it is declared that "Baptism may be administered wherever the word is preached, but it is most expedient that it be ministered upon a Sabbath, or upon the days of prayer, to make the people have a greater reverence to the administration of the sacraments than they have." The Church of Scotland, when its liberty of action was unimpeded, ever discovered a laudable concern to discountenance private baptism. Thus in 1580, the General Assembly censured a minister for "baptizing privately," and in the following year, another minister was suspended for the same offence; and the Assembly ordained "That the sacrament (of baptism) should not be administered in private houses." When, at the memorable Perth Assembly in 1618, private baptism, with other prelatical and superstitious observances were enacted, and were afterwards, by oppressive civil authority, forced upon the Church of Scotland; faithful men went into banishment, and voluntarily chose diversified privations and sufferings, rather than defile their consciences by adopting unscriptural usages.

At the commencement of the Second Reformation, in the celebrated Assembly of 1638, Prelatical corruptions were condemned and swept away, and private baptism among the number. In subsequent times, the Church of Scotland, in its public acts, has discovered a jealous concern about preserving the purity of the ordinance, by maintaining its public administration. One instance, among a number that might be adduced, may suffice to show this watchful care. The Assembly of 1690, “discharged the administration of baptism in private, that is, in any place, or at any time when the congregation is not ordinarily called together to wait on the dispensing of the Word.” The following weighty reasons are assigned for this enactment:— “Those who receive the sacraments are solemnly devoted to God before angels and men: *they are solemnly received as members of the church, and do enter into communion with her.*” And it is added, “By the private use of the sacraments, the superstitious opinion is nourished that they are necessary to salvation, not only commanded duties, but as means without which salvation cannot be attained.”*

The other Reformed churches were equally careful to provide for the public dispensation of baptism. Bishop Burnet says that the Church of England at the Reformation, judged it expedient to “have all baptisms done in the church, and permitted the other only in cases of necessity.” The Reformed Church of France declares that “no baptism shall be administered but in church assemblies, or where there is a formed public church.”† The Church of Geneva enacted, “No baptism shall be celebrated but in the ecclesiastical assemblies, immediately after sermon.” In Holland, it was ordained “That private baptism should not be used, except in cases of persecution.”

* Acts of Assembly, 1690.

† Canon vi. Of Baptism. Quick's *Synodicon*.

Thus the concurrent testimony of the churches of the Reformation is uniform in favour of the sacrament of baptism being dispensed in the public assemblies of the church; and not only the authorized symbols of these churches, but many eminent reformers and divines connected with them, have declared private baptism to be opposed to Scriptural requirement, and apostolic practice, and to be a dangerous innovation.

With such an array of important testimonies and of cogent reasons, in favour of public baptism, should not all who are concerned for the purity and advancement of the Church of Christ—ministers and people—plead for a practice which the nature and design of the institution demand, not less than Scripture precept and usage? and, on the same ground, should not the private administration of baptism, through whatever motives, or by whatever pretext it is urged, be steadfastly resisted? Indeed, a proper consideration of the circumstances in which Christian parents dedicate their children to God in baptism, pleads so strongly in favour of public baptism, that we might appeal to the sanctified feelings of all right-minded members of the church in support of the views which we have advanced. Were it put to the choice of an intelligent godly parent whether he would receive the ordinance for his child in private, or in the public assembly of the church, we are persuaded he would not hesitate to prefer the latter: and only from ignorance, or low and mistaken views of the nature and design of the ordinance, will any professing Christians be found to seek the dispensation of baptism in private.

What more solemn and impressive rite, than the baptism of an infant child, in the presence of the congregation of God's people! It is an act of dedication of an immortal being to God, the author of life, the fountain of all blessing. The parent is a deeply interested party, as he herein renews his own personal

covenant, and surrenders up his child to Him who can alone protect, sustain, and bless him. The highest interests of a young immortal are deeply concerned in the solemn transaction. The baptismal engagement will either be a means to him of enjoying the highest blessings, or if afterwards left to depart from God, of aggravated condemnation. By nature the infant is a fallen, guilty polluted human being, as he is utterly unable to deliver himself from this ruined condition, or to resist the innumerable evils with which he is surrounded in entering on life's devious, troublous course. With what intense interest must a Christian parent regard the period of the public dedication of his offspring to God—the time in which he receives the badge of a holy Christian profession! How anxiously must he desire, at such a season, the prayers of God's people in behalf of himself and his child, and how grateful and supporting to him must be the thought, in retiring from the solemn scene, and the reflection afterwards, that his little one has been publicly enrolled in the household of faith, and that he can certainly calculate upon the earnest prayers of the people of God being enlisted in its behalf! To overlook or neglect such distinguished privileges betrays, on the one hand, a criminal insensibility to the condition of a child, and to the evils to which it is exposed; and on the other, to the invaluable blessings which are connected with the fellowship of the saints, and which constitute an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

The following judicious remarks on public baptism, by the excellent Archbishop Ussher—one of the most illustrious prelates that ever adorned the Episcopal Bench, and of whom the Irish Church may justly be proud—are so weighty and apposite, that we cannot refrain from introducing them at the conclusion of this plea for the purity and efficiency of a solemn ordinance:—“Baptism is a visible admittance of thy child,

if thou beest a parent, into the congregation of Christ's flock, signifying its interest in the heavenly Jerusalem, which is above. Is this a business to be mumbled over in a corner? Christ came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized. Is the receiving of thy child into the bosom of the Church in a full congregation no comfort to thee? Is it not mercy to see the blood of Christ ministering sealed up unto thy infant, to purge it from that pollution which it has brought into the world with it; which also thou makest confession of by presenting it to this mystical washing? Is it not joy to thy heart to hear the whole congregation of God's saints pray for thy child; and that God has honoured thee so much as to count thy very child holy and within his covenant? Think on these things. Every one that is present at baptism should consider that that being a public action of the congregation, every particular person ought reverently to join in it. Shall the whole Trinity be present at baptism (Mat. iii.) and we be gone? Join ought every one in prayer for the infant; join in praises to God for his mercy that we and our children are brought forth, and brought up within the pale of his church (whereas the rest of the world are like a wilderness), and thank God for adding at the present a member to his church. Join every one ought in meditation of the pollution of nature, of the blessed means of redemption by Christ, of the happy benefits that God seals up unto us in our baptism, even before we know them, of the vows and promises which we in our childhood, made by those who were undertakers for us; and finding our failings every time we are present at baptism, we should renew our covenant with God, and labour to get new strength to close with his promises, which, in our baptism, he made unto us. Thus, if we were wise to make a right use of it, we might learn as much at a baptism as at a sermon."*

*Archbishop Ussher on the Uses of Public Baptism—Quoted by Bickersteth, "Treatise on Baptism," p. 218.

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM BY CHRISTIAN
PARENTS—DISPOSITIONS SUITABLE TO
ITS ADMINISTRATION.

God early and impressively proclaimed the manner in which He is to be approached in holy ordinances. “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.”* This is still the standing law of the house of God. He is “greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.”† While, in all ordinances, holy fear and devout reverence should characterize religious worshippers, those which may be regarded as the highest and most sacred institutions of Christianity—the seals of the covenant—should be approached with peculiar solemnity, and with a frame of mind corresponding to the nature and importance of the service—to the spiritual benefits expected from its performance, and to the weighty obligations which it involves.

It is generally admitted to be a gross profanation to partake of the Lord’s Supper, in a rash and hasty manner, without due preparation. The very formula of institution appears to imply as indispensable to a right participation, solemn previous preparation. “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat,” &c. And not only the practice of our Lord and his apostles, but the profession also of almost all sections of the church, declares an unprepared approach to this sacrament to be presumptuous sinning; not only unproductive of any real benefit to the participant, but fraught with fearful danger.

Although there is reason to fear that, from low views

* Levit. x. 3.

† Psalm lxxxix. 7.

of the nature and design of the other sacrament, and from the unfaithfulness of those who dispense it, numbers come to it destitute of due solemnity, ignorant of the necessity of special preparation, and unconcerned about making it, yet is such preparation equally important and beneficial in partaking of baptism as in coming to the Lord's Supper. The gracious presence of the King of Zion is assured to faithful ministers in baptizing, equally as in preaching the Word, and should be earnestly sought and expected, and should be reflected on with reverence and godly fear. Those who came to the baptism of John at Jordan, "confessed their sins" (Mat. iii. 6), and this implied reflection, humiliation, self-examination and prayer. The awakened on the day of Pentecost were bid to "repent and be converted." Saul was enjoined by Ananias to "rise and be baptized, washing away his sins." The eunuch, when baptized by Philip, was instructed, as indispensable to receiving the solemn rite, of the need of "believing with all his heart," and in the apostolic practice generally, the converts baptized are described as being "pricked in their hearts," crying out, with earnestness, What shall we do? as having "gladly received the Word," and being made "partakers of the Holy Ghost." *

Now, substantially the same preparation is required still to a right participation in the baptismal seal of the covenant. Although it is admitted that the instances referred to were cases of adult baptism, and infants cannot give the same evidence of faith and repentance, yet this does not render the less necessary a proper spiritual state of mind in those who claim the ordinance as a privilege to themselves and their offspring. It cannot be regarded as less than presumptuous sin to partake of a seal of the covenant, ignorant of its nature, and without faith in the spiritual mys-

* Acts ii. 37, 41; x. 47.

teries which it exhibits, and a real, heartfelt desire after the blessings which it is designed to communicate. Parents require to have knowledge of Divine things and spiritual affections for themselves, and they require the exercise of grace, in connexion with the dedication of their children to God. It is true that the blessing in baptism is not absolutely conferred because of the faith of parents ; yet, when it comes, it is generally in this way. There is a *gracious*, though not a *necessary* connexion between the faith of a parent exercised in the act of baptismal consecration, and the spiritual blessing upon the child, whether conferred at the time, or enjoyed afterwards. On these grounds, Christian parents, like those who came to the Saviour while on earth, in behalf of their children, should be concerned to approach in baptism in a right frame of spirit. Viewing the service as unspeakably important to themselves and to their little ones, whom they present to God, they should aim to come to it with special preparation of heart, putting away from them whatever is inconsistent with the holy solemnity, and cherishing dispositions of mind befitting the enjoyment of the blessing desired. The preparation requisite for receiving the ordinance of baptism consists in

1. *Serious meditation and self-examination.*

In every instance of drawing near to God, we should solemnly consider the character of the glorious Being with whom we have to do. We should think seriously on the spiritual objects exhibited, ponder the nature of the service required, and reflect upon our own character and the state of our hearts, when engaging in its performance. To the people of Israel, as they stood at the base of the mount, it was said by Moses, in the act of sprinkling the blood of the victims, "Behold the blood of the Covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."* The immedi-

* Exodus xxiv. 8.

ate preparation for the observance of the Lord's Supper is enjoined in the command—"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread." Self-scrutiny is equally necessary towards a right participation of the sacrament of initiation. In baptism we come to take hold on God's covenant, to profess reliance on the Saviour and his merits for all blessings to ourselves and to those who are to us objects of the dearest interest, to join ourselves to the Lord's people, and to dedicate ourselves and our children to be wholly the Lord's. We publicly declare that we renounce every other service, and all other grounds of dependance. In the solemn transaction, we have to do with the vast concerns of God's glory, and with the interests of immortal souls for eternity. It seriously concerns us to see that we have duly considered these important matters, and that we are acquainted with the way of acceptance. We approach an ordinance which may either be a signal means of blessing to ourselves and others, or which, if profaned by an inconsiderate and unhallowed observance, must be fraught with imminent danger. 'If we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us.'* The person who does not meditate on such things, and who does not weigh the question of his fitness to approach this ordinance, must be in a state far from safety. His ignorance and thoughtlessness betray a heart unchanged, and the prevailing power of unbelief within. He provokes God, profanes a holy ordinance, and may not expect the blessing to himself and others. On the other hand, serious meditation and self-examination may tend to discover the real state of the heart and life, and may lead to apply for the blessing which is never denied to them that humbly seek it.

2. *Due consideration of the truths, privileges, and obligations held forth in the ordinance.*

* Psalm lxvi. 18.

It is sad to come in contact with the truths of revelation without feeling their momentous nature and importance, and to be presented with high privileges without a due estimate of their value. To be brought under solemn obligations to duty, and yet not to feel a sense of responsibility, betrays a state of conscience at once degraded and revolting. In no position is this insensibility more criminal than in coming unprepared to the sacraments. Those who partake of the Lord's Supper without *discerning the Lord's body*, are declared to "eat and drink damnation," or judgment, to themselves. This *discernment* implies some measure of knowledge of the great truths connected with the character, mission, and work of the Redeemer, and a spiritual acquaintance with their influence on the heart and life. By analogy, we infer that it is most dangerous to come inconsiderately to the other sacrament without reflection on the truths and privileges which it exhibits, and without a feeling of the solemn and weighty obligations which it imposes.

Baptism, we have already shown,* embodies an epitome of the great truths connected with the work of Christ, and the momentous affair of human redemption. It holds forth impressively the evil and demerit of sin, the necessity of pardon and moral purification to the enjoyment of happiness, a perfect atonement provided, deliverance from condemnation, the moral renovation of the nature by the agency of the Spirit, fellowship with the family of God, and all the weighty and affecting obligations to holiness which are furnished by the cross of Christ, the enjoyment of special and high privileges, and the professed dedication of the person to God and his service.

Right preparation for coming to such an ordinance must, in the nature of the case, imply that these great

* Chapter III.

truths are duly considered in their vast magnitude and importance, believed on in the heart, and embraced as principles to purify the mind, and influence the life and conduct. We are justified, regenerated, and sanctified by the knowledge of the truth, and all the saving operations of the Spirit are conducted through the same instrumentality. In no position can a rational, immortal being, be placed more favourable for the contemplation of divine truths, than when these are not only addressed to the ear, but exhibited also in embodied action. If this opportunity of studying them and receiving impressions from them be neglected, it can hardly be expected that, in any other case, they will be received so as to exercise a salutary, spiritual influence. On the other hand, it is not less our duty than our privilege, to ponder deeply these vital truths, and to surrender ourselves to their influence, when we approach to an ordinance which most vividly exhibits them.

Every separate truth should be made the subject of distinct, prayerful meditation and application. We should receive the doctrines of the word in faith and love, feed on them for soul nourishment and spiritual strength, and should be prepared joyfully to profess these in the baptismal act, as the ground of our sure hope. Privileges and obligations to duty are necessarily and inseparably connected in the dispensation of the covenant of peace, and in the administration of holy ordinances. The one we cannot possibly enjoy without feeling the other; and in proportion as "spiritual blessings" in "heavenly things with Christ"* are really enjoyed, so will we be constrained in love to walk in newness of life. Coming to partake of eminent privileges in baptism, we should seriously consider the obligations which are thus laid upon us to be the

* Ephesians i. 3.—margin.

Lord's, to live not to ourselves, but to Him who died for our sins, and who rose again for our justification. When we take the cup of salvation and call upon God, we come to pay our vows to the Lord before all his people. The plentiful provision of high privileges in baptism demands the consecration of ourselves and all we have to Him who has satisfied us with good things, and crowned us with tender mercy. To Abraham, when God gave him the covenant of circumcision, the announcement of the highest privilege was connected with the precept enjoining all holy obedience. To Christian parents, in like manner, the gracious declaration and promise—"I am God Almighty:" "I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee"—is inseparably connected with the comprehensive command, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." Let these truths, privileges, and obligations be duly considered. Let them be felt as a solemn, personal concern in their proper connexion and influence, and thus will be attained a main part of the preparation for receiving baptism as an ordinance fraught with blessings important and permanent.

3. Lively faith in the great mysteries presented in the ordinance.

In every religious service, we are solemnly reminded, "that without faith it is impossible to please God." The grand principle of all acceptable obedience is the reliance of the heart upon divine truths—the dependence of the whole man upon Christ and his finished work. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Every right view of the sacrament of baptism shows its observance to be eminently a work of faith. This is the essential and pervading principle of the whole service, and without it, there can be no proper attendance upon the ordinance. We require faith to perceive the authority of the institution, and

to discern its glory and excellence. Faith is needed to discern the connexion between the outward symbol and the spiritual substance. By faith we behold in the service the blood of the covenant, and take hold of the blessed charter of salvation. The dedication of ourselves and ours must be the work of faith: in the exercise of the same holy grace, we alone can apprehend the worth of the soul, estimate aright the grand provision made for its salvation, and trust the Redeemer for the accomplishment of his gracious assurances—"Nurse this child for me, and I will give thee thy wages." "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

In approaching to this ordinance, it is specially required, not only to have the principle of faith in the heart, but to have it in lively exercise. It is by *actually believing*, and not by *reflecting on the nature and operations of faith*, that we realize divine mysteries, and receive the blessing. In baptism, the great objects of faith are brought very near. They are "*represented, sealed, and applied to believers.*" We should, therefore, by looking to "the Author and Finisher of faith," draw near to these glorious objects. We should embrace a *personal Saviour*, as he is revealed appointing the ordinance, presiding in its administration, and dispensing all the blessing. His faithful word of promise should be received in faith; and his finished righteousness should be taken as the ground of all our dependence and hope for acceptance. The ordinance not only exhibits impressively the grand objects of faith, it presents likewise the strongest *supports and encouragements* to believing confidence. The Saviour's boundless compassion in receiving helpless, sinful human beings; the full provision of his love and mercy displayed and brought near to bless them; and his truth and gracious offers declared and confirmed by an *expressive rite*—all supply "strong consolation" to

them who flee for refuge to lay hold on the gospel hope. What higher encouragement can we possibly expect to enable us to draw near in “the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed as with pure water”? As we ought, in a special manner, to have faith in exercise before approaching to the baptismal service, so, in partaking of the ordinance, the blessing is to be sought and obtained only through the working of this grace. If we believe with all the heart, water may not be denied us to be baptized; and in the act of its application, by faith we apprehend the great mysteries of redemption, and receive the all-enriching blessing which is entitled—the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as with fire.

Lastly, As preparatory to the reception of baptism, we should, with much prayer and in humble penitence, and full purpose of heart, *take hold of God's covenant.*

The blessing dispensed through ordinances is enjoyed in answer to prayer. There is the amplest encouragement to expect it in this way. “I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.” “Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.”* These divine declarations furnish a large warrant and encouragement to expect acceptance and blessing in surrendering ourselves and our offspring to God in baptism. In an act of spiritual dedication, there is special need of genuine contrition of heart, and of godly sorrow for sin. We are naturally estranged from God, and devoted to the service of idols. Our children are under guilt, and the taint of moral depravity, and are exposed to condemnation. Solemn vows voluntarily made, we have frequently broken, and because we re-

* Ezekiel xxxvi. 37; Jeremiah xxxiii. 3; Isaiah xlv. 11.

gard iniquity in our heart, we have reason to fear that the Lord will not hear us. The frame and exercises of the genuine penitent peculiarly befit us, when we draw near to the holy Lord God, and when his name is named upon us. When we renew our own baptismal vow, we should do it in fervent prayer and in deep humility; and when we present our children to God, to be called by his name, to receive the seal of his covenant, and to be consecrated to his service, such exercises are specially becoming. From us they derive a polluted nature; and they are exposed to innumerable evils and dangers, which they have of themselves no power to escape. Their welfare for time and eternity is connected with the results of their baptismal dedication. In such solemn circumstances, the heart of a parent must be callous indeed, that is not humbled in the divine presence, and that is not excited to earnest entreaty in behalf of his child. Fearing that God may justly remember against him former sins, and that the blessing may be withheld because it is not asked, or because it is asked amiss, he should seek the "Spirit of grace and supplication," and should pour out his heart in fervent prayer. Like "the father of the faithful," when he feared the exclusion of one child from the promised blessings, and earnestly asked, "Oh! that Ishmael might live!" he should plead for the life—spiritual and eternal—of his offspring. In baptism he should be able to declare, as the mother of Samuel, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord, as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." *

Taking hold of God's covenant by personal vowing is not only a chief part of the baptismal service, but is likewise an eminent preparation for it. By repentance and prayer, we renounce all dependence upon works of

* 1 Sam. i. 27, 28.

our own for acceptance. We confess and mourn over our manifold breaches of God's law ; and we come to the Mediator of the New Covenant, and lay hold of his righteousness. By appropriate symbols, the great provision of the "counsel of peace" is set before us in baptism. God graciously proposes to be a God and Portion to us and our seed. The Mediator is willing to receive "little children" to himself, and to bless them. His blood is exhibited, in symbol, to pardon and cleanse them—his Spirit is offered to sanctify and seal them, and all the benefits of a "Covenant, ordered in all things and sure," are held out, in impressive manifestation and gracious offer, to be to them an everlasting portion. What encouragement have we, by faith and solemn dedication, to avail ourselves of this merciful provision, and to declare, on the footing of such high encouragement, "I am the Lord's!" *Personal vowing* is a singular means of preparation for the reception of the Sacraments. We come to them, not so much to engage, for the first time, to be on the Lord's side, as by bringing our previous acts of dedication with us, to renew them solemnly, and to have our personal covenant accepted and ratified. The promise to parents and their children in connexion with such preparation is most gracious and abundant. To the "sons of the stranger," that *join themselves to the Lord, and take hold* of his covenant, it is promised, "even unto them will I give, in my house and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar: for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."*

* Isaiah lvi. 5—8.

A pious minister in New England, (Rev. John Baily) thus speaks of his feelings and private exercises preparatory to the baptism of one of his children—"I spent some time in offering up myself and my child to the Lord, and in taking hold of the covenant for myself and for him. It is a weighty matter to be done to-morrow in baptism. I prayed hard this day that I might be able, in much faith, and love, and new-covenant obedience, to do it to-morrow. It is not easy, though common, to offer a child unto God in baptism. O, that is a sweet word, 'I will be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee.' No marvel Abraham fell on his face at the hearing of it."*

CHAPTER VII.

ENGAGEMENT AND DUTIES CONNECTED WITH BAPTISM.

ALTHOUGH overlooked in controversy, and greatly neglected in practice, the engagement in baptism is solemn and explicit, and the duties which it involves are among the most weighty and important, whether they are regarded as referring to families—to the rising generation—to the world, or to the church of Christ. Those who deny the doctrine of Infant Baptism, and who lay undue stress upon the mode of administration, give evidence, by their writings, that they make the outward rite the all-important matter, and give little or no prominence to the obligations and improvement of baptism. Vast multitudes, again, who admit in theory the right of infants to be baptized, and who seek the ordinance for their children, seem hardly ever to think that they are brought under any

* Quoted in "Bowder's Religious Education Enforced."

peculiar engagement in the matter, and certainly do not give evidence afterwards that they cherish any sense of obligation to practical duties from participation in this ordinance. How few, besides, of the youth even of the church appear to feel that their baptism has brought them under sacred engagements, or seem alive to the responsibility and obligations arising from their baptismal vow!

It cannot, however, for a moment be questioned, that there is a very full and comprehensive engagement implied in baptism—binding to solemn duties, the performance of which is most beneficial to the individuals, and to the whole church. These duties embrace the great matters of practical godliness, and are intimately connected with the revival, spread, and prevalence of true religion in the world. They naturally and necessarily result from the baptismal engagement; and some of the most powerful motives and encouragements for their due performance are derived from the same source.*

* The most distinguished theological writers, both of former and later times, who are evangelical in sentiment, have held that baptism involves a special engagement, on the part of the participant, to embrace the benefits offered, and to be devoted to the service of God. Thus Witsius, in his *Economy of the Covenants*, remarks, "There are those two things in baptism—God stipulates, or requires, a good conscience towards Himself; and the conscience answers, or promises, to God, that it will endeavour to be so; or, which seems more plain, man engages to keep a good conscience," (vol. ii., p. 432). Dr. Hill justly states the sentiments of orthodox divines on this subject—"The sacraments, in the opinion of Calvinists, constitute federal acts, in which the persons who receive them, with proper dispositions, solemnly engage to fulfil their part of the covenant, and God confirms his promise to them in a sensible manner; not as if the promise of God were in itself insufficient to render any event certain, but because this manner of exhibiting the blessings promised gives a stronger impression of the truth of the promise, and conveys to the mind an assurance that it will be fulfilled." From this view, Dr. H. describes baptism as a "significant representation both

The Westminster Divines, in the "Shorter Catechism," state in brief, but comprehensive terms, that baptism "doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and OUR ENGAGEMENT TO BE THE LORD'S." This engagement, in the case of those who are baptized in adult age, is a solemn public declaration of the relinquishment of former evil courses, and of separation from the world, and an open avouchment of being on the Lord's side, of connexion with his people, and devotion to his service. In the case of the baptism of the infant children of Christian parents, it respects both the parents and the children. We admit that, although the blessing frequently comes in this way, the efficacy of baptism does not depend upon the faith or vows of the parent. Still, the parental vow, when properly made, has an important influence upon both the parent and his child. As a parent, he receives a most valuable privilege himself, while he obtains peculiar benefits for his offspring. The spiritual interests of both are so involved in the baptismal transaction, that they cannot be separated; and the obligation resulting from the enjoyment of high privilege and from solemnly pledged vows, devolves, though in different respects, upon the one and the other.

The parent, in receiving the seal of the covenant, vows for himself and engages to be the Lord's. This, if rightly performed, is a public renewal of vows formerly made; and it implies that he accepts of God, in covenant, as his God and Portion—that he resigns

of what the baptized persons engaged to do, and also of the grace by which their sins were forgiven, and strength communicated to their souls;" so that it "rises from being a mere profession of faith—a mere external rite—to be a federal act, by which the mutual stipulations of the covenant of grace are confirmed." (Hill's Lectures on Divinity—vol. ii.—pp. 328, 335.)

himself wholly to his guidance and blessing, and engages, as an individual and a parent, to walk in newness of life. The baptismal vow lays the parent under a *superadded* obligation to fidelity and diligence in all duty which he owes to God and his household. It carries with it the force of an oath ratifying a promise—of a bond subscribed before witnesses—of a seal attached to a writing to give it confirmation and validity. In all these cases, it is universally admitted, that the obligation to perform the engagement is strengthened, and that the criminality of neglect or violation is aggravated. The parent, by a solemn voluntary vow in baptism, binds himself to walk in a perfect way within his house, and, like the veteran Joshua, he virtually declares, “As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

But the Christian parent may be properly viewed, too, as, in baptism, entering into an engagement in behalf of his child, that *it* also shall be the Lord's. It has been contended, indeed, that the parent vows for himself, and not for the child; that “he promises in his own name, not in the name of the child,” and that “the duties to which he becomes bound are strictly parental.”† Such a statement, however, we regard neither as accordant with the recognized usages of society, nor with the representations of sacred Scripture in analogous instances of public social vowing. Parents represent and act for their children in infancy, or even unborn, in bonds and civil compacts; and if the engagement is moral, heirs and executors are regarded as thereby laid under an obligation to implement the condition of the bond, as they expect to enjoy the benefit of the entail. When Israel covenanted at Horeb, and, forty years after, on the plains Moab, their infant seed,

* Joshua xxiv. 15.

† M'Crle's Lectures on Baptism—p. 38.

and even posterity unborn, are declared to have been embraced in the solemn transaction; and many generations afterwards, the nation is punished for the violation of this covenant.*

The federal deed is regarded as binding posterity equally as it did those who originally entered into it. Under the former economy, the circumcised were bound to keep the whole law; and though the child of eight days' old was incapable of personally vowing, yet the Israelitish parent took hold of God's covenant in its name; and, as represented by the parent, it was virtually pledged to be the Lord's. Whatever may be said of the expressions employed in the form of baptism in the service of the Church of England, in which the Sponsors speak for the child, there can be no doubt that, while the parent voluntarily renews sacred vows for himself, he, at the same time, in the act of dedication, pledges his child to be God's, to walk afterwards in all holy obedience. The language and spirit of eminent servants of God, when taking hold of God's covenant for themselves and their children, are most befitting Christian parents, as they reflect on their solemn engagement. "Bless God," says the excellent Matthew Henry, "that the covenant of grace is so ordered, that not you only, but your offspring, are taken into that covenant; that God will be a God, not to you only, but to your seed, Gen. xvii. 7, and so entail his kindness, by a covenant commanded to a thousand generations. Thus richly doth free grace outdo all expectation. That God should signify his good-will to us is very wonderful; but lo! as if this had been a small matter, He hath spoken concerning his servant's house for a great while to come; and is this the manner of men, O Lord God! 2 Sam. vii. 19. Admire the condescension of Divine grace herein. Many great men

* Deut. v., and xxix.; Jer. xi.

think it beneath them to take notice of children ; but our Lord Jesus will have little children brought to him, and by no means forbidden. Mention this to the glory of God's wisdom and goodness, and never forget this instance of his loving-kindness." *

Considering the baptismal engagement in its *two-fold* aspect—as it respects parents, and as it rests upon children—we regard it as obliging parents,

1. Themselves to walk *as examples of the power of true religion.*

Parents should exemplify before their children the holy religion which they profess ; otherwise their instructions will be unavailing. It has been well observed, that whatever other lessons children may learn or neglect, the spirit and conduct of parents are continually before them ; and this is a copy which they may be expected always to transcribe—and the more so from their innate depravity—if the parental example is faulty or inconsistent. To a reflecting parent, nothing can be more distressful than to be the means of perverting his own children, or to see his own sins re-appearing in their character and conduct ; thus exposing them to the punishment which consists in visiting “the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.” Christian parents should exhibit an example of abounding in all the duties of religion—private, domestic, and public. This example should display whatsoever things are honest, lovely, pure, and of good report. It should uniformly manifest the Christian temper—ever attracting towards religion, and containing nothing repulsive. The dignity and sacredness of a patriarch and priest, in his house, should be blended with the gentleness, meekness, and tenderness of a father that compassionates his children—who can enter into their every case, and who is ever ready to counsel, sympa-

* *Treatise on Baptism—complete Works of M. Henry—p. 535.*

thise with, and do them good. The Christian parent should always be prepared to say to his household, by an instructive, consistent, impressive example, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Like the monarch of Israel, he should thus "bless his house." He should

"Point to brighter worlds, and lead the way."

Religion in parents should be seen directing every word and action, and influencing the whole temper and spirit. It should shed a halo of light around the conduct; and in all the chequered scenes of human life, in domestic trials, as well as duties and enjoyments, it should exert a commanding power. To act thus, parents bind themselves in their engagement at baptism; and those who have been real blessings to their children, have not only, at the time of coming to the ordinance, been aware that this was the import of their solemn vows, but have afterwards laboured to walk in accordance with it before their families. Not a few who have been distinguished servants of God, and have occupied public stations in the church, have confessed that it was owing to parental example, and especially to the attractive example of their *mothers* that they were first drawn to the ways of religion; and to this, in a great measure, may be traced their subsequent attainments and usefulness.

2. To cherish *always a deep sense of their responsibility.*

However little parental responsibility is considered or felt, it is most weighty and extensive. Parents are the instruments of the earthly existence of their children. From them they inherit a polluted nature, and are, in consequence, under guilt and condemnation. At their birth, they are introduced to an evil world, and on every side temptations and dangers surround them. The journey of life on which they have en-

tered conducts them forward to the eternal state, and happiness, or misery unending, will be their final portion. They will have connexion, if spared beyond infancy, with other human beings, and must diffuse around them either an influence for good that will allure others to the ways of virtue, or of evil that will mislead others to ruin. How solemn to a Christian parent must be reflection on these things! In virtue of his relation to his child, and of his engagement in baptism, it devolves upon him, as an instrument above every other, to labour to rescue his child from the curse, to guard him against temptation, and to guide him into the way of peace. Can he ever lose sight of this weighty responsibility? When he may feel wholly insufficient for these things, and may tremble in view of the consequences that flow from neglect or failure, he should betake himself to that grace which is all-sufficient both for him and his child. He should eagerly avail himself of every means prescribed in the word to bring his offspring to God for a blessing. A due sense of his responsibility will lead him to travail as in birth till Christ be formed in the heart of his seed; and till He obtains some satisfactory evidence that they have become the subjects of regenerating grace, and are numbered in the family of heaven. It will impel him to cherish an earnest and heartfelt concern for the early conversion of his children, and to employ all appointed means to secure for them the blessing.

The parental engagement is commensurate with the continuance of the relation between the parent and the child. Of this responsibility he cannot divest himself as long as he and the child lives. The vow in baptism explicitly recognized it; and the future course of life is, at every stage, to indicate its practical operation. How should parents, under such a solemn accountability, watch and pray always! How

should they dread failure, and the doom of a steward that is unfaithful to the highest trust! How diligently and perseveringly should they labour that they may be found approved at last; and that they may be able to say, as they present their solemn charge to the Judge at his coming, "Behold I and the children whom God hath given me!"

3. *To train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

The grand design of the baptismal rite holds parents engaged to educate their children for God and for heaven. The little ones are presented to God, and solemnly dedicated to his service. In the ordinance of his own appointment, God accepts the surrender, and affixes his visible seal to the baptized infant. He then restores it to the parent—the person the most deeply interested in its welfare—and commits it to him for future instruction, and for all the training befitting one that has been given up to God, and that has been solemnly pledged to his service. The parental engagement in baptism has an express and immediate connection with this work. The parent receives back again his children from the hands of God and his servants, as a second time given him—to be nursed, not for himself, but for a service and destiny worthy an immortal being interested in the redemption of Christ.

This vow implies that all proper instruction shall be provided for the child—that it shall be made early acquainted with its lost state by nature—with the character and claims of Christ as a Master—with the excellence of his service, and with the recompense of the reward that awaits the faithful servant. It is not by mere instruction, or command, that children are to be brought up in the service of God. They are to be *nurtured* in piety, and *trained* in "the way in which they should go."*

* Proverbs xxii. 6.

taught the good and right way; and instructions should be given them diligently, according to their capacity to receive them, and adapted to their varied duties, temptations, and trials. The lessons of the divine word must be at one time imparted to them as "sincere milk" for babes, and at another as "strong meat" for them that are of full age. The authority of God, and of his law, must be clearly exhibited and strongly impressed on the child's heart and conscience; and the doctrines of God's moral government and providence, and of man's recovery through the redemption of Christ, must be continually presented—to deepen in the child's mind the sense of God's authority, and to lead him to flee from the wrath to come. Parental instructions must be communicated with patience and perseverance, and yet with authority, and enforced by example. The honourable testimony which God gave to Abraham, the Father of the faithful, should be sought by every parent while imparting instruction to his children, and in training them to virtue and usefulness—"I know him that he will command his children and his household after him to know the Lord, to do justice and judgment." * Habits for good are to be formed in youth—evil propensities to be corrected and eradicated, and an immortal, accountable being is to be led to discharge faithfully his duty to God while in the world, and to be prepared for the exalted service and enjoyment of God in glory.

Such is the Christian parent's work in relation to his children; and to perform it faithfully he solemnly engages in the act of baptismal dedication. This work the parent should regard as peculiarly his. None other can, in this case, supply his place. He is the chief selected instrument for the important

* Genesis xviii. 19.

trust; and from his intimate relation to his offspring he has facilities for conveying instruction, employing authority and example, and carrying on a course of moral training and discipline, which no other person possesses. A great reward will be his, if this training is blessed for effecting the desired purpose. Should the child, on the other hand, perish through neglect of parental instruction and superintendence, and the want of a proper example, who can tell the fearful doom of him who has the blood of a lost child required at his hands? The engagement to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in all its extensive application and momentous consequences, should be solemnly pondered by parents in presenting their children in baptism, and should be ever after considered, as supplying the most powerful motives to the diligent and faithful performance of all parental duties.

Finally, The parental engagement in baptism has regard *to the actual employment of children in works that honour God in the world, and that advance his kingdom.*

All previous training converges to this end. To live to God's glory is the great end of human existence; and the vow of a Christian parent cannot but embrace this for himself, and this, too, as the grand object of all his efforts and desires for his children. The excellent John Brown, of Haddington, declared, shortly before his death, "If I had a thousand lives to live, and a thousand children, I would willingly give them all to promote the conversion of sinners and the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world—as this appears far the noblest end of my being." It is not enough for parents to teach the way of duty, or to talk of efforts for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. It is not even sufficient to show, by their own example, that they are abounding in prayer and

other religious duties. They should take children betimes by the hand, and engage them in religious duties; not only pray with them, and for them, and teach them how to pray, but see also that they actually pray. Like Joshua, they should resolve, and act on the resolution, "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." Not, 'I will serve God without my house—or, my house, while I am excused; but, I first, and then my house, and I and my house together.' The engagement of parents, too, should contemplate, as a high honour, their children, who are a part of themselves, and to live when they are gone, employed in active exertions for the spread of divine truth, and the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom. The testimony and the law left in Israel parents are to transmit to posterity, and to charge them to hand down the deposit to future generations. What higher privilege is there than thus to have our families pledged to a cause which employed the counsels of eternity, and which brought the Son of God to earth! What more honourable than to see them embarked in an enterprise which prophets, apostles, and martyrs regarded with rapt delight, and which angels celebrate in their loftiest praises! The parental vow should regard the Redeemer's glory as all and all; and the Christian parent should view himself and his seed as living and enjoying privilege only for the purpose of advancing it. Like the church universal, in the Forty-fifth Psalm, he should declare of Christ, in his solemn engagement, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever." Thus, too, will be realized the gracious assurance given respecting dedicated children, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." *

* Psalm xlv. 16, 17.

The following brief form of the baptismal covenant was prepared by the excellent Philip Henry—the father of the Commentator—for the use of his children. He taught it to them early, and each of them solemnly repeated it every Lord's day, in the evening, after catechising, he putting his amen to it, and sometimes adding, "So say, and so do; and you are made for ever":—

CHILD'S PERSONAL COVENANT.

"I take the Lord to be my chiefest good, and highest end.

"I take God the Son to be my Prince and Saviour.

"I take the Holy Ghost to be my sanctifier, teacher, guide, and comforter.

"I take the word of God to be my rule in all my actions; and the people of God to be my people in all conditions.

"I do likewise devote and dedicate unto the Lord my whole self—all I am—all I have—all I can do.

"And this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely, and for ever."

Speaking of this transaction, Mr. Henry's biographer says, "He also took pains with them to lead them to the understanding of it, and to persuade to a free and cheerful consent to it; and when they grew up, he made them all write it over severally, with their own hands, and very solemnly set their names to it, which he told them he would keep by him, and it should be produced as a testimony against them, in case they should afterwards depart from God, and turn from following after him." *

* *Life and Times of Rev. Philip Henry*, p. 120.—London—Thomas Neilson—1848.

II.—ENGAGEMENT OF CHILDREN IN BAPTISM.

WE have seen that there is a virtual pledge offered by parents in behalf of their children in the baptismal vow. This, beyond doubt, devolves on the child when he becomes capable of understanding the purport of it, in like manner as the obligation of bonds and covenants falls upon posterity who are represented in them, when they cease to be minors. Besides, the ordinance of baptism carries with it an obligation to the performance of solemn duties, on those to whom it is administered, just as the Scriptures expressly tell us that they who were circumcised became by the act of circumcision bound to “keep the whole law.”

If it is inquired what is the ground of this obligation? On what principle are infant children, who are incapable of pledging vows themselves, held engaged to solemn and special duties in virtue of their baptism? we reply,

1. *That the Covenant and Institution of Christ* clearly furnish ground for such an obligation. In virtue of the covenant of grace, God claims the children of his people as his, previously to their baptism. They are numbered with his peculiar people, and belong to his visible church, in virtue of a federal connexion with his people, as soon as they are born into the world. Abraham, when he believed God, and took hold of his covenant, became entitled to the seal of circumcision, not for himself alone, but also for his posterity. This principle runs through the whole of the former dispensation. The infant seed of Israelitish parents were regarded as included in the covenant—not absolutely as heirs of its spiritual blessings—but as laid under obligation to all the duties connected with the profession of an Israelite. On the same ground, the promise to the seed of Christian parents, that God will be their

God, implies that they will be his servants—to choose him as their Lord and Portion, and to walk before him in newness of life. Baptism is, properly speaking, primarily *a seal on God's part*, though it becomes ours too, by our accepting it. In virtue of their connexion with the covenant, the glorious Mediator authorizes his servants to apply his visible seal to children. In the fullest sense of the phrase, *He baptizes them*, through the instrumentality of his ministers. He thereby publicly and visibly separates them from others, and claims them as his peculiar heritage and possession. Like an indenture signed and sealed, their baptism openly displays them to others, as the Lord's pledged servants. As the Hebrew servant, who refused to leave his master on the year of release, by a significant rite, declared his willingness to remain in subjection, so the baptized are engaged to perpetual fidelity to their Master, and are held bound to remain in his house for ever.

2. The dedication made of children in baptism implies the fullest obligation to all the duties of a holy profession.

Parents in baptism bring their children to God's altar, and owning his paramount right to them and his interest in them, surrender them to the Lord, and consecrate them to his service. This surrender is substantially what every believer makes of himself, when he enters into a personal covenant, and when recognizing the Divine claim upon all that he is and all that he has, he devotes himself to God. It is the giving up of the child as "a living sacrifice." It is "yielding" the soul "to God, as alive from the dead," and the body as an instrument "of righteousness unto holiness." Abraham, at the institution of circumcision, dedicated himself, and Ishmael and Isaac, his sons, and all that were in his house, to God; and the action, we are expressly informed, was followed by Divine approval.

Under the Jewish economy, all the first-born sons of Israel were regarded as peculiarly dedicated to God. The Levites substituted for them at first, were separated for God's immediate service, and the *redemption-money* subsequently paid for them was cast into the sacred treasury. The whole Church under the New Testament is entitled the "Church of the First-born," and all who are recognized as members in it by baptism are introduced to the privileges of the First-born, as they are obliged to live as a "royal priesthood"—and as pertaining to a "holy nation," and a "peculiar people."

Thus early dedication imposes a solemn and weighty obligation to live to God. It is related in history, that Amilcar, the father of Hannibal, led his son, when only eight years old, to the altar, and made him swear by the gods of his country, eternal enmity to the Romans. His future military achievements were not a little influenced by this early engagement. In a far higher and better sense, a Christian child may be conceived as in baptism vowing to be on the Lord's side—to fight against spiritual enemies and to follow after holiness. A due sense of baptismal dedication is frequently connected with the first gracious work of the Spirit in the heart; and subsequent reflection on it supplies the most powerful and affecting motives to walk in all holy obedience. To such parental consecration to God and his service, the inspired Psalmist appears to refer, when he joyfully acknowledges God's distinguishing goodness, and when he renews his engagement to be the Lord's: "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." *

* Psal. cxvi. 16, 17.

III.—THE PURPORT OF THE ENGAGEMENT MADE IN BAPTISM.

It is related of Philip Henry, in his "Life," that "In dealing with his children about their spiritual state, he took hold of them very much by the handle of their infant-baptism, and frequently inculcated upon them that they were born in God's house, and were betimes dedicated and given up to him, and therefore were obliged to be his servants." A proper consideration of this kind will help the young to a right view of their engagement in baptism, and may assist them too in fulfilling the solemn obligation.

The engagement of the baptized implies,

I. A FULL RENUNCIATION OF ALL SPIRITUAL ENEMIES.

In the Primitive Church, this renunciation was explicitly made. One Christian Father, speaking of Baptism, says, "We renounce the devil and his pomps and his angels."* Another says, "The Baptized renounce the Evil spirit, and all his damnable pomps."† In the formula of baptism in the Church of England, the person answering for the child is taught to declare, "I renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that I will not follow, nor be led by them."‡ Now, whether this renunciation is made more or less expressly, it is certainly involved in the rite of initiation into the Church. Children are by nature under the power of the Evil One, are corrupt in the desires and inclinations of the heart, and are exposed to innumerable evils, which war against the soul. From these they require to be delivered, if they would enjoy the privileges of God's people, and partake of the benefits of redemption. In

* Tertullian.

† Origen.

‡ Book of Common Prayer—Baptismal Service.

receiving the grace of salvation, and embracing the Gospel, we come out and are separate. We escape from the slavery of Satan, and give up connexion with his servants and works. We become children of God, are enrolled in his family, and become subjects of the kingdom of heaven. Baptism is the accredited sign of this change—the visible symbol that we have forsaken our former master and his service—and that we have pledged our allegiance to the Captain of salvation. The Redeemer, by appointing the ordinance to be administered to us, claims us as his, and the young in receiving it virtually declare, “What have I to do any more with idols?” “O Lord, I am thine; save me.” It is of great importance for children to be made early to feel that they have been pledged in the most solemn manner to renounce Satan—to deny ungodliness and the lusts of the flesh, and to relinquish the world and its vanities.

2. PROFESSED SUBJECTION TO CHRIST AND FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE.

In the instances of Apostolic baptism recorded in the New Testament, it is said, “As many as received the word were baptized;” and again, “Those who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ were baptized.” Once more, it is declared in reference to all the baptized, “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”* These expressions plainly imply a *profession of the truth of Christ, relation to him, and practical obedience to his commands*. All truth is centred in Christ—the Alpha and Omega of Divine revelation. When the grand truth of Christ’s atonement is confessed, baptism is administered, and the baptized come under an engagement

* Galatians iii. 27. The figurative language here used has been supposed to refer to “robes of honour and distinction—official vestments, such as royal, judicial, or military robes.”—M’Crie—Lectures on Baptism, p. 144.

to receive instruction in whatever Christ has commanded, and to profess it before the world. In this ordinance, the Saviour exhibits himself as the King and Head of his people—their Physician, Shepherd, Husband, Father, and Friend. In these endearing relations, the baptized are engaged to receive him—rely on him for all the benefits which flow from them—and act consistently with the honourable station to which they are thereby called. Having named the name of Christ, they are bound to depart from all iniquity. In baptism, we publicly take the honourable name of Christian; and this rightly understood implies—a believer in Christ—a lover of Christ—one that confesses his truth—is concerned to advance his glory—and that lives in subjection to his authority, and obedience to his laws. With baptized persons, it is not left optional, whether they will live as believers in Christ, and act consistently with Christian character. They are already solemnly engaged to submit to Christ's yoke, to confess him before men, and to act as his willing servants. To manifest ignorance of this obligation, or to refuse to acknowledge it, is wilful covenant-breaking, and cannot but incur the fearful displeasure of Him who has all power to execute judgment on his enemies, as well as mercy to reward his faithful servants. The service of Christ is perfect freedom; and those who properly feel their baptismal engagement will be ever ready to declare joyfully, "I am the Lord's," and joining themselves to his people, to "subscribe with their hand to the Lord," and to surname themselves by the name of Israel."*

3. DEDICATION TO GOD IN COVENANT—A THREE-ONE GOD.

The Triune name is named upon us in baptism; and this, as we have already shown, implies an act of ex-

* Isaiah xliv. 6.

press dedication to the glorious Godhead. Each of the Divine persons is present to witness the solemn transaction, to accept the dedication, and to confer the desired blessing. Surely if the rite has any meaning—and the use of the Triune name is not an empty form—it must intend that the baptized are engaged to take God the Father as their Father—God the Son as their Saviour and Friend—and God the Spirit as their Sanctifier and Guide. How important and honourable are such relations! How criminal and infatuated ever to be unmindful of such a solemn engagement! Its frequent remembrance, in a spirit and conduct befitting it, must eminently conduce to a life at once useful and happy. It is the just remark of Matthew Henry, “That a life of holiness is a life of renewed acts of self-dedication.” Such dedication, when rightly made, is just the renewal of the baptismal covenant. The substance of it is to accept of a Triune God as a Portion, and to love and serve Him with the whole heart and soul, and strength and mind. This is the grand end of our existence, and while it alone is worthy of a rational, accountable being, it implies the diligent discharge of the highest duties, and the enjoyment of the most exalted and enduring privileges.

4. THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE toward God in the whole life.

The apostle Peter declares, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* This cannot mean the correct answering of questions on doctrine previous to baptism, for this may be given, when yet the individual is destitute of real grace, and without an interest in God’s salvation. Nor does it intend that any thing wrought in

* 1 Peter iii. 21.

our heart and conscience is the ground of our salvation. But the expression teaches that baptism represents the peace and purity that result from the renewal of the heart, and the sanctification of the nature. The embodied substance of this representation is a conscience purified by the atoning blood of Christ, and made tender by the renewal of the Spirit. Baptism symbolizes pardon and purity and peace, and these blessings enjoyed are just the realization of the symbol. A life of holiness is this "answer of a good conscience." They have great peace who love God's law. To be holy is to be happy; and those who exercise themselves daily, as the apostle Paul, "to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men," supply the best answer to the engagement made in baptism.

It need scarcely be added, that the engagement in baptism implies that neglect of religion by the baptized is an aggravated sin, attended by the most fatal consequences. When the Israelitish people broke the covenant of which circumcision was the seal, they were rejected as excised branches. Having violated solemn engagements, they were dissevered from the covenant, and were cast out of God's peculiar favour and protection. Such still is the baleful fruit of forgetting the covenant of one's youth, and departing from God. This solemn bond implied sacred engagements, and when these are neglected, the consequences are in the highest measure deplorable. Baptized youth, proving infidel in profession, and ungodly in practice, generally do worse than others, and are left to a more fearful doom. Like Julian the Apostate, some attempt, by forsaking religion and associating with the ungodly, to wash away their baptism. The fearful retribution that pursues them shews that God remembers their baptismal engagement. He visits them as covenant-breakers—gives them up to their own hearts' lusts, and leaves them to final rejection.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

THE OBLIGATION, AND MOTIVES TO PROMOTE IT ARISING
FROM BAPTISM.

THE education of the young has been not improperly said to be the grand question of the day, as upon its settlement must depend, in a great measure, the character and condition of individuals, and the destinies of communities. Whether the education of the people shall be attended to or neglected—what kind of instruction shall be imparted to them—what are the ends to be proposed in education, are inquiries of the deepest interest; and the proper solution of them intimately concerns all who would desire to benefit mankind, as the course adopted must be productive either of salutary or baleful fruits, for indefinite ages to come.

It is perfectly obvious,—and all history bears testimony to the fact,—that the character impressed upon nations is according as parental training and other education has moulded them; and it is now all but universally admitted, that the peace, well-being, and prosperity of nations is inseparably connected with the proper instruction of the young, who are to be their future rulers or citizens. Other things being equal, and taking education in its comprehensive meaning, as embracing not only intellectual acquirements, but likewise proper moral discipline and habits, a well-educated community will enjoy physical comfort, advance in civilization, and attain to influence and greatness vastly above one that is uneducated, or whose education is conducted on a wrong principle, or perverted to unworthy ends.

Into the subject of the *obligations of the State* in

relation to education—into the question of National Education, however interesting or important, we do not at present enter, as our principal concern is to exhibit the duty of establishing a right education, as flowing from the baptismal engagement—an engagement immediately pertaining to persons as members of the Church, and not as citizens of the Commonwealth. If this obligation is fully established, it may be seen indirectly, or by legitimate consequence, to devolve upon the State too. At least, it will be manifest that a Christian Government cannot, without high criminality, do any thing in the matter of education that would contravene the authoritative injunctions of the Head of the Church, to provide for the thorough instruction of all who are committed to her care, or that would throw impediments in the way of fulfilling the command of her exalted Sovereign.

That the Church is bound to provide for the proper education of all her members, and to extend this blessing throughout the world, appears obvious,

1. From the Great Commission of the risen Saviour to his Apostles, and to all his future ministers.

“Go ye therefore and teach”—or make disciples of—“all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always to the end of the world.”* This Commission, it is worthy of remark, is issued in immediate connexion with the Saviour proclaiming his universal Headship and authority. “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore,*” &c. It is, moreover, inseparably connected with the institution of baptism, *teaching* being enjoined both before and after the command to baptize. While the nations of the world are to be

* Matthew xxviii. 20.

discipled by baptizing them, those who are initiated by the Christian rite are afterwards to be *taught* all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. The Church is established in the world to execute whatever Christ has committed to her agency. This is the great end for which she is designed in relation to the world in which she is placed—the unreclaimed territory of the Prince of darkness. The execution of this high trust is the chief evidence of her fidelity to her glorious King, and the eminent way of securing his presence and blessing; as neglect here must involve a forfeiture of His favour, and incur His fearful displeasure.

The Commission plainly renders it the duty of the Church, and of every believer, to do these *three* things—1. “To make known God’s light and salvation to every creature.” 2. “To disciple all nations—that is, to bring them into connexion with Christ’s church or school, that they may become disciples therein;” and 3. “To instruct thoroughly in all that Christ has commanded, all who are thus discipled.” This last department of the Church’s duty, in the terms of the Commission, contemplates a very extensive diffusion of the means of proper instruction. “All nations” are elsewhere designated “every creature.” They are “the uttermost parts of the earth” to be given to the Redeemer for his inheritance—“the isles” that “shall wait for his law.” The “field is the world;” and by the instrumentality that Christ has ordained, are men in every condition and clime to be brought to the obedience of faith, and to be taught whatsoever the Redeemer has commanded.

The Church is the grand Institute set up for this purpose. She is the Teacher of the nations; the Instructor of every creature. By the solemn rite of baptism, disciples are gathered from the nations, and are entered in Christ’s school. The teaching of infant

children is committed to parents; and yet this is done by a public rite, in the presence of the Church, as implying that the whole Church is concerned in it, and will see to its faithful execution. The teaching of the Church, however, is not to be confined to infantile members. It concerns the whole period of human life, from infancy to the grave. It is not alone by the services of the sanctuary in public worship that the various classes committed to the Church's care are to be taught the "all things whatsoever Christ has commanded." Training for the employments and duties of human life, the Sabbath school, the prayer-meeting, the exercise of discipline, and originating and maintaining schemes of Christian benevolence, are certainly embraced in the comprehensive scope of our Lord's Commission.

Practice, too, is as necessary here as profession. "Keeping Christ's commandments" is as essentially the *observing* of them, as believing the directions and promises of the word.

2. The significant and impressive rite of Baptism implies that *the whole education of the baptized is to be conducted so as to subserve the great design of the institution.*

Children are brought to God, and are dedicated to him that they may know him. This is the grand end of their existence—the beginning, progress, and perfection of their happiness. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." * All subsequent instruction must be connected with the growth of religion in the heart, else it is of no real value. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil that is understanding." The dedication in baptism implies that the young shall be taught in the good and right

* John xvii. 2.

way. It is the giving up not only of the body, but of the mind and soul—the consecration of the whole life to God. This, if it has any proper meaning, implies that the dedicated one shall be carefully instructed in relation to his diversified duties; that every part of the life, and all its pursuits, shall give evidence of this dedication carried into actual effect. Then, the subject of baptism is publicly introduced into the church. He is entered in Christ's school, to learn his Master's will, that he may do it. All the best means of instruction are largely provided for him; and these are not only given that he may know how to conduct himself in the house of God, but also that he may discharge the duties of life, and conduct himself in the world as a follower of the Lamb, and a citizen of heaven.

The duty of teaching little children, in the period of life that succeeds their baptismal dedication, something of the principles and duties of religion, is pretty generally admitted, and to some extent practised. Even when the church is neglectful of the charge of her infantile members, parents regard themselves as bound to communicate the first elements of religious education. The evil, however, is, that not only this is often done in a very superficial manner, but that these instructions cease at a period when it is most important that they should be continued, or superseded by a more thorough training. The church's duty to her baptized members is to "teach every creature, both theoretically and practically, *until* they are old, and until the end of their lives." The period of which the church and many parents are criminally neglectful is the *school-going* age of children; and that is the time of life "immeasurably the most important and the most promising." Children, during this period, are acknowledged as disciples, and they are looked forward to as, in a little, to become the friends, supporters, and members of the church. Yet, on the part

of both parent and of the church, the education of the young, in a proper sense, at this time of life, is overlooked or neglected. Mental training is divorced from religion. Children are placed in the hands of instructors who have no concern for their immortal interests, and who do not consider religious instruction as any part of their business. The matter is left entirely in the hands of irreligious or careless teachers; and no healing salt is cast into these waters. A neglect of this kind is a practical violation of the baptismal vow of the parent, and of the virtual engagement of those who administer, and of those who concur in the administration of the solemn rite. The consequences are every way deplorable. The young thus neglected often grow up careless, and make no profession of religion. They cast off the authority of the parent, the bible, and the church; and, taking the way of the world, live ungodly, and ultimately go to misery and ruin. Thus are the hopes of the church blasted; and instead of being built up by the accession of youthful members, Zion mourns over her long desolations. "There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she has brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons whom she has brought up." * A due consideration of the nature and design of the ordinance of baptism, and of the duties involved in it towards the young, would go far to remedy this neglect, and to prevent these melancholy consequences.

3. There is abundant proof that, *in former times, the church fully recognized her obligation to provide a thorough Scriptural education for her baptized members, and to extend the same blessing throughout the world.*

The great end for which the church was established

* Isaiah li. 18.

was, that she should train up a godly seed, and that those instructed in the truth, and imbued with right principles and habits, should be the instruments of maintaining and extending true religion in the world. The ancient church of God, in the best periods of her history, steadily prosecuted this end, and availed herself of the means divinely appointed for its attainment. Infants were recognized and sealed as members. They were carried up to Jerusalem at an early age, on the occasion of the public festivals; and parents were strictly enjoined to give them instructions in religion at all times and upon all occasions. Deuteronomy vi. 6, 7, "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Not only were Israelitish parents commanded to instruct their children in relation to their obligation to obey the divine law—they were to make them familiar with the history of God's church, the meaning of holy ordinances, the covenant and testimony of God, and the judgments or mercies dispensed by Jehovah, in connexion with the rebellion or the obedience of his ancient people. While religion flourished in the Jewish nation, these injunctions were carefully observed, and the commonwealth prospered, through the divine blessing, and became great and powerful—as succeeding races rose up, well trained in the knowledge and fear of God.

The New Testament economy carries out the same great principle of parents and the church collective being under a primary obligation to bring up the young in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. There is abundant evidence from ecclesiastical history that, in primitive times, the instruction and discipline of children were objects of unceasing care and labour. The

office of Teacher, or Doctor, existed wherever the church was established, and the youth of the church were preserved from the influence of Pagan learning, and were trained for the duties of life in a manner accordant with their baptismal dedication. "In the primitive church, every congregation, as a general rule, or several, according to their ability, had their school, and larger districts their catechetical or higher seminaries or colleges." *

In the dark ages, the Waldenses, those early witnesses for truth, were distinguished for the religious instruction and discipline of their children. Doubtless it was owing, through the divine blessing, to their remarkable diligence in this matter that, notwithstanding severe persecution, they maintained their existence as a compact and united body—that their testimony was transmitted from one generation to another, and that they remained so long true to their ancient motto, "*Lux in tenebris*" †—a "beacon for the admiration and guidance of the church in after times." Authentic history informs us, that these simple-minded, bible-loving people employed every hour which they could gain from labour and sleep in the acquisition of knowledge for themselves, and in imparting it to their children; that they prepared catechisms, and summaries of Scripture doctrine for their instruction, and that the pastors made the religious education of the young a

* See an excellent Pamphlet, entitled, "Denominational Education in Parochial Schools and Religious Colleges, enforced upon every church by divine authority," by the Rev. Dr. Smyth, of Charleston—p. 10. Higher seminaries of learning, in the primitive age, as at Alexandria, were supported by the church, and were presided over by eminent Christian scholars, whose business it was to expound and apply the Scriptures, instruct catechumens, and prepare labourers for the public work of the church.

† Light in the darkness.

principal object of their unceasing care and attention. The Reformers, in their conflict with Rome, saw the importance of emancipating the human mind from ignorance, and of educating the people on Scriptural principles. Especially did they recognize the solemn duty of the church providing for the religious training of all her members. The churches of the Reformation, without exception, firmly maintained the obligation of the church to maintain, under her own supervision and control, common and grammar schools, academies, colleges, and universities. In Geneva, France, Holland, and elsewhere, this was regarded as a principal care of the church, and measures were adopted to place the education of the young on a right footing, and to maintain it in vigorous operation.

In Scotland, through the noble exertions of our Presbyterian forefathers, the religious education of the young was, from the earliest period, made a main part of the reformation that was aimed at, and happily established. The "godly upbringing of youth," was a principal ground of contending with civil rulers of the illustrious Knox. His declared design was, that every village and district of country should have a school, and every large city or town, a college; and these were not only to be scriptural seminaries, but also to be under the exclusive superintendence and direction of the church.* To the capacious mind of

* M'Crie's Life of Knox—p. 250. The late Dr. Chalmers, (Works—vol. ii., p. 143, 147), thus appropriately speaks of the sagacity and comprehensive views of Knox in the matter of education:—"When Knox came over from the school of Geneva, he brought its strict and, at that time, uncorrupted orthodoxy along with him; and with it he pervaded all the formularies of that church which was founded by him, and not only did it flame abroad from all our pulpits, but through our schools and our catechisms it was brought down to the boyhood of our land; and from one generation to another have our Scottish youth been familiarized to the sound of it from their very infancy; and un-

the Reformer, and his earnest concern for the efficiency of the church, and the welfare of the nation, we are indebted for the admirable *parochial school system** of Scotland; and to this, and to parental instruction in families, the Scottish people are largely indebted for the force of character, morality, and religious purity by which they have been long distinguished among the nations.

Soon after its establishment in 1560, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland ordained that a *church school* should be erected in every parish, and that the teacher should be a pious, orthodox, and well-qualified man, fitted to instruct the youth in the Scriptures and Catechism, as well as in the elements of literature. In the Assembly of 1642, a grammar school was planted in every Presbytery; and in the famous Assembly held in Glasgow in 1638, the acts of preceding Assemblies were revised and ratified, by

promising as such a system of tuition might be, in the eye of the mere peasantry, certain it is, that, as the wholesale result, there has palpably come forth of it the most moral peasantry in Europe notwithstanding." * * * "To Knox we owe our present system of parochial education. By that scheme of ecclesiastical policy, a school was required for every parish, and had all its views been followed up, a college would have been erected in every notable town. On this inestimable service done to Scotland we surely do not need to expatiate. The very mention of it lights up an instant and enthusiastical approval in every bosom. And with all the veneration that is due, on other grounds, to our Reformer, we hold it among the proudest glories of his name, that it stands associated with an institution, which has spread abroad the light of a most beauteous moral decoration throughout all the hamlets of our land, and is dear to every Scottish heart, as are the piety and worth of its peasant families."

* We call the system *admirable*, which provides for the establishment of a scriptural school wherever there is a church, and which enjoins it as a special duty upon the ministry and office-bearers of the church to superintend the education imparted; though we would not be understood as approving of the present administration of the Parochial Schools.

which visitations of colleges were directed to be kept by committees of the Assembly; and the Principal, Regents, Professors, Masters, and Doctors within the same were required to “be tried concerning their piety, soundness in the faith, their ability to discharge the duties of their calling, and the honesty of their conversation.” *

One of the Reformed Churches may be particularly referred to, as its earnest concern for the scriptural education of the young is more fully expressed in its public arrangements than that of some of the other churches. This was the Presbyterian Church of Holland. By its Synodical Assemblies, it is directed that the Consistories, in every congregation, shall provide good schoolmasters, who shall be able not only to instruct children in reading, writing, grammar, and the liberal sciences, but also to teach them the catechism and the first principles of religion. Every schoolmaster was required to subscribe the Belgic Confession of Faith, or the Heidelberg Catechism. A *threefold* instruction in the Catechism is enjoined—1. *Domestic*, by parents; 2. *Scholastic*, by schoolmasters, and 3. *Ecclesiastic*, by pastors, assisted by members of Consistories. Those who are appointed to inspect schools are enjoined to make the same an object of their chief care. No person was to be appointed to the charge of any school

* See “Christian Education of the children and youth of the Presbyterian Church.” By Samuel Miller, D.D.—pp. 13, 14.

The authorized Formularies of the Presbyterian Church speak of the teachers of youth, whether in the common schools or higher seminaries, as a kind of office-bearers in the church, and as being objects of special interest to the church. See Second Book of Discipline—“The office of Doctor, or Catechiser, is one of the two ordinary and perpetual functions that travail in the word.” “They are such properly who teach in schools, colleges, or universities.” The Westminster Divines say, “The Scripture doth hold out the name and title of *teacher*, as well as of the *pastor*.”

who was not a member in full communion with the Reformed Belgic Church, and who had not previously subscribed the Confession of Faith, and Catechisms of the church, and moreover, solemnly promised to instruct the children committed to his care in the principles contained in the standards of the church. And it was, furthermore, enjoined, That every schoolmaster shall employ *two days in every week*, not only in hearing the children repeat the catechism, but in assisting them to understand it. To ensure fidelity in the teachers, it is declared to be the duty of the pastors and elders of each congregation frequently to visit the schools—to direct and encourage the teachers in the proper way of catechising—to examine the children with “mild severity,” and to excite them to industry and piety, by holy exhortations, seasonable commendations, and appropriate rewards.*

These references manifestly show that the Church, in her purest times, was fully sensible of the great importance of a thorough religious education for her baptized members, and that the utmost pains were employed to have the instruction of the young under the supervision and control of the church itself. If we would walk in the steps of illustrious forefathers—if we would be instrumental in training a godly and devoted race for the maintenance and diffusion of true religion, and be honoured to transmit the testimony and law left in Israel to succeeding generations, we should adopt the same course, and emulate the faithfulness and zeal of those who lifted up a standard for truth against powerful adversaries. To leave the education of her youthful members to others, over whom she has no control, is, on the part of the church, to abandon one essential department of her duty, and

* See Miller on “The Christian Education of the Children and Youth of the Presbyterian Church,”—pp. 16, 17.

one main element of her strength and hope. Christ's commission to his church is, to "*teach all things whatsoever He has commanded;*" and no plea of fewness, or want of means, will warrant a neglect of this primary duty. The primitive Churches, and subsequently the Churches of the Reformation, when they adopted measures for the "godly upbringing" of the young, and regarded, as under their control, not only the instructions of the family, but likewise the full education of children, the religious teaching and discipline of common schools, academies, and colleges, had but limited worldly means, and had, moreover, to contend with great difficulties. Were we to lay properly to heart the obligation of the baptismal engagement upon the whole church, we would readily find means for furnishing a religious education to all the youth of the church, and for extending it to others too. Thus, besides, would we be honoured to prepare a suitable and devoted instrumentality for promoting the Redeemer's glory in the earth, in teaching the nations to bow to his sceptre, and to know and obey whatsoever He has commanded.*

4. When the *nature and design* of education are considered, the obligation of the baptismal engagement

* In this important matter, we may learn a lesson from adversaries. Many Roman Catholic parents instruct their children, at an early age, in the dogmas and superstitions of the Popish system, much more diligently than Protestants teach their children a purer faith. Numerous religious orders are set apart for the education of youth; and the *Frères Ignorantins*, *Sisters of Mercy*, and others, labour in this vocation with a zeal and assiduity worthy of a better cause. Many Roman Catholic congregations make and carry out arrangements by which the children among them shall be thoroughly imbued with the knowledge of Popish doctrines and usages, and by which their poor shall be visited and relieved. The consequence is that Romanists generally are attached to their idolatrous and absurd system, and have an expertness in defending it which puts to shame the ignorance and lukewarmness of many professed Protestants.

to provide it for the young, and to control and direct it, will be still farther apparent.

Whatever disputes have arisen on the subject of education, or, on the province of the State in relation to the education of the people, it is now beginning to be generally admitted, that no system of mental training can be efficient for the ends designed, without being religious. Philosophers and literary men are now to be found declaring this, as well as Divines; while the system that would divorce education from religion is losing favour with all who are capable of taking comprehensive views of the character of the human mind, or of the nature and destinies of human beings. An able writer justly remarks—"Education, to deserve the name, must be moulded and leavened in every part, by the word and gospel of Christ. There is here no middle ground. A mere neutrality is impossible in its very nature. Education must be godly, or else it will be godless. What, indeed, is the true nature and purpose of Christian education? Nothing less, assuredly, than the training of immortal souls for an everlasting kingdom of glory. To profess to believe the gospel and still to aim at any lower object, is folly and madness. To impart some dry details of science or history is not to educate, in a Christian sense of the word. This is, indeed, a far higher and nobler work. It is by instruction and moral suasion, by discipline and prayer, to persuade men to secure those high ends for which they were created—to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever. The very drift and purpose of education cannot be seen without faith in the great doctrines and hopes of the word of God. It must not be a training for this world only—an intellectual luxury that dazzles and deceives,—but a training for immortal life; a moral discipline, of which the fruits will abide and endure for ever."

Education, rightly understood, is the culture of the

intellectual and moral nature of a human being. It aims not only to fit him for the business of this present life, but, regarding him as a rational, accountable, and immortal creature, it chiefly inculcates his duty to God the author of his being, and it brings him under a course of training suited to his future destiny. Education has been properly defined to be “*The progressive and harmonious developement of all the intellectual and moral principles of our nature; the complete subjection of ourselves to the control of right principles, and the acquisition of all the knowledge that may be useful to enable us to fill well the sphere of duty in which our Creator has placed us, or to which He may call us.*”* To effect these important ends, education must embrace the culture of all the powers of the mind, the purifying and elevation of the conscience, and the improvement of the heart, and the proper application of the faculties of the body to whatever is useful, and becoming, and praiseworthy. The education which God has enjoined in his word certainly contemplated such an extensive training. The late Dr. Arnold of Rugby, referring to Deuteronomy xi. 19, justly remarks, “That the special thing to be taught was a knowledge of God’s statutes and ordinances; not the Ten Commandments only, not all the early history of their forefathers contained in the book of Genesis, but God’s law given to them his people, his will respecting them morally and politically; his will with regard to all the relations of private and public life; with regard to their government, their limits and divisions, their property real and personal, their rules of inheritance, their rules with regard to marriage;—their whole conduct, in short, in peace and war, as men, as citizens. All this was laid down in their law; all this was to be carefully taught them in youth, that

* “*Denominational Education,*” by Dr. Smyth.—p. 17.

so, in whatever line of life they might be thrown, or whatever questions might be agitated, they might know what was God's will, and therefore might know and do their own duty." Applying these views to modern Education, Dr. Arnold adds, "Undoubtedly that is useless in Education which does not enable a man to glorify God better, in his way through life. But then, we are called upon to glorify him in many various ways, according to our several callings and circumstances; and as we are to glorify him both in our bodies and spirits, with all our faculties, both outward and inward, I cannot consider it unworthy either to render our body strong and active, or our understanding clear, rich, and versatile in its powers; I cannot reject from the range of religious education, whatever ministers to the perfection of our bodies and our minds, so long as, both in body and mind, in soul and spirit, we ourselves may be taught to minister to the service of God."

Education, while it overlooks no part of a man's constitution and welfare, must have a principal and primary regard to the interests of the soul; and its main efforts must be directed to the cultivation of the highest and noblest part of his nature. A useful writer* appropriately remarks on this subject, "In taking a Christian view of the objects of education, there can be no doubt that the first is to instil and cherish, in dependence on the Divine blessing, true religion, both in the soul and in the daily and hourly habits of life; and the second is, to convey general knowledge, to form the mind and manners." Hence the moral renovation of the hearts of the young must be a leading object of all education that deserves the name of Christian. "What the mind needs is, not so much to be amended and improved, as renewed; not so much to be kept from

* Babington.

falling into sin, as to be delivered from the reigning power and dominion of sin. And the great object to be promoted in every part of the education of youth is their renewal, their sanctification, and consequent salvation." *

Education, aiming at these high ends and properly conducted, should labour, at every step, to induce proper habits mental and moral, to impress upon the young a sense of their duty to God and accountability, and to make them early acquainted with their natural depravity, and with the future state of happiness or misery. The Divine and all-comprehensive precept in relation to the education of the young is, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."† The word "train" here denotes to *catechize*, *initiate*, or *instruct*. The *objects* of this culture are not persons in mere childhood. The original term refers equally to young men and women. It embraces the whole period of human life up to manhood. "In the way," is literally, in the Hebrew, "even to the mouth of his way," and it therefore signifies, to the very *entrance* of his way in life. This training must have reference to talents and capacity, and is to be adapted to the preparation of youth for the mode of life which they are designed to follow. It is, moreover, to begin from the commencement, and continue to the end of education, and it comprehends all that is necessary for them, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. This course of training is specially enjoined upon God's people. It is the business of the Church of Christ; and she is under the most solemn and sacred obligation to provide that her children shall

* "As this life is a preparation for eternity, so is education a preparation for this life; and that education is alone valuable which answers these primary objects."—*Bishop Short*.

enjoy it from the earliest to the latest period of their life.*

It must be apparent to any reflecting mind that, to effect such training, all education must be *under the control of the Church*, and that it must be *throughout Scriptural*. Christian parents have a principal concern in it. To them the Divine command is plain and pointed. They are to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and while they rear them for usefulness in this world, they are to train them for God and for heaven. If they are necessitated to entrust a portion of the work to others, they must, notwithstanding, see—and the Church should co-operate with them in providing—that their whole education is conducted on Christian principles, that there is nothing in it to turn them aside from the way in which they should go, but, on the contrary, everything to secure that, even when they are old, they will not depart from it.

To accomplish the high ends of education, the Scriptures must be assumed as the basis of all instruction. The Word of God must be assigned the appropriate place of supreme authority, in directing, controlling, and purifying education in all its departments. Direct instruction must be given in the great truths of the Bible, as being the first and most important matters for a child to be made acquainted with; and on other subjects, the authority of God speaking in his word will be of paramount use in subduing the wayward spirit of youth, and impressing upon teachers and taught, the duty and end of mental cultivation. The Scriptures alone bring fully into view the doctrine of human accountability, and shew the young their fallen

* For a very satisfactory view of the *objects* of Christian education, see an excellent little work, recently published by Messrs. Johnstone & Hunter, Edinburgh, entitled, "Hints to Parents and Teachers on Christian Education in Schools."—Pp. 28—40.

and degraded condition, and the Divine method of recovery through Christ. They exhibit the authority of *conscience*, and in the hand of the Spirit, they are efficacious in purifying and elevating the moral principles. They furnish the *rule* and *standard* of all genuine morality; and while they supply principles and rules for the business of human life, at the same time they point always to the world to come, as the ultimate destiny of an immortal being, and they subordinate all pursuits to the promotion of the Divine glory, and the attainment of happiness in God's presence in heaven for evermore. Such being the uses and power of the Scriptures, it is evidently irrational and preposterous to reject them in the great business of education; and any system which aims to train the young without assigning the Scriptures their legitimate place and authority must be essentially deficient, and must ultimately prove a miserable failure.

The training of children to mere mechanical operations, without cultivating right habits, does not deserve the name of education. Supplying food for the intellect, without aiming to eradicate the deep-rooted depravity of the moral nature, and to improve the heart, is to overlook the principal business of the culture of a human being, and must prove in the end of most mischievous consequence. A fundamental and essential part of education is, beyond a doubt, moral culture.* Without this, all other knowledge is vain and worthless—nay, it is positively hurtful and injurious. An excellent American writer,* and able advocate of Scriptural education, well observes, "To establish sufficient *moral principle*, there must be proposed *motives* to do it, convincing the mind and controlling the heart, superior at all times and in all circumstances over every possible motive to do wrong. To direct in moral con-

* See Appendix.

† Dr. Bethune.

duct, there must be an exhibition by actual *example* of the highest moral perfection. All these can be found only in Christianity. Hence we affirm that though there are some auxiliary means, the BIBLE is fundamentally essential to the proper training of the young. Every attempt to build a sound education, except upon evangelical truths, will be a failure. For, besides that the Holy Scriptures is a library of itself, containing the most ancient, authentic, and satisfactory account of things in their causes, narrative the most simple and impressive, biography the most honest and useful, eloquence the most powerful and persuasive, poetry the most sublime and beautiful, argument the closest and most profound, politics the justest and most liberal, and religion pure from the throne of God; it alone teaches morals with sufficient authority, motive, and example—the authority of God, the motives of eternity, and the example of Jesus Christ, God in man.”

The argument for employing the Scriptures as the basis of all education may be exhibited by transcribing a passage from the Author’s “Discourses on National Education” :—

“Emanating from the Source of all wisdom and knowledge, the Bible informs us of the grandest and most important truths, with which, above all others, the young should possess an early acquaintance; and by tracing effects to their proper causes, and conveying information in the most attractive manner, the Bible is admirably fitted to promote intellectual developement. From this source, we have the only authentic account of the creation of the heavens and the earth—an account which natural discoveries have never, in a single instance, invalidated, but ever tended more powerfully to confirm and establish. To the Bible we are indebted for all our knowledge of the introduction of natural and moral evil into the world,

and for a clear revelation of the Divine law, and its sanctions. Herein we are informed of the birth of the world,—the origin and early character of its inhabitants,—the deluge,—the dispersion of the human race,—the origin of language and civil government,—the institution and object of sacrifices,—and the hopes and prospects of man for eternity. Here, too, is developed the wondrous scheme of God's condescension and love in redemption,—that which “angels desire to look into,” and which is destined to be the song and science of eternity. The vastness and variety of the subjects contained in the Sacred Volume, stamp it with supreme importance. It deserves attention, as having for its author the Father of lights, and as containing, emphatically, the truth, without any admixture of error; and it claims our love as being the only means of discovering the way of life and immortality. Grand and noble in its subjects,—sublime and beautiful in its doctrines,—simple, eloquent, and attractive in its language, it is fitted to make an impression on the minds of the young, which can be effected by nothing else; and its instructions are adapted to persons in every relation,—to the wants and circumstances of all classes of the community. It exhibits the interests of time in connexion with the concerns of eternity, and assigning the latter their paramount position, it provides for the efficient maintenance of the former. The duties of parent and child,—of master and servant,—of rulers and ruled,—the rights and duties of citizens, and the only ground of national prosperity, are taught in the Scriptures, with a clearness and fulness that are unequalled in any other volume that was ever penned:—

“The Bible,” it has been well observed, “is a book of ‘useful knowledge.’—The information it conveys, is adapted to the wants and circumstances of all classes of the community. Without an acquaintance with this book, the duties of a citizen cannot proper-

ly be fulfilled. Acknowledged by the nation to be a book of the highest authority, and appealed to, as it is in all our courts of justice, no man can justifiably take an oath who is ignorant of the book on which he swears. Sound *political knowledge*, in like manner, can never be obtained by a man who is ignorant of the Scriptures, for 'the Bible furnishes *the only permanent basis for a just government.*' It is the only book of universal authority which contains the charter of the subject's rights; which prescribes the limits of the ruler's power; which dares to give law to the legislator, and denounces penalties against the sovereigns of the earth. It presents a King who is above all kings; and a law which is paramount to every other law. It appoints a tribunal of appeal, to which the highest magistrate may be summoned, where power cannot overcome right, nor fraud pervert justice; and where the unjust judgment of the oppressor will be brought upon his own head. It is the safeguard of freedom. The records of modern times do not present us with a single country blessed with free institutions, on whose permanence and happy influence we can now rely, in which the influence of the Bible is not exerted. In proportion as that has been wanting, the spirit of despotism has maintained its sway, and ignorance and apathy and slavery have been the portion of the people."*

"One peculiar and eminently excellent characteristic of the instruction of the Bible is, that it *produces moral purity.* Correcting the erroneous opinions of the young, and guarding them against the malign influences wherewith they are surrounded, it ever holds up before them the enormous evil and dreadful consequences of sin, and exhibits to them the surpassing beauty and certain happiness of a course of holy obedience. While it teaches children to love God, and to reverence and obey him, by motives of the highest kind, it is of equal efficacy to inculcate relative duties, to correct every fault of the young, and to check and eradicate the rank productions of nature. It furnishes no nutriment to pride, selfishness, anger, revenge, or any of the wicked desires of the heart. Being in direct opposition to every thing corrupt and sinful, it is eminently fitted to be the guide of teachers, and a directory for youth.

* Dunn on National Education, p. 44.

This is, indeed, the exclusive honour of the Bible, in its influence upon mankind in every relation. Illuminating man's moral and intellectual darkness, dissipating the shades of deep-seated ignorance and superstition, and dispelling the clouds of a false philosophy, it tends to banish crime from the countries where its light has been diffused, and to introduce virtue and happiness. It is the only book which has had power from God to change the character of nations,—the book which 'abolished the bloody rites of Diana, threw down the polluted temples of Venus, terminated for ever the barbarous spectacles of Rome, and destroyed the blood-stained altars of the Druids.' In late years, it has achieved what philosophy and political wisdom could never accomplish,—the emancipation of large portions of the human family from slavery, superstition, and cruel idolatry; and before it every system of darkness and oppression, in every part of the world, is destined yet to fall.

“Thus excellent and valuable as is the Bible, even when viewed irrespective of its grand office as a revelation of mercy, may we not infer that, instead of being shut out from places of instruction, or its admission conceded as a matter of favour, it should be better understood, and more constantly and thoroughly studied than any book whatever? Indeed, nothing valuable and important in education, when considered in its full extent, can be properly obtained but through the aid of the Scriptures of truth. It alone affords infallible direction concerning the cultivation of man's higher nature; it exhibits the rule of duty, and presents even to the minds of children the all-seeing eye and incontrollable authority of Jehovah. It furnishes effectual means for forming proper mental and moral habits, and it supplies a preparation for eternity. Subservient to these high purposes, which are fundamental to all right education, why is the instruction

of God's word rejected, and its authority contemned? Where else can we find so much true beauty, sublimity, and diversified and valuable information? Where is there else such a standard of taste,—where a work fitted to exert such an influence in moulding the character and regulating the conduct? Nothing, we are persuaded, but the opposition of the natural heart to God and his truth, can account for the rejection of the Bible from the guidance of popular education. Men love darkness rather than light, and refuse to come to the light, because their deeds are evil. Connected as they are with man's imperishable nature, and with his prospects for eternity, the truths of revelation are deserving of early and universal acceptance, and compared with them all other truths are but of secondary importance. The *decisions* of the Scripture on every subject on which it speaks, are final and unalterable. Whether it erects a tribunal for judging of human conduct, warns of the evil of sin, inculcates the love of God and man, or displays the nature and rewards of holy obedience, it enforces its precepts with commanding and irresistible authority. By the most affecting motives, it constrains to the submission which it enjoins, and like as is said of the method by which its glorious Author rescues sinners from degradation and misery,—it draws 'with cords of love and bands of a man.'

* * * * * “As men of all classes absolutely need its lessons, so the Bible should have free course in the schools of youth; and its commanding authority should be acknowledged, from the humblest seminary, to the most learned university. Owing to the reigning depravity of the human heart, education is fitted to become a powerful instrument of evil, if it is not purified and directed by the Holy Scriptures. What did education without the Bible do for France? It produced wide-spread and withering infidelity, and

led to national perfidy and crime, to an extent hitherto unknown in the history of nations. And to take an illustration still nearer ourselves, education in the south of Ireland, where the Scriptures are excluded, has only served to prepare a people the better for the deeds of the demagogue and the incendiary, and to reduce society almost to complete disorganization. Contrast with the degraded condition of this portion of the population of this country, that of the people of the Northern Province, and the difference is almost that between unsubdued barbarity and civilization. Inquire we the reason of this marked distinction, and we feel constrained to ascribe it, above all other modifying causes, to the want or the enjoyment of a Scriptural education. Our Protestant fathers, when in poverty, or cherishing the truth amidst trial and persecution, maintained an unyielding regard to the Scriptures, as the foundation of law, and the basis of all education. The heritage which they transmitted to us, at the expense of suffering and blood, has continued to yield countless blessings to their posterity; and while other parts of the land are involved in darkness or polluted with crime, the Northern Province stands forth conspicuous, as a striking illustration of the advantage of a Scriptural Education.”*

The VALUE of Scriptural Education might be illustrated by a variety of considerations; but this, after the statements already made, is unnecessary. Men of the most different views and characters are constrained to do homage to the principle. Statesmen, however they may legislate for the instruction of the people on low views of expediency, are compelled to admit the excellence of Bible education.† Christian philan-

* The Duty of Nations favoured with Divine Revelation to promote Scriptural Education—in Two Discourses—pp. 68—72.

† It is worthy of remark, that though the Scriptures are excluded from the Schools by the National System of Education for

thropists see that, without such training, their plans for the amelioration of the human race must prove abortive; and even the practice of those who are connected with idolatrous systems furnishes a powerful motive to lead Christians never to compromise the grand principle, but always to take the Scriptures as the basis and directory of all education. Heathen systems, such as the Brahminical and Buddhist in India, and that of Confucius in China, are maintained and perpetuated by the sacred books being taught in the schools, and the priesthood being the instructors of youth. The Koran is taught to all the youth in Mahometan countries. What a reproach that in many Christian lands, and especially in Protestant countries, where the purest faith is professed, the education in schools, higher and lower, from which the Scriptures are systematically excluded, should contrast so unfavourably with the early training of the young in Pagan countries, and of the followers of the Arabian Impostor!

In India, the experiment has been tried of education without the Scriptures, and of instruction as founded on the Word of God, and has brought out most decisive results. In the Government Schools and Colleges, the system was adopted of furnishing to the natives a full course of education, but wholly unconnected with Scriptural instruction, lest the prejudices of the Hindoos should be excited. The consequence has been that the educated youth of India, while their attachment to Brahminical idolatry is shaken, generally become infidel, and study with intense interest the writings of the most celebrated European Deists and Free-

Ireland, statesmen of all classes declare that they are to be employed in the Schools supported by the State-funds in England. Even the eccentric Lord Brougham, in his place in the House of Lords, has pleaded that the Bible is not a sectarian book, and that its daily use in the Schools should not be objected to by any who assume the name of Christian.

thinkers, in order to find weapons to assail Christianity. The eloquent pleadings and successful labours, on the other hand, of Dr. Duff and his excellent fellow-labourers, have convincingly shewn that mere secular education will never effect the removal of even the most absurd and monstrous superstitions, and that the civilization as well as the spiritual regeneration of India, can only be hoped for from education conducted on thorough Scriptural principles.*

3. If it is inquired, On whom the obligation arising from the Baptismal Engagement rests, to impart such an education to the youth of the Church? we reply,

1. It primarily and eminently devolves on **CHRISTIAN PARENTS.**

The Divine command to them is, "Provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."† Parents are the natural guardians of children, and they have the deepest interest in their training for future usefulness and happiness. From them their offspring derive a polluted nature, and from them they will learn, in the way of example, much of good or of evil, whether they attend to their education properly, or neglect it. Pa-

* A similar testimony is borne by the results of education in the Southern and Western parts of Ireland. The youth of Munster, who have received a classical and mathematical education, unaccompanied by Scriptural instruction, often become the leaders of secret societies, and the principals in perpetrating murders, and disturbing the peace of the country. It deserves, too, to be mentioned, that though several of the religious bodies that are employed in evangelical efforts in Connaught countenance the National System of Education, which excludes the Bible from schools, they are compelled to establish Scriptural Schools in connexion with their respective Missions, as being those alone which can afford a proper training for the youth that are to be freed from the degrading bondage of superstition and idolatry.

rents are under the highest and most sacred obligations to instruct their children—to develop the principles of their minds—improve their hearts and consciences—imbue them with proper habits, and train them to subserve the great end of their existence. They are, in truth, the first and grand instrumentality in all that pertains to a right education of their children. Cherishing a due sense of their responsibility in this matter, they can do for their children what no other human beings can accomplish. Even with limited attainments and opportunities, if they are thoroughly alive to the importance of education, and attend to it with sustained energy and diligence, they will impart instructions in childhood and youth, which will have more influence in moulding the character, and directing the future course of life, than any which their children will afterwards receive. Christian mothers have thus proved invaluable instructors of the young; and to them, the church and the world have been largely indebted for unfolding and directing the mental powers of many that have been eminent for intellectual attainments, as well as for distinguished virtue, and for all that is beneficial to society. In the Sacred Scriptures are recorded many bright examples of maternal excellence, and fidelity in imparting instruction, in connexion with the gracious habits, and future devotedness of public servants of God.

Parents should regard themselves as responsible for the right training of their children—for the direction and control of their whole education, and as themselves called to be the first and chief agency in this important business. There are some of the most essential parts of education which they can never perform by proxy—which cannot properly be deputed to others. Christian parents, as having pledged solemn vows in behalf of their children, to educate them for God and his church, should aim to be *painstaking* in this mat-

ter. They should consider the mental and moral training of their children as being eminently their work, for which they are before all others accountable. This is evidently of far higher concern than the things which only pertain to the body. No plea of want of ability, or of other necessary engagements, will exonerate parents from this duty. It is not high attainments, so much as a due sense of responsibility, and of the vast importance of the work that will qualify parents for the right instruction of their children. Earnest anxiety for the spiritual welfare of their children, diligent, painstaking, steady and persevering exertions, and faithful instructions, enforced by a consistent example, will accomplish what the highest abilities will fail to achieve, when such habits are wanting. It is an observable fact that the best trained families are frequently those of parents in humble circumstances, and of moderate abilities, but who have been distinguished for true religion.

God designs that all parents should have time and opportunity for the work which He allots to them. They only require a will resolutely bent to seek, by all possible means, their children's welfare and usefulness. They should redeem time for this purpose, and, like the Israelitish parent, follow up the religious instruction of their children, when they sit in the house, or walk by the way—when they lie down or rise up. Education thus commenced early, and pursued steadily will, under the Divine blessing, mould the mind and induce good habits, as well as impart knowledge, which will prove useful and abiding. As the twig is bent, such is the inclination of the tree, and according to the preparation of the soil, and the quality of the seed sown, so may we expect the future harvest.

Christian parents, above all, should ever regard themselves as charged with the *religious instruction* of their children. To promote this is a principal part of

their sacramental vow; and without such instruction, neither can the moral evil of their nature be eradicated, nor the great end of their being answered. The religious training of the young is the paramount concern of parents, from which they cannot be relieved, and which every solemn consideration of duty and interest urges them to seek to accomplish. Expensive charitable establishments for education must fail of their object, when they remove the religious training of children from the hands of their parents; and even Sabbath-school teachers should aim to supplement the labours of parents, instead of superseding them. Ministers themselves are but helps to parents in the training of their children, and should co-operate with them in promoting their spiritual welfare and usefulness. They should ever impress on parents a sense of their responsibility, and in no respect, even in feeding the lambs of the flock, act as if they took the religious training of children out of the hands of their natural instructors, or made their work of secondary interest or importance. Christian fathers and mothers have the highest motives to charge themselves always with the religious education of their children. Where the means of grace are faithfully dispensed, it has been said that, in general, the conversion of the young may be traced to parental prayers, instructions, and example, and their edification and establishment to the ministry. What an important object this for Christian parents ever to set before them! What an encouragement to self-denying and diligent exertion—that they may be the means of rescuing their children from ruin, and of introducing them to the kingdom of God! A reward this of inestimable value—a blessing to children and an honour to themselves, compared with which, the riches and diadems of a universe are less than nothing and vanity.

Finally, The engagement of Christian parents re-

quires them to direct all other parts of their children's education on Scriptural principles, and so as to subserve the advancement of God's glory, and their eternal salvation. Some parts of their children's education they may of necessity be called to depute to others. All parents are not able to teach their children all things which they need to know; and some that have the ability have not the leisure from other necessary duties. Home education is not always the best, even where it is attainable. The schoolmaster in his place is as needful for the instruction of the young, as the parent himself or the minister. But as parents are accountable for leading their children in the whole way in which they should go, it is incumbent on them to see that, in those parts of their education which they depute to others, they choose proper instructors—guard against every thing that is obstructive to right religious instruction—prepare them for serving God in the business of life, and aim to secure their souls' salvation. Many things that are comprised in a course of modern education, both in common schools, and in the higher seminaries, require the careful observation of Christian parents; and not a few, as interfering with the religious discipline of the mind, if this attention were duly given, should be at once rejected.

After what we have said on the subject of Scriptural Education, it need scarcely be added, that parents, desirous of entertaining a due sense of their baptismal vow in behalf of their children, should always prefer Scriptural Seminaries for their children, and should see that all their education be based on the Word of God, directed by its authority, and imbued with its holy and purifying principles. The fear so strongly expressed by Luther, "That the Higher Seminaries from which the Bible was excluded might prove great gates to hell," may justly be entertained by Christian parents in our day. In many public institutions of

learning the Scriptures are not permitted to enter; and while the youth, who from their position are afterwards to influence society, are trained for years to the study of the polluting fables and perverted morals of the Heathen Classics, and the intellect is educated, without any means being taken, either by parents or teachers, to improve the heart, or to impress upon the conscience the rule of duty, we need not wonder that many of the young so trained, afterwards become sceptical or infidel in their principles, or callous to all religion and depraved in their morals, and follow courses ruinous to themselves, and pernicious to society. Let parents be timeously aware of the dangers to which their children are exposed, and sedulously watch, direct, and control all parts of their education. Such attention will be eminently beneficial to themselves. It will expand their minds—give them a deeper sense of their responsibility, interest them in all their children's pursuits, and will prepare the rising youth for distinguished usefulness. Thus Christian parents may, either while living, or after they have been removed by death, be honoured through their children, as Zeb- edee and his wife are named with distinction in the Scriptures, through their sons, the apostles of Christ. The reflex honour thus conferred upon parents by children over whom they have faithfully watched, and whom they have carefully trained, is the reward of fulfilling the Baptismal engagement, and of discharging aright parental duties.

2. The obligation to educate aright the youth committed to her care, DEVOLVES LIKEWISE UPON THE CHURCH.

The command to "teach" her children God's statutes, and to train them in the way in which they should go, is addressed to the church. Her appointed mission is to "disciple all nations," and to make them

acquainted with all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. The great duty of Christian education the world neither will nor can perform. We admit, that the education of the young is an important office of the State, since the obligations and duties of citizens cannot be fully required or rightly performed, while the young are allowed to grow up in ignorance, and are not trained to proper intellectual and moral habits. As long, however, as the State is not modelled according to the Word of God—while it is not, in the proper sense of the term, a CHRISTIAN STATE, it cannot educate the young on right principles, or for a right end. The nature and design of Christian education, as combining morals with religion at every step—as enforcing every duty by Divine authority—as aiming to eradicate the natural enmity of the heart—and as rendering every pursuit subservient to the promotion of God’s glory, and the attainment of the soul’s salvation, worldly Statesmen will not appreciate, and they may not therefore be expected to educate the people on proper grounds. Something they may do to civilize and refine human society, and to promote intellectual knowledge and advancement; and these things, as long as the masses of society remain in rebellion against Christ, and reject his authority and laws, are not only useful, but necessary for the restraint and benefit of communities. But while Civil States continue “kingdoms of this world,” we are not warranted to expect from them any adequate provision for the Christian education of the young.

Whatever the Civil Power may claim to do in the business of State-education, it must be apparent to any who have duly considered the positive and frequent commands of the Scriptures, and the extensive import of the Baptismal Covenant, that the church is solemnly charged by her Divine Head with the education of her baptized members. This can never be safely left

to civil rulers to supply by a state provision—nor to schoolmasters, over whom the church has no control, nor even to parents themselves exclusively. The church is the nursing mother of a holy seed, and their godly upbringing is a legitimate and first object of her care. Hers it is to hold up the Bible as the true basis and manual of instruction, and to point to the Spirit of God as the only efficient Guide and Teacher,—to fit and qualify the young to fill whatever sphere He has allotted them, for the glory of God, with benefit to themselves, and with advantage to the church, and to civil society. It is hers to instruct and direct Christian parents, in relation to the education of their children, and to take account of their performance of this important part of parental duties. There is much, besides, which the church may and ought to do, in providing for, directing and controlling the whole education of her youthful members. No part of their education can she, without dereliction of solemn duty, consent to place beyond her supervision and control, or to leave altogether to those who cannot conduct it on right principles. Whenever the church has declined from her “first love,” become lukewarm, and ceased to do her first works, she has become indifferent to the proper training of the young. At least some parts of it she has—to ease herself of an arduous burden, contentedly left wholly to others, and manifested no concern on the subject. On the contrary, the sure indication of revival in the church is a lively and jealous concern about the instruction of the young—no part of it being overlooked; and all the church, ministers, office-bearers, and members, feeling a hearty personal interest in the matter.*

* Of the position that revival in the church is indicated by an earnest attention to the scriptural education of the young, we have a striking illustration in the proceedings of the Free Church of Scotland, and in the recent history of the American Presby-

The baptismal engagement certainly implies that when a pledge is exacted of parents to educate their children for God and for heaven, those to whom it is given will co-operate in the work. The baptized infant is not only dedicated to God, but is introduced to the church, and entered there as in Christ's school, to

terian Church. In the former case, amidst extraordinary efforts, requiring a vast expenditure, to sustain the ministry, build churches, erect manses, no less a sum than £50,000 has been raised in a few years to build school-houses, and a sum, amounting to several thousands, is contributed annually by the congregations of the Free Church to provide salaries for the teachers, support Normal Institutions, and sustain the schools. It is most gratifying, too, to observe, that not only the *quantity*, but the *quality* of the education furnished by the Free Church of Scotland is such as to meet the approval of those who contend for the religious training of the young. The church regards herself as chargeable with the direction and supervision of the education of all the young committed to her care; the instruction communicated in the Free Church Schools is a sound literary education, based upon the Word of God—the religious character of the teachers is duly attended to—and leading men of the Free Church are nobly pleading for the establishment of a thorough scriptural, yet unsectarian system of National Education for Scotland. Since the disruption of the Presbyterian Church in America, in 1837, and the return of the orthodox portion to a nearer conformity to the Westminster Standards, and especially since the successful attempts of the Popish party in the State of New York to engross a part of the School Fund, the Old School Presbyterian Assembly have taken vigorous measures to pervade the entire large body which they superintend with a thorough Scriptural education. In their plan of Parochial Schools, they propose to have a school in each congregation, in which, besides the usual elementary instruction, instruction shall be daily given in the Scriptures, and the Shorter Catechism; and to establish, likewise, in districts, higher seminaries, in which the more advanced youth shall be instructed in the Larger Catechism and the Confession of Faith. This is an example worthy of imitation everywhere. More vigorous and sustained efforts should be made by the church in the cause of scriptural education, to preserve her own baptized youth from evil influences that everywhere surround them, to train them for Christ's service, and to advance the kingdom of Christ throughout the world.

be trained for his service, and to reflect his moral likeness, and the purity of his truth. When the name of God is named upon him, he is at the same time surnamed with the name of Israel; and the holy fellowship into which he is brought, in its very nature, requires that all who pertain to it, should actively aid in bringing up a youthful immortal being, to walk worthy of God, and as an ornament and honour to the church. Ministers and office-bearers in the church are enjoined, as the test of their love to the Saviour, to *feed his lambs*. The members of the church are to pray for them—guard them from evil—set before them a constant and attractive example of godliness, and always labour that they may realize the grand privilege promised to them that are born in Zion. “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.” *

Of the things which the church may do for the education of the young within her pale, and which, by the Baptismal Covenant, we conceive she is solemnly bound to do—things which are certainly practicable, and which cannot safely be neglected—may be mentioned,—

First, The care of the education of all her baptized youth should be constantly entertained.

All those to whom the church administers baptism she accepts as disciples, and virtually consents and vows to be their instructor. That they should be without knowledge it is not good. The meanest and poorest of her members must not be overlooked; and no child should be suffered to grow up untaught, either in relation to divine things, or to the acquirements which are requisite to fit them for the business of human life. Nor are the children of richer members to be left to follow education, without the Church see-

* Isaiah liv. 13.

ing of what kind it is, and manifesting a tender concern in their progress and spiritual welfare. "Unsanctified human learning has done much harm in the Church," was the weighty remark made by a venerable minister to Halyburton, when a boy at school, which sank into the youthful heart, and afterwards influenced the life of that excellent man. The godly Rutherford, writing to a Christian mother—a lady of rank—expresses, in one of his "Letters," a desire to know the day that she would send her son to school, that he might seek him to be taught by the Well-Beloved. The Church's duty is to see that her youth be under proper instructors, and that the instructions given be conducive and not opposed to a "training in the way they should go." It is not knowledge of every kind that can safely be imparted to children with corrupt natures, and surrounded by a world of temptation. The grand maxim of all right education is, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding." The Church is bound to see that this is the beginning, middle, and end of the instruction of her baptized members. In such a good work, pleasant as it is profitable, should all co-operate. Expense should be cheerfully borne rather than that one child should be allowed to grow up uneducated. A lively interest taken by all in the instruction of the Church's children would have the most salutary effects upon the young themselves. In increased moral influence—revival and extension—the Church would reap an abundant reward. Her sons would rise up, and with the characteristic attachment of disciples to a devoted instructor, would call her blessed. "Instead of the fathers," she would take her "children, and make them princes throughout the earth."*

* Psalm xlv. 16.

Secondly, It deserves to be seriously considered whether the office of Doctor or Teacher might not be advantageously revived in the Church. This is expressly enumerated among the ascension-gifts of Christ, and among the orders of officers appointed in the Church, Ephes. iv. 11. It is joined with the stated ordinary office of "pastors," and not with such offices as were extraordinary. In the primitive churches, Doctors or Teachers existed as a distinct order; and ecclesiastical history bears testimony to the value of their labours in the training of the young, and the diffusion of sound learning and scriptural knowledge. The order of Doctors was recognized in the constitution and fundamental regulations of the Reformed Church of Scotland. In both the First and Second "Books of Discipline," provision is made for the general establishment and maintenance of Scriptural schools. The qualifications of the teachers of youth are declared; seminaries higher and lower are placed under the supervision of the Church; while the duty of the State, to co-operate in "the godly upbringing of the young is prescribed and defined.† The "Doctor" is associated

† In the opening of the Seventh Chapter of the First Book of Discipline, the following weighty statements are made respecting the necessity of schools for youth, and the nature of those which the Church should be careful to establish, "Seeing that God hath determined that his Kirk here on earth shall be taught not by angels but by men, and seeing that men are born ignorant of God, and of all godliness, and seeing also He ceases to illuminate men miraculously, suddenly changing them as He did the apostles and others in the primitive Kirk:—of necessity it is that your Honours be most careful for the virtuous education and godly upbringing of the youth of this realm, if either you now thirst unfeignedly for the advancement of Christ's glory, or yet desire the continuance of his benefits to the generation following; for as the youth must succeed to us, so we ought to be careful that they have knowledge and erudition, to profit and comfort that which ought to be most dear to us—to wit, the Kirk and spouse of our Lord Jesus."

with the pastor in the instruction of the ignorant, and in maintaining the government and order of the Church. He is regarded as an "Elder," and in relation to his special work, it is said, "Under the name and office of the Doctor, we comprehend also the order in schools, colleges, and universities, which has been from time to time carefully maintained, as well among the Jews and Christians, as among the profane nations."* It is evident from these statements, that our pious ancestors, in their laudable attempts to banish ignorance, and to imbue the whole community with sound learning and Scriptural knowledge, regarded the teachers of youth as men of a sacred character, and aimed to entrust the business of education to those alone over whom the Church had control, and in whom she had complete confidence. The Doctors were required to be persons who gave evidence of possessing "the gift of knowledge," and among the most important of their functions, "the exposition and application of Sacred Scripture" is particularly specified.

It might subserve the most salutary purposes to have the same order still in existence in the Church. The character of the Teacher will, to a great extent, influence for good or evil, those who are entrusted to his care for instruction. Education being not the mere development of the intellectual faculties, or the mere acquisition of temporal knowledge, but the culture of the mind, and the training and elevation of the immortal nature; and laying as it does the foundation of all knowledge in Scriptural and evangelical truth, † can never be properly entrusted to those who are

* Second Book of Discipline—Chapter V.

† This comprehensive view of the nature and design of Education, and of the necessity of its being based on Scripture and evangelical principle, is taken by the late Prime Minister of England.—See Speech of the Earl of Derby in the House of Lords, Friday, Feb. 27, 1852.

ignorant of the Gospel, and who have not an adequate sense of their solemn duties, and of the responsibility of their office. The Church, it is evident, can alone fully judge of these qualifications; and as she has a vital interest in the manner in which the young are educated, she should see to entrust the matter into the hands of suitable persons, and to honour those who are employed in it. One of her most valuable labours is to raise up well-qualified teachers of youth, and to cast the purifying salt into the nurseries of learning. Men of scriptural principle and godly character, with high literary acquirements, placed over the schools, and Doctors thoroughly fitted to expound and apply the Sacred Oracles in the higher seminaries, would be important auxiliaries to the Church in her great work of making known God's light and salvation to all nations. We have greater facilities and ampler means to obtain such instructors of youth, within the Church and under her control, than had our forefathers, when they cherished the noble design of making their native country distinguished among the nations for Scriptural light and sound learning. All that we need is to be awakened to a due sense of our solemn obligations, and of the value and greatness of the work; and of the immense benefits that will result from its faithful performance, to the interests of the Church now, and to future generations.

3. The Church is specially under obligation to provide for the *education of her future ministry*, and for training subordinate agents for evangelistic labours.

Christians are taught to regard the ministers of the Word as the "ascension-gifts" of the Saviour to his church: as "the glory of Christ" and the "messengers of the Churches," and as "stars" in the Redeemer's right hand. To give a succession of such labourers is the fruit of the peculiar love of Christ to the Church as his mystical Body, and an evidence of his

intense and unfailing care for her best interests. The members of the Church have important obligations to discharge in relation to the preparation of the ministry. While the Redeemer himself calls and qualifies his servants, and assigns them their posts of labour, the people who expect the blessing through such instrumentality are to seek the gift of approved labourers from Zion's exalted King, and they are to send them forth to their work, and yield them all encouragement and support in prosecuting it. The special injunction of the Saviour, as He directs the eyes of the disciples to fields white for the spiritual harvest is, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He would send faithful labourers into his harvest."* To obey this command, and pray in a right spirit, we must feel the pressing urgency and importance of the work to be done, and the value of suitable labourers, and we must employ all proper means to prepare them for the service and sustain them in it. Multitudes of able ministers of the word, and faithful public labourers are an eminent blessing to the Church, while a paucity of suitable instruments, and labourers destitute of suitable qualifications, are evidences of the Church being in a low state, and must be regarded as tokens, to some extent, of the Divine displeasure.

A principal duty involved in the baptismal engagement, on the part of the Church, is to seek prayerfully a succession of faithful labourers, to administer ordinances, and to strengthen the stakes and lengthen the cords of the sanctuary. The ancient church, even while enjoying the gift of prophecy, had "schools of the prophets," and the inspired history supplies evidence that these were supported by public contributions, and that they were objects of deep interest to the faithful in Israel. The primitive Churches, in the

* Matt. ix. 38.

early days of Christianity, regarded the preparation of youth for the ministry, and calling them forth to labour, as one of her principal functions. All the Reformed Churches, without exception, directed early and constant attention to this matter. Higher Seminaries, Colleges, and Universities, were established and supported liberally, for the training of labourers for the Church's public work. The most learned and devoted of God's servants were engaged as the instructors of youth who were designed for sacred offices: they were greatly honoured and liberally supported when employed in this work; and the Church generally indicated the liveliest concern for the adequate maintenance and efficiency of the public Seminaries. By entertaining this conviction, by this prayerful painstaking, and by such liberality displayed in preparing labourers, the Church made successful inroads upon the kingdom of darkness, and achieved her noblest conquests.

If the Church in later times has not been distinguished by spiritual activity within her pale, nor by successful efforts for the propagation of religion in the world, this may be ascribed, in a great measure, to the want of a proper sense of the value of the ministry. Hence adequate means are withheld for training labourers, and for sending them out and supporting them in their work. Little care has been taken to enlist educated youth in the Church's public service. Some who are otherwise qualified, but are destitute of means for the acquisition of human learning, are not encouraged, and the education of candidates for the ministry is left almost wholly in the hands of those who are not amenable to the Church's authority, who have no right views of the magnitude or ends of the sacred office, and who are utterly disqualified to impart spiritual instruction. It need not be told how criminal and suicidal is a course of this kind. If the education of

all her baptized youth is the solemn duty and proper business of the Church, much more is she under obligation to provide for the proper education of the ministry. The truth cannot be advanced in the world without a fit agency to declare it. The aids of human learning are needed, and previous preparation is absolutely required for the exposition and defence of the Gospel. If the Church lacks labourers for spreading the truth, and making known the light of her testimony throughout the nations, it is in consequence of her own sinful neglect. Alive to her own true interests, and seeking the blessing that is connected with holy zeal and prayerful activity, she should excite the young to give themselves to the Lord's public work, and provide all the means requisite for their careful preparation. Training schools for labourers of different kinds she should establish, and place over them able and devoted instructors. Colleges and Theological Seminaries for candidates for the ministry may be provided even by sections of the Church that are not distinguished for the number of their members, or the possession of worldly riches.

The Waldenses—those early and eminent witnesses—trained many labourers, and sent them far beyond their native valleys to distant parts of Europe, to propagate evangelical truth, even when they were despoiled of their goods by ruthless persecutors. The "Poor men of Lyons," trained for their work by the liberality of Peter Waldo, had adequate human learning, and extensive acquaintance with the Scriptures, and were most devoted and successful instruments for the propagation of the Gospel. The "Academy" over which Calvin presided at Geneva could boast of no large means of support, and many others established by the Reformed Churches in France, Scotland, and elsewhere, although enjoying little worldly patronage or

support, were yet eminent institutions for preparing devoted labourers for Christ's service.

The Church must return and do her first works, if she would possess polished instruments for the great work of the world's conversion. She must fervently pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth faithful labourers: she must encourage the young and others who appear suitable for the service: she must esteem it not a burden, but an honour and privilege, to provide for their training. She must enlist them in the service, assign them their fields of labour, and take a deep and prayerful interest in all their toils and trials and successes. This would be a beautiful exhibition of the Church's sense of the obligation of the baptismal engagement respecting her youthful members, and an eminent means of fulfilling her high mission to make known God's light and saving health to all nations." *

* Hooker justly remarks that "Religion without the help of a spiritual ministry is unable to plant itself."—*Eccl. Pol.*, b. v., ch. 6. Mosheim likewise observes, "That the best system of religion must necessarily either dwindle to nothing, or be egregiously corrupted, if it is not perpetually inculcated and explained by a regular and standing ministry."—*Eccles. Hist.*, Cent. 1, p. ii., ch. 2. "Not even," says Calvin, "is the light and heat of the sun, not even is meat and drink, so necessary for the support and cherishing of life, as the maintenance of the ministry of the Gospel Church on earth."—*Institutes of Christ. Rel.*, lib. 4., c. 3.

CHAPTER IX.

IMPROVEMENT OF BAPTISM, AND
ENCOURAGEMENTS ARISING FROM BAPTISMAL
DEDICATION.

MATTHEW HENRY justly says, “If Infant Baptism were more conscientiously improved, it would be less disputed.” An ordinance so fraught with spiritual meaning, and holding forth so manifold and eminent privileges as Baptism, certainly demands of those who have been admitted to it, a special improvement. Infants are unconscious of what is done for them at the time they are presented to God and his church; but as in the case of those who are born heirs to a valuable property, or destined early to an important and responsible station or office, so it is required that those who are claimed as “God’s Heritage” should be early instructed in the nature of their high calling, and in its weighty obligations, and that they themselves should be led to improve aright their distinguished privileges. If the child of a good man, or the son of a distinguished scholar, or patriot, or philanthropist, is expected early to discover a sense of the advantages which he has enjoyed, and to walk worthy of his parent, how much more should those who, by their baptism, are separated from the rest of the world, and designated as children of God, walk worthy of Him who has called them to his kingdom and glory! The first great matter to be taught the children of the Church—comprehensive of all that is most important for the young to know—is the nature and obligation of the covenant of their youth; and the right improvement of their baptismal dedication may be said to be the beginning of all that is excellent in character, as it is the purification and elevation of their whole future life.

Our baptism should be specially improved, as it is an ordinance of grace; and if no concern is entertained to realize the blessings which it is designed to convey, this will not only be justly reckoned sinful neglect and contempt of a holy institution, but will, besides, lead to the forfeiture of the benefits which it was appointed to confer. As implying, moreover, a professed dedication to God, it must be the highest affront to the Divine Majesty virtually to deny his right to us, and practically to disown the solemn engagement.

Many, it is to be lamented, even in the visible church, do not consider their obligation, and make no right improvement of their baptism. This arises from the low views that are prevalent respecting the ordinance itself. It is regarded merely as an external rite of long standing, to be observed from custom, or a sense of propriety, while its spiritual meaning is overlooked, and the obligation to improve it is not once considered. Others, again, view it as the assumption of a Christian name and profession, without having any right views as to what constitutes Christian character. And a large number, while they understand something of the nature and import of the ordinance, through the power of sin and the deceitfulness of the human heart, do not yield themselves to God, and have no real relish for the spiritual blessings of the Covenant. The majority of professors, it is to be feared, rank in one or other of these classes. Hence their baptism is not improved, and instead of reaping from it eminent advantages, their neglect incurs deserved and aggravated Divine chastisements.

The due improvement of baptism, on the other hand, may be regarded as the first duty of the young, who have been dedicated to God in infancy, and as embracing the whole subsequent course of a godly life. It brings with it early and eminent advantages—imparts a healthful tone to the spirit and disposition, and

influences for good the future relations and conduct; and as being the fulfilment of sacred engagements, it opens the way to the enjoyment of manifold blessings. The due consideration of baptismal vows, and the desire early cherished to pay them, are the fruit of special divine favour; and to act afterwards under the impression of being devoted to God, indicates the progress of the work of grace, and is followed by the happiest results.

The Westminster Divines, in the answer to the 167th Question of the Larger Catechism, give this significant and comprehensive account of the improvement of baptism:—"The needful but much neglected duty of improving our baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long; especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others;—by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein;—by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of and walking contrary to the grace of baptism and our engagements;—by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament;—by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace;—and by endeavouring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ, and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same spirit into one body." From this admirable summary, it will be seen that Christian youth should be directed to consider the nature and design of their baptism as among the first and most important lessons which they should learn, or which are taught by serious reflection and an awakened conscience. Hence may they learn to appreciate aright the high privileges which

are sealed to them in baptism, and may be led to feel the weight and obligation of sacred vows. Thus, too, the young may be brought to repent of "the errors of their youth," and be urged to escape from the wrath to come. By considering their ways in the light of baptismal engagements, they may be led to discern the necessity and excellence of the Gospel refuge, and be drawn to the Saviour lifted up. The great blessings of redemption shadowed forth and sealed in the sacrament of baptism may, by serious prayerful consideration of the ordinance, be seen in their unspeakable value, and become objects of earnest desire. This sacred rite supplies numerous and all-powerful motives to the cultivation of every holy disposition, and to the practice of the most important duties. By reflecting on our baptism, we are excited to humility, brotherly love, and active benevolence; and from it we may derive spiritual comfort, and the assurance of hope. In fine, the young, by due consideration of their baptism, may be made sensible of their obligation to the performance of all duty, and may derive incentives to the cultivation of universal holiness.

In improving their baptism, the children of professed Christians should,

FIRST, COME EARLY TO SERIOUS REFLECTION, AND SHOULD BETIMES CONSIDER THE OBLIGATIONS ARISING FROM THEIR INFANTILE DEDICATION.

Jewish children of the Old Testament church are represented as inquiring at their parents respecting divine ordinances—"What mean ye by this service?" and parents are enjoined to be at special pains to give them full instruction on the subject. The inquiry implies that the minds of the young were early awakened to ponder the nature and design of religious institutions; and that parents, the natural instructors of their children, were to hold themselves ready to satisfy their craving for such information. Every thing should

be done to encourage the young of Christian parents to cherish the same spirit, and to propose similar inquiries concerning religious ordinances with which they are conversant. Parents, by directing the thoughts of their children to the character of divine institutions, and by familiar explanations of their meaning and design, may excite such a spirit; and the young themselves should begin betimes to consider seriously their position, and what God designed for them, both in relation to privilege and duty, by bringing them into connexion with holy ordinances. Children are generally characterized by an inquisitive disposition; and they are capable of receiving impressions from the administration of religious ordinances which they witness, and of understanding their import when properly explained, to a greater extent than is generally imagined. It is matter of observation, that very little children, when present at the public dispensation of baptism, have their attention arrested, and more frequently talk of the ordinance than of any thing else that they witness on the occasion. This presents an opportunity which should never be allowed to pass, without telling children of their early dedication to God, and the meaning of the various parts of the ordinance, and without inculcating the duties and the powerful motives to their performance which it so admirably furnishes. To the young, awakened to serious reflection, nothing is better fitted to minister important instruction, and to impress the mind in favour of practical religion than the ordinance of baptism. The thought of having been in infancy surrendered to God—the grace and condescension of God in taking notice of creatures so helpless, and in appointing a solemn rite for them as a means of acceptance and blessing—the affecting view given in it of their natural guilt and defilement—the symbol of the Redeemer's precious blood—their dedication to God, and admission to the fellowship of his people—

and the pledge given in the most solemn manner for their religious training—all these, when duly pondered, are calculated to impress the youthful heart, and to enforce upon the young the obligation to be decidedly religious. The first right impulse of youth is to feel and say, “I am and must be the Lord’s;” and nothing is better fitted to prompt them to such a decision, than due reflection on an ordinance in which they were devoted to God, and in which He, in the most condescending manner, claimed them as his. If there is any way in which an engagement to be the Lord’s can be felt impressing the heart and conscience, none would appear to be better adapted than serious consideration of the baptismal covenant.

Secondly, STRIVING AFTER CONVERSION, AND RENOUNCING YOUTHFUL VANITIES AND SINS.

Baptism we have shown to be symbolical of regeneration. The washing with water points to the application of the blood of Christ, and forcibly reminds the baptized that they must be “born of water and of the Spirit,” if they would enter the kingdom of God. In allusion to the element employed in the Christian rite, we are said to be “saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Ghost.” * As circumcision denoted “the putting away of the sins of the flesh,” and the renovation of the heart, so baptism primarily refers to a spiritual change of heart, and transformation of life; and without a reference to such a change, it would be destitute of all proper meaning. The young should begin betimes to reflect upon their state, and to ponder the solemn inquiry whether they have passed from death unto life, or are yet dead in trespasses and sins. To an immortal being, at any stage of his history, this inquiry should appear most interesting and momentous. If unrenew-

* Titus iii. 5.

ed, he is guilty, condemned, and miserable—estranged from God—under the power of the destroyer—enslaved to his own heart's lusts—adding to his transgression daily, and advancing forward to the retribution of a lost eternity. If he has become the subject of renewing grace, he has been translated into the family of God—enlisted in a service the most ennobling, and rendered heir to a glorious and everlasting kingdom. There is no intermediate state. We are either aliens from God, and exposed to his dreadful wrath and curse, or we are spiritually risen with Christ, and “created anew unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.” Is there any subject that deserves the consideration of the young above this? Issues the most momentous, both for the present life and for the life to come, depend upon its settlement.

As long as the young remain unregenerate, they are rebels against God, and exposed to impending ruin; if they continue in this condition, they must live unblest, and at death go to dwell with unquenchable burnings. On the other hand, the great change in conversion is the basis of all that is excellent in character, and conducts to the enjoyment of all happiness here and hereafter. Baptized youth should early lay to heart these things. They should plead with God, that as, by their baptism, they became *professedly* his, they may, by regeneration and adoption, become his in *reality*. They should think seriously how fearful it is to be “strangers from the covenant of promise”—without God, and without hope in the world—and they should be in earnest in fleeing from the wrath to come. The Scriptural agency and means of regeneration they should attentively consider, and faithfully employ; cherishing, at the same time, the heartfelt concern that they may result in their translation from the power of darkness to the kingdom of

God. They should earnestly plead for the Spirit to quicken; the Word should be prayerfully read as the instrument by which we become new creatures, and ordinances should be attended, as appointed means of grace and salvation. The evidences and fruits of regeneration should be frequently pondered; and the young should never rest satisfied till it is made clear to the conscience that “they are new creatures in Christ”—that “old things are passed away, and all things are become new.”

Baptism significantly expresses what is inseparable from regeneration—the renunciation of all ways of sin and departure from God. The “old man and his deeds” must be laid aside, if we would put on the “new man.” By baptism, children are engaged to serve the Lord in newness of life. If we would be disciples of Christ, we must forget our father’s house, and our own people—deny ourselves, and forsake all that we have. The young, remembering their baptismal covenant, and that they have taken the designation of children of God, must forsake youthful thoughtlessness and folly. They must give up former companions and pursuits, and having solemnly named Christ’s name in their early dedication and subsequent recognition of it, they should “depart from all iniquity.” All real honour and blessing are connected with such self-renunciation and holy separation. “Come out from among them and be ye separate, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” * Although a separation from youthful follies and vain companions may take place, where there is no real change of heart, yet it is not unfrequently a preparation for the new birth, and a means, in the hand of the Spirit, conducing to regeneration. And when a

* 2 Cor. vi. 19.

person has been renewed, and taken into the family of God, the habitual renunciation of ways sinful or doubtful is one of the most clear and decisive evidences that he is the Lord's. "I thought upon my former way," &c. "Depart from me, all that are evil-doers, for I purpose to obey the commandments of my God." "I am companion to all them that fear and obey thee." *

Thirdly, BY YIELDING THEMSELVES WHOLLY TO GOD, AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN HIS SERVICE.

The baptismal rite, in every view of it, implies God's right of propriety and possession of those who partake of it. The promise, "I will be a God to thy seed," pertains to the children of believers. God graciously sets the seal of his covenant in their flesh, and claims them as specially his. A main part of a right improvement of the ordinance of baptism is for the young to recognize early God's right, and actually to devote themselves to Him. They are urged to this by the reiterated calls, commands, and promises of holy Scripture. The Redeemer takes a peculiar interest in the lambs of the flock; and by the most affecting considerations and gracious offers allures them to himself: "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."† By such commands and assurances, the young are impressively taught that the great design of their early dedication was that they might be the Lord's, and that all their interest and honour lie in being devoted to his service. By baptism, they were, like the infant Samuel, "lent to

* Ps. cxix. 59—69.

† Jer. iii. 4; Romans vi. 18; Prov. viii. 17.

the Lord," and pledged as long as they live to be his. This relation is inconceivably dignified—this service honourable beyond expression. In allusion to the element used in baptism, and the mode of its application, the great promise of the Spirit is given to believers and their seed, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."* The effect is a ready and joyful surrender of themselves to God, "One shall say I am the Lord's." This self-dedication, baptized youth should make early, and they should in the whole course of their lives, evidence it, by cheerfully and devotedly serving the Lord. The Hebrew servant who refused to go free on the year of release, had his ear bored through with an awl, at the door-posts of the house, and remained a servant to his master for ever. Baptism significantly pledges its subjects to the service of the most glorious Master, in a similar manner. By voluntary consent and hearty recognition, the young come to the Church as pre-engaged servants, and in love to Christ, declare that they are his to serve him for ever. How blessed the relation to be a child of God—a servant of the King of glory! How honourable his service! "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." His service is perfect freedom, and in keeping his commandments there is a great reward. Early decision on the Lord's side, and active engagement in the work of promoting his glory secure to the young a crown of honour, and are the path to the enjoyment of all blessing. Distinguished servants of God, such as Matthew Henry and Jonathan Edwards, Brainerd and Payson, have left behind them the record of eminent usefulness, as the blessing from above, which flowed from the early personal renewal of their baptismal dedication,

* Isaiah xliv. 6.

and from their early devoting themselves to the service of God.

Fourthly, BAPTISM IS TO BE IMPROVED BY ITS SUBJECTS IN ALL THEIR SUBSEQUENT LIFE.

There is no condition or event or circumstance of human life, in which the baptized may not draw from the covenant of their infancy motives for godly living—for Christian activity, support, and consolation. The baptized ought to confess with contrition of heart how remiss they have been, and how neglectful in improving their baptismal privileges and engagements. They should acknowledge too the condescension and faithfulness of God, in supplying them with valuable privileges, as resulting from their being claimed as his heritage, and the actual fulfilment of his promises to those who trust in him. The whole life of faith may be promoted by a due consideration of the baptismal engagement. The young may derive strength for the mortification of sin, and quickening of grace, from the death and resurrection of Christ, into which they were baptized.* Especially in the time of temptation, our baptism may be of singular use, in resisting the tempter, and working for us deliverance. The proper improvement of the ordinance will enable to overcome the world. By baptism, we have been brought out and become separate. God that claims them as his, is pledged to provide for the wants of his servants, and they may therefore serve him without undue carefulness or fear. We have all reason to be content with the disposal of Divine Providence, and to be satisfied with his sovereign allotment. All is arranged in infinite wisdom, and must work together for good.

Thus, too, we may be enabled to resist the devil, to escape from his wiles, and to triumph over all his temptations and power. God has the exclusive right to us,

* Romans vi. 3.

and all that we are and have, as we have been in infancy given over to Him. When we are tempted to sin, we should remember that we have been called and appointed to be a holy and peculiar people. If we are tempted to doubt or despair, we should take encouragement from God's early claim, and the confirmation of his covenant given to us in our infancy. And if we are in danger of being drawn to indolence or neglect, we should call to mind that we were solemnly pledged before many witnesses to serve God with our bodies and spirits which are his.

In all afflictions and trials, we may from our baptism gather motives for support and comfort; and we may hence, too, grow up to a blessed assurance and joyful hope of salvation. Devoted and claimed as God's servants from the earliest years, we should aim to keep the fellowship of his church—the one body into which we were baptized, and to abound in his service to the end. We may thus cherish the humble but joyful hope, that He who marked us early as his servants will preserve and sustain us in his work, accept of our feeble services, and fulfil to us his blessed word, "Where I am, there shall my servant be."

In fine, all the duties of our holy religion will be more faithfully and vigorously performed when viewed in connexion with the baptismal engagement, as all spiritual privileges will be thereby enhanced. The baptized are bound to the *daily prayerful study of the word of God*, as they are called to walk by it as a light to their feet, and a lamp to their path. Thus alone will they learn to know all things whatsoever the Saviour has enjoined, that they may do his commandments—the great duty which is immediately connected with baptism. Prayer is inculcated as the grand business of life, as baptism presents the strongest motives and encouragements to the duty. God has special delight in the early prayers of the young. Josiah

is commended because he sought the Lord, while his heart was yet tender. It is twice recorded of Samuel while a child, as worthy of special observation, that he “ministered to the Lord,” and it is added, “The Lord revealed himself to Samuel.”* Children were baptized in the name of the Father, and therefore may they draw near to him as a Father, waiting to be gracious. They were baptized in the name of the Son, who is their Advocate and Intercessor in prayer; and they were baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, who can help their infirmities, and make intercession in them, with groanings that cannot be uttered. What encouragement is thus furnished to the young to pour out their hearts to God, and to expect the fulfilment of his gracious assurance, that “whatsoever they ask the Father in Christ’s name shall be given them!” The duty of seeking early the fellowship of the Church, and of walking worthily in it, is also enjoined by baptism—for we are in baptism incorporated into one body—become the children of Zion, and are taught to seek all our “well-springs” there. To honour parents, and receive the counsels of religious instructors, is impressed on the young by their early dedication, as the due discharge of such duties lies at the foundation of all subsequent usefulness and happiness. Advancement in religious knowledge, growth in grace, and the cultivation of Christian tempers and dispositions are likewise inculcated by baptism; and impressive motives are supplied from this ordinance to walk in all holy obedience. Being itself a seal of the Covenant, it opens the way to the enjoyment of all chartered spiritual privileges, as it serves to guarantee and confirm their possession. In it the God of all grace gives us “all things richly to enjoy.” By significant symbols, He gives us Christ, and He virtually assures us that “with him He will

* 1 Samuel ii., iii. 1.

freely give us all things." Presenting to us a goodly heritage, and abundant spiritual provision, He says to the baptized, "Open thy mouth, and I will fill it." Brought to his house, and admitted to his table in his kingdom, they are encouraged to expect all the good of the Covenant, as the ordinance of baptism supplies the strongest arguments to plead for its full enjoyment — "Lord, I am thine; save me." "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; He will give grace and glory, and withhold no good thing."*

The *Motives* that should especially constrain the youth of the Church early to recognize their baptism, and to improve it by entering decidedly upon a religious life, are manifold and powerful—of these the following deserve to be seriously pondered:—

1. *The responsibility of baptized children is peculiarly solemn and weighty.*

The enjoyment of spiritual privilege implies a special obligation to the duties of religion. The Divine rule of judgment is, "To whom much is given, from them shall much be required." The young of Christian families have been made partakers of privileges of no ordinary kind. They have been entrusted with many talents, and these the most valuable, and for their improvement they are solemnly responsible. They were born in Zion, and were subjects of prayer from the earliest period of their existence. By their baptism they were publicly devoted to God, and introduced into the number of his disciples. Sacred pledges were given and received for their religious training. From childhood they have been instructed out of the Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, and have listened to the faithful preaching of the Gospel. They have been separated from the world lying in wickedness, and have united with God's people in the

* Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

hallowed scenes of religious worship. Participation in such distinguished privileges, entails a degree of responsibility on which it behoves the young frequently to reflect, and supplies the strongest motives to decision and activity in the work of religion. The misimprovement of these advantages will incur the high displeasure of Him who confers them, and must issue in aggravated misery. "Take the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents; for to every one that hath shall be given; and to him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he seemeth to have." "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth." If the young would escape this fearful doom, and obtain the reward of the faithful, they should always entertain a deep sense of their responsibility, and employ it as a propelling motive to lead them to Christian activity and devotedness.

2. *To defer to recognize the baptismal engagement is an aggravated sin, and of most dangerous consequence.*

One of Satan's most powerful temptations addressed to those who come in contact with the profession of religion is to lead them to be undecided and to procrastinate. The youth of the Church are peculiarly assailed with it, and the principal and most potent devices of the enemy are employed to induce them to defer being religious till a future period. They are tempted to this, by the indecision of others, and by the dread of the reproach of singularity. They entertain the idea, so congenial to the natural heart, that to be devoted to religion is incompatible with pleasure; and like the slothful servant, they say in their hearts, "I know thee that thou art an austere man." All this is evil in itself, and is followed by the most disastrous consequences. It implies contempt of God's authority—it indicates the prevailing love of sin—it is an open refusal of the baptismal engagement—while the momen-

tous concerns of the soul and eternity are suspended on an uncertain future. The danger of such a course is manifold. It cannot be but most displeasing to God. It is virtually saying to Him, "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thee." Like Israel of old, the young who were admitted to the privilege of baptism, thus declare they will have none of God. They prefer the love and pursuit of sin to his favour and service; and the proposal to repent and reform at some future period is, in reality, a rejection of the Divine claims upon the homage of the heart and life. Need it seem strange, that those who act thus should be given up to their own hearts' lusts, and left to wander vainly in their own counsels?

The depravity of the nature, if not early checked, gathers strength and vigour with our growth. The mind gradually loses its delicacy of sentiment and feeling; conscience becomes callous, and the heart is hardened. If first warnings are unheeded, and early religious counsels are disobeyed, the heart is rendered less susceptible of receiving right impressions; religious restraints are readily thrown aside, and the individual is prepared for launching away into a career of folly and dissipation. Repentance and conversion become more improbable, the longer they are deferred; and numerous mournful facts attest that to the young acting thus, the enjoyment of salvation at any subsequent period becomes more hopeless. Given over to youthful lusts, on the indulgence of which their heart was bent, they become formalists or hypocrites, and at last are consigned to utter rejection and ruin. When the means of grace are faithfully dispensed, the larger number of those who are converted are awakened in youth. If, therefore, baptized children do not early profit by the preaching of the word, and other religious privileges to which they have access, there is reason to fear that they may not afterwards be benefited. The

young should take warning in time. The early and diligent improvement of baptism will save them from the rocks of danger on which others have split, and rescue them from the perils by which others have been overwhelmed in ruin. It may be the means of delivering them from death, and directing their steps to walk in the way of the living.

3. *Eminent advantages and privileges flow from the early recognition and improvement of baptism.*

To be decided and earnest is a principal feature of mental and moral excellence, and is inseparable from success in attaining a desired object. Especially is decision in religion of inestimable value to the young. It is a shield against temptation—it moulds and elevates the character, and imparts a proper tone and direction to the pursuits of life. Spiritual as well as temporal blessings are the promised reward of youthful devotedness. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Freedom from a state of irresolution and indecision is to the young no inconsiderable advantage.* And to be brought into fellowship with the friends of God—to enjoy an interest in their prayers—and to be led, through intercourse with them, to acquaintance with heavenly objects, and to the holy exercises of religious worship, are benefits which baptized youth can never too highly appreciate. The young become useful by becoming pious. None others “serve their generation,” but those who, devoting their hearts and lives to religion, serve it “by

* It is the judicious remark of Foster that ‘the decided man has this advantage above others, that he will bend circumstances to his will; and persons perceiving his inflexibility of purpose, will move out of his way to make room for him.’—*Essays on “Decision of Character.”*

the will of God." The decided piety of children is the highest comfort and honour to Christian parents; it gladdens the hearts of ministers, and cheers the faithful who prefer the good of Zion to their chief earthly joy. It powerfully confutes the cavils of infidels, and silences gainsayers; and, not unfrequently, it has proved a blessed means of revival to the church.

Substantial and enduring happiness will be found by the young inseparable from the due improvement of the baptismal engagement. Satisfied early with divine mercy, they will rejoice all their days in God.* *"True religion is peace, comfort, and felicity; and separate from it, there is nothing that deserves the name of happiness."* It cures the evils of the heart, by subduing and eradicating those disorderly passions and inclinations, which create so much dissatisfaction and misery in human society. It confers "the witness of a good conscience," and enthrones in the heart the peace that "passeth all understanding." The privileges, graces, and duties of religion are all sources of diversified and exalted pleasures—pleasures that never satiate nor weary, which no enemy or trial can take away. This is a happiness continually augmented, as the capacity for relishing and enjoying it expands. The pleasures of true religion are pleasures for life in all its changes and circumstances. They yield support and triumph in death; and in the future world, in their vast increase and endless enjoyment, they become "rivers of pleasure, and joys at God's right hand for evermore." What powerful motives and encouragements have baptized youth, from all this, to improve their early dedication, by choosing deliberately God's ways, and by resolving, like an illustrious servant of God, "Never henceforward till they die, to act as if

* Psalm xc. 15.

they were any way their own, but entirely and altogether God's." *

CHAPTER X.

ABUSES OF BAPTISM—NEGLECT—APOSTACY.

THE best things, through man's corruption, are liable to be perverted and abused; and when they are so, according to a received maxim, "they become the worst." † Among these, the ordinances and institutions of religion, though of divine appointment, instead of being employed for holy ends, have been, through ignorance, misunderstood, and have been resorted to for purposes carnal, corrupt, and wicked. Of this perversion of holy ordinances, we have a striking instance in the history of the Jewish Church, and an example still more gross in the Church of Rome—the Antichristian apostacy of the New Testament. In the former case, a people that were peculiarly God's—and to whom pertained the adoption, and the covenants, the giving of the law, and the oracles of God—by overlooking the spiritual import of institutions which were given them of God, and by resting on the mere outward observance, to the neglect of moral purity of heart and life, became the embittered enemies of the Messiah—long-promised, the Hope of their nation, and the glorious Substance of all the typ-

* See "Resolutions," by President Edwards. These remarkable *Resolutions* were written when the author was only *twenty years* of age; and being by him solemnly read and pondered once a week, through all his subsequent life, may be said to have been the directory for living of that truly eminent man.

† *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

ical rites that adumbrated his character, sufferings, and salvation. Every ordinance, even when they contended for its ritual observance, they misunderstood and perverted, and employed as a cloak to cover their wickedness, until they fell under the divine displeasure, in its most fearful manifestation, and were utterly given up and rejected. The Apostle Paul, in the tenth chapter of First Corinthians, adduces the conduct of ancient Israel, in abusing holy ordinances, and the punishment which followed, as a terrific warning to Christians in all ages. The deliverance at the Red Sea—their consecration to the observance of the Mosaic ordinances—their protection and provision in the wilderness—all referring to things spiritual that are substantially exhibited in Christ and in the Gospel, are enumerated as their high and distinguishing privileges, and they are represented as grossly abusing them by lusting after evil things—idolatry, fornication, tempting Christ, and murmuring. The apostle then significantly and solemnly adds, as speaking to those who enjoy gospel ordinances, “Now, these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (1 Cor. x. 1—12.) By the manifold corruptions of the Man of Sin, almost every ordinance of revealed religion has been polluted by human inventions, and applied for uses and ends altogether contrary to the Scriptural institution. Even where the errors of the Romish apostacy are disavowed, institutions that are spiritual and of divine prescription may be so abused by ignorance and unworthy motives, that, instead of being privileges, and means of conferring spiritual benefit, they may degenerate into a mere outward form, and their observance may incur the divine displeasure rather than conduct to the enjoyment of a blessing.

The abuses of baptism in our day, in all sections of the church, there is reason to fear, are manifold; and they are such as to demand the serious consideration of all who are concerned for the purity and efficacy of divine ordinances. Some of them are so gross that they amount to a base prostitution of a holy sacrament; while others betray ignorance and culpable indifference in relation to matters of the highest importance. The blessing which the ordinance is designed to confer is not earnestly sought, and consequently is not enjoyed. In instances not a few, the profanation of a sacred institution draws upon those who are chargeable with it deserved rebuke and chastisement. The following may be noticed as instances of the perversions of the ordinance, which are too common throughout the churches, and whose consequences cannot fail to be most injurious:—

1. *Baptism is abused by Superstition.*

Where Scriptural views are not entertained, and do not induce a godly practice, superstition will always more or less enslave the mind. The least inquiry and observation will satisfy a person, that even in Protestant churches superstitious notions are attached to the baptismal rite, and form to many the grand reason for its observance. By one class, it is thought to purge away all original sin. Others regard it as a kind of charm, of potent virtue, to preserve children from evil influence, and to protect them from danger. Some cherish the idea that children unbaptized are under the power of evil spirits; while others think they cannot possibly be saved without baptism. The mere external rite is all that is thought about—the observance of it is conceived to bring with it some undefined blessing, or to ensure the safety, temporal and spiritual, of the child. Cases are even known where the only avowed object of ignorant parents in seeking baptism for their children is that they may *thrive*. Such low and dishon-

ourable ideas respecting a holy institution are not only opposed to all scriptural views on the subject, but tend to degrade it exceedingly. The slavery of superstition is one of the most powerful and debasing that holds in bondage the human mind. The person who is under its power must walk in darkness, and can never know solid peace, nor entertain a joyful hope. Of this we have a striking instance in Luther. When a monk, and while rigidly observing ascetic rules, and submitting to the severest bodily mortifications, he was kept in continual fear, and was at times truly miserable. Ministers and others, who have the religious instruction of the people entrusted to them, are deeply responsible for the prevalence of superstitious views in relation to baptism. These, it is to be feared, are generated by the indiscriminate admission of persons of all classes and characters to the ordinance, and by its careless or perfunctory administration. The nature and design of the institution are not taught, and the obligation of the sacramental vow is neither explained nor enforced. In such cases, the spiritual guides of the people are greatly to blame, and the complaint of the prophet has too significant an application to many Christian teachers in our day—"The leaders of this people cause them to err." "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." The remedy for this abuse is the inculcation of Scriptural views of baptism. All pains should be taken to instruct parents in relation to its connexion with the covenant of grace—its spiritual significance, and the solemn duties as well as the high privileges which are implied in participation in the ordinance. The ignorant should, by all means, be deterred from coming to this sacrament until they have been instructed; and the least admixture of superstition should be eschewed as dishonouring to God—degrading to a sacred institution, and most pernicious to the applicants themselves.*

* See Appendix.

2. *Formality and worldliness* lead also to gross abuses of baptism.

Akin to the superstitious observance of this ordinance, is that of attending to it as a mere outward form, or to subserve worldly advantages and ends. This latter abuse, however, may and often does take place even where the best doctrinal instructions are given, and where orthodox sentiments are entertained in regard to the institution. The evidence of a formal attendance on baptism is furnished by parents coming to it, without any special preparation, and receiving it for their children, without laying it to heart, or manifesting a due concern to perform solemn vows. Ministers, too, dispense the sacred rite without a due impression of its importance, or of its influence for good or evil, upon those who receive it, and without special prayer for a blessing upon the administration. And it is painfully observable, that congregations of Christian worshippers witness the dispensation with little appearance of being suitably affected—of praying for a blessing, or of duly improving it for themselves or others. While special preparation is deemed necessary for the other sacrament, and its administration is accompanied with much apparent solemnity,—the sacrament of baptism, which presents the same spiritual symbols, and is of unspeakable interest to all concerned, whether parents, the immortal being dedicated to God, or the church in general, is attended upon as an outward form, without meaning, and from which no valuable results are to be expected.* The ordinance,

* When baptism is administered, as it ought to be, in public, it is proper that the minister and congregation be apprized beforehand—perhaps the Sabbath preceding that on which the ordinance is to be dispensed, that they may be prepared to observe it with becoming solemnity, and that a full opportunity may be afforded for giving instructions on the spiritual import of baptism, and on the special duties of parents, and of baptized children.

again, is frequently observed merely to maintain the worldly respectability of families. It has been virtually removed from the ordinances of the church, and employed as an occasion of family festivity, or convivial intercourse. Spiritual benefits have been scarcely thought of at all. The fellowship and prayers of God's people have not been desired; and it cannot be expected that, from an ordinance thus administered, children will be afterwards reminded of their baptism, or taught from it their connexion with the church, or their responsibility to God. Such a way of observing baptism betrays irreverence and carnal-mindedness—is a mocking of God; and the result cannot be otherwise than the incurring of the divine displeasure and the privation of all blessing. Formality in religious services indicates a spirit and character opposed to the gospel. In a day when some profession of religion is looked for, and it would be reckoned disreputable to be wholly without it, individuals will have recourse to outward forms, and never think of looking beyond them to right dispositions of heart, or to the spiritual duties and privileges which they are designed to exhibit and inculcate. Observance of these forms is expected by others; it accredits our religious profession; the church with which we are connected enjoins the baptism of children, and it would be thought singular if we neglected it. Perhaps, besides, the persons who take such low views think that there is some virtue in attending to the rite, and that God, on this account, will be well-pleased with them, and cannot fail to reward them. It need not be told how intrinsically evil such a spirit is, and of what dangerous consequence is its indulgence. The "form of godliness," while its power is denied or unknown, originates from pride and self-righteousness. From such as assume it, we are enjoined to "turn away," as they themselves are deluded to their ruin, and their example is contagious

and destructive to others.* It should be our special concern, in attending upon all divine ordinances, to worship “in spirit and truth,” and to go beyond the outward form to Him who appointed them, and to the spiritual blessings which they are designed to communicate.

3. The DOGMA OF BAPTISMAL REGENERATION is a grievous abuse of Baptism.

In the Popish Church, baptism is held to be indispensable to salvation: and the unbaptized are, without exception, consigned to eternal misery. Hence, the laity, and even women, are allowed to administer baptism to infants who are in danger of dying, and even to dispense it to children before their birth. By the decree of the Council of Trent, the guilt of original sin is declared to be remitted by the grace of Christ bestowed in baptism;† and in the Catechism of the same Council it is affirmed, “Baptism washeth away the stains of sin;” and again, “The law of baptism extends to all, insomuch that, unless they are regenerated through the grace of baptism, be their parents Christians or infidels, they are born to eternal misery and eternal destruction.”‡ These sentiments are so destitute of support from the word of God, and are so repugnant at once to Christian feeling and to evangelical doctrine, that it is only necessary to state them to those who

* Antipædobaptists, who declaim loudly against infant baptism as an empty form, are themselves open to the charge of *formality*, in strenuously maintaining that there is no baptism, where it is not administered to adults, and by immersion. Their whole system, by unduly exalting the *mode* to the undervaluing of the spiritual import of the ordinance, is justly chargeable with *formality*.

† Council. Trident.—Sess. v.—Canon 5.

‡ Cat. Council of Trent.—pp. 152, 162.

bow to the authority of the Scriptures, to ensure their rejection.

It is to be greatly deplored, however, that among Protestants, to a large extent, the same errors are substantially adopted, even when they are not openly avowed. Infants dying without baptism, are regarded as in peril of ruin, or as actually lost; and hence the ignorant press to have baptism dispensed to children in such a case, though they have no proper notion of the nature and design of the ordinance, or of the solemn engagement which it implies. The Church of England, unhappily giving countenance to the Popish tenet that children dying unbaptized are out of the pale of salvation, enjoins the ordinance to be administered, in cases of emergency, by laymen and women. The doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is too plainly countenanced, if it is not directly taught, by the formularies of the Prelatical Church, and is firmly maintained by a large number of her dignitaries, and influential ministers.* Connected with this is the sentiment that the grace of baptism is inseparable from the administration of the ordinance by persons episcopally ordained; and that the sacraments, as dispensed by others, are invalid, and can convey no spiritual benefit. Few errors can be conceived more subversive of the truth of the gospel, and of more destructive tendency, than these. Baptism thus ceases to be a significant symbol; and the mere outward sign is rested in, instead of the spiritual blessings which it denotes, and no anxiety is entertained respecting that change of heart, which is indispensable to their enjoyment. This is a grievous, and it is to be feared, a fatal delusion. It places salvation in a mere ritual observance, and in connexion with a particular section of the church; and it accounts as of no value the

* See Appendix.

moral renovation of the heart, and that holiness of life without which no man shall see the Lord.

To maintain, as the dogma of baptismal regeneration does, that men are made Christians by baptism, so that a future change by the Spirit is unnecessary, is utterly opposed to the proper nature and design of baptism, and contradicts the plainest declarations of the Scripture on the subject. Regeneration cannot surely consist in those things which are only outward signs of it, or instituted means for effecting it, for the *nature* of a benefit is plainly different from the *means* of attaining it. Baptism is only the external token of regeneration, or at most, an ordained means towards its attainment; and it therefore subverts all right conceptions of the ordinance to confound it with regeneration itself. The inspired writers speak of baptism as quite different from regeneration, and affirm the possibility of the external rite being observed, without a spiritual renewal of heart accompanying it. 1 Peter iii. 21, "The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Here the external application for the cleansing of the flesh is distinguished from "the answer of a good conscience toward God," which is produced by the virtue of Christ's resurrection; and it is implied that the one may exist without the other, and that there is no salvation without the latter. In Galatians vi. 15, the apostle Paul declares, that "in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature." By "circumcision" here is meant the whole system of Mosaic ordinances, and as these avail nothing, so by parity of reasoning, under the Gospel, no external ordinances avail for salvation, without a new creature. They may be attended to and administered in due form, and be fol-

lowed by no blessing. Without the renovation of the nature, evidenced by keeping the commandments of God, persons though baptized remain under the curse, and cannot inherit the kingdom of God. If baptism were either regeneration, or inseparable from it, then all that are duly baptized are, in consequence, regenerated, and may be expected to give evidence of the change in their lives. All observation and experience, however, contradict such a sentiment. Many who are baptized, even by those who boast of episcopal ordination, live ungodly lives, and die in their sins. Like Simon Magus, even after baptism, they remain in "the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity," and in death are "driven away in their wickedness."

To those who insist on the virtue of baptism being limited to its administration by a particular class of spiritual functionaries, it deserves to be mentioned that our Lord himself baptized not, but his disciples; and that the most distinguished of the apostles purposely abstained from personally administering baptism. In the case of Cornelius and his household it is said, "Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." * The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church, declares, "I thank God, I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say I baptized in mine own name." † Thus is it recorded, and thus acted our Lord and his apostles, as if foreseeing the abuses of the latter times, in overvaluing the sacraments, and exalting them, as do the high Prelatists, above the ministry of the word. The tenet of baptismal regeneration is the source of many other errors, and is of the most injurious practical tendency. Those who embrace it are led to regard their state as safe before God, and their final salvation as secure; any farther spiritual renovation of the heart

* Acts x. 48.

† 1 Corinthians i. 14, 15

and life is considered unnecessary, and to insist upon it is viewed as fanaticism and enthusiasm. The word is not valued for its convincing and sanctifying influence. The rite of *Confirmation* has a natural connection with the dogma of baptismal regeneration; and thus is it, too, that in the *Burial Service* of the Church of England—expressive and beautiful as employed about those who die in faith—the unwarranted and unscriptural hope is avowed of the “sure and certain” happiness and glorious resurrection even of those whose lives have been utterly ungodly. Those who hold the doctrine of baptismal regeneration discover the utmost intolerance; while its maintenance gives countenance to the saddest delusion. Any real reformation is hopeless as long as it is held; and it becomes, therefore, a sacred and incumbent duty to expose the gross and complicated error of this most unscriptural dogma, and to endeavour to rescue men every where from its pernicious influence.

4. Another abuse of Baptism is *want of faith in it as a means of spiritual blessing*.

This is opposed to a superstitious dependence upon the baptismal rite, and yet it is an abuse, evil in its nature, and productive of mischievous consequences. It originated in part from opposition to the Popish sentiment by which the sacraments are unduly exalted, or from want of scriptural acquaintance with the object of these ordinances, or with superficial knowledge of the instructions of the Word. Men prone to extremes teach that the sacraments are only signs of profession, or simple memorials of past transactions. Hence, no grace is sought or expected either in connexion with the administration of baptism, or as flowing from it afterwards. The recorded sentiments of the most eminent reformers are completely opposed to this low view of the sacraments. Calvin expressly and pointedly teaches that the sacramental institutions are not

merely badges of a Christian profession, but are instituted means of the grace of salvation. Luther insists on the necessity of faith to a right reception of the sacraments; and in one of his Letters* declares that "he would deny Christ who went to the sacrament without believing that he should obtain the grace which it was designed to confer." Our Scottish Reformers declare, "We utterly condemn the vanity of those who affirm sacraments to be nothing but bare and naked signs." † The view which is thus repudiated leads to manifold evil. Blessings are not generally enjoyed which are not valued and earnestly sought. "Ye have not, because ye ask not." Baptism rightly viewed is a precious means of grace to parents. It is designed to strengthen their faith—animate their hope, and confirm to them the inheritance of all New Covenant blessings. To children, too, it is intended to be a means of blessing. What more natural than to believe and expect that in an ordinance appointed to bring infants near to Christ, some of them should even then, in the act of resigning them to an all-compassionate Saviour, obtain mercy? And it is every way rational as well as Scriptural to believe that the "covenant of their youth" should afterwards be remembered to them for good. If we have no faith in the connexion of such blessings with the ordinance of baptism, we will not seek them in the act of administration, and we are in danger of not obtaining the promised benefit. We should believe, on the contrary, in the divinely established connexion between the instituted ordinance, and the blessing. We should have recourse

* Dated November 29th, 1518.

† The sentiment which is thus rejected is that which was maintained by Waterland. It is substantially taught by Orme in his work on the "Lord's Supper," and by Dr. Halley in his "Lectures on the Sacraments."

to it as one of "the wells of salvation," and exercising gracious dispositions in waiting on its administration, we should desire and anticipate from it an increase of grace. Here may we experience that it is indeed "good to draw near to God." "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

5. Among the worst abuses of this ordinance may be noticed, lastly, *neglect of proper improvement of it afterwards, and apostacy from baptism.*

No ordinance of our holy religion is properly observed where a salutary impression does not remain afterward. Even where correct views concerning baptism are entertained, and solemn emotions are experienced at the time of its dispensation, if it is not reflected on afterwards, and if care is not taken by parents to improve it for themselves and for their children, its special design is overlooked, and the spiritual benefit of the ordinance cannot be realized. That must be regarded as a formal service in religion which does not purify and elevate the spirit, and lead to a godly practice. Especially does such a solemn rite as baptism demand, after waiting on its administration, frequent prayerful reflection, and a life devoted to the work of religion. Parents profess, in the baptism of their children, to take hold of God's covenant, and to renew their own act of personal dedication. They pledge themselves to walk in a perfect way within their house; and by the faithful performance of all religious duties, and a consistent Christian example, to train their families to the practice of godliness. It is too apparent that many come under such solemn engagements, and do not consider them afterwards; at least, their subsequent conduct plainly declares that they have either made vows without due consideration, or only to forget and violate them. The cases, it is believed, are not rare in which parents, coming away

from the solemn ordinance, hardly once allude to it in their families, and give no evidence, either in their devotional exercises in their households, or in their spirit and conduct, that they have been engaged in a service of peculiar solemnity and importance, or that they derive from it any superadded obligation to holy living. Where the ordinance is not improved to greater prayerfulness, watchfulness, activity, and diligence in all duties, personal and domestic, it is certainly abused. The effect of such inconsiderateness and neglect must be very pernicious to parents themselves and to their families. Vows repeated without a due sense of their solemnity, and a dread of Him to whom they are made, tend to sear the conscience and harden the heart; and can hardly fail gradually to obliterate a sense of moral obligation, and to render the person a formalist or hypocrite in religion. The members of a family observing the spirit and conduct of a parent unimproved after he has been employed in the most solemn religious service, will naturally be led to regard attendance on ordinances as a mere formal matter—either to be kept up, or neglected, as convenience or interest may dictate.

Such a grievous abuse is, we fear, common among religious professors in our day; and to this may be traced not a little of what is so painfully observable—that the ordinance of baptism brings with it so little real spiritual benefit to families. Parents, in guarding against an evil so flagrant and aggravated, should improve the baptism of their children to deepen their sense of the obligation of sacred vows, and to promote spirituality and devotedness in all religious duties. They should, besides, improve the ordinance, by feeling the momentous nature of their charge in relation to their children, by fervent prayer, and earnest endeavours for their children's salvation, and by training them early and constantly in accordance with the baptismal eu-

gement. Baptized youth, too, should be aware that their baptism is by them abused when they do not begin betimes seriously to consider it, and to act as persons who have been dedicated wholly to God. The neglect of the young to recognize their baptism when they arrive at years of judgment, indicates a heart at enmity with God and averse to religion. If indulged in, it cannot fail to provoke the Divine displeasure, and to expose to retributive vengeance. Where God's claims upon the young are not acknowledged, and the privileges conferred on them in infancy and childhood are undervalued or contemned, there can be no blessing. They that *despise* God shall be "lightly esteemed." The tendency of this early neglect is to open apostacy from the profession and vows made in baptism. The deplorable character of such a result cannot be adequately declared. We shudder at what is recorded of Julian the Apostate, who when advanced to mature youth, bathed himself in the blood of an animal that was offered in sacrifice to Jupiter, that he might wash off his baptism. Yet not a few of the young of Christian families as really proclaim their apostacy from a Christian profession sealed in baptism, when they refuse to join themselves to the Lord's people, and when they give themselves over to youthful follies and lusts. The course of apostacy, whether openly avowed or disguised, can only be evil, and the end is death. Refusing to own God's paramount claims, or to recognize their early vows, the young reject all that is really good for the present life, or for the world to come. Useful, in the proper sense of the term, they cannot be; the blessing from on high they cannot enjoy. Against God none can ever harden himself and prosper. In the end, all who apostatize from baptismal engagements, will be constrained to own the power and vengeance of the Saviour whom they despised—like Julian, who, when mortally wound-

ed in the war with the Parthians, exclaimed, as he threw up into the air his blood collected into his helmet—"O Galilean! thou hast conquered."

The excellent Archbishop Ussher noted in his time the following abuses connected with baptism—many of which characterize the spirit and conduct of professors in our own day:—

"The main care and preparation is about matters of outward pomp and state. Every thing is fitted and prepared for the purpose, but only that which should chiefly be, viz., the hearts and minds of those that go about a business of that nature. While the sacrament is in performing, the demeanour of many show that they have a slight opinion of that service; some turning their backs upon it, and going out of the church, so soon as the sermon is done, as if the word was worth the minding but not the sacrament. Others prating and talking all the while, as if there were nothing for them to learn by, and no duty for them to perform in that action. Lastly, infants are brought to the sacrament of baptism in their infancy, but are never by their parents taught the doctrine of baptism, when they come to years of understanding. Baptism is not made use of as it ought in the whole course of men's lives. These things show that men commonly have a mean conceit of this ordinance."

To prevent or remedy such abuses—alike dishonourable to the Institutor of the ordinance, subversive of its design, and injurious to those who observe it—Scriptural views of the nature and ends of Baptism should be plainly and frequently inculcated. The best way of guarding against error is to teach the truth; and those who are entrusted with the Gospel are under a solemn responsibility to declare with all fidelity and diligence its principles, that holy ordinances may be preserved incorrupt, and that those who wait on their administration may give the answer of a good

conscience in the sight of God. Fixed solemn meditation on the spiritual objects which baptism presents will also be a means of preventing and remedying abuses. Above all, the Holy Spirit should be earnestly sought, both by those who dispense the ordinance and by those who wait on its dispensation. He alone can inspire right spiritual views, bring the heart into a proper frame, and make the saving application of the great truths which are symbolically taught in the ordinance. The Spirit is the “unction whereby we understand all things”—and the “baptism of the Spirit” as with fire will infallibly rectify abuses, destroy corruptions, enkindle a glow of holy desires and affections in the sacred service, and impel afterwards to devoted obedience. In fine, setting about the immediate performance of baptismal engagements, and constantly keeping them in devout remembrance, will prevent future abuse, and preserve from formality and apostacy. All that are concerned for the Divine honour, and that value the purity of the Church, and the prevalence of true religion, are bound to contribute by their utmost exertions to preserve from corruption the institutions of the Sanctuary; and thus to prevent evils which are of incalculable extent, whether as affecting individuals, or the Church, or civil communities.

CHAPTER XI.

SPECIAL DIRECTIONS TO PERSONS CONCERNED IN
THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM.

THE ordinance of baptism when duly administered is calculated to furnish important *practical lessons* to the several parties who are interested more or less nearly in its administration. If the views which have been already advanced in this Treatise are correct, then this Sacrament is at once a means of conferring the highest and most precious privileges, and of exciting to the performance of the most solemn duties, both personal and relative. It exhibits a sealed charter of a blessed inheritance, while it presents manifold obligations to all holy living; and were the privileges of baptism duly improved, and its obligation properly felt, it could not fail to promote whatever is pure and lovely and of good report in human society.

We notice briefly a few classes to whom Baptism suggests weighty practical considerations, and addresses special directions:—

1. THE MINISTERS AND OFFICE-BEARERS OF THE CHURCH
HAVE A PECULIAR INTEREST IN THIS ORDINANCE.

To them is entrusted the dispensation of those institutions which are appointed by Zion's King for the manifestation of his glory, and for communicating spiritual blessings to the heirs of salvation. In executing a trust so sacred and important, it deeply concerns them to have an approved character, to bring to the service a right frame of mind, and to act with all fidelity. The fire of Divine jealousy burns hot near the altar; and God loudly proclaims to all who would approach it, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." *

* Leviticus x. 3.

The seals of the Covenant in a peculiar manner require cleanness of hands and purity of heart in those that administer them. They should cherish a godly fear lest they profane holy ordinances themselves, and thus mar the communication of the blessing, and lest they should countenance the profanation of them by others. Upon them rests a most weighty responsibility; and if low perverted views of the ordinances of religion are entertained, and they are abused for unworthy ends, the fault will generally be traceable to the ministers and office-bearers of the Church. They have not been at pains to teach the people: they administer ordinances in a formal and perfunctory manner; and for low, interested purposes, they admit unworthy persons to a participation in the seals of the covenant. The consequence is that men are lulled in fatal security and delusion in relation to their spiritual state, the sacraments are profaned, and subsequent improvement of them is not to be expected.

To preserve Baptism from such perversion and abuse, and to render it a means of edification and blessing, the authorized teachers and rulers of the church should,

First, *Give full Scriptural instructions* on the subject.

The Divine Word exhibits clearly the nature and design of the seals of the Covenant; and full statements concerning their spiritual import and the qualifications of those who have the right to partake of them are contained both in the Old and New Testaments. These the ministers of the word should fully expound and faithfully apply; while the other office-bearers of the Church should labour to enforce such instructions, so that no ignorant or unworthy person be admitted to the holy ordinance. The public administration of baptism furnishes a suitable occasion for a full exhibition of its nature and spiritual significance, as

well as for impressing the solemn obligation which it entails. The catechizing of the young, and their admission to the fellowship of the Church should be improved by giving instructions concerning the baptismal engagement; and all pains should be taken to make parents and the baptized youth of the Church aware of the value of the privilege to which they have been admitted; and of the nature of that holy devotedness by which they should be characterized. Instructions in relation to baptism when properly given, are fitted to be eminently useful. They must of necessity embrace the grand truths of our holy religion; and as the ordinance contains an affecting display of the Divine condescension, and an attractive manifestation of the covenant of redemption, and of the grace and love of the Saviour, these instructions may be imparted so as to excite more than ordinary interest, and in such a manner as to make salutary and lasting impressions.* In general, it should be adopted as a rule never to admit an ignorant person to the participation of baptism for himself or for his child. Parents should be carefully instructed in the nature of solemn vows before they are required to make them, as well as frequently reminded of them afterwards. Spiritual advantages of the highest kind will accrue to the Church from a course of Scriptural instruction, and from the exercise of faithful discipline, in guarding against the abuse of the rite of initiation,—as the neglect of either is too

* As Baptism should never be administered in a hasty or careless manner, it might greatly conduce to its profitable observance to have stated times for its administration in the congregation—such as on a particular Sabbath in the month. Parents should take care to notify their purpose to seek baptism for their children sometime previously to the administration—both that the minister himself might have his mind prepared for the important service, and that the opportunity may be afforded for fuller instructions in relation to the institution.

evidently fraught with consequences to its purity and efficacy, which are in the highest degree injurious.

Secondly, ALL CARE AND SOLEMNITY IN THE ADMINISTRATION.

Where ignorance prevails respecting the nature and spiritual meaning of Baptism, and no special instructions are given on the subject, it will generally be found that the ordinance is administered in a hasty, formal manner, so as to manifest no right state of feeling in the administrator, and so as to produce no proper impression either on those to whom it is administered, or on others who may witness the administration. This is not only the case when baptism is dispensed in private, when worldly business and conversation are scarcely suspended for a few minutes, while an immortal being is impressed with the seal of God's covenant, or when the rite is hurried over, to make way for the convivial entertainment that is to follow. Not unfrequently, in the public congregation, Baptism is dispensed with very little observable solemnity. It is brought in at the end of a service—perhaps already sufficiently protracted—hurried over with a few remarks, often controversial, or merely doctrinal—while neither minister, nor parents, nor spectators are concerned to realize the Divine presence, nor to be aware of the unspeakably momentous nature of the transaction.

Christian ministers, in dispensing this seal of the covenant, should themselves seek special preparation for the service. They should entertain clear and Scriptural views of the sacred symbols, and of their connexion with the spiritual objects which they represent. They should cherish the compassion of the Saviour, when He commanded infants to be brought to Him, and when He took them up in his arms and blessed them.* The exercises of mind and the public act of

* In some of the Reformed Churches on the Continent, it is usual for the minister, in dispensing baptism, to take the child

parents in offering their children to God—the condition of the immortal being baptized—its dedication to God and his service—the introduction of a member to the fellowship of Christ's church—its consignment to a pastor as a lamb of his flock—the naming upon it of the Triune name—the application of the sacred symbol of the mysteries of redemption—the impressing of the seal and confirmation of the covenant, and the thought of the important consequences that must result from the baptismal rite—of good or of evil, and for time and eternity—all these must deeply affect the mind of a devoted minister, and lead him with all solemnity and fidelity to discharge this act of his ministerial commission. He should come to the service in the spirit of fervent prayer, of ardent love to souls, and of heartfelt reliance upon the promise of the Saviour's gracious presence and blessing. With all plainness and fidelity, and searching application, should he deal with parents. The little immortal to be baptized should be an object of the deepest interest. The minister, in receiving it to the ordinance, becomes the instrument of adding to the number of the professed disciples of Christ. Besides, he not only executes the Saviour's will and commission, he *imitates* his tender compassion towards little children.

His earnest concern should be to bring them to the arms of the Redeemer himself, that He may effectually bless them. Infants are no less the objects of the Father's everlasting love, and of the Saviour's purchase than adults. Their future character and usefulness—their happiness or misery are intimately connected with their early dedication—and these momentous matters should be vividly before the mind of the minis-

into his arms, while he invokes the Divine blessing, and pronounces the words of dedication. Some Dissenting ministers in England too, are in the habit, in the act of baptizing, to take the infant in one arm, and sprinkle the water with the other hand.

ter when administering the ordinance. The *covenanted privileges* of infant children should be regarded as greatly important, and their baptismal dedication to God should be taken as a special occasion to seek the gracious presence of the glorious One who claims them as his, and who seals to them his deed of precious privilege. To a faithful minister, few opportunities can ever occur more suitable than the administration of baptism for conveying weighty instructions to a congregation. The great doctrines and privileges of Christianity may be exhibited in the most affecting and impressive manner from this ordinance, and chiefly in their practical tendency. The fundamental articles of original sin—the covenant of redemption—justifying, regenerating, and sanctifying grace—the sinner's unspeakable need of Christ and of the Spirit's work—adoption into God's family—fellowship in the visible church, with the obligations to all new obedience, are therein strikingly exhibited. From such an ordinance, the faithful pastor cannot fail to educe instructions on the great matters of faith and Christian practice, and to enforce them with all solemnity and earnestness.

With what advantage, too, may he address parents, urging them to pray for their children—to labour for their conversion—to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—to train them for Christ's service here, as they desire and expect to meet with them in his presence in glory! Seldom will the servant of God enjoy a more favourable opportunity for reaching the heart of parents; and eagerly should he embrace it for making impressions that may be permanent, and to excite to important duties which are too generally neglected. It is recorded of Matthew Henry, the Expositor, that he laboured by appropriate discourses to render the dispensation of baptism by him a service of special solemnity and spiritual profit to those to whom he administered it, and that many of these long after-

wards remembered the occasions with peculiar interest, and regarded it as an eminent means of blessing. The administration of baptism should still be thus characterized—and thus might it be rendered a means of blessing, not only to parents and families, but likewise to the whole church.

Lastly, Ministers should afterwards manifest *tender and watchful concern about baptized children.*

When the risen Saviour demanded a test of supreme love from Peter and from all his future ministers, He placed it in the thrice-repeated command, “Feed my Sheep”—“Feed my Lambs.” Ministers should regard the baptized youth of the church as *the lambs* of the flock; and they will evince their love to Christ, and their devotedness to his service by faithfully feeding them. As pastors they should discover towards them special tenderness and lively concern. They should bear them on their spirits, and earnestly recommend them in prayer to the Chief Shepherd. They should impart to them instructions in Divine things,—adapting them to their age and capacity—and should endeavour, by condescending familiarity and sympathy, to speak to the heart and conscience at a time when the young are peculiarly susceptible of tender impressions.

Upon the OFFICE-BEARERS of the Church devolve, to a large extent, the great duty of training the young, even in childhood, in the way in which they should go. Many parents, even of those who make a Christian profession, are, in a great measure, ignorant of the nature, design, and obligations of baptism. It is the office of ministers to teach such, to excite them to a faithful discharge of parental duties, and to aid them in bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The young, too, require to be instructed in relation to the great duty of recognizing and improving their baptism; and this, in a great

measure, is the appropriate work of ministers and other office-bearers in the church. The superintendence of classes of children of the church for catechizing, familiar scriptural exposition and prayer, should be regarded as a special and indispensable part of the pastoral care; and the direction of the Sabbath-school, and the employment of the young in active efforts for the spread of the Gospel, and in other labours of Christian benevolence, will prove not less a happy means of enabling them to fulfil their baptismal engagement, than of strengthening the ministry, and reviving the church.

By manifesting tenderness, and unremitting care, ministers and other public persons in the Church may greatly benefit the youth that have been committed to them in baptism.* This is indeed a work which, while it will always characterize a devoted ministry, is eminently calculated to benefit the church, and to promote the cause of true religion. The "testimony and law" left in Israel is, by such means, transmitted from one generation to another; and race thus declares to race God's wondrous works. The work itself, though arduous, is at once encouraging and delightful. Baptism supplies the most suitable and powerful motives to address the susceptible minds of the young, and may furnish instructions to them at once diversified and most important.

By manifesting an interest in their welfare, and entering into their juvenile thoughts and feelings, faithful instructors come to be regarded by them as their benefactors and most endeared friends. Not unfrequently the young learn to imitate those who are their

* Ruling Elders in the Church might be most usefully employed, in considering baptized children, and mature youth, as objects of their prayerful and constant concern, and by conducting Scriptural Classes for their instruction. This duty is exhibited and enforced in the excellent work of Dr. King on the "Eldership."

loved teachers; and thus a diligent and devoted minister may mould after his own moral and spiritual habits those whom he prayerfully instructs, and may reproduce his own mental likeness in those whom he was desirous of leading in the good and right way. Baptized youth are the future hopes of the Church. On them it depends, in a great measure, to maintain her ordinances pure and entire,—to exemplify the power of true religion, and to propagate the testimony of Christ. The times that are now passing over the church, and the eventful periods of her future history, demand peculiar concern about the young, and urge those who would advance the Redeemer's cause to take more than ordinary interest in their spiritual training. They have dangers of no common magnitude to encounter in these last times, and duties the most important to perform. If they grow up ignorant of their baptismal vow and unwilling to fulfil it, the cause with which they are connected must retrograde and fall into decay. If, on the other hand, they early range themselves on the Lord's side, and devote themselves to his service, they shall become instruments of eminent blessing to the Church, and through them, the cause of truth and godliness will be advanced, and achieve its brightest triumphs. With such views and prospects, let ministers and office-bearers in the church improve their opportunity with the young, and faithfully "occupy" this valuable talent. This work rightly performed will ensure an abundant reward. *"Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." "I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles; and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."**

* Psalm xlv. 16; Isaiah lx. 8, 9.

In prosecuting such a work, we become *eminently like Christ*; and we train and prepare those who are to perpetuate his cause, and transmit his truth to future generations. How important this labour! What an unspeakable honour to be herein co-workers with God! How benign and valuable are its results!

2. The MEMBERS of CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONS being witnesses of the administration of Baptism, have special duties to perform at the time, and may gather from the occasion valuable lessons for future godly practice.

Those who witness the dispensation of baptism should ever regard it with a feeling of deep solemnity, and reverence, and heartfelt interest. All levity and carelessness should be considered as most unsuitable to the occasion, and as a high provocation. The public administration of this ordinance should be regarded as an important privilege to a Christian assembly, and as demanding from the members of the church the performance of peculiar duties. It furnishes an affecting and impressive display of the fundamental truths of our holy religion. These truths, whether declared in words, or presented in embodied representation, should always be received with fixed attention and profound interest. In baptism, they are exhibited with special application to the soul, regarded as guilty and polluted, and to a human being in the infancy of its existence. They are thus taught in a manner fitted to impress the mind with the deepest sense of their momentous nature and practical importance. It seems almost impossible that any person who has felt the value of the great things of salvation for himself can witness the dispensation of this sacred rite, without being led by it to the more cordial belief and more fervent love of the truths of the Gospel.

What a striking exhibition does baptism make of the Divine goodness toward infant children, and of the

sovereignty, freeness, and all-sufficiency of God's grace towards helpless human creatures! The infant child is the emblem of weakness, want, and unworthiness, and yet God does not overlook it in its low condition: He even condescends to embrace it in the arms of his mercy. How impressively does this illustrate the grand fundamental principle of the Gospel—“*By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God!*” * How affectingly does it exhibit the triumph of Divine mercy over man's guilt and unworthiness, and display the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards creatures most undeserving and helpless!

In the condition of infancy, the distinctions that afterwards exist among human beings are unknown. The child of the peasant and the sovereign are here on a level. The most distinguished of mortals are by nature helpless and morally depraved; and no rank in society, or place however exalted, has any power to remove the guilt or pollution of sin. The grace that is illustriously though symbolically displayed in baptism, is freely offered to the lowest child of poverty, equally as to the infant inhabitant of a palace. In view of this wondrous manifestation, should we not exclaim with devout gratitude and joyful hearts, “Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. . . . Praise ye the Lord.” † While witnessing the celebration of the baptismal rite, we should *be brought to feel our own obligations to sovereign grace.* We must receive the kingdom of heaven as a free gift bestowed on the undeserving, if we would

* Ephesians ii. 8.

† Psalm cxiii. 5—9.

receive it at all. To come to glory, we must first be the subjects of grace. If we receive not the kingdom of heaven "as a little child," we shall in nowise enter therein—and this not only in putting on dispositions resembling those of a little child, but in being introduced in a way analogous to that in which infants are admitted to the seal of the covenant. We are *passive* in the hands of Divine mercy in obtaining the pardon of guilt, and the spiritual renovation of the nature. Like an infant cast out in the day of its birth, and ready to perish, we are lying in our blood, unable to help ourselves, and none to pity or relieve us. If we are rescued from ruin, the compassionate Saviour passes by us in mercy, and our time is a time of love. He spreads the skirt of his garment over us, enters into covenant with us, and says to us, Live. Should we not admire this marvellous grace, and learn from the baptismal rite, to cherish a heartfelt sense of our obligation to serve and delight in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us?

By baptism, an infant member is publicly added to the Church, and a Christian congregation is laid under obligation to special duties by this act of admission. They should cherish a lively interest in the parents, and should aid them by their fervent prayers. They should concur in the solemn dedication of the infants to God, and bearing them on their spirits, they should seek to be instrumental in bringing them to Christ, and in committing them to his arms for a blessing. The pledge solemnly tendered for their religious education, and accepted by the Church, imposes upon its members an obligation to contribute to their future training in the way they should go. Baptized children are committed to the Church as their nursing mother, and every faithful minister should lay to heart the weighty trust; and by prayers, counsel, and example should aim to fulfil it. Every instance of baptism

should be regarded by the members of the church as calling them to more entire devotedness to God's service, and especially to promote its holy fellowship, by labouring constantly for the spiritual welfare of fellow-members—infantile or others.*

Finally, SPECTATORS OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM SHOULD BE PARTICULARLY REMINDED OF THEIR OWN BAPTISMAL COVENANT; and should be excited to *seek earnestly the privileges which it holds forth, and to perform the duties to which it obliges.*

No opportunity is more fitted to realize our own early dedication to God, than when we witness the surrender of an infant child to God in baptism. We, too, had the name of a Triune God named upon us, and He set upon us the seal of his covenant, and claimed us as his. We may have enjoyed at the time the earnest prayers of godly parents, as the public prayers of the congregation were likewise offered in our behalf, and we certainly had an interest in the spiritual desires of the Lord's people who were present at the administration. Reflection upon such high privileges should lead to serious self-examination. We should inquire whether we have felt and acknowledged our obligation to be the Lord's, and have taken hold of his covenant. We should ask our hearts whether we have been duly sensible of our natural guilt and defilement, and have fled to the blood of Christ for pardon and cleansing. Our baptism was a significant emblem of regeneration, and we should be urged to a careful trial whether we have yet been the subjects of this great change. We have been marked with the Di-

* In one section of the Church (the Reformed Presbyterian) in which Baptism is, almost without exception, dispensed in public, on the Sabbath in which the rite is administered, we know it to be common to offer up special prayers in domestic worship, in behalf of the parents, and the children that have been baptized. This laudable practice is worthy of being generally adopted.

vine name, engaged to be the Lord's, and pledged to walk before him in newness of life. It behoves us to inquire seriously and diligently whether we have felt the weight of this obligation, and whether we have given evidence of it in holiness of life. We are called to eminent privileges in baptism. The fellowship of God's church, a new covenant relation to God himself, justification, adoption, sanctification, and an inheritance with the saints in light—these are freely offered to us, and our baptism is the appointed symbol and sign of being confirmed in their possession. When we witness the dispensation of baptism, we should be stirred up to examine whether the gracious design of the ordinance has yet been accomplished in us, or whether we are still unacquainted with these things. We should entertain a deep sense of the value and excellency of this high privilege, and should eagerly pant after its enjoyment—"If children, then heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ." "We are begotten again unto a lively hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

How earnestly should the members of a congregation, in witnessing the administration of baptism, *desire the baptism of the Holy Ghost?* This would cleanse them from sin, quicken them in all duty, and cause their hearts to burn with love to God and man. It would be a blessed revival to the Church, in which "dry bones" would be quickened, and saints would be animated to go on their way rejoicing. For ourselves individually, we should gather from witnessing the baptism of others, that we are solemnly obliged to "keep the whole law." We should feel that we are required to exercise ourselves daily to have "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man." Ourselves we should yield anew to God, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness.

With enlarged hearts we should run in the path of the Divine commandments. Joyfully calling to mind our vows, we should declare, as we betake ourselves to all the duties of a godly life, “Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praise to thee.” “O Lord, I am thy servant, thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid.” “One shall say, I am the Lord’s, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”

3. CHRISTIAN PARENTS have a special call to improve the baptism of their children.

The occasion should be regarded by them as a marked and important era of their history—as a season of special value to themselves and their families. To a godly parent, who has formed a right estimate of the salvation of his child, there cannot but be felt a very deep interest in the act of his solemn dedication to God, and of his public recognition as a member of the church. Having prayed for his child as soon as it had existence, and rejoiced with trembling in an immortal creature being lent him of the Lord at its birth, he cannot but regard it as a high privilege to consecrate publicly his infant offspring to the Lord, and to obtain for it the visible seal and confirmation of His covenant. To the faith of a godly parent, Baptism is the King of Zion claiming his child as specially his, and enrolling his name in a charter of the highest privileges. By this rite, moreover, the connexion of the children of the faithful with the church is openly ratified, and all the benefits which such a relation confers are declared to be theirs. They obtain a place and a name within Zion’s walls better than that of sons and daughters. They are incorporated with God’s people—the most excellent community on earth,—and are admitted to an interest in their prayers, and to a participation in their exalted privileges. No believing

parent can be indifferent to such a distinction either for himself or his child. As Joseph, though filling a high station in the palace of Pharaoh, brought his two sons to his aged father for a blessing, and preferred to have them called by his name and incorporated with God's people to their ranking as princes in Egypt, so a faithful parent will regard the fellowship of his children with the church of Christ as above all earthly honour. While he may wonder at the providence by which he has been brought into the parental relation, he will receive the ordinance of baptism for his child with devout thanksgiving.

God, may a believing parent say, has presented himself to me as a God in covenant, and has not only said He will be a God to me, but to my seed after me. Is not this a wonder of goodness and mercy? That He should take notice of one so vile and worthless, is amazing condescension; but that, moreover, He should take such a guilty sinful creature into a covenant relation with himself, and give him a personal interest in all his attributes, promises, and fulness, is wonderful beyond expression or conception. "What am I, Lord God, and what is my father's house?" "This is not the manner of men, O Lord God." And then it is an additional act of divine favour, and one most affecting to a godly parent, that the same glorious Being should declare, "*I will be a God to thy seed after thee.*" How matchless the grace that stoops down to regard my infant child! How unspeakable the privilege of having my helpless little one interested in the same covenant of peace, and in having infinite love and mercy, and almighty power pledged to protect, provide for, and bless it! From me it inherits a polluted nature, and it is under the primeval curse. In itself it is helpless, and exposed to a thousand dangers. Yet, notwithstanding, the God of salvation not merely notices in pity my tender babe,—He brings

near his covenant and salvation, spreads over it the robe of righteousness, and says to it in the most impressive manner, Live! With what lively gratitude and heartfelt thankfulness should a Christian parent contemplate these precious privileges, and appropriate them to himself and his offspring. The excellent Matthew Henry suitably remarks, "Much of the mercy of having children lies in this—that they have them to devote to God; not only a seed to be accounted to *us*, but to be *accounted to the Lord for a generation.* (Psalm xxii. 30). Not only to honour us, and to bear up our names, but to honour God, and to bear up *his* name in the world. What is an estate or office good for, but to glorify God with it, and that we may have something to lay out, and use for his honour? Bless God that he has not only given you a child, but that He hath invited and encouraged you to give it to Him again, and is pleased to accept of it. Be thankful that you have a child, admitted from its birth into the bosom of the church, and under the wing of the divine Majesty. Hannah had been long barren, and it was her great grief. At length God gave her Samuel; but it doth not appear that *his birth* was so much the matter of her praise, as *his dedication* to the Lord. When she had brought him in his infancy to the tabernacle, then it was that she said, "*My soul rejoiceth in the Lord.*" (1 Sam. i. 28, and ii. 1). You have more reason to be thankful that you have a child born to inherit the *privileges of the covenant*, than if you had a child born to inherit the largest estate.

* * * * Rightly understand the nature and intention of the ordinance, and you will say with wonder and praise, '*This is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.*' This gate of the Lord into which the just shall enter! Enter into it, therefore, *with thanksgiving*, and into his courts with *praise*. Your children are polluted, but bless God there is a

fountain opened, not only for the house of David, but for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (Zechariah xiii. 1). Draw water, therefore, with joy out of these *wells of salvation*. Rejoice that there is such a covenant, which you can, through grace, lay claim to. The expressions of joy and rejoicing *at the baptism of a child* should be turned into this channel; and should terminate in God, and in the New Covenant." *

Again, a Christian parent should, at the dispensation of baptism, *take hold of God's Covenant*, and fully surrender himself and his offspring to be the Lord's. The encouraging proposal, "I will be a God to thee," contains the offer of the Best Portion and the largest inheritance to a parent; while the accompanying declaration, "I will be a God to thy seed after thee," holds out a share in the same invaluable privileges to his infant seed. Of this gracious promise, baptism is the appointed seal; and it is brought near that it may be appropriated, and that the blessings which it exhibits may be claimed and enjoyed. Coming to the "Mediator of the New Covenant" is represented as among the chief privileges of the gospel. All blessings are guaranteed to "the son of the stranger" that "joins himself to the Lord, and that takes hold of his covenant." This, which was the rest and hope of the dying monarch of Israel, is still the support and confidence of every believing parent. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." † It enhances the high privilege exceedingly to a godly parent that his infant seed are embraced in the same blessed compact of mercy, and that, through sovereign grace, the same exalted privileges which are his heritage for aye, are presented and guaranteed to them likewise.

* Henry's Treatise on Baptism—complete Works—pp. 235—238.

† 2 Samuel xxiii. 5.

His special employment should be, when approaching in baptism to the Mediator and to the symbol of the blood of the covenant, to appropriate the gracious provision to himself, and to claim it for his offspring. Here must rest all his hopes, and on this ground he is encouraged to offer up his fervent prayers. Accepting for himself the purchased blessings of redemption, and acquiescing in the covenant as the sealed charter of their enjoyment, he should, at the same time, seek and claim a covenanted inheritance for his child too. In the baptismal act, he should bring him to the Mediator of the covenant for life and salvation—to the blood of the covenant for cleansing, and to the Spirit of the covenant for renovation of heart and life. His grand concern ought to be that the soul of his child should be bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord, and that his name may be inscribed in the Lamb's book of life; as all his desire concerning himself should be that he enjoy a lot in the covenant—sanctified and blessed in this life, and in the world to come. An aged minister once said to his wife and daughter, as they stood at his death-bed, “I have nothing to leave you but the promise and blessing of a covenant God, and that is enough.” This, too, will appear to every godly parent an all-satisfying portion for his children. When devoting them to God in baptism, he should be affected with lively joy. He should regard the transaction as symbolically espousing them to Jesus Christ, and as introducing them into a connexion where all is promise and blessing. This far excels the most eminent relationship on earth, and no inheritance here is worthy to be compared to it. He should aim in all his future course to walk in all covenant obedience, and like Abraham with his son and grandson, to sojourn by faith with his children “as heirs with him of the same promise.”

Parents, moreover, should improve the ordinance

of baptism, *by cherishing intense and constant desires after the spiritual benefit of their children, and by labouring continually for this purpose.*

The administration of baptism suggests to parents the importance and necessity of seeking earnestly the spiritual welfare of their children. It supplies powerful arguments and the strongest encouragements for prayer in their behalf; and it furnishes constraining motives to employ diligently all Scriptural means for their conversion and instruction in righteousness. Brought by baptism into a visible relation to Christ and his church, children, though morally defiled, should be regarded by their parents as relatively holy. At the Saviour's command they have been brought to him, and given up to him. Parents have by this act surrendered them to the God of all grace. They are dedicated to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that they may be wholly the Lord's, and may afterwards walk worthy of this high calling. Parents should earnestly labour that their children may actually partake of the spiritual benefits which baptism represents and seals. For themselves, they should seek special grace that they may be enabled to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Children are presented to the church, and then entrusted to parents as dedicated ones, that they may be taught all things whatsoever the Lord has commanded. At the time of this dedication, parents, feeling their solemn responsibility, should plead that they may have an early and saving acquaintance with the divine promises—that they may soon come to know the things that are freely given them of God. - And ever afterwards, while the child lives, a godly parent may refer to his baptism, as a powerful plea, in asking for him the enjoyment of all saving blessings. While God's covenant remains, and its seal is uncancelled, he may not question the divine willingness to save to the uttermost all that

come unto him, or that are brought to him according to his own institution. On this ground, he may supplicate for himself gracious help to enable him to discharge his solemn duties. Having received the sign and seal of the covenant for his offspring, he is encouraged to seek aid from above to make them acquainted with their privileges and obligation. He has the warrant to plead for the Holy Spirit to bless his efforts, and to command success. As he brings his children to the Saviour in prayer, he may say, "Receive my offspring, as thou didst command me to bring them to thee. O, take them into thine arms and bless them. They were thine, and thou gavest them me. Graciously hast thou privileged them with the means of salvation. Oh! that they may live in thy sight. Let them be received under thy special protection and care. Make them subjects of thy renewing and sanctifying grace. Dispose and enable them to do whatsoever thou hast commanded. O sanctify them wholly, and preserve them unto thine everlasting kingdom." Matthew Henry judiciously remarks, "The sealing of the covenant in general, as a token of God's good will to our seed, is a sufficient handle for *faith* to take hold on in *praying* for our children. I see not how those parents can with equal confidence pray for their children, who deny them to be in covenant, and so set them upon even ground with the children of infidels."*

The baptism of their children may be ever afterwards used by Christian parents as one of their strongest pleas in their behalf at the mercy-seat. When they bring them to holy ordinances, they may entreat that God would remember the covenant of their youth, and bestow on them his special grace. When they are exposed to temptation, they may plead that they

* *Treatise on Baptism.*—Complete Works of the Rev. M. Henry, p. 242.

may be preserved and delivered from the snare of the fowler, as they were early given up to the Lord, and as by their baptism He claimed them as His. In the sickness and death of children, parents may make mention of the same dedication, and may take to themselves the comfort that the Lord will not forsake the work of his hands, or cast off those that were placed under his care, and committed to his protection and blessing. On the same ground, too, parents are encouraged to employ, besides prayer, all other appointed means for the conversion and spiritual training of their children. Salvation comes to a house when the means of salvation are faithfully dispensed to it; and this lays the members of a family under obligation to accept of the salvation itself when they are capable of so doing. Baptism, as a seal confirming the offer and promise of salvation, is certainly to be regarded as a special means of blessing. The oracles of God, the adoption, and other spiritual privileges, belonged to the children of Israelitish parents, in virtue of their circumcision. In like manner, the children of Christian parents, in consequence of their baptism, have a proper right to all the means of grace, and to all gospel privileges. Parents, as they rest under the most weighty obligations, should seek earnestly that their children may actually enjoy these. They are to bring them up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." They are bound to labour for their early conversion. Theirs it is to guard them against the numerous evils that surround them, train them for usefulness in God's service, and by precept and example aim to prepare them for the enjoyment of a blessed immortality. The parental obligation resulting from baptism should be felt and faithfully discharged at every future stage of the existence of the parent and child, as long as the relation lasts. Thus the hearts of fathers will be turned to their children, and of children to their pa-

rents, the curse threatened will be removed, and choicest blessings will descend upon the land.* Thus the truth and an inheritance of gracious privileges will be transmitted from one generation to another; and the piety of families will radiate as from a centre of light, to purify and revive the church, and to convert the world. The baptismal vow duly recognized in its obligation upon parents and children, and properly paid, by the diligent performance of solemn reciprocal duties, is calculated to confer innumerable benefits upon the human race. When the Gospel shall have achieved its last triumphs, and the Redeemer's Kingdom shall embrace the world's wide population, the prayers of godly parents will be abundantly answered—God's work shall appear before his servants' face, and his glory will be brightly manifested to their children.†

Before closing this view of the improvement of baptism by parents, we may briefly advert to the special obligation which the ordinance imposes upon CHRISTIAN MOTHERS. While it is fully admitted that parental duties concern both parents, there can be no doubt that they are incumbent in a peculiar sense upon the mother. The strength of maternal affection has been always, and almost among all people proverbial. In the Sacred Scriptures, it is referred to as the expressive emblem of Divine kindness and compassion: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." ‡ By the exercise of tenderness, when blended with wisdom and fidelity, a mother obtains an influence over the minds of her children, which no other human being can. Children in early years are almost exclusively in the hands of the mother, hearing her instructions, observing her example, and receiving from her daily, innumerable proofs of affection, at a period

* Malachi iv. 6.

† Psalm xc. 16.

‡ Isaiah lxvi. 13.

the most important of human life—the period of the rapid development of the mental faculties and of the formation of character.

When the Emperor Napoleon is said to have asked Madame Campan, what France chiefly required, to cure her manifold evils, and to render her great and illustrious, she replied in one word,—MOTHERS. So it may be truly declared, that the instrumentality of godly mothers is powerful to prevent or rectify evils in the church, and to diffuse a healthful and permanent influence throughout communities civil and ecclesiastical.

In the administration of baptism, the responsibility of the female parent should be distinctly and fully recognized. Instead of being regarded as represented by her husband, and so allowed to be absent, or not to enter expressly into any engagement upon the occasion, it were evidently more suitable that she should publicly, with all the solemnity of a sacramental vow, come under a direct and formal obligation, in regard to the soul of the child, and for its religious training. Under the Christian economy, the privileges of children are increased by the admission of females to baptism; female parents should therefore consider it not only as a special duty, but as a high privilege to enter into solemn vows in behalf of their children. To them are entrusted the first care and training of their children. By the death of the father, the whole of the future religious education and guidance of the children may devolve upon them; and by their fidelity in the charge confided to them, they may be the means of incalculable benefit to the church, and will themselves reap a glorious reward. On all these grounds, it must be apparent that mothers are bound to enter formally into the baptismal covenant; and that they, in a peculiar manner, are required to evince

their sense of the obligation by seeking, by all appointed means, the spiritual benefit of their children." *

To fulfil their vow in baptism, mothers should learn to cherish habitually *a sense of their responsibility to God in behalf of their children*. God implanted maternal affection with the design of employing it as a powerful instrument of effecting his beneficent purposes towards the human family. A mother cannot forget the son of her womb. The depths of her affection, the anxieties of her heart for the welfare of her child can never be fully declared. With what tenderness will she watch over a sick child, exhaust her strength, and peril her life to procure his restoration to health? When wayward or wandering, she will yearn over his return to the paths of virtue; and if reclaimed, with what ecstatic joy will she welcome his recovery as the fruit of earnest prayers and solemn vows! The tie which binds a Christian mother to her offspring is, in many respects, absolutely indissoluble. Whether they walk in wisdom's ways, or turn aside to the paths of folly, her heart is with her children; and they cause her indescribable happiness or

* In opposition to the views which are advocated in the text, the practice in Presbyterian Churches, as well as others, and even where the ordinance of baptism is publicly dispensed, is for the mother either to take no part in presenting the child in baptism, or to give no public assent to the baptismal engagement made by the parent. In cases not a few, the previous instructions given by the minister are withheld from the mother, and no pains are taken to ascertain whether she has scriptural views of the ordinance, or to press upon her a sense of the solemn duties which she owes to her child. The consequence is, that many female parents, even where an evangelical profession is made, entertain very low and unworthy views in relation to the nature and design of baptism, and do not afterwards betake themselves to a diligent discharge of parental duties. Mothers, instead of being honoured by such neglect, are in reality injured, and devoted female influence, which is of great power, is lost to families and to the church.

misery, according as they act properly, or deviate from the way of righteousness. Even in death, a mother's heart is in the loved ones; and she weeps with bitter sorrow over the grave of those that are lost, as she rejoices with holy joy over those who have died in the Lord.

Children, too, in most cases, become early sensible of the power of maternal affection, and learn to reciprocate it. In childhood this is universally observable. The infant clings to its mother—looks to her for support and direction, and lodges all its complaints and cares in her bosom. The youth of right principles will always gratefully confess his obligation to a mother's training and example; and even when the paths of virtue have been forsaken, the instances are not rare in which the wanderer has acknowledged that, through a mother's prayers, he was held back from crime, and reclaimed to the path of rectitude.

A mother's affection has thus vast power either to ruin her children or to promote their happiness. It has a plastic force to mould their character and to determine their future destinies. More or less, every human being is influenced for good or evil by the mother that bore and nursed him. The fortunes of the rising generation may therefore be said to be eminently in the hands of mothers, and their influence for good or evil must be felt in the church and in the world for ages to come. If female parents, like Hannah, devote their children to God "all the days of their life," or like Lois and Eunice, by "faith unfeigned," train them to practise from childhood the lessons of holy Scripture, they will confer an incalculable blessing, not only on their own families, but also on the whole church.

In the view of interests so solemn, and consequences so momentous, mothers should cherish a deep and abiding sense of their responsibility. In the overflow-

ings of maternal affection, they should consider the worth of the soul of the little immortal that they fondle in their bosom, and their paramount obligation to nurse it for God. They should earnestly inquire, Is it spiritually well with the child? They should seriously think that either it must be trained for God's service here, and for eternal felicity, or that it will live without God in the world, and be miserable for ever. Mothers should habitually realize their dread accountability. When they press their children in their arms, or bend over their cradle, they should bring them to His arms who alone can effectually bless them; and they should "travail as in birth" that Christ may be formed in their hearts. How fearful the case of those "careless ones," who have no serious thoughts on such a subject! We recoil with horror at the intelligence of Pagan mothers imbruing their hands in the blood of their children, and offering them in sacrifice to some disgusting idol. But surely the crime of mothers in Christian lands is worse, when they neglect the souls of their children, or pervert them by evil instruction and example, and their final doom will be more tremendous.

While unconverted, mothers cannot feel aright parental responsibility. They may cherish maternal affection—caress with fondness their infant offspring, and take pleasure in ministering to their bodily wants and to the development of their minds. But the worth of the soul and its vast and undying interests will be overlooked, and no proper sense will be entertained of the importance of training it for God, or of their own solemn accountability in the matter. It is fearful indeed to contemplate the condition of an unconverted mother bringing into the world an immortal being, and without any proper sense of its eternal destiny, leading it in the path to ruin. Not feeling its naturally lost condition—insensible of her own want

and misery, and living prayerless, her conduct can only be injurious to her offspring. Under the inspection of an unawakened, unconverted mother, the child will grow up ignorant of God, unacquainted with its sin and misery, and in danger of a lost eternity. Mothers should consider how dreadful it will be for them to appear at the judgment-seat, and give account for the children that they nursed for themselves or for the world; but whose souls they neglected, and whom they misled to their ruin, by their instructions and example. This feeling of responsibility mothers should always cherish—in all their intercourse with their families—in their whole conduct and example. If it is entertained so as to lead to befitting effort, it will compensate for the want of eminent abilities in the mother, and will give weight to maternal instructions which nothing else can. It will dispose mothers habitually to deny themselves for the benefit of their children—will constrain them to fervent prayer on their behalf, and induce them to use all means, as if all depended on them, for bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. A lady of rank once told the author, that after her marriage, and before her first child was born, when the rest of her household were retired to bed, she was frequently accustomed to spend hours, till an advanced period of the night, in studying the Scriptures, under a deep sense of her responsibility, and with an earnest concern that she might be fitted to train the children that God might give her in the ways of religion.*

* This was Lady Bateson, of Belovir Park, near Belfast. Of some of her children, who died young, there was good evidence of their having early received religious impressions. Her eldest son—Robert Bateson, Esq., M.P., who was a rising statesman—when dying at Jerusalem of fever, which he caught in his travels, showed himself to be intimately acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and gave strong and clear expression to his Christian

To cherish and act upon this sense of responsibility is more difficult than is generally imagined. There are *dangers* to which mothers are peculiarly exposed, and by which many are overcome, that tend to turn them aside from the path of duty, and to prevent their attention to the spiritual training of their offspring. Their bodily weakness and trials are made an excuse for neglecting at times the instruction of their children, and for intermitting the practice of other important parental duties. Yet these should serve as a monitor to remind them of the uncertainty of life, and of the value of present opportunities, and should impel them to greater diligence and earnestness in bringing their children to Him who hath chosen "weak things to confound the mighty," and whose glory it is to "perfect strength in weakness." Mothers are, moreover, in danger of lavishing all their *care upon the bodies* of their children—of making them mere fondlings of affection, and of deferring unduly their religious training. There are necessary cares about children in infancy—there are provisions required for their health and safety, which must engage much of a mother's solicitude and attention. But surely this authorizes no exemption from the higher duties of caring for the welfare of their immortal souls. Infantile weakness should remind mothers of the helpless moral condition of their children, and of the urgent need of providing for their spiritual safety, in the prospect either of their growing up in an evil world, or of their removal by death. It is sadly misplaced affection—not unlike children delighting in dolls and toys, or the instincts of some of the lower animals—to caress a child, and take pleasure in its outward form, while its higher nature and eternal interests are overlooked. The impulses of affec-

hope in death. He ascribed, too, his religious impressions to maternal instruction.

tion, to be productive of real benefit to its object, must be controlled and directed by a sense of duty ;—and it should ever be borne in mind that “ *Wherever affection interferes with principle, a primary law is outraged, and misery must be the result.*” * Such tender mercy the Scriptures represent as cruel. To defer unduly the spiritual culture of children is certainly injurious. Children may be trained to proper habits even in infancy. The leading traits of character, which afterwards remain, are early developed ; and under the blessing of the Spirit, little ones may be brought to understand the great truths of the Gospel, in the first years of their existence, and may derive from them saving benefit. It is therefore highly criminal, under any pretence, to withhold from them what is essential to their welfare, and to neglect that on which their eternal salvation, in a great measure, depends.

Wherever mothers expend their chief pains in training a child’s body, or in seeking to prepare it only for this present life, and neglect or defer the concern for the soul, they are to be regarded as selfish and perverted in their affections. They nurse their children for themselves or the world, and not for God, and the consequences cannot fail to be disastrous. The immortal part is sacrificed to the mortal ; the vast interests of eternity are made to give place to the fleeting concerns of time ; and while mothers contract a great load of guilt, children advance in life, ignorant of God and unconcerned about their salvation ; and parents and children, remaining unawakened, are ripened for the fearful retribution of a common inheritance in misery.

The principal danger and the fruitful source of almost all the others to which mothers are exposed, is an *erroneous or imperfect view of the natural condition* of children. They do not properly consider the declarations

* Treatise on the Sacrament of Baptism, by Rev. W. K. Tweedie.

of Scripture concerning the fallen state of human nature, nor regard their children, when they are born into the world, and given into their hands to be trained, as ruined and helpless—as exposed to God’s fearful curse, and every moment liable to everlasting destruction. They look upon them and speak of them as being innocent. Unconverted and carnal mothers regard with the utmost repugnance the Scripture doctrine of the Fall, and cannot think that their children are dead in trespasses and sins.* Even where the doctrine of Original Sin is admitted, it is to be feared that many mothers have low views of the inherent malady, and are not therefore in earnest in seeking the remedy. The innocence and gentleness of childhood in man’s sight are mistaken for innocence before God—and kindness, benevolence, and filial obedience are regarded as evidences that the nature is not wholly depraved, and that there is no urgent need of that renewal of heart and life which the Scriptures declare to be indispensable to an entrance into the kingdom of God. Hence mothers entertain no overpowering sense of their children’s guilt and depravity—little or no attempt is made to eradicate the evil of the nature, and there is no travailing in birth for their regeneration. The sad result is, that the disease of the nature gathers strength—and in the hands of a mother blind to her child’s spiritual condition, it grows up in habits of confirmed ignorance and ungodliness. To avoid this fearful danger, fraught with ruin to multitudes, Christian mothers should look upon the loveliest child, as by nature under the curse and exposed to eternal misery. They should first of all labour for their early conversion to God, and should rest satisfied with nothing in or about their

* Hence it is common to speak of children when dying or dead, as being chargeable with no sin, and as certainly gone to happiness, without any reference to their fallen state, or to Christ’s finished work, as the only ground of salvation.

children, till they have some evidence that they are adopted into the family of God. Like the Father of the faithful, when pleading about a child apparently in danger of rejection, they should fervently pray to God, 'O that my child might live before thee.' This should be regarded as the end of all their aims and desires about their offspring—to bring them to Christ for the blessing, and to train them to love and serve Him from their earliest years, as they expect their felicity in the full enjoyment of Him for ever.

Besides the dangers to which we have adverted, against which mothers should constantly watch and pray, there are *trials* peculiar to them, which only a mother can properly estimate. The feeling of parental responsibility to which we have alluded, sometimes becomes oppressive and overwhelming. The sickness and death of infant children, before they can possibly give evidence of faith in Christ—the difficulty of managing aright a number of children in a family, each having a different disposition—the dread of dangers to which they are exposed as they grow up—and the painful anxiety of Christian mothers when they see their children advancing in life, without giving evidence that they have laid to heart the claims of religion—these are trials from which the best of Christian mothers have not been exempted. The severest trial, however, lies in a parent being called to witness the waywardness, folly, and sometimes hopeless end of children that were tenderly nursed, and whose spiritual welfare was an object of unceasing care and solicitude. While it may be admitted that the falls and evil courses of children may often be traced to defects in the training of parents, or to their sins of temper or spirit or conduct, there can be no doubt that God frequently acts as a Sovereign in allotting to godly parents such a trial. Of children of the same family, one is taken and another is left; and

to rebuke human presumption, and show that the best efforts are nothing without special grace, while the young of irreligious parents sometimes become monuments of mercy, the children of devoted parents forsake good instructions and take the downhill path to ruin. In this afflictive case, who can declare or conceive the distress of a Christian mother? The child that is a part of herself—that she fondled in her bosom—that she taught from infancy the way of godliness—for whom she fervently prayed, and whom she often solemnly dedicated to God—to see this child lost to all good, and rapidly ripening for ruin—this is affliction to a godly mother the most severe and crushing that can befall her in life. Under a trial of this kind, such poignant grief will be hers as rent the heart of the king of Israel, when he went up to his chamber weeping, and when, as he poured out his bitter sorrows over a lost son, he exclaimed, “O Absalom, my son : would God, I had died for thee ; O Absalom, my son, my son !”

In such trials, even in the heaviest, there is support and relief to a Christian mother in considering that salvation is of sovereign grace, and that the Covenant of grace is ordered in all things and sure. Like the dying monarch of Israel, who had his full share of domestic trials, she should say, “Although my house be not so with God, He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, . . . and this is all my salvation and all my desire.”* She may derive comfort, moreover, from the thought that her children were dedicated to God, and that they may afterwards obtain the blessing, though the stream of mercy may long run underground, and though a parent may not live to realize her fondest hopes, in witnessing their calling and conversion. She should appropriate the comfort once admin-

* 2 Samuel xxiii. 5.

istered by a venerable minister to Monica—the mother of Augustine—when he said, “Woman, it is impossible that the child of so many tears and prayers should be lost.” The instances of the mothers of John Newton, and Legh Richmond, who died when their sons were in infancy, show that maternal prayers for the salvation of children are sometimes graciously answered, when those who offered them have ceased to pray and weep. Both of these distinguished servants of God, in early life, forgot God, and wandered in the ways of sin and folly, and yet both confessed that even in their wanderings they remembered their mothers’ prayers; and these were not only the means of restraining them from certain evil courses, but were ultimately answered, in their conversion to God and eminent usefulness. Christian mothers should continue to hope to the end. They have offered prayers and made vows, and tendered counsels and warnings, which may hedge up the way of backsliders and wanderers. Even when it comes to the worst, and there is no farther ground of hope, they will be enabled to bow in resignation to the Divine sovereign disposal—gracious supports will be vouchsafed, and the consolations of the Spirit will not be wanting, in the hour of severest trial.* He that commanded again to life the centurion’s daughter when there appeared to be no hope;—He who arrested the bier, and gave back an only son to a widowed mother, is yet the same, full of compas-

* The case of Andrew Fuller and his son is an illustration of Divine support given to a parent, when suffering severely from the folly and wickedness of a child whom he had carefully instructed, and for whom he had fervently prayed. Amid repeated instances of his son’s extravagance and misconduct, Fuller was enabled to continue in prayer and to look up expecting an answer; and though the youth came to a premature end, in a distant land, as the fruit of foolish and sinful courses, he was not taken away, till there was some evidence of his father’s prayers being answered, in his obtaining mercy.

sion and mighty in power. He is still ready to hear and answer prayer. He goes after the lost sheep, and searches till He finds it. He can recover the wandering, and bid the spiritually dead live. And should it not comport with his sovereign purpose to fulfil all the earnest desires of devoted parents, He knows how to comfort and support the distressed. He is a Brother "born for adversity." In the darkest dispensations, He enables his people to bow in resignation to His righteous disposal, and to acknowledge that all His ways are in rectitude and faithfulness.

A few of the *peculiar duties* of Christian mothers may be briefly noticed:—

1. *The spiritual welfare of their children should be always made a matter of primary concern.*

This should be their great object in all that they do for their children—in their prayers, instructions, and whole conduct towards them. How their children may be saved from the wrath to come, and prepared for God's service, should be their first and principal study. To promote this, they should subordinate every other business to their spiritual training, and employ every Christian expedient for this end. The expressions of maternal affection should draw children "with cords of love, and bands of a man" to Jesus the Great Shepherd, who "gathers the lambs with his arm," and lays them in his bosom. If others lavish their whole care upon the bodies of their children, or in preparing them for the business of the world, Christian mothers should show that the soul's salvation of their children is valued by them above every other possession or enjoyment. Like Hannah, the pious mother of Samuel, for this they should pray, before their children are born, and when afterwards they embrace them, and show all a mother's care and tenderness about them, they should habitually act on the resolution of the same godly woman, "They shall be lent to the Lord; as

long as they live they shall be the Lord's " In labouring for the spiritual welfare of her children, a female parent is herself greatly honoured. She becomes a "mother in Israel," and "while many daughters do virtuously," she excels them all. Earnestly concerned to fulfil her engagement on behalf of her children, her secret thoughts and desires will be all for their spiritual good; her intercourse with them will evince this to be her chief concern respecting them—by which she will be influenced, in directing them in relation to their duties, habits, pursuits, and companions in life.

2. A Christian mother should consider herself *charged with a principal part of the spiritual instructions of her children.*

Even where the other parent is disposed and qualified to teach his children, the instructions of a godly mother are often of singular benefit to a family. Children are near her at an age when they are hardly capable of direct instruction from their father; and yet even then, they may be taught much that is good and profitable, and may receive impressions which will remain with them throughout all their future life. They are chiefly in a mother's plastic hands, in the forming time of their minds and habits; and the seeds that are then sown may afterwards germinate and yield a rich harvest. Besides, the gentle, familiar, solemn manner in which affectionate Christian mothers tender instructions is better adapted to infantile minds than any other; and the frequency with which important truths and principles of conduct are inculcated by mothers upon their little ones gathered around them, is much better fitted to enlighten them and mould their habits, than the lessons of fathers which are only given after considerable intervals, however able or appropriate. If those who are "weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts," are "taught knowledge," and made to understand doctrine, "precept must be

upon precept, and line upon line,"*—and this is the kind of teaching that mothers are peculiarly qualified to impart. It is related that Dr. Dwight's mother, who was daughter of the excellent Jonathan Edwards, and had a large family, was accustomed to conduct the early education of the elder children, while a younger child was rocking the cradle of the infant, or while she was busy in some domestic employment.† In the days of our reforming forefathers, the catechizing of children and servants, was frequently the special work of ladies of rank, or of the wives of eminent ministers. Were Christian mothers still to imitate such laudable examples, we have no doubt that family instructions would be more efficient, and Christian households would afford fuller evidence of walking with delight under the power and love of the truth.

3. They should *exemplify the spirit of true religion before their children.*

A mother's example is a constant monitor to her

* Isaiah xxviii. 9, 10.

† "It was a maxim with her, the soundness of which her own observation through life fully confirmed, that children generally lose several years, in consequence of being considered *too young* to be taught. She pursued a different course with her son; she began to instruct him almost as soon as he was able to speak; and such was his eagerness, as well as his capacity for improvement, that, before he was four years old, he was able to read the Bible with ease and correctness." "With the benefit of his father's example constantly before him, enforced and commanded by the precepts of his mother, he was sedulously instructed in the doctrines of religion, as well as the whole circle of moral duties. She taught him from the very dawn of reason to fear God; to be conscientiously just and kind; affectionate and charitable and forgiving; to preserve on all occasions, and under all circumstances, the most sacred regard to truth; to relieve the distresses and supply the wants of the poor and unfortunate. She aimed, at a very early period, to enlighten his conscience; to make him afraid of sin, and taught him to hope for pardon only through the righteousness of Christ. The impressions thus made were never effaced." —Life of Dr. Dwight.

children, and must have a powerful influence, either to draw them to the paths of virtue, or to turn them away from religion. This is a lesson presented to them daily, and whatever else they may learn or forget, this they may certainly be expected to copy. In a mother's temper and habits, children should see exemplified the life of religion, and should learn whatsoever is pure, and lovely, and of good report. When Sarah is held forth to Christian women for imitation, she is commended for having "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," which is said to be in the sight of God "of great price."* Christian mothers should thus study to display before their children the lovely and attractive graces of our holy religion. They should be examples of faith and patience and meekness, while they should be characterized by holy decision, activity and perseverance in well-doing. All their instructions should be recommended and enforced by a holy, consistent example. Here is eminently a mother's sphere of salutary influence. She should always be able, by the language of action, to say to her children, "*Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ.*"† A mother's conduct as well as instructions should ever

"Point to brighter worlds, and lead the way."

The cases on record are not few in which persons who have become distinguished, have confessed that they were first impressed with the excellency of goodness from what they observed in their mothers, and that they were chiefly indebted for their future eminence to their example. The mothers of Isaac, Moses, Samuel, David, and Lemuel in the Old Testament; and of our Lord, of John the Baptist, of several of the Apostles, and of Timothy in the New, are illustrious instances of maternal piety, connected with the emi-

* 1 Peter iii. 4.

† 1 Corinthians xi. 1.

ment usefulness of children. Not a few of the martyrs of Christ were the children of believing mothers; and the same connexion between parental piety and distinguished usefulness in devoted ministers, missionaries, and other public servants of Christ, is easily observable.*

4. Mothers should regard themselves not only called *to pray for their children*, but frequently *to pray with them*.

At the mercy-seat, they will have power with God and with man, and prevail. Here woman's weakness becomes armed with the power of Omnipotence. God is wont greatly to honour those who cherish the spirit and cultivate the habits of Hannah, and of Lois and Eunice. Our Lord when on earth showed forth his power and Godhead, by answering frequently the prayers of mothers who applied to Him for the relief of their children. He is yet ready to hear and willing to answer the petitions of mothers pleading for spiritual blessings for their offspring. Mothers should pray *with* their children, as well as pray *for* them. Even little ones are impressed by a parent kneeling with them at the throne of grace, and uttering a few simple petitions for them, more than by instructions, however suitable; and they will thus be brought to a sense of what they have said or done amiss, more than by corporeal correction. To a mother herself there is no position more solemn than that of leading her child to

* The mothers of many of Scotland's Reformers and Martyrs of the Covenant were devoted Christian women.—See "Ladies of the Covenant" *passim*. The mothers of Dr. Payson, and the late Drs. M'Crie and Chalmers, were not only truly pious, but also women of superior minds. In the admirable work of the late Rev. Christopher Anderson, on the "Domestic Constitution," a large number of instances are given of distinguished scholars, statesmen, and divines, who owed much of their future eminence to parental wisdom and piety, and to careful parental training. See "Anderson's Domestic Constitution," pp. 110—163.

the mercy-seat, and pouring out her heart in its behalf. Her own spirit cannot fail to be benefited, and she will carry away from the exercise a deeper and more permanent conviction of the worth of the soul, and will be impelled to seek more diligently and earnestly its salvation. Efforts begun and carried on in prayer are, to a large extent, blessed. Children who have from infancy been convinced that their mothers were prayerful, and who have, in company with them, frequently engaged in prayer, may be expected to be impressed with the idea that "every thing is sanctified by the word of God, and by prayer," and that they cannot hope to enjoy any safety or blessing but in prayer.

However arduous may be the work, and solemn the responsibility of a Christian mother—however great her dangers and trials, she has manifold ENCOURAGEMENT, both from the declarations of the divine word, and from God's gracious providential dealings with the families of his people. The prayer of faith, we are assured, will be heard, and efforts made in faith are never altogether in vain. It is accordant with God's plan of mercy that He advances his glory by means of the weakest instrumentality; and this is strikingly illustrated by a blessing upon the labours of female parents. Frequently has it been observed, that where the children of a family are remarkable for piety or eminent usefulness, this was connected with the fervent piety of the mother. Of the fruits of maternal fidelity, we have a striking instance in the justly-celebrated RICHARD CECIL. Though religiously educated, when a young man he became infidel, and laboured to instil the same principles into others. His excellent mother, however, continued to pray for him; and at length the impression of her earnest piety was the means of arresting him in his career of folly, and of effectually reclaiming him. One night,

as he lay contemplating the case of his mother, he said within himself:—

“I see two unquestionable facts: first, My mother is greatly afflicted in circumstances, body, and mind; and yet I see that she cheerfully bears up under all, by the support she derives from constantly repairing to her closet and her Bible. Secondly, That she has a secret spring of comfort of which I know nothing; while I, who give an unbounded loose to my appetites, and seek pleasure by every means, seldom or ever find it. If, however, there is such a secret in religion, why may I not find it as well as my mother?” He instantly rose and began to pray, but was soon damped, by recollecting that much of his mother’s comfort seemed to arise from her faith in Christ. Now, “this Christ I have ridiculed: He stands much in my way, and can form no part of my prayers.” In utter confusion he lay down again; but, in process of time, conviction of sin continuing, his difficulties were gradually removed, his objections answered. He now listened to those admonitions of his mother which he had before affected to receive with pride and scorn; yet they had fixed themselves in his heart like a barbed arrow; and though the effects were concealed from her observation, yet tears would fall from his eyes, as he passed along the street, from the impression she had made on his mind. Now he would discourse with her, and hear her without outrage, which revived her hopes, especially as he then attended the public worship of God. Thus he made some progress, but felt no small difficulty in separating from his favourite connexions. Light, however, broke into his mind, till at last he discovered that Christ Jesus, so far from “standing in the way,” as he once thought, was indeed “*the way, the truth, and the life, to all who come unto God by him.*”

After such a change so produced, it is not wonderful that Mr. Cecil should speak as he does of the power of parental influence. “Where parental influence does not convert,” he would say, “it hammers; it hangs on the wheels of evil.” Again, he says—

“I find in myself another evidence of the greatness of parental influence. I detect myself, to this day, in laying down maxims in my family, which I took up at three or four years of age, before I could possibly know the reason of them.” “Besides, parental influence must be great, because God has said it shall be so. The parent is not to stand reasoning and calculating. God has

said, that his character *shall* have influence; and so this *appointment* of Providence becomes often the punishment of a wicked man. Such a man is a complete *selfist*. I am weary of hearing such men talk about their 'family'—and their 'family'—they 'must provide for their family.' Their family has no place in their real regard; they push for themselves. But God says, No! you think your children shall be so and so; but they shall be rods for your own backs. They shall be your curse. They shall rise up against you. The most common of all human complaints is, Parents groaning under the vices of their children! This is all the effect of parental influence." *

While the command to "train" children aright, and the promise of beneficial results (Prov. xxii. 6), have been thought by some to guarantee in all cases a blessing to follow faithful parental training, so that no child so reared finally perishes—we may, at least, safely infer from it, that in a great majority of cases, such exertions will be crowned with success. Mothers should think of the unspeakable honour of nursing children for God, and of their feeble efforts being made available for the conversion of their children, and to prepare them for usefulness in the church, and for advancing the Redeemer's glory in the world. True, it is not in their power to regenerate one soul; but the Spirit, graciously promised to them who ask him, can quicken, and seal to the day of redemption. Amidst difficulties and trials, mothers should continue to pray and labour. The conversion of their children to God will surely be an abundant reward for all their anxiety and self-denying exertions;—while to be instrumental in training labourers for the Redeemer's vineyard on earth, and for the work of the Upper Sanctuary, is an honour transcending all that the world can bestow upon its favourites. Godly mothers may look forward with humble but assured hope to that "recompense of reward" which the King will at length confer, when

* See Anderson's "Domestic Constitution."—pp. 156—158.

they and their believing offspring will exult together in the bliss of heaven—when in holy transport, they will be enabled to exclaim, “Behold we, and the children whom God hath given us;” and those whom they tenderly nursed, and whom they reared for Christ’s service, shall share with them in the “fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasures which are at God’s right hand for evermore.”

Let Christian mothers, in dedicating their children to God in baptism, and afterwards improving it, propose to themselves these high objects, and seek to realize this honour and blessedness. Let them consider that, in caring for the spiritual welfare of their children, they are elevating and ennobling their own character, and performing to the Church and to the world one of the most important services in which a human being can be employed. If they are unconcerned on this vital subject—if they live prayerless and without faith—or if their children’s spiritual improvement is postponed, from considerations of their own ease and worldly interests, they will not only themselves be chargeable with aggravated criminality, but will be the means of dragging down others with them to hopeless destruction. As they would escape a doom so fearful, let them lay to heart their special interest in the baptismal engagement. Let them aim continually after their children’s renewal in the Spirit of holiness—and by all the power of a mother’s affection—all the earnestness of a mother’s prayers—and all the constraining force of a mother’s attractive example, let them endeavour that those whom God has given them may be a blessing in the earth—the instruments of making known to future generations the Redeemer’s renowned fame.

CHAPTER XII.

SALVATION AND DEATH OF INFANTS.

BEFORE concluding this Treatise, it seems proper to state briefly the doctrine of Scripture in relation to the salvation of children dying in infancy. A large number of the human family die in childhood, probably not less than *one-fourth of all that are born into the world*; and it is calculated that “one-half of all that are born, die before they have reached the full standing of members in the Christian Church.” * What is the state in death?—what the final condition of this vast number? are inquiries not only prompted by an earnest curiosity, but to which also a regard to the Divine glory, and a consideration of the immortal spirit demand an answer. The anxieties of Christian parents on this subject, too, require to be at least alleviated, if they cannot be fully satisfied; and in cases where tender loved ones are removed by death from the embraces of fond parents, and where death has made frequent inroads among the infantile members of a family, the inquiry assumes a peculiarly solemn and absorbing interest.

The subject of Infant Salvation has been injuriously treated, not only by Socinians and Pelagians, who reject other fundamental doctrines of the gospel, but likewise by others whose sentiments are generally considered evangelical. Some of the most eminent English Divines, both ancient and modern, who strongly repudiate the Popish dogma of Baptismal Regeneration, teach that infant children are in a state of salvation, as having “*prevenient grace*,” or a “*holy infantile dis-*

* See *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*, by Rev. James Buchanan—p. 213.

position"; others, that all infants are not only adopted and justified, but also regenerated and sanctified. But this justification, regeneration, and adoption, are of a different kind from that which is conferred on believing adults. It is suited to baptized infants, so that if they die in infancy, they shall thereby be saved; but should they live to mature age, they may, notwithstanding, through the corruption of actual sin, fall away and perish.* Several distinguished Congregational Divines, by means of the doctrine of *general atonement* which they advocate, hold that all infants dying in infancy, whether their parents make a profession of religion or not, are certainly saved.† Such writers teach that infants do not need the penalty of the violated law removed, for they were not properly under it; and maintain that the Saviour is only a "Head of influence to them, and not a sacrifice for their personal guilt."

It need not be declared how contrary all this is to the plain and reiterated statements of the Word, and

* This is the sentiment of Bishop Davenant, one of the British Delegates to the Synod of Dort.

† The Rev. Thomas Binney, in his work entitled "*The Great Gorham Case*," thus speaks of those who hold that infants are under the curse, and liable to God's wrath in consequence of Adam's sin—"They alike assume the liability of all infants, *as such*, TO GOD'S EVERLASTING WRATH AND DAMNATION, and that every babe is born into the world fitted for HELL. . . . But I will say for myself, that with my views of the divine character, the meaning of the Bible, the redemption of Christ, and the probation of mercy, if I were to adopt and profess this doctrine, I should, in my own estimation, be a traitor to humanity, a denier of the gospel, an apostate from Jesus, and an infidel to God." Another able Congregationalist writer, speaking of infants and adults respectively, says, "It is obvious that the Saviour of these two classes may be so designated in diverse degrees. The one He may save merely bringing its powers into a just accordance. He may be the *Head of influence without being a sacrifice for personal guilt.*"‡

‡ *The Christian Atonement, &c.*, by the Rev. Joseph Gilbert—pp. 27, 28.

how incompatible it is with the scheme of salvation by grace. The Scriptures represent the whole human race fallen and ruined in Adam as its federal head, and that “judgment has come upon all”—infants as well as others—“to condemnation.” Those who teach that infants are justified and adopted in infancy admit, that if they live beyond the period of infancy, they may forfeit the title which they had obtained through actual sin, and may at last perish. This is plainly to inculcate the Popish heresy that grace is defectible—that those who were once in a state of grace, and had fellowship with Christ, may, notwithstanding, come short of eternal salvation. While such a view dishonours Christ, by teaching that his work is imperfect, it cannot furnish any solid comfort to Christian parents with respect to their infant offspring. The saints in Heaven are represented as all singing the same song—“THOU HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD.” Their being “redeemed” implies that they were formerly guilty and depraved; and if infants were not once in this condition, they could not join in the song, and they could have no part in the enjoyments and praises of the Upper Sanctuary. Again, infants suffer pain and death, and are frequently cut off by calamities, which are inflicted by God’s hand, as His threatened punishment for sin. Thus, in the destruction of the Old World, and of the cities of the plain, thousands of infants perished; and these signal acts of vengeance are always represented in Scripture as coming upon a people as the consequence of their aggravated transgression. Infant children are involved with their parents in the common ruin—the proof this that they were not regarded as innocent, but as sinful and guilty. Under a righteous Sovereign, an innocent person cannot be condemned and suffer; and the fact that infants suffer and are cut off by judgments which are inflicted directly by God’s hand, is standing and

irresistible evidence that children in infancy are viewed as criminals, and that it is consistent with the highest rectitude to visit upon them the penalty of the primeval offence. The emphatic inquiry of Eliphaz is applicable to infants as well as others—"Who ever perished being innocent? and where were the righteous cut off?"*

If it is alleged, as is sometimes done by those who plead for the universal salvation of infants, that bodily pain and death are all that will be inflicted upon them as the consequence of Adam's sin, it is only needful to reply, that if outward affliction and death are of a penal nature, and the fruits of the curse, then, if it is consistent with infinite holiness and justice to award in this life punishment, the Sovereign Judge of all may inflict greater, without any imputation on his moral

* Job iv. 7. "If the perfect sinlessness of infants had been a notion entertained among the people of God of old, in the ages next following the flood, handed down from Noah and his children, who well knew that vast multitudes of infants perished in the flood, is it likely that Eliphaz, who lived within a few generations of Shem and Noah, would have said to Job, as he does in Job. iv. 7, 'Who ever perished being innocent? and where were the righteous cut off?' especially since in the same discourse (chap. v. 1) he appeals to a tradition of the ancients for a confirmation of this very point; as he also does in ch. xv. 7—10 and xxii. 15, 16. In which last place, he mentions that very thing—the destruction of the wicked by the flood—as an instance of that perishing of the wicked, which he supposes to be peculiar to them, for Job's conviction; in which 'the wicked were cut down out of time, their foundation being overflowed with a flood.' Where it is also observable, that he speaks of such an untimeliness of death as they suffered by the flood, as an evidence of guilt; as he also does ch. xv. 32, 33. 'It shall be accomplished before his time; and his branch shall not be green.' But those that were destroyed by the flood in infancy, above all the rest, were 'cut down out of time,' when, instead of living above nine hundred years, according to the common period of man's life, many were cut down before they were one year old." "The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended," &c, by Jonathan Edwards, A.M.—pp. 157, 158—Glasgow, 1819.

perfections. The severe sufferings and physical death of infant children certainly furnish ground to infer, that if one part of the penalty is endured by those even who “have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” the whole may be exacted, and that without any infringement of the character or prerogatives of Deity.

There are some who advocate Infant Salvation on somewhat different grounds. They admit that infants are involved in the sin of Adam as the federal head of the whole human family, and are, in consequence, exposed to condemnation and ruin. But they hold that, through the constitution of grace which is now established in Christ, the direct penal effects of Adam’s first sin are so far removed, that none shall be finally condemned merely for his one offence.* This opinion is not new. It is substantially the sentiment of Davenant, and has been ably refuted by WITSIUS, in his excellent work “*On the Efficacy and Utility of Baptism, in the case of Elect Infants, whose parents are under the Covenant.*” According to it, the original guilt of infants is forgiven, though not in baptism, yet as the fruit of Christ’s death, and as infants are members of the Church. Notwithstanding, if they survive the period of infancy, they may fall from their gracious state, and finally perish. This scheme is obviously liable to the most serious objections. It is built upon

* This is the sentiment of the late Dr. Russel of Dundee—“It appears,” says he, “that the original constitution, and that which is now established through Christ, are thus far co-extensive, that the direct penal effects of the sin of Adam, separately considered, are so far removed, that none shall be finally condemned merely for his one offence.” Elsewhere, he teaches that original sin is not of itself a ground of condemnation. “This rests,” he adds, “on the principle, that the atonement of Christ is a general remedy, admitting, according to the Divine pleasure, of a particular application.”—*Russel on Infant Salvation*—pp. 59—71.

the foundation of a "*general atonement*," which is destitute of support from the Scriptures. It divides the work of Christ into parts, and represents it as imperfect and incomplete. According to such views, the Redeemer expiated Original sin unconditionally, and actual sin on condition of faith. If infants, redeemed and pardoned, may afterwards sin and perish, then the end of Christ's sacrifice is not obtained, and the reconciliation effected is not permanent, but ceases when the child has passed beyond infancy, and has become a responsible being. These sentiments are derogatory to the work of Christ, and can furnish no solid comfort to those who seek to be guided in all things by the will of Christ, and not by human fancies; or to Christian parents, who are concerned about the eternal welfare of their infant children, whether living or dead.

With reference to the salvation of infants, we must in this, as in every other case, bow implicitly to the authority of God speaking in his Word. Whatever information the Sacred Oracles communicate, whether by direct statement, or by legitimate inference, we are bound to receive and cordially believe; and where the Scriptures are silent we must be content to remain ignorant. To interpose in such a case our own theories, however plausible, or to embrace the sentiments of others, however pleasing or beautifully expressed, is presumption—intermeddling with what God has not seen fit to reveal, and seeking to be wise above what is written. Having regard to a principle which cannot be controverted, we remark,

First, *That it does not appear safe to assert dogmatically that all infants are absolutely saved.* We are aware that some eminent Calvinistic Divines, such as Gill and Toplady, have maintained that children dying in infancy are universally saved, on the ground that God, who knew the end from the beginning, may have included, in his eternal covenant, this large por-

tion of the human family, while in the divine purpose it was settled that hardened transgressors should eat of the fruit of their own doings. All that can be said at most of this sentiment is, that it is a pleasing theory—a supposition, however, unsupported by any clear or conclusive evidence. We can only determine concerning God's purposes or operations by what He has been pleased to reveal; and we search in vain the Sacred Record for any declaration, which assures us that all infants that die in infancy were elected to eternal salvation. We should ever beware of sitting to judge what is proper for God either to purpose or do. Our only safe ground is to *believe* fully that the Judge of the whole earth will do right—to receive what is revealed, and where we cannot fathom, to stand still and adore. “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Whether the universal salvation of infants is taught on the ground of their innocence, or of the divine decree embracing all infants, or of a “general atonement,” the doctrine must fail to afford satisfaction to a mind bowing to divine authority. None of these assumed principles have a clear Scriptural warrant to sustain them, and therefore the consequence deduced from them must be inconclusive and unsatisfactory. To assert positively, as some do, that all that die in infancy are certainly saved, is only to advance a presumption without proof. It is, moreover, attended with the manifest danger of clinging to a favourite theory, and straining the Scriptures to comport with it, instead of rejecting preconceived opinions, and simply hearing as a child the voice of the Beloved speaking in his word.

Secondly, *That the original sin of all infants is taken away through the redemption of Christ is without Scriptural authority.*

It is often asserted in the Bible that Christ died to

put away sin—that he died as a substitutionary sacrifice, and that his death was a perfect atonement, and an adequate propitiation to divine justice for sin. But nowhere is it asserted or hinted that, by the atonement of Christ, one kind of sin is remitted, and that other kinds are uncanceled. The sacrifice of Christ put away, for all for whom it was offered, sin of every kind, original and actual—past, present, and future. They for whom “He was made sin,” are redeemed from all iniquity, and shall be “made the righteousness of God in Him.” If any sin is taken away, all transgressions are cast into the depths of the sea. Where original sin is remitted, the subject shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. To assert, therefore, that the original sin of all infant children is fully blotted out, either through Christ’s death or by baptism; and that, in consequence, such as die in infancy shall be saved, while others, so pardoned, may live and sin actually, and perish for ever, is unsupported by a shadow of Scriptural proof, and must fail to afford satisfaction to a pious reflecting mind.

Thirdly, *That baptism does not absolutely secure the salvation of infants.*

The opinion that baptized infants shall certainly be saved is not only maintained by those who hold the dogma of baptismal regeneration, but likewise by the majority of their opponents—the evangelical section of the National Church of England. The one party teach that baptism regenerates, and therefore saves those who die in infancy,—the other, that “infants baptized, and dying before actual sin, are certainly saved.” The latter view is that of Mr. Gorham, the opponent of the Bishop of Exeter, and of Mr. Goode, who is by far the ablest advocate of evangelical doctrine in the Church of England, on the article of in-

fant baptism.* Both these writers, and those who adopt their views, hold that regeneration is inseparably connected with baptism—if not at the time, before or after the reception of the rite. Infantile regeneration is regarded, however, as different from the regeneration of adults—it is only regeneration *commenced*; and though sufficient to save an individual dying in infancy, it is totally inadequate to save the same individual dying in more advanced life.† The Scriptural views of baptism which have been already advanced in this Treatise, afford no countenance to such sentiments. Considered as an external rite, it has no power to effect a spiritual change. As a seal of the covenant of grace, it confirms the enjoyment of saving benefits only to those who are interested in the covenant. As a surety, Christ Jesus is regarded as one with those for whom He engaged in covenant. His finished work is perfect; and every sinner to whom his righteousness is legally reckoned must be justified

* See his elaborate work, entitled, “The Doctrine of the Church of England as to the effects of Baptism, in the case of Infants,” &c., by William Goode, M.A., F.S.A., Rector of All-Hallows, Great and Less, London—2d edition—London, 1850.

† “I know not,” says Mr. Goode, “why any one should quarrel with the term *infantine regeneration*, more than with the apostolic term *infantine holiness*, used in a similar sense. But there comes a farther question as to what this regeneration is, and whether one who may have been rightly called regenerate as an infant, is therefore to be so considered as an adult? Clearly not; because, by the word of God, personal faith is essential to the regeneration of an adult. The child, in passing from an infantine state to a state of responsibility, goes through a complete change of condition.”—“*Doctrine of Church of England*,” &c., p. 13—221. Dr. Jackson, another advocate of the same doctrine, quoted by Mr. Goode, says, “The same measure of regeneration which sufficeth children or infants dying before they come to the use of reason, will not suffice those who attain to the use of reason, or years of discretion.”—“*Goode’s Doctrine of the Church of England*,” &c., p. 14.

at once and for ever. It is surely preposterous to suppose one part of this righteousness given in infancy, and the rest at a subsequent period, or given and afterwards withdrawn. Such are the results of resting the hope of infant salvation upon a foundation laid in mere human fancy, or upon the vain attempt to bring the doubtful or erroneous expressions of human formularies into accordance with the Word of God.

The Salvation of infants dying in infancy may be shown to rest upon a foundation much more secure and stable. Christian faith and parental hope must be fixed on the unchangeable Word of God, if they would minister solid peace, or be as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast in the day of trial. A few considerations may be briefly stated, as guiding to right views on this important subject:—

It must always be borne in mind that if any provision has been made for the spiritual welfare of infants, *they must be dealt with substantially on the same principles as other saved sinners are treated.* There is, indeed, a peculiarity in their case—as being free of actual sin—and as being incapable of exercising thought or understanding on the truth spoken. But still, they are—like all others of the human family—fallen, guilty, and depraved. They were each one shapen in iniquity, and in sin did their mother conceive them. They have the same natural corruption as adults, and from this, as a polluted fountain, issues forth all actual sin. Hence they are far from God and at enmity with Him—exposed to his fearful wrath and curse, and unspeakably needing his salvation. Besides, *the salvation which they require is a “common salvation.”* If saved at all, they must be saved substantially in the same way as adult sinners. They must be made partakers of salvation through the covenant of grace. Their nature must be changed. They must be justified through the righteousness of Christ, adopted into the family of

God, and fully saved through the redemption of Christ, and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.*

Keeping these two statements in view, we observe,

1. That the salvation of *Infant children can only be through sovereign grace*, and that however young, they are capable of being subjects of grace.

Salvation by grace is the glory of the Gospel. Since the Fall, no other method of salvation has been revealed, and by no other have sinners been reconciled to God, or brought home to heaven. None are saved as being innocent, or as having contracted only a small measure of guilt and defilement through the primal apostacy. Accordingly, when the Apostle contrasts the federal headship of Adam and of Christ, and sets in opposition to the reign of death, which was introduced through the first offence, the reign of grace, he represents infants "who sinned not after the similitude of Adam's transgression," as liable to death, and then triumphs in the extent of the reign of grace. "For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." "For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."† Here, while the reigns of death and of grace are contrasted, and the latter is represented as more sure and glorious than the former, it seems every way reasonable to regard infant children as to some extent subjects of the dominion of grace. Through the headship of Adam, they are included with their parents in the "disobedience of one," and share the ruinous consequences of the Fall. May not

* See Buchanan on "The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit," pp. 214, 215.

† Romans v. 15, 17.

the children of believing parents be also included in the federal representation of Christ, the Second Adam, and thus share the blessed effects of redemption? Without pretending to determine the number or the classes that receive "abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness," we may safely affirm that a very considerable number in infancy may be rescued from the dark dominion of death, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. If they are dealt with as guilty, and were by nature infected with the poison of sin, they are certainly capable of having the Saviour's righteousness imputed to them for justification, and of being made partakers of the Divine nature. 'The freeness and richness of the grace of God afford a large ground for godly parents to trust and hope for the salvation of their infant seed. They have encouragement to take hold of God's covenant, not only for themselves, but for their offspring. The same sovereign mercy that reached them when perishing, and rescued them from ruin, can avail to deliver their infant children too; and they can have no higher ground of rejoicing, in the prospect of their own and their children's salvation completed, than that the "head-stone" should be "brought forth," with "shoutings of grace, grace unto it.'

2. *It is as redeemed by the blood of Christ alone that infants are saved.*

While the fountain-spring of human salvation is grace, the blessed channel of conveyance is the blood of the Lamb. All who come home to glory are *blood-washed*, and all, as they wave palms of victory, sing the same song of triumph, "Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, . . . to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."* Redemption implies that its subjects were once under captivity and spiritual bondage; and in this state are all in-

* Revelations i. 5, 6.

fants by nature, incapable of delivering themselves, and without hope of deliverance by created power. The perfection of the redemption finished—the infinite value of the atonement of Christ, as well as the unspeakable condescension and compassion of the Redeemer, afford strong grounds of trust that infant children may be numbered with the ransomed and redeemed of the Lord. When the Saviour took “little children up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them,”* He did this not merely as an expression of tenderness and benevolence, but in his official character as a Redeemer, and in the exercise of his public ministry. When he added that “of *such* is the kingdom of God,” meaning that not only in disposition but even in age, such were proper members of the church on earth and in heaven, He exhibited them as objects of a Saviour’s blessing. Now, that redemption is finished—while the Redeemer is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever”—there is ample ground to believe that the blood of the Lamb will avail for the salvation of tender little ones; and that among the great multitude that shall come to heaven will be infants that were dedicated to God, and whom the compassionate Shepherd of Israel gathered with his arm and blessed.

3. *Christian parents have large ground to pray and hope for the salvation of their infant children.*

With reference to the infant seed of unbelievers, as it appears to us, Scripture is entirely silent, and it behoves us to affirm nothing positively, as to whether they are saved or not. There is an obvious propriety in this that does not apply to believers; and the Spirit may have, of purpose, left this matter in darkness, to restrain presumptuous speculation, and to impress upon all parents the awful necessity of seeking for themselves personal salvation, as they would have comfort respecting the final condition of their children. **While we are**

* Mark x. 16.

not permitted to speculate respecting the eternal state of the infant seed of unbelieving or irreligious parents, we may safely leave them in the hands of Him, who as the Sovereign Judge of all will do what is right, and whose goodness is over all his works.

Believing parents have, however, gracious encouragement to trust that the salvation of their seed dying in infancy is secure. The promise is to them and their children; and this promise—a compend of the New Covenant—assures them of full salvation for themselves, and at the same time, seems to hold forth a similar assurance on behalf of their infant offspring. Children, while in a state of infancy and childhood, are not only so absolutely dependent on their parents, as to be regarded, by the laws and usages of society, as one with them, but, under both the former and later dispensations of the Covenant, there exists a kind of moral identity between believing parents and their children. There is a *gracious* connexion between them, such that if children die in infancy, there is strong ground to hope that, in terms of the promise, God is their Portion and Salvation. If, in the Divine purpose, any of the children of faithful parents have not been predestined to life eternal, they shall live, till, by their own personal act, they shall reject the offers and renounce the hopes of the Gospel. The extensive promise and this divinely established connexion, afford to believing parents ample grounds of pleading for the welfare of their children. They have, indeed, the same warrant to pray and hope for the salvation of their infant children, as they have to confide in the covenant of peace for their own salvation. Faith, taking hold of the encouraging promise in the one case, may appropriate it in the other; and may receive the blessed end—the salvation of their children's souls as well as their own. On such a ground, it seems probable, David bowed down in resignation to the Divine disposal, when his

infant child was taken away. The expression that he uttered must mean more than that he expected shortly to be with his child in the state of the dead. Such a sense would be frigid, and would furnish no adequate reason for the calmness and joy of the pious monarch, when his child was removed by death. His resignation arose from his having obtained a gracious answer to prayer. Remembering his own sin, he wept and made supplication, and was doubtless more concerned about the salvation of his child than about the preservation of its life. His prayer was answered; and in the assurance conveyed to his spirit of its eternal welfare, his griefs were dispelled, and he gave utterance to the sentiment of joyful resignation, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return unto me."*

Again, *the seal of the covenant is provided, and parents and their infant children are included in it.* On God's part, this is a gracious attestation of His purpose of mercy toward both, and of his confirming to them his covenant-favour, and the precious promises which convey it to the heirs of salvation. In baptism, He provides an ordinance for believing parents dedicating to Him their offspring; and this intimates his willingness to accept of their faithful surrender. The chief design of giving up children to God is, that they may

* 2 Samuel xii. 23. On this passage, Matthew Henry remarks in his usual quaint but pithy style, "Secondly, I shall go to him to heaven, to a state of blessedness which even the Old Testament saints had some expectation of. Godly parents have great reason to hope concerning their children that die in infancy, that it is well with their souls in the other world; for the promise is to us and to our seed, which shall be performed to those that do not put a bar in their own door, as infants do not. * * * * God calls them his children that are born unto him; and if they are his, he will save them. This may comfort us when our children are removed from us by death; they are better provided for, both in work and wealth, than they could be in this world. We shall be with them shortly to part no more."—*Henry's Exposition in loco.*

be saved; and when all is so mercifully provided to comfort the hearts of godly parents, and to encourage them to fervent prayer in behalf of their infant offspring, there is surely strong ground to hope that these prayers shall be graciously heard, and that in the case of those dying in infancy, they will be answered in their eternal salvation.*

The Scriptures, moreover, record *the instances of distinguished servants of God, who were subjects of grace in infancy.* The Saviour himself, the vital Head of the Church, had from the womb the Spirit without measure to sanctify his humanity. He is styled “the Holy child Jesus” in his birth and infancy; and set forth as the perfect model to which all the members of his mystical body are to be conformed. There is every reason to conclude, that some of his redeemed ones share in this conformity, from the earliest dawn of their existence. Of John the Baptist, the angel predicted, “he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother’s womb.”† God declared of Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee.”‡ Timothy is commended

* “When a child is thus baptized on the strength of a parent’s faith, we see the federal principle which pervades the scheme of grace as well as the covenant of works,—and the parent is impressively reminded of his responsibility, as being answerable to God for his child, at least during its infancy, or non-age. Whether, therefore, we consider baptism as a sign of grace—or as a seal of the covenant—or as a visible witness for the truth—or as an intelligible symbol of spiritual blessings—it is fraught with profound instruction; and not less fraught with encouragement to faith, since it is a true sign, and a real seal, and ought to be regarded by every parent as a pledge of his child’s interest in the covenant of grace, and as a motive and stimulus to hope, and pray, and labour, for its everlasting salvation.”—*Buchanan on the Holy Spirit*—pp. 229, 330.

† Luke i. 15.

‡ Jer. i. 5.

as having “known the Scriptures from childhood;” and the inspired declaration concerning him seems to imply that he was early a partaker of “like precious faith” as distinguished his mother and grandmother.” *

The annals of the church, and of believing families, record instances, not a few, of children that were dedicated to God being called in infancy, and whether removed by death, or spared for usefulness, giving marked indications of being interested in the common salvation. The hope of Christian parents about their infant offspring is no vain illusion, or idle expectation. The cases related by President Edwards, in his “Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Northampton,” of children savingly impressed in infancy; and by Jane-way in his “Token for Children,” of the early piety and happy deaths of many in childhood, furnish cheering evidence that grace is not unfrequently implanted in the dawn of existence. Of the youthful martyr James Renwick it is recorded, that at the infantile age of two years, he gave evidence of some gracious motions of the Spirit. The mother of the excellent Dr. Payson, of America, was accustomed to say that she could assign no date to the commencement of vital religion in his heart, so early did he show the work of grace in his temper, and words, and actions. The history of godly families supplies many instances, consoling to the hearts of Christian parents, and illustrative of the sovereign power of divine grace, in which children dying in childhood gave pleasing evidence, prior to their removal, of being blessed of the Lord. From such instances, as well as from the connexion of parents and their seed in the provision and seal of the covenant of grace, we are warranted to conclude that parents may not only indulge the hope of the salvation

* 2 Tim. iii. 15; i. 5.

of their children dying in infancy, but may even *come to a blessed assurance on this subject.*

As believers may make their own "calling and election sure," so they may arrive at a comfortable assurance in relation to the present safety and future welfare of their children. How this precious privilege is realized, it may not be easy to explain to those who are strangers to the feelings of believing experience, or who do not possess the *witness of the Spirit*. But, notwithstanding, this presents no hindrance to its actual enjoyment. By following them "who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and giving "all diligence," a Christian parent may, for himself, attain to "the full assurance of hope unto the end," and, in a similar way, may he come to partake of a joyful hope respecting his infant offspring. Relying on the divine promise—taking hold of God's covenant, and receiving the answer of prayer, he may realize the seal and earnest of the Spirit, and know that not only is an inheritance reserved for him in heaven, but also for those who were lent him of the Lord—who were early dedicated to God—for whom he frequently and earnestly prayed, and whom he desired above all to train for Christ's service. Answers of believing prayer are vouchsafed in various ways, and the vow made in faith, God not only accepts, but at times makes his servants who tender it know that what they have committed to Him, He will keep to the day of redemption. Whether the matter is made clear to others or not, a believing parent may have it assured to his own heart, that the infants that he brought to Christ have been embraced in his arms and blessed—that the Lambs that were entrusted to the Good Shepherd have been laid in his bosom, and in death are taken home to his fold in glory.

Such an assurance, however given to a godly parent, is replete with support and consolation, when he is

called to mourn over the blighting of domestic hopes—in the removal by death of infant children. Few afflictions affect more tenderly the hearts of Christian parents, or form to them a greater exercise of faith than this. To see a lovely opening flower nipped at once, and all its beauty decayed—to witness the sufferings and death of a tender infant, and know that these sufferings are inflicted in consequence of the depraved nature which it inherits from parents—to think that the visitation may be sent as the punishment of parental sin, and to be unable either to alleviate the bodily sufferings of the child, or to convey divine truth to its mind; these are some of the sorrows which occasionally distress the hearts of Christian parents, and which are felt to be peculiarly poignant and overpowering. Under such a trial, they should walk by faith and not by sight. The compassionate Saviour is present to wipe away their tears, bear their burdens, and hear their prayers, and He is able to “save to the uttermost,” because “He ever liveth to make intercession.” The little ones that were given to parents, as only lent them for a time, He has a sovereign right to reclaim. In their death, he can and will receive them into his compassionate arms, to bless them and make them blessed for evermore.* Their removal from the em-

* The following appropriate expressions on this point are from the conclusion of TWEEDIE'S little work on the “Sacrament of Baptism”:—“And now imagine that you see the funeral of some little child—fancy it one of your own. The coffin is lowered into the narrow house. The parent's tear has fallen on it. The sigh of sympathy has been heaved by the bystander. The heart has glanced at the mother, as she sits in her chamber childless and weeping. ‘Dust to dust, ashes to ashes,’ is the dirge, and the mourners return to their homes. Now, this child belonged either to a Christian father, or to an unconverted man. The *Christian*, led by God's Spirit, sought to give his child in spirit to Christ. When the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was pronounced over him, it was not a mere ceremony, but a sacrament. He has, therefore, humble hope. He can rest

brace of sorrowing parents is for their eternal felicity ; and is, at the same time, a high honour conferred upon parents who nursed them for God, in that they are taken home to heaven, to be jewels in the king's diadem of glory, and to be attendants in his palace for ever. They are *lambs* speedily carried out of the wilderness, and beyond the reach of evil beasts of prey, to the heavenly pastures. They are *lilies*, gathered to bloom in the garland of glory for ever. Such bright hopes should produce calm resignation in the bosom of bereaved parents, and should lead them to rejoice in tribulation.

“ I have had six children,” said the excellent Elliot,

on promises. He can trust the God of grace and truth. With the Bible before him, he can dry his tears, and be comforted. * * * * * ‘ Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages,’ may be regarded as words of encouragement to parents that would train their offspring for God ; and when these words are in spirit obeyed, ‘ The voice of rejoicing and salvation may be heard in the tabernacles of the righteous.’ ” (Ps. cxviii. 15.)

In contrast with this, the case of an irreligious parent, in the death of a child, is thus presented :—“ What hope can the *unconverted man cherish*? Not one heartfelt prayer ever was offered by him. The baptism of his child was but a superstitious ceremony, and what spiritual benefit can accrue? This man presumes that his child is happy, and it may be so. Of that we know nothing ; it is one of the secret things that belong to the Lord our God. But we may ask, what right has such a parent to expect such a result *to follow his neglect*? The child may be safe in the bosom of his heavenly Father, but it is so in spite of its earthly parent ; and when he and his little one meet in the presence of God, if his child appear among the ransomed of the Lord, he will implore no blessing on the head of his father. ‘ I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth ; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore have I sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.’ (1 Sam. iii. 13, 14.) These are the words in which God would warn and startle parents that are remiss.”—“ *The Sacrament of Baptism*,” pp. 121—123.

the North American Missionary, "and this is my sweet comfort that they are all either *on* Christ or *in* Christ. Three of them I had hoped would have served my Master on earth ; but it seemed otherwise to his sovereign wisdom. He took them to serve Him in the Upper Sanctuary, and what am I to speak against my Master's will?" Like the bereaved mother, the woman of Shunem, a Christian parent, as he subscribes to the divine disposal, will be enabled to say, "IT IS WELL." The privilege of being entrusted with an immortal being to train for God, and of having a tender child made partaker of the grace of salvation, and taken home to the Father's house, is an abundant compensation for all a parent's anxieties, and trials, and sorrows. The period of separation is but brief. The "land afar off" is brought near to the eye of faith, and becomes more dear to believing hope, as some that were a part of ourselves have already entered on its possession, and may be among the first that shall welcome believing parents to heaven. The full reunion of believing families is reserved for heaven. The mutual recognition of believing parents and dedicated children in the Canaan above will greatly enhance the joys of the better country. When faithful parents shall receive their own bright reward, it will fill up the measure of their felicity, to have their children joint partakers of the bliss of heaven, and to be able to say in ecstatic wonder, as they stand in the glorious presence of the king, "BEHOLD WE, AND THE CHILDREN WHICH GOD HATH GIVEN US."

CONCLUSION.

The holy Ordinance which we have been considering is to be regarded not only as a blessed *privilege*, but is likewise fraught with the most solemn and weighty *instruction* to the whole church. To Christian families especially, it is eminently fitted to teach, in the most affecting and impressive manner, truths of the highest value. While parents may derive from it direction, encouragement, and consolation, children may also receive from their baptism early spiritual impressions, and may be actuated to a life of holy devotedness. In connexion with the administration of baptism, the New Testament Elijah “turned the hearts of fathers to their children, and of children to their fathers;” and the same sacred rite, under the blessing from above, may still be a powerful means of removing parental neglect and filial disobedience, and thus of drying up the sources of manifold and widespread evils that afflict society. Notwithstanding the low, inadequate views respecting baptism that, in our day, are extensively prevalent, and its diversified abuses, this ordinance, if duly considered, and properly improved, is calculated to be the instrument of revival and blessing to the church and to Christian families. Ministers, in its administration, may learn to feel more deeply the value of souls for which they are called to watch as they that must give account; and to perceive more clearly the excellency of the blessings of redemption, which are presented in lively and significant symbols. The members of the church may be led, not only to feel the vast importance of salvation, and of the privileges of the house of God; but to realize, at the same time, their own baptismal covenant, and to cherish a solemn prayerful interest in the spiritual

welfare of the infant members of the church. That is a work of revival begun, in which the hearers of the gospel and the members of the church are brought to feel the worth of the soul, the unspeakable value of the great salvation, and their own obligations to be the Lord's; and are excited to pray fervently and labour diligently for the advancement of Christ's cause and kingdom in the world. While the Spirit of grace and power alone can produce such impressions and can impel to such efforts, baptism, when observed in a spiritual manner, is an ordinance admirably conducing to these high ends. Purified from abuses which have long marred its simplicity, and perverted it from its proper ends—dispensed in public, and with befitting solemnity—and its practical influence constantly impressed, it is an institution that brightly reflects the glory of the King of Zion, and diffuses a radiance of light and love throughout the church.

Some distinguished writers have even regarded baptism as the great means of *national reformation*.* Although we may hesitate to adopt fully their sentiments on this article, yet we cannot doubt, that were the Scriptural doctrines connected with baptism generally taught and embraced, and were the obligation of the baptismal vow properly felt throughout the community, many of the evil streams which pollute society would be dried up, and the righteousness which exalts nations would be promoted. We have seen that the principle of a thorough Scriptural education is properly deduced from baptismal dedication; and in this the rulers and people of a nation, as well as the members of the church, have a deep interest—in-
as-

* This view is ably advocated by the Rev. Henry Budd, in his "Helps for the Young; or Baptismal Regeneration, according to the services of the Established Church," 2 vols., 12mo. The work contains some excellent sentiments, well expressed, on the subject of Scriptural Education.

much as education moulds the mind and character, and fixes the destinies of a community. It were easy, moreover, to show, that the baptismal engagement involves the idea of *national covenanting*. The national society is the aggregate of the individuals that compose it, and if each of these has been dedicated to God, then it is evident that the whole are under a paramount obligation to avouch the Lord to be their God; and, moreover, that, as in the case of the parental vow, so there is a descending obligation in the Scriptural vows of the nation.

To the *baptized*, whether in youth or in adult age, this ordinance addresses the most weighty counsels, as it encourages to walk in all holy obedience. It is recorded that when individuals were baptized in the primitive church, they were arrayed in white robes, to indicate their cleansing from sin, and to declare their intention thenceforth to maintain a life of unspotted purity. At the same time, they were addressed in these words, "Receive this white and immaculate garment, and bring it forth without spot before the tribunal of Jesus Christ." "They were thus considered as engaged to that strict and holy life, which Jesus Christ has left us by his doctrine and example."* Baptized persons, indeed, rest under the most weighty obligations to imitate the Saviour's perfect example, and to walk as He also walked. The Apostle Paul addressing such declares, "*As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*"† Herein consist their highest privilege and paramount duty. Baptism is the expressive sign of union to Christ, and those who receive it in faith are regarded in the face of the Anointed, and as one with Him—their glorious vital Head. By providing for them this

* See Cave's Primitive Christianity.

† Galatians iii. 27.

seal of the Covenant, God graciously intimates his design to bestow upon them eternal salvation, and to put upon their whole persons the righteousness and image of his Son. Theirs it is to put on Christ daily in believing, and to study and practise increasing conformity. As dedicated ones, they are required to live not to themselves, but to shine as lights in the world, and in all things to aim to promote the Redeemer's glory. Incorporated by baptism into one body with the faithful in all ages, they should learn to love all that love the Lord Jesus with a pure heart, and to cultivate with them a holy and constant fellowship. Forgetful of this, and unmindful of the holy separation from the world to which baptism calls them, the members of the church lose their distinctive character. The love of many waxes cold—perilous times come—and selfishness, alienation, and enmity reign where self-denial and fraternal affection ought to abound.

The practical improvement of Baptism, under the blessing of the Spirit, will restore to the Church its primitive glory and beauty. As in apostolic times, the religion of Love will again prevail throughout the Church—healing its manifold divisions, and exhibiting before the world the excellence and attractive power of the Christian profession. A Pentecostal shower of the Spirit will produce the same blessed effects as in the days of old. “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” “None of them said that aught that he had was his own, but they had all things common”—and “did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.” Thus will Christians again know and feel how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity; and the sweet counsels of the loving Apostle will be transcribed in their whole spirit and intercourse, **“BELOVED, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER; FOR LOVE IS OF GOD; AND EVERY ONE THAT LOVETH IS BORN OF GOD, AND KNOWETH GOD.”***

* John iv. 7.

And, finally, Christians are encouraged, in improving their baptism, to hope for victory in death, and for a blessed resurrection unto life everlasting. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." "Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."* Laying hold on eternal life, and frequently renewing our engagement to be the Lord's, we may entertain a joyful hope, which may grow up to a blessed assurance—"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness." "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."†

* Romans vi. 5, 8.

† Psalm xvii. 15 ; xvi. 11.

A P P E N D I X .

No. I.—BAPTISMAL REGENERATION—pp. 13, 198, &c.

THE dogma of Baptismal Regeneration—to which frequent reference has been made in the preceding Treatise, both in connexion with the doctrine of the Sacrament, and with its practical tendency—is essentially Popish, and its maintenance in any form in the Protestant Churches, affords painful evidence of the existence therein of a portion of the leaven of Antichrist. The sentiment that regeneration is effected by baptism and is inseparable from it, is taught in the most plain and positive terms in the authorized books of the Romish Church, and is properly to be considered a cardinal doctrine of the Popish system, from which others of its most intolerant and dangerous doctrines are clearly deducible. The Council of Trent declares: “If any one shall affirm that by these sacraments grace is not conferred, in consequence of the *work performed*, but that faith in the Divine promise is of itself sufficient to obtain grace, let him be accursed.”* In a book approved of by Romish dignitaries, and extensively used by Romanists, it is declared: “Before baptism, we are in the condition of infidels out of the state of grace; by it we are made members of the Church, and the habit of faith, with other virtues, is infused into our souls. By our first birth, we are born in sin, children of wrath; by baptism, we are *born again*, and become the adopted children of God; by our first birth, we are born to eternal misery; by our second, we are born to eternal life; for if sons of God, we are also heirs of heaven; for which reason baptism is called regeneration, because by it we are *born again of God*.”† The Romanists believe that grace is literally in the sacrament, connected with it as the fruit is with the tree; and one of their latest and most distinguished writers (Dr. Wiseman) expressly says: “Whatever impugns baptismal regeneration, is,

* See Acta Concil. Trident.

† *The Poor Man's Catechism: or, The Christian Doctrine Explained*, by the Rev. John Anselm Maunock.

in truth, destructive of baptism as a sacrament."* According to this system, the sacraments cease to be signs, and there is no distinction between the grace which they communicate, and that which they exhibit or represent. The Popish tenet is, that in all cases, the sacrament conveys the grace which it symbolizes. It needs no argument to show that this takes away altogether the sacrament as a significant rite of the Church, and is irreconcilably at variance with the nature of the sacramental institutions, as exhibited in the Scriptures.

Baptism is, on the Popish principle, essential to salvation; and children dying unbaptized are therefore excluded from happiness. The Romish tradition is, that such do not suffer the utmost torments of hell, but that they are confined in a part of the place of punishment called *Limbus Infantum*, from which there is no release. Moreover, by the Popish doctrine, baptism confers a character which cannot be lost. The baptized person becomes a member of the true Church, and though he may fall from grace, and even perish in mortal sin, he is still regenerated. Hence, likewise, the Church and all who are called Christians are one and the same. Bellarmine declares: "All are included in the Church, even though they be vile, unprincipled, and impious."† On this ground it is that all who are baptized in any way, even heretics, are claimed as belonging to the Romish Church, and Papal authorities teach that all means are lawful to reduce such back to obedience, and failing this, to cut them off as rotten branches.‡ Justly has it been remarked by an able American Author: "Nothing but her want of power, and the ascendancy of Protestantism, compels the Church of Rome to hold her obnoxious ordinances in abeyance; although the assumed Divine authority for such decrees must for ever be asserted by those who sincerely embrace the Roman Catholic faith."§ From the dogma of baptismal regeneration flow almost all the other errors of the Church of Rome respecting the other six sacraments; and it has been justly observed, that, so long as it is believed, there is a

* Wiseman's Three Lectures on the Catholic Hierarchy—Lect. II., p. 14.—London, 1850.

† "Includuntur omnes alii, etiamsi reprobi, scelestis et impii sunt."—Bellarm. De Eccles. Milit., C. II. Quoted by Hagenbach—Hist. of Doct., vol. ii., p. 279.

‡ Peter Dens asserts: "Although heretics be beyond the pale of the Church, they still continue subject to the Church by reason of baptism; whence she deservedly lays hold on them as deserters from her camp, that they may be compelled to return." And again: "Heretics are not in the Church as it regards the union of charity and the communion of saints. That they are not in the Church as it regards subjection to it is denied; for by baptism they became subject to the Church, and they remain personally subject thereto wherever they are."—See Dens' Theology, Tom. II., as Quoted by Elliot, in his Delineation of Popery—pp. 119, 447, 448.

§ Elliot's Delineation of Popery—vol. ii., p. 120.

wide door kept open for the entrance of all other Antichristian doctrines and usages. The grand means of overturning the imposing superstructure of Romish error is the word of God; and if scriptural views of the nature, ends, and uses of the sacrament of baptism are diligently inculcated, and faithfully received and maintained, the fundamental falsehood of the system will become apparent, and its rejection must follow.

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration, as taught by Episcopalians in these countries, assumes a variety of aspects, some of them very nearly related to the Popish tenet on the subject, while there are others which, though we may see cause to reject, it would be evidently unfair to represent as akin to the Romish error. There is no doubt that several of the doctrinal symbols of the Church of England afford countenance to baptismal regeneration; and the justness of the sentiment uttered by a distinguished Prelate seems to be unquestionable. The Bishop of London, in a Charge delivered in 1842, said: "The opinion which denies baptismal regeneration might possibly, though not without great difficulty, be reconciled with the language of the Twenty-seventh Article; but by no stretch of ingenuity, no latitude of explanation, can it be brought to agree with the plain, unqualified language of the offices for baptism and confirmation."

Dr. Halley, in his "Lectures on Baptism," divides the views held by Episcopalian writers on regeneration as connected with baptism, into the four following classes:—

1. "Baptism so introduces a person into the evangelical covenant as to give him a right to all its external privileges, by the good use of which, he may acquire a title to everlasting life.

2. "Baptism so changes the federal condition of a person, as to bestow upon him an immediate title to eternal life, which he retains until it be forfeited by sin.

3. "Baptism produces a moral and spiritual change upon the soul in connexion with the federal change of condition, which entitles him to eternal life.

4. "Baptism is the medium through which a moral and spiritual change is, although not invariably, yet so frequently produced, as to warrant the Church, though not with certainty, yet in the judgment of charity, to declare the person to be regenerate."

The first two views, which are maintained by such writers as Waterland and Bishop Van Mildert, are evidently not liable to the grave objections which are applicable to the others. According to them, regeneration does not mean any internal change whatever, but only a federal change of condition. Still they cannot be reconciled with scriptural views of the subject. They regard baptism as placing its subjects in a salvable state; and all unbaptized persons as in a condition in which it is not

possible for them to be saved. The Scriptures, on the contrary, teach that all men to whom the word is proclaimed are bid welcome to the privileges of the Gospel; and by faith in the gracious promise and offer, sinners may be saved, "antecedent to any sacrament and independent of it." On these two theories, too, it is obvious that there is little or no hope of salvation for infants who may die without having been admitted to baptism.

The Third view is that of the Puseyite or Tractarian party, of whose sentiments the "*Tracts for the Times*" are the exponent, and the Bishop of Exeter its chief living advocate. It is, to all intents, the same as the Popish tenet to which we have referred, or, as the Prelate just named has declared—on this article "the Churches of Rome and England are agreed." According to this view, by the application of water to the body, and repeating a form of words, the individual baptized becomes a Christian in heart and character. He is brought into a state of grace, his past sins are forgiven, and he is an heir of eternal life. The person baptized is truly regenerated; and though, by some of the party, it is admitted that the virtue of baptism may be lost through aggravated criminality, others maintain that, notwithstanding the greatest falls, the salvation of the baptized is secure. It only requires the important addition which Puseyite Divines make, in maintaining that baptism can only be administered by those who have been episcopally ordained; and then we have the Prelatical church claiming, according to the intolerant assumption of the Papacy, the exclusive privilege of salvation for those within her pale, while all others are either doomed to hopeless perdition, or left to "the uncovenanted mercies of God." The sentiments of some of the opponents of Tractarianism, such as Mr. Gorham and Mr. Goode, we have already noticed in the Chapter on Infant Salvation.

The fourth theory mentioned by Dr. Halley is that maintained by not a few of the Evangelical section of the Church of England; and in particular, it is stated and defended by Mr. Faber—the distinguished writer on Prophecy—in his "*Primitive Doctrine of Regeneration*." He maintains that "the connexion between baptism and regeneration is *not inseparable*; but that there are other modes of regeneration; yet as it is one mode in which the grace of regeneration is frequently imparted, the church—as it must pronounce some opinion—pronounces the most charitable, and declares the most charitable." Mr. Faber elsewhere says: "I never yet happened to meet with an English clergyman who had either succeeded in persuading himself, or had even attempted to persuade himself, that his church did not consider the grace of regeneration to be conveyed in baptism."* There are various

* "*Primitive Doctrine of Regeneration*"—p. 81.

serious objections to this theory. Regeneration, according to Mr. Faber, depends very much on the worthy reception of the rite of baptism. In the case of infants, he supposes that some are worthy recipients by "the preparatory ingraftation of incipient holiness." All that can be said of these views is, that they are mere gratuitous assumptions, destitute of authority from the Word of God. For a pretty full and able refutation of these different theories of Baptismal regeneration, see "Halley's Lectures on Baptism"—Lecture V. The two things that lead so many excellent persons of the Prelatical Church to plead for Baptismal Regeneration are, first—their holding the doctrine of General atonement; and second—the vain attempt to reconcile the expressions of the Catechism, and of the Baptismal and Confirmation Services, with the teachings of Holy Scripture. The Tractarians, likewise, lay a great stress on the writings of the Christian Fathers, as inculcating their views of the ordinance. It has, however, been clearly proved by those who have most carefully investigated the subject, that though the language employed by some of the earlier Christian writers on baptism was of doubtful meaning, yet there is not the faintest trace of the dogma of Baptismal regeneration, as it is held by Romanists and Puseyites, till corruption had extensively spread in the church, in the beginning of the third Century.* In its most modified and least objectionable form, this doctrine is "Popery in the Ear;" † and must be at once repudiated by all Protestants, who would successfully resist the progress of Popish delusion.

No. II.—DR. HALLEY'S VIEW OF THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

ALTHOUGH Dr. Halley's "Lectures on Baptism," to which we have repeatedly referred, bear ample testimony to the learning and research of the Author, they yet contain some views which we cannot but regard as fundamentally defective and unscriptural, in relation both to the nature of the Sacraments, and to the subjects of baptism. According to Dr. Halley, the sacraments are not—as taught by the Puritans, Westminster Divines, and other Calvinists—"federal rites, or ratifications of the evangelical covenant," but simply "significant rites, emblems of Divine truth, sacred signs of the evangelical doctrine, designed to illustrate, to enforce, or to commemorate the great and most important truths

* Halley's Lectures—p. 244.

† This is ably shown, though occasionally with caustic severity, in a work recently published, entitled, "Popery in the Full Corn, the Ear, and the Blade," by Rev. William Marshall—Edinburgh, 1852.

of the gospel." Baptism," he adds, "we believe, is the sign of purification on being admitted into the kingdom of Christ, but neither the cause nor the seal of it."* Such a view of the sacraments is not only most meagre, but it is manifestly inconsistent with plain scriptural statements. Baptism is termed by the apostle "the circumcision of Christ;" and circumcision, which it supplants, is entitled "a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith."† The baptized are figuratively said to "put on Christ." Such expressions can never be properly explained on the principle that makes the sacraments simple signs of Divine truth, as the words employed in preaching the gospel. Even granting to Dr. Halley that they are more "expressive signs," it is yet obvious that there is a sense whereby in baptism we are said to "put on Christ," quite different from the preaching of the gospel to "every creature."

Moreover, Dr. Halley, to make out his system, is obliged to represent the gospel covenant as pertaining to all classes indiscriminately, and to maintain the defectibility of Divine grace. The covenant with him is not a covenant of salvation, but only of "inceptive rights," easily forfeited, the symbol of which is therefore not distinctive, and not a means of blessing. Dr. Halley's principles would appear to countenance universal atonement and common grace; and hence baptism, in his view, is no more to a believer than an unbeliever. Considering the covenant as extending to all to whom the gospel comes, he pleads for the administration of baptism as the birthright of every person. The ordinance, according to him, is neither a seal of real grace, nor a channel for its conveyance—it is nothing more than an emblem of Divine truth; or, as he attempts to prove, it is a token that all men, at least in Christian lands, are born in a state of grace, and have "an inceptive right to salvation," and shall certainly enjoy it, provided they do not "forfeit" it. Such a view of the subject is glaringly opposed to the doctrine of Divine sovereignty, and of the covenant of redemption, as declared in the Scriptures; it is irreconcilable with the manifold Scriptural expressions respecting the design and extent of Christ's sacrifice; it is subversive of the purity of the Church, and is fraught with danger to the souls of men.

Following out his scheme to its legitimate consequences, Dr. Halley effectually does away the distinction between the Church and the world, and resolutely maintains the right of every human being to baptism. He argues at length that it is the duty of Christian ministers to baptize "all applicants, provided the application does not appear to be made scoffingly and profanely,

* Halley's "Lectures on Baptism"—pp. 94, 95.

† Colossians ii. 12; Romans iv.

for that would be a manifest desecration of the service, and all children offered by their parents, guardians, or others who may have the care of them." This sentiment is entertained at present by several ministers in England, and by various distinguished individuals in the Continental churches. Dr. Halley attempts to sustain the argument for this scheme of indiscriminate baptism, partly by his doctrine of the general extent of the Gospel covenant, and the consequent spiritual relation of all infants to Christ, and partly by the terms of the Gospel Commission. He interprets the commission (Matt. xxviii. 19), in the most literal sense of the terms, and holds that as all nations are to be taught and disciplined, so all are to be baptized. We need not say that this is certainly pushing criticism much beyond its legitimate limits. There is surely some thing more required in order to constitute discipleship than baptism. To be a disciple of Christ implies, in the case of all adults, some knowledge of his character and will, and some measure of obedience to him. Our Lord himself declares the terms of discipleship to consist in self-denial and forsaking all to follow him; and says, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." A profession is plainly taken as a pre-requisite to all the cases of adult baptism recorded in the New Testament, whether of John's, or of the Apostles. "The Commission" evidently implies the necessity of instruction previous to baptism, and the Apostolic practice certainly demanded a profession of Christ prior to the administration of the sacred rite. These points are very satisfactorily shewn by Dr. Wilson, in his excellent work on "*Infant Baptism, a Scriptural Service,*" wherein Dr. Halley's loose views are carefully examined, and ably refuted.* We would deeply regret the spread of such a sentiment among the Congregationalist body—distinguished as they have been for practical religion and Gospel liberty, and for their exertions in behalf of the evangelization of the nations; and we rejoice to find, from a statement made by Dr. Campbell in the "*Christian Witness,*" that it is not likely to spread among the ministers of that body in England. Its adoption would manifestly tend to abolish the distinction between the Church and the world, corrupt the ordinances of religion, and lull men in delusion.

No. III.—PURIFICATION BY SPRINKLING,—p. 134.

In the able Dissertation on the Mode of Baptism, by the Rev. William Sommerville, Nova Scotia, to which we have referred, after considering at length the question, What is Baptism? Mr.

* See Chapters II. and III. on the Subjects of Baptism,—pp. 338—387.

S. shows, in a lucid and convincing manner, that, with the exception of Aaron and his sons, "*the purification of persons in water, by the instrumentality of another, was effected in every case, by SPRINKLING water upon them.*" He also proves that, 1st, "The term *washing* denotes the process by which purification is accomplished." 2d, "*Dipping is never enjoined for the purpose of cleansing or washing the thing dipped.*" 3d, "*Immersion is no more adapted to cleanse than sprinkling.*" 4th, "Complete purification is ascribed to *sprinkling.*" 5th, "There are circumstances connected with the washing of Aaron and his sons which show that they were not *immersed*, in whatever form the prescribed ablution may have been performed." 6th, "Our Lord's declaration to Peter (John xiii. 10), shows that complete cleansing may be by the application of a small portion of the element." As a specimen of Mr. Sommerville's clear and forcible manner, we subjoin his remarks on this passage, and on the concluding particulars:—

"The remarkable declaration of our Lord to Peter, on the eve of his departure, must confound all reasonings in favour of immersion, founded on the command to wash, as though it must infer an obligation to immerse; and of the Anabaptistical practice, from the nature of Baptism viewed as a cleansing ordinance. 'He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.*' Peter's ideas of purification were more carnal, and more nearly allied to the notions of Anabaptists. In his mind, the idea of extensive or complete purification is associated with such an application of water as shall bear some apparent proportion to the effect to be produced. 'Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' It is owing to the same earthly apprehensions, that the ritual or baptismal washing, which is performed by sprinkling or pouring water upon the person to be cleansed, is now treated by the advocates of immersion with contempt and ridicule: and that a vast amount of laborious argument, not derived from such sources as are accessible to the overwhelming majority of those who are all equally interested in the decision, is profusely expended. Our Lord's definitive sentence, absolutely subversive of Anabaptistical speculations, suggests to us a most important evidence of divine wisdom, in the appointment of rites of purification in particular, and in subsequent allusions to them. The necessity of entire purity must be taught, and, at the same time, the utter inefficiency of external observances to accomplish it, must be kept up before the eye of the mind. It is God alone who sanctifies wholly, in soul, in body, and in spirit. The blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer (the water of separation) cannot sanctify, even partially, nor contribute to the sanctification of the soul. Had a total im-

* John xiii. 10.

mersion been requisite, or had the application of the cleansing element to the whole man been enjoined, the mind would have been led into the notion, too much in accordance with the views of the darkened understanding, that there must be some virtue in the symbol. On the other hand, the injunction of a partial application, in order to a total purification, is calculated to anticipate any leaning to a superstitious reliance upon the outward ceremonial. The Saviour says, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.' Then would the disciple say, 'I must be washed.' Again the Saviour says, 'He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' Now the disciple would very naturally subjoin, 'What is this that he saith? Water can cleanse no farther than it is applied, yet he has averred that a man is clean every whit, in consequence of having had his feet washed. Water is not the real means of the purification intended. Another means, and another than outward purification, are contemplated.' The inquiry, forthwith arising, would have respect to the interpretation of the language of what, from its very form, must appear to be a symbol. The like reflections would be suggested to the mind of the child of God, under the former dispensation, in the observance of the rites of purification enjoined upon him.

"Admitting with unfeigned satisfaction the total absence of all reliance upon a total immersion, in the article of Baptism, contemplated as a cleansing ordinance, on the part of many who strenuously contend for it, I submit that the practice of total immersion, in Jew, or Christian, is superstitious,—that the addition of more water to that which is required and sufficient for sprinkling, that the whole man may be covered, is of the same character with the addition of one immersion to another, and another still, or of oil and salt to the baptismal water, and is adapted to pervert the ideas of Christians, with reference to the intention of an external ordinance, and to leave false and unscriptural impressions, as it proceeds from perverted ideas and false principles. The Greek Christian is as fully entitled to three dips, and the Papist to a little salt, and oil, as the Anabaptist to more water than is necessary for aspersion.

"In purification, God discovers a solicitude that nothing, to be purified, be subjected to a process from which it is not naturally fitted to come forth uninjured. Nothing may be exposed to an ordeal which is calculated to destroy it. 'The gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead, *every thing that may abide the Fire, ye shall make go through the fire, and it shall be clean; and all that abideth not the fire, ye shall make go through the water.*'* Here is the evidence, and an exemplification of the

* Numb. xxx. 22, 23.

principle—a principle strictly adhered to in every part of the Mosaic ritual—a principle diametrically opposed to the supposition that washing necessarily implies immersion, and utterly subversive of the practice of immersion for the purification of persons. Total immersion at once points to the destruction of persons, and is an apt emblem of destruction, not of safety. In a state of total immersion, the functions of life presently experience a suspension, or at least a violent interruption to their exercise, which must soon put a period to temporal existence. The action of the lungs, upon which the movements of the whole animal machine depend, immediately ceases. It is to no purpose to adduce the fact that a man may be immersed, and sustain no permanent or even present injury, when every one knows that the safety entirely depends upon a speedy extrication from a state of submersion. Death is the issue involved in that state, simply considered; and as it is not insinuated that baptize signifies to *take out* of the water as well as to *put into* it; moreover, as the argument in favour of total immersion is made to turn upon the word *baptize*, and that is said to denote *mode*, and *nothing but mode*, it is plain that, according to the divine direction, no provision is made for emergence from the water. That Anabaptists have the ideas of immersion and destruction as closely united in their minds as others, is evident from this,—that whilst they pertinaciously contend that *baptize* signifies to *immerse*, and nothing but *immerse*, the administrator of the ceremony of immersion finds it expedient to supererogate, and is as careful to take the subjects out of the water as to put them into it.

“The whole tenor of Scripture phraseology, respecting the ends fulfilled by coming in contact with water, agrees with the principle stated above, and applied to the solution of the question between immersion in water, and sprinkling or pouring water, in legal washings and baptisms of the former or latter dispensation. In every case in which water is described as *coming upon, from above, poured upon or sprinkled*, it is expressive of a blessing; and, invariably, being immersed in water is expressive of a ruinous calamity to every thing destructible by immersion, and from which, as being destructive to persons, the child of God would humbly pray to be delivered. *Being covered with water, is never represented as a privilege, but a calamity; never a blessing, but a curse.*”

No. IV.—SCRIPTURAL EDUCATION,—p. 198.

National Education. Since the part of this Treatise which refers to Scriptural Education was printed, the Ministerial measure for National Education in England and Wales, was introduced

into Parliament by Lord John Russell. It is gratifying to find from the speech of his Lordship, that statesmen are compelled to admit that mere secular education will not meet the wants of the people, nor fulfil the responsibility of rulers in attempting to elevate the intellectual, moral, and social condition of the community. It is now conceded that a religious basis is indispensable to all that deserves the name of education, or that is deserving of the support of the State; and moreover, that the nation has declared that it will not be satisfied with any system of public education of an inferior kind. This is a gratifying token of the progress that right views on education have recently made; and should encourage the friends of Scripture Education to persevere in their attempts to introduce the purifying salt of Divine truth into all the seminaries of youth, from the highest to the lowest.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

The following extracts from the elaborate work of the Rev. Lyman Coleman, D.D.—on “Ancient Christianity Exemplified”—exhibit the remarkable pains taken by parents in the early Christian Church, in the religious training of their children:—

“The tender solicitude of these early Christians for the religious instruction of their children is one of their most beautiful characteristics. They taught them, even at the earliest dawn of intelligence, the sacred names of God and the Saviour. They sought to lead the infant minds of their children up to God, by familiar narratives from Scripture, of Joseph, of young Samuel, of Josiah, and of the holy child Jesus. The history of the patriarchs and prophets, apostles and holy men, whose lives are narrated in the sacred volume, were the nursery tales with which they sought to form the tender minds of their children. As the mind of the child expanded, the parents made it their sacred duty and delightful task daily to exercise him in the recital of select passages of Scripture, relating to the doctrines and duties of religion. The Bible was the entertainment of the fireside. It was the first, the last, the only school-book almost, of the child; and sacred psalmody the only song with which his infant cry was hushed as he was lulled to rest on his mother’s arm. The sacred song, and the rude melody of its music, were, from the earliest periods of Christian antiquity, an important means of impressing the infant heart with sentiments of piety, and of imbuing the susceptible minds of the young with the knowledge and the faith of the Scripture. Even in the earliest periods of Christianity, there were those who, like our Watts in modern times, ‘condescended to lay aside the scholar, the philosopher, and the wit, to write little poems of devotion adapted to the wants and capacities of children.’

“The Christian fathers abundantly insist on the duty of giving daily instructions in the family. ‘Speak of divine things not

only in the social circle, but in the family—the husband with the wife—the father with his child; and very frequently renew the subject. Let no man affirm that the child needs not to be addressed on these topics; for they must be discoursed of, not only sometimes, but at all times.’ ‘You must immediately begin to bring up your children in the nurture of the Divine Word.’ ‘Leave to your children God for their inheritance, and you leave them an inestimable treasure. Be it our effort and our desire, then, not to leave to them an inheritance, but to leave them in the possession of personal piety. Preach the name and doctrine of Christ on all occasions. Let every master of a family know that this solemn duty rests upon him in regard to all his house. Constantine the Great, though he appointed men of the most approved piety to be the teachers of his children, was himself their instructor in the knowledge of divine things, to lead them to immortal blessedness. Origen was first and chiefly taught by his father the knowledge of divine things, and made familiar with the sacred Scriptures, before he was permitted to give attention to profane literature; and, notwithstanding his vast attainments in every branch of knowledge, he ever continued to make the Scriptures his chief study. Even in his earliest childhood, he was required to commit to memory and to repeat some portion of the sacred Scriptures.

“The writings of the early Christians are filled with expressions of the deepest solicitude for the piety of their children. The mother of Augustine bewailed the early impiety of her son ‘with tears and sighs more bitter and abundant than those of a mother for the death of her child; for she looked upon him as already dead in spirit. But the Lord finally heard her prayer, and refused not her tears, for she gave herself wholly unto prayer.’ When bewailing his hardened impiety to a Christian friend, he said to her, ‘Go in peace; it is impossible that a child of so many tears should be lost.’

“‘Children,’ says Jerome, ‘are a trust committed to us of the Lord, and, therefore, to be trained up with the greatest care. The nearer they are allied to us in the flesh, the more impressive is our responsibility.’ Polycarp, the venerable disciple of John, earnestly exhorts parents to bring up their children in the knowledge and fear of God. These brief examples may indicate the pious care of these Christians for the religious education and the conversion of their children. Their great desire and constant endeavour was to train up their children in the fear of God, to conduct their education at home, to withdraw them as much as possible from temptation, and to make them so happy in their own quiet homes, that they should neither desire the noisy amusements of the world nor subject themselves to its temptations. The children found their happiness in their parents, and the pa-

rents in their children. Such families were the nurseries of pure, consistent, efficient churches ; such Christians were the lights of the world, which could not be hid ; the salt of the earth, which never lost its savour.

“THE DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES OF THE FAMILY.

“These early Christians were examples of devout piety in their families. There, at the domestic altar, they fed the sacred flame of devotion, which burned in their bosom with a triumphant, deathless flame. There they formed and maintained the spirit of a pure, deep, and earnest piety. Every master of a family fulfilled, within the walls of his own house, the office of private pastor, keeping up in it a regular course of reading, prayer, and private instruction to all the members of his household. Thus, every private house was, in the words of Chrysostom, a church to itself.

“The influence of pious mothers was also particularly remarkable over their children. Gregory of Nazianzen ascribed his conversion to the piety of his mother, Nonna. His brother Cæsarius, by the same means, was enabled to maintain an exemplary life of piety in the court of the emperor. Their sister Gorgonia also religiously walked in the steps of her mother, and was instrumental in the conversion of her husband, and training her children and her nephews in the ways of piety. Theodoret ascribed his conversion, under God, to his pious mother, and Basil the Great to his grandmother, Emilia to his sister Macrina. Augustine and Chrysostom, also, the greatest lights of the ancient church, were indebted to their pious mothers for those instructions that brought them to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

“The several members of a Christian family were accustomed to rise very early in the morning and address their thoughts to God by silent ejaculations, by calling to mind familiar passages of Scripture and by secret prayer. Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 188, was accustomed, whenever he awoke, to call to mind the words of Christ ; and often anticipated the dawning of the day in these devout exercises. ‘One must arise,’ says Basil the Great, ‘before the twilight of the morning, to greet with prayer the coming day.’ ‘Let the sun at his rising find us with the Word of God in hand.’ ‘Let the day begin with prayer.’ ‘Soon as the day returns, and before leaving his chamber, the Christian should address his prayer to his Saviour ; and before resuming his daily labour, begin the work of righteousness.’ ‘Let the child be accustomed, early in the morning, to offer prayer and praise to God ; and at evening again, when the day is past and gone, let him end his labour by bringing his evening offering to the Lord.’

“After their private devotions, the family met for united pray-

er, which was uniformly accompanied with the reading of the Scriptures. The recital of such doctrinal and practical sentiments as might best fortify them against the prevailing scandals and heresies of the times, constituted also, as it would seem, part of their devotional exercises. In the family, as in all their devotions, the primitive Christians delighted to sing their sacred songs.

“At the table they reverently sought the blessing of God. Several of these examples of prayer before meals are given at length in the fathers. Here also they rehearsed some portions of Scripture and sang praise to God; a custom which Clement of Alexandria and Chrysostom earnestly recommend. The meal being ended, they concluded with prayer, giving thanks for the blessings received, and supplicating a continuance of the divine mercy. ‘As the body requires daily sustenance,’ says Chrysostom, ‘so the soul needs to be refreshed with spiritual food, that it may be strengthened for its warfare against the flesh.’

“The day was closed by devotions, renewed in much the same manner as in the morning. Such was the pious care with which these Christians ordered their households in the fear of the Lord. Chrysostom made it the first duty of the master of the house ‘to seek so to speak and so to act that the spiritual good of the whole household might be promoted; and of the mistress of the family, while she oversees her domestic affairs, especially to see that all act in the fear of God, and with reference to the kingdom of heaven.’”

No. V.—ABUSE OF BAPTISM BY IGNORANCE AND SUPERSTITION,—p. 245.

There is reason to fear that the Sacrament of Baptism is, at present, abused by ignorance of its true nature and ends; and by connecting with its administration superstitious views and usages, to a much greater extent than is generally imagined. Ignorant parents themselves, propelled by superstitious notions, or the desire to be considered Christians, seek the ordinance for their children, while yet they have no proper notion of the spiritual import of Baptism, and no sense of the weight of parental obligation. The facility with which many ministers of religion dispense the ordinance to such characters, without taking any pains to instruct them on this subject, confirms them in their ignorance and delusion, and tends manifestly to foster unworthy, superstitious sentiments and feelings concerning one of the most important and significant institutions of our holy religion. The use of *the sign of the Cross* in baptism, as it is practised in the Church of England, evidently tends to countenance superstition. It is without any warrant in the Word of God; and the pleas employed in its

favour would be equally available for the Popish usages of employing chrism and spittle, and the candle or taper for exorcism, in baptizing. The Private administration of baptism, to which we have referred at length in the Treatise, is a prolific source of ignorance and superstition with respect to this ordinance; and should be universally repudiated, and most strenuously opposed by all who are concerned for the honour of Scriptural truth, and the purity of the Church of Christ. It deserves to be recorded that a large number of the best of the English Reformers were decidedly opposed to the use of the sign of the Cross, and various other human rites in Divine worship. When the Reformation of the Church of England was about to be conclusively settled at an early period of the Church of England, a large number of the most learned and pious divines of that church earnestly petitioned that the sign of the cross in baptism, as well as stated fasts and festivals, godfathers and godmothers in baptism, kneeling at the Lord's Supper, bowing at the name of Jesus, &c., might be abolished. When their petitions were read, and their arguments heard, in the Lower House of Convocation, the vote was taken, and the abolition passed by a majority of those present—forty-three voting in favour of granting the prayer of the petitioners, and thirty-five against it. But when the proxies were called for and counted, the scale was turned;—those in favour of the abolition being fifty-eight,—and those against it fifty-nine. Thus, by a solemn vote of the Convocation, the several rites that were regarded and publicly complained of as Popish superstitions, and the sign of the cross among the rest, were retained in the Church only by a majority of one. It is with pleasure that we have learned that several of the pious, evangelical ministers of the Prelatical Church in this country insist upon Public Baptism, and take some pains to instruct their flocks in the nature and objects of the ordinance.

In addition to the historical testimonies which have been already adduced in behalf of public baptism, we give the following:—Cave, in his *“Primitive Christianity,”* quoting from Tertullian and Justin Martyr, says, “Baptism was seldom done without the presence of the congregation, and that for very good reason, both as it is a principal act of religious worship, and as it is the initiating of persons into the church, which thereafter ought to be as public as it could, that so the whole congregation might be spectators and witnesses of that profession.”* Archbishop Wheatley says, “If we look back unto the practice of the Primitive Church, we shall find that Baptism was never, except upon extraordinary occasions, done without the presence of the congregation.”†

* Cave's *Primitive Christianity*—pp. 311—313.

† Wheatley on the Common Prayer,—p. 326.

ERRATUM.

A slight mistake occurred in printing, in numbering the Chapters. That which is marked Chapter III.—page 69—should be Chapter IV., and those which follow should accord with this alteration.

