



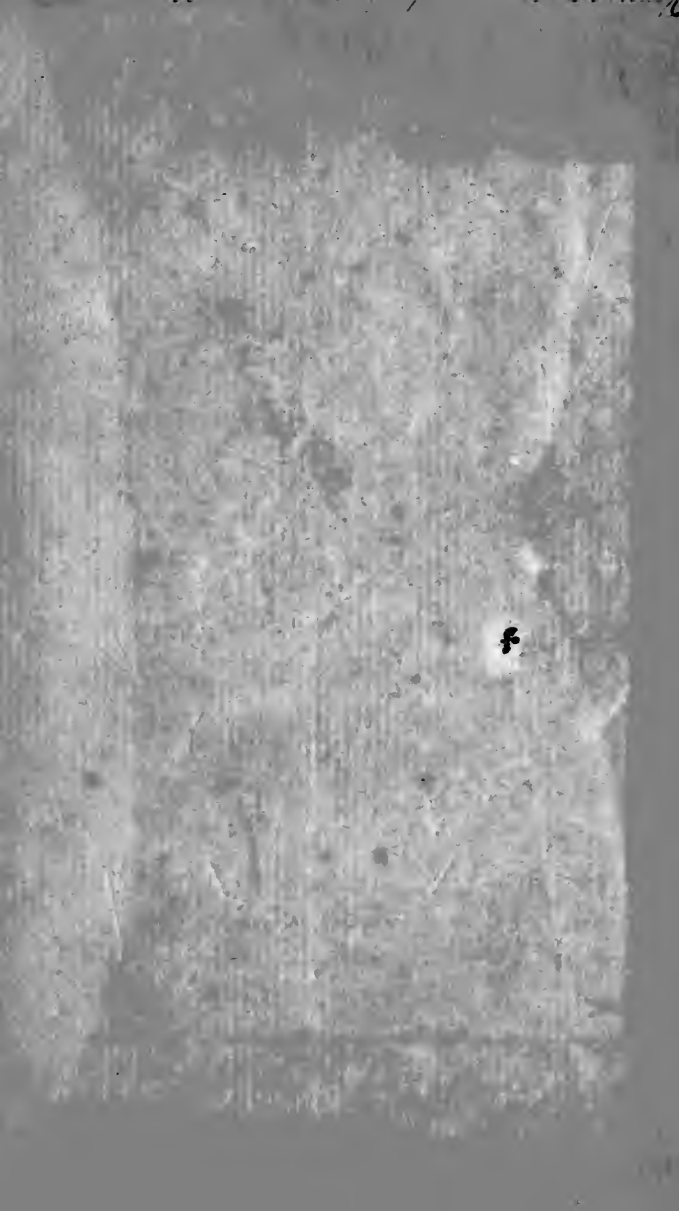
Epitaph of the Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by Mr. Samuel Agnew of Philadelphia, Pa.

Agnew Coll. on Baptism, No.

SCB
10358
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2

Published by the same Author,

1. Remarks on the Christian Minister's Reasons for administering Baptism by Sprinkling or Pouring of Water.
2. Discourses on Personal Religion, in 2 vols. 12mo, 2d Edit.
3. Occasional Sermons, &c.

Printed for J. Buckland, in Pater-noster-Row;
G. Keith, in Grace-church-Street; W. Harris,
No. 70. St. Paul's-church-yard.

A N

A N S W E R

T O

The Christian Minister's Reasons

F O R

BAPTIZING INFANTS.

I N

A SERIES of LETTERS to a FRIEND.

By SAMUEL STENNETT, D.D.

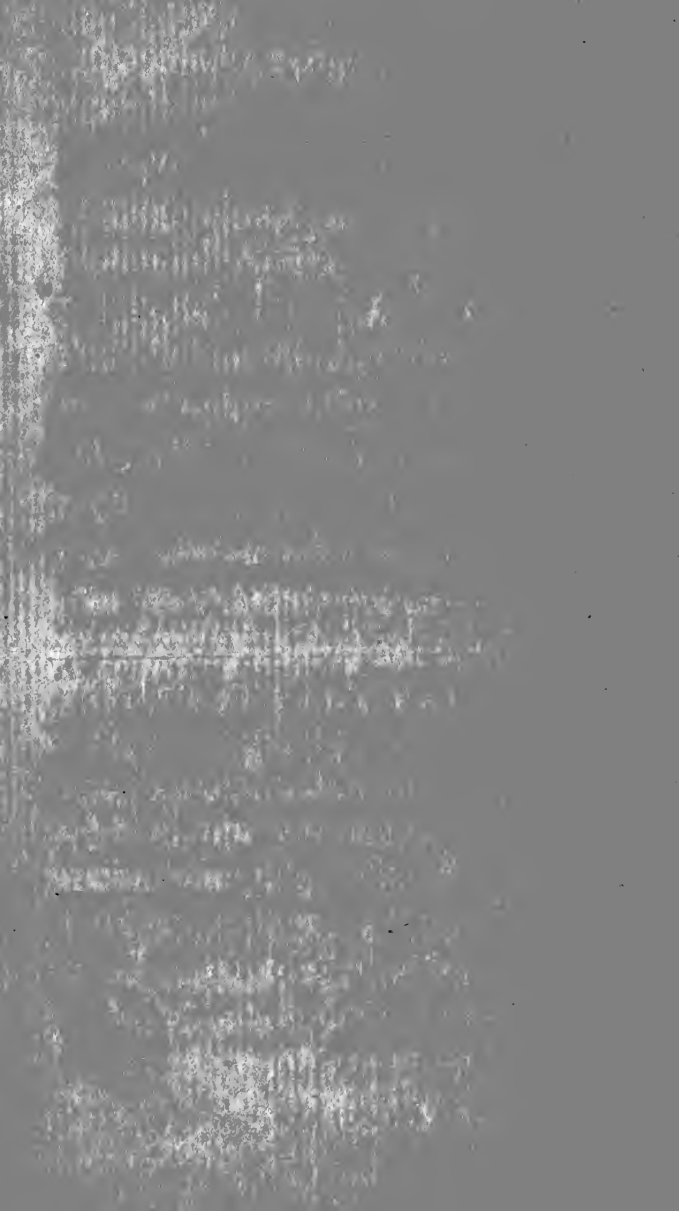
Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

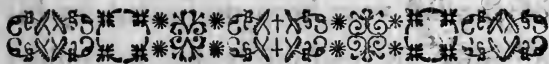
Matt. xxviii. 19.

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MDCCLXXV.





ADVERTISEMENT.

TH E time which has elapsed since the publication of Mr. Addington's Treatise upon Baptism, makes it necessary to apologize for the late appearance of the following Reply to the second part of that book. The Remarks on the first part, which respects the MODE of the Institution, were designed to have been quickly followed with these on the SUBJECTS of it: but, some other important affairs calling off the author's attention from this matter for a considerable time, he began to think of laying aside his

design. Having, however, in the course of the last year been persuaded by his friends, for reasons which he judges sufficiently important, to resume his intention; he now begs leave to submit to the Publick the following Answer to *The Christian Minister's Reasons for baptizing Infants*: which he wishes could have been comprized, consistently with the justice due to the subject, in a narrower compass.

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LET-



LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

Am happy in the very favourable reception you have given the Remarks I sent you on *The Christian Minister's Reasons for administering Baptism, by sprinkling or pouring of water.* We proceed now to consider his *Reasons for baptizing Infants.*

Mr. *Addington* sets out with expressing his wonder, that there should be “so universal a connection, as he finds there is in England, of the two distinct tenets of immerfion and immerfing the adult:” This strange circumstance he is at a lofs to account for; and of confequence, I fuppofe, to account for that other as ftrange circumstance, the connection of the two oppofite tenets of fprinkling, and the fprinkling infants. But there appears to me, I acknowledge, nothing at all furprifing in either

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cafe.

case. As the two points respect the same institution, so he who considers the one can scarce avoid considering the other. And, as they are both clearly laid down in Scripture, I cannot wonder that he who concludes from our Saviour's commission and the facts recorded in the New Testament, that the adult only who profess their faith in Christ are to be baptized; should also conclude from the same commission, and the same facts, that such persons are only properly baptized by immersion. Nor do I at all wonder, on the other hand, as we commonly see one error leads on to another, that they who, upon a mistaken notion of Baptism's being necessary to salvation, had admitted their children to it without any authority from the Bible; should, in a course of time, contrary to the sense of Scripture, substitute sprinkling in the room of immersion: a change to which the gradual disuse of bathing, and the fond apprehensions of parents for their children, might naturally prompt them.

But there is, I confess, one thing that does surprize me, and that is, that the practice of baptizing infants should survive that of giving them the Eucharist: which latter custom very early obtained in the church, and was introduced upon the very same principle that gave rise, as we have good reason to apprehend, to the former, I mean its being thought necessary to salvation.

This partial reformation will, however, seem the less strange, when we reflect, that the principle just mentioned from whence these abuses sprung, hath not even yet fully spent its force, but on the contrary hath a very powerful and general influence, though it be not openly acknowledged: nay the spirit of it is very often to be perceived where one should little expect it, and where the principle itself is absolutely disavowed.

But not to detain you, Sir, any longer with this speculation; I hasten to our Author's grand object, which is to prove, that "Christians ought to give up their little ones to the Lord in this ordinance*:" that is, that they are in duty bound to baptize them.

Previous to an examination of Mr. A's arguments in support of this proposition, it may be proper to inquire by what kind of proof we are to be determined in this controversy. Here I would observe then, that all positive institutions depend solely upon the will of the Institutor, and that therefore in every question relating to them, we must be guided by his express declarations, or by those of persons he has duly authorized to signify his will. Nor is it to be doubted that a wise Legislator will, in all matters of this sort, take care to express his mind in the most

* Page 61.

plain and intelligible manner. For if he were to leave persons to reason from analogy, that is, from a resemblance between what he is supposed to enjoin and other previous institutions, there would be no end to men's inventions: so that amidst the wildness of imagination, and the obscurity which generally attends a long train of deductions and consequences, very few would be able to frame any precise accurate idea of his meaning; and of course their obligations to the matter required would be greatly weakened, if not absolutely superseded.

Doctor Hoadly, the late Bishop of Winchester, felt the force of this reasoning; which I think every one must upon the least reflection, and therefore asserts, in his Plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that “*all positive duties, or duties made such by institution alone, depend entirely upon the will and declaration of the person who institutes or ordains them, with respect to the real design or end of them; and, consequently, to the due manner of performing them.*”

Now Baptism is a positive institution of Christ: and, agreeably to his infinite wisdom and goodness, he has expressed himself in the most clear and explicit manner respecting both the mode and the subject of it. That this is the

case with respect to the mode, has I hope been satisfactorily shewn in my remarks upon that part of Mr. *A.*'s book. The question now is, To whom this ordinance is to be administered? A question doubtless of equal importance with the former, and upon which therefore it is natural to suppose our Lord should be equally explicit. This we think he has been, and that therefore the issue of this inquiry, as well as the other, ought to be rested alone upon his own express declarations, and those of his Apostles and first Ministers.

Doctor Samuel Clarke, sensible, as it should seem, that Infant-Baptism has not the support of any express declaration of Christ or his Apostles, very frankly acknowledges, in one of his Sermons *, that “ *by analogy drawn from the rite of circumcision, it has, for many ages, been the general practice in the Christian church to receive infants by Baptism into the obligations of faith and obedience to the gospel; and to make profession for them, what they are to believe and obey.*” And he adds, feeling this ground to be indefensible and yet not willing totally to abandon it, “ *whether this analogy be rightly drawn, or no; and be a sufficient and adequate foundation for what has been built upon it, is a controversy.*” It cannot however be doubted, that if Dr. Clarke

* Sermon 38. Vol. I. edit. fol.

had been speaking of positive institutions in general, and not directly of Infant-Baptism, (which, as he was in the practice of it, it concerned him at least not absolutely to condemn) he would have readily acknowledged, with my Lord of Winchester, that their authority depends entirely upon the will and declaration of the person who institutes or ordains them. The principle therefore I have been establishing, as the ground of our inquiries upon the subject before us, can scarce fail of being assented to by every sober and considerate person.

Now this principle granted, I might very properly be excused considering the much greater part of Mr. *A.*'s book, which consists of that kind of analogical reasoning just now referred to; and which, whether it has or has not any force in it, methinks cannot satisfy a sober inquirer in a matter of this importance, and which in its own nature requires an express positive declaration. By a long train of deductions Mr. *A.* proceeds to the consequence he wishes to establish, viz. "The right of the
 " infant children of pious parents to Baptism." In his way to this consequence he leads us through such a variety of (not to say here defective) reasoning, as cannot fail of confounding the most attentive reader, and leaving his mind, if he be impartial, perfectly dissatisfied. You will

will give me leave, Sir, to lay before you at the outset a general scheme of Mr. *A.*'s reasoning, and then appeal to you, upon the very face of it, Whether, if it was our Saviour's meaning that infants should be baptized, it is imaginable he would have left a question of such importance upon such an issue? For upon an issue of this kind it must have been left, if there is no positive declaration to authorize the admitting them to Baptism, which we assert there is not. Mr. *A.* if I do not mistake him, reasons thus—"God
" has made a covenant with all pious Christians
" —all the seed of such pious Christians, as he
" infers from various considerations, are included
" with them in that covenant—being included
" in it they have a right to the seals of it—
" Baptism is a seal of the covenant—therefore
" all the seed of pious Christians should be bap-
" tized." Now, I ask, do you think, Sir, that our Lord would have left the right of persons to this institution upon so uncertain and precarious an issue, to say the best of it, when all doubt of the matter might have been precluded by these few plain words, " Let all who believe and
" repent be baptized, and their infant children
" also?"

But I do not mean, upon the general ground of the unsatisfactoriness of such analogical and consequential reasoning in the matter of a positive

institution, to excuse myself of the trouble of following our Author through his discussion of these propositions. The stress which, through prejudice and for want of better evidence, some persons may be apt to lay upon it, makes it necessary to expose the fallacy and weakness of it: and this, I think I may add without the imputation of rashness, may be pretty easily done. In the mean time, give me leave to observe, that if but one of these propositions is disproved, the consequence Mr. *A.* wishes to establish, “That infants have a right to Baptism,” is as effectually destroyed, as if they were all disproved: one link of the chain broke, the whole drops. But I am much mistaken, if, upon examination, each of these propositions will not be found to be defective, except the first.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

S. S.

L E T-

L E T T E R II.

DEAR SIR,

IT is readily agreed that God has made a Covenant with his people. The first point therefore to be considered is, “Whether,” as Mr. *A.* asserts, “the children of pious parents “are in the Christian Covenant, or included “with them in it*?”

Now here it was natural to expect our Author would have given us a clear and precise idea of what he means by the Covenant, and by children’s being included with their parents in it. This, however, he has not done. It is necessary therefore, in order to discern the force or weakness of his reasoning, to lay down all the possible senses in which persons may be said to be in a covenant, to apply these senses to the question before us of the children of pious parents being in the Covenant, and to examine Mr. *A.*’s arguments in reference to each of them: for as I am often totally at a loss, either through my own dulness or his want of perspicuity, to comprehend the precise point he means to prove, I hold myself obliged

* P. 61, 62, 87, 101, &c.

to this method of considering his arguments, tedious as it may be, in order to escape the blame of doing them any the least injustice.

Now the phrase of *being in a covenant*, or *being included in it*, can only be understood either, first, of a person's being a contracting party in a covenant; or, secondly, of his being intitled to certain advantages through the mutual stipulations of others on his behalf. In the former case it is not only necessary that a man should exist, but that he should be capable of judging and acting for himself: in the latter, he may be concerned, though he is not *sui juris*, or is not even in existence.

FIRST, A person may be said to be in a covenant who is a contracting party in it. Now this may be affirmed of him who enters into solemn covenant-engagements with God in any religious duty, more especially Baptism, which is evidently adapted to express the surrender of ourselves to God, and our resolution, in a humble dependance on his grace, to be the disciples of Christ. But, in this sense of the phrase, it will be acknowledged on all hands, that children cannot possibly be in covenant with God, since they are not capable of any such transaction. I am excused therefore considering Mr. *A.*'s arguments as directed, any of them to this point, and may conclude.

conclude he agrees with me that infants cannot, upon the ground of any personal engagements of their own, be intitled to Baptism.

Here you will give me leave to observe, that the necessity of something of this sort, previous to Baptism, is manifestly acknowledged by the practice which obtains in the church of England and other churches, of admitting sponsors in Baptism. Children cannot promise or vow for themselves, and therefore others are required to do it for them, or Baptism is denied. The unreasonableness and pernicious tendency of this custom I shall not stay here to consider and expose, as it is not a matter in debate between Mr. A. and me. Nor need I tell you, Sir, that there is no foundation for it in Scripture, any more than for many other absurd and dangerous practices, which the church of Rome hath obtruded on the world*. To proceed,

SE-

* Mr. Wall, in his History of Infant-Baptism, takes pains to prove that this custom, which obtained in an early age of the church, originated from a similar custom which, he insists, was in use among the Jews at the admission of Infant-Profelytes to the profession of their religion. "Either the father of the infant, he tells us, or else the consistory of the place, or at least three grave persons, were required to answer or undertake for him that he should renounce Idolatry, &c." He then goes on to trace up to the same source the other ceremonies which were practised in the same early age of the church,

SECONDLY, A person may be said to be in a covenant, or included in it, who is intitled to of giving infants milk and honey, and anointing them with a sort of precious ointment at their Baptism *. Now I do not mean to enter here into the question respecting Profelyte-Baptism, as it will be considered more particularly hereafter. It is natural, however, in this place to observe, that, admitting it to have prevailed in our Saviour's time, the resting Christian Baptism upon this foundation will draw after it consequences which persons are not perhaps at first aware of. Mr. *Addington*, a dissenting Pædo-baptist minister, will tell us (if he may be supposed to have made the opinions of authors he has quoted p. 169, 170. his own) I say, he will tell us, "It is true, there is no express mention in the New-Testament of baptizing infants; but, as that was a common usage among the Jews when our Lord instituted Baptism, He no doubt meant that Infants should be baptized." Mr. *Wall*, a divine of the church of England, will say, "Mr. *A.* you reason well. But why stop here? The practice of admitting Sponsors, as well as baptizing infants, was in use among the Jews, why then should you object to this laudable custom amongst us?" A divine of the church of Rome will step in and say, "Gentlemen, you are both right so far as you go. But why should you object to Chrism, and those other ceremonies in use amongst us, since they have also antiquity, as well as the authority of our church, to recommend them?" How the matter would be settled amongst these disputants I will not pretend to say. But I know what a Baptist minister would say, if he might be allowed to give his opinion. He would modestly, and yet with a firmness inspired by a becoming veneration for the sacred oracles, say,

* *Wall's Hist.* p. 59, 61.

"Sirs,

to certain advantages through the mutual engagements of others on his behalf. In this sense it is acknowledged that not only infants, but those who do not yet exist, may be included in a covenant. And it is, I suppose, in this sense Mr. A. considers the children of pious parents as included with them in the Christian Covenant. Here then let us consider the state of such children,

I. In reference to the Covenant between God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ on the behalf of sinners; and

II. In reference to any covenant-engagements subsisting immediately between God and their parents.

I. We are to consider the state of the children of pious parents in reference to the Covenant between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ on the behalf of sinners. Now this Covenant is

“Sirs, you are all wrong to rest your opinions concerning
“Baptism upon Jewish authorities, or those of the primitive church in an adulterated state, when it stands to
“reason that the Mode and Subjects of this Christian institution must have been, and it is a fact that they really
“are, clearly laid down in the New-Testament.—*To the law and the testimony*—The Bible is our religion. If
“Infant-Baptism is to be found there, practice it; if not, reject it.”

either

either *absolute* or *conditional*, I mean in respect of the persons benefited by it.

FIRST, If it be *absolute*, then whoever is in it will be infallibly saved; and of consequence the children of pious parents, if they are in it, will most certainly be saved.

That Mr. *A.* considers the Covenant as *absolute*, I will not positively affirm: yet, as his readers will, some of them, be apt to affix this idea to the account he gives us of it; I fear I shall be charged with doing him injustice, if I do not treat his arguments, at least some of them, as directed to this point. His account of the Covenant is this: “God has engaged, “in the covenant of grace, to bestow on his people all the blessings of his love both here and “hereafter †.” And the state of the children of his people in respect of the Covenant is thus represented: “The promises” (which he expressly explains of spiritual, temporal and eternal blessings) “are made alike to Believers, “whether Jews or Gentiles, and to their children, in both Testaments †.” Again, discoursing of Peter’s words to the converted Jews, he says, “If no more was meant by

† P. 2.

‡ P. 100.

“ the promise, than that their descendants
“ should inherit the promised blessing when
“ called by divine grace, it was very little in-
“ deed. It was no intimation of mercy at all
“ concerning their children as theirs. He might
“ have said this of the children of unconverted
“ heathens, as well as of the offspring of
“ Christians. If your children, when grown
“ up, become Christians, they shall enjoy the
“ privileges of the Christian covenant; but the
“ Apostle joins them here with their parents,
“ as admitted, in consequence of their relation
“ to them, into covenant with God, &c*.” And,
in another place, he speaks of “ Christian parents
“ putting in their claim to those new-covenant
“ blessings which are promised to their child-
“ ren †.” From these passages some may per-
haps conclude Mr. *A.* means to say, that the
children of pious Christians are included with
them in the Covenant absolutely considered.

Now if this be our Author's meaning, it
lies upon him to prove that ALL of them are
in the Covenant; or to point out, upon scrip-
tural and authentick authority, WHICH OF
THEM are in it: for, if one or other of these
be not done, the general indefinite idea of some
of them being in the Covenant will not, upon

* P. 121, 122.

† P. 179.

his own ground of reasoning, intitle any of them to Baptism.

¶ I. Are ALL the children of pious parents in this covenant? No, they are not: for we have the clearest evidence that they will not all be saved. Scripture furnishes numerous instances of pious persons who had profligate children, and instances of this sort too frequently occur in every age. So that they who will maintain this strange position, that they are all in the Covenant, must likewise maintain, either that such profligate children will, notwithstanding their profligacy, be finally saved, or that their parents are not pious persons. But these assertions are followed with consequences so glaringly absurd and dangerous, that the bare mention of them is sufficient to their refutation. Nay Mr. *A.* himself acknowledges, that “there are, “ he fears, many of those who prove such sons “ of Belial as to cast off the yoke;”—and that “ the promises of God to the children of his “ people are by no means a security to those “ who live to reject his authority*.” The numerous passages therefore which he has cited, to prove the peculiar regards of God the Father and of Christ to the offspring of Believers, and by consequence their being in the Covenant (which passages we shall consider in their proper place) these numerous passages, I say, do not,

* P. 64.

cannot, prove them ALL to be in the Covenant. As then they are not *all* of them in the Covenant, it lies upon Mr. *A.*

2. To point out, by some authentick scriptural criterion, WHICH OF THEM are in the Covenant. Here it will be said,

1.) That such children of pious parents as die in their infancy are in the Covenant. To which proposition I heartily assent, provided it be extended to the children of bad as well as good men. The Scriptures are not indeed very explicit upon this matter: yet I think our Author's arguments, in the latitude just insisted on, are pertinent. His arguments I shall be at the pains to collect, and the rather as a review of them will enable me to rescue some texts from a misapplication, to which they are liable through Mr. *A.*'s promiscuous and confused manner of citing them. For it will be found upon examination, that he has produced passages in proof of God's peculiar affection to the children of good men, and (as some will be apt to construe them) in favour of such children indiscriminately, whether dying or surviving; which yet are only pertinently to be applied to the fact as I have stated it.

His reasoning from "the children of pious parents being exposed to sufferings and death,"
" as

“ as descending from the first Adam, to their
 “ deriving some peculiar advantages from the
 “ second*,” I feel the force of; but must beg
 leave to extend this probable argument to all the
 descendants of Adam dying in their infancy.
 And so I most heartily join Mr. *A.* in hoping,
 that, as “ through the offence of one many die
 “ who have not sinned after the similitude of
 “ Adam’s transgression; so the grace of God,
 “ and his unspeakable gift of eternal life, shall,
 “ through Jesus Christ, abound to many,”—
 not only the dying infant-children of Believers,
 but of all mankind. Nor am I disposed to think,
 any more than Mr. *A.* “ that the seed of God’s
 “ servants,” and I will add of any other men,
 “ should be called into being merely to spend a
 “ few useless and miserable moments upon earth,
 “ and then to be blotted out of existence, or
 “ consigned over to everlasting misery †.” Fur-
 ther, “ the tender care which a watchful Pro-
 “ vidence extends over children in the helpless
 “ state of infancy,” I am most sincerely willing
 to improve into an argument of “ the blessed
 “ God’s being mindful of their spiritual and
 “ eternal interests.” And as “ infants,” who-
 ever their parents may be, “ are unquestionably
 “ of more value than many sparrows,” so “ be-
 “ ing removed hence by the divine appointment
 “ in their infancy,” I rejoice in the hope and
 confidence that “ our Father is their Father,

* P. 62.

† P. 63.

“ and

“ and our God their God *.” The compassion a merciful God was pleased to express towards a vast number of infants, Mr. *A.* refers to, who were the offspring of Heathens and Jews, Ninevites and Israelites, will likewise admit of a very pleasing probable inference in favour of the happy state of all children dying in their infancy. But I forbear reciting all the passages wherein children are mentioned, as many of them are not to our present purpose; and as in others infants are not intended, but the descendants or posterity of those referred to.

I must not, however, here pass over the instance of our Saviour's taking little children, infants, into his arms and blessing them; as I am happy in thinking that a very good argument arises from thence in favour of the point we would gladly establish. While we hear our Lord, in this pleasing attitude, pronouncing those gracious words, *of such is the kingdom of heaven*, parental affection, methinks, cannot fail of prejudicing us in favour of this interpretation of them, that, dying in their infancy, God of his mercy receives them to Himself, and makes them happy with Him in his kingdom above. Nor do I know any inconvenience that can arise from this interpretation. But the particular consideration of this passage I shall refer to another opportunity. In the mean time I would just observe, that here

* P. 67.

is no exclusive right, in favour of the children of pious parents, to the kingdom of heaven. If it may be inferred from the words, that ANY of them dying in their infancy will be saved, it may that ALL. In this opinion I presume Mr. *A.* will agree with me: though his reasoning is a little unfavourable to it, since he seems to think that the children of Believers only should be presented to Christ by Baptism, as the proper subjects of his kingdom; for, endeavouring to account for it how those children that were brought to Christ came not to be baptized by Him, he says, “Possibly their parents had not yet entered themselves among the followers of Christ*.”

It is admitted then that such children of pious parents as die in their infancy are in the Covenant. But this concession avails Mr. *A.* nothing in the present dispute: for he must first know that such and such children will die, before he can pronounce them in the Covenant, and so intitled to Baptism. But is there,

2.) Any other medium by which we may frame a judgment of children, whilst in their infancy, that they are in the Covenant? There is not, there cannot be one, unless God was Himself to point them out by some preternatural and extraordinary mark of his favour. We must wait

then till they grow up, and give credible proof themselves, by their own personal faith and repentance, that they are in the Covenant.

Thus have we proved that ALL the children of pious parents are not in the Covenant absolutely considered; and, admitting that some of them are in it, that there are no distinguishing marks or characteristicks upon any of them, during their infancy, by which it can be known or credibly apprehended WHICH OF THEM are in it. Wherefore it clearly follows, that they can none of them have a right to the seals of the Covenant, even though it be allowed that a person's being in the Covenant gives him a title to them, which point we shall consider in its proper place.

Before we proceed to consider the Covenant in the other view of it as conditional, let me expostulate a few moments with those who hold it to be absolute, upon the great absurdity and very pernicious tendency of asserting, that the children of Believers indiscriminately are in it.

By the absurdity of holding this kind of language I mean not only that the proposition is not conformable to truth, which I think I have clearly shewn, but that it contradicts itself. When we say that the Covenant is absolute, we mean that God the Father has stipulated or agreed with his
Son

Son the Lord Jesus Christ for the redemption and salvation of a certain number of the sinful race of men; that of his free and sovereign mercy he has chosen them to eternal life, irrespective of any considerations of natural relation or consanguinity; and that this Covenant is eternal, unchangeable and irrevocable. But how inconsistent with this account of the Covenant is it to say, that the children of pious parents “are admitted IN CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR RELATION TO THEM, into covenant with God—that AS such, it is reasonable to expect they should derive some peculiar advantages from the second Adam—that AS such they are authorized to expect that God will pour out his Spirit upon them—and that AS such they have a claim to New-covenant blessings, and their parents may put in their claim for them?”

Can this language be any way made to agree with the freeness and sovereignty of divine grace—the professed sentiment of many who talk it, if not Mr. A? Nay, what is it better than a contradiction in terms, to reason thus from the relation which children stand in to pious parents, to their interest in the Covenant; and at the same time to maintain that those who are admitted to the grand privilege of it, that of *becoming the sons of God, are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God* *?

* John i. 12, 13.

But this reasoning is not only absurd, but very carnal and vain-glorious, and therefore utterly unworthy of those who so loudly disclaim the most distant pretences to merit before God. It is a kind of language not unlike that held by the Pharisees and Saducees who came to John's Baptism; and if it proceed, which God forbid! from that temper with which they stood chargeable, it will no doubt receive the same check they met with, *Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham* *. But, separate from the consideration of the irreconcilableness of this reasoning with the idea of the Covenant as absolute, I would ask any serious thoughtful person, Whether it would not shock his reason and faith too to be told, that we are to conceive of the great blessings of religion much after the same manner we do of a temporal inheritance, which descends in a line to a man's latest posterity, unless some spendthrift arises and cuts off the entail, and so reduces the family to beggary? And yet this unaccountable reasoning from consanguinity and the natural ties of flesh and blood, in matters of spiritual concernment, gives too much countenance to such a comparison.

The inconsistency also of this strange tenet with the doctrine of the saints final perseverance, must needs strike every one at first view. For if

* Matt. iii. 9.

the children of pious parents are in the Covenant, and so intitled to the promise of the Holy Spirit, and all the blessings of God's love both here and hereafter, how can they any of them fail of salvation? And yet it has been proved that they will not all of them be saved. Wherefore to say that they are in the Covenant, is to say that the Covenant is, and that it is not, unchangeable and irrevocable. Mr. *A.* indeed thinks that their being in the Covenant and living afterwards to renounce it, may consist with the perseverance of the faithful *. But he can no otherwise maintain this sentiment than by denying that the Covenant is absolute. This may perhaps be his meaning, and if so, all that we are to understand by the phrases of their being in the Christian Covenant—in the Covenant their parents are in, and in the promises of which it was God's design to include them—and of God's having engaged to pour out his spirit upon them; all I say we are to understand by these phrases is, “that they are admitted,” as he expresses it in the next sentence, “by virtue of a divine appointment, to certain privileges in their infancy.” But, whatever may be Mr. *A.*'s opinion, which I have no authority to pronounce upon, they who hold that the Covenant of grace is absolute and unconditional, do, by saying that the children of Believers are in it, in effect deny the doctrine of perseverance.

* P. 64.

Nor is this language, of the children of pious Christians being in the Covenant, less pernicious in its tendency, than it is inconsistent with the professed sentiments of those who hold it. For it cannot fail, wherever it is inculcated, of begetting in the minds of young persons a more favourable idea of their state than the Scriptures warrant; the ill effect of which to promote indifference to the interesting concerns of religion must be very considerable. Mr. *A.*, apprehensive of this, tells us, “The gospel does not by any means encourage the descendants of good men to trust to the religion of their parents in such a manner as to neglect it themselves*.” True. But, if children are told they are in the Covenant, how can they do otherwise than look upon their state, as to another world, safe? Nay, the very language Mr. *A.* himself uses in his exposition of the words of Peter in the Acts, though in the warmth of controversy he might not advert to the unhappy tendency of it, can scarce fail of producing in young minds reasonings the most unfavourable to the interests of real religion. Only suppose him addressing a circle of young people after this manner—*The promise is to you, children. If the Apostle meant no more than that you should inherit the promised blessing, when you are called by divine grace, it were very little indeed. It were no intimation of mercy at all concerning you as the children of pious parents. He might*

* P. 65.

have said this of the children of unconverted heathens, as well as of you the offspring of Christians. But he joins you here with your parents, as admitted, in consequence of your relation to them, into covenant with God, and proper subjects of Baptism, as the seal of that covenant.* Suppose him, I say, thus addressing a company of young folks, and then judge you whether they would not be apt to flatter themselves with a vain notion, that they stood higher in the favour of God than others. They certainly would: and the ill effect of this to lull them asleep in carnal security, every one who is at all acquainted with the human heart must clearly perceive.

I am, Sir,

Yours,

* P. 121, 122.

L E T.

L E T T E R III.

DEAR SIR,

WE proceed now to consider the state of the children of pious parents in reference,

SECONDLY, To the Covenant taken *conditionally*. The tenor of the Covenant, in this view of it, is, that God of his mercy engages, for Christ's sake, to pardon and save those who repent and believe the gospel. Now, properly speaking, they only are in the Covenant, thus considered, who comply with the terms of it. But admitting that, previous to their repenting and believing, persons may be said to be in the Covenant, as it is a declaration of God's mercy to all indefinitely, and supposes all capable of salvation; yet it cannot be said of the children of pious parents exclusively, that they are in the Covenant. They are no otherwise in it than the rest of mankind to whom the gospel is published, it being equally true of them all, that if they repent and believe they shall be saved. If therefore the right of the children of Believers

to Baptism be inferred purely from the consideration of their being thus conditionally in the Covenant, the right of others to Baptism may be inferred. likewise from the same consideration; and so, upon this ground, whether men do or do not repent and believe, they are intitled to this sacred ordinance.

But upon what principle, I ask, can the idea of their being in the Covenant conditionally intitle any persons to Baptism? If indeed Baptism be itself a condition of salvation, or if it be the appointed mean of attaining faith and repentance, and so is a condition of a condition, then the being in the Covenant does properly intitle persons to it. For this general declaration of God's merciful disposition to save men, and of his requisition of faith and repentance to that end, manifestly implies in it a right on their part to what He may have appointed as a condition of salvation, or as a mean of attaining that faith and repentance which are necessary to it. If He has said, "Whoever is baptized shall be saved," then every one has a right to Baptism. Or if He has said, "I require all to repent and believe, and appoint Baptism as a mean to that end," then ought all to be baptized. It lies upon Mr. *A.* therefore to prove one or other of these points—*that Baptism is a condition of salvation—*or *that it is an appointed mean of attaining faith and repentance*: if he fails here, his asserting that
the

the children of pious parents are in the Covenant conditionally, will be to no manner of purpose at all. Let us begin with the first.

1. Is Baptism a condition of salvation? Mr. *A.* no-where, as I remember, undertakes to prove this position. Yet, as it is held by some, and as in early times it was maintained with warmth, and seems to have been the ground upon which Infant-Baptism first got footing in the church, it will be proper here to investigate this question.

There are only three passages, as I recollect, that can be supposed to give any sanction to this opinion, *viz.* The words of our Saviour to Nicodemus, John iii. 5. *Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*—The words immediately following his commission to the Apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.*—And the words of Ananias to Saul, Acts xxii. 16. *Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

As to the first of these passages, it has been often urged in proof of the necessity of Baptism to salvation, and with the greater confidence,

though not the more reason, as it was so understood by some of the Fathers. St. Chrysostome, speaking of those who “*depart without illumination* (τὸς χωρὶς φωτισμαῖο ἀπερχομενὸς) by which it is well known the antient Fathers meant Baptism* ; says, that “*they are without the palace, among the sentenced, among the condemned. For* “*verily,*” adds he, “*I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven †.*” I the rather mention the opinion of the Fathers upon this matter, as we shall have occasion hereafter to apply this observation to a very important purpose.

But the absurdity of this interpretation of our Saviour’s words, will clearly appear upon a little

* That the term *illumination* is used in this sense by the Fathers, is evident from the words of Justin Martyr, who, speaking of Baptism, says, “*This laver is called illumination, as those whose minds have learned these things are illuminated, καλεῖται δὲ τὸτο το λυτρον φωτισμος, ὡς φωτιζομεταν την διανοιαν των ταυτα μαθησαντων.* Apol. 2. p. 94. Edit. Paris. 1636.

† —ἐξω των βασιλειων εἰσι μετὰ των καταδικων, μετὰ των καταδικασμενων. Ἀμην γαρ λεγω υμιν, εαν μη τις γεννηθῃ, &c. Hom. 3. in Ep. ad Philip. p. 20. And this Father elsewhere says, that “*without Baptism it is impossible to obtain the kingdom—and without it ’tis impossible to be saved.*” Ἀνω βαπτισματὸ ἀμνηχανον βασιλειας επιτευχειν—αδυνατον μιν χωρις αὐτου σωθηναι. Homil. 3. in Epist. ad Cor. p. 256 & 257. Edit. Eton.

reflection. The indefinite particle *τις*, in the connection it here stands, I am willing to acknowledge amounts to an universal negative: wherefore, if Baptism is meant by the phrase of being *born of water*, it follows that without Baptism children cannot be saved any more than grown persons. But can any one imagine, that an infinitely merciful God would suspend the final salvation and happiness of infants, upon a contingency no way subject to their own controul, nor, in some cases, to that of their parents neither? Another interpretation therefore of the phrase, *born of water and the Spirit*, must be sought for: and what so natural as that of the internal *washing of regeneration*, spoken of Tit. iii. 5.? For the term *water* being often used in Scripture to signify the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, it is extremely proper to understand *water* here, in its connection with *spirit*, of *spiritual water*. This at once clears the passage of every difficulty, and makes our Saviour say, what we must all admit, that none can enter into the kingdom of heaven unless prepared for it by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, of which children are capable as well as grown persons.

In the next passage referred to, and which some have considered as a proof that Baptism is a condition of salvation and necessary to it, it

is observable our Saviour connects it with faith: *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.* So that if it be a condition of salvation, it is only such to those who are capable of believing, as well as of being baptized. Wherefore infants can have no concern here: for though they may be sanctified, that is, wrought upon by the influence of another; yet they cannot believe, that is, exert an act which the mind in that state is not capable of. But it is not a condition of salvation to the adult neither; for if it were, though a man believed, yet not being baptized, (which is more than a possible case, it having sometimes happened through unavoidable causes) that man would fail of salvation.

Why then, it may be asked, does our Saviour here connect Baptism with faith, which is on all hands acknowledged to be necessary to salvation? The answer is extremely natural, because in his infinite wisdom He has judged this a proper way of professing our faith in Him, and laying ourselves under voluntary engagements of obedience to Him. And this view of the matter very strikingly shews the importance of Baptism, though not in itself necessary to salvation: for it teaches us that, if a non-compliance with this command of his proceeds from a contempt of his authority, or a wilful indifference to it, we really do not believe to the salvation of the soul. To
which

which I would add, that as by thus connecting it with faith in the former clause of the verse, our Lord has stamped importance upon the institution, and bid us neglect it at the peril of his displeasure; so, by dropping it in the latter clause, He has plainly intimated that faith only, with what is essential to it, is necessary to salvation; and that if persons, through conscientious scruples about their duty, or any other unavoidable impediments, are held back from Baptism, they shall notwithstanding be saved.

As to the words of Ananias to Saul, *Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins*; they can never mean that there is a real efficacy in Baptism to cleanse us from sins. For this notion, besides the absurdity of it, destroys the idea of Baptism as a sign or figure, which is most unquestionably its true and proper nature, and the light in which the Scriptures represent it. Bread, in the other sacrament, is a figure of the body of Christ; and water, in this, of the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit. Wherefore as bread can only be said to feed and nourish the soul in the reference it hath to the sacrifice of Christ, or the doctrine of the cross; so Baptism can only be said to wash away our sins in the reference it hath to the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit. It is the type or emblem of the internal washing of regeneration; and therefore

can have no natural or proper efficacy in itself to that end: and of consequence its being said to wash away sin, will by no means prove that it is a condition of salvation, and therefore necessary to it.—As then there is no foundation in Scripture or Reason for making Baptism a condition of salvation, it remains to be inquired,

2. Whether Baptism is a mean of faith and repentance, which it is agreed on all hands are necessary to salvation? If it be, they who are conditionally in the Covenant, as I have explained the phrase, must doubtless have a right to it. This question I take to be the main hinge upon which the dispute between us and the Pædobaptists turns, and therefore deserves our particular consideration.

Now I deny that Baptism is a mean of acquiring faith and repentance: for there does not appear to me to be any the least fitness in it to that end, nor have we any proof from Scripture that it was instituted to that end. I can easily conceive how instructing persons in the principles of the gospel, and reasoning with them upon the evidence of it, may be a mean of their becoming believers of it; and how the laying before them their condition as lost miserable sinners, and the representing to them the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, may be a mean of their

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becoming truly penitent. But how their being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, should be a mean of their acquiring faith in Christ, and repentance for their sins, I cannot divine.

As to the adult, who have not been baptized in their infancy, I suppose most people would think it strange were they admitted to this ordinance, previous to their having believed and repented, or their having made a personal profession of faith and repentance: yet if Baptism is a mean to these ends, they ought certainly, with these views, to be admitted to it. But what would a Pagan say, if our Missionaries were to tell him, “ You are to repent and believe the gospel in order to your being saved; but first of all you must be baptized in the name of the Trinity?” He would no doubt of it say, “ Then you mean to convert us, not by informing our understandings, and convincing our judgments, but by baptizing us.” And whether this manner of treating Pagans would be likely to give them a favourable idea of Christianity, I leave any one to determine.

But, if Baptism is not to be administered to the adult in order to their conversion, may it not to infants, in order to theirs when they grow up into life? No. For there is no greater fitness in it to that end in regard of them, than

of those just mentioned. It will be said perhaps, that a recollection of their Baptism will lead them into a knowledge of the great truths signified by it, such as the necessity of dying to sin and living to righteousness, and of the washing of regeneration to that end. But is not a knowledge of these truths more naturally and properly acquired by instruction from the word of God, than by a reference back to a ceremony performed on them, of which they can themselves have no remembrance?

But if it be further urged, which is the main consideration, that a recollection of their having been baptized, by the impression it will make upon their minds of the solemn obligations they were thereby laid under to God and their duty, will be a powerful motive to excite them to faith and repentance; I reply by denying the fact, that their having been baptized does lay them under any personal obligations to faith and repentance. For, supposing Baptism were a sign or token of his resolution who voluntarily submits to it to believe and repent (which yet is an absurd and unscriptural account of the intent of the institution) it yet would not, it could not, oblige children to repent and believe when they grow up, because it is no sign or token to them of their resolution to believe and repent, they not having voluntarily submitted to it.

What

What then becomes of all this reasoning from the advantage of persons recollecting the solemn engagements they are laid under by their having been baptized in their infancy? a kind of language which has a shew of piety in it, but not one principle in Scripture or Reason to support it. "You was baptized a few days after you was born, therefore you are bound to repent and believe the gospel." Is it imaginable that a child, possessed of any tolerable understanding, can be at all influenced by such reasoning, if indeed it deserves the name of reasoning? He must instantly perceive the absurdity of it, and instead of being disposed by it to believe and repent, rather feel himself prejudiced against faith and repentance. There is then no fitness in Baptism itself to the end for which it is administered to children: wherefore it cannot be argued from thence that it is a mean of faith and repentance.

But whatever fancied utility there may be in baptizing infants to dispose them in their riper years to take the yoke of Christ upon them; as Baptism is a positive institution, it cannot have such utility in it, unless appointed to that end; or, in other words, it cannot be a mean of faith and repentance, unless the Scriptures have declared it to be such, which they have no where done.

Thus

Thus we have proved that Baptism is not itself a condition of salvation, nor yet an appointed mean of acquiring faith and repentance, and so the condition of a condition. And from hence it clearly follows, that the being in the Covenant conditionally, or, in other words, the being included in God's general declaration of mercy, that whoever believes and repents shall be saved, does not, cannot intitle any one to Baptism, previous to a profession of faith and repentance.

Having considered the state of the children of pious parents in reference to the Covenant of grace taken absolutely and conditionally; we come now to consider it,

II. In reference to any covenant-engagements subsisting immediately between God and their parents.

When persons first become religious, it is readily acknowledged, they enter into covenant with God. He in his mercy becoming their God through Jesus Christ, they on their part solemnly devote themselves, their families, their substance, and their all to God and his service. Now the question is, Whether children, in virtue of these transactions of their parents, may be said to be included with them in covenant

with God? To enable us to decide this question, it will be necessary to inquire a moment into the tenor or purport of these covenant-engagements of parents on behalf of their children; and consider what are the true and proper benefits and obligations which result thence to them. The language of this solemn surrender of their children to God, is no other than a fervent and devout wish that God would bless them; a firm resolution, so far as lies in their power, to promote their best interests; and an humble acquiescence in the pleasure of God concerning them. And from these tempers and engagements, it is readily admitted, there do arise many advantages to their children. Their pious wishes and prayers, proceeding from a lively sense of the infinite importance of religion, may afford a happy omen, though not a certain assurance, of the future spiritual good their children may enjoy. And their solemn resolution, in the strength of God, to discharge their duty towards their children, will doubtless have an effect upon the education they give them. And these benefits, which children partake of in consequence of these covenant-transactions of their parents with God, do unquestionably lay them under special obligations of duty and obedience; so that if they precipitate themselves into sin, their guilt is more aggravated than that of others.

Now

Now from this view of the advantages which children derive from their connection with pious parents, it is natural to conclude that they are in a situation more favourable to the interests of religion than other children: and to this idea of their situation are to be referred those passages Mr. *A.* has cited, which express the peculiar regards of the blessed God towards such children; which passages we shall consider more particularly by and by. But to infer from their being thus benefited by the piety of their parents; and from the texts which illustrate this idea, that they are in covenant with God; nay more than this, to talk, as our Author somewhere does, of “parents introducing their children into the “covenant of God*,” is surely most unreasonable and unscriptural. No. If religion be a personal thing, as it most certainly is, he who is in covenant with God can only be so in virtue of his own personal and voluntary engagements.—Upon the whole then, whatever advantages accrue to children from their parents personal covenant-transactions with God, children cannot on account of such transactions be said to be in covenant with God, and of consequence all claim to positive institutions on this ground fails.

I am, Sir,

Yours,

* P. 183.

L E T-

L E T T E R IV.

DEAR SIR,

BEFORE we proceed to examine the true import of the passages Mr. *A.* has produced from Scripture, in support of his general proposition, “that the children of pious parents are included with them in the Christian Covenant” (which passages we have only hitherto occasionally touched upon) as also to develop his arguments drawn from the Abrahamick Covenant; it will be proper to take a brief review of the fact, as we have stated it, respecting such children.

We have considered the two only possible senses in which persons can be said to be in a covenant, *viz.* that of their being contracting parties in a covenant, and that of their being intitled to certain advantages through the mutual stipulations of others on their behalf. These senses we have applied to the proposition Mr. *A.* wishes to establish. And here we have shewn, that the children of pious parents cannot be in the Christian Covenant, first of all, as being themselves contracting

tracting parties in it, for of that they are incapable. Wherefore, if they are in it at all, it must be, secondly, as standing intitled to certain advantages through the stipulations of others on their behalf. This has led us to consider their state in reference to the Covenant between God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, and in reference to covenant-transactions more immediately between God and their parents. As to the former, the Covenant of grace; it is either *absolute* or *conditional*. If *absolute*, then all who are in it will be saved: but all the children of pious parents will not be saved: wherefore all of them are not in the Covenant. Nor can it be known, in their infancy, which of them are in the Covenant, since there are no discriminating marks upon any of them from whence their interest in it may be inferred: and without a credible proof of their being in the Covenant, they surely can have no claim to the peculiar privileges of it. If the Covenant be *conditional*, they cannot properly be said, in this acceptance of it, to be in it, till they have complied with the conditions of it: but they are not capable in their infancy of complying with the conditions of it, and so, not being in it, are not on this ground intitled to the privileges of it. If it be said, they are conditionally in the Covenant, as it is a general declaration of God's mercy through Christ to all who repent and believe the gospel; yet

yet they are, in this general idea of the Covenant, no otherwise in it than are all others to whom this declaration of mercy is made. And if it be further said, that their being thus in it implies a right to what God may have appointed as a condition or mean of salvation; yet, as Baptism is not itself a condition of salvation, nor an instituted mean of faith and repentance which are necessary to salvation, they are not upon this ground intitled to Baptism.—We have farther considered their state in reference to those engagements which their parents may have entered into with God on their behalf. Numerous advantages, it is acknowledged, they reap from these engagements, in all the care and attention which their parents hereby become religiously bound to pay to their education: but these engagements do not bring children themselves personally into covenant with God. Wherefore on this ground they can have no right to a positive institution, unless there was an express command for their admission to it.

And now, upon this view of the matter, I leave you, Sir, to judge with what propriety Mr. *A.* has asserted, “that the children of pious parents
“are included with them in the Christian Co-
“venant.” But I do not mean to dismiss the question without considering the passages he has produced in support of it. Though, if the rea-
soning

soning of the preceding pages be just, you will scarce expect much from these passages. Indeed, in that case, it will be impossible for them to prove Mr. A.'s proposition, in the natural and proper sense of it, or in any sense of it which will justify his conclusion, that such infants have a right to Baptism. We shall begin,

I. With those texts our Author has cited from the Old Testament.

And here the first he has mentioned is from the Psalms: *Children are an heritage of the Lord* ||. This text he expounds thus, “The Lord gives
 “ them as a heritage to the church, and to their
 “ parents; and, through the riches of his grace
 “ in Christ Jesus, mercifully considers them as
 “ an heritage to Himself *”—that is, in other words, God of his mercy includes them with their parents in the Christian Covenant. But will this exposition, will this reasoning, satisfy a considerate reader? The plain meaning of the words is, in my opinion, this, “As protection and success in worldly affairs (of which the Psalmist had been just speaking) are the gifts of Providence, so are also a numerous offspring. Men receive them from God, as they do a patrimony from their ancestors, freely and without price or labour.” So Jacob speaks of the children which God had graciously given him †.

|| Ps. cxxvii. 3. * P. 67, 68. † Gen. xxxiii. 5.

Or if the Psalmist meant to convey a further idea of the interest which God hath in them; it is readily acknowledged, that He hath a property in all children, and particularly in the Israelitish children (who may perhaps be more immediately intended here) as they were separated by Him from the rest of the world to the enjoyment of peculiar temporal privileges. But what, I beseech you, has this to do with the children of Believers being in covenant with God?

Mr. *A.* proceeds—“The word of God furnishes many convincing testimonies of this truth, *viz.* that God through Christ considers the children of Believers” (for of them he is speaking) “as an heritage to Himself*.” Well. And what are those testimonies? By his immediately mentioning the case of the Ninevite children, one should suppose he meant this for one testimony. But surely he does not consider these as children of Believers: if not, how is God’s mercifully sparing them from the calamity threatened the Ninevites, an argument that the seed of Believers are included with them in the Christian Covenant? It may indeed be a good argument to prove God’s “peculiar regard for the children of his own people” in the like circumstances: for if He had pity on the children of infidels in a time of publick danger, no

* P. 68.

doubt He would have had pity on the children of them that truly feared Him. But more than this it would not prove.

In this view, as expressive of the attention of Divine Providence to the temporal interests of the Israelites, the passages next cited are very pertinent. *Because He loved their fathers, says Moses, therefore He chose their seed after them**; that is, separated them to the enjoyment of great temporal blessings, which are immediately recited, such as his bringing them out of Egypt, driving out nations before them, and giving them the land of the Heathen for an inheritance. But surely Moses did not mean, by God's choosing their seed after them, his admitting their infant-children into the Covenant of grace with them.

In like manner the favour of God expressed to Noah, it is acknowledged, was extended to ALL HIS HOUSE. *The Lord blessed him, and HIS SONS, and established his covenant with them and THEIR SEED after them †*: that is, He saved Noah and his family from the general deluge, blessed them with the promise of fruitfulness, and assured them that He would no more destroy the world by water. Wherefore this instance, and that of God's promising *to establish the kingdom to David and his seed after him ‡*, are no doubt pro-

* Deut. iv. 37. † Gen. ix. 1, 9. ‡ 2 Sam. vii. 12.

per illustrations of the observation Mr. *A.* had just made, “ that the children of the righteous are included by God in many Covenant-engagements which he entered into with their parents *,” provided those engagements are understood to refer to temporal blessings. But they furnish not the shadow of a proof, that such children are included in the Christian Covenant. Mr. *A.* might therefore have saved himself the trouble of marking the words, *all his house, his sons, and their seed*, with capitals, unless he meant to mislead his readers with the appearance of an argument, where there is really none.

The next passage is likewise in point to prove God’s merciful regard to the temporal interests of the children of good men, especially under the Jewish Dispensation: *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, his seed shall be mighty upon the earth, the generation of the upright shall be blessed †.* But no one surely ever dreamt of making this passage say any more, than that rewards of a temporal kind were very largely distributed among the families of pious Israelites, by that extraordinary Providence which presided over them; and that in every age the piety of good men, accompanied with prudence and industry will be likely to secure worldly prosperity and happiness to their children.

* P. 68.

† Pf. cxii. 1, 2.

Mr. A., aware of these objections to the passage already remarked upon, takes upon him to prove “ that the blessings which the children of them “ that feared the Lord as such inherited, were “ not merely natural and temporary *.” But here too he fails: for, unhappily for him, though the texts he cites do refer to spiritual blessings, they do not insure those blessings to the immediate descendants of pious ancestors. The election, or remnant of the Jews in the latter day, of whom the Apostle speaks as *beloved for the fathers sakes* †, that is, the Patriarchal Fathers; are not surely the immediate children of those Fathers. Wherefore *their* being included in the Covenant of grace with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is no proof that the immediate offspring of individual Christians are included with them in the Christian Covenant, and beloved of God for *their* fathers sakes. Again, The Father of mercies, it is true, has engaged to *pour his Spirit upon the seed of Jacob, and his blessing upon his offspring* ‡; but by what rules of logick Mr. A. makes *Jacob* to mean individual Christian parents I am at a loss to conceive. ’Tis prophesied also that *the children of Jacob, or the posterity of Jacob, shall be as aforesaid; that they shall be the people of God, and he will be their God; and that they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King* ||, that is, be under the spiritual

* P. 69.

† Rom. ii. 28.

‡ Isa. xlv. 3.

|| Jer. xxx. 20, 22, 9.

government of Christ the Messiah. But what in the world should induce Mr. *A.* to interpret *children* here of infants, and the infant-offspring of Christians? when he cannot but know that the term *children* in this, and many other prophecies of the like nature wherein the blessings of the gospel are foretold, manifestly intends, either the natural descendants of Israel in some future distant period who should be converted, or the spiritual seed of Israel in general.

And now has our Author from these passages proved his assertion, “that the children of pious men inherited, as their children, blessings not merely natural and temporary, but,” as he doubtless means, “spiritual and eternal? *” He thinks he has: for he tells us, that, “encouraged by such declarations of mercy, the pious patriarchs not only committed their offspring to God by faith in prayer, but likewise solemnly blessed them in the name of the Lord †.” So then they firmly believed, that their children, grandchildren, &c. &c. were in covenant with God, and heirs of eternal happiness. *Credat Judæus Apella!* Nor do I make Mr. *A.*’s conclusion stronger than his premises, had they been admitted in the sense he lays them down, would warrant. For if the passages he has cited do refer to spiritual blessings, which I readily acknowledge they do; and if the indivi-

* P. 69.

† P. 70.

dual persons to whom the promise of these blessings is made, are the infant-offspring of pious parents, which is what he doubtless means to prove: then he must certainly consider the pious patriarchs as firmly believing their children to be included with them in the Covenant of grace, and upon this ground authorized solemnly to bless them in the name of the Lord.—Nay further, he insists, “that the seed of pious men, “thus included in the promises made to their “fathers” (promises he must here mean of spiritual blessings, for of these he had been speaking) “are expressly claimed by God as his “own*.” And so he makes the prophet Ezekiel to mean, when he tells the Jews that their sons and their daughters were BORNE UNTO GOD, and were HIS CHILDREN †, that they were his as included in the Covenant of grace. Whereas the plain meaning is, that they were HIS in regard of that covenant which subsisted between Him and the Jews as a nation.

The whole then to be collected from the passages Mr. *A.* has cited from the Old Testament is this: Some of these passages do indeed speak of the infant-seed of good men, but then they refer entirely to civil matters; and therefore do not prove such infant-children of pious parents are included with them in the Christian Covenant. And the remaining passages do indeed

* P. 70.

† Ezek. xvi. 20, 21.

refer to spiritual blessings, but then by the children or seed of Jacob, to whom those blessings are promised, are evidently meant, either the proper descendants or posterity of the Jews in some future age, or the seed of Jacob in a spiritual sense: and therefore they do not prove that the children of pious parents are included with them in the Christian Covenant.

And now I ask, Sir, Whether you think Mr. *A.* has any mighty reason, in this first stage of the controversy, to exult over his brethren the Baptists with that indignant air he does in the following sentences? “ Let us not dare to
 “ keep back from God that which is his own.
 “ A feeble infant may, indeed, seem to some
 “ an offering unworthy of his acceptance, and
 “ below his notice; but his thoughts are not
 “ as our thoughts, nor are his ways as our ways.
 “ The tender parent has, on this account, rea-
 “ son to rejoice that they are not*.” But why should Mr. *A.* put himself thus out of humour? What cause have the Baptists given him for these severe reflections? And to what purpose are they to be thus held up to the world, in one sentence, as guilty of sacrilege, robbing God of his right, or at least withholding it from Him? In the next, as looking upon infants in a contemptible light, as unworthy the acceptance and even the notice of God? And, in the last, as void

* P. 71.

of parental tenderness and affection? His unkind idea of them is not surely founded upon facts, nor does it arise out of their doctrine. If however Mr. *A.* would insinuate the latter, it must be owned he has possessed his reader, provided he could prove it, of an infinitely better argument against their doctrine, than any he has yet advanced, and I may venture to add, ever will. But I would charitably impute this little fallacy of the passions, rather to the uneasiness he feels from the weakness of his arguments, than to natural temper, or the want of Christian charity.

I am, Sir,

Yours.

L E T

L E T T E R V.

DEAR SIR,

WE have seen by what kind of reasoning Mr. *A.* has attempted to prove, from the Old Testament, his leading proposition in this dispute about Infant-Baptism, “that the children of pious parents are included with them in the Christian covenant.” Let us now see whether he has succeeded any better in his reasoning,

2. From the New Testament;

The two first passages our Author here produces, relate to the kind and condescending notice our Saviour took of little children in the days of his flesh. And I would here observe, before we proceed to an examination of them, that I am most sincerely disposed to collect every possible idea from them that is favourable to the real interests of children. Nay I carry the matter further than Mr. *A.*, and insist that our Lord, by taking infants in his arms and blessing them, meant to express his regards, not only to the

infant-seed of Believers, but to all infants ; and that by saying, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven*, I think it highly probable He meant to say, that all who die in their infancy are admitted to heaven. If therefore I cannot with Mr. *A.* infer from these passages, that the children of pious parents, as such, and whether they live or die, are included with them in the Christian Covenant, I hope I shall not fall under those censures which he has so freely bestowed on the Baptists, and which were taken notice of at the close of my last letter.

You will allow me also further to observe, that I have no objection to his accommodation of the pleasing description given us in one of the prophets of our Saviour, as *gathering the lambs in his arms*, and *carrying them in his bosom* ; to his accommodation, I say, of this description to the passages before us: since you see I admit that all children who die in their infancy, and those too who surviving infancy discover early symptoms of piety, belong to the fold of the good Shepherd, and are in the Christian Covenant. Though I suppose most will agree with me, that by the lambs of the flock, in the prophecy referred to, are meant persons in the first stage of religion, whatever their age may be in regard of natural life. Let us now then,

1.) Consider the story Mr. *A.* refers to, Matthew xviii. 1—6. *The disciples, it seems, came unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself, as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth Me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a milstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

And now what is Mr. *A.*'s reasoning from this story? It is, if I mistake not, this: "The children of pious parents belong to Christ, that is, are in the Covenant, and so disciples truly dear to Him: wherefore if we do not receive them in his name, as belonging to Him, and as his disciples, and if we in any wise offend them, we are accursed*." What then will become of those who dispute Mr. *A.*'s proposition, that the children of pious parents indiscriminately are included with them in the Christian Covenant?

But this reasoning will be found, upon a moment's reflection, to be totally foreign to the

* P. 71, 72.

purpose of the story. The plain meaning of it, if indeed it can be made plainer than the Evangelist has made it, is this: The disciples, out of a vain curiosity and a carnal aspiring temper, wish to know of our Lord, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord calls a little child to Him, and placing him in the midst of the circle where they were standing, bids them look upon it, and observe the meekness, humility, and teachableness there was in its countenance; assuring them, that except they were converted and became as little children, they should not enter into heaven at all; but whoever of them humbled himself as this little child, he should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And He then goes on to instruct them how to behave towards such persons as resemble children in those tempers He had been recommending, which persons He describes as little ones which believe in Him; that they should receive them in his name, as belonging to Him, and as his disciples, and that they should take care, at the peril of his displeasure, that they did not offend them, weak as they might be in the faith.

From this view of the story it is plain, whatever tenderness our Saviour most certainly had for little children, He did not mean to say, that the offspring of pious parents are in the Cove-

Covenant, or indeed to decide at all upon the question respecting the state of any children; but only to persuade the disciples to imitate the simplicity usually observable in young children, and perhaps peculiarly remarkable in the countenance of this child. Mr. *A.*'s mistake lies in understanding the phrase of *receiving one such little child in Christ's name*, of receiving children in the literal sense of the term. But even admitting that this was our Saviour's meaning, our Author is to remember, that the little ones we are commanded to receive, and not offend, are expressly described as *believing in Christ*: which cuts off all pretence in favour of his general argument. This leads us,

2.) To the other story respecting children in Matt. xix. 13—15. which is more to the purpose of the present question than the former, as it seems to have been our Lord's grand object, in this whole business, to give all around Him an idea of the tender affection He bore to infants. I shall relate the story from the Evangelist just referred to, with the additional circumstances mentioned by Mark and Luke, some of which Mr. *A.* has omitted. *Then were there brought unto Him little children (young children, infants) that He should put his hands on them, and pray: (that He should touch them): and the disciples rebuked (those that brought) them. But Jesus.*

(called them unto Him, and was much displeased, and) *said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven (of God). And He (took them up in his arms) laid his hands on them (and blessed them). (And He said, Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.)*

Mr. A., at the close of his remarks on this story, says, that “all he wishes to prove from it is, that Christ meant to warn his disciples of the guilt of despising little children, and to enjoin it upon them that they be presented to Him as the proper subjects of his kingdom*.”

As to the guilt of despising little children, if our Author means to fix an imputation of this sort on our Lord's immediate disciples, I must put in my exception, having a far better opinion of those men of God, than to suppose them capable of an evil which very few of the most profligate among mankind are chargeable with. It is true our Saviour was displeased at their conduct; but his displeasure was occasioned by their imprudence and inconsideration, not by any inhumanity or cruelty in their tempers: and it was expressed with the greater warmth, in order the more deeply to impress the minds of spectators with the exceeding great tenderness

* P. 78.

He felt for little children. And I imagine it was chiefly with a view to mark this distinguishing feature of benevolence in our Lord's character, and to instruct us in the duty we owe to our children, that the Evangelists have so particularly related this pleasing story. But I am very much mistaken if Mr. *A.* has not the Baptists chiefly in his eye, whilst he is magnifying our Saviour's indignation against the Apostles. They are the people he means to charge with *the guilt of despising little children*: and with so hearty a good will does he set about chastising them for their inhumanity, that he has neither time nor patience to put in a healing word on behalf of the disciples. But, whatever ill opinion Mr. *A.* may have of the Baptists, if they are accustomed to bring their children to Christ for his blessing in the way they think He has authorized, they can scarce be supposed to have forfeited all claim to parental tenderness. If, however, he will insist, that to refuse baptizing little children is to despise them, I fancy we shall quickly see that some of this guilt lies at his door.

But the main thing our Author wishes to prove from this story is, "that our Lord meant to enjoin it upon his disciples to present little children to Him as the proper subjects of his kingdom." By little children here, he means the little children of pious parents—by their being

the proper subjects of Christ's kingdom, their being included with their parents in the Christian Covenant—and by presenting them to Christ, baptizing them. Now I would ask,

1. What there is in this story that limits our Saviour's regards to the children of pious or professing Christians? That I do not misrepresent Mr. *A.* when I say, he would have those only presented to Christ as the proper subjects of his kingdom, a moment's reflection will sufficiently shew. It is well known that the generality of his brethren do not admit any to Baptism but the children of Believers. And that he is of this opinion is plain from his supposing that our Lord did not baptize these infants, because "possibly their parents had not yet entered themselves among his followers*;" and from his confining his admonition respecting the baptizing their children, at the close of his remarks on this story, to "such Christian parents as are in covenant with God themselves†." Now by presenting children to Christ he means baptizing them; for this surely must be his sense of the similar phrase of "suffering them to come to Him," where he tells us, that "Christ has laid it down as a standing rule in his church, that little children should be suffered to come to Him ‡." It follows then, that Mr. *A.* would have the children of professing Christians, and

* P. 77.

† P. 78.

‡ P. 76, 77.

of none others, presented to Christ as the subjects of his kingdom.

But what ground, I ask again, is there in this story for so unreasonable a partiality in favour of this class of children? The piety of those who brought their children to Christ I am by no means inclined to dispute: but does our Lord say, "Of the children of *such* parents, *such* pious persons as these, is the kingdom of heaven?" No. But, Of *such little children*, little children in general. And pray, why, if by the kingdom of heaven is meant the world of glory, are not the dying infants of unbelievers, or men of doubtful religion, as proper subjects of it as the seed of the pious? Or, if by the kingdom of heaven is meant the church of Christ here on earth, pray why are not the former kind of children as fit members of it as the latter? And how can Mr. A. consistently with reason, with charity, and with the spirit of this story, discourage all, except *such Christian parents as are in covenant with God themselves*, from presenting their children to Christ as the proper subjects of his kingdom? Suppose some affectionate parents, who come not within his description, were to bring their children to Mr. A. for Baptism, and he were to refuse them, telling them that he could not in conscience comply with their request, *they not having entered themselves among the fol-*
lowers

lowers of Christ: would not the disappointed afflicted parents be apt to reply? “Take heed, “Sir, how you despise little children. Your “Master hath said, Suffer them to come unto “Me, and forbid them not: and you yourself “have told us, that He was moved with grief “and indignation at the unbecoming spirit of “his disciples, when they would have kept them “at a distance.” What would Mr. *A.* say in return? I know not how he could appease them, but by telling them that there are other ways of presenting their children to Christ, besides this of baptizing them. Though by this sort of reply he would perhaps run the risk of making them Antipœdobaptists. But, to insist no longer on this partiality of our Author in favour of a particular class of children, let us proceed to the main inquiry, and that is,

2. How it appears from this story, that the children of pious parents are “the proper subjects of Christ’s kingdom?” That they are so he concludes from our Saviour’s words, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven.* Now if you ask him what he understands by the kingdom of heaven or of God, his reply is, that “it matters little, “in the present inquiry, whether the church “of Christ in this or a future state was principally intended here; a state of grace and “glory being so connected, that a title to “the latter presupposeth an interest in the former.”

“mer *.” Mr. *A.* then concludes from our Lord’s words, that they are the proper subjects of Christ’s kingdom in this and in a future state, the kingdom of grace and glory.

We will begin with the latter, *the kingdom of glory*. In what sense does Mr. *A.* consider them as the proper subjects of that kingdom? His own words best explain his meaning: it is this, that *they have a title to it*; “a title,” says he, “to the latter, that is, a state of glory, presupposeth an interest in the former, that is, a state of grace.” But will Mr. *A.* affirm it to be our Saviour’s meaning, that *all* the children of pious parents have a title to heaven? No surely. If he says those of them who die in their infancy have a title to it, I readily agree with him, provided he adds to the number *all little children* who die in their infancy. And this I take to be our Lord’s meaning, *Of such, of little children passing out of life in their infancy, is the kingdom of heaven*. And considering what prodigious numbers, out of all kindreds, nations, and tongues, are removed hence at that early period, heaven may very properly be said, a great part of it, to consist of them. But though the title of such children to the kingdom of heaven does imply in it that “they are capable, as Mr. *A.* expresses it, of being born of water and the Spirit,” that is, as I have shewn, of spiritual water; nay

more, that they actually are fitted for heaven by the Holy Spirit, ere they are admitted to it: yet the children of pious parents can have no right in virtue thereof to the positive institutions of Christ *, because there is no way by which it can be credibly known which of them do possess such title to the kingdom of heaven, till they die. If this therefore be the plea on which the children of pious parents are admitted to Baptism, you see it rests upon a presumption of their dying, and is common to all little children as well as those of pious parents.

But, to proceed, Are the children of pious parents the proper subjects of Christ's kingdom *here on earth*? This Mr. A. asserts. But upon what ground? Is it the sense of our Saviour's words? He does not chuse to say, or at least to say it roundly. "It matters little," says he, "in the present inquiry, whether the church of Christ in this or a future state was principally intended here." But I am much mistaken, if Christ has not Himself decided the question, and told us that He does not mean his church on earth: and the fixing the sense of the phrase will be found presently to be of very great importance. Now that He means the world of glory, and not his kingdom on earth, appears plain to me from the words immediately following, as reported by Luke, *Whosoever shall not*

*receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein**, that is, Whosoever shall not receive the gospel with the simplicity and teachableness of a little child, he shall in no wise enter into the world of glory—not surely he shall in no wise enter into the visible church, for into that some of the vilest hypocrites have entered. By the phrase then, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven*, our Lord does not mean that the children of pious parents are the proper subjects of his kingdom, or church on earth.

Upon what ground then does Mr. *A.*'s assertion stand? Why purely upon a consequence, which consequence too, if admitted, will avail him nothing: “a title,” says he, “to a state of glory presupposes an interest in a state of grace,” or, as it is expressed just before, “in the church of Christ in this state.” I will not here enter into the question, whether a right to the kingdom of heaven does in every instance give persons a right to fellowship with the visible church here on earth; because the disproving it is not necessary to the invalidating Mr. *A.*'s plea, and would lead me too far from my subject. We will therefore admit his consequence. And what has he gained? Why, as I said, nothing. For how can the right of *some* of the children of pious parents to the kingdom of heaven (for the right, as we have seen, is in some of them only) give a right

* Luke xviii. 17.

to them *all* to become members of Christ's visible church on earth? Or indeed how can it give a right to *any* of them, since there is no way of knowing or framing any probable conjecture *which* of them is possessed of this right to the kingdom of heaven?

But, supposing the children of pious parents were, every one of them, proper subjects of Christ's kingdom here on earth, and so intitled to Baptism, would they not, upon the very same principle, be intitled to the other Sacrament, the Lord's Supper? Mr. *A.* himself tells us, "that they are admitted by Christ to the honours and privileges of his kingdom *;" and this, no doubt of it, is one. Why then does he deny them a place at the table of the Lord? If he says they are not proper subjects of the institution, as they cannot discern the Lord's body; so we say, they are not proper subjects of Baptism, as they cannot therein profess faith and repentance. And how strange is it, since the absurdity of the former practice is so generally acknowledged, that that of the latter is not acknowledged too! And I will add, how still more strange is it, that persons of understanding should consider the testimony of the Fathers in favour of Infant-Baptism as any mighty advantage to the argument, when they know those very Fathers held this practice of giving the

Eucharist to children, which Pœdobaptists now so generally reject!—But so it is. Men, yea good men; the Fathers, yea the wiser Sons of the Fathers; are liable to err!

*Maxima pars vatum (pater, & juvenes patre digni)
Decipimur specie recti:—*

Thus have we seen how unhappily Mr. *A.* has failed in his attempt to prove from this story, “that the children of pious parents are the proper subjects of Christ’s kingdom,” or, as he has expressed it in his general leading proposition, “that they are included with them in the Christian Covenant.” Let us now inquire,

3. Whether there is any positive direction, or even distant intimation, given us in this story, that it is our Lord’s will that children should be presented to Him by Baptism? “Christ has laid it down,” says our Author, “as a standing rule in his church, that they should be suffered to come unto Him*,” that is, that they should be baptized, as his readers will no doubt of it understand him. But how does it appear that our Saviour had Baptism in his eye at all? No more can be concluded respecting our duty, from his saying, *Suffer little children to come to Me*, than that we ought upon all occasions humbly to commend them to Him by faith and prayer for his blessing. Not a word is said about Bap-

* P. 76, 77.

tism, unless the above phrase is so to be interpreted: and who shall object to such liberties?

Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus.

Interpres——

He took these infants in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them; but did not baptize them. And indeed, if we had not been elsewhere told, that *Jesus baptized not* *, it might, I think, be naturally enough apprehended from this story, that it was neither his nor his disciples practice to baptize little children: for if it had, it is scarce likely a company of fond parents, crouding around Him with their children, would have received the check they did from the Apostles.

But enough has been said; I persuade myself, to convince you, Sir, that our Author has got no support from this story to the proposition we are considering about the Covenant, or to the general argument respecting Baptism. All my fear is, lest this very particular investigation of his reasoning should have taken off your attention from the narrative itself, and left you in any doubt about the ends the sacred historian proposed in relating it. I must therefore intreat your patience while I give you a short view of this whole affair, and the instruction it was

* John iv. 2.

intended to afford us. So will you lose sight for a while of a subject that has already tired you, I mean Infant-Baptism, it having no connection at all with the passage before us.

“ Laying hands upon persons, particularly children, and blessing them, was a very ancient practice, and has been more or less used in all ages. The people, in the neighbourhood where Christ now was, hearing of the mighty works He had done, and conceiving a high veneration for his exalted character, bring their children to Him to receive his blessing. The disciples, thinking 'tis probable that the people's crowding about Him with their children might be troublesome to Him, bid them keep back, and not press upon Him. Our Lord, perceiving it, sharply rebukes them for their imprudence and inconsideration, saying, Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of God. As if He had said, Do not forbid these infants to be brought to Me for my blessing, for my Father hath great tendernefs for such little children: multitudes of them are removed at this early age, and He fails not of his mercy to receive them to Himself, and make them happy with Him in his kingdom above. And this opportunity I take to remind you, as I have done on another occasion, that whosoever shall not receive my doctrine with the simplicity, teachableness,

ness,

ness and humility of little children, shall in no wise enter into that happy world to which they are thus admitted." And now can any one be at a loss what instruction we are to gather from this very pleasing story? We learn from it, that Christ hath great tenderness and compassion for little children—that such of them as die in their infancy are most probably happy with Him in heaven—that it is the duty of parents to present them to God by prayer for his blessing—and that we ought all of us, if we would be the disciples of Christ, to divest ourselves of the violent passions and secular pursuits of riper years, and copy after the meekness and simplicity of children.

I am, Sir,

Yours.

L E T.

L E T T E R VI.

DEAR SIR,

THE proposition on which Mr. *A.* grounds the right of the children of pious parents to Baptism, you will recollect, is this; *That they are included with them in the Christian Covenant.* This proposition we have considered at large, and shewn that, in some views of it, it is absolutely erroneous; in others, manifestly improper; and that it can, in no admissible sense whatever, allow of an inference in favour of the right of children to the positive institutions of Christ. Our Author's mistaken reasonings from several passages of Scripture, in support of this general assertion, we have laid open; and proceed now to examine what he has advanced upon the words of Peter to the Jews.

Acts ii. 39. *The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* This text does not indeed immediately follow the passage last considered, but is introduced in Mr. *A.*'s second chapter, under the head of "Reasons for administering
"Baptism as a seal of the Christian Covenant."

I chuse,

I chuse, however, to take it up here, as he tells us, “ it expresses the Apostle Peter’s sense of the “ nature and extent of the Christian Covenant *,” that is, that the children of pious parents are included with them in it.

Now there are two inquiries which arise upon these words; the one, What is the import of the promise here spoken of? and the other, Who are the persons to whom this promise of right belongs? As to the former, I am willing to admit that the promise intends, as Mr. *A.* expresses it, “ the sacred engagement of the Covenant of grace; and that it includes in it pardon, grace, and glory †.” The question, therefore, which remains to be considered is, To whom the promise of these blessings belongs? To this question the Apostle replies, *It is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call:* that is, The promise is to you, whom the Lord our God hath called; to your children, whom the Lord our God shall call; and to all that are afar off, whom the Lord our God shall call. Mr. *A.*, however, will not admit that the restrictive clause at the close of the verse has any reference to children; but insists that the promise is made indefinitely to the immediate offspring of converted Jews and Gentiles, without any regard to the phrase of God’s calling them. And so

* P. 116, 117.

† P. 120.

the doctrine he grounds upon this passage is, that "God hath promised pardon, grace, and glory, and secured the continued succession of these blessings to the seed of his people to the end of time *."

But can any sober man believe that this was the Apostle's meaning? The promise must be taken either *absolutely* or *conditionally*. If *absolutely*, then our Author makes the Apostle assert what is contrary to fact: for, admitting that the children of pious parents who die in their infancy are saved, it is certain that multitudes of them who grow up are profligate, and continue so all their days. How then can it be said that God hath promised pardon, grace, and glory, and secured the continued succession of these blessings to the seed of his people to the end of time? But if Mr. *A.* considers the promise here *conditionally*, he in effect admits what he is labouring to disprove, that the restrictive clause does refer to children: for what difference is there between his saying, in his own words, pardon, grace, and glory, are promised to such as repent and return unto the Lord; and my saying, in the Apostle's words, The promise is to such children as the Lord our God shall call?

But let us consider a little more particularly what Mr. *A.* has to object to the interpretation

* P. 120.

I have given the text. He tells us, "if this was "all the Apostle meant," that is, that their descendants should inherit the promised blessing when called by divine grace, "it was very little "indeed*." Strange! Is it very little indeed which is promised the posterity of good men, when God assures them that if they repent and believe, as their parents have before them, they shall be pardoned and saved? Such language one should scarce expect from a Christian minister. But what would Mr. A. have the Apostle say more? Why, that God hath mercy on the children of his people "as their children," and that they are admitted, "in consequence of "their relation to them," into covenant with God. So then we are to consider God as having respect, in the dispensation of spiritual blessings, to consanguinity and the ties of flesh and blood; and to conceive of grace as descending in a lineal succession from father to son. But how inconsistent this doctrine is with reason, Scripture, and fact, I need not say. Nor can I think there was a whit more vanity in the pretence of the Pharisees, *We have Abraham to our father,*" than there would be in that of young persons who should take upon them to say in Mr. A.'s words, "If the Apostle did not mean "that the promise is to us, as the children of "pious parents, he meant very little indeed: he "has done no more than put us upon a footing

* P. 122.

“with the children of unconverted Heathens.” Nay, I am persuaded, such language from their lips would not fail to shock Mr. *A.* himself, however he may have unhappily taught them to speak it.

Our Author has yet another objection to the interpretation I have given of the passage, an objection indeed suggested only by implication; and that is, that the construction of the words will not bear it. “This is,” says he, speaking of his own exposition of the text, “the only sense “which the construction of the words will bear ||,” and of consequence mine is, in his opinion, forced and unnatural, if not ungrammatical. Now I appeal to Grammarians, and those who are acquainted with language and stile, whether such a construction is not very frequently admissible, and in many instances absolutely necessary?

But supposing, after all, the restrictive clause, *even as many as the Lord our God shall call*, is not referable to *children*, still Mr. *A.* has not proved his point. The word *τεκνοίς*, here rendered *children*, very properly signifies *posterity*. Now, this sense of the word admitted, how does the Apostle’s saying, The promise is to you Jews and your posterity, prove that their immediate infant-offspring were included with them in the

|| P. 121.

Christian Covenant? Nothing could be more natural than for the Apostle, when he was speaking of God's merciful regards for them, to assure them of his regards for their posterity also, of whose conversion St. Paul so largely treats in his epistle to the Romans. And this was the more natural, as in the next clause of the verse he informs them of the designs of Heaven respecting the Gentiles. How unreasonable then is it to build upon this passage the right of the immediate descendents of pious parents to the peculiar privileges of the Christian Covenant! Those two learned Pædobaptists, the Doctors Hammond and Whitby, sensible of the force of this objection, have ingenuously acknowledged the mistake of laying any stress upon the words in favour of Infant-Baptism*.

As to the long quotation our Author has given us from Mr. Bostwick, every thing material in it, respecting the point we are here discussing, has been already sufficiently replied to. I would however just observe, that his laying a stress upon the Apostle's saying in the present tense, the promise *is* to you and your children, as if that were a sufficient proof of the right of these children in their present infant state to the privileges of the Christian Covenant, is very weak indeed; since the Apostle speaks alike in the

* See Dr. Hammond's *Queries*, and Dr. Whitby in *loc.*

present tense respecting the Gentiles, who were confessedly at that time afar off, and could not have a right to these privileges till they were called. And then as to Mr. A.'s and his friends reasoning from this supposed truth of children's being in the Covenant to the obligations lying upon their parents to baptize them; as also from the connection of the verse we have been considering with the preceding, wherein the Apostle exhorts the Jews to repent and be baptized every one of them; I say, their reasonings from these topicks we shall examine in their proper place.

Let us now proceed to the passage our Author has cited from Rom. xi. 16. *If the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.* This text Mr. A. has introduced under the head of *The children of Believers represented as Holy* *: but, unhappily for our Author, it does not relate to the immediate offspring of Believers, and therefore is not an instance of their being even called *holy*. The Apostle had been treating of the rejection of the Jews through their own unbelief: he takes occasion therefore from this dispensation, tremendous as it was, to provoke at least some of his countrymen to emulation, that they might be saved; and to caution the converted Gentiles, to whom he was sent as an Apostle, against vain-glory. To these purposes he observes, that however the casting

* P. 78.

away of the Jews had become the occasion of reconciling the Gentiles, and therefore was to the former, the Jews, a very humbling and awakening providence; yet the latter, the Gentiles, should not vain-gloriously triumph over them, since it was the merciful design of God in time to come to call them by his grace, and the receiving them would be life from the dead. In this connection comes in the passage we are considering: *For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.* If the first-fruit (alluding to the offering of first-fruits) be holy, separated to the use and service of God, the lump from whence it was taken is not to be deemed vile and contemptible: and if the root be holy, so are the branches too, though some of them may be dead and broken off; nay, even those branches that are broken off ought not to be despised, since some of them may be grafted into their own olive-tree, and partake of the root and fatness of it. The sense of all which is manifestly this, that however God had cast off the Jews in general for their impiety and unbelief, yet as He had had a people among them, and was resolved in future time to extend his mercy to very many more, the believing Gentiles should not treat them with contempt as utterly accursed; nor should those among them, who were disposed to repent and turn unto God, consider their case as desperate.

And

And now what is there, you will say, in all this to the matter in debate? Mr. *A.* thinks there is a great deal in it; and that he can prove from this passage, at least by analogy, that the children of pious Christians are holy; and holy, as included with them in the Covenant of grace. "The Christian," says he, "is to his or her family as the root of these branches: and upon the principles here laid down, he or she being holy, so are they*." But, if our Author's argument succeeds, he must first make it appear, that by the *root* and the *branches* here are meant individual Jewish parents and their own proper immediate offspring. And when he has so done, he must prove that the children of these Jewish parents are here stiled holy, as included with them in the Covenant of grace. But by the *root* and *branches* here, as appears from the views we have taken of the Apostle's reasoning, are not intended individual Jewish parents and their immediate offspring. Wherefore it does not follow, by analogy from this passage, that the children of Christian parents are holy. Admitting, however, that the immediate children of pious Jewish parents were intended; yet such children were not holy as included with them in the Covenant of grace, but only as separated by Divine Providence, in consequence of their relation to them, to the enjoyment of many external religious privileges. On this account, and this only, they

* P. 80.

might be said, in comparison with the children of Heathens, to be holy. Wherefore it does not follow, by analogy, that the children of pious Christian parents are holy, as included with them in the Covenant of grace, but only, as separated by Divine Providence, in consequence of their relation to them, to the enjoyment of many external religious privileges. On this account, and this only, they too may be said, in comparison with the children of irreligious and profligate parents, to be holy. And here I would further observe, that whatever positive institutions the one or the other may be supposed to have a right to, that right must, in the nature of the thing, be founded not merely in their relation to Jewish or Christian parents, but in the express command of God. Wherefore to reason from Circumcision to Baptism, even upon the ground of analogy, is to reason falsely; unless it can be proved that there is an express authority for the latter as well as the former. But of this we shall have occasion to treat more particularly hereafter.

We now come to the passage, 1 Cor. vii. 14. *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.* This Mr. A. calls the “celebrated passage,” to express, I suppose, his firm persuasion,

sion,

is sanctified, &c. considered. 81

sion, that, however some may think the texts already produced do not satisfactorily prove his general proposition, “ that the children of pious “ parents are included with them in the Christian “ Covenant;” yet this proves it to a demonstration. So that we are to consider it as the sheet-anchor of the cause, the main ground on which the right of children to Baptism stands. Now I readily admit that the children of Believers, or of parents, one of whom only is a Believer, are here stiled *holy*. But then I insist, that such children are in no other sense holy, than is the unbelieving parent also. For the Apostle as expressly asserts that the unbelieving husband is sanctified or made holy (*ηγιασαυ*) by the wife, and the unbelieving wife sanctified or made holy by the husband, as that the children of such parents are holy (*αγια*). But Mr. *A.* has prudently taken no notice of the former part of the verse, lest the holding it up to view should disturb the sense he has thought fit to affix to the latter part of it:.

— *et quæ*

Desperat tractata nitefcere posse, relinquat.

He must, however, give me leave to consider the words in the connection they stand: and, thus considered, it will follow, that if the holiness of the children, whatever be the sense of the word here, is to be admitted as a proof that

they are included in the Christian Covenant, the holiness of the unbelieving parent is to be admitted as a proof that such parent is included in the Christian Covenant also. And, if upon this ground the former have a right to the positive institutions of Christ, upon the same ground the latter has also. But, though the unbelieving husband or wife is said to be holy, Mr. *A.* will not on that account allow that he or she is in the Covenant, and intitled to the peculiar privileges of it: why then does he insist that the children, because they are said to be holy, are in the Covenant, and have a title to the peculiar privileges of it? On this ground I might very safely and properly rest the merits of the question, respecting the inference to be drawn from this passage in favour of Pædobaptism.

But I do not mean to dismiss the subject without inquiring what the Apostle intends by *sanctification* and *holiness* in this place. It may be difficult to fix his precise meaning; but if we will make reason, Scripture, and fact our guide, it cannot be difficult to determine upon some of the senses given, that they are not his meaning. Personal internal holiness, for instance, cannot be here intended. In this Mr. *A.* agrees with me, though he has expressed himself upon it a little more cautiously than he need have done. "The Apostle does not so MUCH mean," says he,

he, “ that spiritual sanctity of heart and life
“ which is required as a meetness for heaven,
“ and to which the promises of salvation are
“ made in the gospel *.”

I am likewise of opinion with Mr. *A.* that legitimacy is not here intended. Indeed Dr. *Doddridge*, to whose character for learning, candour, and piety I pay great deference, has so expressed himself in his paraphrase on this passage, as very naturally to convey this idea, though in his note he opposes the sentiment. How to reconcile him with himself I am at a loss: nor shall I indeed attempt it †. Of his paraphrase, however,
I shall

* P. 81.

† Mr. *A.* finds very great fault with a certain anonymous writer for having, in a pamphlet intituled, *Eusebio to Philetus*, made a *partial and dishonourable* quotation from Dr. *Doddridge*'s paraphrase on this text, *meaning thereby to impose this sense of legitimacy upon his readers as that which the Doctor intended to give of the passage.* I do not wish to become an advocate for any man who shall wilfully misquote or misrepresent an author: but still I must think Mr. *A.* has a little too severely reprehended the writer he here animadverts upon. The Doctor's words do seem to me to convey the idea of legitimacy; though, as I have observed above, in his note he expresses himself otherwise. I should have been glad if the writer referred to had given his reader the whole of what the Doctor has said on the subject, and pointed out the inconsistency between the paraphrase and the note. Reprehensible however as his omission may be, it is not every one that is a fit reprover of others:

I shall take some notice. “*The unbelieving husband,*” says he, *is so sanctified to the wife, and*
 “*the*

for faults of this kind. Suppose a person, eagerly set upon establishing a disputable point, should cite a passage in support of it from a book, whose very title pronounces it spurious, taking no notice at the same time of his authority; would not that person, I ask, be very ill qualified to call another to account for defalcation in his quotations? Surely he would. Yet this, Mr. A. will forgive me if I say, he has done. Speaking, in the former part of his work, of our Saviour’s Baptism in Jordan, in order to supply the want of proof from Scripture that it was performed by sprinkling or pouring water, he tells his reader in a note, that “An ancient Eastern history of Christ, written in Persic, speaks of this his Baptism as follows; “*The Lord Jesus Christ entered into the sea, and John, with all humility, baptized Him with his hand, and washed Him, by casting water on his head.*” So singular a story, and, if true, so decisive in the controversy respecting the mode of Baptism, ought to have been well authenticated, or not to have been mentioned at all. As however Mr. A. has omitted giving us his authority, I will undertake this office for him: in order “to undeceive such” (to use Mr. A.’s own words) “as have been imposed upon by this dishonourable quotation.” His authority, I take it, is Geronimo Xavier, a Jesuit, who about the year 1595 was sent from Goa to Agra, at the request of Soltan Akbar the Great Mogol, to explain to him the Christian religion. This Xavier, having been at the pains to learn the Persian language, wrote two books in it. The first of them was this history of Jesus, collected for the most part out of the Romish Legends, which he intended to substitute among the Mohammedans, instead of
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“ the unbelieving wife is so sanctified to the husband,
“ that their matrimonial converse is as lawful as if
“ they were both of the same faith.” But if one party’s being a Believer makes cohabitation lawful, it should seem to follow as a natural consequence, that where neither is a Believer cohabitation is unlawful; which is a proposition no one will maintain. But let us examine the question respecting legitimacy a little more at-

the gospel. A copy of this book, with a Latin translation of it, was afterwards published, with a view to expose the iniquitous practices of these Jesuits; and the title-page of it informs the reader that this ancient history is *spurious (contaminata)*. Now if Mr. A. took his quotations from this copy, and was really acquainted with these facts, his disingenuity, in obtruding this story upon the publick, would deserve the severest censure; nor can any one be at a loss a moment to determine which is the greatest evil, whether to relate a story as true, and at the same time suppress that part of the title-page of the book whence it is taken, which says the whole book is spurious; or to quote an Author’s paraphrase upon a disputable passage of Scripture, and to say nothing at the same time of a note at the bottom of the page. But if our Author, ignorant of these facts, took the passage out of this copy of Xavier’s book without looking at the title; or took it from some other Author who had quoted it, without inquiring into that Author’s authority; whilst I feel myself happy in acquitting him of the charge of disingenuity, I must nevertheless blame his imprudence for reporting a story so much to his purpose, and not at the same time telling his reader he would not be answerable for the truth of it.

tentively.

tentively. The Apostle's object in this context was, no doubt, to dissuade those Christians who were married to unbelievers from any thoughts of a separation. And the consideration of their having been lawfully married was most certainly a good argument to enforce such advice; and the rather, as a divorce would be likely to bring dishonour on their offspring, in the opinion of those who might not know the true cause of it. But if he meant to urge this argument, it is scarce imaginable he would describe the lawfulness of the marriage-contract by the phrase of *the unbelieving husband's being sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband*; since the validity of the marriage did not, could not, in the nature of the thing, depend upon one party's being a Believer. Whether he or she were or were not a Believer, the marriage would have been good; nor would a separation, upon pretence of their not being of the same faith, have made the children illegitimate.

And as thus legitimacy seems not to be intended, so neither can it be apprehended, with any appearance of reason or consistency with Scripture, that the *holiness* resulting to either party from the faith of the other, and of consequence to the issue of both, can intend interest in the Covenant of grace. Whoever calmly considers the nature, spirit, and tenor of the
 Christian.

Christian Covenant, whether he understands it as absolute or conditional, will not methinks hesitate a moment to pronounce it both absurd and unscriptural to suppose, that the wife or the children can be so sanctified or made holy by the faith of the husband, as in consequence thereof to be included with him in that Covenant, and become intitled to the peculiar privileges of it.

We are obliged therefore to look out for another sense of the terms *sanctification* and *holiness*. And, if Mr. A. will but give up his general proposition, in those exceptionable senses of it to which I have all along objected, we shall perhaps be able to compromise the matter upon this text without much difficulty. I agree then that there is a sense in which every good man may be said to sanctify his wife and his children. He devotes them by faith and prayer to God, he separates them, as far as his influence reaches, to the fear and service of Heaven, and they derive from their connection with him such external advantages of a religious kind, as often prove the happy means of their conversion and salvation. This sense of the terms in debate well agrees with the use of them in many passages I might mention*. And if it be admitted here, we are to consider the

* Thus Job is said to have *sanctified* his children, ch. i. 5. And every creature of God is said to be good, being *sanctified* by the word of God and prayer. 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.

Apostle as reasoning thus—“ I give it as my opinion, that you who believe, do by no means separate from your husband or wife, who as yet, is not a Believer: for you have by prayer solemnly devoted him or her to God, and laid yourself under a voluntary obligation to attempt, at least, his conversion: and who knows but you may succeed? *What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?* v. 16. It should be remembered too that by thus devoting your husband or wife to God, you have in effect devoted your offspring to him also, and are therefore become equally obliged to concern yourself for their spiritual welfare. But by departing from your husband or wife, under a pretence that he or she is an Heathen, and ought to be treated in the same manner you formerly treated the Gentiles as common or unclean; by so doing you in effect cast off your children too as common and unclean, and deprive them of the benefit of a godly education, the evil of which conduct is very great. But by still continuing with your husband or wife, you act agreeable not only to the dictate of nature but of piety, thereby expressing your affectionate regard to parent and children, and your concern for their salvation, as having devoted them to God and his service.”

This paraphrase may perhaps not satisfy, nor do I lay any great stress upon it. The phrases here used, though doubtless well understood by the Corinthians, are as to us become obsolete, and very difficult to be explained, for want of knowing perhaps some customs and modes of speech frequent in those early times. But, difficult as it may be to fix the precise meaning of these phrases, we may surely with confidence pronounce upon any such interpretation of them as contradicts reason, Scripture, and fact, that it cannot be genuine. And of this kind, if there be any force in the reasoning of the preceding Letters, is that interpretation which makes these phrases say, that the children of a Christian parent are included with him in the Christian Covenant; and not only they but the unbelieving husband or wife too. And after all, if we could be persuaded to admit even this absurd sense of the passage, the consequence, I mean the right of such children to Baptism, would not so clearly follow as our opponents seem to apprehend. For it did not follow from the children of Jewish parents being in Covenant, or included in the national Covenant, with God, and so being in a sense holy, that they were to be circumcised; but because God had expressly required they should. In like manner, could it be proved that the children of Christian parents are included with them in the Christian Covenant, and on that

90 1 Cor. vii. 14. *The unbelieving, &c.*

that account holy; it would not follow that therefore they should be baptised: their right to Baptism must depend, and depend alone, upon the direct express command of the Institutor; for it is absurd to talk of analogy and consequence in the matter of positive institution, as I have already shewn.

I am, Sir,

Yours.

L E T.

L E T T E R VII.

DEAR SIR,

IT remains that we now consider Mr. *A.*'s last argument in support of his general proposition, that "God hath included the children of his people in the promises of the Christian Covenant." It is taken from "the sameness of the Abrahamick and Christian Covenants:" from whence, he thinks, it follows, that as the seed of Abraham were included with him, so the seed of Christians are included with them, in the Covenant of grace. In order, therefore, to prove that the Abrahamick and Christian Covenants are the same, having first given us what he styles "a comprehensive summary of the Covenant of God with Abraham," he proceeds to establish these three propositions,

FIRST, "That the promises to Abraham in the Old Testament, and those to Christians in the New, appear to engage for THE SAME spiritual, TEMPORAL and eternal blessings;"

SECONDLY, "That they are made alike to Believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, and to THEIR CHILDREN in both Testaments;" and

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, “ That not only Abraham, but
 “ ALL HIS CHOSEN SEED were admitted to the
 “ peculiar privileges of the Covenant in the same
 “ way in which Christians are taught to expect
 “ them;” that is, through the same Mediator *.
 The terms of these three propositions are very
 plain, except the phrase in the last of *his chosen*
seed, which is somewhat equivocal. Taking it
 however for granted, that by *the chosen seed* of
 Abraham Mr. A. here means, agreeable to the
 general tenor of his argument, his descendents
 according to the flesh; I must except to each of
 his propositions as not conformable to truth.
 Let us begin with the first.

FIRST, It is not true that the promises to Abraham in the Old Testament, and those to Christians in the New, engage for *the same* spiritual, temporal and eternal blessings.

This will very clearly appear, if our Author will allow me to give a little more comprehensive summary of the Covenant of God with Abraham than he has thought fit to give us. The seventh verse of the seventeenth chapter of Genesis he has faithfully transcribed, but has given us no hint at all about the eighth. V. 7. *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.* V. 8.

* P. 100, 101.

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. Is not this 8th verse, I ask, a part of the Covenant of God with Abraham, as well as the 7th? And if so, will Mr. A. say, God has promised the *same temporal* blessings to Christians he did to Abraham? Has he said he will give them the land of Canaan for a possession, and that he will be their God in that sense wherein he here evidently meant to say he would be the God of the natural descendents of Abraham, that is, their immediate civil Governour and King? No, he has not.

The truth is, the Covenant which God made with Abraham was twofold, and had respect to him both in a religious capacity, as the father of the faithful; and in a civil capacity, as the progenitor of a numerous people separated by Providence to the enjoyment of peculiar national blessings. Wherefore the blessings promised him in the first of these characters as a good man and a Believer, such as the pardon of sin, the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, every needful good thing of the present life, and everlasting happiness in the world to come, are the same as God hath promised to all real Christians. These blessings, I readily agree with our Author, are comprehended in the assurance that God would be his God, and in the like assurance to
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the pious under the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian Dispensations. Nor do I know who they are of whom Mr. *A.* complains as “repeatedly urging it as an objection against supposing the Abrahamick and Christian Covenant the same, that the former contains promises of temporal enjoyments only, and the latter only of spiritual*.” If there are such, I am sure they are very little acquainted with their Bibles.

But, to proceed, the blessings promised to Abraham in his other character, that is, as the head of a family and the father of a numerous people the Jews, were peculiar to him and them, and common to none besides. We, indeed, as Christians are greatly benefited by the temporal advantages the Israelitish nation enjoyed, as through that channel the inestimable blessing of the gospel was communicated to us: for by the separation of that people from the rest of the world, and the establishment of a peculiar civil and religious government among them, the great events of the coming of the Messiah, and the erection of his spiritual kingdom were secured, and so the promise made to Abraham, that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed, was happily accomplished. But the temporal blessings themselves, which by this Covenant with the Patriarch were assured to his own

* P. 89.

proper posterity, we as Christians have no concern with: they were limited to the Jews, and forfeited by their disobedience at the commencement of this New Dispensation.

Now this distinction between the blessings promised to Abraham in the two different relations wherein we have considered him, is natural and necessary, and clearly founded both in the terms of the Covenant itself as explained in the New Testament, and in the consequent facts. God promises Abraham, as a good man and a Believer, that he will be his God and the God of his spiritual seed, that is, as the Apostles explain it, that he will pardon, accept and save them. And then again, he promises Abraham and his seed according to the flesh, that he will give them the land of Canaan, and make them a numerous and prosperous people. But these two distinct stipulations of the Abrahamick Covenant Mr. *A.* industriously confounds, representing the right which Abraham and his posterity had to the land of Canaan, as flowing from their interest in the Covenant of grace, in the same manner as the right of Christians to every needful temporal good flows from their interest in the same Covenant. “The sacred word,” says he, “in both covenants,” that is, the Abrahamick and Christian, “engages for every real good with respect to the body, and his people’s subsistence in the present world. In this view,”

adds he, that is, in this view of the Abrahamick Covenant as being the same with the Christian, “ Canaan was promised by God to the seed of his servant Abraham, and every necessary support by the way. So says our Apostle Paul, Godliness has still promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come*.” But Mr. *A.* should have remembered, that the grant of Canaan to the seed of Abraham was, as we have seen, an affair totally independent of the interest which any of them might have in the Covenant of grace. Wherefore it clearly follows, that the *temporal blessings* here promised to Abraham are *not the same* which are promised to Christians, and that this part of the Covenant of God with that Patriarch is not the same with the Christian. But it is time we proceed to his*

SECOND Proposition, which is indeed the main thing to be considered, that “ The promises of spiritual, temporal and eternal blessings, are made alike to Believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, and to THEIR CHILDREN in both Testaments.” Now I readily agree with Mr. *A.* that these great blessings are promised alike to Believers, whether Jews or Gentiles; and therefore need not follow him through his proofs of these points. But how does it appear that they are promised to *the children* of believing Jews and Gentiles?

* P. 88.

Before we proceed to consider our Author's answer to this inquiry, you will give me leave to observe what I have had frequent occasion to take notice of before, I mean his predilection in favour of the children of Believers. The promises it seems are made to them in common with their parents, but not to other children: for from his manner of expressing himself one would suppose they are excluded. And yet, a little afterwards, he speaks of the application of this promise, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee*, to the *infant* posterity of Abraham in general, whether their immediate parents were or were not Believers; for he tells us "that
 "circumcision, which God instituted as a token
 "of it, was expressly required to be administered
 "to them, to all the posterity of Abraham, at
 "eight days old *." So inconsistent is Mr. A. with himself!

But to return, How does it appear that the peculiar blessings of the Covenant of grace are promised to *the children* of believing Jews and Gentiles? Why, by analogy, thus, "They were promised to the children of Abraham, he being a Believer; in like manner they are promised to the children of all pious Jews and Christians, they being Believers." "Forasmuch," says Mr. A. "as the blessing pronounced upon
 "Abraham extended to his seed, if Believers are

“ blessed as he was, it must be both in themselves and their offspring *.” The passage referred to is that before cited, *I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee* †. The import of this promise our Author has already settled: it includes in it, he says, the blessings of pardon, sanctification, and eternal life. The question then to be determined is, Whether by the seed of Abraham here is meant, his *natural* seed, that is, his children after the flesh; or his *spiritual* seed, that is, the children of Abraham’s faith, or those who should be Believers as he was? Mr. *A.* maintains the former, I the latter. Let us see which of these senses stands best supported by reason, Scripture, and fact.

I. If by the seed of Abraham here, are meant his children according to the flesh, then such children were intitled to the blessings of pardon, sanctification, and eternal life; and not only they, but their children also, and so on to the end of time. For as the blessing pronounced on Abraham is supposed to have devolved on HIS immediate children in virtue of his faith, so, by parity of reason, it must have devolved on THEIR children in virtue of their faith, and thus from one generation to another in perpetual succession. But, that this is not the fact is evident beyond a doubt. To this perhaps Mr. *A.* will reply, that though he considers the promise

* P. 92.

† Gen. xvii. 7.

to Abraham as absolute, yet he considers it to his children as only conditional, that is, that God would be a God to them, provided they believed as Abraham did. But will Mr. *A.* say, that God has not promised to be a God to them that believe, if they be not the children of Abraham, or the children of such Jews or Christians who believe? He will not. I ask then, What there is in this promise peculiar to the children of Believers? Surely then all who believe, whether descended from Jews or Christians, Believers or Unbelievers, may with propriety be stiled the seed of Abraham, that is,

2. His spiritual offspring, or the children of his faith. If Mr. *A.* will admit this sense, he will have the clear support of the New Testament, and find himself at once relieved of the embarrassments and indeed absurdities, which attend the limiting the phrase of *his seed* here to his offspring according to the flesh. Our Saviour and his Apostles very frequently explain the phrases, *the seed of Abraham*, and *the seed of Israel*, of persons resembling them in faith and piety, though not descended from them; nay, more than this, they assure the carnal unbelieving Jews that they were not the children of Abraham, or the seed of Israel. Thus St. Paul says, *They are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they*

*all children**: And our Lord in his discourse with the Jews, having admitted that they were the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, tells them, *If they were Abraham's children*, that is, his children in a spiritual sense, *they would do the works of Abraham* †. And the Apostle, speaking of this very matter of Abraham's believing God, and of his having been blessed by Him, says, *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham* †. Can any thing therefore be plainer than that by the seed of Abraham, when the peculiar blessings of the new Covenant are promised to such persons, his spiritual seed are intended? Nor is there any real force in the objection, that to interpret the same phrase of the seed of Abraham, of his spiritual seed in one verse and of his natural seed in the other, is to create a confusion of language not to be admitted in the sacred writings; since the different kinds of blessings granted in the one and the other, sufficiently ascertain the different characters of those to whom such distinct blessings are promised. And now little need be said respecting Mr. A's

THIRD Proposition, to prove the Abrahamick, and Christian Covenants the same: viz. "That the blessings are promised freely in both

* Rom. ix. 6, 7. † John viii. 39. † Gal. iii. 7.

"through

“through the same Mediator.” I readily grant that so far as these two Covenants are the same, the blessings promised in each are communicated in the same way. But till such time as our Author has proved, that the children of God’s people were included in the Abrahamick Covenant, considered in its reference to spiritual and eternal blessings, his inference will not follow that they cannot be excluded from the Christian.

Upon the whole, it clearly appears that, in the Covenant God made with Abraham, many blessings were promised to him and his natural seed the Israelites, which belong not to Christians; and many blessings were promised to him and his spiritual seed, that is, Believers, which belonged not to multitudes of his natural offspring the Israelites. From whence it follows, that *the Abrahamick and Christian Covenants are not, in some very material respects of them, the same.* And of consequence the argument Mr. A. deduces from their supposed sameness in support of his general proposition, “that God hath included the children of his people in the promises of the Christian Covenant,” manifestly fails: that is to say, it is most absurd to infer from the natural seed of Abraham being included with him in that Covenant, which promised them great temporal prosperity; that **the**

natural seed of Christians are included with their parents in that Covenant, which promises them as Believers pardon, sanctification and eternal life.

I am, Sir,

Yours.

L E T T E R VIII.

DEAR SIR,

YOU are sensible that positive institutions depend entirely upon the will of the Institutor, and that therefore in every doubtful question respecting them, we are to be determined by nothing short of his express declarations. This being the case, I might have been excused the trouble of considering Mr. *A.*'s analogical reasoning in favour of Infant-Baptism, which makes up the principal part of his book; and might have immediately proceeded to demand of him what direct positive authority he has for this practice in the New Testament. His reasoning I have, however, proposed to examine, that so our Author, driven from this subterfuge, may be obliged to meet me upon that ground upon which alone disputes of this kind can be satisfactorily issued. The sum of his reasoning, if I do not mistake him, is this: "God has made a Covenant with all pious Christians—their seed are included with them in this Covenant—being included in it they have a right to the seals of it—Baptism is the seal of the Covenant—there

fore the seed of pious Christians ought to be baptized." Now if either of these propositions fails, the consequence must fail also: one link of the chain broken, the whole falls. But I am much mistaken, if each of these propositions, except the first, is not defective. The first, "That God has made a Covenant with all pious Christians," I admit. To the second, "That their seed are included with them in this Covenant," I object. Here I have laid down all the possible senses in which persons may be said to be in a Covenant, or included with others in it, and applied them to the question before us. In some of these senses I have shewn, it is absolutely impossible that children should be in the Covenant. In others, though it is possible they may be in it, yet there is no medium by which to form a credible judgment whether they really are in it. And as to the remaining senses in which persons may be said to be in a Covenant, they are indirect and improper senses of the phrase: admitting, however, that in these senses the children of pious Christians are in the Christian Covenant, it is clear to a demonstration that their being thus in it can give them no right, unless there be an express authority for it, to the institutions of it. Mr. A.'s arguments I have particularly considered, and you are to judge, Sir, whether they have not in every instance failed.

And

And now the two following propositions, "That, being included in the Covenant, they have a right to the seals of it;" and, "That Baptism is a seal of the Covenant;" will be very quickly dispatched. In the mean time give me leave again to remind you, that whatever be the fate of these two propositions, if my reasoning upon that already discussed be just, Mr. A.'s consequence, that the children of pious parents ought to be baptized, must fail.

The notion, "that interest in a Covenant gives persons a right to the seals of it," has perhaps been too hastily taken for granted in this controversy. It will be worth our while therefore to inquire a little into the merits of this question.

The practice of affixing seals to Covenants is of very early date. The use and intent of it is, to bind the parties contracting to the fulfilment of the conditions agreed on between them; and to preserve, to that end, an authentick proof of the transaction. In antient times, and when writing was not so generally used as it is now, Covenants were only sealed and not subscribed. And the persons who sealed were of three denominations, the contracting parties, the witnesses of the transaction, and the magistrate or presiding officer in the court where a copy of the instrument was lodged.

Now if this be the practice alluded to, there is an impropriety in the phrase itself, of persons *having a right to the seal of the Covenant*: for if sealing be, as you have seen, a matter rather of duty than of right, to use this kind of language is much the same as to say, that persons have a right to do their duty. But what I have principally to observe is, that it follows from this account of the usage of sealing, that interest in a Covenant does not in all instances give persons a right to the seal of it, or, in other words, make it their duty to affix their seal to it. A man may be included in a Covenant or benefited by it, who is no way a party to it, and whose signature therefore is not at all requisite. Children, for instance, frequently derive advantages from Covenants which, with all the authentick forms of them, existed long before they were born.

But it will be said, “As the infant posterity of Abraham were ordered to be circumcised, and as circumcision is expressly stiled *a seal of the righteousness of faith*, so we have here an instance of persons who, though only included in a Covenant and not parties to it, yet were admitted to the seal of it.” But the mistake of this reasoning will appear upon considering the passage referred to, the only one, as I recollect, in which circumcision is spoken of as a seal. The words
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are in Rom. iv. 11. *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.* Abraham believed in the promise of God respecting the Messiah, and by voluntarily submitting to circumcision in obedience to the divine command, he gave clear evidence of his faith; and so circumcision became, in regard of him, a seal or authentick proof of his justification: it was a seal affixed by Abraham himself to the Covenant, and an attestation, on the part of God, to his interest in the blessings of it. And in the same light it might be considered in regard of others, who submitted to it in riper years, and upon the conviction of their judgment. It was an expression of their free assent and consent to the Covenant, and so a seal affixed by them to it*. And it was on the part of God (to speak with reverence) a seal affixed by him to the Covenant, that is, a gracious assurance, with respect to those who thus in faith submitted to it, that he would pardon, accept and save them..

* Spencer in his treatise de legibus Hebræorum, speaking of circumcision under the notion of a seal, as distinguished from a sign, or token, thus expresses himself, "Omnes enim Circumcisioni SPONTE subjecti ad legem observandam se obstrinxerunt, et renuntiatis idolis, Dei solius cultui se solidè manciparunt." Spencer. de Leg. Heb. Lib. 1. cap. 4. de Circumcis. p. 24. Edit. secund.

But in neither of these views could circumcision properly be considered, in regard of infants, as a seal of the righteousness of faith. It was not a seal affixed by them to the Covenant, for they were wholly incapable of declaring their assent and consent. Nor could it be truly affirmed, that God, by requiring circumcision to be administered to the infant seed of Abraham, did assure them of interest in the spiritual blessings of the New Testament. But though I object to the idea of circumcision's being a seal of the Covenant, at least in regard of infants, and understand the passage just referred to as only saying, that it became to Abraham, and by consequence to all others who believed, a seal or attestation to their justification; yet I readily admit, that it was a sign or token of the Covenant between God and Abraham in all who were circumcised, and shall have an opportunity by and by to shew with what propriety it is so represented, and what were the true reasons and ends for which it was administered to infants.

Having thus shewn that interest in a Covenant does not in all instances give persons a right to the seals of it, and that circumcision, though it became a seal of the righteousness of faith to Abraham, could not be a seal to his infant posterity, at least in the same sense it was to him; it remains that we now take some notice of the
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fourth proposition, in this chain of reasoning on which the right of infants to Baptism depends, and that is, "That Baptism is a seal of the Covenant."

I do not recollect any passage of Scripture wherein it is thus represented: I have no objection, however, to the idea of its being a seal of his justification who submits to it, as Abraham did to circumcision, in faith. There appears to me a propriety in saying, that the sign or token of Baptism is to such a person a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being unbaptized. And there can be no doubt that we are to consider it as a solemn test, whereby we voluntarily bind ourselves to new obedience; for such is the reasoning of the Apostle in the sixth of the Romans, and in those other passages wherein he reminds Christians of their having put on Christ by Baptism, and their being risen with him. But it is easy to see that Baptism cannot be a seal of the righteousness of faith, that is, of their justification, to infants, they not having faith: nor can it be in regard of them a test of new obedience, they not voluntarily submitting to it.

But it will be said, that as infants, notwithstanding their being incapable of affixing any seal to the Covenant, or of entering into any personal

personal engagements for themselves, were admitted to circumcision; in like manner may the infant children of Believers, though they lie under the same incapacity with respect to the Christian Covenant, be admitted to Baptism. This argument, which, you see, proceeds entirely on the ground of analogy, we shall consider more particularly in the next Letter, and shew that the two cases widely differ, and that there were obvious reasons for administering circumcision to the male offspring of Abraham, which reasons do not hold good with respect to the baptizing the children of Believers. In the mean time I would again observe, what has been often mentioned and ought never to be lost sight of in this debate, that though the analogy were ever so just, yet it would not authorize the practice of baptizing infants, unless there were an express command for it: for surely nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that a wise Legislator would suffer a positive duty to stand solely upon the ground of a mere consequence.

I am, Sir,

Yours,

L. E. T.

[III]

LETTER IX.

DEAR SIR,

IT is time we now proceed to consider particularly the argument by analogy from Circumcision to Baptism. The reasoning, if I mistake not, is this:—Circumcision and Baptism are signs or tokens of the same Covenant, and instituted to the same end—Circumcision, after a course of time, was by divine command laid aside, and Baptism substituted in the room of it—Wherefore, as Circumcision was administered to the infant-seed of Abraham who was a Believer, Baptism ought also to be administered to the infant-seed of Christians.

Now in order to point out the great mistake of this reasoning, plausible as it may seem at first view, I shall lay down and establish the following positions:

FIRST, That Circumcision and Baptism differ very widely in their nature and intention; from whence will appear the great propriety of infants being admitted to the former institution, and of their being held back from the latter.

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, That there is no scriptural authority for affirming that Baptism is substituted in the room of Circumcision, but good presumptive evidence to the contrary. And,

THIRDLY, That the reasoning by analogy from the one institution to the other, if admitted, would prove too much, and so destroy itself.

FIRST, Circumcision and Baptism differ very widely in their nature and intendment. In order to prove this, I beg leave to consider them separately, and then to compare them with each other.

I. As to Circumcision, it was *a token of the Covenant between God and Abraham* *.—A positive arbitrary sign instituted by God to bring to remembrance that transaction, in the same manner as the bow in the heavens was appointed by God, as a token of the transaction between Him and Noah †. But what was the purport of that transaction between God and Abraham? I readily agree that the grand object of it was the coming of the Messiah, and our redemption by Him; on which account the gospel is said to have been preached unto Abraham. But this surely was not the only object of it. Many events were to intervene (and in subservience too to this great design) wherein the religious and

* Gen. xvii. 11.

† Gen. ix. 12—17.

civil interests of the posterity of Abraham were intimately concerned. In his family was to be preserved the profession of the true religion, in opposition to the idolatrous worship which generally prevailed. His descendents, in reward of his piety, were to become as numerous as the stars of heaven, and to enjoy great temporal wealth and prosperity. Those of them who should spring from Isaac and Jacob were to be formed into a distinct body, after some hundreds of years were to be put into possession of the land of Canaan, and to have a peculiar kind of civil and ecclesiastical polity established among them; by which means a general expectation of the coming of the Messiah was to be kept alive in the world, his genealogy was to be ascertained, and the way opened for erecting a new kind of kingdom totally different from the former, a kingdom built upon foundations and supported by means purely rational and spiritual. All these matters were included, either directly or indirectly, in this Covenant of God with Abraham.

Now it was fit that some rite should be instituted, as a sign or memorial of this extraordinary transaction: and as this transaction had for its object the civil and political interests of all the descendents of Abraham, as well as the spiritual welfare of those among them who should be truly pious, it was fit that his male offspring should be

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the subjects of such rite. And what rite could be better adapted to this end than Circumcision? It had a natural and direct influence on all the particulars just mentioned. It was, very possibly, one means of their prodigious and speedy increase: or at least it was a pledge of the fulfilment of the divine promise which assured them of such increase. It was an obstruction to their contracting marriage with neighbouring nations, and an hindrance to their joining in the lascivious festivities of the idolatrous Heathens. And by these effects of it, as well as by the veneration it cherished in their breasts for the memory of their renowned Ancestor, it had a mighty influence to unite them among themselves, and to prevent their mingling with any other people: a matter this of the greatest importance to the accomplishment of the designs of Providence respecting the Messiah *. And as it perpetually

* St. Jerome, in Epist. ad Galat. c. 3. says, "Quia ex femine Abrahamæ erat Christus oriundus, & ab Abrahamo usque ad Christum multa erant secula transitura; providens Deus, ne soboles dilecti Abrahami cæteris nationibus misceretur, & paulatim familia ejus fieret incerta, gregem Israeliticum quodam circumcisionis cauterio annotavit." And St. Chrysostome, speaking of Circumcision, says, "Ὁμοίωσεν ἡμεῖς τὴν δεσποτικὴν, ὡς εἶδωσ τῶν μελλόντων ἰσχυροῦσ ἀδελφῶσ τῆσ γνῶμησ, καθάπερ χαλκὸν σίδηρον ἐπιτίθεισ, &c. Vide sapientiam Domini, quomodo cum sciret imperfectas & pravas eorum (Judæorum) mentes futuras, signum Circumcisionis quasi frænum quoddam imposuit ad indomitos eorum impetus cohibendos, ut ne gentibus

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tually reminded them of the exemplary piety of Abraham, which drew down upon them the blessings of increase, protection, and happiness, and of the sure promise of God whereby they were encouraged to expect the continuance of all this temporal good; so it clearly taught them their obligations to preserve inviolable their national profession of the true religion in opposition to idolatry, and to demean themselves as good citizens under the extraordinary kind of government they lived, and by which they were distinguished from all the other nations of the world.

And then as to those among them who truly feared God, it held up to their view, in a lively manner, the promise of the Messiah, and of all those spiritual blessings which his peculiar people, whether Jews or Gentiles, were to enjoy: and so it nourished their faith and hope in a course of sincere and acceptable obedience. In short, it was capable of being improved, and was improved by their prophets, to the important purpose of teaching and enforcing the great utility and absolute necessity of internal purity, or, as they were used to express it, of men's hearts be-

“commiserentur.” Homil. in Gen. xxxix. p. 567. It is remarkable that Tacitus the Roman Historian, speaking of the Jews, gives this reason for the practice of Circumcision, “Circumcidere genitalia instituire, ut diversitate noscantur.” Lib. 5. Hist. sub init.

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ing circumcised to love, fear, and serve the true God.

Such was the nature and intendment of the rite of Circumcision: of which matter I have given the larger detail, in order the more clearly to point out, not only the admirable fitness of the institution itself to the ends proposed, but; the true grounds and reasons of its being administered to all the male infant-posterity of Abraham. And I am well persuaded, whoever considers that the Covenant, of which it was a sign, had particular respect to a numerous body of people who were to subsist, for a long course of years, in one common society, separate from all the rest of mankind, under a national establishment partly civil and partly ecclesiastical; will at once be struck with the goodness as well as wisdom of God in thus fixing upon the subjects of his peculiar kingdom, and at so early an age, this sign or token of his authority over them, and special regard for them. And now let us take a view,

2. Of Baptism, and consider what is the nature and intendment of this New-Testament institution. It is a sign or memorial of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and of our fellowship with Him therein. This is clear from those passages which speak of our being
baptized

baptized into his death; and our being buried with Him in Baptism, and also raised with Him*. And the end of the institution is evidently this, that persons may by submitting to it publickly and solemnly profess their faith in Christ, and their having resolved, upon the conviction of their judgment and conscience, and with the consent of their will, to become his followers and to conform to his precepts. This appears from an acknowledgment of their faith in Christ the Son of God being demanded of persons at their Baptism, as in the instance of the Eunuch; *If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayst be baptized* †—from Baptism's being spoken of as *the answer of a good conscience towards God* ‡—from the baptized being said *to have put on Christ* §—and from the Apostle's urging Christians to obedience from a recollection of the solemn engagements they entered into at their Baptism: *Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection* §. Such was the nature and intent of Baptism.

* Rom. vi. 3. Col. ii. 12. † Acts viii. 37.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 21. § Gal. iii. 27. § Rom. vi.

4. 5. Now

Now upon a review of the two institutions, placed in a comparative light, it will be found that there is little or no analogy between them, at least no such analogy as will warrant the usual conclusion in favour of Infant-Baptism. I admit, indeed, that they have both a reference to Christ, but after a very different manner: the one remotely, as a sign or token of that Covenant wherein the coming of the Messiah was promised; the other directly, as a memorial and a plain figurative representation of the important facts of his burial and resurrection, upon which the whole superstructure of Christianity stands. But what is most to our purpose to be observed here is, that those matters in the Covenant between God and Abraham, which seem to have been the chief, if not the only, ground or reason of Circumcision, and which that rite was peculiarly adapted to express, are matters to which Baptism hath no reference at all; such as the assurances given Abraham that his seed should be very numerous, that many nations should spring from him, that they should be mighty, wealthy and prosperous, that a great body of his descendants should inherit the land of Canaan, and that *of them* the Messiah should come. It was to confirm the promise respecting these events that Circumcision was instituted*: but these

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* This will appear, if we attentively consider the particulars on which God is pleased to insist in his discourse with

are matters which Baptism is not at all conversant about.

And then as to the intent of the two institutions, the difference is too remarkable to escape observation. Circumcision was adapted to purposes civil and political, as well as moral and religious: Baptism to purposes of the latter kind only. By Circumcision the numerous descendants of one common Ancestor were to be separated from the rest of mankind to the enjoyment of great temporal prosperity; and a considerable part of them to be formed into one body, and to be continued, for a long course of years, in that connection, in order to bring about the designs of Providence respecting events the most interesting to the world in general. By Baptism, on the other hand, truly pious persons, without respect to country, birth, or any natural or civil connections whatever, were to be separated from the unbelieving and irreligious world, under one Head the Lord Jesus Christ; not to the enjoyment of temporal immunities, but privileges purely spiritual and divine. In short, Circumcision and Baptism were the means or instruments of two kingdoms totally different, in regard of their frame and constitution, of the subjects of which they were to be composed, and the ends of their

with Abraham, on occasion of his instituting this rite.

Gen. xvii. 1—14.

establish-

establishment; the one worldly and temporary, the other spiritual, and to continue to the end of time.

And it is very remarkable that the sanctions, annexed to the two institutions, were clearly characteristick of the difference between the two dispensations. The great God, consulting upon the whole the temporal interests of those over whom He resolved to preside as their immediate Sovereign, enjoins Circumcision upon pain of death. Christ, in the character of a spiritual Prince, enjoins Baptism on his subjects upon the pain, not indeed of death, or the loss of their worldly substance, but, of his displeasure, and the injury of the peace and comfort of their minds: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved* *.

Now from this comparative view of the two institutions, I presume, it appears plain (even upon the ground of analogy, and without respect to positive appointment) that it was highly fit and necessary that Circumcision should be administered to the infant-posterity of Abraham in general; and as fit and necessary that Baptism should be limited to the adult, to persons capable of professing their faith in Christ, and their subjection to his spiritual dominion as their Lord and King. And from hence, I hope, Mr. *A.* will be

* Mark xvi. 16.

convinced of his mistake in reflecting upon those as guilty of temerity, if not insolence, “ who call it an absurdity, or censure it as in any view weak or improper, to apply a token of the Covenant of grace to little children *.”

But the matter does not rest here: as the right of infants to Circumcision did not depend on the supposed fitness, in the eye of human prudence, of their being admitted to that institution, but purely on the divine appointment; so the right of infants to Baptism does not depend upon the fitness of their being admitted to that positive institution, in the apprehension of some wise and good men, but purely upon the divine appointment. Let us proceed therefore to the

SECOND Question, Whether there is any scriptural authority for affirming that Baptism is substituted in the room of Circumcision? To this I answer, there is not. Mr. *A.* however thinks otherwise. But what is his proof? The whole amount of it is this: “ Circumcision was a type of Baptism; therefore it was intended to take place of it.” But how does it appear that Circumcision was a type of Baptism? Thus, “ It was fit the two positive institutions of Christianity should have their types. As to the Lord’s

* P. 104.

Supper, we are told that *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us* || ; therefore the Passover was a type of that institution. And though we have no expression so much to the purpose respecting Circumcision and Baptism, yet as there is a striking resemblance between the two institutions, as they are both spoken of in the near connection of two verses *, and as there was no ancient rite by which Baptism was prefigured, if not by Circumcision ; so no doubt this was a type of that, as well as the Passover of the Lord's Supper." And now having, as he thinks, proved his medium, " that Circumcision is the type, and Baptism the antitype," Mr. A.'s consequences follow apace—" consequently Baptism succeeded to Circumcision—consequently Baptism ought to be administered to infants—and consequently the right of children to Baptism is established on a divine appointment." Thus hath our Author toiled through the whole length of analogy, implication, supposition, prefiguration, and consequence ; and who shall venture to dispute with him his conclusion ? " Let a single text," says he, " be produced, clearly and expressly repealing this act of God in favour of infants, and we will give up their title †."

But not quite so fast, Sir ! to talk of repealing a statute before it is enacted is a little strange.

|| 1 Cor. v. 7. * Col. ii. 11, 12. † P. 109, 110.

And sure I am, no law among men ever stood upon such a precarious foundation, as Mr. *A.* has placed this supposed divine law. If I were to set about proving to a foreigner, by such kind of reasoning as this, that every freeholder in this country is obliged to pay a tax to the King on his estate, he would no doubt conclude that there really is no such law, or that I was most egregiously trifling with him. But, inadmissible as this kind of reasoning is in all matters respecting positive institutions, and excused as I might very well be, upon this ground, from paying any attention to it; I am yet willing to be at the pains, if you will not, Sir, think me tedious, to shew you that the reasoning itself is defective and inconclusive.

What necessity is there for supposing, that Christian ordinances must have been prefigured by Jewish types? Not to say how very ungracefully this assertion proceeds from the same pen that complains, and very justly too, of the fancifulness and absurdity of “finding typical mysteries in all the several materials, forms, and utensils, of the ancient tabernacle; and most momentous gospel doctrines, not only in the Jewish High-Priest himself, but in every hue and form and fold of his garments ||.” Nor can I conceive how it should be a greater weakness “to trace resemblances between Old-

“ Testament rites and New-Testament doctrines,” than between Old and New Testament rites themselves, “ where none were intended *.” It is true we are told that *Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us*: but, though we learn from other scriptures besides this that the Paschal-lamb was a type of Christ, is it certainly to be concluded, from the occasional use of this allusive language when the Apostle was speaking of the Lord’s Supper, that the Passover was designed itself to be a figure of that institution? Or if it is, does it thence follow that Circumcision was a figure of Baptism? Or if this were the case, is there any more reason to infer from thence the right of children to Baptism, than from the Passover their right to the Lord’s Supper?

“ But there is, in some respects, a striking resemblance between the two institutions †?” But may not men who “ indulge their fancies” find “ a resemblance where none was intended?” Have not Romanists, upon this pretence, obtruded on the world innumerable fooleries under the notion of divine rites? And if Mr. *A.* will have it that there is, IN SOME RESPECTS, a striking resemblance between Circumcision and Baptism, and from thence conclude that the latter was substituted in the room of the former; may not I with equal truth affirm, that there is, IN OTHER

* P. 106.

† P. 107.

RESPECTS, a striking dissimilarity between them, and that therefore Baptism was not substituted in the room of Circumcision?

“ But the Apostle tells the Colossians, that
 “ in Christ they were circumcised with the circum-
 “ cision made without hands, in putting off the body
 “ of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ:
 “ and adds in the next verse, Buried with Him
 “ in baptism; wherein also you are risen with Him
 “ through the faith of the operation of God, who
 “ hath raised Him from the dead †.” But does the
 Apostle here call Baptism, as Mr. A. would per-
 suade us, “ the Christian Circumcision:” or does
 he tell us that it was “ substituted in the room of
 the Jewish Circumcision ||?” By no means. The
 Circumcision of which he speaks is expressly said
 to be MADE WITHOUT HANDS: and how strange to
 make him say that Baptism, which is MADE WITH
 HANDS, was substituted in the room of that which
 was MADE WITHOUT HANDS *! The truth is,
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† Col. ii. 11, 12.

|| P. 108.

* Mr. A. understanding this phrase of *the circumcision made without hands* to refer to Baptism, is at pains, in a note, to justify the idea of Baptism's being made without hands. To this end he tells us of “ a learned writer,” who says that “ Baptism is here called *the circumcision made without hands*, as appointed to remain to the end of the “ world.” He has not told us who this learned writer is: the criticism therefore must stand or fall by its own weight.

there is not one word said of Baptism's being substituted in the room of Circumcision. All that the Apostle means to say is, "That in Christ, or by the influence of his doctrine upon their hearts, they were after a spiritual manner circumcised to love and fear God; and that they were buried with Christ in Baptism, by which institution was expressed, in a very lively manner, their resurrection, through a divine faith, to newness of life." He gives us no intimation at all, that he even means to draw a parallel between Circumcision and Baptism; much less that he means to say this was prefigured by that, and designed to take place of it. To assert the contrary is not only to give that indulgence to fancy which Mr. A. had just before condemned, but to offer violence to the plainest rules of interpretation.—Thus have we considered all our Author has to say in support of this favourite point,

And now, though I am not obliged to prove a negative, yet I will mention a circumstance

It seems to me, however, pretty extraordinary, that what is material should be called immaterial to express its long duration, which yet might have been as easily expressed by a word directly to the purpose. To such shifts are men driven to maintain a favourite hypothesis!

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which methinks cannot fail to put it beyond dispute with a sober inquirer, that Baptism was not substituted in the room of Circumcision: and that is the Apostle's not having urged this consideration with Judaizing Christians, to dissuade them from their violent attachment to this Old-Testament rite—their not having urged it, upon occasions which would have naturally, if not necessarily, led them to it. Is it imaginable, for instance, that it would have escaped them, when they were solemnly convened at Jerusalem to decide upon the great question respecting the use or disuse of Circumcision? Could they have forborne to reason thus?—"Circumcision was anciently instituted as a seal of the Covenant: Baptism is now substituted in the room of it: it is fit therefore that Circumcision should be laid aside. Nor have you any reason to complain of the change, since this New-Testament rite, of which that was a type or shadow, is a less irksome and painful one than that, and is as authentick a seal of the Covenant as ever that could possibly be." Such reasoning would, no doubt, have instantly removed all their objections. And there was the greater occasion for the Apostles to insist upon this point, if there were either truth or reason in it, as the practice of these Jewish converts, in adhering to Circumcision and Baptism too, plainly shewed that they were

utter strangers to it. But not a word of this sort is said either on this or any other occasion. How natural then the conclusion, from the silence of the Apostles respecting this matter, that Baptism bears no such relation to Circumcision as our friends the Pœdobaptists pretend!—And now it remains that I make good my

THIRD And last position, That the reasoning by analogy from the one institution to the other would, if admitted, prove too much, and so destroy itself. Mr. *A.* maintains that, Baptism being substituted in the room of Circumcision, as infants were commanded to be circumcised, so infants ought to be baptized. And, upon the same ground of analogy, ought he not to insist that, as only the male children of Abraham were circumcised, so only the male children of Believers should be baptized?—that as the former were circumcised on the eighth day, so the latter should be baptized on that day? and I may add, that the sanction annexed to Circumcision * ought to remain in force with respect to Baptism, and every *man-child* who is not baptized *be cut off from his people?* But as we know Mr. *A.* would not allow this scope to the argument by analogy, by what authority, I ask, of reason or Scripture, does he allow it

* Gen. xvii. 14.

any scope at all? His good-nature would not suffer him to establish Infant-Baptism by penal laws: nor should his good-sense suffer him to bind it upon men's consciences by the slender-ties of inference and analogy.

I am, Sir,

Yours,

G S

LET

[130]

L E T T E R X.

DEAR SIR,

I Congratulate you and myself upon having at length arrived at the ground, upon which ALONE the right of infants to Baptism ought to be tried and determined, I mean the exprefs authority of Scripture. For whoever confiders the nature of positive institutions, will quickly be convinced that to expect satisfaction upon this point from analogical reasoning, which as you have seen hath no other support than mere conjecture, is vain and foolish. We are agreed that Baptism is an institution of Christ. Now is it imaginable that our Saviour would exprefs himself ambiguously upon so important a question, as that respecting the persons to be admitted to this institution; or that he would leave us to spell out his will by framing a comparison between Baptism and Circumcision, and that too without giving us the least intimation that these two rites bear any relation to each other? He that can suppose this does no honour surely to the infinite wisdom and goodness of our divine

Master.

Master. But the matter is quite otherwise. He has declared his will in the plainest manner: nor is there an instance to be met with in the New Testament of any one infant's having been baptized. Let us then appeal, in the first place, to the words of the institution, which no doubt are expressed, as all laws ought to be, in so clear a manner as that he who runs may read.

Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. *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 alway, even unto the end of the world.*—*μὲν δὲ ἐν ὀνόματι πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἀγαλόμενοι.*

Now it is agreed on all hands, that this commission of our Saviour's to his Apostles, in the first leading idea of it, has respect to the adult, and that it clearly expresses his will that **THEY** should not be baptized till they are first taught. The Pædobaptists, therefore, admit grown persons as well as children to Baptism, at the same time holding themselves obliged by the words of the institution to reject such as have not been instructed in the Christian faith*. And from
hence,

* To this effect we are told in the Catechism of the Church of England, that of persons to be baptized, mean-

hence, by the way, it appears that our opponents are not against limiting the general phrase of ALL NATIONS to a particular and qualified meaning. So far then we are agreed.

The question which remains to be debated is this, Whether the words of the institution are capable of such a construction as will authorize the Baptism of infants? Now I deny that they are; and further maintain, that our Saviour has so expressed himself as, by the plainest rules of interpretation, clearly and fully to preclude infants from a right to Baptism. Here then let us inquire, First, What our Lord requires his Apostles and Ministers to do?—TO TEACH and TO BAPTIZE. Secondly, In what order he requires them to fulfill these his injunctions?—They are FIRST to teach, then to baptize. And, Thirdly, Whom they are thus to teach and baptize?—ALL NATIONS.

FIRST, What is the duty he requires of his Ministers? It is TO TEACH and TO BAPTIZE. Now here it is to be observed that the two actions respect the same subject. The *all nations*, who are to be taught, are to be baptized; and the *all nations* who are to be baptized, are to be such as have being the adult, are required “repentance, whereby they forsoke sin; and faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God, &c.”

been taught. To preclude all doubt about this, they are mentioned immediately after the verb teach, and marked again distinctly after the participle baptizing by the relative *αὐτοῖς*: it is not only said, "Teach and baptize all nations;" but "Teach all nations, baptizing them." And both these particulars are equally binding upon Ministers, so that if either of them is omitted the command is violated. Now teaching evidently implies in the persons taught a capacity of receiving instruction. But infants are not capable of being taught. Therefore it was not, it could not be, our Saviour's meaning to require his Ministers to teach and baptize them. The argument is so plain it must strike every one.

To evade, however, the force of this plain argument, we are told our Translators have not given us the proper rendering of the word *μαθητευσατε*. "It does not so properly signify "to teach," says Mr. A. "as to profelyte or "make disciples*," that is, "'Tis capable of a sense which may without impropriety be applied to infants, and that sense is profelyting or discipling." But is it proper to say of persons, that they may be profelyted or disciplined without any previous instruction, conviction or persuasion? for if infants are disciplined, it must be without either. He, it is true, who becomes

* P. 112.

a disciple to another is not supposed at his entrance to be master of what he aims to be taught: but his becoming a disciple or a scholar surely implies his being capable of being taught, nay more than this, his having some idea of what he is going about, and his giving some consent to the business. But I do not mean to rest the matter barely upon the impropriety of applying the term disciple to infants. We insist that the word truly and properly signifies TO TEACH; or if our opponents will have it that it signifies also *to disciple*, that it means SUCH DISCIPLING ONLY AS IS BY TEACHING: which last sense of it evidently strengthens the former, and renders the application of it to infants still more improper; for so it expresses not only teaching, but the effect of teaching, teaching successfully so as to prevail. That this is always the signification of the word *μαθητευα*, and particularly in the place under consideration, Dr. Gale, in his reflections on Mr. Wall's History of Infant-Baptism, has shewn at large, from the etymology and sense of the Greek word, from the authority of the several versions, from the opinions of the Fathers, and from the Scriptures themselves and the practice of the Apostles. To that book therefore I refer you, Sir.

But before I proceed to consider what Mr. *A.* has to say in support of his opinion, “that the
“ word

“word does not so properly signify to teach, “as to profelyte or make disciples;” I beg leave to cite a few testimonies to the contrary, among a vast many others that might be mentioned. Tertullian speaks of it as the business of the Apostles *first to preach, and afterwards to dip or baptize* *. And St. Jerome, describing the duty of Ministers, says, *First they teach all nations, and then dip them that are taught in water* †. Erasmus in his annotation on Mat. xxvii. 57. refers to the passage before us, as an instance in which the word is used transitively, and signifies TO TEACH; and accordingly renders it *docete, teach* all nations. And in his paraphrase on the passage itself gives it that sense. Turretine says, that infants “*are no more capable of faith, than they are of that instruction, with which the adult are taught and made disciples of Christ,*” Mat. xviii. 19 ‡. Constantine, though he thinks the word does sometimes signify *to be, or to make disciples*, yet says its primary and more genuine sense is, *doceo, διδάσκω, to teach*; and for this refers to the passage before us as an unquestion-

* —Prius est prædicare, posterius tingere. Tertul. de Bapt. cap. 14.

† Primum docent omnes Gentes, deinde doctas intingunt aqua. In Matt. xxviii. 19.

‡ —Cujus non magis capaces sunt, quam illius institutionis, quâ docentur adulti, et discipuli Christi sunt, Mat. xxviii. 19. Institut. Theolog. Par. II. p. 640. § 9.

able instance*. In like manner Stephens tells us it signifies *docco, to teach*, confirming it by the same instance †.

Bishop Burnet, in his Exposition of the Articles, says, “*By the first Teaching or making disciples, that must go before Baptism, is to be meant the convincing the world, that Jesus is the Christ, the true Messias, anointed of God with fulness of grace, and of the Spirit without measure; and sent to be the Saviour and Redeemer of the world. And when any were brought to acknowledge this, then they were to baptize them, &c. †*” Dr. Whitby, in his notes on this passage, says, “*μαθητευει here is to preach the gospel to all nations, and to engage them to believe it in order to their profession of that faith by Baptism; as seems apparent, 1) from the parallel commission, Mark xvi. 15. Go preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: And 2) from the scripture notion of a disciple, that being still the same as a Believer:”* which he at large proves. And then adds, “*If here it should be said that I yielded too much to the Antipædobaptists, by saying, that to be made disciples, is to be taught to believe in Christ, that so they might be his disciples; I desire any one to tell me how the Apostles could μαθητευει make a disciple of an Heathen or unbelieving Jew, without being μαθηται or Teachers*

* Lexic. ad Voc. † Thesaur. ad Voc. ‡ P. 300.

“ of them, &c.?” And afterwards observes,
 “ that it needs not be asserted that infants are made
 “ disciples, any more than that they are made believers.
 “ by Baptism, &c.*

But what ought to have the principal weight with us in determining the true sense of the word, is the opinion of the Apostles, which is clearly to be gathered from their practice, and what is affirmed concerning them in the Acts. If then it is a fact, that wherever they came, they first TAUGHT OR MADE DISCIPLES BY TEACHING before they baptized, it is past a doubt that this was the sense they affixed to the word μαθητευσατε: and the fact every one knows who has read his New Testament. Nay it is particularly related of Paul and Barnabas, when they had departed to Derbe, that *they had preached the gospel to that city, and (μαθητευσαστες ιουδαιας) had taught many †*; herein conforming themselves to the commission in Matthew, and to the sense given us of it in the parallel passage by Mark, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ‡*. To which Luke also refers, when he says, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations ||*.

Now all this evidence one would think should be sufficient to convince a reasonable man, that

* Whitby in Mat. xxviii. 19. † Acts xiv. 21.
 ‡ Ch. xvi. 15. || Ch. xxiv. 47.

the word in debate properly signifies TO TEACH, OR TO DISCIPLE BY TEACHING. But Mr. A. will have it that it may signify *to proselyte* or *disciple*, without a reference to any previous instruction. But what proof has he given us that the word is any where so used? Why; he tells us, “ that “ *Moses's disciples* was a term familiar to the “ Apostles, and that the descendents of Abra- “ ham were entered among his disciples by cir- “ cumcision *.” But are the infant children of the Jews any where stiled the *disciples of Moses*? or are they any where said *to be disciplined* or *made disciples* by circumcision? This our Author does not venture to affirm in so many words; but tells us, “ that there seems no more impropriety “ in calling them disciples of Christ, than “ servants of God, as in Lev. xxv. 41, 42.” But that passage is strained when it is made to speak this sense: it says that a Hebrew servant and his children with him, shall at the year of Jubilee return unto his own family and the possession of his fathers; assigning this reason for it, that *they*, all such servants and their children, *are God's servants which he brought forth out of the land of Egypt.*—“ But infants seem at least included, if not principally referred to, in the term (disciples) Acts xv. 10.” Here also Mr. A. fails. For *the disciples*, upon whose neck the Judaizing teachers are censured for attempting to put a yoke, were Gentile converts,

* P. 111.

and are expressly said in the preceding verse to have had *their hearts purified by faith*. Here is no reference to their children, if they had any. How unjustifiable then; from a mere supposition that they are included, to infer that they are called DISCIPLES, and that therefore this term may be properly applied to infants!—Such is the proof, and the whole of it, which our Author brings in support of his proposition, that μαθητεύω signifies to disciple or to make disciples without regard to any previous instruction.

I presume then it has been clearly made appear, that the two commands of teaching and baptizing respect the same subjects, that the word μαθητεύω properly and only signifies to teach, or to disciple by teaching, and that therefore, as infants are incapable of being taught or being disciplined by teaching, they are not the subjects of either command, and so are not to be baptized. This reasoning is further confirmed;

SECONDLY, By the order in which the words are placed. *Go teach all nations, baptizing them*. I do not indeed lay any great stress upon this. Yet, when two actions are commanded, the former of which must in the nature of the thing precede the latter (as has been shewn to be the case

case here) any one would be apt to suppose, that in placing them thus there is a regard had to the order of nature. Mr. A. however treats this as a very trifling observation, telling us, “ that “ if we are always to lay so much on the order “ in which things are mentioned, we must believe, on the other hand, that John baptized “ before he preached, as his preaching is mentioned after his baptizing *.” Be it so then, that a stress is not ALWAYS to be laid upon the order in which things are mentioned: yet if, in the instance cited, the impropriety of supposing John baptized before he preached stares our Author so full in the face, that he is willing to acknowledge the order is inverted; why should he hesitate at acknowledging that the words stand in their proper order, when our Saviour commands his Apostles *to teach and baptize*? And I mean no more by this observation than to say, that the order of the words exactly accords with the purport of my reasoning under the former head: that is, supposing it to have been our Lord's will that we should teach persons before we baptize them, his meaning would be more naturally and clearly expressed by his saying, *Go teach all nations baptizing them*, than by the other mode, *Go baptize all nations teaching them*.

* P. III, 112. Mark. i. 4.

But we are told, “ that the duty recommended
 “ in the word *μαθητευσατε*, whatever it be, is no-
 “ thing distinct from Baptism, much less previous
 “ to it; that the Apostles are not required to disci-
 “ ple AND baptize, but BY or IN baptizing; and
 “ that there is not the least hint of any previ-
 “ ous qualifications for the ordinance *.” But
 will Mr. A.’s friends thank him for these bold as-
 sertions? I am persuaded his sensible and learned
 friends will not. The ablest advocates for Pædo-
 baptism have admitted that in these two words our
 Lord has plainly enjoined two distinct duties, that
 of instructing the Heathen world, and then bap-
 tizing them. Bishop Burnet and Doctor Whitby
 in the passages just quoted, and many besides,
 have expressed themselves as clearly upon the
 matter as can be wished. And indeed the Evan-
 gelist Mark, in the parallel place, has so ex-
 plained this text in Matthew, as to put the
 question respecting our Lord’s meaning (if in-
 deed it could be a question) beyond a doubt.
*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to
 every creature. He that believeth and is baptized
 shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be
 damned* †. How then, I appeal to common sense,
 can our Author venture to assert, that here is
 but one duty enjoined, and not the least hint of
 any previous qualification for Baptism? This,
 however, asserted, we cannot wonder to hear him
 further asserting, in the next page, “ that we

* Ibid.

† Mark xvi. 15, 16.

“ have

“ have no authority from hence to baptize Be-
 “ lievers, for they are not mentioned;” and
 that “ there is not, as he remembers, one ex-
 “ prefs command, either of Christ or his Apo-
 “ stles, to baptize Believers in all the New
 “ Testament ||.” If Mr. *A.* will cast his eye back
 upon the passage just quoted from Mark, he will
 see something, however, that looks like a com-
 mand to baptize Believers; and if Philip told
 the Eunuch that, provided he believed with all
 his heart, he might be baptized, most people
 will suppose he did in other words tell him,
 that Christ had commanded him to baptize such.
 But Mr. *A.*'s assertion is much like his who
 complained that he could not find, from the be-
 ginning of his Bible to the end of it, one passage
 wherein it is plainly and expressly affirmed, that
 there is such a thing as religion.

But to return: had Mr. *A.* candidly acknow-
 ledged, that *μαθητευσατε*, in its respect to adult
 Heathens and Jews, is indeed expressive of a duty
 distinct from Baptism; but further insisted that
 in its reference to infants, they being incapable
 of instruction, the whole meaning of it is to be
 absorbed in *βαπτίζετε*; his readers would per-
 haps have been better disposed to give him credit.
 But, perceiving the dilemma to which this would
 reduce him, he boldly asserts that the word hath
 nothing at all to do with teaching or instruction;

and so suffers himself to be deserted by his most learned and able supporters.

But let us, for a moment, consider our Author's pretence for resolving the two duties into one. It is purely this, the different inflection of the two words TEACH and BAPTIZE, the one being in the imperative mood, and the other a participle. It is not said, Go teach, *and* baptize; but, Go teach baptizing: from whence Mr. *A.* concludes our Saviour meant to say, Go teach or disciple *by* or *in* baptizing. But this surely is a very weak pretence to ground so important a proposition upon, as "that the duty recommended " in the word *μαθητευσατε* is nothing distinct " from Baptism." Mr. *A.* must know that it is a kind of construction very common in the Greek language, and that it often occurs in the New Testament, where two actions or duties of a very different nature are required: as where the Apostle says, *See that ye walk circumspectly, redeeming the time—Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns—Take the sword of the Spirit, praying always* *. Now apply our Author's criticism to these and many other instances of the like kind, and what will be the effect? Why, that walking circumspectly, is nothing distinct from redeeming the time; that being filled with the Spirit, is nothing distinct

* Eph. v. 15, 16, 18, 19. and ch. vi. 17, 18.

from speaking to ourselves in psalms and hymns, and that taking the sword of the Spirit, is nothing distinct from prayer.

But it is further objected, "If any regard is to be paid to the order in which the words are placed, teaching is to follow Baptism—for after enjoining that, our Lord adds, *teaching them* *." But is there no difference between persons being taught the elements of a science, and their being instructed more fully in the science itself? Or can any one doubt the propriety of our being first grounded in *the principles of the doctrine of Christ*, to use the language of the writer to the Hebrews, and then, having been baptized, *going on unto perfection* †? This is evidently our Lord's meaning. And though Mr. A. and I are so unhappy as to differ here too, yet I have the comfort to find many of his learned Pædobaptist friends agreeing with me. I will give you the comments, that I may not be tedious, of only two of them upon the passage under consideration: I mean the celebrated Grotius, and the ingenious and pious Dr. Doddridge. The former says, "*As there is a twofold kind of teaching, the one by way of initiation into the first principles, the other by way of more perfect instruction*" (for that he plainly means by *διδασκαλίας*, as opposed to *σοιχευμένων*); "*the former seems to be intended by the word μαθητευσαι,*

* P. 113.

† Heb. vi. 1.

“ for that is as it were to initiate into discipline,
 “ and is to go before Baptism: the latter seems in-
 “ tended by the word διδασκειν, which is here placed
 “ after Baptism *.” Dr. Doddridge says, “ I
 “ render the word μαθητευσατε, profelyte, that it
 “ may be duly distinguished from διδασκουσες, teach-
 “ ing, (in the next verse) with which our version
 “ confounds it. The former seems to import in-
 “ struction in the essentials of religion, which it
 “ was necessary adult persons should know and sub-
 “ mit to, before they could regularly be admitted to
 “ Baptism; the latter may relate to those more par-
 “ ticular admonitions, in regard to Christian faith
 “ and practice, which were to be built upon that
 “ foundation.” Thus clearly do these two learn-
 ed Pœdobaptists express themselves respecting the
 distinction, so natural and obvious, between the
 teaching our Lord requires before, and that He
 enjoins after Baptism: and thus have they put
 out of countenance this little futile objection of
 our Author, which can have no other effect, at
 most, than to entangle weak minds.

And now, having considered at large the true
 import of the word μαθητευσατε, and taken no-

* Cum duplex sit docendi ratio, alia per modum *Εισαγωγης των Στοιχεισμενων*, alia per modum *Διδασκαλειας*, prior supra videtur indicari verbo *μαθητευειν*, id enim est veluti in disciplinam initiare, & Baptismo præponitur: posterior verbo *διδασκειν*, quod hic post Baptismum locatur. *Grot. in loc.*

tice of the order in which our Lord requires his Apostles to fulfil the two duties of TEACHING and BAPTIZING, it remains that we inquire,

THIRDLY, Whom they are thus to teach and baptize?—ALL NATIONS. Now if the word *μαθητευω* truly and properly signifies to teach, or to disciple by teaching, as I hope has been satisfactorily shewn, it follows that, whoever are intended by the phrase ALL NATIONS, infants are not, because they are incapable of being taught, or being disciplined by teaching. The question here therefore is, Whether the phrase is *necessarily* to be understood of infants, as well as the adult? If it is, then, either I have given a wrong account of the word *μαθητευω*, or our Saviour has required an impossibility. But if, on the contrary, the phrase ALL NATIONS is not necessarily to be understood of infants, then there is no reason in the description thus given us of the persons to be baptized, to oblige us to recede from that sense of the word *μαθητευσατε*, which our Translators have given us and we have established. I maintain then that the phrase is not *necessarily* to be understood of infants; and I hope to make it appear, not only that I have reason and the generally received rules of interpretation on my side, but that the concessions which the Pœdobaptists themselves make, and are obliged to make, do abundantly confirm my position.

Now here it is to be observed, that our Saviour's ministry and that of his Apostles having been confined, during his stay on earth, to the Jews, and it being the will of God that the gospel should afterwards be published to the whole world; there was the greatest propriety in his expressing himself after this manner. Nor yet does He say *all of all nations*, which would have made a very considerable difference; but, *all nations*, that is, the people of all nations, or mankind in general. So that his meaning is plainly this: "Go teach
 " the people of all countries, whether Jews, or
 " Gentiles; Romans, or Barbarians: and when
 " you have so taught them as effectually to per-
 " suade them to become my disciples, then bap-
 " tize them." And such we find was the practice of the Apostles and primitive Ministers.

For the sense of this phrase of ALL NATIONS, or the people of all nations, that it does not necessarily, nay that it seldom, if ever, includes in it every individual, I might appeal to the usual modes of speech in all languages, to the writings of the best authors, and to the Scriptures themselves. But I shall content myself, to avoid being tedious, with one plain instance of this kind of phraseology, from among many others, in the New Testament. *Jerusalem and ALL JUDÆA, and ALL THE REGION round about Jordan*, are said to have been baptized of John; and yet we are im-

mediately after told, that the Pharisees and Sadducees, who came to his Baptism, were rejected by him *.

But it will be said, Though every individual may not be included in the phrase of ALL NATIONS, yet surely *children* must, “since they make,” as Mr. *A.* expresses it, “very considerable parts of all nations †.” But if there are other very considerable parts of all nations, whom our Author would not admit to Baptism, and whom no man in his senses can believe our Lord has commissioned his Ministers to baptize, such as infidels, profligate persons, madmen, and idiots; Why should we be supposed to offer violence to the general terms of ALL NATIONS, because we assert that infants are not included therein? Nor must I omit to observe here, that, general as the phrases are in the passage just cited, by which St. Matthew describes the people who were baptized by John, even ALL JUDÆA, and ALL THE REGION round about Jordan; it is a plain fact that he did not mean to include infants in those phrases, though they were such *considerable parts* of those countries: for he expressly tells us, that the people *were baptized, confessing their sins*, of which infants are, no doubt, incapable.—But Mr. *A.* insists that “the expression elsewhere, in the word “ of God, includes children; as when it is said,

* Matt. iii. 5, 6, 7.

† P. 114.

“ In thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*.” But though I admit, which I am very ready to do, that all children who die in their infancy are blessed in or through Christ the promised Messiah, yet our Author will not surely assert that even here the phrase means ALL of all nations. Or if it did, it would not follow from thence, that the phrase, wherever it is used, must necessarily include all the people of all nations, whether young or old: I say necessarily, for this it lies upon him to prove, in order to set aside our reasoning from the application of the word *μαθητευσατε*, that infants are not here included in the phrase ALL NATIONS.

There is yet one other argument Mr. A. uses, to persuade us that infants must be here intended; and that is oddly drawn from the old untenable topick of analogy. “ The Apostles, he supposes, were fully instructed in his idea of the Covenant, viz. that children are included in it with their parents, and so intitled to the seal of it; and that Circumcision and Baptism are, as it were, convertible terms: they could not therefore but understand the phrase ALL NATIONS to extend to infants. Thoroughly grounded in his doctrine and reasoning, it was as natural for them to suppose our Lord meant infants when He said, Go, baptize all nations, as it would have been to suppose He meant them,

* P. 114. Gen. xxii. 18.

had He commanded them to go circumcise all nations. Nay, there was no occasion at all to mention them expressly; on the contrary, if He had designed they should not be baptized, it would have been absolutely necessary to have inserted an exclusive clause to that purpose*." This reasoning of our Author from Circumcision to Baptism has been already so largely considered, and so satisfactorily, I hope, confuted, that I must not enter into it again here: nor does Mr. A.'s presuming that the Apostles were of the same opinion with him, add any weight at all to it, since he has not given us any proof of that fact. I must, however, observe, that his winding up the argument with telling us, that if we are right, there should have been an exclusive clause inserted in the commission, opens him a large field for declamation on the idea of "our dear little ones" being denied the seal of the Covenant, shut out from the blessing of the seed of Abraham, and refused to be numbered among the subjects of Christ's kingdom †." Just as if those who are of opinion that there is no warrant for baptizing infants were guilty, if not designedly, yet by necessary consequence, of the greatest imaginable cruelty to their children. But I have no other concern with these appeals to the passions, than gently to reprove our Author for the unkind reflections insinuated in them,

* P. 115.

† P. 115, 116.

and sincerely to pity the weak well-meaning people who mistake them for arguments,

And now, Sir, I must beg your excuse for having drawn out this Letter to so unusual a length. You are sensible that the settling the true meaning of the words of the institution, is the main thing in this debate; and that this could not be done in the compass of two or three pages. I will, however, comfort myself with the firm persuasion, that you have not the shadow of a doubt left, that *μαθητευσατε* truly and properly signifies TO TEACH, OR TO DISCIPLE BY TEACHING; that, as infants are incapable of both the one and the other, it could not be our Lord's intention to include them in the terms ALL NATIONS; and further, that the order in which the words are placed, and the common usage of such general phrases, perfectly well agree with this reasoning. How will you wonder then to hear our Author say!—"Let such as seek a
" precept for baptizing children study well
" these instructions of their divine Master, and
" they will find it here: a precept as express
" for baptizing infants as for baptizing the
" adult; and on the authority of which the
" ordinance is to be administered to both (that
" is, if the latter have never been baptized be-
" fore) or administered to neither*." But your

* P. 116.

wonder, Sir, will abate, when you recollect, that the same pen, which thus expresses itself here, has more than once in the course of this book asserted, “ that there is not one text in “ the whole Bible, or however that it has not “ met with one, in which Christ commanded “ his ministers to baptize Believers, much less “ Believers only *.”

* P. 114, 176.

I am, Sir,

Yours.

L E T-

L E T T E R XI.

DEAR SIR,

YOU have seen in the preceding Letter how clearly our Saviour has described, in the words of the institution, the persons whom he would have his Apostles and Ministers baptize : they are such as have been *taught*, or prevailed upon by teaching to become his disciples. And thus has he not only authorized their baptizing the adult, but in effect plainly prohibited the baptizing infants, as they are incapable of being taught. You have seen also that the phrase of *all nations* does not necessarily include in it infants, and therefore furnishes no sufficient argument to set aside the sense given of the word *μαθητευσατε* ; yea, more than this, that its plain and obvious meaning very well accords with our Saviour's express limitation of Baptism to such only as have been taught.

And now the question is, Whether our Lord has any where else, either himself, or by his Apostles, required the baptizing infants ? If the reasoning from the words of the institution be just, we may be assured he has not, for he can-

not contradict himself. The fact therefore we assert, that he has not; and call upon our opponents to produce any one instance in the New Testament. This Mr. A. wishes to do, and to that end presses into his service the words of the Apostle Peter—*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ**. Upon which he observes in a note, “Some have remarked
“the change observable in the Apostle’s phra-
“seology, from the plural *μετανοησατε*, repent
“ye, to the singular disjunctive, *βαπτισθητω*
“*εκασος υμων*, let every one of you, or every
“one belonging to you, be baptized †.” So that, according to our Author, we are to understand the Apostle here as commanding infants to be baptized. But the words *εκασος υμων* must surely intend those to whom the Apostle addresses himself, and those only. Now these are so described, as to put it beyond a doubt that infants were not of the number: they were the Jews to whom he had been preaching, who had heard him, who were pricked in their heart, and had said to him and the rest of the Apostles, Men and Brethren, what shall we do? To these he says, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you*. Were their infant children pricked in the heart? Did they cry out, Men and Brethren, what shall we do? Or can the Apostle be supposed to have exhorted them to repent? By what

* Acts ii. 38.

† P. 126. Note.

rules of interpretation then, can he be understood to mean them when he adds, *And be baptized every one of you?* But Mr. A. concludes from what follows in the next verse, that their children must have been included in the instructions here given respecting Baptism: *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* But if the sense of these words is, as I hope hath been satisfactorily proved in my remarks on this passage*, that “the promise was to their children or posterity, as many of them as the Lord their God should call, and to them that were afar off whom the Lord should also call:” if, I say, this is the sense of the words, it is without the least pretence of reason that Mr. A. draws an argument from them to prove, that the infant children of these converted Jews were included in the Apostle’s exhortation, *Be baptized every one of you.*

And now as Mr. A. does not pretend that there is any other command in the New Testament to authorize the baptizing infants, I should proceed to consider what he has to say respecting the practice of the Apostles. I must, however, in the mean time animadvert a little upon his third chapter, in which he states the objections of the Baptists to Infant-Baptism, and replies to them.

* See Let. VI. p. 71, &c.

Here I must remind you, Sir, of what you have no doubt often remarked, that it is mighty common for disputants to state each others objections inaccurately, if not unfairly, and thereby enable themselves to say many plausible things which yet are not at all to the purpose. This, our Author has done. So that you will not wonder at his gravely asserting some things in the course of this chapter, which we have no more doubt about than himself, and at his advancing many others which are quite foreign to the point. These excrescencies however taken off, the weakness and futility of his replies to the real objections of the Baptists will so clearly appear, as to require little animadversion of mine upon them.

The objections of the Baptists to Infant-Baptism are considered in three distinct sections, under the general description of—*The incapacity of infants for faith and repentance—The supposed bad tendency of Infant-Baptism—And, our Saviour's not having more clearly revealed and expressly enjoined it.* Let us begin with the

FIRST of these objections, which Mr. A. has more largely stated in the text thus; “ The
 “ Apostles, and John before them, required re-
 “ pentance and faith of those they baptized :
 “ and as infants can neither repent nor believe,
 “ there-

“ therefore, says the Antipædobaptist, they are
 “ not the proper subjects for this ordinance*.”

But the objection is not stated either truly, or logically. Not truly; for the Baptists do not say that John and the Apostles required repentance and faith of those they baptized, but that they required a PROFESSION of repentance and faith of those they baptized. Nor is it stated logically; for the terms in the conclusion are not contained in the premises—“ John and the Apostles required repentance and faith of those they baptized: infants can neither repent nor believe: therefore—What?—They are not the proper subjects for this ordinance.” What right Mr. *A.* had to put such a syllogism into the mouth of the Antipædobaptist I know not; nor what was his end in so doing, unless to make his opponent appear ridiculous, or to enable himself to cast a mist before the eyes of his readers. The objection truly stated is this—There is no instance of either John or the Apostles having baptized any, but upon a profession of faith and repentance: infants are not capable of professing faith and repentance: therefore, there is no instance of either John or the Apostles having baptized infants.

You will excuse, Sir, my taking all these pains to reduce the objection Mr. *A.* starts to its

* P. 127.

due form, as we shall hereby be enabled to find our way quickly through the maze of ten or a dozen pages: a maze I call it, for I am sure it must have struck you as well as me, that his reasoning is as confused and irregular, as is his manner of stating the objection. Nor is it easy many times to devise what he would be at, except in general to persuade his readers, without attending to the objection he had started, that Infant-Baptism is a very good thing, and that they are very cruel people who do not practice it. But let us hold our Author to the objection as it has been truly stated, and see whether he has made a sufficient reply, or indeed any reply at all. We will take the three propositions in their order.

I. There is no instance of either John or the Apostles having baptized any, but upon a profession of faith and repentance. Now the only way of encountering this proposition is, by producing instances of persons baptized without a profession of faith and repentance. Mr. *A.* may indeed, if he pleases, tell us, that it does not follow from the Apostles baptizing some upon a profession, that therefore they baptized none without it. He may add with an air of triumph, "Produce an instance in which they refused to baptize the child of a Christian upon this consideration, and we will acknowledge it a case in point."

point*.” He may insist, that the cases of the offspring of Christian parents, and of adult-converts from heathenism or the Jewish law are very different; that though it might be proper to require a profession of the former, yet it might not of the latter. He may further tell us that infants are capable of being included in covenants, that being in the Covenant of grace with their parents they have a right to the sign of it, and that they are as fit to be enrolled among the subjects of Christ’s kingdom by Baptism now, as they were by Circumcision formerly. In a word, he may pretend, that, in examining our Lord’s general commission to his Ministers, he does not find him authorizing them to require faith and repentance of all they baptized †. But this reasoning is not at all to the purpose of setting aside a plain matter of fact asserted by the Baptists, That there is no instance of either John or the Apostles having baptized any, but upon a profession of faith and repentance. He must, as I said, produce instances to the contrary. Now what instances has he produced ?

The first he mentions is that of our Saviour †, who to be sure could not profess repentance, as he had no sins to repent of. But, as Mr. *A.* knows the objection respects mere sinful men only, I am at a loss what end he could propose

* P. 127, 128.

† P. 128, 129.

‡ P. 130.

by holding our Lord up to view, except that of confounding or at least amusing his readers. As to Simon the forcerer *, it is acknowledged that he had neither saving faith nor genuine repentance. But will our Author say that he did not PROFESS both the one and the other, for that is the true state of the question? He will not: on the contrary, he himself admits “that Simon was “baptized on making a profession of faith in “Christ †.” And having admitted this, there is as little reason as there is decency in the reflection that immediately follows, “a notable authority for Believer’s Baptism!” Indeed had this language dropt from some lips, I should have considered it as a designed insult upon the Apostle Peter himself. But this is not Mr. A.’s meaning. All he intends is to set his readers a smiling at the idea of BELIEVER’S BAPTISM. To return, as Christ did not repent, nor Simon truly believe, he asks with an air of triumph,—“Will “any yet tell us, none but those that repent “and believe should be baptized?” Yes, I will presume, among many others, to tell him that none ought to offer themselves to Baptism who do not repent and believe; and that Ministers ought to baptize none, but upon a credible profession of repentance and faith. But he must be a poor reasoner indeed, who shall conclude from one or two Scripture-instances of insincere persons having been baptized upon such profession,

* P. 130.

† Ibid.

that therefore faith and repentance are not the proper qualifications for Baptism, and that Ministers are authorized to baptize those whom they clearly apprehend to be destitute of these qualifications, or whose early age render them incapable of them.

Mr. *A.* proceeds, “ Those that plead John’s authority would, perhaps, be at a loss to tell us what confession of faith he required of any who came to be baptized of him*.” Not at all. They were baptized of him *confessing their sins*; and if no more had been told us concerning them, it would be natural enough to infer from thence that they professed faith in the doctrine of remission of sins. But we are expressly assured, that John did preach this doctrine to them, that he declared he was the forerunner of the Messiah, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and that Christ would baptize them with the Holy Ghost. Can any one then be at a loss, except Mr. *A.*, what confession of faith John required, or the penitent Jews made?

He further insists that, “ as to the Apostles, they did not always require both faith and repentance: for if they had, they would not have baptized the impenitent Simon †.” But why should Mr. *A.* oblige us again to remind him of what he has himself admitted, that Simon

* P. 130.

† P. 131.

was baptized ON MAKING A PROFESSION of his faith? This is the true state of the question, and till this fact respecting Simon is disproved, the instance is not at all to the purpose of refuting the objection here under consideration. He is therefore only amusing or rather confounding his readers, by telling them over and over again, that Simon had not saving faith, and that therefore persons may be baptized who have it not.

But he insinuates, which is indeed more to the purpose, could it be proved, “that Simon’s profession was not credible*.” What authority he has for this insinuation I cannot conceive: I am sure there is none in the story. It is true he turned out a bad man, as Judas Iscariot had before him; but did it thence follow that the one or the other did not make a credible profession? or that Philip was chargeable with rashness and imprudence for baptizing Simon, any more than our Saviour for admitting Judas among his disciples and Apostles? But, to what purpose is Mr. *A.* so fond of persuading his readers, at the expence of Philip’s reputation, that Simon’s profession was not credible; to what purpose, I say, except it be to infer from thence that the claim of the children of Christian parents to Baptism, is as good, if not better, than Simon’s? “If a
 “profession,” says he, “is all that is required,
 “then why insist upon that from such as were

* P. 132.

“ born of Christian parents, and have professed
 “ Christianity all their lives*?” But a profession
 is not all that is required : it must be a credible
 profession. And till he has proved that Simon’s
 was not credible, his inference will have no
 weight at all with a considerate reader. Mr. A.,
 however, calls upon us to prove that a CREDIBLE
 profession is necessary †. To which it is sufficient
 to reply, that if the Apostles were used to re-
 quire a profession, it must have been a credible
 one ; for otherwise the requisition would have
 been to no purpose at all. Philip tells the
 Eunuch, *if he believed with all his heart he might
 be baptized* † : from whence it is most natural to
 infer that, if it could have been proved by any
 one instance in his conduct, that he spoke a wil-
 ful untruth when he said he believed with all his
 heart, or in other words, if it could have been
 proved that his profession was not credible, the
 Evangelist would not have baptized him.

The CREDIBILITY of men’s professions in those
 days, as well as now, was to be determined by
 such external circumstances attending them, as
 were obvious to persons in general as well as
 the Apostles. This was the ground upon which
 claims to the positive institutions of Christ were
 to be tried : nor do we ever find the Apostles
 over-ruling or setting aside such claims, by any
 judicial sentence of their own on men’s cha-

* P. 131.

† P. 132.

‡ Acts viii. 37.

acters, merely in virtue of that discernment of spirits with which in some instances they might be endowed. So that the dilemma to which Mr. A. would reduce us, *viz.* that Simon's profession was not a credible one, or that Philip was miserably imposed upon, is totally groundless. As to his caution to Ministers to be careful who they admit to Baptism*, it is in general a very good one: I must, however, tell him, that the line of duty our Saviour has drawn for them is so plain, that they need not be intimidated from it by the possibility of some, yea of many persons being insincere in their profession: nor is there a shadow of reason in this consideration to induce us to conclude, that a profession of faith is an improper, precarious, or insufficient ground of admission to the positive institutions of Christ.

Our Author having thus failed in the instances of the Jews, and of Simon the forcerer, mentions those of Lydia's household—"We do not find," says he, "that they made any confession of their faith before they were baptized †." But is it said they did not? No. Or is there any thing in the story that should lead us to suppose they did not? If there is not, their confession not having been particularly reported by the Historian, is no proof that they did not make one; but the contrary is with

* P. 131.

† P. 132. Acts xvi. 14, 15.

good reason to be presumed, since there are so many instances of its having been required, and its having been given. I acknowledge indeed, if it could be proved that there were infant children in the household of Lydia, and that they were baptized, it would follow that a profession of faith was in some instances dispensed with, as infants are not capable of making a profession. But it cannot be proved, nor has Mr. *A.* attempted it in this place *. Here therefore he fails.

And now all Mr. *A.* has further to reply to this objection of the Baptists is, “ that those “ cases in which a profession was required were “ of a peculiar nature,” that is, as he explains himself, they were cases of persons who “ had “ been bred up Jews or Heathens †.” Admitted : but does it thence follow, that the offspring of these converted Jews or Heathens were baptized without a profession ? Mr. *A.* may apprehend it very fit they should. But that is not the question. The question is about the fact, Whether they actually were baptized without a profession ? Till he has proved this from plain Scripture authority, the objection of the Baptists remains

* What Mr. *A.* observes concerning *households* in the sequel of his discourse will be considered in its order.

† P. 132.

in its full force, That there is no instance of either John or the Apostles having baptized any, but upon a profession of faith and repentance. And now,

2. It will scarce be denied by any one in his senses, That infants are incapable of professing faith and repentance. Mr. *A.*, however, has spent no less than four or five pages in discoursing of the capacities of infants, and enumerating texts of Scripture wherein infants are mentioned. But, has he proved that they are capable of professing faith and repentance? If not, to what purpose is he at all this pains to convince us of what we are as well satisfied about as he can be, that infants are capable of deriving benefits from the new Covenant, of receiving divine impressions, and of being happy in the world to come? These are matters utterly foreign to the present question. If, however, he means to possess his reader with a notion that we have our doubts about these things, and that this is the true ground of our not admitting infants to Baptism, he must give me leave to tell him that he does us great injustice. And now having made good the objection of the Baptists, as I have truly stated it, That there is no instance of either John or the Apostles having baptized any, but upon a profession of faith and repentance; and, that
 infants

infants are incapable of faith and repentance ;
the conclusion follows of course,

3. Therefore, there is no instance of either
John or the Apostles having baptized infants.

I am, Sir,

Yours,

L E T.

L E T T E R XII.

DEAR SIR,

LET us now proceed to consider the second objection our Author has put into the lips of his opponents, and his reply to it. It is,

SECONDLY, *The bad tendency of Infant-Baptism.* In order to give this objection its proper weight, Mr. A. will permit me to observe,

I. That what is performed as an act of worship, or a religious duty, if it has not the authority of Scripture, is sinful and of a bad tendency. This, no doubt, as a Protestant Dissenter, he will readily admit. *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin* *. Upon this ground he rejects the sign of the cross in Baptism, and many other ceremonies, which the church of England, as well as Rome, has thought fit, upon its own authority, to enjoin. Can he wonder then that they who object to Infant-Baptism as unscriptural, should consider it, for that reason, as unlawful and of very pernicious tendency? So they must

* Rom. xiv. 23.

consider it, upon Mr. *A.*'s own principles, till such time as he has convinced them that it has the authority of the Bible, which he has not yet done.

Here I cannot help expressing my concern, that so many wise and good men, in the communion of the Established Church, should not perceive the reasonableness and importance of this principle, common to all Protestant Dissenters. Hence it is that they speak of Pædo-baptism, when obliged to acknowledge its divine authority doubtful, as a mighty innocent harmless thing. But Protestant Dissenters are utterly precluded from this argument. It is therefore as unreasonable as it is unkind in them to reflect upon their brethren the Baptists, as guilty of petulance, narrowness, and bigotry, for maintaining with firmness, and zeal, that a practice which they deem unlawful is therefore of a bad tendency. Which leads me to consider their objection,

2. In the light Mr. *A.* has more particularly stated it. "Infant-Baptism," say they, "is hurtful both to children and their parents, as it tends to encourage in both a false hope, and an unwarranted dependence on a vain ceremony *."

* P. 140.

Now surely they who are in this practice do expect some advantage from it: but if Infant-Baptism is unscriptural, it must be a vain ceremony; and whatever the proposed advantage may be, the hope and dependence it creates must be false and unwarranted. There are various apprehensions concerning its utility and importance. Some look upon it as necessary to salvation; and their number, I fear, is not small. *Mr. A.*, however, heartily agrees with me in exploding this opinion, as most absurd and pernicious: but then he insists that this abuse of Infant-Baptism does not disprove the divine authority of it. I agree it does not. Yet, as he has intimated that Adult-Baptism is liable to the same abuse, he must give me leave to affirm, that there is not the like danger of such abuse in the latter case as in the former.

My reason is this: There are certain qualifications required of the adult, previous to their admission to Baptism, which qualifications, as they are generally understood by the Baptists, do clearly preclude a dependence upon external observances. But as no previous qualifications are required of Infants, (as indeed in the nature of the thing they cannot be) it is easy to conceive how parents may come to think, that Baptism has an influence on the salvation of their children independent of other considerations, and is there-

therefore of no small consequence in order to the securing their future happy state. And the fact corresponds exactly with the reasoning: vast numbers of people, who are in the practice of Infant-Baptism, do thus conceive of its importance; whereas few, I believe, who are in the practice of Adult-Baptism, lay any such stress upon it. Whether a presumptive evidence is to be drawn hence to the prejudice of the former, and in favour of the latter, I leave you, Sir, to determine. However of this I am very sure, that every real Christian cannot but wish, that an error big with such destructive consequences to mankind, whether it has or has not any real support in Pædobaptism, were utterly driven out of the world.

But though this dangerous error is disavowed by Mr. *A.* and his brethren, yet I think it must strike every one upon a little reflection, that the kind of reasoning which he and they use to authenticate Infant-Baptism, has a direct and natural tendency to beget in the minds both of parents and their children a *false hope*, and an *unwarranted dependence*. If parents are told that, being themselves Believers, their children are included with them in the Christian Covenant, and stand intitled in virtue of such relation to the blessings of it; and that by being baptized they are entered into the Covenant, and claim is laid on

their behalf to the promises of it; if, I say, they are told this, and do implicitly believe it, who shall blame them for concluding that their children are upon a different footing from other children, and have a fairer and better prospect of salvation than they? Nay, fond parents who believe all this, had need of a great command of their passions, and a very happy talent at distinguishing, to secure them from a full persuasion, that their children who grow up, as well as those who die in their infancy, shall most certainly be saved. And the effect of such hopes and dependences to betray them insensibly into a remissness about their education, and to give occasion afterwards, if their children turn out ill, to many sad suspicions as to the genuineness of their own piety, may be easily imagined. To which I must add, that it is far from being improbable that children, bred up in the notion that they are included with their parents in the Covenant, and that something extraordinary was done for them in their infancy, should be tempted to presume upon the safety of their future state, to the neglect of a serious attention to personal religion. Such then, in the apprehension of the Baptists, is the bad tendency of Infant-Baptism. Let us now see what Mr. A. has to say, by way of reply, to all this.

“It seems strange,” says he, “that any should speak of it, as hurtful to be early entered into the

“ the school and kingdom of Christ; to be com-
“ mitted to his teaching and government, his
“ protection and blessing as his disciples and
“ his subjects; and to be laid under peculiarly
“ solemn obligations to serve the Lord from
“ our youth *.” But who are the unnatural,
cruel, profane people that speak thus? There
is no Baptist, who fears God, but rejoices with
his whole heart at the idea of these great blessings
being conferred on his children in early life;
and who does not consider himself obliged to do
his utmost, by his instructions, influence, ex-
ample, and prayers, to promote their everlasting
salvation. But if our Author means that it is
in the power of parents to initiate their infant-
children into the kingdom of Christ, that they
may do this by baptizing them, and that the
solemnities of Infant-Baptism lay them under
peculiar obligations to serve the Lord; he must
give me leave to demand of him his authorities
for these positions. And until he has produced
them, no sensible man will wonder that the
Baptists should pronounce such positions not
only erroneous, but, for the reasons just now
mentioned, hurtful, and of a very dangerous
tendency.

But, in order to remove the prejudices which
some may have entertained concerning the Pædo-
baptists, as if they laid an undue stress upon

* P. 140.

this ceremony, Mr. *A.* tells us, at large, what pains he and his brethren are at to discourage a superstitious attachment to external modes and forms; and to remind parents and others, at these solemnities, that circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. All this is extremely proper. But I fear these cautions and exhortations will have little effect, so long as those who give them fail not to counteract them, by their own confused and mistaken reasonings respecting the joint interest of parents and their children in the Covenant, upon which the whole superstructure of Infant-Baptism stands. What pity then our brethren will not yield to the force of this plain truth, that positive institutions must in their own nature derive their authority, not from the uncertain deductions of analogy; but, from the clear and express declarations of God's word! Yielding to this proposition, they would at once find themselves obliged to lay aside Infant-Baptism: and so those evils of which we have been complaining, and to which the misapplication of that rite affords such ample support, would in a good measure, if not entirely, cease.—Evils, I will add, which do materially affect the tempers and practice of prodigious multitudes, and which our brethren cannot but be sensible, it is out of the power of all their cautions and warnings to prevent.

But

“ If Infant-Baptism is a vain ceremony, and
 “ gives encouragement to a groundless deceitful
 “ hope, the reflection falls upon the Almighty
 “ Himself, and He deceived his own people
 “ when He ordered them to circumcise their
 “ children at eight days; and added, it shall be
 “ a token of the Covenant betwixt Me and
 “ you*.” It remains that we now consider the

THIRD And last objection of the Baptists, as our Author has stated it, and his reply thereto: “ If Infant-Baptism be the will of Christ, why did He not more clearly reveal and expressly enjoin it † ?” or as the Baptists, if they may be allowed to speak for themselves, would chuse to put it, “ If it be the will of Christ, why did He not reveal and enjoin it in any way at all ?”

To this objection Mr. *A.* replies by asserting, “ that the Scriptures do say enough concerning it to give satisfaction to the honest, diligent, and unprejudiced inquirer.” If this be true, his opponents must be miserably defective in honesty, diligence, and impartiality, at least in one or other of these virtues. But what do the Scriptures say to give us this abundant satisfaction? Mr. *A.* refers us to what he has offered in the preceding chapters of his book, especially the second. You, Sir, have read those

* P. 143:

† Ibid.

chapters and your Bible too, and yet remain unsatisfied. I am, however, inclined to hope, did our Author know you, he would except you from the number of dishonest, superficial, prejudiced inquirers. Indeed I am of opinion that scarce any, even of Mr. A.'s own persuasion, have read his treatise attentively, without wishing for some further satisfaction upon the point, that Christ has clearly revealed and expressly enjoined Infant-Baptism. I cannot but hope, therefore, that a perfect satisfaction to the contrary will be the result of an impartial consideration of the preceding Letters, especially the tenth, to which I beg leave to refer them.

But "if any should say, continues Mr. A. "that no passages are produced in which Christ "has required in so many words, *Baptize Infants*, we answer partly by referring to what "is offered, Chap. 2. § 2." To which I reply by referring you also to Letter the tenth, "And we answer partly," adds he, "by asking the objector, whether he does not think "himself sufficiently authorized to keep the "Christian Sabbath, though Christ has no "where said in so many words, *Remember the "first day of the week to keep it holy* *." There is, I acknowledge, some weight in this objection: and all I can say to it is, that not having yet met with any passage in the New-Testament

* P. 143.

that appears to me to have repealed the fourth commandment, and to have required the observation of the first day, I cannot think myself sufficiently authorized to renounce that, and to keep this.

He again asks the objector, "Does not he admit women to the Lord's table, though his divine Lord has nowhere said, *Let women, as well as men, do this in remembrance of Me* *." This kind of reply has such an air of trifling in it, as cannot fail, I think, of disgusting rather than satisfying a sober inquirer. If, however, Mr. A. expects a direct answer to his question, he will give me leave to tell him, that Christian women are commanded to partake of the Lord's Supper. The Apostle, in 1 Cor. xi. 20—ult., where he delivers what he had received from Christ respecting this institution, is evidently addressing them as well as the men; for of them, and of their deportment in their religious assemblies, he had been particularly discoursing in the preceding verses. And when, in the course of that passage, he says, *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat, &c.* † he uses the word *ἄνθρωπος*, which, being of the common gender, includes women as well as men.

* P. 144.

† V. 28.

Mr. *A.* goes on, “ Does he baptize Believers only? Where has Jesus said, *Baptize Believers only**?” Christ hath said, *Go teach all nations, baptizing them*; adding, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved* †. And the Apostles, who no doubt understood the commission they received from their Master, required a profession of faith from those whom they baptized. The Baptists, therefore, in obedience to Christ, and in conformity to the practice of the Apostles, admit none to Baptism but upon a profession of their faith.

Our Author, pleased with this Laconick way of reasoning, proceeds, “ Does he baptize those again, who have been baptized in their infancy? Where is the sacred oracle that says, *Baptize the adult, though they have been baptized in their infancy* ‡?” The Baptist does not baptize those again who have been baptized in their infancy: nor does he assert that the sacred oracle any where requires him so to do. He does, indeed, sometimes baptize those who have been sprinkled in their infancy: but then he denies, as Mr. *A.* is sensible, that sprinkling is baptizing; insisting, as he thinks upon the clearest evidence, that the word βαπτίζω signifies, and only signifies, to immerse, or to wash by immersion. The charge therefore of Anabaptism, or of baptizing persons again, he utterly denies.

* P. 144.

† Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 16.

‡ P. 144.

Once more, Sir, and you will get to the end of this catechetical lecture. "Does he require," asks Mr. A. "the immersion of the whole body, and renounce Baptism administered in any other form? Let him produce his Master's authority requiring of his servant, *Thou shalt baptize only by plunging* *." If TO BAPTIZE persons signifies no more nor less than TO PLUNGE or DIP them in water, for the truth of which the Baptists appeal to those who understand the original language, and to the Scripture instances of Baptism; then our Saviour, by commanding his Apostles and Ministers to baptize, has commanded them to baptize only by plunging. And Mr. A. might, in the apprehension of the Baptists, with equal propriety have asked, "Do persons bathe themselves by plunging, or by sprinkling?"

Mr. A., flattering himself that he has so managed his questions, that the Baptists cannot give a direct answer to them; or that they must have recourse to something short of an express command, to warrant the duties he has questioned them upon; tells his reader, with a kind of eclat, that, if they have authority for these things equal to an express command, he has the same for Infant-Baptism. That question must be submitted. I am pleased, however, that there is a mixture of diffidence with all that con-

* P. 144.

fidence our Author has expressed upon the matter; for he appears to me to admit, that there is not an express command for baptizing children.

What follows is a repetition of the old arguments from the Covenant, Circumcision, and other points which have been already discussed (except that of HOUSEHOLDS, which will be considered hereafter). All these arguments, Mr. *A.* thinks, are sufficient to preclude any reasonable dispute about the divine authority of Infant-Baptism. Whether they are so or not, is a question I am most heartily willing to submit to the decision of that sort of persons our Author has described above, I mean, “honest, diligent, and unprejudiced inquirers.”

It now only remains, before we quit this chapter, to take a little notice of Mr. *A.*'s reply to their difficulty, “who would have expected to find more on the subject both in the discourses and writings of the Apostles*.” That there is any thing at all in their writings on the subject of Infant-Baptism, I may venture to affirm, has not yet been proved: and as to those of their writings which are not conveyed down to us, I can say nothing of them. I agree with Mr. *A.*, “that it is probable the Apostles insisted most on subjects of the greatest import-

* P. 145.

“ance, and on such as were most generally
 “talked of and disputed in their day.” But,
 as he supposes “that none ever doubted then
 “of the propriety of Infant-Baptism, and that
 “therefore it is not to be wondered at, that
 “they said NO MORE upon the subject †;” I am
 at equal liberty to suppose, and I think upon
 much better grounds, that none ever had an idea
 then of baptizing infants, and that therefore it
 is not to be wondered at, that they said NO-
 THING AT ALL upon the subject.

I am, Sir,

Yours.

† P. 145.

LETTER XIII.

DEAR SIR,

I Fear the two last Letters, in which are considered Mr. *A.*'s replies to the objections of Baptists, have somewhat disturbed the thread of the argument: it will be necessary therefore to recall your attention a moment to the state in which we left it at the close of the tenth Letter, or rather a little way on in the eleventh.

Having, in the former part of these Letters, examined at large our Author's reasoning from the Covenant, Circumcision, and those other points which at best can only be considered as presumptive and indirect proofs of the right of children to Baptism; and having shewn, I hope to your satisfaction, that the reasoning, even from those topicks, is totally defective and insufficient; we at length were so happy as to arrive at the ground on which alone debates of this kind are to be tried and determined, I mean, the express positive authority of Scripture. And I think it may be affirmed without hesitation, that, in that stage of the debate to which I wish

to recall your attention, *viz.* the beginning of the eleventh Letter, we left our Author in possession of no one passage of the New Testament which can be said, with any appearance of reason, to command or enjoin Infant-Baptism.

Mr. *A.*, however, still appeals to Scripture, if not for a command, yet for examples to authorize this practice. I am most heartily willing to join him in this appeal; and if it can be satisfactorily proved, that the Apostles did indeed baptize infants, I will admit that such proof will supply the defect of an express command. In order thus to bring together all our Author means to say from Scripture, I must beg you to turn to the third section of his fourth chapter, passing over, for the present, his inquiry into the practice of the church since the times of the Apostles, which we shall consider afterwards. There you will find him saying, “The practice
“ of the church in baptizing infants, is founded
“ on the authority of the Apostles themselves;
“ and, as a church, it is herein formed upon
“ their model * :” that is, in other words, infants are initiated by Baptism into the Christian church, and so become members of it, agreeable to the model of the church which the Apostles laid down, and to their own practice which was exactly conformable to it. This then he is “to
“ endeavour to prove.”

Now if this proposition were true, it would surely be very natural to expect some plain directions respecting these matters in the Acts of the Apostles, and some clear instances of these first Ministers baptizing infants, and admitting them into the church. Whether Mr. *A.* felt a suspicion that he might possibly fail in his proofs, is not for me to say. He has, however, provided beforehand, in the best manner he could, against the disappointment which such a failure would occasion, by telling his reader, “It was
“ needful for the Apostles to insist largely on
“ these matters, the propriety of Infant-Baptism
“ not having been disputed in their time*.” But would not Mr. *A.* consider himself as very egregiously trifled with, if having, for instance, demanded of an advocate for the established church, what proofs there are in the New Testament that the feasts and fasts now used in the church, were observed in those times, his opponent should tell him, “Why, truly, it was needful for the Apostles to insist largely on these matters, the propriety of such feasts and fasts not having been then questioned?”

He adds, as a further succedaneum to any defect of evidence that might be complained of, “Children had been admitted to the seal of the
“ Covenant for two thousand years:” And what then? “Therefore it was needful for the

* P. 168, 169.

“ Apostles to insist largely upon their right to “ it*,” that is, to Baptism. Or, in other words, infants had been circumcised for two thousand years, therefore no doubt near two thousand years ago they were baptized. But Mr. A. can scarce expect this reasoning will satisfy an unprejudiced inquirer, till such time as he has proved that Circumcision and Baptism are one and the same thing, or at least that they are so nearly allied in nature and obligation, as that the repealing the former must necessarily be interpreted to mean the enacting the latter.

But the main intent of these observations of Mr. A.'s, is to make way for another apology (and a more plausible one than the former) for the Apostles having said so little about Infant-Baptism; and that is, “ Its having been a com-
 “ mon practice among the Jews, time immemo-
 “ rial, to initiate their children into the Cove-
 “ nant by Baptism, and not only them but pro-
 “ selytes to their religion, and their children
 “ also.” So that we are to consider Christian Baptism as succeeding of course to Jewish Baptism; and, having been told that our Saviour has adopted it into his plan as a New Testament ordinance, we are not to wonder that there are no particular directions given us who are to be baptized, nor any particular mention made of infants in the histories of Baptism. This seems

to be the sense of the passage Mr. A. has given us from Dr. Lightfoot: "There needed no mention," says he, "of baptizing infants in the New Testament, as it had been as ordinarily used in the church of the Jews, as ever it hath been in the Christian church. It was enough to mention that Christ established Baptism for an ordinance under the gospel, and then it was well enough known who should be baptized by the use of this ordinance of old †." And this seems to be Dr. Hammond's view of the matter, who tells us, "It is little needful to defend the Baptism of Christian infants, from the law of circumcising infants among the Jews, the foundation being FAR MORE FITLY laid in that other of Jewish Baptism, a ceremony of initiation for all, especially for profelytes, as well as that, and whereas that of circumcision belonged only to one, this other being common to both sexes*.

Now I do not wonder that the friends of Infant-Baptism should pay great deference to the opinion and reasonings of two such respectable authorities, as the Doctors Lightfoot and Hammond; especially in a matter which may be thought to bear an aspect somewhat favourable to their cause. Nor do I mean rashly to assert, that these great men had no foundation at all for what they say concerning Jewish Baptism. But

† P. 169, 170.

Quere IV. p. 610. fol. edit. 2d.

* Dr. Hammond's works,

still, I may surely be allowed to affirm, that, eminent as they were for learning, integrity, and piety, it is not impossible that they might consider this matter in too strong a light, and raise a superstructure upon it which it will not support. Nay, that they actually did so, I hope clearly to make appear in the sequel.

The authorities upon which their opinion is grounded, are those of Maimonides, Rabbi Solomon, and the compilers of the Babylonish and Jerusalem Talmuds. Now the general character of the Jewish Rabbins and Talmudists for ignorance, fancifulness, and want of integrity, is notorious almost to a proverb. Their books abound with senseless tales, scandalous falsehoods, and most abominable blasphemies; which is well known to be true in an especial manner of the Talmuds just mentioned, from whence Dr. Hammond and others cite their principal testimonies in favour of Profelyte-Baptism*. I am
ready,

* For the character I have given of the Jewish Rabbins and Talmudists, I might appeal to the judgment and testimony of very many learned men, such as Scaliger, Le Clerc, Buxtorf, and others. But, for the sake of brevity, I will content myself with giving you only Dr. Lightfoot's account of them, the Author Mr. A. has cited in favour of Profelyte-Baptism. Speaking of the mistake of those who think the Old Testament was pointed by the wise men of Tiberias, he says, "I do not wonder at the impudence

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ready, however, to grant that the accounts which Jewish writers give us of customs and ceremonies, actually in use among them at the times in which they severally lived, are deserving of credit: for of such facts they were no doubt competent witnesses, and cannot be supposed, whilst occasionally relating them, to have been under any temptation to deceive. But then their reasonings upon such customs and ceremonies, and the traditions they pretend to have received from former ages relative to them, will surely have little weight with those who not only consider these Authors in the light they have been represented, but reflect a moment that it was

“ dence of the Jews who invented the story; but I wonder
“ at the credulity of Christians who applaud it. Recollect,
“ I beseech you, the names of the Rabbins of Tiberias,
“ from the first situation of the university there, to the
“ time that it expired; and what, at length, do you find,
“ but a kind of men mad with Pharisaism, bewitching
“ with traditions, and bewitched, blind, guileful, doting,
“ they must pardon me if I say magical and monstrous?
“ Men, how unfit, how unable, how foolish for the
“ undertaking so divine! Read over the Jerusalem Talmud,
“ and see there how R. Judah, R. Chaninah, &c. and the
“ rest of the grand Doctors among the Rabbins of Tibe-
“ rias behave themselves; how earnestly they do nothing;
“ how childishly they handle serious matters; how much
“ of sophistry, froth, poison, smoke, nothing at all there
“ is in their disputes! And if you can believe the Bible
“ was pointed in such a school, believe also all that the
“ Talmudists write. Vol. II. p. 73.

their

their interest to add every embellishment to their religious rites and usages which their fruitful imagination could suggest. By the aid of this distinction we shall be enabled to draw the line between what is clear and certain, and what is at best doubtful and precarious, respecting the matter in debate.

It is plain then, I think, that the Jews were accustomed, a long time since, to baptize or wash persons in water after they had circumcised them. This was their practice about 1160 years after Christ, when Maimonides and Rabbi Solomon flourished. This was their practice the latter end of the fifth century, about which time the Babylonish Talmud was compiled. And this too might be their practice in the third century, about the middle of which the Jerusalem Talmud is generally supposed to have been finished*. But beyond that period there

* Buxtorf fixes it at the year 230. Vid. Buxt. Synag. Judaic. c. 3. p. 60. Edit. Basil. 1661. Mr. Whiston, however, places it in the year 369. See Chronolog. Tables, Cent. 19. Scaliger in 370. Vid. Scal. de emend. Temp. l. 7. p. 323. And others in 422. Vid. Wolfii Præfat. ad Bibliothec. Heb. p. 28. With these last Dr. Gill agrees, whose skill in Rabbinical learning is well known, and whose Dissertation on this subject of Jewish Profelyte-Baptism I would recommend to those who wish to see this question more largely discussed.

is no evidence of any Jewish writer having said any thing at all about the matter.

Let us now inquire what is to be gathered from the authorities just referred to, concerning their own opinions of this ceremony, as to the nature and quality of it, the subjects of it, and its obligation. And I am inclined to think it will be found upon examination, that little more is to be collected with certainty from their accounts, than will warrant the general fact that has been admitted. As to the nature and quality of this ceremony, whether they considered it as a mere appendage to Circumcision, or as an initiatory rite distinct from it, will admit of doubt. From the Talmud it should seem plain that the latter was the light in which they considered it*; and yet from some circumstances, it may with good reason be conjectured, that they looked upon it only as a washing prescribed by their elders to purify from the pollution occasioned by the wound of Circumcision: for they considered the blood of Circumcision as causing pollution, and this washing was ordered to be used after the sore of Circumcision was healed †.

Again,

* “The Profelytes entered not into Covenant but by Circumcision, Baptism, and sprinkling of Blood.” Gemara Babylon. ad tit. Cherithoth, c. 2.

† The Talmudists, Maimonides, &c. speak of Baptism as following Circumcision, and after the party is cured of the

Again, as to the subjects of this ceremony, whether they baptized their natural-born children the wound. Maimonides *Ifuri Bia*, c. 13, 14. and *Talmud Bab. Mafs. Jev. fol. 47.* "It is plain enough," says Dr. Gale, "that upon some such notion," (that is, of cleansing from pollution) "they were washed after the fore of Circumcision was healed, as are also the Mahometans to this day from them. And this pollution seems to have been contracted from the blood of Circumcision; for thus the Chaldee paraphrase which goes under the name of Jonathan's, interprets the words, Ezek. xvi. 6. of the blood of Circumcision, from which, v. 9. God says, he washed and cleansed them: and the Jews in their second benediction after Circumcision apply the words in the same manner. And therefore it is observable, even all natural-born Jews were washed with this Baptism, except only Females," as Dr. Hyde likewise notes (in *Not. 39. ad Bobov. Tract. de Turcarum Liturgia*, p. 22.) "who not being circumcised, were not washed till they had contracted pollution some other way: and this plainly intimates that there was a Baptism thought necessary on account of Circumcision, or some pollution contracted thereby; otherwise persons who had been circumcised would not have been obliged to a Baptism, from which others who could not be circumcised were excused. Why then," adds the Doctor, "may not the Talmud be understood to mean only this washing for pollution by Circumcision? This was to be done as soon as the cure of the sore was accomplished, and so was that spoken of in the Talmud: they are the same therefore in respect to time, and I do not understand how a person could be washed with two different washings at one and the same time." Dr. Gale's *Reflections on Mr. Wall's History of Infant-Baptism*, p. 328,

dren, or only profelytes and their children, is not sufficiently clear from their accounts. Their reasoning in regard of this custom, together with that of sacrificing, from Numb. xv. 15. *As you are, so shall the stranger be**; would induce one to conclude that the former was their practice; as Dr. Hammond, if not Dr. Lightfoot, seems to have apprehended †. On the contrary, their generally speaking of Baptism in reference to their profelytes, would lead one to suppose it was a ceremony peculiar to them; as was the opinion, I think, of the great Selden. And then, as to their idea of the obligation of this custom, it is manifest they thought differently. Some maintained, if a person was circumcised only it was sufficient, and others that he could not be a perfect Jew unless he was both circumcised and baptized ‡.

In

* Maimon. *Ifuri Bia*, c. 13.

† See the passages already cited from Lightfoot and Hammond, p. 187. particularly that of Dr. Hammond, which speaks of "Jewish-Baptism as being a ceremony of initiation for all, especially for profelytes."

‡ Thus, in the Babylonish Talmud, we find two Rabbins debating the matter after this manner; "Of him that was circumcised, and not baptized, Rabbi Eliezer said, that he was a profelyte. Because, said he, we find of our Fathers (Abraham, Isaac, &c.) that they were circumcised, but not baptized. And of him that was baptized and not circumcised, Rabbi Joshua said, that

In such a state of uncertainty are we left upon all these questions, by those very authorities which are usually appealed to in support of the opinion, that Jewish initiatory-Baptism generally obtained in the time of our Saviour. It is also further to be observed here, that some of the Jewish Rabbins plainly intimate they neither knew nor allowed of such an initiatory rite; ridiculing Christian Baptism as a novel ceremony, not founded in reason, but mere fancy. Several passages to this purpose Dr. Gale has cited in his Reflections on Mr. Wall's History of Infant-Baptism, to which book, Sir, I refer you*.

Let us now see whether there are any other Authors who speak of this custom. Dr. Hammond cites a passage from Arrian the philosopher of Nicomedia, which speaks of those who are accounted right Jews, as *βεβαμμενως*, dipt †. But whoever considers that Arrian did not live till 150 years after Christ, that what he says may refer, to the frequent washings in use among the

“ he was a proselyte. Because, said he, we find of our
 “ mothers, that they were baptized, and not circum-
 “ cised. But the wise men pronounced, that till he
 “ were both baptized and circumcised, he was not a pro-
 “ selyte.” Gemara ad tit. jevamoth, c. 4.

* See Gale's Reflections on Mr. Wall's History, p. 329

—333—

† Dissert. in Epictet. l. 2. c. 9.

Jews,

Jews, for purification from legal pollutions, and that it is well known the Pagan writers were used to confound the Jews and Christians together, very commonly speaking of the latter under the denomination of the former, of which instances might be produced from Suetonius, Tacitus, and others; whoever, I say, considers these things will be convinced, that this passage is by no means in point to prove, that Baptism, as an initiatory rite, obtained in the time of our Saviour and his Apostles*.

It remains now to be observed, that there is no mention made of this practice of Profelyte-Baptism, by the earliest Jewish writers, such as Philo, who flourished in the first century; or

* Dr. Owen thinks Arrian is here very evidently speaking of Christians, and that therefore this passage will not furnish a proof in favour of Profelyte-Baptism. His words are, "Quem locum frustra quidem adducunt, ut probent Judæos ritu Baptismi uti solitos fuisse, cum apertissime de Christianis loquatur Philosophus." Owen. Theologoumen. l. 1. c. 9. p. 109. And Dr. Jennings, in his Jewish Antiquities, says, "It is most likely that Arrian meant Christians, in the place alledged, because in his time many persons became Profelytes to Christianity, but few or none to Judaism.—Besides, if he had spoken of Profelytes to Judaism, it is highly probable he would have mentioned their Circumcision, for which the Heathens derided them, rather than their Baptism, which was not so very foreign to some of the Heathen rites of purification." Vol. I. c. 3. p. 138.

Josephus, who the same century wrote his history of that people, and had frequent occasions to mention this ceremony, if it had obtained among them. Nor is it mentioned in the Mishna, which was compiled about the year 219 after Christ *; or in the Targums or Chaldee Paraphrases. Nor is there, in fine, a word about it in the New-Testament, the Apocryhal books, or the Old-Testament. And whoever reflects how natural it is to suppose that most of these writings, if not all of them, would have taken notice of this practice, had it obtained in the early age our opponents assert it did; will surely admit that their silence upon the matter affords a strong presumptive proof to the contrary, that no such initiatory ceremony did prevail in our Saviour's time. And if no such ceremony did prevail in that age, or there is not sufficient evidence of the fact, all the reasoning from it in favour of Christian Pœdobaptism of course fails †.

But,

* Vide Buxtorf. *Synag. Judaic.* cap. 3. p. 52. Mr. Wall says, it is not only mentioned in the Gemara, but in the text of the Mishna itself. Dr. Gill has, however, shewn the mistake of this in his *Dissertation on the Baptism of Jewish Profelytes*, p. 37.

† Dr. Jennings, in his *Jewish Antiquities*, says, "After all, it remains to be proved, not only that Christian-Baptism was instituted in the room of Profelyte-Baptism, but that the Jews had any such Baptism

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But, admitting that this custom did obtain so early as is pretended, it is nevertheless agreed on all hands that it was not of divine authority, but only one of those traditions of the elders, which are so frequently spoken of in Scripture with disapprobation and contempt; and is it probable that our Lord would make a ceremony, which originated in ignorance and superstition, the ground or model of a Christian institution? or that He would by such means wish to accommodate Himself to the bigotted Jews, at the very time He was severely censuring their leaders for their bold innovations in religion, and their teaching for doctrines the commandments of men?

Besides, if Jewish Baptism was the model or exemplar of Christian Baptism, the natural and

“ in our Saviour’s time: the earliest accounts we have of
“ it, are in the Mishna and Gemara.” Indeed as to the
Mishna, Dr. Gill has satisfactorily shewn that there is
no account of it there. Dr. Jennings further says,
“ There wants more evidence of its being as ancient as
“ our Saviour’s time, than I apprehend can be produced
“ to ground an argument upon it, in relation to Christian
“ Baptism.” Vol. I. p. 136, 138. Dr. Owen also asserts,
“ The institution of the rite of Baptism is no where men-
“ tioned in the Old Testament; no example is extant;
“ nor during the Jewish church was it ever used in the ad-
“ mission of Profelytes; no mention of it is to be met with
“ in Philo, Josephus, nor in Jesus the son of Syrach; nor
“ in the Evangelical History.” Vide Theologoumen. l. 5.
Digress. i. p. 447.

obvious consequence of this position will prove unfavourable to the cause our opponents wish to establish. For, admitting there was such a custom, it must have either extended to the children of native Jews, as well as profelytes and their children, or have been confined to the latter. If it extended to all of them, then Christian Baptism came in the room of Jewish Baptism, and not of Circumcision, as the Pædo-baptists commonly with great earnestness maintain: and so the argument from that topick is set aside, unless it be said that this one rite was to take place of two rites. And if it was confined to Jewish profelytes and their children, then the consequence which some have drawn seems very natural, that Christian Baptism was designed to be administered only to the first profelytes to Christianity and their children, or at most to such persons and their offspring only who in any age or country should first receive and profess the gospel. But these consequences, however natural, Mr. *A.* I persuade myself, will not approve. As therefore this argument, if admitted, of Christian Baptism's being founded on Jewish Baptism, proves more than our Author would wish to have proved, and so proves nothing at all to his purpose; it would certainly be his wisdom totally to abandon it. And indeed, the manner of his expressing himself, in the beginning of his treatise *, upon

* P. 5.

this very matter, looks as if he laid very little if any stress upon it: "Some," says he, "have supposed that Baptism was adopted by Christ, and practised by his Apostles, as a temporary accommodation to the genius and customs of the Jews, who had been used to Profelyte-Baptism, and many other washings, in and before the time of our Saviour. But if so, they would, most probably, have confined it to Jewish converts."

Mr. *A.* will therefore, it is probable, say that the only use he wishes to make of the argument from Jewish-Baptism is, that if such a custom was at that time known to prevail among the Jews, it is not to be thought strange, that no particular mention was made of infants by our Saviour in his commission to the Apostles, since from the notoriety of the practice they would naturally suppose Him to mean infants as well as others. But this reasoning proceeds, at least in a degree, on the principle I have just shewn the great mistake of, that our Lord meant to conform to the usages of the Jews. Besides, if there was no occasion to mention infants, that matter being to be understood of course; what occasion to give a particular commission about baptizing at all? might not that have been understood of course likewise? But, if it was thought fit formally to institute Baptism, was it not natural to

expect that the proper subjects of it should be described with the same precision, that the ordinance itself is described? Or, if some prior custom was sufficient to direct in the question concerning the proper subjects, was it not more natural to suppose the Apostles would take John's Baptism for their guide, than that of the Jews? and it is clear, I think, beyond a doubt, that John did not baptize Infants.

To which I would further add, that if, as our opponents reason, the prevalence of this ceremony among the Jews would have made it necessary for our Saviour to expressly forbid the baptizing children, if it was his meaning that they should not be baptized; I ask, would it not have been alike yea more necessary for Him to have expressly prohibited their partaking of the Lord's Supper, since that is supposed to have come in the room of the Passover, and children were admitted to it as well as the rest of the family?

Thus have we seen that the proof adduced in support of the supposed fact, that Jewish initiatory Baptism obtained in our Saviour's time, is defective and insufficient; that there are strong presumptive proofs to the contrary; that, admitting the Jews were at that time accustomed to wash their children in water after they had circumcised them, it is plain they had no divine
 autho-

authority for such a practice; that it is highly unreasonable to suppose our Lord would make a traditionary usage the ground or exemplar of a Christian institution; and, in a word, that as He judged it fit formally to institute Baptism, it is natural to suppose He would describe the proper subjects of the ordinance with the same precision He has the ordinance itself. And thus I persuade myself you are convinced, Sir, that the reasoning from Jewish to Christian Baptism utterly fails.

I am, Sir,

Yours,

LETTER XIV.

DEAR SIR,

JUST as we were entering, in the last Letter, upon Mr. *A.*'s historical proofs from the New Testament in favour of Infant-Baptism, our attention was diverted to another matter, I mean Jewish Profelyte-Baptism, which seems to have been thrown out as an apology for our Saviour and his Apostles not having said so much, respecting the right of infants to this Christian institution, as he could have wished they had done. That question we have disposed of, and you are convinced that our Author's apology is insufficient.

Mr. *A.* proceeds: "Yet the New-Testament is not silent upon this head*." Not silent! If the fact really is, as he had a little before asserted, "that the practice of the church in baptizing infants is founded on the authority of the Apostles; and that, as a church, it is herein formed upon their model:" I say, if this were the fact, instead of the New Testament's not

being silent upon the matter, one would expect to hear frequently of it, particularly in the Acts of the Apostles. But the case is quite otherwise. As to passages requiring the practice, scarce any are pretended to be produced. Such, however, as have been produced to that purpose, contain, as we have seen, rather a prohibition of the practice, than a command enforcing it. And as to examples of Infant-Baptism; whether there are any such in the New Testament, is to be the subject of our present inquiry.

Now here, Sir, I would again remind you of what Mr. *A.* stands engaged to prove, *viz.* That this practice is “founded on the authority of the Apostles,” and that “the church is herein formed on their model.” His proofs therefore ought to be clear, direct, and positive. It is not enough to tell us that the Apostles possibly might, or that they probably did, baptize infants. Conjectures will not in this case do: if our Author’s proofs stand upon this ground only, they are insufficient, and must utterly fail of giving his readers that satisfaction he has thus led them to expect.

What then are his proofs? They are drawn from passages wherein the Apostles are said to have baptized HOUSEHOLDS; as in the cases of Lydia, Stephanas, and the Jailor. Now if it

can be proved that the term **HOUSEHOLD** necessarily includes in it infants, and that the phrase of baptizing households must necessarily mean the baptizing every individual therein; or if it can be proved, from the circumstances of the particular cases referred to, that there must have been infants in those families, and that it is absurd to suppose they were not baptized; I say, if these, or either of these propositions, are proved, Mr. *A.* has made good his engagement, and he may plead the authority of the Apostles for this practice, and assert that the church is herein founded on their model. But if neither of these propositions are proved, and especially if the reverse of them shall appear upon good ground to be the fact, his plea of apostolick authority falls of course.

Now as to the first of these propositions, no man of common sense will affirm that every **HOUSEHOLD** must have infants in it. We very well know there are many families, which consist only of the master or mistress and their servants; and many others in which, though there may be children, yet they are of an age beyond infancy: and such families are upon the whole more numerous, I suppose, than those that have infants in them. Besides, the general term **HOUSEHOLD** is often used, when only the greater part of it is intended. So we are told, that *Elkanah*

and

and ALL HIS HOUSE went up to Shiloh to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow * : and yet we learn from what follows, that *Hannah and the child Samuel staid at home.*

It is plain then, that, though there are many households in which there are infants ; and though, when households are spoken of, all the individuals of which they are composed are sometimes intended ; yet, on the contrary, there are many households in which there are no infants, and households are sometimes spoken of when only parts of such household are intended. Judge you then, Sir, what truth there is in Mr. A.'s assertion, “ When it is said the Apostles baptized households, it is saying, in other words, that they baptized children ||.”

Let us now see whether there are any circumstances in the cases our Author has produced, from whence it may be certainly inferred there were infants in those families, and that it is absurd to suppose they were not baptized. The case of Lydia is first mentioned, and as the story is short we will recite the whole of it : *And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us : whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.*

* 1 Sam. i. 21.

And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us*. Now if what has been just said concerning HOUSEHOLDS be admitted, the use of that general term here will not prove that Lydia had infants in her family, and that they were baptized.

Mr. A. indeed asks, “Of what was her household composed, if she had no children †?” The answer is very natural, Of servants, and persons employed in her business under her. But is there any other circumstance, you will inquire, to induce a supposition that she had infants in her family? None at all. On the contrary, there are circumstances which naturally lead to the opposite conclusion. It is most probable she was a single woman, for there is not only no mention made of her husband, but the business and household are said to be her’s. And as she was *of the city of Thyatira*, it looks as if she was only a sojourner at Philippi †: and if so, it is very unlikely, even though we

* Acts xvi. 14, 15.

† P. 171.

† Wolfius, in his *Curæ Philolog.* says,—“Cur non credamus, eam more mercantium, Judæis imprimis recepto, mercatus causa varias terras obiisse, propriam vero rerum suarum sedem fixam habuisse Thyatiris, ex alia ceteroquin regione oriundam?” *Wolf. Philolog. in loc.*

admit she had children, that she should bring them with her across the Ægean sea from so remote a distance. We cannot indeed be certain upon these questions, yet surely the probabilities are rather against her having infant-children, than for her having them.

Here I must just observe, that as Mr. *A.* would persuade us that her household was baptized upon her faith, he takes care to place her conversion and Baptism in a connection as favourable as he could to that idea, making but one sentence of the whole, “When her heart
“ was opened to receive the word, she was bap-
“ tized and her household ||.” Whereas her conversion is related in the 14th verse; and the other matter, v. 15th, in a different connection, *And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, &c.*

Nor will the objection Mr. *A.* throws out, of the faith of her household not being particularly recorded, have any weight with those who consider, in how concise a manner the Evangelists are used to relate facts of this nature. Dr. Whitby, who was himself a Pœdobaptist, was so far from making any account of this circumstance, that he thus paraphrases the passage: “*And when she, and those of her household, were*
“ *instructed in the Christian faith, and in the nature*

“ of the Baptism required by it, she was baptized
 “ and her household; then she besought us, &c.”

The next instance Mr. A. mentions is that of the household of Stephanas, which the Apostle Paul tells us he had himself baptized*. He, however, speaks of them in the close of the epistle, as *having addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints* †: from whence it is reasonable to conclude, that they were not infants at the time of his baptizing them. All Mr. A. has to object to this natural account of the matter is, that, as they were the first-fruits of Achaia, they might be children at their Baptism, and be grown to a sufficient age, at the time of St. Paul's writing this epistle, to minister unto the saints. But, besides the consideration that their being spoken of as the fruits of the Apostle's ministry, would lead one to suppose that they, as well as Stephanas himself, were of an age to be instructed and converted; if we reflect on the short distance of time there was between the Apostles first preaching in Achaia and his writing this epistle, which could not be, I think, at most more than five years, and his here speaking of them as HAVING ADDICTED THEMSELVES to the ministry, which must be understood of their temper and engagements for at least some time past; if, I say, we take all

* 1. Cor. i. 16.

† Ch. xvi. 15.

these circumstances into the account, we shall, I am persuaded, see little force in our Author's objection. And after all, if we can do no more than conjecture on either side, I am heartily willing to leave it to any impartial reader to determine, where the strongest probabilities lie.

The last instance Mr. *A.* produces is that of the Jailor at Philippi, of whom it is said, that *he was baptized, and all his **, that is, as we say, all his who had heard the word and believed, whether they were children, servants, dependents, or relations. And, in support of this exposition of the passage, we cite the verse preceding the text, and that following it. In the former it is said, that Paul and Silas *spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house*: and in the latter it is added, that *he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house*. Now, upon this view of the words in the connection they stand, methinks every unprejudiced Reader, without any further remark, would instantly conclude that our exposition is most just and natural.

But Mr. *A.* will have it that there were infant-children in the Jailor's family, and that they were baptized. He, however, brings no other direct argument in support of his opinion, than

* Acts xvi. 33.

what is taken from the import of the general terms HOUSEHOLD and ALL HIS HOUSE, which argument has been already considered and answered. As to the reasoning of the Baptists from the verses preceding and following the text, he prudently passes over the former in silence; aware, it is probable, that his reader would be apt to say, If the phrase of ALL HIS, or ALL HIS HOUSE, in the one verse is necessarily to be understood of infants, it is so to be understood in the other; and then the sense will be, that the Apostles spake the word of the Lord to the Jailor, and to all his infants. This verse therefore, as I said, he passes over in silence. But as to that following the text, he dwells particularly upon it, in hopes by the aid of a criticism to abate the force of the argument we draw from it, if not to improve it to his own purpose. Πεντηκοντος, *having believed*, is, I admit, in the singular number, and therefore to be referred to the Jailor: but by what authority he makes πανοικι signify *over his house*, rather than *with his house**, I do not know. I maintain then that the proper rendering is, *He, having believed with all his house, rejoiced*. And so the sentiment, though somewhat differently expressed in the original, is the same with that of *Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believing on the Lord*

* Πανοικι, Adv. cum tota domo, cum tota familia. Hederici Lex. with

with all his house ||. The argument therefore from the one text and the other, has considerable force in it to prove, that of whomsoever these households consisted, they were such as believed, and so were qualified to be admitted to Baptism.

But admitting our Author's criticism, that the words should be rendered, *He, having believed, rejoiced over all his house*; still it does not amount to a proof that there were infants in the Jailor's family, or that if there were they were baptized. And as to his conjecture that the Jailor's faith in God respects his trusting or committing his children to God, and his inferring from thence that they were baptized upon the faith of their parent; I am satisfied the conjecture itself, and the doctrine built upon it, will not be mistaken for proof by any considerate person,

Thus hath Mr. *A.* utterly failed in every instance he has produced in support of his assertion, "that the practice of the church in baptizing Infants is founded on the authority of the Apostles; and that, as a church, it is herein formed upon their model." How unhappy would it be for the churches which are in the same practice with him, if, in other matters, they did not more sensibly feel the apostolick authority on which they are founded, and could not more clearly trace the divine model after

|| Acts xviii. 2.

which

which they are formed, than they do, or possibly can, in this particular of Infant-Baptism!

I have only to add, before we dismiss this subject, that if infants were baptized in the time of the Apostles, it seems strange that, however the particular mention of them might be omitted in the stories just considered, they should be passed over in silence in the account given us of the Baptism of the Samaritans. For the Historian having in that narrative thought fit to specify men and women, (*they were baptized, says he, both men and women* *) how natural would it have been for him to add children! and the rather, as children are mentioned in this connection, when a matter of a different kind is related. I refer to the account of our Saviour's miracle of the five loaves and two fishes, in which we are told, that *they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children* †.

I am, Sir,

Yours, 11

* Acts viii. 12.

† Matt. xiv. 21.

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LETTER XV.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING carefully weighed all Mr. *A.* pretends to alledge from Scripture in favour of Infant-Baptism, it clearly appears that there is neither precept nor example for this practice in the sacred oracles. Here therefore we might safely rest the matter in debate, Yet I am willing to try the force of the two popular pleas our Author has adopted, of ANTIQUITY and UNIVERSALITY; pleas which the Papists so successfully use to profelyte unthinking people to their communion.

Nor have I any apprehension that this trial will at all injure the cause I am defending: on the contrary, I am well persuaded it will serve it. It is the part of error, not of truth, to elude inquiry: and he who would establish a point in debate, if he is satisfied of the goodness of his cause, will know how even to avail himself of the objections of his opponents. Truth is always perfectly consistent with itself: and however collateral circumstances may be so disguised,

or placed in such a point of light by skilful management, as, for a time, to weaken and confound the plainest evidence of a real fact; yet, when those circumstances come to be thoroughly looked into, they will not only cease to have their effect, but will corroborate and brighten that evidence to which they before proved so unfriendly. For these reasons, Sir, I am heartily disposed, as I said, to give a fair trial to our Author's pleas of ANTIQUITY and UNIVERSALITY.

As to ANTIQUITY, Mr. *A.* boldly asserts that Infant-Baptism was practised in the first ages of Christianity. "It was received," says he, "in all ages*." Now, before we proceed, I beg leave to premise that, admitting our Author could produce two or three instances so early as the first or second century, which yet I am well satisfied he cannot, it would not from thence follow that our Saviour or his Apostles had enjoined this practice; unless it be said, that it is morally impossible such a corruption of the institution should take place in so early an age. I allow indeed it is scarce probable it should: but no one surely will assert it is impossible, who considers that gross errors did prevail even in the times of the Apostles; and that it is by no means inconceivable, that men might lay

* P. 174.

such a stress on this ordinance as to prove an occasion, in a short course of years, of so unscriptural an innovation. All the effect, therefore, which the clear proof of this fact would produce upon a considerate and unprejudiced person, would be to put him upon re-examining the doctrine and history of Baptism, as laid down in the New-Testament: and being still persuaded that our Saviour meant to confine the institution to those only who profess faith and repentance, he would feel himself obliged, as a Protestant, instantly to reject Infant-Baptism, though stamp'd with the venerable authority of the earliest age. But there is little occasion for this reasoning, as it will be found, upon inquiry, that the supposed fact is totally destitute of evidence to support it.

If then I can clearly make it appear, First, That there is no proof of Infant-Baptism having obtained in the first or even the second century; Secondly, That at what time it did obtain, a very probable account is to be given of the source whence it originated; and Thirdly, That to suppose the Christian church, in so early an age as the third century, capable of thus adulterating an institution of Christ, is by no means incredible, but perfectly consistent with the character of those times: if these things can be made appear, this boasted argument of ANTIQUITY, which

which has so mighty an effect on weak and superstitious minds, will lose all its force, and the investigation of it will throw further light upon the truth, and add strength to the evidence already adduced.

FIRST, There is no proof of Infant-Baptism having obtained in the two first centuries.

It is not pretended that the earliest Fathers of the church say any thing about it, such as, Barnabas, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, or Hermas. The first authority therefore Mr. *A.* cites is Justin Martyr, who flourished about the year of Christ 140. The passage he gives us is taken from this Father's Apology, addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, which was not written till after the year 150. Now this passage, instead of serving our Author, is, I think, clearly against him. Justin's view, in his Apology, was to vindicate the Christians of those times from the cruel reproaches of their enemies, and, among the rest, the horrid one of murdering their infants, and making an impious use of their blood in their assemblies. When therefore he proceeds to give an account of their manner of solemnizing Baptism, how natural to expect he would speak of infants, if it had been the practice to baptize them; and especially as
he

he introduces his account with assuring the Emperor, that he meant, by describing this solemnity, to avoid the charge of *seeming to deal unfairly in some part of his apology!* But not a hint is given about infants, or any ceremony relating to them.

Justin Martyr's words are these: "*As many as are persuaded and do believe, that those things which are taught and spoken by us are true, and engage to live accordingly, are instructed to pray, and implore of God with fasting the forgiveness of their past sins, we praying and fasting together with them. They are then led by us to a place where there is water, and they are regenerated with the same kind of regeneration with which we were regenerated. For in the name of God the Father and Lord of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they are then washed in the water. For also Christ hath said, Except ye be regenerated, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,*" &c. *

* Οσοι αν πειθαστι και πισυωσιν αληθη ταυτα τα υφ' ημων διδασκομενα και λεγομενα εινα, και βιου ετας δυνασθ υπιχωνται, ευχεσθαι τε και αιτειν ηνευοντες πασα τε Θει των προημαρτημενων αρεσιν διδασκονται, ημων συνευχεμεναι και συνευουλιων αυλοις. Επεια αλωνται υφ' ημων ενθα υδαρ εσι, και τροπον αναγεννησιως ον και ημεις αυτοι ανεγεννηθημεν, αναγεννησθαι. Επ' ονομαθ' γαρ τε Πατρσ των ολων και Διασθσ Θεσ, και τε Σωτηρσ ημων Ιησθ Κρισθ, και Πνευ. μαθ' αει, το εν τω υδατι τοτε λελεσθ ποιωνται. Και γαρ ο Κρισθσ ειπεν, 'Αν μη αναγεννηθιτε κ μη εισελθιτε εις την βασιλειαν των ορων. &c. Justin. Mart. Apolog. I. p. 83, 89. Edit. Thirlb. Lond. 1722.

L

Thus

Thus you see the words Mr. *A.* has quoted, viz. “*They are regenerated by the same way or manner of regeneration as we ourselves were regenerated,*” refer to the Adult, whose solemn preparation for Baptism the Martyr had just described; and not to Infants, as perhaps Mr. *A.*’s readers may have supposed, from the abrupt manner in which he has introduced this partial quotation, telling “us, that Justin, speaking of the baptized, says “*they are regenerated, &c.*” Some indeed may be apt to conclude from this passage, that our Saviour’s words, *Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, &c.* were in that early age understood to refer to Baptism; and that even then Baptism, which is the symbol of regeneration, began to be considered in a too important point of light, if not as absolutely necessary to salvation. But, admitting this, the inference is rather favourable to the cause I am defending than otherwise. For, on the one hand, we are from thence enabled to give a probable account of the introduction, in a course of time, of Infant-Baptism, as I shall shew by and by more particularly: whilst, on the other hand, it is natural to conclude from no mention being made of the Baptism of Infants on this occasion, (when, as I have shewn, it could scarce have been omitted without the charge of prevarication) it is natural, I say, to conclude, that the reasoning leading to it had not then produced its effect.

There

There is another passage, in the same piece of Justin's, "from which our Author thinks it probable that Baptism was applied to children in obedience to our Saviour's command, μαθητευσατε, &c. disciple all nations, baptizing them; viz. That wherein he speaks of some who *ἐκ παιδων μαθητευσαν τῷ Χριστῷ*, from children were discipled to Christ*." The word μαθητευω we have largely considered, and proved that its true and proper meaning is, *to teach*, or *to disciple by teaching* †. There can be no doubt therefore that the passage before us ought to be thus translated, *They were taught or instructed in Christ from their childhood*: just as Timothy is said *to have known the Holy Scriptures from a child* ‡. But what man in his senses will from hence conclude, that Infants in Justin's time were baptized? It is true, the same word is used here as in the commission: but this proves no more than what we readily grant, viz. that such as are instructed in Christ, or are discipled to Christ by teaching, be they ever so young, are to be baptized.—Thus our Author utterly fails in his attempt to produce any authority for Infant-Baptism, for the first 150 years of the Christian æra.

The next authority Mr. A. quotes, in order of time, is Irenæus, who is supposed to have written

* P. 167.

† See Let. X.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

that book of his against Heresies, from whence the passage in question is taken, about 180 years after Christ. Speaking of Christ as “*sanctifying every age by that likeness which it bore to Himself,*” he adds, “*For He came of Himself to save all: all, I say, who by Him are born again to God; infants, and little ones, and children, and young men, and old men. Therefore He went through each age: and was made an infant for infants, sanctifying infants: for little ones a little one, sanctifying those of that age;*” &c. *

Now it must strike every one, I think, as very strange, that so early a writer as Irenæus should assert that Christ “*passed through every age,*” that is, that He lived to be an old man. He must, one should suppose, have known otherwise. Who can forbear therefore suspecting that this passage is not genuine? Nay, the whole chapter from which it is taken is liable to the same suspicion: for the writer, whoever he was, by fixing, in the beginning of it, our Sa-

* “—omnem ætatem sanctificans per illam quæ ad ipsum erat similitudinem. Omnes enim venit per Semet- ipsum salvare: omnes, inquam, qui per Eum renascuntur in Deum; infantes, & parvulos, & pueros, & juvenes, & seniores. Ideo per omnem venit ætatem: & infantibus infans factus; sanctificans infantes: in parvulis parvulus, sanctificans hanc ipsam habentes ætatem: &c.” Iren. adv. Hæref. l. 2. c. 39.

viour's Baptism at about thirty, and mentioning three Passovers as intervening between that and his death; and, at the close, affirming that He lived till above fifty, evidently contradicts himself. These mistakes therefore, of which it may be thought this venerable Father could have scarce been guilty, have led some learned men, Pœdobaptists as well as of our persuasion, actually to pronounce that sentence upon this whole chapter of which we have supposed it deserving.

It has also been observed by Dr. Gale and others, that, as we have not the whole original work of Irenæus, but only a translation; so, by comparing some parts of the translation with some remaining fragments of the Greek, it appears that the Translator has taken very scandalous liberties with the original: and therefore we cannot be sure, even though the chapter be not absolutely spurious, that he has given the Author's real sense in the passage before us. Now who, that considers these things, would be disposed to lay any great stress upon this authority, which yet is deemed the most considerable of any in the second century in favour of Infant-Baptism *?

But,

* The learned Cave seems to have apprehended the passage in debate genuine; but he acknowledges Irenæus to have been in an error, which he supposes he was betrayed into,

But, waving the question respecting the authenticity of the passage; in order to its serving the cause of our opponents, it must be proved that by *being born again* is meant *being baptized*. And even then the idea of Infant-Baptism would be oddly conveyed—"Christ came to save all who by *Him* are baptized unto God; infants, and little ones, &c." But the evidence Mr. *A.* has brought to prove that Baptism is here meant by regeneration, is insufficient. For those other words of Irenæus which he cites to this purpose, viz. "*When He gave them the commission of regenerating unto God, He said unto them, Go, teach all nations, baptizing them,*" &c. * these words, I say, do not prove the point: for why may not the phrase here, of *regenerating unto God*, be understood in reference to teaching, and the effect of it upon the hearts of men,

"partly from a mistaken report, which he had somewhere picked up—and partly out of opposition to his adversaries, who maintained that our Saviour staid no longer upon earth than till the 31st year of his age; against whom the eagerness of disputation tempted him to make good his assertion from any plausible pretence." Life of Iren. § X. p. 170. And if this were the fact, we still see how little stress is to be laid upon a passage, which is thus judged to have proceeded from credulity, and to have been written in the heat of controversy.

* "*—potestatem regenerationis in Deum demandans discipulis, dicebat eis, &c.*" Iren. adv. Hæres. l. 3. c. 19.

as well as to baptizing? Nay this is the most natural sense of the two.

And as to the passage wherein, according to Mr. *A.*, he speaks of *Baptism* as *the regeneration unto God*, the proper rendering of it is, *the Baptism of the regeneration unto God* *, that is, Baptism which is the symbol or representation of regeneration, or, as the Apostle expresses it, *the washing of regeneration* †. And who would understand either Irenæus or the Apostle to mean, by these phrases, that Baptism and regeneration are one and the same thing? Our Author might as well say, that the BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE means the BAPTISM WHICH IS REPENTANCE. If then regeneration is to be understood here in its proper sense, and as we commonly understand it, what does this passage assert? No more than what the Baptists are willing to admit, *viz.* “that Christ came to save all who by Him
“ are regenerated, whether infants or grown
“ persons:” for infants are capable of being renewed, though not of repenting and believing.—Thus Mr. *A.* fails in his authorities for Infant-Baptism for 180. years after Christ.

The next our Author mentions, as succeeding immediately to Irenæus, is Tertullian, who did

* “ —εις εξαρθρον τε βαπτισμα^ς της εις Θεον αναγεννησιως, κτλ &c.” l. i. c. 18.

† Tit. iii. 5.

not write till about the beginning of the third century. The passage he refers to, and which I shall give a little more largely than he has done, is this: “According to every one’s condition and disposition, and age too, the delay of Baptism is more profitable, especially as to little children. For what necessity is there that the sponsors also should be brought into danger? because either they may by death be prevented fulfilling their promises, or be deceived by a child’s proving of a bad disposition. Our Lord indeed says, Do not forbid them to come unto Me. Therefore let them come when they grow up, let them come when they learn, when they are instructed whither to come. Let them become Christians when they are able to know Christ. Why does that innocent age hasten to the remission of sins? Men act more cautiously in secular matters: for they will not intrust worldly substance to such as are, in this case, intrusted with divine treasure. Let them know how to ask salvation, that you may appear to have given to him that asketh. For no less reason ought unmarried persons to be put off who are likely to come into temptation; &c.” *

Now

* “ —pro cujusque personæ conditione ac dispositione, etiam ætate, cunctatio baptismi utilior est: præcipue tamen circa parvulos. Quid enim necesse est sponsores etiam periculo ingeri? quia & ipsi per mortalitatem de-
 “ stituere

Now the conclusion Mr. *A.* draws from this passage is, “that infants were USUALLY baptized in Tertullian’s days.” But if so, and if this had been the constant and universal practice from the beginning, is it probable that Tertullian would have set himself to oppose it? Or if he had, would he not have spent more time and pains in justifying so bold an innovation, as this must have been, of the delaying the Baptism of Infants? The conclusion therefore I draw from the passage is, that some persons did about this time baptize their children; but that the practice was not general. And this state of the fact very well accounts for this Father’s taking up the matter and reasoning about it in the manner he does. But Mr. *A.* objects, “that one might infer from his words, that Baptism was denied to *all* unmarried, as justly, as that it was denied to Infants*.” This

“stituere promissiones suas possunt, & proventu malæ indolis falli. Ait quidem Dominus, Nolite illos prohibere ad me venire. Veniant ergo dum adolefcunt, veniant dum discunt, dum quo veniant docentur: fiant Christiani quum Christum nosse potuerint. Quid festinat innocens ætas ad remissionem peccatorum? Cautius agetur in secularibus; ut cui substantia terrena non creditur, divina credatur. Norint petere salutem, ut petenti dedisse videaris. Non minori de causa innupti quæ procrastinandi, in quibus tentatio præparata est; &c.” Tertul. de Baptismo, l. 2. c. 18.

* P. 164, 165.

however is a mistake: for there is a clear difference in the reasoning in the one case and the other. He speaks of infants as being neither in need of Baptism nor fit for it, and therefore to be held back from it; a reason equally applicable to all infants. But the reason he assigns for unmarried persons delaying Baptism, is their being likely to come into temptation; which might be peculiarly applicable to some in the unmarried state, but not to all.

As to Mr. A.'s conjecture, "that Tertullian refers merely to the offspring of Heathens, in all that he says concerning the procrastination of Infant-Baptism *;" I can see no ground at all for it. For though he does elsewhere speak of "*the children of the faithful as designed for sanctification, and by that for salvation †;*" it does not appear that by sanctification he means Baptism: and whatever he means by it, he speaks of such children only as *designatos*. But there are passages in this writer which shew, as Dr. Gale has observed, that his idea of Baptism was such as could not be applied to the Baptism of Infants: *viz.* where he says, "*The soul is sanctified not by washing, but by*

* P. 165.

† "Quasi designatos, tamen sanctitati, ac per hoc etiam salutis intelligi volens fidelium filios: &c." Tertul. de Anima, c. 39, 40.

“ *answer* *; alluding, it is probable, to the answer given by candidates for Baptism to the questions put to them: or to the Apostle Peter’s account of a submission to this institution, as *being the answer of a good conscience towards God* †. And again he says, “ *Baptism is the seal of faith, which faith is begun and approved by the faith of repentance. Therefore we are not washed, that we may leave off sinning, but because we have already left it off: because now we are become pure in heart* ‡.”

Thus have we seen that there is no proof of any one Infant having been baptized till the beginning of the third century: and even then it does not appear that the practice generally prevailed; but, on the contrary, from this passage in Tertullian, it looks as if it was beginning to get ground in the church.

Origen, the next in order of time to Tertullian, flourished about the year 230. “ This

* “ *Anima non lavatione sed responsione sancitur.*”
Tertul. de Resurrectione, c. 48.

† 1 Pet. iii. 21.

‡ “ *Lavacrum illud obsecratio est fidei, quæ fides a penitentia fide incipitur & commendatur. Non ideo abluimur, ut delinquere desinamus, sed quia desumus: quoniam jam corde loti sumus.* Tertul. de Pœnitentia, c. 6.

“ Father,” Mr. *A.* tells us, “ speaking of little children as under the guardianship of angels, (as mentioned Matt. xviii. 10.) queries, whether that their guardianship of them commenced from their Baptism, or even their birth *.” A passage in point, as a common reader would suppose. But if our Author, recollecting the reproof he had given Mr. Brown a few pages before †, had thought fit to give us the whole sentence from Origen, his reader would have clearly seen, that not LITTLE ONES in regard of age, but PERSONS RESEMBLING LITTLE ONES are here intended, and that the Father has so expressed himself as to put this sense of the word beyond a doubt.

The sentence runs thus: “ *If again any one should inquire, when it is the angels spoken of are set over those little ones signified by our Saviour? whether they take the care and management of them from the time, when they by the washing of regeneration, whereby they were new born, do, AS NEW-BORN BABES DESIRE THE SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD, and are no longer in subjection to any evil power? or from their birth, according to the foreknowledge of God, &c. †*” Their desiring the sincere milk of

* P. 162.

† See p. 152, note.

† “ Εἰς ἄλλοις ζητησέν αν τις, ποτε των δεκνυμενων
 “ υπο τη σωτηρος μικρων οι λεγοντες αυτων Αγγελος προεισαν-
 “ ται;

of the word, you see, clearly shews that they could not be infants in age; but infants, or little ones, as having been newly regenerated by the grace of God. So that this passage does not furnish so much as the shadow of a proof in favour of Pœdobaptism.

The other passages our Author quotes from Origen are indeed full to the purpose: but then the question is, Whether they really are Origen's? They are not taken from the original Greek, which are the only authentick pieces of that Father, but from the translations of Ruffinus. In order, however, to give these translations an authority nearly equal to the original, Mr. *A.* assures us, "that Ruffinus lived in the third century*," the same with Origen himself; and, "that his knowledge or integrity have never been doubted †." But our Author is mistaken in both these facts. Ruffinus lived and wrote the latter end of the fourth century, more than a hundred years after Origen. And his knowledge and integrity have been more than once doubted. Not only St. Jerome, who was

“ ται; - πολυρον δεξαμμοι την οικονομιαν περι αυτες διοικειν
 “ αφ ε δια ληρη παλιγενεσις, ω εγεννηθησαν, ως αφ εγεννηθη
 “ βρεφη το λογικον κ̅ αδολον γαλα επιποθουσι, και μηκει
 “ υποκοιμμοι πανηρα τινι δυναμει; η απο γενεσεως, κολα
 “ την τε Θεω προδωσιν, &c.” Comment. in Matt. Tom. 13.
 p. 331. ed. Huet.

* P. 163.

† Ibid.

his

his cotemporary, and had a quarrel with him, but several modern writers, as Dr. Gale observes, handle him very roughly. Scaliger, speaking of one of St. Irenæus's pieces against Heresies, says, "*The Translator was an ass, and was more illiterate than even Ruffinus**." Mr. Daillé observes, that "*Ruffinus has so filthily mangled, and so licentious-ly confounded, the writings of Origen, &c. which he has translated into Latin, that you will hardly find a page where he has not retrenched, or added, or altered something †.*" Mr. Du Pin says, "*they are translated with so much liberty, that it is a difficult matter to discern what is Origen's own, from what has been foisted in by the Interpreter ‡.*" And Huetius speaks of the remains of Origen, as "*deformed by wretched translations ¶.*" What dependence then is to be placed upon a testimony conveyed down to us through such hands?

Thus you see, Sir, that for the two first centuries and a half, there is no one clear proof of Infant-Baptism having prevailed in the Christian church.

I am, Sir, Yours.

* Scaligerana, p. 213. "L'Interprete d'Irenée est bien asne, il est plus indocte encore que Ruffin."

† De Usu Patrum, l. 1. c. 4.

‡ Hist. Eccles. Vol. I. p. 117.

¶ Origenian. l. 3. c. 2. Sect. 3. § 1.

L E T T E R XVI.

DEAR SIR,

I Am willing to admit that there is proof of Infant-Baptism's having obtained in Africa about the middle of the third century. I proceed therefore now,

SECONDLY, To give you, as was proposed, a probable account of the source whence this innovation originated, and the manner in which it was introduced.

I say *probable* account, because this is all that can be reasonably expected of us in a matter of this nature. For surely it is absurd to insist that unless we can fix with certainty the exact time when the first infant was baptized, point out with unquestionable precision the true motives and causes leading to it, and trace this practice through its gradual progress to the period when it generally obtained in the church; that unless we can do all this, it is to be presumed from its having prevailed in the third century, that it is no innovation, but of divine original.

To

To shew the mistake of this reasoning, let us for a moment apply it to the other case of the admission of children to the Lord's Supper.

Suppose then an advocate for infant-communion was to say to Mr. *A.*, Unless you can fix with certainty the exact time when the first infant was admitted to the Eucharist; unless you can point out with precision the causes leading to this practice; and unless you can trace this practice through its gradual progress to the period in which it became general: unless you can do all this, it is to be presumed from its having prevailed in the third century, that it is no innovation, but of divine original. What would be Mr. *A.*'s reply? He would not hesitate a moment. There is no authority for it, he would say, in Scripture. And as to what you require of me, it is unreasonable: all you can expect is, a probable account of the rise of this corruption; and that I am ready to give you. In like manner I reply to Mr. *A.* upon the matter before us. There is no authority for Infant-Baptism in Scripture. All you can reasonably expect from me is, a probable account of the source whence this innovation originated, and the manner in which it was introduced: and this I am ready to give you. Yea, I will go further and add, that perhaps we may be able to intersperse some few historical notes which will render our account

count more than probable, I had almost said, certain.

I suppose, Sir, it will be admitted that innovations in religion, of the most absurd kind and pernicious tendency, are very possible. No one can doubt it, who considers that many such innovations do actually exist in the church of Rome. It is certain also that some innovations have arisen very imperceptibly; imperceptibly, at least, to us, who live in a late period of Christianity: for, with all the lights which history furnishes, it is out of our power to fix precisely the origin of some of those ceremonies which yet Protestants generally acknowledge to be unscriptural. And it is further certain, that some innovations have made a very rapid progress in a short time; so that what was scarce known in the beginning of one century, has obtained through a whole country by the middle of it. This is the fact with respect to the mode of Baptism in this country: for in the course of about fifty years immersion was wholly laid aside, and sprinkling substituted in its room; without the allowance of the Institutor, as Dr. Whitby acknowledges; contrary to the determination of a synod, under Kenwolfe king of the Mercians, in the year 816; and contrary too to the express words of the Rubrick of the Church of England as it now stands. It is not strange, therefore, that

that Infant-Baptism, absurd and unscriptural as we conceive it is, should find its way into the church: nor would it have certainly followed from our not being able to point out the source whence it originated, that, because it prevailed in the third century, it was no corruption. A probable account, however, is to be given of the matter.

A misunderstanding of our Saviour's words to Nicodemus, *Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* ||, seems to have been the ground upon which Infant-Baptism was introduced. Yet there is good reason to apprehend, that the words were BY DEGREES perverted to that gross sense which the Fathers of the fourth century affixed to it, about which time this innovation pretty generally prevailed. Justin Martyr, the middle of the second century, mentions this passage, as we have seen *, in the account he gives the Emperor Antoninus Pius of Christian Baptism. And from the connection in which he introduces the words, it is probable he understood our Saviour here as speaking of Baptism. But it is also natural to conclude from his very particular description of those who were admitted to Baptism, as well as from his total silence about infants, that he considered this institution merely as the

|| John iii. 5.

* See p. 217.

symbol of regeneration, and those only who were regenerated in the proper sense of the word as the fit subjects of it. Upon this sense, however, of the passage, from whomsoever it originated, it is easy to conceive how people might come to look upon Baptism in a very important light with respect to the adult; and, in time, to consider Regeneration and Baptism as convertible terms. And from this step the transition was extremely natural to that of interpreting *it* of any one or all kinds of persons: and so the conclusion necessarily followed, that, unless children as well as grown persons were baptized, they could not be saved.

This interpretation of our Saviour's words obtaining, fond parents, no doubt, became eager to have their children baptized: and considered our Lord as allowing, if not commanding, their Baptism, when He said, *Suffer little children to come unto Me* *. And accordingly we find these words were commonly used at that time, as a plea in support of this innovation. Yet here a difficulty seems to have arisen, from the manifest impropriety of admitting such to Baptism, as are incapable of making a previous profession. This difficulty, however, is over-ruled by allowing sponsors in their room to answer for them: which practice, as appears by the passage we

* Matt. xix. 14.

have quoted from Tertullian, prevailed about this time. And now some people, it is probable, in Africa, where this business was agitated, baptized their children. Tertullian, however, protests against it, insisting “ that infants should
 “ not be baptized, till they were grown up;
 “ that they should not come, till they had
 “ learned, and were instructed whither to come;
 “ that they should not become Christians by
 “ profession, till they were able to know Christ;
 “ and that even the adult, who were likely to
 “ fall into temptation, should rather delay Baptism, than be forward to submit to it *.” But these remonstrances have little effect. The idea of the indispensable necessity of Baptism to salvation prevails: insomuch that the salvation of such martyrs as died, not having been baptized, is put upon the ground of what they called *Baptismum sanguinis*, which they considered as equivalent to water-baptism.

And now, Is it at all strange, that at the distance of an hundred years from Justin Martyr, and when the sense of our Saviour’s words to Nicodemus was fixed in the manner I have represented, we should hear of a question proposed, at an assembly of Bishops at Carthage, whether infants ought to be baptized on the eighth day, in conformity to the practice among the Jews of circumcising on that day, or whether it might

* See p. 224.

not be dangerous to delay Baptism even until that time? Not at all. And though I admit, the proposing this question and the opinion given upon it, furnish a proof (and it is the first clear proof we have) that Infant-Baptism prevailed at that period; yet it does not certainly follow from thence, that the practice then universally obtained even in Africa, much less throughout the Christian church.

On the contrary, there is good ground to apprehend that the Greek churches were of a different opinion from the African council: for Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, who flourished about this time, speaking of Novatian as *rejecting holy Baptism*, further describes him as *subverting the faith, and profession which goes before it**. So that his idea of Baptism was, that faith and a profession went before it. And what is more directly to our purpose; Vansleb, a Dominican friar, in his history of the church of Alexandria, assures us (and he gives us his authority) that “*in the first ages, none but such as were thirty years of age were baptized there, and that some time after permission was given to baptize the children of Christians †.*”

How

* Το λυτρον αθετηντι τε αλιον, και την τε ωρθωτικην και ομολογιαν αναρρονησι. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 7. c. 8.

† See Vansleb. Hist. de l'Eglise d'Alexand. Part. I. c. 23. His authority was, it seems, Amba Macaire, Bishop of Memphis,

How this corruption, from its thus springing up in Africa, might in a course of time spread yet further, till it became general in the Christian church, is easy to be imagined. I shall not therefore tire you, Sir, with following Mr. A. through his testimonies from the fourth and fifth centuries, &c. but leave him in the quiet possession of those authorities. To shew you, however, that I am not singular in my conjectures concerning the rise of Infant-Baptism, it may be proper to give you here the opinion of some learned men, and Pœdobaptists too, upon the question.

Rigaltius, in his notes on the Epistle of Cyprian to Fidus, says, “ *As faith springs from as-*
 “ *sent, it is not discerned in man till he arrives at*
 “ *years capable of understanding and wisdom. And*
 “ *therefore we read in the Acts of the Apostles,*
 “ *that men and women were baptized when they had*
 “ *believed Philip preaching the gospel, but no men-*
 “ *tion is made of infants. So that from the age*
 “ *of the Apostles to the times of Tertullian the mat-*
 “ *ter remained doubtful. And there were those who*
 “ *took occasion from that word of our Lord, Suffer*
 “ *little children to come unto Me (to whom yet our*
 “ *Lord commanded not water to be administered) to*
 “ *baptize even new-born infants. And, as if some*

Memphis, who was secretary to Cosmus the third, their 58th Patriarch, and lived A.D. 756.

“ *secular*

“ *secular business were transacted with God, they offered sponsors to Christ, or persons who should become sureties for them, that when adult they should not depart from the Christian faith: which indeed displeased Tertullian.**”

Curcellæus acknowledges, “ *Infant-Baptism was unknown the two first ages after Christ; in the third and fourth it was approved by a few, till at length in the fifth and following ages it began to obtain in divers places; and therefore this rite is indeed observed by us as an ancient custom, but not as an apostolical tradition †.*” And in

* “ *Fides, cum ex assensu veniat, in homine non deprehenditur, ante annos intellectus & sapientiæ capaces. Adeoque in Actis Apostolorum legimus, cum credidissent Philippo evangelizanti, baptizatos fuisse viros & mulieres, mentione infantium nulla. Itaque ab ævo Apostolorum usque ad Tertulliani tempora res in ambiguo mansit. Et fuere, qui occasione verbi Domini, Sinite parvulos venire ad Me, quibus tamen aquas ministrari non iussit Dominus, etiam recens natos infantes baptizaverint. Et quasi seculare aliquod negotium cum Deo transigeretur, sponsores & fidejussores Christo dederint adultos a fide Christiana non recessuros, quod sane displicuit Tertulliano.*” Rigalt. Not. in Cypriani Epist. ad Fidum.

† “ *Pœdobaptismus—qui duobus primis a Christo nato seculis fuit incognitus, in tertio vero & quarto a paucis est approbatus, in quinto demum & sequentibus passim obtinere cœpit—et proinde hic ritus a nobis quidem ut antiqua consuetudo, sed non ut apostolica traditio observatur.*” Curcellæi Rel. Christ. Inst. l. 1. c. 12.

another place he says, “ *That the custom of baptizing infants did not begin before the third age after Christ: but in the two former ages there appears not any trace of it *.*”

Suicerus to the same purpose declares, “ *That in the two first ages no one received Baptism, but he who, having been instructed in the faith, and imbued with the doctrine of Christ, was able to testify that he believed; because of those words, He that believeth and is baptized. Therefore it was first required to believe; hence the order of catechumens in the church. It was then also a constant custom always observed, to give the catechumens the Eucharist immediately after Baptism; afterwards an opinion prevailed, that no one could be saved, unless he had been baptized; and therefore, because the Eucharist was before given to the adult catechumens, as soon as they were washed by holy Baptism; this also was appointed to be done in regard of infants, after the introduction of Pædobaptism †.*”

But

* “ *Morem infantes baptizandi non cœpisse ante tertium a Christo nato seculum: in duobus vero prioribus nullum ejus vestigium apparere.*” Curcel. Dissert. secunda de peccat. orig. sect. 56.

† “ *Primis duobus seculis nemo Baptismum accipiebat, nisi qui, in fide instructus, & doctrina Christi imbutus, testari posset, se credere: propter illa verba, Qui crediderit & baptizatus fuerit. Ergo prius erat credere;*

“ *inde*

But it will, perhaps, be objected, that it is scarce credible the Christian church should be capable, at so early a period, of falling into so gross an error as this must have been, if it was any error at all. To obviate this difficulty I go on to shew,

THIRDLY, That the true character of the early ages of Christianity, puts the credibility of this matter beyond a reasonable doubt.

Some may, perhaps, have been used to conceive so highly of the knowledge and prudence, as well as the simplicity and piety, of the primitive Fathers, as to suppose it very improbable that they should corrupt and adulterate the institutions of Christ; and the rather as they lived so near the times of the Apostles, and must have been well informed what were the customs and usages which prevailed in those days. But the mistake of this will appear upon a little reflection. They were, it is true, pious men;

“ inde ordo catechumenorum in ecclesia. Mos etiam tum
 “ perpetuus constanter observatus fuit, ut secundum Bap-
 “ tismum catechumenis illis statim daretur Eucharistia;
 “ postea opinio invaluit, neminem salvari posse, nisi qui
 “ baptizatus fuisset; quia autem catechumenis adultis,
 “ olim simul ac loti fuissent sacro Baptismate, dabatur
 “ Eucharistia; hoc etiam in infantibus ut ferit institutum
 “ post Pædobaptismum introductum.” Suiceri Thesaur.
 Ec. sub voce *Συμμετρίαι*.

but they were, most of them, very weak, injudicious, and credulous, miserable interpreters of Scripture, and very ill informed as to many transactions before their own times.

Could any thing be more silly than Justin Martyr's comparing the human body to the cross? telling us, *"The human form differs only from that of other creatures, as it is erect, extends its arms, and has a nose projecting from the forehead, through which respiration is made; all which shews nothing else, but the figure of the cross. And thus it is spoken by the Prophet, Christ the Lord is the breath before our face *."*

How very ignorant and credulous must Irenæus have been, (if the passage referred to in the last Letter be really his) to assert that our Lord passed through every age; and that he had this by tradition from the Apostles: notwithstanding the sacred history of the New Testament is directly against him, and he had certain means besides of knowing otherwise, if he had duly attended to them!

* *"Το δὲ ἀνθρώπειον χημα εἶναι ἀλλὰ τῶν ἀλοῶν ζῶον διαφέρει, ἢ τῶ ὀρθοῦτε εἶναι καὶ ἐκλάσιν χειρῶν εἶναι, καὶ ἐν τῶ προσωπε ἀπο τῆ μέτωπις τελεωμενον τὸν λοβὸν μὴ ξώληρα φερεῖν, δι' ἧς ἡ ἀναπνοὴ ἐστὶ τῶ ζῶου, καὶ εἶναι ἀλλο δεικνυσθῆναι ἢ τῆ χημα τῆ σαυρῆ. Καὶ διὰ τῆ προφητεῖας δὲ ἐλεχθῆναι εἰπῶς Πνεῦμα πορὸ προσωπε ἡμῶν, Χριστὸς Κυριος."*
Apol. I. p. 82. Edit. Thirlb. Lond. 1722.

Can any one forbear pitying the weakness of good St. Cyprian, when he hears him reasoning (in his Epistle to Fidus concerning the famous council at Carthage) from the prophet Elifha's stretching himself on the Shunamite's child, to an equality of grace given to infants and adult persons? and further telling us, that "*in that place a spiritual equality, and such as is in the esteem of God, is intimated to us* *?"

Instances of this kind of weak reasoning, and mistaken interpretation of Scripture, are innumerable. Nor were the Fathers of the fourth century, who so readily went into the practice of Infant-Baptism, a whit wiser than their predecessors, who by their false reasoning had laid a foundation for it: as sufficiently appears from the writings of St. Epiphanius, who, amidst a multitude of other wild conceits, argues by ana-

* "*—esse apud omnes, sive infantes, sive majores natu, unam divini muneris æqualitatem declarat nobis divinæ scripturæ fides. Helifæus super infantem Sunamitidis viduæ filium qui mortuus jacebat, ita se Deum deprecans superstravit, ut capiti caput, & faciei facies applicaretur, & superfusi Helifæi membra singulis parvuli membris, & pedes pedibus jungerentur. Quæ res si secundum nativitatis nostræ & corporis qualitatem cogitetur, adulto & provento infans non posset æquari, nec cohærere & sufficere possent membra parva majoribus. Sed ILLIC æqualitas divina & spiritualis exprimitur, &c.*" Cypriani Epist. 64. ad Fidum. Edit. Oxon. p. 160.

logy “ from our Saviour’s being called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and consequently the Virgin Mary’s being a Lioness, to her having borne no more children after Him *”

Now, is it to be wondered that men of such a cast, however honest and pious, should in the first instance misapply the words of our Saviour to Nicodemus, to Baptism? should then insist that the adult, who died unbaptized, could none of them be saved, except in extraordinary cases? from thence proceed to assert, that even infants, dying without Baptism, could not enter into the kingdom of heaven? and so not only yield to this innovation, but propagate it with all their might?

It is further to be observed, that we hear of sponsors in Baptism, of the sign of the cross, of anointing the baptized, and giving them milk and honey, as early †, and of admitting infants to the Lord’s Supper very near as early ‡, as we hear of Infant-Baptism itself. And is it in-

* “ Λεωνη δε δούλεα ε γινεται κυστις αρα ουκ εστι κυστις
 “ οιδεν η Μαρια εκλει συναρει ν σωμάτων η αλια Παρθενος.”
 St. Epiph. Oper. adv. Hæres. Tom. I. l. 3. t. 2. p. 1045. Edit. Colon.

† Tertul. de Baptism. l. 2. c. 18. and c. 7. and, de Corona, c. 3.

‡ Cypr. de Lapsis, p. 175.

credible,

credible, or indeed at all strange, that the men who introduced the four former usages into the church, which Mr. *A.* has no doubt are unscriptural, should be capable of introducing the latter? It is also certain that the chief corruptions of Popery, such as prayers for the dead *; the worship of relicks †; the invocation of saints ‡; and the institution of monkery §; were either actually introduced, or rising into existence, in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, and some of them earlier. No less than ninety heresies are said to have sprung up in the three first centuries. And spurious books without number were forged under the names of Christ and his Apostles, and the apostolical writers; and, what is remarkable, many of them cited by the primitive Fathers as genuine.

To all which I will add a short account from St. Cyprian himself, of the miserable defection of those times, I mean about A. D. 250, the æra in which we have the first clear proof, as hath been shewn, of the prevalence of Infant-Baptism. This Father tells us, and he was an eye-witness of what he reports, that the discipline of the church was corrupted, and its faith almost lost,

* Tertul. de Monogam. X. p. 682.

† Chrysof. Op. T. 2. p. 555. Ed. Bened.

‡ Hieron. Tom. IV. par. 2. p. 285, 286. Ed. Bened.

§ Id. p. 780.

by the long tranquility it had then enjoyed. “*Each one,*” he complains, “*studied how to in-*
“*crease his patrimony; and forgetting what the*
“*faithful had done in apostolick times, or what*
“*they ought always to do, their grand passion was*
“*an insatiable desire of enlarging their fortunes.*
“*There was no real religion in their priests, no*
“*sound faith in their ministers, no mercy in their*
“*works, no discipline in their manners. The men*
“*disfigured their beards, and the women abused*
“*their faces by false arts. Their eyes, fashioned*
“*by the hand of God, were adulterated, and their*
“*hair stained with other colours. Fraudulent*
“*schemes were practised, to deceive the simple and*
“*to circumvent the brethren. It was usual to join*
“*in marriage with infidels, and to prostitute the*
“*members of Christ to the Gentiles: not only to*
“*swear rashly, but to be guilty of perjury: to*
“*treat those who were set over them with inso-*
“*lent contempt, to reproach them with abusive lan-*
“*guage, and to fall out among themselves with*
“*obstinate resentments. It was common for a great*
“*many bishops, whose duty it was to be both in-*
“*structors and examples to the rest, having despised*
“*their divine stewardship, to become stewards of*
“*secular affairs; and, having left their station in*
“*the church and deserted their people, to wander*
“*about into the provinces of others, and seek out*
“*the market of gainful traffick. Nor were they*
“*disposed to relieve their hungry brethren in the*
“*church,*

“ church, but eager to lay up a great deal of money,
 “ to seize estates by treachery and fraud, and to in-
 “ crease their stock by exorbitant interest. What do
 “ we not deserve to suffer,” adds he, “ for these
 “ heinous sins? &c.” *

And now, upon the view we have taken of the weak reasonings of the primitive Fathers, the superstitious prejudices of the people, and

* “ Studebant augendo patrimonio singuli; & obli-
 “ quid credentes, aut sub Apostolis ante fecissent, aut
 “ semper facere deberent, insatiabili cupiditatis ardore
 “ ampliandis facultatibus incubabant. Non in sacerdoti-
 “ bus religio devota, non in ministris fides integra, non
 “ in operibus misericordia, non in moribus disciplina.
 “ Corrupta barba in viris, in feminis forma fucata.
 “ Adulterati post Dei manus oculi, capilli mendacio co-
 “ lorati. Ad decipienda corda simplicium callidæ frau-
 “ des, circumveniendis fratribus subdole voluntates. Jun-
 “ gere cum infidelibus vinculum matrimonii, prostipuerunt
 “ gentilibus membra Christi: non jurare tantum tenere,
 “ sed adhuc etiam pejerare: prepositos superbo tumore
 “ contemnere, venenato sibi ore maledicere, odiis perti-
 “ nacibus invicem dissidere. Episcopi plurimi, quos &
 “ hortamento esse oportet cæteris & exemplo, divina pro-
 “ curatione contempta, procuratores rerum secularium
 “ fieri, derelicta cathedra, plebe deserta, per alienas pro-
 “ vincias oberrantes, negotiationis quatuordecim nundinas
 “ aucupari. Esurientibus in ecclesia fratribus non sub-
 “ venire, habere argentum largiter velle, fundos insidiosis
 “ fraudibus raperè, usuris multiplicantibus seentis augerè.
 “ Quid non perpeti tales pro peccatis ejusmodi mereantur?
 “ &c.” Cyp. Oper. de Lapsis, p. 123, 124. Edit. Oxon.

the general defection of the times, will any one, can any one, think it strange that Infant-Baptism, amidst the numerous errors and abuses that prevailed, should find its way into the church?

Thus have I made good my three propositions—That there is no proof of Infant-Baptism having obtained the two first centuries—That at what time it did obtain, a probable account is to be given of the source from whence it originated—and, That to suppose the Christian church, in that early age, capable of thus adulterating an institution of Christ, is by no means incredible, but perfectly consistent with the character of those times.

And now, Sir, I leave you to judge, whether Mr. *A.* has truth on his side when he affirms, “ that Infant-Baptism was received in all ages; “ —that its authority was not disputed in the “ early ages of Christianity;—and that of all “ the sects into which the church was divided, “ in the third and fourth centuries, not one “ ever upbraided the other with baptizing infants as an innovation; but all agreed in it ||.” What then becomes of his argument from ANTI-QUIRY? Will a considerate man lay any stress upon it? On the contrary, will not the inquiry we have made confirm his suspicion, that the

baptizing infants is an innovation? or, at least, convince him of the reasonableness and importance of this truly-protestant maxim, that in all matters of this nature, the Scriptures, and those alone, are to be our authority?

I am, Sir,

Yours.

L E T T E R XVII.

DEAR SIR,

WE have considered Mr. *A.*'s argument from *Antiquity*, and proceed now to that of **UNIVERSALITY**.

“Infant-Baptism,” he affirms, “has been universally received and preserved in all parts*,” as well as in all ages. A bold assertion this! And an assertion scarce reconcileable with an opinion he had before quoted from Mr. Wall, and, I suppose, adopted as his own. “The learned Wall,” says he, “informs us, that from the year of our Lord 400 to 1150, no society of men, in all that period of seven hundred years, ever pretended to say it was unlawful to baptize infants †.” So that we are to understand Mr. Wall and Mr. *A.* as saying, that, before and after those periods, there might be societies of men who held the unlawfulness of baptizing infants. And if so, how is it our Author here asserts, “that Infant-Baptism has been **UNIVERSALLY** received and preserved **IN ALL**

* P. 175.

† P. 154.

“PARTS, and in all ages?” We will take, however, the line Mr. *A.* has drawn, by the assistance of Mr. Wall, for our guide in our inquiries upon the question of the UNIVERSALITY of Infant-Baptism. And,

1. As to the first four hundred years from Christ. It is so far from being true “that it was universally received and preserved in all parts, through that period;” that there is no proof, as we have seen, of any one infant’s having been baptized during the former half of that time: and though, towards the end of the third century, it might pretty generally obtain in Africa; it has been proved that it did not obtain throughout the Christian church, particularly the Greek. So that the argument from UNIVERSALITY, hath evidently thus far failed. But how stands the fact, you will ask,

2. With regard to the six or seven following centuries? To this, I acknowledge, it is difficult to reply with precision, for want of sufficient historical lights. For it is well known that, during those ages, learning, as well as religion, was at a very low ebb: insomuch that, during the incursions of the barbarous nations, and, in a course of time, the enormous usurpations of the church of Rome, both the one and the other were almost extinguished and lost. So

that if we had had NO ACCOUNT, in all that period, of societies of men, that held it unlawful to baptize infants, it would not be strange; nor would it from thence follow, THERE WERE ACTUALLY NO SUCH SOCIETIES. I hope, however, to make it appear that we are not left wholly in the dark upon the matter.

The ancient Vaudois or Vallenses, so called from the place of their abode, the valleys of Piedmont*; are upon good grounds apprehended to have escaped the errors and corruptions of Popery in the worst of times, to have maintained the doctrines and institutions of Christianity in their primitive purity, and to have been of apostolical original †. From them the Waldenses of the twelfth century, who made so considerable a figure in the southern parts of France, and spread themselves into Bohemia and Germany, derived their name; and not, as is commonly supposed, from Peter Waldo of Lyons, who arose about

* “The name Vallenses or Vaudois,” says Dr. Allix, “was given them from the place of their abode, which the inhabitants called, les Vaus de Lucerne and Angrogne, from whence came the Latin name Vallenses, which was afterwards changed to Valdenses, &c.” See his Remarks on the ancient churches of Piedmont, p. 179.

† This is the opinion of Beza, Dr. Allix, and other writers of note. And it is maintained by Dr. Maclaine, the learned Translator of Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History, as we shall see in a note further on.

A. D. 1159.* Now these Waldenses, or Albigenses as they are otherwise called, did, many

though

* "It seems evident from the best records," says

Dr. Maclaine in his notes on Mosheim, "that Valdus"

(by whom he means this Peter Waldo of Lyons, of whom

Mosheim had been speaking) "derived his name from

"the true Valdenses of Piedmont, whose doctrines he ad-

"opted, and who were known by the names of Vaudois

"and Valdenses, before he or his immediate followers

"existed. If the Valdenses or Waldenses had derived

"their name from any eminent teacher, it would pro-

"bably have been from Valdo, who was remarkable for

"the purity of his doctrine in the IXth century, and was

"the cotemporary and chief counsellor of Berengarius.

"But the truth is, that they derive their name from their

"vallies in Piedmont, which in their language are called

"Vaux, hence Vaudois, their true name; hence Peter or

"(as others call him) John of Lyons, was called in Latin

"Valdus, because he had adopted their doctrine; and

"hence the term Valdenses and Waldenses used by those,

"who write in English or Latin, in the place of Vaudois.

"The bloody Inquisitor Reinerus Sacco, who exerted

"such a furious zeal for the destruction of the Waldenses,

"lived but about eighty years after Valdus of Lyons, and

"must therefore be supposed to know whether or not he

"was the real founder of the Valdenses or Leonists; and

"yet it is remarkable that he speaks of the Leonists (men-

"tioned by Dr. Mosheim as synonymous with Waldenses)

"as a sect that had flourished above 500 years; nay men-

"tions authors of note, who make their antiquity remount

"to the apostolick age. See the account given of Sacco's

"book by the Jesuit Gretser, in the Bibliotheca Patrum.

"I know not upon what principle Dr. Mosheim maintains,

"that the inhabitants of the Vallies of Piedmont are to be

"care-

though perhaps not all of them, deny Infant and practice Adult Baptism *. It is natural, there-

“ carefully distinguished from the Waldenses; and I am
 “ persuaded, that whoever will be at the pains to read at-
 “ tentively the 2d, 25th, 26th, and 27th chapters of the
 “ first book of Leger’s *Histoire Generale des Eglises Vau-*
 “ *doises*, will find this distinction entirely groundless.—
 “ When the Papists ask us *where our religion was before*
 “ *Luther?* we generally answer, *in the Bible*; and we an-
 “ swer well. But to gratify their taste for *tradition* and
 “ *human authority*, we may add to this answer, *and in the*
 “ *vallies of Piedmont.*” Mosheim’s *Eccles. Hist. Cent. XII.*
 Part II. note g, p. 452.

* I say *many* and not *all*, because there were some in the XIIth century to whom the general names of Waldenses and Albigenses were given (“under which names” Dr. Mosheim observes, “the Latins comprehended all the
 “ adversaries of the Roman Pontif.” *Eccles. Hist. Vol. II.* p. 441.) who rejected all Baptism. For my assertion, however, that the greatest part of the Albigeois and Vaudois denied infant, and practised adult, Baptism; I appeal to Chassanion a French-writer, who, in his history of these people, declares this to be his opinion. His history, he tells us, he collected from two ancient manuscripts, one of which was written in the Languedoc tongue, and the other in old French. The passage referred to I shall transcribe from my grandfather’s translation of it, in his answer to Ruffen, p. 81. “Some writers,” says Chassanion; “have affirmed, that the Albigeois approved not of the
 “ Baptism of infants; others that they entirely slighted
 “ this holy sacrament, as if it was of no use either to great
 “ or small. The same has been said of the Vaudois,
 “ though some affirm that they have always baptized their
 “ children;

therefore, to conclude that they derived this their opinion and practice from the ancient Vaudois
or

“ children : this difference of authors kept me for some
 “ time in suspense, before I could come to be resolved on
 “ which side the truth lay. At last, considering what
 “ St. Bernard says of this matter in his sixty-sixth Homily
 “ on the second chapter of *The Song of songs*, and the rea-
 “ son he brings to refute this error ; and also what he wrote
 “ *ad Hildefontium comitem sancti Egidii* ; I cannot deny
 “ that the Albigeois for the greatest part were of that opi-
 “ nion. And that which confirms me yet more in the
 “ belief of it, is, that in the history of the city of Trèves,
 “ which I have mentioned before at the end of the fourth
 “ chapter, it is said that at Ivoi, in the diocese of Treves,
 “ there were some who denied that the sacrament of Bap-
 “ tism was available to the salvation of infants. And one
 “ Catherine Saube, who was burnt at Montpellier in the
 “ year 1417. for being of the mind of the Albigeois in not
 “ believing the traditions of the Romish church, had the
 “ same thoughts concerning Infant-Baptism ; as it is record-
 “ ed in the register of the Town-house of the said city of
 “ Montpellier, of which we shall speak at the end of the fourth
 “ book. The truth is, they did not reject this sacrament,
 “ or say it was useless ; but only counted it unnecessary
 “ to infants, because they are not of age to believe, or
 “ capable of giving evidence of their faith. That which
 “ induced them (as I suppose) to entertain this opinion,
 “ is what our Lord says, that *He that believeth and is bap-
 “ tized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be
 “ damned.*” Aucuns ont escrit que les Albigeois n’ap-
 “ prouvoient point le Bapteme des petit enfans. D’autres
 “ qu’ils depressoient entierement ce saint sacrement, &c.
 Chassanion, Hist. des Albigeois Imprim. Fan. 1595.—

Among

or Vallenses. So that the Baptists may, I think, with good reason reply to those who ask them, Where their doctrine was before the Reformation? aye, and before the twelfth century too? It was IN THE VALLIES OF PIEDMONT: A reply which, as we have seen in the note below, Dr. Maclaine wishes the Lutherans to give the Papists, to gratify their taste for tradition and human authority. And now let us come down,

3. To the year 1150, about which time Mr. Wall admits, though very unwillingly, there might be societies of Baptists.

It should, however, be observed, that, more than a century before this, we find Deodwinus,

Among the several sects which prevailed in the XIIth century, to whom the general names of Waldenses and Albigenses were given, there were some, as I observed before, who denied all Baptism, and others who denied it to infants only. This even Mr. Wall acknowledges. See his *History of Infant-Baptism*, p. 394, 400. And this I mention, to account for the disputes that have arisen respecting the Waldenses, whether they were or were not proper Baptists. But surely it does not follow from some of the sects of this century having denied *all* Baptism, that the ancient Waldenses were not of the opinion of those who denied Baptism to infants *only*: but the contrary is the natural inference, if regard be paid to the testimony of Chassanion just cited, and to Dr. Maclaine's opinion, which is so well supported, that the Waldenses of the XIIth century derived their name from the ancient Vaudois or Valdenses, who had flourished above 500 years before.

Bishop.

Bishop of Liege, complaining in a letter to Henry the First of France, that a report was spread through all Germany, that Bruno Bishop of Angers, and Berengarius Archdeacon of the same church, *did all that in them lay to overthrow the Baptism of Infants* *. It is indeed thought by some, that no more was meant by this expression, than that they held tenets which tended to the destruction of Infant-Baptism. This however admitted, it is natural to infer from Deodwinus's jealousy for the safety of Pædo-baptism, that it had had its opposers, and that the contrary doctrine was not a novel idea at that time. But what I mean to observe as remarkable is, that in the next century the Archbishop of Triers is said to have expelled the Berengarian sect out of his diocese, among whom there were some who confessed their opinion to be, that *Baptism does no good to infants for their salvation* †.

* Mr. Wall, from whom I take this fact, tells us, that the Letter referred to "was written by (Durandus Bishop of Liege, as Baronius and the Editors of the Bib. Patr. had supposed; but as Bishop Usher (7) and F. Mabilion (8) have fully proved, by) Deodwinus Bishop of Liege, to Henry I. King of France."

(7) De Success. Eccles. p. 196.

(8) Analect. T. 4. p. 396. The Letter is to be met with in Bib. Patr. T. II. Ed. Col. 1618. Durandi Epist.—Wall's Hist. p. 384.

† See Wall's History, p. 386.

Now

Now as Mr. Wall thinks these were a sort of people that have been since called Waldenses, and that it is probable there were those among the people so called who denied Infant-Baptism; it is not unlikely that the Berengarians were properly speaking Antipædobaptists.

I might mention others, not long after Berenger, who were charged with having been un-found in their judgment about the sacrament of the altar, and Infant-Baptism. But I shall confine myself to those two famous Reformers, Peter de Bruys and Henry his successor, from whom the Petrobruffians and Henericians took their name. Dr. Mosheim has given us a particular account of them both, and his words I shall transcribe. Having spoken of some other sects, he proceeds :

“ *A much more rational sect was that which was*
 “ *founded about the year 1110, in Languedoc and*
 “ *Provence, by Peter de Bruys, who made the most*
 “ *laudable attempts to reform the abuses and to re-*
 “ *move the superstitions that disfigured the beautiful*
 “ *simplicity of the gospel; and after having engaged*
 “ *in his cause a great number of followers, during*
 “ *a laborious ministry of twenty years continuance,*
 “ *was burnt at St. Giles's, in the year 1130, by*
 “ *an enraged populace, set on by the clergy, whose*
 “ *traffic was in danger from the enterprizing spirit*
 “ of

“ of this new reformer. The whole system of doc-
 “ trine, which this unhappy martyr, whose zeal was
 “ not without a considerable mixture of fanaticism,
 “ taught to the Petrobrussians his disciples, is not
 “ known; it is however certain, that the five fol-
 “ lowing tenets made a part of his system: 1. That
 “ no persons whatever, were to be baptized before
 “ they were come to the full use of their reason.
 “ 2. That it was an idle superstition to build churches
 “ for the service of God, who will accept of a sin-
 “ cere worship wherever it is offered; and that
 “ therefore such churches as had already been erected
 “ were to be pulled down and destroyed. 3. That
 “ the crucifixes, as instruments of superstition, de-
 “ served the same fate. 4. That the real body and
 “ blood of Christ were not exhibited in the Eucharist,
 “ but were merely represented, in that holy ordinance,
 “ by their figures and symbols. 5. And lastly,
 “ That the oblations, prayers, and good works of
 “ the living, could be in no respect advantageous
 “ to the dead *.”

Dr. Mosheim then goes on to give an account
 of Henry his successor, and an Italian by birth.
 “ It was,” says he, “ no doubt a rare thing to see
 “ a person, who was at the same time monk and

* Mosheim’s authorities are, Petri Venerab. Lib. contra
 Petrobruff. in Biblioth. Clunienti, p. 1117.—Mabillon. An-
 nal. Benedict. Tom. VI. p. 346.—Bainage, Histoire des
 Eglises Reformées, period IV. p. 140.

“ hermit,

“ hermit, undertaking to reform the superstitions
 “ of the times; yet such was the case of Henry,
 “ who leaving Lausanne, a city in Switzerland,
 “ travelled to Mans, and being banished thence re-
 “ moved successively to Poitiers, Bourdeaux, and
 “ the countries adjacent, and at length to Thoulouse
 “ in the year 1147, exercising his ministerial func-
 “ tion in all these places, with the utmost applause
 “ from the people, and declaiming, with the greatest
 “ vehemence and fervor, against the vices of the
 “ clergy, and the superstitions they had introduced
 “ into the Christian church. At Thoulouse he was
 “ warmly opposed by St. Bernard, by whose influence
 “ he was overpowered, notwithstanding his popu-
 “ larity, and obliged to save himself by flight. But
 “ being seized in his retreat, by a certain bishop,
 “ he was carried before pope Eugenius III, who
 “ presided in person at a council then assembled at
 “ Rheims, and who, in consequence of the accusa-
 “ tions brought against Henry, committed him, in
 “ 1148, to a close prison, where, in a little time
 “ after this, he ended his days *. We have no ac-
 “ curate account of the doctrines of this reformer
 “ transmitted to our times. All we know of that

* Mosheim's authorities are, *Gesta Episcoporum Ceno-*
manens in Mabillon, Analect. veter. ævi, p. 315. Ed. nov..
—Gaufridi Epist. in Lib. VI. Vitæ S. Bernardi, Tom. II.
Opp. Bernhard. p. 1207.—Matth. Histor. Major. p. 71.
—Mabillon, Præf. ad opera Bernardi, § VI. & Annal.
Benedict. Tom. VI. p. 346, 420, 434.

“ *matter is, that he rejected the baptism of infants;*
 “ *condemned with severity the corrupt and licentious*
 “ *manners of the clergy; treated the festivals and*
 “ *ceremonies of the church with the utmost contempt;*
 “ *and held clandestine assemblies, in which he ex-*
 “ *plained and inculcated the novelties he taught*.”*

Besides these illustrious reformers and martyrs for the truth, I might mention several others who with the like firmness opposed the corruptions of the church of Rome, and among the rest that of Infant-Baptism. But I forbear entering into particulars, as I mean not to write a history of the Baptists. It must, however, be observed, that many of the Waldenses were driven, by the persecution they suffered in the southern parts of France, into various countries; and no doubt carried with them their opinion and practice respecting Baptism. Dr. Allix speaks of a colony of them in Bohemia, of their having continued there several years, of the state of their churches, and of their being charged, among other matters, with being in an error concerning Infant-Baptism †. And there is a letter written to Erasmus out of Bohemia in the year 1519, in which an account is given of a

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Vol. II. Cent. XII. Part II. Ch. V. p. 446—448.

† Dr. Allix's Remarks on the ancient churches of Piedmont, p. 211, 214, 221, 223.

sect then in being, and which had been in that country for above ninety years; whose practice is thus described: “*Such as come over to their sect*”
 “*must every one be baptized anew in mere water:*”
 “*they make no blessing of salt, nor of the water,*”
 “*nor make any use of consecrated oil*.*” Now it is most natural to conclude, that these were the Waldenses of whom Dr. Allix speaks. To which I would just add, from Dr. Mosheim, that in the fifteenth century “*The Waldenses still*”
 “*subsisted in several European provinces, more e-*”
 “*specially in Pomerania, Brandenburg, the district*”
 “*of Magdeburg and Thuringia, where they had a*”
 “*considerable number of friends and followers. It*”
 “*appears however,*” continues he, “*by authen-*”
 “*tick records, which are not yet published, that a*”
 “*great part of the adherents of this unfortunate sect,*”
 “*in the countries now mentioned, were discovered*”
 “*by the inquisitors, and delivered over by them to*”
 “*the civil magistrates, who committed them to the*”
 “*flames †.*”

From this short detail of facts down to the fifteenth century you will judge, Sir, what truth

* Colomesius's Collection of Letters of men of note, Ep. 30. This passage Mr. David Rees cites in his answer to Mr. Fowler Walker's Defence of Infant-Baptism, p. 201. and from him I take it.

† Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Cent. XV. Part II. Ch. V. Vol. III. p. 272.

there is in Mr. A.'s assertion, "that Infant-Baptism, has been universally received and preserved in all parts, and in all ages." I must, however, do him the justice to observe, that he is willing to admit, and that without any great reluctance, an exception to his universal proposition, in the next century. The Anabaptists in Germany, that numerous and powerful!—that wild and wicked faction! must not be passed over in silence, lest the cause of Pædobaptism should suffer by the omission: an omission, of which, it must be acknowledged, few declaimers against the Baptists have been guilty. The sad story, therefore, our Author must in faithfulness relate, though "it is so unpleasing a scene," that he cannot reconcile himself "to enter particularly into it*." Thus forced into the painful service, he spends no more than a page and a half in disseminating the opinions and practices of these mad adventurers: opinions which, he is himself sensible, are, in every instance mentioned except that of Baptism, as different from ours, as they are from his: and practices which, he also knows, the Baptists hold in as great abhorrence as he himself does, and have given as convincing proofs thereof, as any denomination of Christians whatever.

* P. 155.

But if Mr. *A.* had recollected his own reasoning a little before, and duly profited by it, he would have saved himself the trouble of giving us this “unpleasing” narrative, and escaped the censure which this impotent attempt to prejudice his readers against the Baptists, will be apt to draw upon him from considerate and impartial people. “We pay no regard,” says he in the passage I refer to, “to the authority of “the church of Rome; yet we cannot think “Protestants are obliged to reject Infant-Baptism merely because Papists practise it, any “more than they are obliged to disown the “being of a God, the divine mission of Christ, “and the reality of a future state, because these “doctrines are received in the Romish church. “We are to distinguish between the principles “which they entertain in common with Christi- “ans in general, and such as are the tenets of “their peculiar system*.” In this reasoning I readily agree with Mr. *A.*; and would therefore ask him, Whether he thinks I should have at all served the cause I am defending, had I spent my time in painting the rivers of blood through which Romish Pædobaptists have waded, in their way to that height of power they have acquired throughout Christendom? He will, no doubt, tell me, I should not. Will then, I ask, the dispassionate friends of that cause he is defending,

* P. 147.

give him their thanks for drawing up the men of Munster in battle-array, in order to frighten unthinking people into an abhorrence of “Anti-pœdobaptist principles;” and to aid him in his hitherto unsuccessful attempts to extirpate “the great and many evils” he complains of, as resulting from those principles * ?

But before we dismiss this “unpleasing scene,” I must do the foreign Baptists the justice to observe, that it is well known great multitudes of them had no concern in these extravagancies. Nor can I forbear adding, though I would not be understood to recriminate, that there were many Pœdobaptists among these German insurgents. Indeed it is easy to imagine, that a history of times, wherein there was a combination of events so strangely perplexed, and conveyed down to us through the hands of Papists, or of Protestants that were inimical to Baptists; must be clouded with more or less obscurity. The truth, however, I take to be this †: At the beginning of the Reformation there were popular tumults in many cities, particularly those where images were broken down. In Munster these tumults prevailed to the turning the Romish priests out of the churches, and put-

* P. 177.

† See Spanhem. Hist. Anabap. p. 12. Hook's Apol. p. 11. and Sleidan.

ting the Protestant ministers in their room, The former left the city, and complained to the Bishop, desiring him to block up the place. Upon this, Rotman, a minister of the Lutheran persuasion, who had publickly opposed Infant-Baptism, at the head of a considerable party, joined the Anabaptists, and thereby increased their number and reputation. So these wild people, exasperated by the severe persecutions they had suffered, and stirred up by some ill men, who knew how to take advantage of the general confusion of the times; proceeded to those violences which all sober people of every profession justly condemn in the highest degree.

In the consequences of these confusions the innocent, as it often happens, were involved with the guilty: and those among the reformed, who were zealously attached to Infant-Baptism, failed not to take advantage, from this business, to fix the most reproachful character upon the Baptists in general. I might, however, produce testimonies enough from Erasmus, Beza, Caspander, Bayle, and others, to prove that the principles and practices of vast numbers of them, who were persecuted even to death, bore no resemblance to those of the men of Munster, except in the point of Baptism; that they were sober, honest and pious, and were never concerned in any insurrections against the state.

Indeed

Indeed the account Mr. Rees has given us of their sufferings, from Brandt's History of the Reformation, sufficiently shews what kind of people they were, and will stamp an indelible infamy upon the memory of their persecutors, whether Papiſts or Proteſtants. "I have carefully told over," ſays Mr. Rees, "five hundred and ſeventy-odd perſons (all Anabaptiſts) who were put to death merely on account of religion; excluſive of, and in contradiſtinction to, any who ſuffered as chargeable with treaſon, rebellion, ſedition, &c. nor have I reckoned into the number, a whole aſſembly of theſe people, which was betrayed at Rotterdam in the year 1554; for I could not make an eſtimate of them: but all that were caught of them were executed." Mr. Rees then affirms, "Upon a fair computation, this ſcantling of Anabaptiſts, who ſuffered abroad in and about the Low-countries for their religious principles, amounts conſiderably to above the higheſt number of thoſe, of whatever denominations, who were put to death in England on account of the Reformation *."

To ſhew you alſo, Sir, what was their character for patience and conſtancy in ſuffering, even in the opinion of their enemies, I will cite the teſtimony of Cardinal Hoſius who preſided at

* Rees's Answer to Walker, p. 220.

the council of Trent: “ If the truth of religion,” says the Cardinal, “ were to be judged of by the readines and chearfulness which a man of any sect shews in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer than that of the Anabaptists; since there have been none, for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more grievously punished, or that have more chearfully and stedfastly undergone, and even offered themselves to, the most cruel sorts of punishments, than these people *.”

And now, Sir, if we look into our own country, we shall find that it can scarce be said with propriety, that “ Infant-Baptism has been universally, and in all ages, received and preserved ” here. There were Baptists in England as far back as Harry the Eighth’s time: for Brandt tells us, that, in the year 1539, one and thirty of them, that fled from hence, were put to death at Delft; the men beheaded, and the women drowned †. And in Edward the Sixth’s reign, the same Historian informs us, there was a congregation of foreign Baptists gathered at London, which, upon the demise of that excellent young Prince, was dispersed by

* See Annot. on Brandt’s third book of Hist. of Reform. Vol. I.

† Brandt’s Hist. Ref. Vol. I. b. III. p. 77*

Queen Mary *. The different orders of Dissenters, under the denomination of Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, you are sensible, did not rise into existence till some time after the Reformation. But, as I am not writing a History, the question, respecting their precedency to one another in order of time, I shall not here inquire into; which yet, from Mr. Neale's account, appears to have been not very considerable: nor shall I trace the Baptists down to the present period.

I must, however, here take notice, which is more to the purport of the present Letter, of Mr. A.'s affected indifference towards the Baptists, in point of number. "The number," says he, "in the present day of those that refuse Baptism to Infants, whatever it may seem in here and there a particular neighbourhood, is very small even in Great-Britain; and hardly worth mentioning, in comparison of the many churches in all Christian countries in which the ordinance is administered to them †." It is, I admit, true, that the Baptists of this and other countries are not to be compared, in regard of numbers, with the many professing Christians of a different persuasion: they are, no doubt of it, the minority. Yet, inconsiderable as they may appear in our Author's

* Brandt's Hist. Ref. Vol. I. b. IV. p. 104. † P. 146.

eye, I hope I shall not be understood to boast when I say, that if they are no more than were baptized unto Moses in the sea, their number is not contemptible. I can, however, assure M. A. upon good authority, that the Baptists in this country, to say nothing of those in other parts of Europe and in America, are more than one third of the three denominations of Dissenters.

But to what purpose do we talk of numbers, as if UNIVERSALITY were an inseparable property and mark of the true church? Our opponents, Sir, to apply Archbishop Tillotson's words, when speaking of the Papists, to the present debate, "*never flout at*" Antipædobaptism "*with so good a grace among the ignorant people, as when they are bragging of their numbers, and despising*" the true Christian Baptism, "*because embraced by so few. This pestilent German heresy (as some of them scornfully call it) is entertained, it seems, only in this cold and cloudy corner of the world, by a company of dull stupid people, that can neither penetrate into the proof nor the*" reasonableness of Infant-Baptism.—"*But we will not stand upon*" any "*advantage*" we may have of numbers beyond what they may care to allow us. "*Suppose,*" I say with the Archbishop, "*we were by much the fewer. So hath the true church of God often been, without any the least prejudice to the truth*"

" of

“ of their religion. What think we of the church
 “ in Abraham’s time, which, for aught we know,
 “ was confined to one family, and one small king-
 “ dom, that of Melchizedeck king of Salem? What
 “ think we of it in Moses’s time, when it was
 “ confined to one people wandering in a wilderness?
 “ What of it in Elijah’s time, when besides the
 “ two tribes, that worshipped at Jerusalem, there
 “ were in the other ten but seven thousand that had
 “ not bowed the knee to Baal? What in our Sa-
 “ viour’s time, when the whole Christian church
 “ consisted of twelve apostles and seventy disciples,
 “ and some few followers beside? How would
 “ Bellarmine have despised this little flock, because
 “ it wanted one of his goodliest marks of the true
 “ church, universality and splendor? And what
 “ think we of the Christian church in the height
 “ of Arianism and Pelagianism, when a great part
 “ of Christendom was over-run with errors, and
 “ the number of the Orthodox was inconsiderable
 “ in comparison with Hereticks? But what need
 “ I urge these instances? as if the truth of a reli-
 “ gion were to be estimated and carried by the
 “ major votes; which as it can be an argument
 “ to none but fools, so I dare say no honest and
 “ wise man ever made use of it for a solid proof of
 “ the truth and goodness of any church or religion.
 “ If multitude be an argument that men are in the
 “ right, in vain then hath Scripture said, Thou
 “ shalt not follow a multitude to do evil: for if this

“ argument be of any force, the greater number

“ never go wrong *.”

* Tillotson's works, fol. edit 9th, p. 250, 251.

I am, Sir,

Yours.

LET-

L E T T E R X V I I I .

D E A R S I R ,

IF you had not read Mr. *A.*'s Book, you would be apt to conclude, from the length to which these Letters are drawn out, that I must by this time have considered all his arguments in favour of Infant-Baptism, and all his objections to that for which we contend. But I assure you this is not the case: our Author's heavy artillery, with which he is to do the main execution, is still in reserve; at least we have hitherto been only now and then alarmed with it. Nor need we be under any apprehensions from this quarter; for though the unkind reflections Mr. *A.* has thrown out, may pass with some kind of readers for very convincing arguments, and fix a deep impression upon their minds to the prejudice of the Baptists; yet I am confident, from a kind of fatality that usually attends this sort of reasoning, they will, in the opinion of considerate and impartial people, rather serve than injure the cause they are meant to destroy.

“The evils of Antipædobaptist principles,” Mr. *A.* tells us, “are great and many*.” That is to say, Great and many evils result from their principles: or, Their principles are of a very bad tendency. No one, I believe, will charge me with doing our Author injustice in this exposition of his words.

Now I should not have blamed Mr. *A.* if, seriously believing this proposition, he had proceeded to point out the great and many evils, natural, moral, and political, which result from the doctrine of Baptism, as held by the people he is writing against. He has certainly a right to lay open to the whole world the ill tendency of any religious opinions he considers as false and heretical. And if he could have fairly proved that ours, in the matter of Baptism, tends to produce any one real evil, except that of drawing upon us the unkind censures and cruel abuse of ignorant bigotted people, I should have thought myself obliged to cancel what I have written upon the subject, as in that case there must have been some essential mistake at the bottom of all my reasoning.

But instead of this, our Author, as if conscious that he had asserted what he could not prove,

and fearful lest he should be thought to speak under the influence of animosity and resentment, and yet unwilling to recede, adds, "We are far
" from charging all those improprieties and dis-
" orders, which some persons of that denomina-
" tion have occasioned, upon those distinguish-
" ing principles*."

But does he mean to charge ANY improprieties and disorders upon those principles? If he does, why are they not mentioned; and their origination from this source clearly pointed out and ascertained? That there may have been ignorant, ill-natured, factious, and I will add wild people too, who may have taken it into their heads to reject Infant-Baptism, I am by no means disposed to deny. Most denominations of Christians, Mr. A.'s not excepted, have had some such sort of folks among them. But, do the peculiar principles of Antipædobaptists, any more than those of Independents, Presbyterians, or Churchmen, make people ignorant and barbarous, ill-natured and factious? Why then must we be reduced to the cruel alternative, of either asserting that the men of Munster did wrong to deny Baptism to their children; or of acknowledging that we descend in a right line from them, and are the inheritors of their principles, and their tempers too?

* P. 177.

If, on the contrary, Mr. *A.* means to charge NONE of the improprieties and disorders, of which some of the Baptists may have been guilty, upon their distinguishing principle; to what purpose, that is candid and generous, docs he, in this connection, hold up to the view of his readers the improprieties and disorders of any of them? It appears to me, therefore, that his intent is to charge the irregularities he refers to, whatever they may be, in part at least, to the principles of the Baptists. And is this fair?—But the German story had, perhaps, so deeply impressed our Author's imagination, and so unhappily clouded his reason, that he scarce knew how to separate the ideas of Baptism and faction; plunging in water, and storming of towns; a steady adherence to what is believed to be an institution of Christ, and an obstinate attachment to peculiarities.

The charge, however, he had exhibited against some of the Baptists, without telling us who they are, gives him an opportunity of gratifying the noble passion he feels for doing others among them all the justice which lies in his power. “We have the pleasure,” says he, amidst all the pain he suffers for being obliged to speak disrespectfully of any of them, “to know some, “that profess these principles, who are of a spirit very unlike that from which those evils, in “other instances, have arisen*.” I sincerely

thank Mr. *A.* for these good tidings; and know not how better to contribute to the increase of this pleasure he so sensibly feels, than by recommending it to him to lay aside his prejudices against the Baptists, and to become better acquainted with them.

But to wish our Author to become intimate with Arminians and Antinomians, may be rather unfriendly: for such, it seems, is his idea of many, if not all of them. "We must confess," says he, "it seems somewhat surprising, that so many of them should run into one or other of the two wide extremes of Arminianism or Antinomianism *." Mr. *A.*'s hitherto imperfect acquaintance with the Baptists, may be some excuse for his mistaken idea of the fact respecting their principles. Be that, however, as it may, if the two heresies he charges many of them with are directly opposite to each other, it would be more than "surprising" did their peculiar tenet of Baptism incline them to both those heresies: it may be charitably hoped therefore, that it bears no aspect, as is really the case, to either. And having thus settled the matter, I flatter myself this bar to a friendly correspondence with them is removed.

But Mr. *A.* still has his difficulties; and they are such, it must be acknowledged, as ought to

* P. 177.

prove, unless they can be obviated, unsurmountable obstructions to an union, not only between him and them, but between them and every good man. "They are, many of them, it seems, in this as well as the last age, violently attached to their peculiarities; and more zealous to establish a favourite mode and party, than to establish the kingdom of Christ. They employ that time in disputing about Baptism, which they ought to spend in endeavouring to acquire a more accurate and thorough acquaintance with the gospel, and in cultivating, in themselves and others, a spirit of candour, humility, integrity, and benevolence. And so are the occasions, by their conduct, discourses and writings, of many evils*." These, Sir, are high charges; and though not laid to them all, yet will be considered by most, as designed to give us the complexion of the sect in general. But does Mr. A. expect his readers will implicitly believe him? They who know the Baptists will not. And they who do not know them, will suspect an Author who shall take these liberties, at the same time producing no evidence in support of what he alledges, of a failure in point of candour, if not integrity too. But the Baptists will, I hope, forgive Mr. A. the injury he has done them, and thereby disprove at least some of the

* P. 177, 178.

charges he has thus exhibited against them. And to dispose them the more readily to forgive him, I think I can find a way to lessen his fault, though not absolutely to exculpate him. I verily believe, Sir, this acrimony is not the effect of natural temper; but of an unhappy ferment into which his spirits have been thrown, by an apprehension that this mischievous tenet is getting ground; and, perhaps, a jealousy that his arguments may be insufficient to check the progress of it.

But let us enter a little more particularly into the evils themselves charged upon the Baptists. This I look upon myself in duty obliged to do, as it is not a few only that are concerned, but many, "MANY IN THIS AND THE LAST AGE." The denomination in general, as I observed before, most people will suppose are intended: for it is not easy to conceive what material purpose our Author could propose, in a dispute of this nature, by holding up a few obscure individuals to publick view. But what are the evils they are guilty of? They are "violently attached," it seems, "to peculiarities." If by peculiarities Mr. *A.* means Arminianism and Antinomianism, of which he had been just speaking, he must know that neither of these is the characteristick distinction of the Baptists, any more than of the Independent, or Congregational denomination,

to which he belongs. But if Baptism is meant, though it may be so described in the innocent, yet surely it ought not in the obnoxious sense of the term; unless it be said, that all opinions held by the minority, however fit and true, are to be ridiculed as peculiarities.

But the criminality, meant to be charged upon the Baptists, lies in their "violent attachment" to this peculiarity. Now, Sir, to adhere steadily to what in their consciences they believe to be the truth, publickly to profess it, by sound reasoning to defend it, and by all decent and proper means to spread it; this surely no sensible man will say is wrong. Such an attachment will intitle them to the applause, instead of the censure, of all wise and good people. I know indeed it is a mighty common thing for persons, when they have taken pains to set aside an opinion or practice they happen to be prejudiced against, and have failed in the attempt, to speak of the point in debate as a trifling matter, and to represent their opponents in the ridiculous light of people who are obstinately set upon contending for a mere nothing. In this manner the subject before us has been too often treated, to the injury, I fear, of religion, as well as in violation of right reason.

But what sense, Sir, is there in saying that truth and error are indifferent? Of no two
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propositions that are opposite to each other can this with propriety be affirmed. I am sensible, indeed, that between truths themselves there is a very great difference, in point of importance: and am as willing to apply this observation to the matters which Mr. *A.* has thought fit to contrast to each other, as ever he can be. No doubt this peculiarity of ours, as he terms it, is of far less consequence than the gospel itself: no doubt a favourite mode, however scriptural and divine, ought not to be an object of the like zeal with the establishment of the kingdom of Christ: no doubt, I will add with him, the observation of Baptism is of trifling consideration, in comparison with the cultivation of candour, humility, integrity, and benevolence. But surely, if the idea of truth is applicable to matters on one side of the contrast as well as the other, indifference is not to be admitted as to either.

But I will go further, Sir, and assert, that as the institutions of the gospel derive their authority from Christ, so to treat them as matters of little consequence, and to consider it as a weak, officious, useless kind of zeal, to maintain them in their primitive simplicity, because they are not of the same important consideration with those other matters just mentioned; is grossly to affront the supreme Head of the church. Besides, positive institutions are not mere arbitrary

trary signs of subjection to the authority of our divine Master, in which light, however, their importance is considerable; but they are wisely adapted to the great purpose of promoting practical religion: wherefore, the treating them with indifference, has a manifest and direct tendency to injure those other more noble truths and duties which, I readily agree, justly demand our superior zeal. To which I will add, if, upon this popular ground of the trifling importance of positive institutions, every attempt to rescue Baptism from human innovation is to be considered as the fruit of violent attachment to peculiarities, and a criminal zeal for a favourite mode and party; I know not upon what sufficient plea our first Reformers are to be justified, in their warm and steady opposition to the corruptions of popery; or their successors the Puritans, in their dissent from the established church.

Thus it clearly appears, that indifference to positive precepts is criminal, and that a zeal for the preservation of them in their original purity is highly commendable. I am, however, very ready to admit, that men's zeal in these matters may be intemperate; and so defeat the noble and important ends of vital and practical religion, to which it ought to be invariably directed. Let us here then inquire, What are the genuine characteristicks of such a spurious and per-

pernicious zeal; and whether the Baptists, as a body, are justly chargeable with it? In this inquiry I shall be guided by the criterions Mr. *A.* has laid down, which I heartily approve, however I differ from him in his mistaken application of them.

When zeal, in questions of this nature, degenerates into "violence," and indecent reflections and reproachful language are deemed fit weapons to be used in the defence of truth; every serious thoughtful man will, no doubt, enter his protest: he will not fail to pronounce such a temper and conduct unworthy of men, much more of Christians? But are the Baptists chargeable with this guilt? I hope not. Is this the cast, the complexion, of the Denomination? Their Apologies, written, many of them, under provocations of the most shameful invective and abuse, will sufficiently exculpate them. Mr. *A.*, who, amidst all his professions of candour, has so severely treated them in the chapter I am animadverting upon; and, which is still more afflicting, who has censured their Baptism (stampt as they verily believe it to be with the all-commanding authority of the Son of God) as scarce reconcilable with decency*; Mr. *A.*, I say, has received no opprobrious language in return. Be it so then, that they are attached to their peculiarities; their attachment

* P. 13, 14.

is not, however, violent in these criminal senses of it. Further,

“ To be more zealous to establish a favourite mode and party, than to establish the kingdom of Christ,” is not only unworthy, but sinful in a very high degree. They who are of this character are a disgrace to any denomination, and will not fail to endure the frowns of their Judge on the great day of account. But why are the Baptists to be thus represented? Do they affirm that the kingdom of Christ is confined to them? that they only have the true religion among them? and that, unless men are of their party, they will not be saved? Do they wish success to none that are employed in the vineyard, but themselves? or say of others, engaged in the same common cause, Master, forbid them, because they follow not with us? On the contrary, do they not profess a warm esteem and affection for all those, of whatever communion, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and aim to promote his cause in the world? and do they not give proof of this, by holding a friendly correspondence with them as opportunities offer; and by cordially joining them in occasional exercises of publick worship? It is not, Sir, the distinguishing tenet of Baptism, how much soever they wish it to prevail, that is the main band that knits them in affection to one another: it is the
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infinitely nobler consideration of the relation they stand in to Christ as his disciples. They hope, therefore, to be believed when they declare, what was before affirmed, that they most cordially embrace in the arms of Christian love the friends of Jesus, who differ from them in this point; and to be further believed when they add, that they hold the temper and conduct of the furious zealot for Baptism, who fails in his allegiance to Christ, and in the charity he owes his fellow Christians, in sovereign contempt. Again,

I agree with Mr. *A.* in condemning the great evil of employing that time in disputing about Baptism, which ought to be spent in acquiring an accurate and thorough acquaintance with the gospel, and in cultivating a spirit of candour, humility, integrity, and benevolence. But is it a fact that the Baptists are guilty of this great evil? Are they ever talking, preaching, and writing upon this subject? It is true, they judge it their duty, at the administration of this ordinance, to give the reasons of their practice. But will any one say, because these occasions may frequently return, that this is indecent? Is it the usual topick of their publick discourses? Or, if they now and then, much against their inclination, state their case to the view of the world, in the manner I have now done, are they deserving

deserving of blame? or if they are, should not those who by their publications against them draw these defences from them, be willing to take a share of the blame with them? Are the friends of Pœdobaptism only to be permitted to speak; and those on the other side to be required, at the peril of that little reputation they may have for “candour, humility, integrity, and benevolence,” to hold their peace? This, Sir, is very hard!

But, “if they would have done disputing about Baptism, those evils, Mr. *A.* thinks, would be prevented which are occasioned by their conduct, discourses, and writings *?” If by these evils are meant the spread of what they take to be the truth, Mr. *A.* can scarce expect, till he has convinced them that they are in an error, to persuade them by this argument to be silent. The best means that I know of to impose silence upon them, is to forbear entering into disputes with them: for I am well satisfied it will appear, upon an inquiry into the history of this controversy, that by far the greater part of what has been said by them upon this subject, has been by way of reply to their opponents. As to any other consequences which may be apprehended from these disputes, whilst the Baptists persevere in modestly and firmly defending the truth, making the study of the gospel and

* P. 177, 178.

the cultivation of the Christian temper their grand objects, they will not be chargeable with those consequences, be they what they may.

Mr. *A.* now goes on to enumerate the evils, which, in his opinion, do immediately result from Antipædobaptism. In general, he tells us, “the cause of Christ and the rising generation are injured thereby * ;” and then proceeds to particulars, which I shall here recite, with few if any remarks of my own, persuaded that a sensible and dispassionate reader, after what has been so largely said upon these matters, will clearly perceive our Author’s mistake in every instance.

“The ministers and disciples of Christ,” says he, “are herein now repeating a conduct, on account of which Jesus was highly displeas’d with his first followers.”

“They are rejecting those as common and unclean, which a Christian Apostle has pronounced holy; and treat those as mere outcasts and subjects of Satan’s kingdom, concerning whom our Lord has declared, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven.*”

“They go before God in repealing an act of grace which He has not repealed but established; and reflect upon an institution of the great Head of the church in which his people rejoiced through many generations.”

* P. 178.

“ They

“ They dispute the authority of the only Bap-
“ tism used in the Christian church for many
“ hundred years, and reduce all that are thus
“ taken into covenant with God, to the state of
“ unbaptized heathens.”

“ The grant of the gospel of grace is hereby
“ represented as less merciful and extensive than
“ that of the law of Moses, which admitted the
“ children of God’s people into his covenant.”

“ Hereby Christian parents are discouraged
“ from putting in their claim to those new-
“ covenant blessings which are promised to their
“ children, and are deprived of a powerful mo-
“ tive to prayer and a Christian education.”

“ Children themselves may, also, in other
“ respects, suffer more from the neglect than
“ many are aware, in consequence of the affront
“ offered even by those who profess themselves
“ the people of God, both to his covenant and
“ the seal of it; and as they are denied a valu-
“ able preservative from sin and folly, as well
“ as encouraged to slight the honour and privi-
“ lege of a godly parentage.”

“ In consequence of these principles, many
“ that are born of Christian parents live long in
“ a Christian country before the very initiating
“ ordinance of the gospel is administered to
“ them; and to some it is never administered at
“ all: while, on the other hand, not a few are
“ washed a second time, (with all the solemnity

“ of a Christian institution) without the least
“ authority from Christ, or his Apostles, and
“ contrary to the very nature and design of
“ Christian Baptism *.”

This long catalogue of evils makes, I acknowledge, a very formidable appearance: nor should I at all wonder, if it produces in their minds, who are not accustomed to think for themselves, the effect our Author proposes, *viz.* an abhorrence of Antipædobaptist principles. The force of education is great: people, in general, have little leisure, and less inclination, to enter into questions of this nature: and the answer is natural, to those who would persuade them that this and the other custom derived from their ancestors may possibly be ill-founded, “ *Sequimur*
“ *majores nostros qui feliciter suos*; “ We follow
“ our forefathers who happily followed theirs.” As it may be thought, therefore, unkind in me any further to disturb their repose; I shall not attempt to counteract the seeming force of what Mr. *A.* has just said, by a similar address to the passions; but submit it to the reader, upon a review of the reasoning of the preceding Letters, Whether the evils, of which our Author so loudly complains, have any other existence than in his own imagination?

* P. 178, 179, 180.

Mr. A. now proceeds to sentence; I mean not himself to pass sentence on the Baptists, but to remind them of what they may expect, if they persevere in denying Baptism to their Infant-children. “As a very awful punishment,” says he, “was, by the express command of God, to be inflicted upon every one of the seed of Abraham to whom the ordinance of circumcision was not duly administered in infancy, *That soul, says the Almighty, shall be cut off from his people, he hath broken my covenant* *; Christian ministers and parents would do well to take heed of refusing or neglecting to apply this ordinance of Baptism to their children; which is, as we have before proved, the Circumcision of Christ †.” To which I shall only reply, that the Baptists have firm confidence in their just Judge, that He will not condemn, but applaud, their conscientious attachment to what they are persuaded, upon the clearest grounds, is his will.

Mr. A. now goes on, as is extremely natural, to hold up to his reader's view the benefits resulting from Infant-Baptism. “It lays a foundation, he tells us, for addressing many valuable instructions, exhortations, cautions, admonitions, and encouragements to children as they grow up;—it obliges parents to train them up in

* Gen. xvii. 14.

† P. 180.

the nurture and admonition of the Lord;—it gives ministers an opportunity of addressing parents upon their duty;—the recollection of this solemnity becomes a powerful restraint against temptation, and an argument to walk in newness of life;—and it tends to cherish in children a peculiar esteem and affection for their parents, as those by whom they were introduced into the covenant of God; and to animate parents to their duty, and to encourage their hopes respecting their children.*”

Now, Sir, if these advantages, which no doubt are very great and important, were the natural and proper effects of the application of Baptism to infants; or if the ceremony were appointed by God to these ends; or if the omission of it did at all lessen the obligations of parents to take care of the education of their children, or of children to make all suitable returns to their parents and to demean themselves well in life, or of ministers to instruct and exhort them both to their several duties: if this were the case, I acknowledge it would be both cruel and impious to deny Baptism to children. But is Infant-Baptism a duty the light of nature and reason teaches? This surely will not be pretended. Is it then a positive duty? If so, when, where, how, has it been enjoined by God? If, in de-

* P. 181—183.

fault of direct proof of this, it be said that those many good uses to which it may be applied, furnish a presumptive proof that it is of divine institution; I answer, presumptive proofs are insufficient to establish duties of a positive kind. And how very slender even this presumptive proof in favour of Infant-Baptism is, will clearly enough appear, if it be considered, that the obligations of ministers, parents and children to the duties mentioned are just the same, and occasions of urging them equally favourable, whether infants be or be not baptized. And, having said all this, I need add no more to convince you, Sir, that the Baptists are as sensible as others of the great importance of looking well to the education of their children; and that to infer the contrary, from their distinguishing opinion respecting Baptism, is very unreasonable.

I have now finished my answer to **THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S REASONS FOR BAPTIZING INFANTS**: and am happy in the opportunity he has given me, at the close of this debate, of thanking him for the many pious exhortations, addressed to parents and children in the following chapter, with which his book concludes. But before I take my leave of you, Sir, allow me in a few words to sum up the argument which has been so largely discussed in the preceding Letters.

As positive duties depend solely upon the will of the Institutor, every question respecting them ought in reason to be decided by his express declarations; which declarations, if he be a wise Legislator, will no doubt be clear and explicit. Baptism is a positive institution of Christ; it is fit therefore we should be determined in the two important questions, respecting the MANNER in which it is to be administered, and the PERSONS on whom it is enjoined, by his express declarations alone, which we say are plain, and easy to be understood. The Pædobaptists, however, (I mean those of them with whom we are chiefly concerned in this debate) not willing to put the question wholly on this issue, insist, “ That the “ children of pious parents are included with “ them in the Covenant—That, being included “ in it, they have a right to the seals of it— “ That Baptism is a seal of it—And that there- “ fore they have a right to Baptism.” These propositions we have considered. All the possible senses in which persons may be said to be in a covenant have been laid down, and applied to the question before us. In some of these senses, we have seen, it is absolutely impossible children should be in the Covenant: in others, though possible, yet there is no medium whereby to form a credible judgment whether they really are in it: and as to the remaining senses, (which yet are indirect and improper senses of the phrase) admitting

mitting that infants are in the Covenant, it is evident that their being thus in it can give them no right to Baptism, without the concurrence of an exprefs command. It has been further shewn, that interest in a covenant does not always give persons a right to the seals of it; and that Baptism, whether it be or be not a seal of the Covenant, is no where thus described in Scripture. The reasoning also from Circumcision has been considered, and proved to be defective. And thus the argument from analogy failing, we have been brought back to the only proper ground on which questions respecting positive institutions can be satisfactorily issued, I mean the exprefs authority of the New Testament.

To the words of the institution we have appealed, and have shewn that, as they expressly require the baptizing those who have been first taught, or who are become disciples by teaching; so they in effect clearly forbid the baptizing infants. With this plain and natural exposition of the words of the commission, we have found the practice of the Apostles uniformly harmonizing: so that we have met with neither precept nor example, throughout the New Testament, to authorize Infant-Baptism. The question respecting the Baptism of Jewish Profelytes has been examined: and, as there is no authentick proof of its having
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obtained in our Saviour's time; so neither, if it could be proved, would this argument avail in default of a positive command.

The pleas of Antiquity and Universality, urged against us, have also been considered: and, though we wish not to rest the issue of the debate upon any other ground than that just stated, of the express authority of Scripture; yet we have made it appear, that there is no proof of any one infant having been baptized during the two first centuries; have given a probable account of the origin and introduction of Pœdobaptism; and shewn, from the character of the times in which we suppose it was introduced, that it is by no means incredible that innovations of this kind should obtain. In the vallies of Piedmont we have found an asylum for the pure doctrines and ordinances of Christ, amidst the thick darkness and barbarism of the middle age. And from thence we have traced the truth for which we contend, amidst the noble testimonies of renowned martyrs and confessors in favour of it, some hundred years before the Reformation, down to the present times.

And now, Sir, I appeal to you, to every man of sense, candour, and piety, Whether the Baptists ought not to be believed when they affirm, that they are not influenced in this matter by a

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fondness for singularity, but by considerations of conscience? Whether they ought not to have a patient hearing given them, when called upon, by the mistaken reasonings and the unkind reflections of their opponents, to defend themselves? Whether, if their arguments are not thought weighty enough to convince, their motives ought not to be applauded as good? Whether, if they are in an error, they should not rather be pitied than blamed? And, as they are heartily disposed to embrace their brethren who differ from them in the arms of Christian charity, whether they may not reasonably expect the like friendly treatment in return?

I am, Sir,

Your humble Servant,

S. S.

T H E E N D.

