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DISSERTATIONS

ON THE

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT,

SHEWING ITS CONNEXION

WITH THE

NEW TESTAMENT DISPENSATION,

IN RELATION TO

THE ORDINANCES OF THE GOSPEL.

ALSO,

AN ESSAY ON CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE.

SECOND EDITION.

In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.—GEN. xxii. 18.

If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. GAL. iii. 29.

EDINBURGH:

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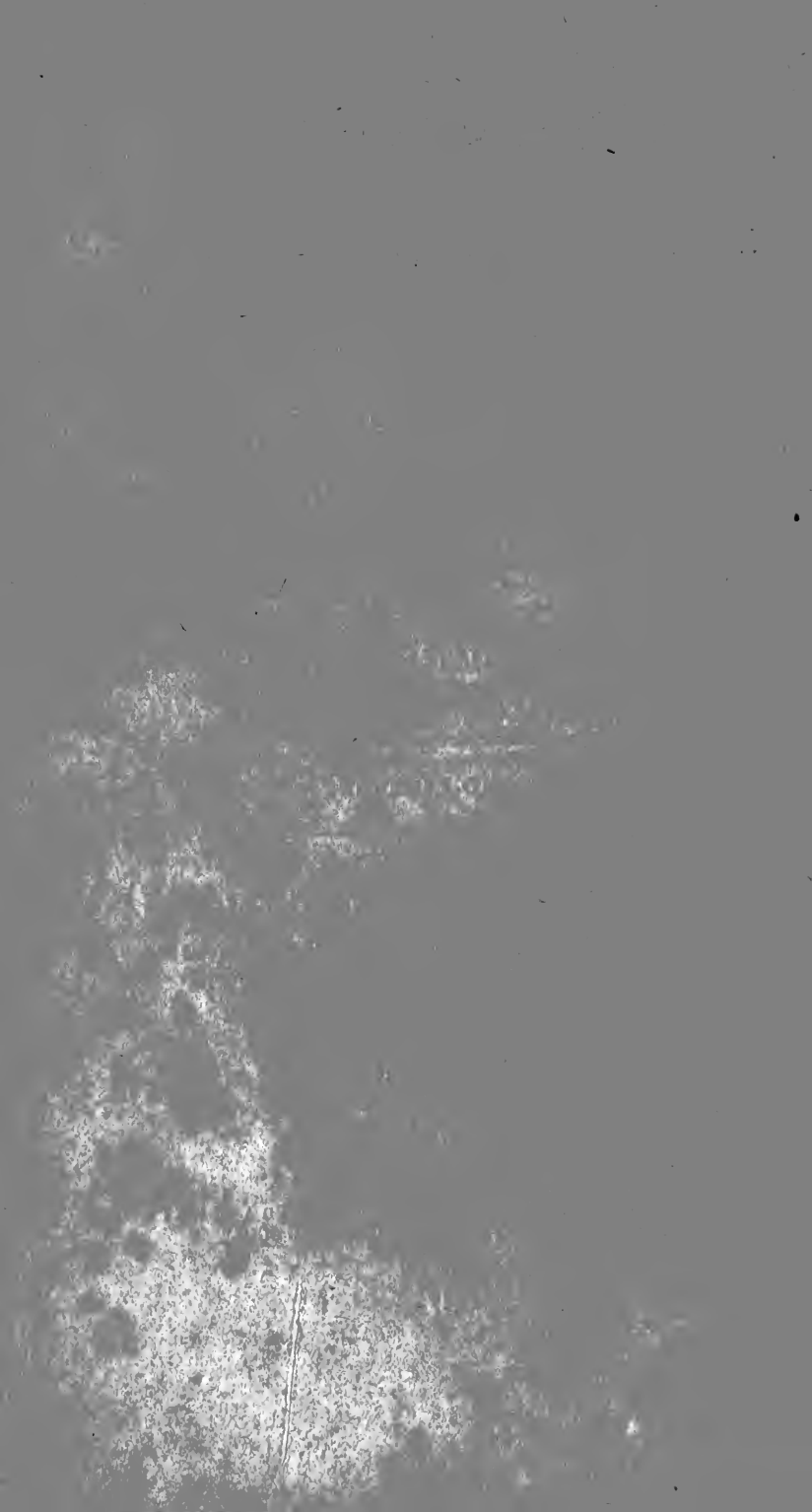

INTRODUCTION.

A FRIEND of mine, happening lately to fall in with one who was proposing to publish a book to the world, inquired what was the motive he had in view? whether *profit* or *fame*, or both? To which the intended author promptly replied, that he trusted it was neither, but *utility* alone. Now, though this be not the place to indulge in commendations either of men or of things, but simply to give an account of what is intended in the following sheets; yet the sentiment drawn forth by the above interrogation is so unquestionably just and proper in itself, that we cannot but take the liberty to approve of it, and to wish, in our turn likewise, from the bottom of our heart, that, having a similar object in view, we were more and more under its influence. What, alas! are all the empty titles, the vain and perishing honours or wealth which a world can bestow, compared with the condition of a benefactor of mankind? To live, not to himself, but to God, is the glory of a Christian; and to spend the few years which are allotted him in this world of sin and misery, not for the aggrandizement of himself, not to purchase himself

a name amongst his brethren, but really to be useful to them, in one way or other, is what he ought continually to have in view.

As to the particular subject of the following inquiry, I am well aware, that prejudice against it runs exceedingly high in many of my brethren; and that it has been no uncommon thing to talk of some who have lately seen it their duty to change their sentiments in regard to it, as if their imagination were disordered, and of others, as if their situation were such as to lay them under a kind of constraint to act as they do. Whether or not these objections, as they apply to others, be well or ill founded, it is not for me to decide; but in as far as they may be brought against myself, I certainly feel concerned to remove every thing of the kind, particularly as I conceive it to be *truth*, and not the petty interests of a private individual, that are here at stake.

In answer, therefore, to the first insinuation respecting a disordered state of the mind, without passing encomiums more or less, a thing rather indelicate in one who is personally concerned, the following *inquiry* is humbly referred to, as a criterion whereby any one may judge of this matter. Nor is it less a matter of thankfulness to an independent mind, to be in a situation independent of any one, God alone excepted, so that he might be under no temptation of espousing any principle but such as flows from the deliberate conviction of his own mind. Such, I am happy to say, is my situation, though I by no means intend to boast of it as being great or flattering in itself: but only, as it renders me independent of all others, save of him in whom I live, move, and have my being; so, whatever be my views, I boldly declare that a dependent situation can never be urged against me as the cause of

my change, as I know it to have been done against some others *.

There is yet another advantage which I now happen to possess, the lack of which has been bitterly complained of, and perhaps too justly, in others, and this is, the giving ones-self *time* to investigate the subject with coolness and deliberation. It is now several years since my mind was led, in a providential manner, presently to be related, to attend particularly to the subject; and though, during that period, I have had a multiplicity of objects to engage my attention, yet I trust that the views contained in the following investigation, will not only manifest my attention to this one in particular, but warrant me with some grace in submitting the result to the public.

The manner in which I was led to the consideration of this subject was simply as follows. In the first place, let it be observed, that I am not ashamed to acknowledge myself to have been trained up from my infancy, and to have professed when I came to years, the principles of Pedo-baptists; and from all that I could collect either from reading or meditation, &c. I conceived

* The idea in regard to situation, may be extended beyond a merely dependent one. When a person's situation has been thought to be uncomfortable, when his affairs, either in regard to the world or the church, have been involved in perplexities, and when he was apprehensive that he would be made a subject of discipline, in any or all of these cases, a change is considered as necessary; and let the unhappy subject, under such circumstances, though they be not real but supposed only, turn to what hand he may, still judgment, or rational and personal conviction are supposed to have no part; but he is considered as being necessarily driven to the change as the last shift by which he might emancipate himself out of all his difficulties. Though, indeed, it becomes none *to be high minded but to fear*, it is yet with peculiar satisfaction that I can plead an exemption from all the above evils.

that I held those principles upon the most tenable grounds. One day, however, as I happened to be reading Dr Macknight's view of the Abrahamic covenant, without the smallest reference to the subject of baptism, (the Doctor indeed never mentioning it, and to my mind it was the most distant at the time), I could not help being struck with the following quotations, John viii. 39. Rom. iv. 16. ix. 8. But as they occur in the course of the Doctor's reasoning, I presume it will be necessary to give it at large. Speaking of the promises given to Abraham respecting his seed, after some remarks upon the original expressions, he says, that 'he '(Abraham namely), was to be the father of many 'nations by the constitution or appointment of God; 'and that he was to be so exceedingly fruitful by pro-'creating children, that nations were to be made of him, 'and kings were to come out of him. In this diversi-'ty of expression, God intimated to Abraham, that he 'was to have two kinds of seed; one by the constitu-'tion or appointment of God, in respect of which he 'was to be *a father of many nations;* and another by 'natural descent, in respect of which he was to be *ex-'ceedingly fruitful* in children. This account of Abra-'ham's seed merits attention, because the promises in 'the covenant being made, not to Abraham alone, but 'to his seed, in their first or literal meaning they be-'longed to his natural seed, but in their second or high-'est meaning, they were promises to his seed by faith.

'The distinction of Abraham's seed into two kinds, 'is intimated by our Lord himself, John viii. 39. where 'he told the Jews who sought to kill him, that not-'withstanding they were the natural offspring of Abra-'ham, they were not his *children*, unless they did the 'works of Abraham. The same distinction is taught 'still more plainly by the apostle Paul, who calls Abra-

'ham's natural progeny, *his seed by the law*, the law of 'marriage; but his seed by the appointment of God, 'who gave believers of all nations to him for seed, *that 'which is by the faith of Abraham*, Rom. iv. 16. *that 'the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only 'which is by the law, but to that also which is by the faith 'of Abraham, who is the father of us all.* In like manner, 'the same apostle, by telling us, Rom. ix. 8. *the children 'of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the chil-'dren of the promise are counted for the seed*, hath insinu-'ated that Abraham had two kinds of children or seed, 'and that the seed by the promise, *a father of many na-'tions I have constituted thee*, are the children of God to 'whom alone the promises in the covenant in their se-'cond and highest meanings belong.'

Often before, had I read these passages as they occur in the Scriptures, without their producing any remarkable effect. On this occasion, however, it was otherwise, for occurring as they did, in a professed treatise on the covenant with Abraham, the grand source whence Pedo-baptists draw all their authority for the baptizing of their infants, I could not but apply them to that subject. 'If there be two distinct seeds, thought 'I, a natural and a spiritual, to which of them do we 'Gentiles belong? Not to the natural, but to the 'spiritual, provided we be possessed of the faith of 'Abraham. But then again, I thought, if we ourselves 'be connected with Abraham only by faith, and if this 'connection be only spiritual, and not carnal, how 'comes it to pass that our children, who are connected 'with us only by carnal descent, can be included in a 'covenant which we ourselves had no right to till we 'believed? Would not this be connecting carnal things 'with spiritual, and to the spiritual part of Abraham's 'seed joining a carnal part, which seems incompatible,

'not to say with these passages merely, but with the 'very nature of the thing?'

Though I considered this as a key, which, of itself, in a manner, unlocked the whole business, and might well warrant Christians to question the propriety of *infant baptism*, founded upon the supposed connexion between a spiritual people and a carnal offspring; yet as I saw many difficulties still to be overcome, and many false glosses still to be removed, I could by no means rest contented till I had examined this subject in such a manner as at least to satisfy my own mind, and concerning the general result of which, I now feel equally pressed till I lay it before the public.

At the commencement of this inquiry, I laid down two principles with myself, the one, not to contend for the mastery, but for truth alone; the other, not to do even this in a dictatorial, overbearing, or controversial manner; for, thought I, *the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, and if truth be on our side, it has surely strength enough to stand on its own legs, without requiring such pitiable props as the spleen and gall of its pretended abettors. And, moreover, I was assured, that it is only when truth comes thus adorned in its own native simplicity, that ever it can be rationally expected to produce important, general, or lasting reformation in the earth.

By the adoption of the first principle, I found myself to be happily at liberty from all sects and parties, theories and systems, known amongst men. Truth being my object, it mattered nothing to me who held, or who opposed it, provided that I but discovered it. In the mouth, even of an enemy, I was determined to recognize it, for even here it is as ointment poured forth, and as gold, equally precious and valuable, according to its proportion, as any where else. Hence to search for it

as for hid treasures, to *buy the truth* at every market where it can be had, and never on any account to part with it, I considered as the grand object of every rational and progressively improving mind *.

As I found the first principle pre-dispose me to the reception of truth, so I found the second dispose me to maintain it in *love*—to hold it for myself alone, and not for another—to allow any who might differ from me, the same right to do so that I claimed to myself in differing from them—and withal, not on such accounts to disunite in matters wherein we are agreed, but in these, walking by the same rule, we may confidently expect that wherein we are otherwise minded, God will reveal even this unto us.

From these principles I was necessarily led to be free, both in stating my own sentiments, and in detecting what I considered to be wrong in my brethren. But in both, I trust, I have been enabled to act with that rectitude and impartiality which principles like these alone can inspire. What I state as my own sentiments and views of divine truth, I by no means place on a level with divine truth itself, but only as a fallible creature's views of it; yet such as he must hold, for himself at least, with all the firmness of which he is capable, till he see reason for being otherwise minded on any point. Hence, liberty to think for myself is all that I demand. And this I conceive to be such an in-

* *Fas est, et ab hoste doceri.* VIR.
Seize upon truth where'er 'tis found,
Amongst your friends, amongst your foes,
On *Christian* or on *heathen* ground,
The flower's divine where'er it grows,
Neglect the prickles, and assume the rose.
Dr I. WATTS.

valuable blessing, that not only do I require it for myself, but most freely grant it to all others without exception. As I was determined to be modelled by no system short of the truth itself, flowing from personal conviction; so, far be it from me to wish any modelled to any scheme of my devising; but let us be alike directed by the truth alone, each being rationally and personally convinced, and thus shall we meet upon bases which are immoveable as the heavens.

When at any time I differ from others, it is not merely because I *wish* to differ, but because I conceive myself to have *reasons* for so doing; and without which, as a rational and accountable being, I do not consider myself to have a right to do so at any time. It is not selfish caprice, but the eternal principles of right, which must alone determine us in every case. And how opposite soever to our pre-conceived notions these may turn out, we must not be backward to embrace them, lest, haply, we should be found even to fight against God. Were I to consult merely my own feelings, I might truly say, that so far from being inclined to differ from any, I could rather wish to live at peace with all; there being no object so desirable, in my apprehension, as that of an universal philanthropy, and none so distressing as that of divisions and discords amongst brethren. God is my witness, that it is long since I not only said, but felt with all the sensibility of my soul, that, to be at variance with any person, far more my Christian friends, would be worse than death to me.

When I said that I wished to differ from none without good reason for it, I was aware, I trust, that a depraved mind, when it had any particular object in view, could easily frame reasons to itself; and though found-

ed upon downright sophistry, imagine them to be such as would not only stand the test of ages, but right in themselves, and such as even God could not but approve. Hence to resign as much as possible my own will, and to pray to be directed by the unerring spirit of the living God, which is promised for the express purpose of guiding his people into all truth, has been another principle which I laid down as a foundation one. But though, indeed, this has been the case, I by no means claim exemption from error; but this I am certain of, however, that I hold no error, knowing it to be such, nor any sentiment, so far as I recollect, but what my mind fully approves.

As to the manner in which the subject is treated in the following pages, it is such as appeared to me to be the best adapted to the attainment of the end; that, since the great bulwark, in the account of Pedo-baptists, is the Abrahamic covenant, it was necessary to begin here, in order to ascertain whether it was really as impregnable in this particular, as they represent it to be.

Respecting the result of the investigation, it does not become me to pass a judgment. I can only say I have done what I could, not to oppose any particular party of professing Christians more than another, but to establish truth in opposition to error; and its success must be determined by others, not by ones-self.

The rent state of the seamless coat of Christ, or, in other words, the contentions and divisions amongst those who profess to be his followers, is such as has deeply affected the mind of me, his most unworthy advocate; and therefore, in addition to what is said in the sequel on this subject, I would here earnestly beseech the Father to hearken, and speedily to answer the prayer of the Son, *that his people might all be one, to the intent that the world might know that the Father hath sent him!*

As I know there are some who look with fear and trembling upon all investigations of this nature—some who are settled on their lees, and who exultingly boast that they have taken a standing in regard to them—and others, who as absurdly precipitate into every new started theory, particularly if it come from certain quarters; so, a word or two respecting each, is deemed necessary as a preparative to the following treatise.

And respecting the *first*, we would remark, that there is surely nothing in the whole word of God which ought to excite such feelings in any who profess to be regulated by its authority. Such feelings, indeed, cannot exist, but in the midst of the most woeful ignorance; and it so happens, that, if they shall be allowed to predominate, there remains no possible means by which this ignorance can be cured. If they proceed from indifference about knowing the mind and will of God on any matter, then the subjects of them ought to question whether ever they knew God, or really reverenced his authority. But if they proceed from the idea, that they are matters only of a lesser nature, and not absolutely necessary to the salvation of the soul, and that bestowing too much attention to them would likely prove hurtful, in leading away the mind from attending sufficiently to more important matters: an opinion this not uncommon in the world, and confirmed by ten thousand woeful occurrences; and yet after all, from what we have known and experienced, we must declare it to be founded on the grossest mistake. Qualifying, therefore, the above expression, "bestowing too *much* attention," &c. and regarding it as indicative of extremes which would cause any thing become a snare, we cannot help blessing the Lord for leading us to give all the attention we have done to the subject in hand. We have found by experience that it

has not been a matter of dry or barren speculation with us; it has not bereaved our soul of good, it has not rendered us more insensible to those precious doctrines on which alone the salvation of the soul depends; but on the contrary, it hath enlarged our views, and furnished us with conceptions, to which we confess ourselves to have been entire strangers before. Indeed, if truth and not mastery were the only object of pursuit, there would be no cause to dread the investigation of any subject, be what it may.

As to the *second* class of objectors to investigations of this kind, there can be but two conditions in which we can be placed that could lead us to take such high and positive grounds on any subject; and these are, either an absolute certainty that we are right, or else, a foolish and dangerous determination to maintain the opinions we have espoused at all hazards, be they right or wrong. If it flow from the first, I acknowledge that a persuasion of the goodness of our cause might inspire us with firmness and confidence; but I hardly see how it could justify us to treat our opponents in the manner, or even leave no room for further improvement in subjects on which so much can be said on both sides. Nay, I candidly confess, supposing my mind not to be biassed to the one side more than to the other, that such language would have come with much better grace from the mouth of an adult, rather than a Pedo-baptist, considering that the former has both express precept and example for his conduct, whereas the principles of the latter amount to no more than simple inference drawn by fallible men. But, to be plain, in none of them do I relish such dogmatical sentiments, for there is no man, however knowing, but has still room for improvement even in the things he knows, and much more in those branches of them which may have escaped his observa-

tion, and of which he may be as ignorant as a child. Even a Newton! that star of the first magnitude, which illuminated a benighted world, demonstrating truths which were never before known—even he had more moderate ideas of himself! He modestly said a little before his death, and of course subsequent to all his bright discoveries, 'I do not know what I may appear to the 'world; but to myself, I seem to have been only like 'a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself 'in now and then finding a pebble, or a prettier shell 'than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all 'undiscovered before me.'

But if such high grounds were adopted in the maintaining of an *error*, what would be the consequence? *Concerning that subject*, says the dogmatical objector, *I have taken my standing*. So might the antediluvians have said in opposition to Noah, that they had taken their standing; and so might the Sodomites in opposition to Lot—the priests of Baal in opposition to Elijah—the unbelieving Jews in opposition to Christ—and the superstitious partizans of the great whore in opposition to the reformers in the fifteenth century. Yea, we know for certain, that all of them, by their conduct, did say so; and what was the consequence? While the history of each will account for itself, let the emphatical words of our blessed Saviour to the Pharisees, those implacable enemies of his, be particularly noticed. He takes them at their word. As they had taken a standing in opposition to him—"Well, there," as if he had said, "ye shall remain, for ye shall *die* in your sins, and whither I go, thither ye cannot come." And who does not recollect the awful denunciation against the incorrigible adherents of falsehood, mentioned in the second chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians? ver. 11. *For this cause God shall send them strong delusion,*

that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Upon the whole then, there is, truly, something so foolish, so grieving, so awfully absurd and dangerous in this sentiment, that it is our earnest prayer that we may never hear it again maintained.

As to the third class of whom we were to take notice, we cannot, properly speaking, call them opposers to investigation, though they virtually oppose it in the most dangerous form, by not thinking it worth their while to investigate at all; but, in a mechanical sort of manner they get into the vortex of novelty, because they will it; and mistaking bold and confident assertions for positive proofs, it is not a little to their astonishment that all their brethren do not follow them. Hence to be virulent and acrimonious, ill-natured, and never disposed to allow another to think for himself, if in any thing he differ from them, are tempers almost inseparable from the precipitate and obsequious proselyte. And, alas! for them, unhappy and inconsistent mortals, have we not seen them manifesting the same turn of mind against that principle to-day, which, by their mechanical sort of circuit they embraced to-morrow; and to-morrow, strange to tell, directing all their hostilities against what they held to-day? And withal, they contend, that it is for the sake of truth they thus act. But little do they know that truth is more deeply wounded, and more insuperable barriers put in the way of its progress, by this very behaviour of theirs, than by all the scoffings of the infidel. Do they really imagine, that men, even of common sagacity, have not penetration enough to see through their vain pretexts? To credit them, indeed, it is always *truth* that they are holding; but will they ever make us believe that truth veers about like the air in the atmosphere, to every point to

which they may turn their face; or in other words, that it is one thing to-day, and another to-morrow? No, they never shall. Truth is one universal and eternal principle. It doth not draw in contrary directions. It doth not require more than one discovery. And when once learned, it cannot be again unlearned, merely as caprice or fashion may dictate. When we behold our brethren therefore, running seemingly without thought or reflection into every new started theory, and perpetually changing as often as their leaders may choose to bid them; when they appear to "count it their very righteousness," as one expresseth it, "to be given to change;" and when they hold all their successive schemes, how opposed soever they may be the one to the other, with the same degree of certainty, even absolute certainty —we cannot help connecting *their* state with that of the man, out of whom *the unclean spirit* had departed, who *walked through dry places seeking rest*, but *finding none.* Such people's religion seems to consist more in something yet to be discovered, than in any thing already known. All their old theories they discard as erroneous; that only is true which they at present hold; and if it should so happen, as it very likely will, that they shall discover something new in future, then their present truths, how tenaciously soever they now maintain them, will, like the former, be abandoned as errors. Thus, in the most inconsistent and irrational manner, do they allow themselves to go on, under pretext that they are the almost sole abettors of the truth, constantly opposing, not only themselves, but their brethren who wish to live at peace with them, and exhibiting to the world at the same time, though it may escape their own observation, the most false representation of that very truth about which they so vehemently contend.

Upon the whole then, I shall just add, that if the

following treatise can be only proved, either in whole or in part, to the conviction of the author, to be founded on error, that he shall not consider his honour, falsely so called, bound to maintain it, but shall rather thank the person, whoever he may be, who shall have the kindness to point out his foibles; and, abandoning what he ought to abandon, he shall rejoice in having it in his power to embrace the opposite truth. But while he is thus free in avowing his readiness to be convinced of his error, he must be thus honest in boldly declaring, that it is only what he *himself* conceives to be error, after it has been pointed out, and not what every captious and fretful mind would be eager in wishing us to reckon so. Nay, we forewarn such plainly, that they may look long before they see us approximating one step nearer them, on account of any such dastardly means. And to others we would say, that if they really wish to do us good, by convincing us of our error, if so be that we are in one, they must do it upon entirely other grounds than those of carrying us back to the old beaten paths, every corner of which we have explored a thousand times. Not that we have an itch for novelty, but for reason; and it is because we have found reason to have deserted, or more strictly speaking, never to have existed in those paths, that we are compelled to relinquish them.

I have just a debt to acknowledge before I enter upon my plan, and though it be a near relation, even a brother according to the flesh, to whom I owe it, yet it is so justly due, that if I never shall have it in my power to repay him in kind for the assistance he has given in this inquiry, I must at least publicly acknowledge it, and tell the world freely, that if it possesses any merit, it is not wholly mine, but that he also is entitled to a share.

But, alas! merit! why should we speak a word respecting this? If we could, indeed, perform works of superorogation, it might then come with some propriety; but in our condition as creatures, and sinful creatures too, we are convinced that we never can serve our Maker as we ought, far less to merit any thing good at his hand. Discarding all such claims, therefore, that he may be graciously pleased to accept of this feeble attempt to serve him with his own, is the prayer of our inmost soul.

A Compendious View of the Plan of the following Work.

HAVING been led, as has been stated, by a casual, or perhaps more properly speaking, by a providential circumstance, to investigate the subject of baptism, according to the key already laid down, of the distinction between the two seeds of Abraham, it appeared necessary, before any decision could be warrantably passed, to obtain as distinctly as possible a knowledge of the following things.

1. The *nature* of the covenant which God made with Abraham, in which it is expressly said, that he was to be a God to *him*, and to his *seed* after him.

2. Of the *persons* included in the covenant, called his seed, which, according to the words of our blessed Lord, are distinguished into carnal and spiritual.

3. The *privileges* to which they had a right by their interest in the covenant.

4. The *permanency* of the covenant in all its parts, or in other words, whether the same state of things is to remain under the Christian, as under the legal dispensation, or if they be altered, in what does the alteration consist? what things are abrogated, and what remain?

5. The *distinguishing* or *characteristic marks* of the two dispensations, and whether the latter, in any respect, resembles the former, in what may be denominated its carnal parts, whether it respects ordinances or subjects.

6. Were these important articles but fairly and impartially examined, might they not lead to conclusions, which, by the blessing of God, might be the happy means of putting an end to that dreadful controversy, which has for so many ages so agitated and convulsed the whole of the religious world?

7. It must always be a source of grief to any person who loves truth, and who wishes truth alone to prevail, to see even good people, supporting what they imagine to be truth by improper means. As on no subject has this method been more abundantly adopted than on the one now before us, it is our design to bestow a little attention upon it, and to assign a particular chapter for the consideration of the various false glosses, unwarrantable conclusions, and very improper treatment which the abettors of both sides of the question have reciprocally given each other.

8. And finally, as we may perhaps differ from many, if not from most of our baptized brethren, respecting various points connected with the ordinance itself, and as we see no inconsistency in Christians who are united in other respects, though they do not see eye to eye in this, still to walk together in love and unity, we shall, therefore, for the consideration of various topics of this nature, assign also a place.

These various particulars, it is conceived, comprise the substance of all that we mean to advance; but that the design may be more fully manifest, we shall here again briefly enumerate the several heads, giving an analysis, in a general way, of the several topics to be discussed under each. And,

1. As to the *nature* of the covenant God made with Abraham, from the sublime views which are given of it in the New Testament, we have no doubt that it included spiritual as well as temporal blessings, and that they are to be taken in a higher sense than many have assigned to them, that is to say, only temporal possessions in the land of Canaan. This will, of course, lead us back to the original promise, to the primary formation of the covenant with Abraham; and a commentary on what is recorded in the book of Genesis in relation to these transactions, will be necessary to complete our purpose in this place.

2. As to the *persons* included in the covenant, a seed spiritual and carnal, not merely answerable to the same respective natures of the covenant, but, in the nature of the thing, excluding none, even the most distant regions of the earth from the church of the living God, and calculated to give a hope not only to those descended from the loins of faithful Abraham, but to the most guilty and forlorn amongst the nations, *and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.* This chapter will consist of several different parts. We shall *first* investigate the grounds we have for asserting that there are two kinds of seed included in the Abrahamic covenant, *then* treat of these separately, and *after* that, make a few general remarks upon the whole.

3. Under our third head, the *privileges* of the covenant will be considered. And these being likewise twofold in their nature, namely, spiritual and temporal,

it will hence follow, that they would be actually enjoyed by all within its bonds in exact correspondence to the particular situation they held therein. If spiritual, they would no doubt enjoy spiritual blessings in addition to the good things of this life; but if only carnal, higher enjoyments than such as are of a carnal or temporal nature, they could not possess. Our order, in the consideration of this topic, will be much the same as in our last.

4. That the same state of things as was established by the legal dispensation, or even by the covenant with Abraham, was not to continue, is manifest by the apostles decree in the assembly at Jerusalem; and that it was not to be wholly overturned, is equally obvious from Christ's declaration, *that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets.* Was there, therefore, any alteration in the covenant? or if there was, in what did that alteration consist? Why was it continued the same till Christ came? and why was there an alteration at that period rather than at any other? and what was the state of things after the alteration took place? Answers to these questions, and to all that they necessarily involve, will form the basis of our fourth principle.

5. Under our next head, however, this last idea will more naturally find a place, as it will evidently appear, from the whole genius of the gospel, and particularly from the epistle to the Hebrews, that the two dispensations are most strikingly different, and that our blessed Lord, when speaking of the kingdoms of this world, said with peculiar emphasis, *now is my kingdom not from hence.* As if he had said, Formerly, indeed, it resembled them, but now it is different--a new order and constitution of things has taken place. Hence it cometh not with observation, but, like the wind, it is known only by its effects. It is now purely spiritual, and in

the hearts of men; even the people he makes willing in the day of his power. In such a strain will our *fifth* article run.

6. These points being established, will the conclusion be rash, to say, that, in conformity to this new and spiritual order of things, we are henceforth to know no man after the flesh; that though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth are we to know him no more; and that, as that which is born after the flesh is flesh, and that which is born after the Spirit is spirit, so, to be heirs of the covenant in the spiritual sense, we must be born again? Here then, we must enter into particular reasoning with our brethren, concerning the subject of Pedo-baptism. We must endeavour to draw their various arguments into a focus, in order to ascertain whether or not they will tally with this undeniable principle. And if we shall find them to agree, then we must maintain that they are right; but if it shall happen to be otherwise, right they cannot be, whether they may think so or not. We shall, therefore, in this case, candidly speak our sentiments, calmly endeavouring to correct error, not by angry expressions or high sounding words, but simply by the exhibition of the truth.

7. Our seventh chapter will be occupied in correcting various abuses which have been run into on this subject, viz. the false glosses, the unwarrantable conclusions, and the very unchristian-like treatment which many abettors of both sides of the question have reciprocally bestowed on each other. For this purpose, we shall first take a brief review of the various passages of holy writ, which are generally brought forward in support of Pedo-baptism. We shall then consider the charges of error and heresy which have been reciprocally employed in regard to this subject, in order to shew how falsely they are founded.

8. As for our eighth and last particular, under it we propose to consider several points respecting the ordinance itself, as, first, the mode; secondly, the propriety of persons who have been known to have had a long standing in the profession of the Christian faith, and who were baptized in infancy, being *re-baptized afterwards* when they came to have their minds better informed respecting this ordinance.

Considerations relative to the impropriety of Christians separating from one another on account of matters of this nature, will come next in course. These we shall include in an appendix. And here, without suffering ourselves to be influenced by human opinion either on the one side or on the other, we shall have immediate recourse to the Scriptures, from which we hope to demonstrate that it is no light matter for Christians thus to act in regard to one another; and that the very essence of such conduct, must, in fact, consist in the grossest mistake of this grand first principle, namely, *the stepping out of our own particular sphere, and assuming the prerogatives of the Judge of all the earth*, seeming to forget that the rights of conscience are not intrusted into the hand of any man or set of men; but that as every man has an unquestionable right in all matters of conscience to judge for himself, so the precept runs, *every man to his own master, he standeth or falleth.* As upon these principles, therefore, *we* could not justify ourselves in separating from our brethren, merely on account of our difference of sentiment respecting baptism, so we would be equally far from justifying them, should a separation be insisted for on their part. That matters may be rightly understood between us, however, and that none may have any secret grudge because we do not act like others who have espoused Baptist sentiments, in going away of their own accord,

we shall candidly assign our reasons for our so doing, leaving it with themselves to decide whether we be right or wrong.

These are the leading topics we intend to consider in the following pages. And it is our earnest desire, that a double portion of the spirit of all grace may be poured out upon us, to enable us to illustrate a subject of so vast importance, both for the advancement of the glory of God, and for the comfort and edification of his dear people. And if these objects be only in any tolerable measure obtained, richer will be the reward, than if kingdoms and empires had been placed within our reach!

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ERRATA.

P. 1. l. 13. *before* premises, *read* the
12. 2. from the bottom, *for* magnificence, *read* munificence.
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184. 17. *for* resuming, *read* resigning
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CHAPTER I.

OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

SECTION I.

General Observations.

AS the covenant with Abraham has been variously interpreted, and very different, and even opposite inferences deduced from hence, it may not be improper, before entering upon a more minute investigation of the subject, to advert in few words to this in the first place. While there are some who consider it as nothing else than the covenant of grace, spiritual in its blessings, eternal and unchangeable in its nature, and comprehending every individual of the Lord's redeemed people; there are others who look upon it as merely a carnal transaction, earthly and temporal in its nature, and not extending beyond the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh. From sentiments so different respecting a premises, it is surely not to be wondered at that the conclusions should be as much so.

It would have been well, if those who adopt the first view, had defined what they mean by the covenant of grace; for till this be done, there can be no certainty in a single step of our reasoning with them, nor is it pos-

sible to say whether their conclusions be right or wrong. For my part, if I have any just conceptions of this subject, I would define the covenant of grace as comprehending the whole scheme of salvation, from its very commencement to its completion. I should suppose that it included all the purposes of God in devising a method of recovery for his fallen creatures, and all the various doctrines which developed and made known those purposes to men. I should suppose this covenant to be unchangeable in its nature, and securing, beyond a doubt, the blessings of eternal life to all within its bonds. I should suppose it as comprehending all the redeemed of the Lord from amongst men, and them only; and as discriminating with the utmost accuracy between them, and such as are his only by profession, and not in truth. In one word, the idea that I should affix to the covenant of grace, should be the salvation of sinners in *reality*, and not in *appearance*—the doctrines of grace, as it were, reduced to practice—God executing in time, what he purposed in eternity—accomplishing the whole of his plan, without the smallest possibility of any part of it misgiving or proving abortive.

Such is the idea I should form of this subject; and I should be exceedingly jealous of any hypothesis that should lead me to form any lower notions of such a glorious plan. I should rejoice in a covenant which is unalterable in its nature, and which secures blessings beyond a doubt to all who are within its bonds. But oh! I should tremble at the idea of a covenant that can be broken, recognizing as its heirs at one time, such as it does not, however, secure to the inheritance of the blessing.

But is not this, discouraging as it is, something like what our brethren maintain, who are for asserting that the covenant with Abraham, particularly that part of it

which includes his natural posterity, is the covenant of grace? According to this, will they not be heirs? But if they are *all* heirs, why do they not *all obtain the inheritance?* Are not the gifts and callings of God, throughout the whole of this covenant, without repentance?

Such, however, is the foundation upon which our brethren build the whole of their system, as it respects the situation which infants are to hold in the church. They consider it, even this part, to be the covenant of grace, and of course unalterable in its nature, and incapable of changing with the other things which were done away in Christ.

Now, that this view of the immutability of the covenant of grace, is consistent with itself and with the nature of the subject, none will deny; but that the other part of their system, namely, that of making children during their infancy heirs of this covenant, and casting them off when they come to years, provided they do not manifest faith in the Saviour, seems to me, not only incongruous in itself, but incompatible with the very nature of the thing. If it be, indeed, the covenant of grace, as is zealously maintained, eternal and immutable in its principles, why does it thus alter almost in every instance, respecting its subjects? How few amongst the thousands born even of believing parents, when come to years, can prove their title to its blessings, any more than those descended of unbelievers? To distinguish the one from the other, therefore, in such a remarkable manner in their infancy, and to place both on a level when they come to years, such a change and revolution, we humbly presume, exists no where save in the minds of those who espouse such a theory *.

* An inconsistency very much a-kin to this, respecting infants too, is also chargeable upon many Baptists. They will tell you, that though they consider all the natural descendents of fallen

On the other hand, however, candour obliges us to acknowledge, that Pedobaptists, though they may be

man to be born children of wrath and disobedience, and hence urge the necessity of a change ere they can be partakers of spiritual blessings; yet they are 'much inclined to judge favourably 'of the state of all infants dying in infancy.' Now, upon this we would here remark, without either affirming or calling in question the possibility of their salvation, as it regards the sovereign pleasure of Jehovah, that the change in their state, which death is here supposed to produce, is at least fully as untenable as any thing advanced concerning infants by the other side of the question. Such charity, as Mr Pirie well observes, is entirely inconsistent with itself. 'If they die, it assigns them a place in 'heaven; if they live, it ranks them with the children of wrath.' And we might add, that, upon this scheme, there appears to be no more necessary than the barbarity of an *Herod*, to send whole districts to heaven; and that though such cruelty might be the cause of much weeping, lamentation, and woe upon earth, yet would it be the occasion of no little joy and rejoicing in heaven. Upon the whole then, would it not be much better to consider the matter thus?—The doctrine of human depravity as universal and inviolable, salvation as alone of the sovereign pleasure and good will of God; and hence, without restricting him to any plans which human wisdom could devise, might we not conceive it possible for him to have his chosen or elected ones amongst all descriptions of men, infants as well as adults; and that it is according to this discriminating and wise plan, which directs all the operations of his hand, that they are admitted into heaven, and not that confused jumble which foolish man would assign to him. Would it not be well too, to lay it down as a first principle, that, whether in the case of the final salvation of such elected ones as die in infancy, or in the case of such infants as receive his blessing while they live, there must always be an exertion of divine power fitting the subjects for whatever is intended with them, or in other words, converting them? Thus, if he bestow upon them heaven, he makes them meet for heaven; or if he bestow upon them the blessings of spiritual grace, he makes them spiritual subjects of his grace. And hence it will follow, that no arguments drawn from exceptions of this nature, can ever be allowed to contradict general truths. What happens in one, two, or a thousand instances, can never be applicable to *all*, unless it extend to all.

wrong in the grand point respecting their infant posterity, are yet certainly to be justified in assigning a higher sense to God's transactions with Abraham than what related merely to a present life. That celebrated patriarch was called by the will of God to the performance of duties, the most painful and trying to human nature, and truly if he had had nothing else to support his mind, but a few temporal promises, relating too, to his descendents, but scarcely in any shape to himself, they would have proved a burden for him too heavy to have been borne. But when we are told that Abraham "was strong in faith, giving glory to God;" that he "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief *;" but "against hope believed in hope, that he should be the father of many nations †;" and this, not only when as yet the promised seed was not born, and humanly speaking there was little probability of the event, but even when he offered him up a sacrifice at the command of God; for he "counted that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure ‡." When we read of these things, I say, and connect herewith what our blessed Lord himself testifies of Abraham, that "he saw his day and was glad §;" we cannot but be astonished at the conduct of those, who, for the sake of supporting a favourite system, would try to divest this subject of its better part.

It is a melancholy symptom, indeed, to see people, apparently so wrapt up in their own respective views, that, rather than grant their opponents any thing, as they conceive, which might militate against themselves, will, through a false and mistaken zeal, deny even palpable facts. The covenant with Abraham, and, indeed, the whole of the former dispensation, have been by many,

* Rom. iv. 20. † Ver. 18.
‡ Heb. xi. 17,—19. § John viii. 56.

represented in such a carnal and earthly point of view, that, truly, under the direction of such guides, we are utterly at a loss to conceive what ideas the people of that dispensation really had of spiritual things. Nor is the one side only to blame for this want of candour, for both have endeavoured to support their respective tenets by similar means; and both, to their shame, have, in the most indiscriminating manner, run down almost all the sentiments of their opposite brethren.

Hence it comes to pass, that a point of difference between such contending parties, frequently shifts its grounds, and acquires a new form; the natural consequence of which is, that the difference, instead of being amicably adjusted, becomes wider still, and still more irreconcileable; and thus will continue till such time as it shall be again reduced to its original principles, and rendered no wider than the simple difference concerning the subject itself.

The original point of difference between Baptists and Pedobaptists, regards only the *subjects* of the ordinance —a question which, perhaps, might have been easily decided at the first, but which has now assumed such an intricate appearance, as almost to terrify people from attempting an investigation of it.

The first thing we must therefore attempt is, to bring the matter within narrow bounds; and in order to this, we must endeavour in the outset to get rid of all the loose jargon which has been but too industriously dealt out by both sides. I recollect well, that when my mind was first led to reflect upon the subject, I found the confusion and intricacy in which it appeared to be involved, the most perplexing and discouraging thing imaginable. I bless the Lord that it is now in some measure otherwise. The idea of divesting the subject, in the first place, of all secondary and collateral

arguments, and of adhering scrupulously to that point on which it must necessarily hinge—this was the first thing which yielded consolation to my mind.

With these views then I begin the present work; and I trust I can appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that it is the love of truth alone, and for the sake of satisfying my own mind, and not any preconceived notions, by which I am chiefly actuated. Indeed I find my mind so happily free of prejudice, either for the one side or the other, that it is a matter of equal indifference with me to embrace either, in proportion as it appears to be founded on truth.

The form, I say, which this subject has assumed, must necessarily render it much more perplexing, and even unsatisfactory, to those who take a side, as well as vastly more difficult for the man of moderation and candour, who regards all alike, to investigate it for the rational conviction of his own mind. As God has, however, promised to "guide the meek in judgment *," we are not left, even in this case, entirely without hope.

We have just stated, that the principal difference between Baptists and Pedobaptists, regards the *subjects* of the ordinance; and we here remark, that if it were possible to make it appear that the principles upon which either side found their opinions, are untenable from the word of God, then all secondary and collateral arguments must consequently fall with them.

As it is upon the tenor of the Abrahamic covenant, that those who hold the Pedobaptist side of the question, chiefly rest the authority of their practice; and as the whole depends, even in their own account, upon this covenant being in reality the eternal, unconditional, and unalterable covenant of grace; so, an investigation of this

* Psal. xxv. 9.

important point, will of course form the subject of our next, and some following sections.

Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me, O Lord! Psal. cxix. 133.

SECTION II.

The Abrahamic Covenant.

WE are now about to enter on a subject, which, in the present day, seems to be much involved in obscurity, and is the source of no little contention in the churches of God. So much is this the case, that truly no person who is a friend to peace, and good-will to men, has any temptation to enter upon it, unless it were to act like Moses, by endeavouring to set his contending brethren at one again *.

As differences of this nature may be often found to proceed from various causes, and perhaps from none more frequently, than that of ignorance and partial acquaintance with the subject about which they are agitated; so, conceiving this to be the case here, it is our intention to enter into it with considerable minuteness. And for this purpose, we would not begin by deducing arguments from the subjects in general, but, before attempting any thing of this kind, we wish if possible to examine it to the bottom, by detailing at large the whole of God's transactions with Abraham, and commenting on them briefly as we go along.

That we may therefore the better enter on a subject of so vast interest and importance, I conceive that the following judicious remarks from Dr Macknight, in his essay on the Abrahamic covenant, may be both necessa-

* Acts vii. 26.

ry and useful. 'To understand these promises,' says he, 'in the whole extent of their meaning, the reader 'should recollect, that in the early ages, before the art 'of writing was invented, the most approved method 'of communicating and preserving knowledge, was by 'allegory; that is, by making sensible objects which 'were present, or not very distant in point of time, re-'presentations of things which are not the objects of 'sense, or which are future, but which have some affi-'nity to the things made use of to represent them. In 'this method of instruction, the characters and actions 'of remarkable persons, and the ordinary events of their 'life, were on some occasions considered as prefigura-'tions of more distant persons and events, to which 'they had a resemblance.' This the Doctor terms *natural allegory*, and considers Abraham, in respect of the faith and obedience which he exercised in uncircumcision, as a type of believers of all nations; and hence is he called their father. He shews that Melchizedec, David, and Jonah, in like manner typified Christ in certain events of their life; and adduces even Paul himself, Gal. iv. 24. as declaring that Abraham's wives and sons were allegorical representations of the two covenants, and of the persons placed under these covenants. 'The characters, actions, and events which constitu-'ted the natural allegory, though existing apparently 'in the ordinary course of things,' he observes, 'were 'ordered of God, so as to be fit emblems of those fu-'ture persons and events, the knowledge of which God 'intended to communicate to the world.'

He remarks farther, that there is in Scripture what may be called *the instituted allegory*; that is, certain actions appointed or instituted by God, to be performed under such and such circumstances, for the purpose of

prefiguring future persons and events. Of this sort were all the Levitical sacrifices, particularly the paschal lamb, John xix. 36. and all the rites of worship appointed by Moses, which, as the apostle tells us, Heb. x. 1. were shadows of good things to come.

'This account of the ancient Scripture allegory I 'have given,' adds he, 'because from what our Lord 'and his apostles have said concerning the promises in 'the covenant with Abraham, it appears that that transaction, besides its first meaning which terminated in 'the persons and events literally spoken of, had an allegorical or second and higher meaning, which was to 'be accomplished in persons and events more remote. 'For example, Abraham's natural descendents by Isaac, 'though he was not yet born, were considered in the 'covenant as types of his seed by faith. In like manner, Isaac's supernatural birth, accomplished by the 'power of God, typified the regeneration of believers 'by the same power; and the land of Canaan, promised to the natural seed as their inheritance, was an 'emblem of the heavenly country, the inheritance of 'the seed by faith. In short, the temporal blessings 'promised in the covenant to the natural seed, had all 'an allegorical or second meaning, being images of those 'better blessings which God intended to bestow in a 'more remote period on Abraham's seed by faith.'

Having availed ourselves of these general remarks, which appeared to be exceedingly necessary in order to a right understanding of the subject, we now proceed to consider it somewhat more particularly, in that order in which it occurs in the history.

In the xiith chapter of Genesis, at the beginning, we are informed that Abraham received a promise to this effect, before he left Ur of the Chaldees. * *I will make*

* Verses 2, 3.

of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

From the preceding verse we learn, that these promises had been given for the purpose of encouraging Abraham to comply with that heavenly mandate addressed to him: * *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.* This calling of Abraham was not only of the greatest importance in itself, but also emblematical of the gracious sovereignty of God, in effectually calling all Abraham's spiritual children from the kingdom of Satan, to the kingdom of his own dear Son. It was important in itself, in as much as that, by means thereof, provision was made for maintaining the purity of the church of God, in opposition to the prevailing idolatry of the times. But there seems to have been another, a higher, and yet more important object, if we may so speak, to be obtained by it; and that was, the accomplishment of that promise, on which not only the purity, but the very existence of the church depended. That Satan, who had seduced and ruined mankind, should be himself ruined and destroyed by one born in our nature, was evidently foretold in that well known passage, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent †." As yet however the promise had remained in its original and general form, till God assured Abraham, that he intended to make him the illustrious progenitor of this most illustrious personage. Hence his descendents, particularly that branch through whom the promised seed was to come, were to be separated and distinguished from all the other nations of the earth. And that this end might be the more effec-

* Ver. 1. † Gen. iii. 15.

tually obtained, the great founder of that peculiar people was himself separated from his kindred and his father's house, long ere any of them were yet born. He was called to go forth into a strange country, "a place," as the apostle informs us, "which he," or rather his descendents, "should afterwards receive for an inheritance *;" but in which he himself "had none inheritance; no, not so much as to set his foot on †." His more remote descendents indeed might dwell at ease, but as for himself, he was a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, "sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange country; dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise ‡."

To reconcile and support the mind under so great *present* sacrifices, it was necessary that the prospect of some *future* good should be presented to it, which, by the exercise of faith and hope, might fully compensate for all the privations it sustained. We find accordingly such a glorious support to have been afforded. "I will bless thee," saith God, "and thou shalt be a blessing. I will make of thee a great nation, and thy name great. I will bless him that blesseth thee, and curse him that curseth thee;" and to such honour will I raise thee, that "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

These promises of encouragement are conceived in general terms. Abraham was first himself to be blessed, and then to become a blessing; and the blessing was to be so diffusive as to extend to the utmost limits of the habitable globe.

Taken in their *literal* meaning, these promises demonstrate the grandeur and magnificence of God, and shew how easy it is for him, when he calls any to works

* Heb. xi. 8. † Acts vii. 5. ‡ Heb. xi. 9.

of difficulty, to make all difficulties vanish before them by the superior grace he bequeaths. In this sense he *blessed* Abraham so exceedingly, that in the course of a few years the land was too narrow to contain him and Lot. Yea, he was rich, not only in silver, and in gold, and cattle *; but at the battle of the kings he armed no less than three hundred and eighteen trained men, who were born in his own house, and pursued them to Dan †.

Thus God, by blessing Abraham so remarkably, rendered him a blessing; for by his means was Chedorlaomer and his confederates discomfited, and he "rescued all the goods, and his brother Lot and his goods, and the women also, and the people ‡."

And I will make of thee a great nation, ver. 2. Of the *literal* accomplishment of this promise we need say nothing more than refer to Abraham's descendents by Jacob, who so grew and multiplied in Egypt, that, though they came there but "few in number §," and though every means was taken to oppress and keep them low, yet it was by hundreds of thousands of valiant men in Israel that they were led forth; and their growing power and glory subsequent to this, are well known. In the times of the judges, and in the reigns of David and Solomon, their numbers were immense. And Paul, speaking even of the literal Israel, applies the words of the promise ¶, saying, "though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea."

And I will bless thee, and make thy name great. As the father and the founder of a mighty nation, he was so in the literal sense; and as the father of believers in the spiritual. Great is the renown of Abraham in both these respects. The Jews, his natural descendents, glory in their connection with him, and those who believe

* Gen. xiii. 2. † Chap. xiv. 14. ‡ Gen. xiv. 14,—16.
§ Gen. xlvi. 27. ¶ Compare Gen. xxii. 17. Rom. ix. 27.

count it their highest honour to be related to him in the spiritual sense. Of both, therefore, though for very different reasons, is he had in everlasting remembrance, and so his *name* has become *great* throughout all the world *.

And thou shalt be a blessing. This follows upon being blessed himself. It is the parent only who is rich, who can enrich the child; the man of power who can defend; the man of wisdom and knowledge who can instruct; and in vain do we look for the communications of blessings, except to a quarter where those blessings exist.

How Abraham became a blessing in a literal respect, we have already seen. And he was to be so in a spiritual respect, in as much as that from him the Messiah was to descend, in whom alone men were to be blessed with all "spiritual blessings in heavenly places †."

Ver. 3. *And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.* This mode of speech was very common in the prophetic language. It occurs in the prediction of Noah concerning his sons, and in that of Isaac concerning Jacob and Esau, chap. ix. 25, 26. and xxvii. 29. In the prophecy of Balaam it likewise occurs, "Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee," Numb. xxiv. 9. And the Lord, in delivering his statutes to the people, and promising to send his angel before them, says expressly, "If thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries," Exod. xxiii. 22.

These predictions were accordingly fulfilled, first in the *literal* sense, by its going *ill* with those nations which opposed Israel, and *well* with such as were favourable to them. And secondly, in the spiritual sense, by the

* Vid. Prideaux's Con. Part I. B. iv. p. 233. Edin. Edit.

† Eph. i. 3.

Lord's determination to punish and destroy all who either manifest an hostile disposition, or treat with contempt or neglect the offers of his grace. But if the denunciatory part be thus verified, no less so must that which includes the faithfulness of God in the communications of his bounty and grace to his people. As his enemies were to be cursed, so his people were to be blessed by being mercifully delivered out of their hands. As it was only in the way of obedience that God had promised to vouchsafe his favour, Numb. xxiv. 9. so, says Solomon, "When a man's ways please the Lord, the Lord will make even his enemies to be at peace with him *." For "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee," saith the Lord; "and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

But it was not in Abraham personally, but in his seed †, even Christ, that men were to be blessed, and to call him blessed. Abraham was to be blessed as the great *progenitor* of him who was to come as the Saviour of the world. And a blessing being thus in his family, which was to bless men; *men of all nations* were accordingly to *call him blessed* ‡.

Upon no other principle but that of a spiritual nature can this passage be explained, *that all the families of the earth should be blessed in Abraham.* Nor does it even mean that every individual of the families of the earth shall be so blessed; for believers only are they who are blessed with believing Abraham, while the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

In what the nations were to be blessed, through the blessing of Abraham, is not here mentioned; but Paul informs us, Gal. iii. 14. that it was the Gentiles receiving the promise of the Spirit through faith.

* Prov. xvi. 7. † See chap. xxii. 18. ‡ Psal. lxxii. 17.

SECTION III.

The Subject continued.

THE next transaction with Abraham respects the *promise of the land of Canaan*; and it took place, first upon Abraham's arrival in that country, and afterwards upon his separation from Lot. The first is contained in the 7th verse of the 12th chapter, the other in the 8th, from the 14th to the 17th verse inclusive. *And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land.* And again, *the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee.*

"Concerning the first or literal meaning of this promise," as Dr Macknight observes, "there can be no doubt; as little can there be any doubt concerning its fulfilment to Abraham's natural seed, according to that meaning." But it appears to me a very important question to ascertain what might be the design of God, in granting any particular region of the earth, as a temporal inheritance to his people. If he had had no particular or special design in it, but meant merely to assure them, that, in addition to the salvation of their souls, he would also provide for their bodily wants; might not the general promise that was given to Noah, or something of a similar nature, have fully answered the purpose?

In speaking of the calling of Abraham from his kindred and his father's house, we observed, that one prin-

cipal reason of this appeared to be, to mark *him* out in an especial manner as the great progenitor of him on whom the hopes of all mankind depended. And we conceive that it was just to prepare the way for the accomplishment of this grand event, that ever the land of Canaan was promised for a possession to him and his posterity. Had it been part of the plan of God, to have fulfilled the promise concerning the seed who was to be the Saviour of the world, immediately, or within a very short period after it was delivered, there would have been no necessity of such a grant of temporal possessions as we see here to have been given. But when it was not to be accomplished till many generations afterwards; not till Israel had multiplied and increased as the dust of the earth; yea, not till He who was to come should be typified in all his threefold offices—by a regularly instituted priesthood—and by a succession of prophets and of kings, who should both verbally, and also by their actions, describe his character and work in all their parts; and thus, that he might not only be distinguished as the seed of Abraham, but *the distinguished Personage of that seed*,—such a constitution as that of a temporal inheritance became absolutely necessary.

That this view is correct, will farther appear from this circumstance, that the promise was not given to Abraham as a solitary individual, but to his seed likewise. And it will be further corroborated still, when it is considered, that by the event, it appears, that it was rather for the sake of the seed, and that at a considerably distant period, than for Abraham himself, that the promise was given. Neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, ever inherited this promise, or saw it fulfilled. Yea, were they not distinctly told that they never should, nor yet any of their descendents, *till four hundred years*

had run their round *?* Why then was such a promise ever granted or introduced in the covenant with Abraham? Was it not a new thing in the church, to which nothing similar ever had been, or should be in any succeeding period to the end of the world? Does it not then appear almost to a demonstration, from the singularity of the circumstance on the one hand, and from its occurring at the time that the promise of a Saviour was restricted to a particular family, on the other,—and when to these are added the special care which Providence always manifested in securing their possession of that land till the Saviour came, that this was the particular design for which the promise of it was given?

There is but one thing that I know of which seems to militate against this view, and that is, the land of Canaan being promised to Abraham and his descendents for an *everlasting possession*. The clause everlasting, seems, no doubt, to extend their possession of that land far beyond the period to which we have referred. But it ought to be observed, that, as it regards a subject, which, in its nature cannot signify an absolute eternity, it must therefore be explained by other passages of a similar nature where the same word occurs, concerning the duration of which there is no doubt. It is the same word in the Hebrew, namely, עולם, which is used frequently to signify time *indefinitely*, as well *past*, as *future*†; and which occurs in all those passages in the Mosaic ritual, where the various ordinances are said to be given for a statute for ever. And hence, though the same word denotes eternity in the strict and absolute sense, when applied to subjects which will evidently bear that meaning (as the eternity of God, for instance, Psal. xc. 2.)

* Gen. xv. 13.

† See Park. Heb. Lex. under עלם II. where a variety of passages are quoted.

yet when employed in the vague or general sense, as in the case before us, its true signification can only be ascertained, either by ranging the subject to which it is applied with that class of subjects to which it naturally belongs, or by examining the history of providence in order to determine whether the event to which it alludes be *already past*, or *yet to come*. For various reasons afterwards to be specified, I would class the everlasting possession of the land of Canaan, here guaranteed to Abraham and his descendents, with the statutes and ordinances instituted by Moses; all of which, it is well known, though likewise termed everlasting, were abrogated and done away by the coming of Christ. And if this arrangement be accurate, it will hence follow that the Israelites' possession of the land of Canaan, though termed eternal in the grant, would likewise terminate at the same time. Accordingly, when we have recourse to the other method of determining points of this nature, to wit, the investigation of history, which is in other words, an illustration of the eternal purposes of the Almighty; we have it confirmed by incontestable evidence that the event is not to be sought for as *yet to come*, but as *past* long ago. Facts have determined, and that nearly two thousand years since, that the descendents of Abraham were not for ever, even in this life, to possess the land of Canaan; but were, after the grand purpose for which it seems to have been given them came to be accomplished, removed from it into different regions of the world, and have thus continued ever since, dispersed throughout countries * to which they have now no na-

* As in the most of controversial writings, the different parties seem to be exceedingly quick sighted to spy each others faults, and often magnify as no inconsiderable error, what cannot, when weighed in the balance of impartial justice, be reckoned an error; so, to prevent violations of this kind here, I would thus take the

tural or instituted right, more than the people amongst whom they sojourn.

It is true, that it was for their unbelief, and for their horrid sin in crucifying the Lord of glory, that the Jews, the natural branches were broken off, and the Romans permitted to take away their place and nation. But may not this be considered not only as a signal punishment on that nation for the wickedness of their conduct; but also as the means by which God intended to fulfil the purposes which he had formed in himself before the world began? Nor would this have been any new or uncommon plan of procedure with God, but the very same on which he seems to have acted from the beginning. When he intended to put the descendents of Abraham in possession of the land of Canaan, for instance, it was not till its original inhabitants had filled up the measure of their iniquities; and that, when they were driven hence by the victorious armies of Israel, his judgments, evidently inflicted upon them for their wickedness, were so blended with the plans he had predetermined to accomplish, that unless we had been informed of them, or taken the events for our interpreters, we could not have distinguished the one from the other. In like manner does this seem to have been the case with the Israelites themselves. When the purposes for which Jehovah seems to have given them a place in Canaan came to be

start, and explain what I mean by the above expression, *countries to which they have now no natural right*, &c. I do not mean, by the particle *now* in this connection, to say, that the Jews ever had such a right as we are here speaking of, to the countries through which they are dispersed, but only that they once had such a right to Canaan, and which no others could have either to that or any other land, unless they obtained it in the same way. I mean, moreover, to say, that though the Jews once had such a right, they seem to have it no longer; but are now in this respect entirely on a par with the other nations among whom they sojourn.

accomplished, and he intended to remove them from it, it so happened that in the ordinary course of his providence, he needed only signally to punish them for the crimes of which they had been guilty, and his purpose was completely effected.

Nor would it be any argument to the contrary to say, as indeed many have done, that, as it was on account of their wickedness and unbelief that the Jews were cast out, so whenever they shall come to see their sins, so as to be humbled for them, and shall turn unto the Lord, they shall be again restored to their own land. Were the persons who espouse such sentiments but duly to consider the matter, they would soon perceive many and insuperable difficulties attending the idea of a literal restoration, which are all happily removed by taking the fact simply as it stands. There would not only be a literal restoration of the land, and that without any apparently specific end now to be obtained by it, but there would be also a restoration of the Mosaic worship and ritual, the royalty of David, and, in one word, all the peculiarities and appendages which pertained to the former dispensation *. It would imply too, that the believing Gentiles would have also a right to it as well as the Jews; for if the Jews, the natural branches, were broken off because of unbelief, and the Gentiles graffed in by faith; and if, when the former shall, through faith likewise, be made partakers of the sap and fatness of their own olive, shall be restored to the land of Canaan; it would imply, I say, that the believing Gentiles too, who are now made all *one* in Christ Jesus, had also a right to the same inheritance. Yea, it would imply that God was really unfaithful to his promise, and that he had actually suffered it to fail in the case of the many thousand Jews,

* Isa. lxv. 20, 21. Hos. iii. 5.

who believed in the first preaching of the gospel, who, instead of being thus distinguished on account of their faith, were involved in all the calamities common to their unbelieving countrymen; the previous, faithful, and friendly warning of their blessed Master, an attention to which would no doubt, in some measure, meliorate their sufferings, alone excepted. In short, it would imply that there is always to subsist in the church of Christ, a distinction between Jews and Gentiles; that the middle wall of partition has never yet, nor ever will be broken down; or else if it be, and that both are on a level, and made one in Christ Jesus, as the Scriptures assert, that all who are thus distinguished as the true Israel of God, to whatever nation they may have formerly belonged, shall be joint partakers of this blessing as a common interest. And hence it will come to pass, that they shall be gathered from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not in the kingdom of heaven and of glory, the blessed antitype of Canaan, but in the literal Canaan, and that for the purpose of returning to what the apostle styles, *the weak and beggarly elements of this world* *, Gal. iv. 9.

All this, we say, would be manifestly implied in taking the restoration of the Jews to their own land, after they are made one with the Gentiles by faith in Christ Jesus, in a literal sense. But is it possible that any can thus understand it? Would it not be better then to consider the restoration of Canaan entirely in a spiritual sense, as a prophetic representation of the conversion of God's ancient people to the Christian faith? and, extending our ideas beyond the narrow limits of the land of Palestine, consider Canaan in this sense, as comprehending the heathen nations also, which are

* Gal. iv. 9.

given to Christ "for an inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for a possession *?" And thus, do we not perceive, by the admirable providence of God, one most beautiful design in all his plans, from the beginning to the end?—First, in calling Abraham, in selecting his descendents, and in giving them his statutes, ordinances, and certain worldly possessions, which might keep them together in one place, till a certain end he had in view in all this was obtained; and then, when his purposes were answered, suffering them, in the same admirable manner, to be scattered throughout all the regions of the earth, and there to remain in their dispersed, cast-off, and forlorn condition, "without a king, and without a prince, and without sacrifice †," &c. till the fulness of the Gentiles should come in.—And then, when the gospel had penetrated into those dark and dreary regions into which the Jews had strayed, like prodigals from their father's house, and by its blessed influences, changed the whole face of nature, so to speak, from a waste howling wilderness, into the garden of Eden, the Jews, struck with this miracle, begin to recollect themselves. In it they see their sin, which was the cause of their dispersion; and along with it, the mercy of their ancient God, unmerited and unsolicited, extending to others no less criminal and wicked than themselves. With them therefore they cast in their lot, saying, "whither thou goest we will go, and where thou lodgest we will lodge ‡;" for we perceive "that God is in you of a truth §." And hence, instead of needing to engage in long and wearisome journies, ere they could worship in an acceptable manner the God of their fathers, they find that the Saviour himself had long ago freed them from that obli-

* Psal. ii. 8.
† Hos. iii. 4.
‡ Ruth i. 16.
§ 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

gation, by declaring "that the hour cometh, and now is, when men shall neither in this mountain," (mount Gerizim, to-wit) "nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father; but that the true worshippers should in every place, without distinction, worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him*." The fulness of the Gentiles being thus come in, and every one calling himself by the name of the God of Jacob, the Jews, now converted by the same truth, retain no longer their ancient enmity at the Gentiles, but seek a place in their communion, and count it an honour as well as a privilege to be incorporated into the same body. And thus whenever the happy change may happen to take place, they will count themselves at *home*; and instead of looking and longing for a restoration to the earthly Canaan, they will have their eyes directed to that better and heavenly country, of which Canaan was the type; and with patience wait the Lord's time to be transported thither.—Such are our views of this important subject.

We now come to a third transaction of God with Abraham, which occupies the whole of the xvth chapter; but this we shall consider in our next section.

SECTION IV.

The Subject continued.

THE subject of the ensuing section is contained in the xvth chapter of Genesis. Because Abraham had been called, both in a temporal and spiritual point of view,

* John iv. 21,—23.

to lead a life of peculiar difficulties and dangers; to strengthen and encourage him therefore, *the word of the Lord came to him*, ver. 1. *Saying, Fear not Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*

Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield. To see how remarkably this promise was fulfilled in its literal meaning, we need only to recollect the various dangers to which Abraham himself was exposed, and the much more numerous and complicated train of sufferings with which his descendents were visited, first by their Egyptian oppressors, then by their wars with the surrounding nations; by their various captivities; by their internal commotions amongst themselves; and, lastly, by their final dispersion. But these things considered, is not their very existence in the present day, the most demonstrative proof that God has, for nearly these four thousand years, shielded not only the parent, but the children * ?

And, as to its spiritual sense, the fact that God has always had a seed to serve him in every generation; a few, who reflected a divine light even in the darkest times, who even in the hottest persecutions were not afraid to confess his name; and as in all times past, so

* See this most beautifully illustrated in the case of the patriarchs, in the cvth Psalm. "*He hath remembered his covenant for ever*, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant; saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: when they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

the many who are now living witnesses for him, not only simply declare that God has *been*, and still *is*, their shield, but that, in defiance of earth and hell, it shews that he can work, and that *none* can hinder him.

God promises farther to be *an exceeding great reward to Abraham*. A person may be defended or shielded from danger; but he may escape, as Job says, "only with the skin of his teeth *." In addition therefore to mere preservation, God promises here to reward his people; and Oh! how munificent is the reward he purposes to bestow! As if the whole universe were too small, and too insignificant for the capacious soul of man, the infinite Creator of the universe proposes to reward it with nothing less than *Himself!*

As all the *unregenerate seed of Abraham*, as well as the *sinners of the Gentiles*, cry with the *many*, "*Who will shew us any good?* what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?"—as they seek their portion in the creature, and not in the Creator; and as it is only the spiritually-minded who say, "Lord, lift thou up upon us the light of thy countenance; for whom have we in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that our souls desire besides thee;" so this part of the promise cannot be taken otherwise than in a strictly *spiritual* sense.

But how strange and unaccountable are the operations of the human mind, that notwithstanding such encouragements, it should at times, even in good people, seem to overlook all the goodness and loving-kindness of the Lord, and brood only on its own distresses, perhaps too as often imaginary as real, which, by the way, it aggravates a thousand fold. One should have expected that Abraham, in the answer he returned for this goodness and munificence of the Lord, would have

* Job xix. 20.

at least said something in connexion with the subject. But, no: Abraham was as yet going childless, and his chief solicitude was about the obtaining of an heir, ver. 2, 3.

Happy is it for us, however, that the Lord does not copy after our example. He did not, like Abraham, deviate from the subject he proposed, but removed all his fears respecting a stranger heiring his possessions, by the comfortable assurance, that one who should come forth of his own bowels should be his heir; and that he should have even a progeny countless as the stars for multitude, ver. 4, 5.

It is said, ver. 6. that *Abraham believed the Lord, and that he counted it to him for righteousness.* But to this we shall not at present attend, as it will more naturally come under consideration afterwards.

The promise of the land of Canaan is again repeated, ver. 7. 16. 18. And because Abraham, ver. 8. desired *to know,* (surely by some sensible representation), *whereby he should inherit that blessing,* the Lord gave him the solemn tokens of his covenant, and confirmed it to him with an oath, ver. 9,—18.

It would be deviating too much from the subject we have in view, to attempt a full investigation of all the matters contained in this chapter; neither is it necessary, as they have been again and again very successfully done by others. But we would remark, from what occurs in the 13th and 15th verses, that, under the emblem of possessions in the land of Canaan, Abraham must have understood a better, even an heavenly country; otherwise the land, from what is there said, though it had been even the primeval paradise itself, could have been no flattering prospect to him, nor yet to his descendents, till the fourth generation.

The next transaction is contained in the xviith chap-

ter, where the covenant is renewed, Abraham's name changed, circumcision instituted, and Isaac promised. As this would however lead us into particulars of too important and complicated a nature to be huddled up in the end of the present, we shall rather make them the subject of another section.

SECTION V.

The Subject continued.

THE subject of this section is continued in the xviith chapter of Genesis.—Ver. 1. Abraham's age is stated to be at this period, *ninety-nine years*; and the Lord is said to have appeared to him, calling himself the *Almighty God*, and giving him this injunction, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect.*

As every one conversant with Christian duty, and the principles whence that duty must flow, well understands the import of this injunction, it is not our intention to enter upon it here.

The covenant which God gave to be between himself and Abraham, is therefore the next thing of course, ver. 2. 4. 7. And it may be remarked, that both the covenant itself, and the blessings contained in it, are precisely the same as those of which we have been speaking. If indeed there be any difference, it consists in minuteness of detail. Abraham is styled, *the father of many nations*, ver. 4. And again, ver. 5. his name was no more to be called Abram, but Abraham; *for a father of many nations*, saith God, *have I made*, or *constituted thee*. And this agrees with what has been already

observed, chap. xii. 3. that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed. To the same purpose he says, ver. 6. *And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.*

With regard to the *literal* meaning, it does not appear very applicable to this passage; not as it respects *nations* here mentioned as descending from him, for in this sense he was the founder of but *one* nation; to-wit, the nation of the Jews: nor yet as a *constituted* head or father; for Abraham, in this sense, like every person else, was naturally the father of his descendents, without being made or constituted so.

Taking then the passage in its *spiritual* signification, what a grand view does it present us with of the covenant of grace; that, whereas the dark places of the earth have long been full of the habitations of cruelty, they shall all shortly be covered with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the channel of the deep. The gospel is just to the *nations* what it is to *individuals*, a system of general universal utility, calculated and designed for every individual of the human race, and addressed to every one without a single exception. It is to the *nations*, to *all the families of the earth*, to the *human kind*, wherever their lot may happen to be cast, that the blessed promise here extends. And what a beautiful corroboration have we of it, not only in the passages quoted below *, but, when the steps came to be laid for its actual accomplishment, in Christ's commissioning his apostles to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to *every creature*.

By this promise therefore are our souls animated, and our expectations enlarged. We rejoice to think, that though Jesus, "the desire of all nations," was rejected

* Psal. ii. lxxii. Isa. xlix. 18,—26. & al. freq.

and despised by one of them when he came in the flesh, that yet every nation under heaven shall bow to his sceptre. The kingdoms are his. They pertain to him as a matter of right; not only as an inheritance given by promise, but as a possession legally purchased by his sufferings and death. His gospel shall therefore spread abroad, and by means thereof shall the nations be brought under him. They shall not be merely converted to him by bearing his name, but they shall be made a willing people in the day of his power. Satan, the god of this world, shall be cast out, shall fall as lightning from heaven, never more to arise, and the glorious kingdom of our blessed God erected in every country where he had his seat. And as this shall be only brought about by the publication of the truth, it is hence the duty of Christians to do all that in them lies to hasten it forward.

Again, not only *nations*, but *kings* were to come out of the loins of Abraham. May not this, in the spiritual sense, to say nothing of the literal, be aptly applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and to all the spiritual subjects of his kingdom, who indeed are not treated like servants or subjects, but are heirs, and of royal dignity, being heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, and made *kings* and priests unto the Father?

We next notice certain *properties* here ascribed to the covenant. It is styled an *everlasting* covenant, ver. 7. and the land of Canaan said to be given for an everlasting possession to Abraham and to his seed. For the meaning of the word עולם, here so rendered, we refer to what we have already said in a preceding section. We there remarked that this word, though the only one in the Hebrew language which signifies eternity in the proper sense, yet being frequently employed to sig-

nify time indefinitely, its true meaning can only be ascertained by a due attention to the subject to which it is applied. Taking the covenant, therefore, which God is here said to establish between himself and Abraham, and Abraham's seed in their generations, in the strictly spiritual sense, as signifying the covenant of grace, then the word עולם will be applicable, in its most unlimited sense, as expressive of eternal duration. And truly the covenant in this view we would extol in the highest strains, and say with David, that it is not only "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," but that it "is all our salvation, and all our desire*." In this view likewise would we understand the apostle's assertion, Rom. iv. 15. "that it" (justification, to-wit) "is of faith, that it" (the inheritance, namely) "might be by grace; to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed." In this view, in short, do we recognize all the doctrines of the gospel, as being eternal in their nature, and including the gifts and callings of God, which are without repentance. The recovery of fallen man by a Redeemer, regeneration or the new birth, faith in God's promises, justification in his sight, sanctification, perseverance in holiness, and final glorification in the eternal world, are doctrines of the gospel which stand or fall together, and which render all who embrace them the true seed of Abraham, in the sense of which we are speaking, and to whom the promise cannot be but sure: "for all that the Father hath given to Christ shall come unto him, and of all that he hath given him he shall lose nothing, but shall *preserve* and raise it up at the last day†." And we may just add on this part of the subject, that God gave not only a simple promise to Abraham and his seed, in the sense we have specified, but "willing

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. † John vi. 37. 39.

more abundantly to manifest unto these heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

But though this be evidently the true meaning of the original word here rendered *everlasting*, when applied to the covenant in its most extended and spiritual sense, yet it cannot be disputed that it has a more limited signification in several other passages in this very chapter. For the sense in which we understand it, when applied to the possession of the land of Canaan, see what we have said on this subject in our third section. And for the same reasons, we would understand it with the same limitations, when applied to the covenant of circumcision, ver. 13. But of this we shall speak more particularly, when we come to that part of our subject which treats of the changes which took place at the introduction of the new dispensation.

The next thing claiming our attention is, that the covenant was not only established with Abraham himself, but also with his seed. *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations*, and so on. But as this will be also the subject of a subsequent part of our work, we shall say nothing on it here, but reserve the full discussion of it for its proper place.

We come therefore to the institution of the rite of *circumcision*, ver. 9,—14. *And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye*

* Heb. vi. 17, 18.

shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant.

What was thus required was immediately complied with, as we learn from the conclusion of the chapter. Ver. 23. *And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the self-same day, as God had said unto him. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the self-same day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son; and all the men of his house, born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, were circumcised with him.*

Without entering into the controversy which has been agitated amongst the learned, respecting the *original institution* of this rite, what especially demands our attention, and will also be of more use than any decisions of this nature, is, to try to ascertain the grand *design* of its institution. Indeed, with regard to the time of its institution, we must plainly say, and that, though in opposition to so great authority as that of the late Lord President Forbes *, that it does not appear to us

* See his Works, vol. i. p. 151. &c. Edinburgh edit.; also Joseph. contra Ap. B. i. § 22. & Antiq. B. viii. c. x. § 3.

to have been one of the *original* institutions enjoined on Adam after the fall, and which must therefore have been practised by his descendents; for this good reason, that if this had been the case, Abraham and his family must have known and attended to it long before the period mentioned in this chapter. It is from this time henceforward, and never before, that the Scriptures speak of it as an institution of divine appointment, or indeed so much as mention it at all; and therefore, the collateral circumstances which may lead some to draw such conclusions, how plausible soever they may appear, are by no means to be admitted when they are rendered so exceedingly suspicious by a palpable truth. I freely confess, for my part, that the Scriptures appear to me to represent circumcision from this time forward in such a light, that it is no part of my system, till I see better reasons for it, to admit such a position. But without saying more on this affair, let us enter upon the discussion of the subject itself.

With regard to the *design* of the ordinance, there appears to be several leading principles held forth to view. 1. It is manifest from this passage, that it was intended to be a *sign* or *token* of the covenant which God here established with his people. And thus it would serve as a remembrancer of the certainty of its fulfilment on his part, as well as a test of obedience on theirs.

In relation to the first of these ideas, Paul says that it was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith of Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised," Rom. iv. 11, The faith which the patriarch had in his uncircumcised state, we formerly noticed, chap. xv. 6.; but having reserved our remarks on it for another place, we shall attend a little to it here. It was there said, that *Abraham believed the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness.* On which words, the apostle Paul

gives a most beautiful divine comment, in the chapter now alluded to in his epistle to the Romans. The subject of which he is speaking, is that of justification by faith, without the works of the law. And he adduces this instance of Abraham's justification, while he was yet uncircumcised, to establish his point. He enters at great length into the subject, and discusses it with much ability. He first lays it down as a maxim, that where works have any part in the matter of justification, then the reward cannot be gratuitous, but may be claimed as a matter of right, ver. 4. But, on the other hand, when works are entirely excluded, and faith the only thing required, then the faith itself, or perhaps the object of it, or perhaps, with more propriety still, the two united, are counted to him for righteousness. In the next place, he does as much as say, (see ver. 6, 7, 8.) that they, and they *only* are blessed, and freed from all the direful consequences of sin, who are justified by this means. Resuming then the subject he had started in the 29th verse of the preceding chapter, (which see), he asks, ver. 9, 10. "Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the" *mark* * " of circumcision, a seal of the righteous-

* So we conceive σημειον ought to be rendered in this passage; for being joined with περιτομης, *circumcision*, it refers merely to what was done in the administration of that rite, and not some representation of it, as the word *sign* would seem to convey. If it had not been the governing word, it would have indeed been all the same whether rendered by the one or by the other. For it would be equally good sense to say, *he received the sign, circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith*, &c. as that "he received

ness of the faith, and by consequence of the blessedness which he had, yet being uncircumcised." Than this mode of reasoning, what could be more convincing or more in point to his subject?

But as the apostle mentions circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham possessed in his uncircumcised state, the question comes to be, whether was it the same to his descendents as to himself? If they indeed had all been partakers of like precious faith with him, there is no question but it would have been the same. But when it was intended also as a mark of national distinction, and dispensed not only to the descendents of Abraham, and that while they were yet incapable of forming any conceptions of it, but to the strangers and sojourners likewise, *whether born in his house, or bought with his money*, I candidly confess that what it intended to *signify* or *seal to them*, if no-

the *mark* of circumcision." But περιτομης being the genitive, we are not at liberty to adopt the former rendering, nor to retain the word *sign*, as in the common translation, without involving ourselves in a kind of absurdity. When we speak of the *sign of* any thing, we are surely not to be blamed for inquiring what this *sign is*. Now, by this rule, if circumcision *had* a sign, what was that sign? The knife, I should suppose; the same as chirurgical instruments are the sign of chirurgical operations, water the sign of drowning, and a gibbet the sign of hanging. Mr Wardlaw, evidently from not adverting to these circumstances, has, in my opinion, gone into a very unwarrantable interpretation of this passage. He considers circumcision here as both a *sign* and a *seal;* and occupies several pages of his Lectures (which see) in order to shew the various respects in which the blessings of the covenant of grace, were *signified* and *sealed* by it. But it does not appear that the apostle represents it in this light at all. His sense seems evidently to be, that, by what is here denominated the mark of circumcision, is simply circumcision itself; and it is this, and nothing else, which is the *seal* in the apostle's account of the matter.

thing of a carnal nature is to be admitted, is not so very clear. Nor have I any idea that we need to inquire what conceptions an ignorant or unthinking multitude might form of it; for if we could only ascertain distinctly the *design of God in its institution*, this would be quite sufficient. It appears to me, I must own, that, as the covenant of which circumcision was a token, consisted of various parts, and evidently included temporal as well as spiritual blessings; so it would not only be viewed in reference either to the one or the other, according as the persons themselves happened to be carnal or spiritual, but that it was designed of God in this two-fold sense, to represent the corresponding parts in the covenant. And I question not but that the self-same principle would run through every other part. The land of Canaan, for instance, was included in the covenant; and being a goodly land, "a land flowing," as the Scripture expresseth it, "with milk and honey; a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths, that spring out of the vallies and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates, of oil-olive, and honey; a land wherein there was bread without scarceness, and lack of nothing; whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass *;" I doubt not but that many of the carnal Israelites, having got possession of it, though not by their own power or might, would yet bless themselves for the goodness of their fortune, and say of it, *This is our rest, here will we stay.* But, ah! to the spiritually-minded, Canaan, with all her fair prospects, was still incapable of satisfying the longing desires of their soul. Viewed as their *only* portion, it was lighter than vanity. It was totally destitute of any real good, except when taken in connexion with

* Deut. viii. 7,—9.

the chief good, and as affording types and shadows of better things to come. And hence, to the former, the threatening to dispossess them of a portion they so highly valued, in case of disobedience, would be exceedingly *terrific*, as the idea would be of coming short of the rest which it typified, to the latter.

2. We mentioned *a test of obedience as a second design* of the ordinance. In the 9th verse, God requires of Abraham to keep his covenant; *thou*, saith he, *and thy seed after thee, in their generations*. And in the next verse, he informs them what it was he required of them, and how they were to testify the obedience of their faith, by observing, as a perpetual statute, the ordinance of circumcision. "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised."

Thus was it a test of their obedience; and see with what an awful sanction it was enforced: ver. 14. "And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant *."

* 1. Some may be apt to think this an exceedingly hard law. But as the conduct here supposed, evidently indicated a contempt of the divine authority, amounting to a breach of covenant on the part of the offender, the apparent severity of the sanction vanishes entirely.

2. It would seem also to appear from this passage, that it was the uncircumcised subject himself, who was to suffer for the breach of God's holy covenant; and as this might happen to an infant of little more than eight days old, it would add not a little to the idea of its severity. But from what is said of Moses in the fourth chapter of Exodus, concerning the circumcision of his son, it is manifest that God acted, even in this, in the most reasonable manner. When the subject was an infant, as in the case here alluded to, then it was the parent's sin, and he was of course

3. Again, this ordinance being instituted at the *time* that the promise of a Saviour was restricted to a particular family, and abrogated when this promise came to be *accomplished*, we should suppose that a *third design* of its institution was to point to this event. And this it did by constituting a kind of national distinction between the progenitors of the Saviour, and the other nations of the world. Hence we read of the uncircumcised *Philistines*, *Edomites*, *Amonites*, and *Moabites**, &c. And hence Paul, in his epistles, repeatedly uses the words *circumcision* and *uncircumcision*, in the same manner as he does those of *Jew* and *Gentile*, or *Jew* and *Greek*, as comprehending the whole human race †.—It would do

to be responsible; but, when an adult, the sin would lie at his own door, and he was therefore to be answerable. The whole then evidently amounts to this, to secure obedience to the holy commandments of God, and to shew that it is an evil thing, and bitter, to depart from him, even in any instance whatsoever.

* Judges xiv. 3. Jer. ix. 26.——We meet with a hint in Brown's Dictionary, Perth edit. respecting this subject, worth the noticing. It is there said, 'For the last 38 years of the Israelites' abode in 'the desert, the Hebrew children were not circumcised. It was 'not there so necessary to distinguish them from other nations,' &c. See art. Circum.——The following quotation from Josephus, the Jewish historian, tends to corroborate this idea most forcibly. His words are, 'The fore-mentioned son (Ishmael) was born to 'Abraham when he was eighty-six years old. But when he was 'ninety-nine, God appeared to him, and promised him that he 'should have a son by Sarai, and commanded that his name should 'be *Isaac*; and shewed him, that from this son should spring great 'nations and kings, and that they should obtain all the land of Ca-'naan by war, from Sidon to Egypt. But he charged him, in order 'to keep his posterity *unmixed* with others, that they should be *cir-'cumcised* in the flesh of their foreskin, and that this should be done 'on the eighth day after they were born.' Vid. Jewish Antiq. B.I. c.x. § 5.

† Gal. ii. 7, 8, 9. Rom. iv. 11, 12. & al. freq.

this also, first, by being restricted to the males, it would shew that the promised seed was to be a male; and then, by cutting off, first the *Berith*, or the animals selected at the ratification of the covenant, chap. xv. 9. and then the foreskin of the males throughout their generations, it would point out the cutting off of the promised seed, God's *true Berith*, whose blood was to cleanse from all sin, 1 John i. 7.

4. And this brings us to remark further, concerning the *design* of the ordinance, that it seems to have had yet a higher and more spiritual signification, even to the persons who practised it, and denoted the cutting off of the sins of the flesh. Hence it was used figuratively by the prophets, to signify the circumcision of the heart *. And hence Paul's remarkable words, "† He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." Not that the apostle is here denying that the *literal* circumcision *was* circumcision, nor yet that the *descendents of Abraham*, who had this mark literally in their flesh, *were* his descendents, (so I take the word Jew here to signify), but he is drawing a contrast between *this* kind of descent, and *this* kind of circumcision, and *that* which is spiritual, in the heart, and not in the letter, as the whole connexion evidently shews. It is therefore evident, that the words *circumcision* and *uncircumcision*, in the spiritual sense as well as in the literal, are used as collective nouns, and in this sense are just synonymous with believer and unbeliever, righteous and wicked, and so on.

Upon the whole then, if these two last views be cor-

* Jer. iv. 4. Deut. x. 16. † Rom. ii. 28, 29.

fect, what a beautiful harmony does it shew us in the truth of God! an order and necessity of things which has existed, and will exist, even from the beginning to the end. It shews, that *without the shedding of blood there could be no remission*, and that even then, except men were converted, and became new creatures, *circumcised in the heart* as well as in the flesh, their literal circumcision or connection with Abraham, or even with their Messiah, a greater than Abraham, could profit them nothing.

We might now speak of the *subjects* of this ordinance, but we conceive it will be better to reserve this, with the things we have already mentioned, to the following chapter.

In the 15th verse, Sarah's name is changed from Sarai to Sarah. This change of her name is just similar to that which was made on Abraham's; and though neither differed essentially from what they were before, yet this new adjunct is very important in its nature, and wonderfully assimilates the one to the other. As Abram signifies a *father*, or *father of elevation*, and Abraham *the father of a multitude*, so Sarai signifies a lady or princess, and Sarah a princess of a multitude. Accordingly, ver. 16. God saith to Abraham concerning her, as he had formerly done concerning himself, *I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her; yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of many nations: kings of people shall be of her.*

At this gracious promise, Abraham, who had been going sorrowful on account of being childless, ch. xv. 2, 3. was so overcome with joy, that he fell prostrate on the ground, and gave vent to the feelings of his heart by laughter; and he said within himself, *Shall a child be born to him that is an hundred years old! and shall*

Sarah, who is ninety, bear! ver. 17. *Yes*, saith the Lord; *Sarah, thy wife, shall bear thee a son* indeed; for nothing is impossible with me *. *And thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him*, ver. 19.

Abraham had been expressing, ver. 18. his anxious solicitude, *that Ishmael might live before God.* Which expression I take to mean, from the connexion in which it occurs, a desire that he might be included amongst God's people, and have a place in the covenant or promise which respected the numerous seed †. This I think evident, from the answer given in the words just quoted respecting Isaac, and from what occurs in the verse following. 'No, my friend, Abraham,' as if God should have said; 'no, this cannot be; it 'would overturn the whole plan of my dealings with 'thee. Not with Ishmael, therefore, but with Isaac 'will I establish my covenant, and with his seed after 'him. And as for Ishmael, lo! I have heard thee even 'concerning him. Lo! I have blessed him also, and 'will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceed-'ingly. Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make 'of him a great nation. But notwithstanding this, mark 'what follows. Though I shall be thus munificent to 'Ishmael, because he is *thy seed*, ch. xxii. 13. remem-'ber that I do not include him in my covenant; but 'my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah 'shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year ‡.' ver. 19, 20, 21.

* Gen. xviii. 14.

† *Before thee.* It is the same word as that used in the first commandment, and which certainly, there at least, denotes *the face* or *presence of God*, in a peculiar sense. See Park. Heb. Lex. under פָּנִים, and IV.

‡ Here it may be proper to remark, that Pedobaptists, seeming-

The next transaction of God with Abraham, is contained in the xxiid chapter, after the account of the offering up of his son Isaac, ver. 15, 16, 17, 18. *And the*

ly with a view to support their system, give this whole account respecting Ishmael, though I do not suppose they intend it, a very false gloss. They first take it for granted that Ishmael was *in* the covenant, or the church, which, in their sense of the words, certainly signify the same thing; and then, that by *mocking* at the weaning of Isaac, they represent him as having apostatized, for which reason they suppose him to have been cast out. But do we not see from the account of the sacred historian, that it is *not true* that he was *ever in* the covenant; and even though it had been true, still, would not the principle be false? for where do we find, in all the account of Ishmael's separation, any thing analogous to the approved scriptural discipline of a church? The whole account of this matter is contained in the xxist chapter of Genesis; and let any one read it with attention, marking every circumstance there narrated concerning Hagar and Ishmael, particularly God's own tender dealings toward them, as well as Abraham's anxious solicitude for the welfare of his son, and say, if it be possible, that these two persons were cast out as heathens and publicans from the church of God. Did not the authority which ordained exclusion from the church, ordain also certain steps to be taken, previous to this last expedient? But where do we find any thing like this occurring here? The truth perhaps is, the mistake may have originated in a wrong interpretation of what the apostle says on this subject, in his epistle to the Galatians. See chap. iv. from ver. 22. to the end. The apostle declares that the whole was allegorical. He speaks of two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, the other from Mount Sion; the one answering to the Jerusalem which then was, the other to the Jerusalem which is above. The one was in bondage, the other free. And as that which is free was to succeed that which was in bondage, so Abraham's wives and sons came to be the most appropriate emblems by which to represent such important matters. And thus do we see verified what we formerly observed from Dr Macknight, 'that 'the characters, actions and events, which constituted the natural 'allegory, though existing apparently in the ordinary course of 'things, were ordered of God, so as to be fit emblems of those 'future persons and events,' which should occur in the course of

angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the

divine providence.—In interpreting subjects of this nature then, we shall certainly err, unless we take the allegorical representation into account. And we shall err even here, if we make the original emblem speak *more* than what the particular thing it was intended to represent, requires. Going upon this principle in the case before us, it would be no difficult matter to demonstrate, that even the Abrahamic covenant was completely abrogated. For if Ishmael was in this covenant, and if he was cast out, the apostle is proving that the circumstance of his expulsion was emblematical of the expulsion of the Jews from the church of the living God; yea, of a complete overturn of their whole system. Or, upon another view, it would even prove that they were never in this covenant, if so be that it is the gospel covenant, which maketh *free* in Christ Jesus; for it was as *bond* persons that they were cast out, persons resembling Ishmael, the son of a bond-maid, and not as the descendents of Isaac, the son of the free woman, and child of the promise. Thus, upon their own principles, notwithstanding their contentions about the Abrahamic covenant, and about the interest they assign to his descendents therein, from this chapter, upon *their* view of the matter, we are compelled to confess, that there was a lapse of nearly two thousand years—to-wit, from the time of Abraham to the coming of the Messiah, in which there was not a single individual included in it. They were all that time in the situation of Ishmael, and as if they had been born of the bond-woman, and not of Sarah, who was free. I mention these things, merely to shew how easy it is, by plausible representations, to pervert the Scriptures, and also to demonstrate the necessity of adopting right principles of interpretation. Is it not then making the *sign* speak *more* than the thing signified requires, to raise such a theory upon the circumstance of Ishmael's expulsion? He was cast out, it is true; but from whatever cause that might have been, all that we need to attend to here is, that this event prefigured the great change which was to take place in the then existing dispensation.

stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.

This renewal of the promise, as the reward of the faith and obedience of Abraham, differs but little from what has been already observed. The blessing and the numerous seed are the same, only the reduplication of the words, *that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed*, and the comparison that they should be *as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand upon the sea shore*, may be applied both to the spiritual and literal Israel. The first is an Hebrewism, denoting in general the superlative number, and may be translated *greatly* bless, or *greatly* multiply. The second is quoted by Paul from the prophecies of Isaiah indeed, in his epistle to the Romans, chap. ix. 27. and applied to the descendents of Abraham according to the flesh.

The next expression, *thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies*, is evidently a prediction, not only of the victories to be obtained over the Canaanitish nations by the Israelitish arms, but also of the spiritual conquests of the Redeemer, the *seed of Abraham* by eminence, as is manifest, amongst other passages, from the 2d verse of the cxth Psalm.

The last article runs thus: *and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, ver. 18. This is precisely of the same import to what was expressed, chap. xii. 3. where it is said, "in thee," that is is to say, in Abraham, "shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Only here we are informed, that it was not in Abraham *personally*, but in *his seed*, that this blessedness was to take place. And who this seed *was*, we are not left to doubt, since an inspired apostle explains it at great length to be CHRIST. See Rom. iv. and Gal. iii. And

this again accounts for what Christ himself says*, that "Abraham rejoiced to see his day;" and that "he saw it, and was glad."

Having thus completed our design respecting our comment on this important subject, before we proceed to the discussion of the other topics we proposed, we would make a few general remarks upon the whole. But having already enlarged so much, we shall leave this to be the subject of a separate section.

SECTION VI.

General Observations on the foregoing Sections.

HAVING finished what we intended by way of comment on the various transactions of God with Abraham, we shall now make a few general remarks upon the whole.

1. Our first general remark then is, that these various transactions, though consisting of many parts, seem to constitute but *one* covenant. Indeed, I confess myself disposed to look upon them in no other light than as a further development of the first promise, Gen. iii. 15. and intended principally to promote its accomplishment. For which reason, I candidly acknowledge that I cannot but differ from Mr M'Lean, an author however for whom I feel very much respect, both for making what is called the *covenant of circumcision* a covenant *distinct by itself*, and also for taking such a view of the subject as to render it necessary for him to do so. He is of opinion, or rather asserts it as an incontrovertible fact, 'that the Scriptures speak of more co-

* John viii. 56.

'venants than *one* being made with Abraham.' Accordingly, after declaring that 'he knows no difference 'between a simple promise, and a promissory covenant, 'save that the latter was usually confirmed by sacri-'fice, oath, &c.;'—he endeavours to make out no less than *three* distinct covenants in the transactions with Abraham *; the first consisting of the promise of all nations being blessed in him; the second, that of the land of Canaan; and the third, the covenant of circumcision. Now, upon the hypothesis that there is no difference between a simple promise and a promissory covenant, it will hence follow that, as all covenants are *promises*, so all promises are *covenants*; and therefore, instead of limiting even those given to Abraham to the number of three, we should have no fewer than *six* covenants, all in their nature fully as distinct as those specified by Mr M'Lean. There would be, 1. The promise or covenant of blessing Abraham personally. 2. That of blessing all nations in him. 3. The promise or covenant of a carnal seed. 4. That of a spiritual. 5. The promise of the land of Canaan. And lastly, the promise that Jehovah would be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him. And to these, if you please, you might add a seventh, if indeed it be proper to view it as distinct from the others, to-wit, the *rite of circumcision*. And, moreover, by applying this rule to other parts of Scripture, what a multiplicity of covenants should we there behold, and what a detached, and at the same time complicated system should we make those lively oracles, which are so remarkably distinguished for their simplicity! But really, might not all Mr M'Lean's difficulties on this head, in a great measure vanish, by attending, besides what we have said above, to the following considera-

* See his Review of Mr Wardlaw's Lectures, pp. 16, 17.

tion, namely, that it is by no means the case that the inspired writers speak of *this* covenant always, if indeed at all, in the *plural* number; for the apostle Peter, in addressing his countrymen the Jews, Acts iii. 25. says expressly, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the *covenant* which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." Nor will it do to explain this away by the detaching scheme, by saying, that it is but one of the covenants of which the apostle is here speaking, to-wit, that of blessing all nations in Abraham. For, first, though it should be said that the covenant in this passage means only that spiritual covenant which had respect to believers of *all nations*, as well as those amongst the Jews; yet still let it be considered, in the next place, to whom it was that the apostle addressed these words, and what was the situation, in respect to the covenant, in which he placed them. They were Jews indeed, but they were *unconverted* Jews; yet because *Jews*, they are styled the children of the prophets, and of the *covenant* which God made with their fathers, &c. And as to the two passages which Mr M'Lean produces, Rom. ix. 4. and Eph. ii. 12. where the words occur in the plural, it is yet to be proved whether the *Abrahamic covenant* is the *only* covenant there spoken of; and till this be done, nothing decisive can be drawn from hence.

I remarked further, that I differed from Mr M'Lean for another reason, namely, that of taking such a view of this subject, in connexion with baptism, as to involve himself in a kind of necessity to do as he has done. For my part, I do not conceive that there is any call for having recourse to such methods of interpretation, to establish the point at issue between him and his opponents, as I hope to make appear in its proper

place. Even a bad cause, it must be confessed, may be rendered exceedingly specious by improper means; but where the cause is good, there is surely no temptation to have recourse to doubtful disputation in support of it.

Upon the whole then, is not the plan of viewing the various transactions of God with Abraham as but *one* covenant, and as having the most immediate connexion with the revelation which went before, much more simple and satisfying to the mind, than that of ranging them all into so many separated and detached portions. Yea, I am convinced, that the more we view a unity of nature and design in the revelations of God, we shall be both the better qualified to interpret them, and the greater blessedness will they convey to our souls.

2. But we would remark, in the next place, that though we contend for a unity in these transactions, we are by no means for discarding a *due discrimination between their various parts*. Yea, this is the very principle upon which we have endeavoured to proceed, and it seems as if absolutely necessary to a right understanding of the subject. We have already seen, that these transactions consist of various parts, and that spiritual and carnal, heavenly and earthly, temporal and eternal properties are, in these transactions, equally applicable to the blessings and to their subjects. If Abraham was to be blessed, the blessing of him personally did not exclude those who were also to be blessed in him—if he was to have a seed by natural descent, this did not interfere with that which he should have also by faith—if temporal blessings were promised to him, these did not necessarily limit his expectation from the hope of better things to come. In all these respects, we see the parts of a covenant, which, though very

different in their nature, are all at the same time indispensably necessary; even the most carnal, temporary, and insignificant, if I may use the expression, no less proper for the constituting of the whole, than the most spiritual, durable, and important.

3. This leads us to remark, in the *third* place, the design *why* things so very *opposite in their nature* should yet be included in one and the same covenant. The articles we consider particularly of this description are, a *carnal posterity*, and *carnal possessions in a certain land*. These were both *new* articles, sealed and conveyed in these transactions. And the reason or design of them we have indeed hinted at before, but we shall now be a little more particular. The promise given to our first parents immediately upon the fall, may be considered as containing the whole gospel in embryo. And as it contained the promise of a seed, evidently a partaker of the human nature, (so I consider the expression, "the seed of the woman," to mean), it was therefore necessary, from the very nature of the thing, that some plan should be afterwards revealed to promote its accomplishment. Such a plan I accordingly consider the covenant of Abraham to be. And, as by the first promise, we were led to expect a Saviour, who should participate of our nature, so here we see provision made for its fulfilment. All the reasons then which prompted God to devise such a constitution in the plan of mercy, *as that the Saviour of the world should be man*, form just so many reasons for appointing Abraham's *natural* posterity, in a certain sense, to be his peculiar people, till the seed came. The same reasons are also applicable to their possessions of the land of Canaan. If there had been no design, such as we have mentioned, on the part of God, why does he introduce, in such a remarkable manner, the *natural* posterity of Abra-

ham, and withal give them, not a promise merely, but actual possession of the land of Canaan for many centuries afterwards, till the great promise was accomplished; and then, from that period down to the present day,—a space nearly as long,—should scatter them among the other nations of the earth, without any certain dwelling place? To deny our principle, and yet to account in a sober and rational manner for these things, I conceive impossible. But admitting the principle, what a satisfaction does it afford to the mind, and how reasonable and important does it represent all the ways of God, as flowing from a wisdom which is inscrutable as it is unerring. Upon this principle, even a carnal posterity, and even the land of Canaan, a carnal inheritance, both which, viewed in themselves, are indeed blessings not to be despised, but when contrasted with spiritual and eternal objects, are lighter than vanity; acquire a magnitude and importance well entitling them to attention. A carnal posterity, if it be a blessing to a man, by not suffering his memory to perish from the earth, is unspeakably more so, when, through this natural descent, *He* was to come, on whom the hopes of the whole world, from the beginning to the end, were to centre. And carnal possessions too, if they be a blessing to men, considered as individuals, by affording a regular supply of their returning wants, they were doubly more so to the people of Israel, considered as a nation; yea, and to all other nations through their means, by serving as a great receptacle which might keep them together, and preserve them a distinct people from all the other nations of the earth, and thus laying a foundation for confirming the great promise, when it actually came to be accomplished, beyond all doubt. Whereas, if they had been allowed to mingle with the other nations of the earth, or if no

certain portion of the earth had been assigned them for an habitation, but had been destined all along to wander and rove about in the manner they do at present; under what different circumstances should we have had the whole accomplishment of this great event presented to us? Truly, if we but rightly understood the matter, instead of contending with one another, we would bless the Lord, first, for appointing even Abraham's *natural seed*, for securing the *birth* of the long expected Saviour; and then, for the granting to them the inheritance even of the land of Canaan, which, by their possessing for so long a period, both themselves and all the world might know *Jesus of Nazareth to be* HE.

4. This leads us of course, to a *fourth* reflection, which regards the *dealings of God with the descendents of Abraham in after times.* We have seen the promise limited, in the family of Abraham to Isaac, and in Isaac's family to Jacob; and even though both parents seemed desirous in their turn to have it otherwise *, yet God's eternal purpose and decree would by no means permit it. We have now to observe, that no limitation of this nature, though it was so numerous, ever took place in the family of Jacob. He had children by concubines as well as by his lawfully married wives, and that even to the number of twelve sons, most of whom manifested as much wickedness and opposition to God, as did either Ishmael or Esau, yet notwithstanding, they were *all* counted the children of the promise, and were honoured ever afterwards to be the twelve heads of the tribes or families of Israel. There is nothing like that of absolute rejection, or similar to that of Ishmael's or Esau's, ever took place in this family at any period. It is true, God was often displeased with them on account of their rebellions, and often threatened to pu-

* Gen. xvii. 18. See p. 42. and ch. xxvii.

nish them, yea, and often put those threatenings into execution; but it is equally true, that though he slew the fathers, even in thousands, he still preserved their children, and retained them still a distinct people from all the nations of the earth. Though thousands, and tens of thousands, on various occasions, fell by the sword, the famine or the pestilence, yet the family, strictly speaking, was still preserved, because a blessing was in it.

It is remarkable too, that when the purposes of God came to be more fully disclosed, and the promise of the Saviour was restricted to a particular *tribe*, that his providence seems to have been exercised for the preservation of that tribe in a particular manner. By the prophetic impulse which operated on Jacob immediately before his death, he was enabled to foretel many things which afterwards came to pass, and among others, that the Messiah, under the designation of Shiloh, was to come of the tribe of Judah*. And what was more astonishing still, the prediction of the destination of the land, which was afterwards divided by lot, was such as tended much to secure to Judah the accomplishment of this promise. When we consider therefore the awful struggle for supremacy between the ten tribes, and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, we cannot sufficiently admire the local situation of the tribe of Judah, as the wisest of projects that could be possibly devised for effecting what was thus intended. Nor is it undeserving of notice, that *Jeroboam*, the first king of the revolt from the house of Judah, evidently saw through this. And therefore, in order to prevent the bad effects, as he supposed, which might flow from the subjects of his kingdom going up to worship at Jerusalem, he erected two calves, placing the one in Dan, and the other in Beth-el, and desired the people to go and worship there, under

* Gen. xlix. 10.

pretext that it was too much for them to go so far as Jerusalem *. But this became a sin unto Israel; and, as it was a matter of mere human device, it soon came to nothing; and *Jerusalem* was *still* the place to which the tribes, the tribes of the Lord, went up. Accordingly, when the prophet *Ahijah*† intimated the Lord's determination to cut off *Jeroboam*, it was at the same time declared, that he should never want a man to sit on the throne of *David*. Though the sin of Solomon had been so provoking as to occasion the rending of the ten tribes from the house of Judah, yet, as neither the original grant of the promise, nor its accomplishment, depended in the smallest on human merit, it was not therefore considered as a reason why the Lord should repent him of what he had purposed. As he had declared by the mouth of his holy prophets, that the Messiah should come of the *tribe of Judah*, his *faithfulness* was engaged to make it good, provided the promise was not conditional ‡.

We may observe too, that God's care over this particular tribe, was further illustrated in the different captivities with which he visited them on account of their sins. There were various captivities of the Hebrews, both before and in the time of their kings, which, for the sake both of illustrating the subject we are now upon, and for giving the reader one connected view of

* 1 Kings xii. 26,—29.

† 1 Kings xiv. 7,—16. comp. with ch. xi. 30,—39.

‡ See the original grant of this promise to the house of *David*, recorded in the viith chapter of the 2d book of Samuel, from ver. 12. to 16. An account which remarkably accords with the facts stated in the passages to which we have referred in the 1st book of Kings. It is also expressly applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the grand and ultimate object of the whole, in the first chapter of the Gospel by Luke, ver. 32, 33. which passages see.

them, it may not be improper here, briefly to enumerate. The various wars which fell out between them and the surrounding nations, in which at any time they happened to be defeated, and part of them, more or less, taken prisoners, are reckoned so many captivities of that people. See several of a more partial nature in the passages mentioned in the margin*.—These were the captivities under the government of *the Judges;* but those which happened afterwards, under that of the kings, were of a still more serious nature.

It was not till Solomon had sinned, in leading the people into idolatry, that the Lord rent the ten tribes out of his hand. Nor was it till Jeroboam had committed a similar trespass, that the government of the ten tribes was also taken from him and his family for ever, and invested in the hands of Baasha†. But we see in the case both of Israel and of Judah, that sin is a leaven, which, when once begun to operate, will not be impeded in its progress, till it has pervaded the whole mass. Neither the signal displeasure manifested by the Lord against the house of Judah, in rending the ten tribes out of their hands, nor yet that against Israel, in the case of Jeroboam, were sufficient to deter that people from walking in ways of their own choosing. Being even mad on idolatry, the then prevailing sin of the whole world, they dared to persist in the practice of it at all hazards. For which cause, the Lord not only afflicted them with internal commotions among themselves, but brought up foreign enemies against them, who discomfited them in battle, plundered their treasuries, and led most of them captives to distant lands.

The principal captivities with which they were visited subsequent to this period, were, *first*, those which

* Judges iii. iv. vi. † 1 Kings xv. 27. 29. 30.

happened to the *kingdom of Israel*, first by Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, in the reign of Pekah, king of Israel *, then by Shalmaneser, about nineteen years afterwards, who came up against *Samaria*, and having besieged, he took it, and carried *Israel* away captives, and dispersed them throughout various provinces of the *Assyrian empire* †. And thus, it is generally conjectured, a termination was put to the kingdom of Israel; for the ten tribes, who were thus taken captives, are supposed never to have returned. And indeed we never read of another king reigning in *Israel* after Hoshea, under whose reign this defeat and captivity took place.

Secondly, the captivities of *Judah*. As to these, there were several of a lesser or partial nature, prior to that great and decisive one effected by Nebuchadnezzar, and known by the captivity of the *seventy years*. In the fifth year of king Rehoboam, son of Solomon, Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem with a mighty army; and, having reduced the city, he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and of the king's house, and the shields of gold which Solomon had made ‡.

Again, in the reign of good king *Hezekiah*, there was a most dreadful attempt made by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, against Jerusalem; but the faith and prayer of that pious prince, and of the prophet *Isaiah*, were the means of preserving Jerusalem from the formidable forces of the enemy §.

Subsequent to this, however, in the several reigns of *Jehoiakim*, *Jehoiakin*, and *Zedekiah*, the three last kings

* 2 Kings xv. 29. † 2 Kings xviii. 9, 10, 11, 12.

‡ Compare 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26. with 2 Chron. xii. 2,—4.

§ Compare 2 Kings xviii. 17,—37. and chap. xix. with 2 Chron. xxxii. 1,—23.

who reigned in Jerusalem, did Nebuchadnezzar as often reduce the city, plundering and spoiling it of all its precious substance. The account of the first, to-wit, the overthrow of Jehoiakim, is recorded in the beginning of the xxivth chapter of the 2d book of Kings. The words are remarkable. Ver. 2. "And the Lord brought against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the children of Ammon; he sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servants the prophets. Surely, at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sin of Manasseh, according to all that he did; and also for the innocent blood which he shed, (for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood), which the Lord would not pardon."

The same chapter contains an account of the disasters of the second also. In the 10th verse, it is said, "At that time," three months to-wit after Jehoiakin's accession to the throne, ver. 8. "the servants of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged." Ver. 12. "And Jehoiakin, the king of Judah, went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers, and he took them prisoners. And he carried thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold, which Solomon, king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained save the poorest sort of the people of the land," &c.——This was the captivity under Jehoiakin.

But the severest of all is that we have yet to notice, which happened in the reign of *Zedekiah*. This was the *seventy years captivity*, predicted by the prophet Jeremiah several years before it came to pass *. It consisted in a total overthrow of the whole Jewish state. Jerusalem was burnt to ashes, and the whole country laid waste; Zedekiah himself taken prisoner; his children slaughtered before his eyes; his eyes put out, fettered with chains, and carried to Babylon †, &c.

Such was the unhappy end of both these contending parties, *Israel* and *Judah*. Having both provoked the Lord, the Lord in his own time punished both of them thus *signally*; but yet, we must say, it was still infinitely less than their iniquities deserved. Amidst all the severity of chastisement, however, the tenderness of his care over *that tribe* of whom the Messiah was to spring, is truly conspicuous. We may say here, as our blessed Lord did on another occasion: 'Suppose ye 'that the ten tribes who were first carried captives into 'strange lands, and were never permitted to return, 'were sinners *above* ‡ the other two tribes, who after-'wards suffered the same fate, but who were destined 'to a captivity only of seventy years? *I tell you, nay*; 'but so it happened, in order to shew forth the wonder-'ful works of God.' Whatever might be the cause for his not restoring the ten tribes, we are furnished

* Jer. xxv. 11, 12.——It may be objected by infidels, that, as the prediction of this event happened so shortly before the period of its accomplishment, the whole might be written afterwards under *a pretext of divine prescience*. But let it be observed, that not only the *captivity*, but their *restoration* is predicted by the prophet, and the *term* of their captivity limited, with the greatest precision, to *seventy years*: considerably previous to which period, this prophet was numbered with his fathers.

† 2 Kings xxv. ‡ Luke xiii. 2.

with reasons the most sufficient for his recalling the captivity of Judah, "as streams in the south;" and for "filling their mouth with laughter, and their tongues with singing, when they could say among the heathen, that the Lord had done great things for them *." His wrath was not only thus pacified toward them for all that they had done, but they were going again to take possession of that inheritance to which they had a right by the promise to Abraham; they were going to restore their ancient worship, to rear again the palaces of Sion, to repair the waste places, and the desolations of many generations; they were going "to declare the name of the Lord in Sion, and his praise in Jerusalem †"—*Jerusalem*, to which "the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord," *to serve him*, till *He* came for whom all the promises were made, and broke down every such distinction, teaching, that henceforth they should neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father; but that, through all the world, wherever the true worshippers were, *there* he was to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, John iv. 21. 23.

This, we conceive, was the great end for which the promise was ever given; and the dispersion and total loss of the ten tribes, while the others were restored, and preserved for so long a series of years, even till the promise came to be actually accomplished, seems to confirm it beyond a doubt.

5. The *spiritual* genius and nature of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, and which indeed ran through the whole of the former dispensation, will form the basis of our *next* reflection. And this we consider to be the more necessary, as there are not wanting those who have spoken of it in the most contemptuous man-

* Psal. cxxvi. † Psal. cii. 21. 22.

ner, and who seem to glory in ascribing to it the epithets of *carnal*, *worldly*, *earthly*, *typical*, and so on, as if there had been almost nothing spiritual in it, or as if the way to eternal life, under that dispensation, had been so wrapt up in metaphorical and dark sayings, that not one amongst a million could possibly discern it. We indeed confess it to be true, that the apostle Paul, particularly in his epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of that dispensation, employs such terms; but it is not in the same sweeping sense that many of his thoughtless imitators have unwittingly adopted, as persons contending for the mastery. None could have a juster view than that holy and spiritual apostle, of the carnal and worldly nature of the services of the tabernacle and temple; but we shall woefully mistake his meaning if we infer from thence, that life and immortality, said to be brought to light by the gospel, were not sufficiently made known to save thousands, and tens of thousands, even under that dispensation, dark as it was. For my part, when I read the Old Testament Scriptures, and behold the uniform piety and trust in God, manifested by many of the saints therein recorded, and that in the most common affairs of life, I cannot help thinking that Christians in these times, notwithstanding all the light they enjoy, have reason to blush and to be ashamed for coming so far short of what was known and practised even by the ancients.

We are fully sensible indeed, that that dispensation did contain promises of a carnal nature; and that temporal possessions in the land of Canaan, temporal deliverances from the Egyptian yoke, and temporal threatenings in case of disobedience, formed very important parts thereof. But upon the supposition that these were its *principal* matters, as the apostle says respecting the law, so may we say concerning the promise, "Where-

fore then serveth the promise* ?" Of what avail was it to Abraham to be told, that though the fair land of Canaan could not be given to himself, yet his descendents at a very distant period should possess it? Was there any thing in such a promise, if you divest it of all spiritual ideas, that could possibly support the mind of any one? or was it at all a compensation worthy of God to bestow, for all the severe trials, difficulties and hardships, which Abraham had been called to endure in all his peregrinations in strange lands? To have remained in Ur of the Chaldees, in his father's house, and among his own kindred, or to have returned when he found himself so sadly disappointed—surely either of the two had been more desirable than the other. But Abraham did not think so. He chose his wandering life because it was the will of God, and because there were assurances given him that it should not be always so. For even while he sojourned as a pilgrim upon earth, dwelling in tabernacles or tents, slender moveable abodes, which could hardly shelter their inhabitants either from the inclemency of the weather, or from the ravages of savage beasts, and which could be struck and carried about with them whithersoever they went—while this was his situation, we say, and while he endured it with patience, "he looked for a *city*," an object forming a contrast to the state he was then in, a city which hath *foundations*, sure and immoveable basis, and not like the *stakes and cords*, which were necessary to bind his then habitation to the earth, "a city which hath foundations, *whose builder and maker is God* †." This, this was the object which bore up his mind. And it must have been spiritual and heavenly in its nature, for it was not to be enjoyed here; for here "he had no possessions, no,

* Gal. iii. 19. † Heb. xi. 10.

not so much as to set his foot on *," save the cave of Machpelah, which he purchased of the sons of Heth, in which to bury his dead †.

Nor was Abraham *singular* in his expectations of eternal blessedness in a future state; for even Sarah too, who was the weaker vessel, and on that account the more liable to despondency; even she, and Isaac also, and Jacob likewise, with their respective families, all found something in the promise, which not only supported them while they led a similar life, but which even raised their minds above the desire of earthly possessions. Accordingly we read of one and all of them, Heb. xi. 13,—16. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country whence they came, they might have had opportunity to have returned; but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city."

Oh! after this, should we not expect to hear all the carnalizers of this glorious covenant rather humbly confessing their ignorance, their folly, and their guilt, than still attempting to overturn a matter which is so clearly established upon the basis of inviolable truth. As the queen ‡ of Sheba shall rise up in the judgment with that untoward generation which lived in the days of our blessed Saviour, and shall condemn it, by her more teachable disposition under circumstances vastly disproportionate; so, let such beware, lest the spiritual

* Acts vii. 5. † Gen. xxiii.

‡ Matt. xii. 42.

and heavenly conversation of these servants of the Lord, and that under a dispensation which they denominate a carnal one, do not *condemn them* for their *carnal* and *ungodly walk*, even under a dispensation which, according to their own account, is a dispensation of spirit and of light.

6. This leads us to make one remark more, which respects the *law*, and the *Jewish ritual*, which were afterwards subjoined to the promise. The apostle assures us, that the one does not oppose the other; though, to set them in direct opposition, the one to the other, is the common way in which the subject is treated. The one is represented as the ministration of death and condemnation, shewing no compassion to the guilty; but, like the merciless man mentioned in the parable, taking his debtor by the throat, and saying, *Pay me what thou owest* *. But the other is represented as a dispensation of mercy, tender mercy, unmerited and unsolicited, emanating from the throne of God, flowing from his generous heart, as an expression of his mere good will and pleasure to his miserable creatures, and extending itself even to the most guilty and hell-deserving of the children of men. Thus death is said to come by the one, and life by the other. And what can be more opposite to each other than life and death, condemnation and pardon, a free and full forgiveness, or condign punishment, without the smallest admixture of mercy?

Now that there *is* a law revealed in the Scriptures, with properties and sanctions such as have been described, I should suppose that no one, who has read them with discernment and the fear of God, can entertain a doubt. But that this was the law, in this sense of the word, given by Moses to the children of Israel, and as comprising all the statutes and ordinances which he en-

* Matt. xviii. 28.

joined, nothing, I suspect, can be more contrary to the truth. The law, in the sense in which Moses was its legislator, was peculiar to the Jewish people, and was abrogated and done away by the coming of Christ. But the law, in the sense in which it condemns men as transgressors in the sight of God, unlike to the other in point of *restriction*, it extends to *all mankind*, Gentiles as well as Jews; and in point of *duration*, being of a moral nature, its obligations are eternal.

It is not true of the Mosaic law, that there were no intimations of mercy made known in it; for to what purpose were the sacrifices, and all that train of rites and ceremonies under that dispensation, but just symbolical representations of such designs? In what other light can they be considered, than the gospel adapted to the then particular state of the church, and as conveying the same great and leading truths, only in a different way? All had their use in pointing to Christ, and to serve till he came. But as they were not the substance, but shadows only, it was necessary that the latter should be removed to give place to the former. Hence the apostle says, Gal. iii. 21. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."

Suppose him here to be speaking of the law of Moses, in the sense in which we have taken it, as I do think he is, his assertion does by no means contradict what we have said respecting it. A righteousness as full and as free as that made known by the gospel, was indeed pointed out by the law, in this sense; but there was nothing in that dispensation which could *procure* it. The sacrifices, and all the other rites, pointed to something which was to be done in the dispensation which was to succeed, but which they were unable to effect of themselves; and therefore it was with the greatest

propriety that the apostle should say of the law, even in this sense, *that it did not give life.* The work which Christ was to finish on the *cross*, was that which *they* in that dispensation were to look *forward to for life*, as *we* in this, are to take a retrospective view of the same object, for the same purpose.

We therefore see that the religion taught in the Scriptures is *one;* one way of death, and one way of life, made known throughout the whole. *As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passes* through to all his descendents, as sinners likewise. And *as in Adam all die, so in Christ* alone *shall all be made alive* *. The first clause of this last passage contains an assumed truth which the apostle considers incontrovertible, namely, that all men have sinned, and are consequently liable to death through the *first* man. And from this assumed fact, he infers that life could only be by the *second.* Now, without supposing the last clause to countenance in the smallest the idea of universal redemption, as has been asserted, it contains an absolute fact, supported by the whole of revelation, that there is life for the guilty in Christ, but in none other; so that if men who "are dead in trespasses and sins†" are made alive at all, it is, as the apostle declares, in Christ Jesus. Nor was this any novel doctrine started by the apostle; for "to him bear all the prophets witness." Abraham saw his day afar off, and was glad. Yea, long before Abraham, he was known as the seed of the woman, which should bruise the head of the serpent. And he *shall* be known, for his name is worthy of everlasting remembrance.—He shall be known as the Saviour and the Great One, elevated on his cross, like the brazen serpent in the wilderness, crying, "Look unto

* Rom. v. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 22. † Eph. ii. 1.

me all ye ends of the earth," look unto me, "and be ye saved; for I am God, and there is none else."

To obtain clear and distinct perceptions of the law in this two-fold sense then, is an object of the greatest importance that can be imagined. As the Scriptures assure us that the one was abrogated, and as the other from its very nature never could, but still is, and ever will be binding on moral agents, and as by the one comes death, and by the other life, either of which is to be the everlasting portion of every child of Adam; so there can be no subject more noble in itself, or more deeply claiming our attention from personal interest.

The principles of morality are exceedingly brief and clear, and such as can be easily understood by all men, though to our shame it must be said, we are continually chargeable with violations thereof. *Love*, love to God which knows no limits, and love to our neighbour, in the same manner, and perhaps to the same *degree* as we love ourselves, is the sum and substance of the whole *. Wherever therefore this principle occurs

* The *degree* of love the children of men are to exercise to one another, seems to be pointed out by Solomon, in Prov. xxiv. 11. As self-preservation is a most natural principle, so we are there taught not to hold the life or welfare of our neighbour less sacred than our own. Natural self-love, therefore, and the love of our neighbour, are principles, which, though distinct in themselves, do not however, when properly understood, run counter to each other. The first indeed seems to require no argument to induce men to an observance of it, but as an assumed truth it may be well employed as the strongest of all arguments to induce to an observance of the second. Both our Lord himself, and his servant Paul, evidently make use of it in this light. Luke vi. 31. Eph. v. 28, 29.——We meet with a circumstance in that very interesting Narrative of the Hon. John Byron, which seems clearly to demonstrate how natural it is for the human mind to act in behalf of its neighbour, when it acts promptly, and without affording itself time to indulge in insidious reflections. The circumstance is

throughout the whole word of God, whether in the law of Moses or in the prophets, in the Gospels or Epistles, *that* is the moral law, the law which can never be changed, the law of which it is said, "Though heaven and earth should pass away, yet one jot or tittle of this cannot fail."

And here it may be observed, that even the gospel itself contains something of a moral principle in it, and binds to the duties of love both to God and our neighbour, by motives the most powerful which can be conceived. Love to God and our neighbour is enforced by the consideration not of his authority merely, but of *his love to us*. And this is again enhanced by the consideration that it is manifested, not only to creatures before whom he makes all his goodness to pass, but as sinners whom he purposes to redeem by the precious blood of his own dear Son. It is this moral principle in the gospel which gives it such hold upon men. They are not at liberty to treat it with scorn or contempt, without at the same time heightening their condemnation. It differs from the law denominated *moral*, in that it declares a full and free pardon to all who believe it, though previously lying under the curse of the other. And because this matchless grace revealed in it, is not only unmerited on the part of the sinner, but procured at a price of such infinite value, and consequently de-

this:—The Indians among whom he was, were, on account of some superstition, going to throw him over board the canoe, for casting his limpet shells into the sea. But having landed shortly thereafter, as he was going to eat a large bunch of berries he had gathered from a tree, 'One of the Indians,' says he, 'snatched 'them out of my hand, and threw them away, making me to un-'derstand that they were poisonous. Thus,' continues he, 'in all 'probability, did these people now save my life, who a few hours 'before were going to take it from me, for throwing away a shell.' pag. 123.

monstrating the love of God, in a manner which never had been done before, the despising of this therefore, *seals*, in a way which the violation of the moral law was incapable of doing, the eternal condemnation of such deluded mortals. Hence the words of Jesus, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil," John iii. 19. And hence those of Paul, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Marantha," that is to say, *accursed when the Lord comes*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

As then the publication of the gospel, or the glad tidings of pardon to guilty men, has been the principal object God has had in view, from the first to the last of the revelations he has given them; and as the gospel was not only made known in *this* dispensation which was latterly established by Christ and his apostles, but in the first promise, in the covenant with Abraham, and in the Mosaic ritual and ordinances; it must therefore be exceedingly improper to talk, as many do, of an indiscriminate abrogation of all that went before this dispensation established by the Son of God in person. In the very nature of the thing it could not be; for what is binding in *this*, as it flows from moral principles, was likewise binding in the former; and though heaven and earth may change, there can be no alteration respecting this, while His authority who enjoined it endures, and while subjects endure, who must be ruled and regulated by the laws of the Most High. Ought we not then to reverence his authority more, than, in order to support our particular systems, to discard any part of those obligations which still stand in force?

7. But as we intend to enter more fully into this subject in another part of our work, we shall say nothing further on it here, but shall conclude by a reflec-

tion or two upon the *grace* and *faithfulness* of God, in first freely giving, and then fulfilling his promises to men.

Oh, then, what marvellous grace is this, when we had rendered ourselves obnoxious to divine wrath, and were literally in the situation of the rebel angels, to whom no mercy was shewn, to have the glad tidings of pardoning mercy sounded in our ears! If the thing be great in itself, and if the manner of effecting it can enhance its value, surely the grace of God, which has thus appeared unto men, bringing salvation, has heights and depths, breadths and lengths, which are absolutely unfathomable to a finite mind. It never can be in time, for it will take eternity itself to investigate, appreciate, and celebrate the glories of such unutterable grace. Till that bright morning arise however, Oh to be but increasingly sensible of its value, that we may become increasingly liker him from whom it flows, as from an inexhaustible fountain!

And, again, let the *faithfulness* of God to all the gracious promises he hath given, convince us of our unfaithfulness; and let it, like a two-edged sword cutting both ways, humble us on the one hand, and stimulate us on the other, to be imitators of God as dear children. What reason have we to rejoice that the Lord's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts like our thoughts! Like Israel of old, we are ever ready to say, "All that the Lord hath commanded will we do, and be obedient," while our consciences can too often testify to our face the hypocrisy of our lips. But the words which have gone out of *His* mouth, cannot return to him void. They are not yea and nay, but have one uniform language, in which, blessed be his name! the good of his creatures seems to be as much consulted as his own glory. The praises of his faith-

fulness then, uttered by Zacharias under the direction of God's unerring Spirit, when his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed, are the most appropriate that can be here used. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

The redeemed of all ages and nations, then, collected from the four quarters of the earth, from the first down to the last straggling sinner who shall be brought into the family of God, will be so many monuments of his faithfulness and grace, which shall endure not only to millions of ages hence, but to eternity itself. What an honour and what a privilege will it then be, to be made pillars in the temple of our God, to go no more out, but to be eternal monuments, bearing inscriptions of that grace made known to the children of men since the world began! If ambition for earthly glory so inspire the human breast, as to excite men to engage in pursuits the most perilous in order to obtain it—assuredly there is not an object in the whole extent of creation worthy of a name or a place in their affections in comparison with this.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE PERSONS INCLUDED IN THE COVENANT, CALLED THE SEED OF ABRAHAM.

SECTION I.

Shewing that the seed of Abraham is of two kinds, namely, carnal and spiritual.

IN entering on a subject such as the present, it may be proper to observe, that the existence of a seed to Abraham at all, was a work entirely of a supernatural kind. Early intimations had indeed been given that he should see his seed, and that his seed should be exceedingly numerous, even as the stars of the heavens, the dust of the earth, or the sand upon the sea shore. But between the uttering of this promise and its accomplishment, even in its first stage, there was not only a long period allowed to intervene, but matters were permitted to take such a turn, as to render its accomplishment, to all human appearance, impossible. The old stocks were both permitted to die of age, ere the tender scion which was to propagate and perpetuate their kind sprung forth. But God, "who redeemeth the souls of his people from destruction, can also *renew* their youth like the eagles *,"

* Psal. ciii. 4, 5.

when he hath any important end to be answered by it. Hence it is said of Abraham, Rom. iv. 19,—21. "That he, being not weak in faith, (though in body), considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform." And again, Heb. xi. 11, 12. "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one," of Abraham to-wit, "*and him as good as dead*, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable."

In our illustrations of the covenant with Abraham, we have seen that this innumerable progeny, both in point of promise and accomplishment, constitutes one of its most important parts. We observed, that he was not only to have a seed, of which he was to be the father in the strict and literal sense of the word, but that he was constituted or appointed to be also the father of believers of all nations, from the beginning to the end of the world.

'This distinction of Abraham's seed into two kinds,' as Dr Macknight observes, 'is intimated by our Lord 'himself, John viii. 39. where he told the Jews who 'sought to kill him, that notwithstanding they were the '*natural* offspring of Abraham, they were not his *chil-*'*dren*, unless they did the works of Abraham. The 'same distinction is taught still more plainly by the 'apostle Paul, who calls Abraham's natural progeny, '*his seed by the law*, the law of marriage; but his seed 'by the appointment of God, who gave believers of all

'nations to him for seed, *that which is by the faith of* '*Abraham*. "That the promise might be sure to all 'the seed, not to that only which is by the law, but to 'that also which is by the faith of Abraham, who is the 'father of us all," Rom. iv. 16. In like manner, the 'same apostle by telling us, Rom. ix. 8. "The children 'of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the 'children of the promise are counted for the seed," hath 'insinuated that Abraham had two kinds of children or 'seed, and that the seed by the promise, (a father of 'many nations I have constituted thee), Gen. xvii. 5. 'are the children of God, to whom alone the promises 'in the covenant, in their second and highest meanings, 'belong.'

To these passages we may add that noted one of John the Baptist, which he addressed to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism. "O generation of vipers! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance, and begin 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 to Abraham," Mat. iii. 7,—9. and Luke iii. 7, 8. The same distinction is in like manner manifest, Rom. iv. 12. "And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision *only*, but who also walk in the steps of that *faith* of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised."

Agreeably to this distinction between a spiritual and carnal progeny belonging to Abraham, does the whole scheme of salvation proceed. As the apostle declares that it is not the children of the *flesh* who are the children of God, so to constitute this relation in the spiritual sense, something more is necessary than mere natural descent. It was the pride, and I may add, the

ruin of the Jews, to plume themselves on their descent from Abraham the friend of God; but the gospel, as a system which stains the pride of human glory, leaves no room for any to glory on such accounts. The doctrine of human depravity, and of regeneration or the new birth, are doctrines as clearly taught, I will be bold to assert, as any contained in the Scriptures of truth. Accordingly, even upon the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, were these doctrines inculcated, and shown to be of indispensable obligation to them, as much as to the Gentiles. Whatever privileges therefore the former might enjoy above the latter, in having "the * oracles of God committed to them, and in being Israelites, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; yea, of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God over all, and blessed for ever:"—they were still both on a level as to their state before God. If the one were sinners, dead in trespasses and sins †, and needed the regenerating influences of the Spirit of the living God, the other also, when tried by their own Scriptures ‡, were no less found to be all under sin, that every mouth might be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God, to the intent that there might be one way of salvation, and but *one* only, for all men.

It remains now to be inquired into, that, since the natural descendents of Abraham were, in a manner, recognized by God as his people, as well as himself, upon what principle they were so, and to what extent the relation between God and them actually proceeded. And here I would remark, that it is exceedingly dangerous to take up things merely by their sound, and from such slight analogy, to affix specific and determined meanings

* Rom. iii. 2. ix. 4, 5. † Eph. ii. 1. ‡ Rom. iii.

to them, which, perhaps, they may not be able to bear upon a closer investigation.

I grant, indeed, that God *is* said to be the God of Abraham, and of his seed after him; but when you take this as referring to his descendents in the literal sense, is it necessary to affix a spiritual signification to this relation, and to suppose it impossible for God to be a God to any, in any other sense? We find that *Nebuchadnezzar* is styled his servant, and *Cyrus* his anointed, apparently for no other reason, than that he selected and employed them as instruments in his hand for accomplishing a particular work *. Again, as he created, upholds, and governs all things, he is hence called "the God of the whole earth;" and the psalmist, speaking of this very subject, calls all the creatures his servants †.

We have seen that there was one very important reason for which the Lord selected the seed of Abraham, which was, that the Messiah might come of his loins ‡. And might not this be also a reason for his styling himself their God in the common and general sense, without implying actually the spiritual relation? But as I am aware, that this is the grand point upon which Pedo-baptists rest the whole of their reasoning, I doubt not but they will be exceedingly averse to admit it. We hear the questions daily reiterated, Do you suppose that God would call himself the God of any one that he did not consider as his? or yet recognize as his people any who were not so in reality? To which we answer, No, most certainly; we do not suppose either the one or the other. When he styled Nebuchadnezzar his servant, the one was, even speaking most strictly, the master, and the other the servant in that particular business in which he was employed. And the same

* Jer. xxv. 9. Isa. xlv. 1. † Psal. cxix. 91. ‡ Heb. ii. 16.

may be said of Cyrus, and so of the rest. And as for the natural descendents of Abraham, it was certainly a very important matter that they should be selected as the *Progenitors* of the Lord's *Anointed*, and well meriting all the appellations which were given them. Whether therefore they be called God's peculiar People, Treasure, Inheritance, or His People simply; and he their God, Redeemer, Portion, and so on; the honour he conferred upon them, and the deliverances he wrought in their behalf, fully justify all such expressions. Besides, we do not deny that God had a people, a true, spiritual, and believing people or seed among the Jews in all ages, and even in the darkest times; and that he was the God of such, in the true spiritual sense of the word, none will deny. But the question between us and the Pedo-baptists is, whether those passages wherein the relation between God, as the God of Israel, and the people of Israel, as his people, is stated, was indeed a spiritual relation, and nothing else; or whether, besides this spiritual relation which necessarily subsisted between God and his spiritual subjects, there was also a relation which subsisted between them as a nation, which as necessarily behoved to be of a different kind.

As I freely profess myself to be of the latter opinion, and as I know that Pedo-baptists, in general, are of the former; I would briefly state, in addition to what I have said, some further reasons for my opinion, hoping at the same time, that if they do not convince them, they will in due time favour us with theirs.

One reason, therefore, is, that it does not seem to be the way of God, nor even to accord with the scheme of salvation revealed in his word, to recognize *whole nations* as his, in a spiritual sense. Upon this principle, what should we make any nation at any period to which his gospel has yet come? Take for example that very na-

tion in which our lot has been cast, and suppose, that because God, and to his name be the praise, has many spiritual and sincere worshippers in it, that therefore the whole is to be regarded as his in the same spiritual sense. Would this be any thing like the fact, when iniquity runs down our streets like a mighty torrent, and when there is so much cause for sighing and crying for the abominations that are done in the midst of us? But whether or not we, even regarded as a nation, are worse than the nation of the Jews, almost at any period, let any one read the whole history of that people, and say if he can.

But another reason why nations cannot be considered as spiritual in their national capacity, is, that it does not seem to accord with the scheme of salvation revealed in the Scriptures. Conversion to God is there held out as being absolutely necessary to constitute a person his spiritual subject. But upon this principle, so far as it regarded the home-born Jews, the mere circumstances of natural birth, and circumcision on the eighth day, are evidently substituted in the room of conversion. And as for others, whether they were voluntary sojourners among them, or slaves bought with their money, or captives taken in war, the ceremonial of circumcision alone is rendered equally efficacious. Nothing more, to give them a place in Israel, seems to have been required of them.

But this ordinance, it will be said, had a spiritual meaning in it; and beyond a doubt, whenever it was dispensed, its spiritual meaning would be explained in order that it might be preserved from generation to generation. Our views of this ordinance we have given elsewhere, nor have we any scruple in admitting that its administration would always be accompanied with suitable instructions, whenever the administrators them-

selves happened to be suitable persons. But if at any time, it had perchance fallen into the hands of such as the sons of Eli—alas! it was but sorry instruction that could have been expected.

It is not, however, with the *sense* of the ordinance that we have here so much to do, as with the *subjects* of it; the former, as we have just hinted, having been considered already, we shall say a word or two respecting the latter in this place. When we attend to its original institution as it respects the subjects, we find that it runs thus. "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised."

Now, after these words, can any who has not a particular system of his own to support, still either tenaciously or dogmatically assert, that the spirituality, even of the subjects, is the only thing which exclusively entitled *any* to this ordinance? Waving this however for argument's sake, as a necessary requisite in the case of infants of eight days old, and suppose that in *their case*, the faith of the parent was all that was required; yet still, upon this hypothesis, what would you make in the case of those bought with their money from any stranger, to whom circumcision was to be administered, as well as to the other? I know it will be said, that they never could be admitted to that, or any other ordinance, without a profession of their faith in the God of Abraham; and that, as the Israelites were commanded to extirpate idolatry from among them, they never *could* receive any, either as strangers or sojourners, nor yet as slaves, who did not acknowledge the one only living and true God. But even granting this to have been the

case, a thing which is not said however in the original institution of the ordinance, what kind of spiritual subjects was it likely to create? When a master intended to hire, or rather *purchase* servants, which was the prevailing custom in those days, it behoved to be made a stipulation in the bargain, that slaves thus transferred from one to another, should not be averse to such acknowledgments. And even supposing that in every case, such acknowledgments were obtained, still we ask, was this all that was sufficient to constitute them spiritual? or will it be supposed that, in such cases, circumcision was not administered immediately, but that time was granted that they might be instructed in due order, so that their profession might not be a matter of necessity, but of choice? But upon this hypothesis, baseless as it is in the word of God, what if some never did repent, or profess faith in the God of Israel? In that case, they would of course still be uncircumcised, and this very circumstance would have been considered by Jehovah as a breach of his covenant. See Gen. xvii. 14.

But why allow such unfounded conjectures ever to enter our minds? Beyond a doubt, if we attend to this subject simply as it stands in the word of God, without prejudice, and without particular systems of our own to support, we shall have very different views respecting it from those we have supposed. Supposition indeed will not need to have a place; and facts will be so abundant, that we need not mistake. Without thinking more lightly either of the ordinance of circumcision itself, or of the subjects to whom it was administered, than Pedo-baptists do, or at least ought to do, I confess that to me it appears, in some respects, to wear an aspect the very opposite of what they maintain. It seems to be a darling theme with them, to re-

present circumcision as the seal of God's covenant, by which they intend the covenant of grace; and to insinuate, that all to whom it was administered were *in* this covenant, at least by profession, till such time as by their ungodly walk they gave evidence to the contrary. Then they represent such as being cut off from the church of the living God; and the cases of Ishmael, and Esau, and the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness, are generally referred to.

Now against these various representations, I have several very weighty objections. I have none indeed against the idea of the covenant being the covenant of grace, provided you understand by this expression, in a general manner, the scheme of the salvation of guilty men; but if it be taken in a restricted sense, as implying no more than what usually goes under this name, I cannot acquiesce in it. Nor is this without reason. For the covenant of grace, in this restricted sense, always implies, and indeed is limited to the secret purposes of God, styled his gifts and callings, which are without repentance, and which secure beyond a doubt the eternal salvation of all its subjects *.

I object, in like manner, to that assertion, that *all to whom circumcision was administered, were in the covenant*, if by the covenant you understand *the promise which was given to Abraham respecting his seed*, and which was limited to one solitary individual in his family. Ere circumcision was at all appointed, we read that Abraham had no fewer than three hundred and eighteen trained servants able to go to war, and probably by the time that that ordinance was instituted, he might have a great many more; yet, though all these had the ordinance of circumcision administered to them, not *one* of them was in the covenant in this sense. Yea, even Ish-

* See more to this purpose, Ch. I. Sect. 1.

mael, his own son, and his sons by Keturah, and his grand-son Esau, though all sprung from the loins of Abraham, were equally utter strangers to it.

This leads us of course to a third objection, which militates against the idea of cutting off persons included in this covenant or promise, for their improper conduct. Not that I am going to deny that God actually threatened to punish, and often did punish them for their offences; but my intention is, to correct the unfounded assertion, in the case of Ishmael and Esau at least, that their *wickedness* excluded them. We read of the former, that he mocked at the weaning of Isaac, and the thing being offensive in the sight of Sarah, she requested Abraham to cast him and his mother out of his family; adding as a reason, *for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.* To which I would reply, 'No, indeed, Sarah, you say 'rightly, the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir 'with thy son; for it was respecting thy son, and him 'alone, that the promise was made. The son of the 'bond-woman had neither right nor title to the promise; 'and therefore thou doest him no injury when thou se-'curest it to its rightful heir.'

Such we conceive to be the true meaning of the account concerning Ishmael. And really had it been for his wickedness before God that he was cast out, I do not see how we can account for God's tender dealings manifested towards him and his mother, throughout the whole of this event, without either calls on the part of God, or evidence of repentance, on theirs. See Gen. xxi.

As for Esau, the next person generally brought in on this subject, what can be more express than these words of an inspired apostle—"The children not being yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose

of God according to election might stand, he saith, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated *." What is particularly noticeable in this passage is, an election and reprobation, a love and hatred, flowing from the mere good pleasure of the agent, without any consideration of moral good or evil in the objects. The best commentators are agreed, as indeed it is evident from the passage, that it was not an election or reprobation to eternal life or condemnation, which is here referred to in the case of these two brothers; but that it was the birth-right, or the right of primogeniture, the restriction of the promise in which of their lines the Messiah was to come. This was the election and reprobation, this the love and hatred; and as this was determined in God's own mind, without any regard to worthinesss or demerit in the objects themselves, yea, even before they existed, it is surprising enough that this event should be so much mistaken, and charged upon the profanity of Esau.

Here should have followed also the rejection of the sons of Abraham by Keturah; for it is an absolute truth that they were likewise separated, and *sent away from his son Isaac, while Abraham yet lived* †. But as there are no charges of an immoral nature brought against *them*, I suspect this to be the reason why Pedobaptists have not availed themselves of this occurrence.

The case of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness, is therefore the next circumstance which is had recourse to. And respecting this, we would remark, that it is not true that they were dealt with as offending members, in a church capacity; but as their sin implied in it a contempt or disregard of the promised land, so they were punished in kind, as one should say, by

* Rom. ix. 11. 13. † Gen. xxv. 6.

the declaration, that none of those who were particularly chargeable with this offence should ever see it. This we conceive to be the plain statement of the matter; and more we do not suppose it possible, without violence, to make it speak. Totally unlike to the Scripture discipline of a church, there was no room left for repentance. The people afterwards indeed saw their error, wished then to be obedient, and the threatening to be reversed, and therefore proposed to go up, and take possession of the land at once. But God had sworn in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest; and therefore, not an individual of all the six hundred thousand who were brought out of Egypt, save Caleb and Joshua, were permitted to enter therein. Their carcases, according to the divine denunciation, fell in the wilderness. They were destined to the severest punishments in that barren land. And for the accomplishment of this, forty years was the period allotted, that they might be wholly worn out and reduced to nothing, even in the common course of nature*. But when we read of such characters as those of Moses, Aaron and Miriam, Eliazar and Ithamar, Phinehas, and those who prophesied in the camp; when we see the Lord, at one time, punishing them for their sins by his fiery-flying serpents, and then again healing them by an institution he was graciously pleased to appoint; when we behold the symbol of his glorious presence still manifested in the camp; this divine oracle consulted, and responses returned; sacrifices, ablutions, and other ceremonial rites attended to; solemn worship, prayer, praise, reading and expounding of the law daily observed; Moses, and Aaron, and others, though still in the wilderness, dying in the hope of a glorious immortality: when we consider these things, we say, as so many

* If the xcth Psalm was penned by Moses, as is generally supposed, how illustrative is it of this circumstance?

incontrovertible facts, how is it possible to reconcile them with the idea that Israel, during all this time, was still in a state of offending members under church discipline, and who of course could not be enjoying the rights and privileges of the house of God; yea, nor have any well grounded hopes for an eternal state?

The circumstance of the Lord's depriving the rebellious Israelites of their enjoyment of the promised land, we grant, was a signal instance of his awful displeasure with them, and well calculated, as we are reminded in the New Testament, to make both them and us to fear, lest we should come short of that better rest which still remaineth for the people of God. But it does not any where appear to be hinted, that all the thousands who died under this displeasure of the Almighty, died under his eternal displeasure; though no less seems to be implied by the manner in which many treat the subject.

The apostle says indeed, that it was on account of their *unbelief that they could not enter in;* but as Moses, and Aaron, and others, equally conspicuous for true godliness, happen to be amongst the number of those chargeable with unbelief, their unbelief must of course be restricted to a particular thing. Moses, we are assured, believed in the Lord as his God; but, on one occasion, he did not sanctify the Lord before the people, for which offence the Lord sware that he should not enter into his rest. Yet this denunciation, affecting as it was, did not imply the everlasting exclusion of Moses from the presence of the Lord, for in every other part of Scripture, he is always spoken of as holding a very distinguished place in the world of glory.

I grant, that this must have exceedingly affected Moses, and put him much more upon his guard to beware of acting in such a manner as to come short of the eternal rest. But this seems all that was intended, for Moses

still enjoyed the spiritual loving-kindness of the Lord, notwithstanding this severe sentence, so far from being ever repealed, that it was actually executed.

And what we have said of Moses, may be said of Aaron, and Miriam, and the sons of Aaron, yea, and of every one who was spiritual among them. Though they provoked God by their unbelief, in one instance, so as to cause him sweaf even in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; yet we may be assured that by the sanctifying influences of his grace, such an affecting dispensation would be the very means of securing them to the eternal rest. It would cause them like Paul, to keep under the body, and to bring it into subjection, lest after all their pretensions to religion they should be found to be but cast-aways. Their fear of coming short of the eternal rest, must have been awfully excited by their actual privation of the temporal; and in as much as the former was of infinitely more importance than the latter, their attention to act so as to please God must have been proportionally increased.—This seems to have been the case with the church of Corinth. The apostolic rod, which was not used for their destruction but edification, wrought in them the most marvellous effects. "Behold," says the apostle, "this self-same thing, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation *at yourselves;* yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge!" 2 Cor. vii. 11 *.

* O! beautiful! Awaked from their carnal security by the former epistle and apostolic rod, as by a peal of thunder; like electrified persons they are at once roused from their dormant state! Formerly they could connive at a vile incestuist, acknowledge him as a brother, yea, even glory in him! (I suppose he must have been rich!) But now, but now they shewed themselves to be clear of that matter! Now their *indignation*, which, had they

From this event we may also learn, that God, dealing with his people as rational beings, generally speaking, adapts the measure and nature of his blessings, to the measure and nature of their faith. This seems to have been the principle in regard to many of the miracles of healing performed by our blessed Lord. "*As* your faith, *so* be it unto you," was a very common mode of address on such occasions. From the report circulated of the Lord Jesus, that he was a man mighty in word and deed, speaking as never man spoke, and healing all manner of diseases, thousands, and tens of thousands flocked to him from all quarters of the country. And all who had any sick with divers diseases, and they that were lunatic, or vexed with unclean spirits, or dumb demons, or blind, or halt, or lame, leprous, or palsied, or withered, were brought unto him, in order to be healed by him. And faith in his ability to perform such cures as they severally stood in need of, was invariably required. But though many believed in Jesus as the Saviour of the body, as able by his miraculous power completely to eradicate from thence the most inveterate diseases, yet this did not imply their invariable belief in him as the Saviour of the soul. Nay, we are certain that many, notwithstanding they obtained the former, gave the most decided evidence that they were strangers to the latter *.

remained in their former state, would have been directed against the apostle for telling them the truth, they turn all against themselves. Yea, they even *fear*, lest God should swear in his wrath, and make the dead corpses which were now among them on account of this matter, to be but emblems of what he would do in the world to come. For which cause, they *vehemently desire* above all things, to have the sanctified use of such a dispensation. And this again fires them with *zeal* for God and his cause. And never can they forget the just *revenge* they ought to take on themselves.

* As in the case of the ten lepers and others.

Now, may it not be so likewise in the case we have been considering? We have seen that it was on account of their unbelief, that they could not enter into the promised land. But as this unbelief did not extend to every principle of their faith, but was restricted to a particular instance; so, many who might afterwards have faith in this one point, and so obtain by their faith possession of what others by their unbelief lost, might yet be destitute of that faith which was necessary for the obtaining of that inheritance, of which Canaan was but a type. As the former could not enter into the earthly inheritance because of unbelief in that particular, so neither could the latter be able to enter into the heavenly inheritance, though they indeed had entered the earthly, unless their faith rose towards the contemplation and belief of higher objects than they either saw or enjoyed in the land of Canaan. Canaan earthly, was but a type or prefiguration of Canaan heavenly; and to rise from the one to the other, it was necessary to have understood and believed it in this sense.

These observations, as I should suppose, having overturned in a satisfactory manner those positions which called them forth, I would here subjoin a quotation, corroborating all we have said respecting the two-fold seed of Abraham, from that well known, pious, evangelical, impartial and masterly writer, Dr John Owen. I now well recollect of having read the passage in the Doctor's own works several years ago, when I had more leisure than I have at present for general reading on theological subjects; but it having entirely escaped my memory, till I saw it in Mr M'Lean's answers to Mr Wardlaw, I acknowledge myself a debtor to Mr M'Lean for enabling me to bring it forward on the present occasion.

'Two privileges,' says our author, 'did God grant

'unto Abraham, upon his separation to a special inte-
'rest in the old promise and covenant.

'1*st*, That, according to the flesh, he should be the
'*father of the Messiah*, the promised seed, who was the
'very life of the covenant, the fountain and cause of all
'the blessings contained in it. That this privilege was
'temporary, the thing itself doth demonstrate.

'2*dly*, Together with this, he had also another pri-
'vilege granted unto him, namely, that *his faith*, where-
'by he was personally interested in the covenant, should
'be *the pattern of the faith of the church* in all genera-
'tions; and that none should ever come to be a mem-
'ber of it, or a sharer in its blessings, but by the same
'faith that he had fixed on the seed that was in the
'promise, to be brought forth from him in the world.
'On the account of this privilege, he became the father
'of all them that believe; for they that are of faith,
'the same are the children of Abraham, Gal. iii. 7.
'Rom. iv. 11. and thus he became heir of the world,
'ver. 13. in that all that should believe throughout the
'world, being thereby implanted into the covenant
'made with him, should become his spiritual chil-
'dren.

'Answerable to this two-fold end of the separation of
'Abraham, there was a double seed allotted unto him.
'A seed according to the *flesh*, separated to the bring-
'ing forth of the Messiah according to the flesh; and
'a seed according to *the promise*, that is, such as by faith
'should have interest in the promise, or all the elect of
'God. Multitudes afterwards were of the carnal seed
'of Abraham, and of the number of the people sepa-
'rated to bring forth the Messiah in the flesh; and yet
'were not of the seed according to the promise, nor in-
'terested in the spiritual blessings of the covenant, be-
'cause they did not personally believe, as our apostle

'declares, Heb. iv. And many afterwards, who were 'not of the carnal seed of Abraham, nor interested in 'the privilege of bringing forth the Messiah in the 'flesh, were yet destined to be made his spiritual seed 'by faith, that in them he might become *heir of the* '*world*, and all nations of the earth be blessed in him.

'Now, it is evident that it is the second privilege 'and spiritual seed, wherein the church to whom the 'promises were made is founded, and whereof it doth 'consist, namely, in them who by faith are interested 'in the covenant of Abraham, whether they be of the 'natural seed or no. And herein lay the great mistake 'of the Jews of old, wherein they are followed by their 'posterity unto this day. They thought no more was 'needful to interest them in the covenant of Abraham, 'but that they be *his seed* according to the flesh; and 'they constantly pleaded the latter privilege, as the 'ground and reason of the former.

'It is true, they were the children of Abraham ac- 'cording to the flesh; but, on that account, they can 'have no other privilege than Abraham had in the flesh 'himself; and this was, as we have shewed, that he 'should be set apart as a special channel, through whose 'loins God would derive the promised seed into the 'world. The former carnal privilege of Abraham 'and his posterity, expired on the grounds before men- 'tioned; having answered its end, the ordinances of 'worship which were suited thereunto, did necessarily 'cease also; and this cast the Jews into great perplexi- 'ties, and proved the last trial that God made of them. 'For whereas both these, namely, the carnal and spiri- 'tual privileges of Abraham's covenant, had been car- 'ried on together in a mixed way for many generations,

'coming now to be separated, and a trial to be made 'who of the Jews had interest in both, who in one on-'ly; those who had only the carnal privilege of being 'children of Abraham according to the flesh, contend-'ed for a share, on that single account, in the other 'also, that is, in all the promises annexed to the cove-'nant. But the foundation of their plea was taken 'away, and the church unto which the promises be-'long, remained with them that were heirs of Abra-'ham's faith only. The church unto whom all the '*spiritual* promises belong, are only those who are heirs 'of Abraham's faith, believing as he did, and thereby 'interested in his covenant.'

Such were the sentiments of the venerable Owen, respecting the Abrahamic covenant. It is true, he was a Pedo-baptist in principle; but he is here writing without any view to that much controverted subject. And it so happens, that, in the course of the illustration of the subject he had in hand, he lays down principles which are certainly right and incontrovertible in themselves, and which to me appear utterly incompatible with the tenets which even *he himself* must have held as a Pedo-baptist. How then, it will perhaps be asked, how did it happen, that such a man as Dr Owen could be so inconsistent with himself? How could a man of his discernment and integrity act so far beside himself, as to maintain principles which did not only differ, but which were positively opposite to and destructive of each other? To which I would reply, that Dr Owen, with all his learning and ability, was yet but a *man;* and being *only* a man, he was therefore fallible, and perhaps he never brought the two ends of his system together. It is well known too, that he was a very scholastic divine, and human sys-

tems, even in his writings, are not altogether out of the question. And moreover, though he thought for himself on many subjects, I dare say, as much as any man either before or since, yet this was not the case universally. Might not popular preconceived notions therefore, partial investigations of truth, and the omission of weighing all the materials collected in an even balance, to see whether or not they would tally, account for the whole charge which can be brought against this great and good man?

But in this I speak solely for myself, without wishing to urge my opinions as a standard for my brethren. All that I ask, is liberty to think for myself, and to express myself according to my own conviction; a freedom, I am sure, I withhold from none. I must therefore say, that there is something so simple, and so satisfactory in the representation here given of the Abrahamic covenant, by Dr Owen, as really to cause me to look with a suspicious eye upon any system that would lay its votaries under a constraint to controvert it. Yea, I would go further, and plainly confess, that if I cannot hold *Pedo-baptism* and *this view of the covenant* consistently at the same time, there would appear a greater inconsistency in my view, yea, and a greater loss which would not be compensated, to give up the latter for the former, than the former for the latter. Yea, it is not merely comparative *loss* or *gain*, but absolute *right* or *wrong*, that would be here at stake. If the doctrine concerning the two seeds of Abraham here stated so clearly both by Drs Macknight and Owen from the Scriptures of truth, *must be given up*, in order to maintain *infant-baptism*, I must confess, for my part, that it would be giving up what I see to be the revealed will of God; and therefore, instead of taking so unwarrant-

able and dangerous. a step, I would abandon the other as a crazy fabric of man's own erection; for it is impossible that his blessed word can contradict itself.

We might mention several other Pedo-baptist writers as concurring with our views on this subject, when baptism is out of the question; but without taking up our time unnecessarily with references of this kind, we shall rather go on to make a few remarks, *first*, upon the two seeds in the Abrahamic covenant, and *then*, in a more general way, upon the whole. Remarks upon the *literal* seed of Abraham, will be the subject of our next section.

SECTION II.

Of the LITERAL *Seed of Abraham.*

IN speaking of this subject, I would remark in the first place, that *all* the natural descendents of Abraham were not included in the covenant which God made with him. None but *Isaac*, as we have already remarked, in the family of Abraham, and none but *Jacob* in the family of Isaac, were included in the covenant, or, which is the same thing, were children of the promise. Though Abraham was himself a believer, this could not alter the purposes of Jehovah, or endow Abraham with a

power to convey that right to any but to those for whom it was prepared. All his other descendents, yea, and the whole of his numerous household, were indeed circumcised. But this seems not to have been on the ground that they were *in* the covenant, or heirs of the promise, either spiritual or carnal, but because they were of *his family;* for it had been enjoined as a positive institution that every male in his house, seemingly independent of any other consideration, whether of his seed, or whether they were bond servants, or strangers sojourning among them, should be circumcised. Thus circumcision would mark out, as a sort of distinguishing characteristic, all who belonged to the family of Abraham. Nor was this, though apparently the literal and primary idea of the ordinance, at all inconsistent with its spiritual significations, any more than the spiritual use the apostle makes of the *games* among the ancient Greeks and Romans, when applied to divine subjects.

The natural descendents of Abraham, strictly speaking, comprise several people and nations. It was predicted that twelve princes should descend from Ishmael, and that, though his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him, yet he should dwell in the presence of all his brethren. This has accordingly come to pass; and the peculiar manners of the *Hagarenes*, *Nabathæans*, *Itureans*, *Arabs*, *Scenites*, and *Saracens*, though undesigned by themselves, bear the most evident tokens of being the descendents of this ancient patriarch, and of course afford no slender evidence to the truth of our holy religion *.

* See this subject treated at large by Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. I.

What became of his descendents by Keturah, whether they remained a people distinct by themselves, or were incorporated with other nations, I am not prepared to say *; but if they were as prolific as the other branches of his family have proved, how astonishing beyond conception has that part of the promise been accomplished, that his seed should be as the dust of the earth!

But it is with the descendents of Abraham in the line of *Isaac* and of *Jacob* that we have chiefly here to do. *They* only were the children of the promise in the strict sense of the word. And though there was a division in the family of the one, no such thing happened in the family of the other. Esau was separated from Jacob because he was not a child of the promise, and erected a kingdom by himself. But Jacob had no less than twelve sons, none of whom were excluded, but honoured to be the twelve heads, as we have observed, of the twelve tribes or families of Israel. It is the history of this people we are going to consider, and in doing so, we would *first* advert to the design of their selection, first, from the rest of the nations at large, and then from their brethren of the same family: I mean from Ishmael and Esau.

We have already remarked, that this peculiarity of *separation* first began in the calling of Abraham away from his kindred and his father's house. The people of the Chaldees, or Assyrians, among whom Abraham dwelt, were idolaters by profession. But to this, Abraham's father's family seems to have been an exception. Nahor, who was either grand-father or brother to Abra-

* Compare Gen. xxv. 1, 2, 3. with 1 Chron. i. 32, 33.

ham, for there were two of that name *, was evidently a worshipper of the true God, for the God of Abraham, subsequent to the period of his calling, is also styled the God of Nahor.

Abraham thus called, might have returned whence he came if he had chosen, for there was opportunity afforded him †; but knowing too well the designs for which he had been called, he durst not avail himself of such a circumstance, without both offending and defeating the purposes of Jehovah. He remained therefore a stranger in a strange land. And the Lord blessed him, and gave him a posterity, the destination of whom he was careful to secure before his death. Ishmael, and his sons by Keturah *he sent away while he yet lived* ‡; but all his goods and his riches, both in men-servants and maid-servants, in silver, and gold, and cattle, were committed to *Isaac* as their rightful heir; so that he was not only an heir of promises yet far distant, but the immediate possessor of the whole of his father's substance.

Of him Esau and Jacob sprung. But as it has been observed, the purpose of God designed that the elder should serve the younger, that the birth-right and the blessing should both be entailed upon Jacob, and that his family and not his brother's, should be the line to which the promises belonged.

Jacob had twelve sons, eight by the two daughters of Laban, Leah and Rachel, who were lawfully connected with him in marriage, and four by his two concubines,

* In the genealogy recorded in the xi. chap. of Gen. the first Nahor is the son of *Serug*, the second, son of *Terah*, father likewise of Abraham and Haran. It then runs thus, Serug the father of Nahor; Nahor the father of Terah, and Terah the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

† Heb. xi. 15.

‡ Gen. xxv. 6.

Bilhah and Zilpah, who were the maids of his two wives *.

The sons of Jacob, though all equally included in the promises, were not, however, all on a level, as it respected the genuineness and morality of their character. It is well known that Reuben and Judah were both guilty of incest, and that all the brethren, Benjamin excepted, *hated* poor Joseph, and "could not speak peaceably to him †," for no other reason than that, because the Lord was with him.

By a variety of singular turns of providence, they were led into Egypt—there oppressed for a long season—de-

* The following Table of Jacob's family, it is conceived, may be useful to some readers.

The children which Leah bare, were
1 Reuben,
2 Simeon,
3 Levi,
4 Judah,
9 Issachar,
10 Zebulun, and also a daughter whose name was Dinah.

Those of Rachel, were
11 Joseph,
12 Benjamin.

Those of Bilhah, *Rachel's* maid, were
5 Dan,
6 Naphtali.

Those of Zilpah, *Leah's* maid, were
7 Gad,
8 Asher.

Excepting Benjamin, whose birth is mentioned chap. xxxv. 18. the rest are all to be found in the end of the xxix. and xxx. chap. as having taken place before they left Laban. From the above statement, the reader will also perceive the propriety of that observation of old Jacob when he was a dying, "Simeon and Levi are *brethren*," &c. xlix. 5. xliii. 30.

† Gen. xxvii. 4.

livered from it—conducted through the wilderness—and at last put in possession of the promised land.

With respect to *nations*, God generally deals with them in their national capacity, even in this life; blessing or punishing them according to their deserts. It was thus that he punished the old world, the cities of the plain, overturned successively the great empires which held all the nations in subjection, threatened the destruction of Nineveh, gave the Jews a settlement in the land of Canaan, and at last cast them out. When the promise of that land was first uttered, it was intimated that four hundred years must elapse ere it could be accomplished; and this was given as a reason, that the "iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full *." But that the Jews, though professors of the worship of the only true God, might not glory over these idolatrous and wicked nations, they were positively informed, that if they should be guilty of like crimes, the land would also vomit them out, as it had done its former inhabitants †.

The way in which God has blessed or punished nations, has generally been by sending peace and plenty among them; or by visiting them with war, pestilence and famine, which overturned, depopulated, humbled, and brought them to their senses. All these instruments were employed in delivering his people from Egypt, in preserving them in the wilderness, and in giving them an establishment in the promised land.

* Gen. xv. 16.

† In illustration of this fact, see what Bishop Newton says respecting the *curse* denounced upon *Canaan*, the son of Noah, and father of the Canaanites. It refers as much to the *conduct* of that people, (for they were to be *a cursed people*) as to the *punishment* consequent thereupon, Vol. I.

The nations were so sensible that there was something more than human in all this, that even the hardened Pharaoh was forced to acknowledge the finger of God, and many of the other nations compelled to apply to their imaginary deities to protect them from the arm of the Lord of Hosts. And to keep the Israelites themselves in their proper situation, duly were they reminded that it was not by their sword, or their bow, or any might of their own, that they had obtained their victories.

Never to any nation had the Lord dealt as to that of Israel. And all that he had promised to Abraham the founder of it, he accomplished; and the accomplishment was so wonderful, as must have struck the beholders with admiration. He had indeed promised to be their God; but little did they know, perhaps, that he was to dwell among them by symbols of his visible presence, and that the ark of his testimony, which was afterwards erected, was to be such a manifestation of his power and glory. The words of Moses as applied to the Israelites shortly before their crossing of the Jordan, are astonishingly applicable to them as a nation throughout the whole of the period they were united in that capacity. "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father and he will shew thee, thy elders and they will tell thee: When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in a waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone

did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields, and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat, and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape *."

To a people thus blessed and honoured by their Maker, it was but a natural expression of their love, that they should in their turn honour and reverence him. God, by becoming their God, constituted them his people; and that they might know what kind of reverence was due to so glorious a Majesty, he promulgated to them his laws.

It has been thought by some, that the law delivered at Sinai demanded nothing more than external obedience, and that if this had been only adhered to, they should not only have secured, on the part of God, a performance of all the promises, but that he, demanding nothing more, would be perfectly satisfied with such exterior worship and obedience. To us, however, it appears in a very different light. We even question if ever such obedience was required by God at any period, or on any occasion, of any of his moral creatures. What, for instance, could be more carnal or external in its nature, than the obedience of a servant to his master? But that even this was not to be a mere bodily service, but to flow from the heart, and to be done, not as to men, but to the Lord, is abundantly evident from Scripture. And thus extensive and spiritual, and demanding nothing less than the homage of the heart, should we consider the whole of God's commandments. When, therefore, we speak of his promulgating laws,

* Deut. xxxii. 7,—14.

we do not suppose that those laws were designed to regulate merely their conduct in life, while the principles of the heart were left out of the question. To love the Lord their God with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, this was the first and great commandment. And that God has an indisputable claim upon all his intelligent, and therefore accountable creatures, for such worship and reverence, is abundantly clear from the nature of the thing. If he created and supports them, and if he had no other reason for his so doing but his own glory, this would not only be the least thing that they could do, but to act otherwise would be defeating the very end for which they were made.

But he had still a higher claim upon the people of Israel. He had not only selected them to be *his*, in the covenant he gave to Abraham, but he had delivered them from the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage. He had signified also his designs to cast out the nations before them, and to give them fields which they sowed not, vine-yards, and olive-yards, and orchards which they planted not, cities which they built not, wells which they digged not, houses filled with all good things, a land flowing with milk and honey, and in which they might drink abundantly the pure blood of the grape. Surely then, love and gratitude to so mighty a Deliverer, so kind a Benefactor, were but the natural returns of sensibility and reason, on the part of the receivers; and whether therefore they were so ingenuous as to render them or not, their duty was the same, and their guilt a thousand-fold aggravated, in case of non-performance.

Again, God was not only to be the *God* of the nation of Israel, but he was to be their *King*. As a king, he enacted laws, appointed judges to carry them into ef-

fect, and could always be consulted, and his mind obtained by the *Shechinah*, or visible representation of his glorious presence, which he had placed among them.

Thus were they as a nation more complete in themselves than any other nation of the earth. Their seeking to be conformed to others therefore, either in regard of the object of their worship, or of the power by which they were to be regulated and governed, were crimes the most heinous in their nature of which they could be guilty. This would have been in effect denying the Lord who had redeemed them, and calling in question his right to prescribe such laws and statutes, as, in his own infinite wisdom, he saw to be best. On this basis, therefore, lay the great controversy between God and that nation. As the whole world had been given to idolatry, and had changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to winged fowls, and quadrupeds, and crawling reptiles * ; the communication which Israel had with other nations, and the same natural depravity of heart, made them eager to learn their ways. Not satisfied therefore with the Lord's own appointments, *to choose him for their God and their King*, they must needs have gods of their *own invention*, and kings from among *themselves*, like the other nations of the earth.

Often, therefore, was that nation sunk into so dismal a state by their propensity to these sins, that it was difficult to find almost any true and spiritual worshippers among them. And often were their prophets commissioned with the most doleful tidings, that the Lord had seen their wickedness, and behold it was worse than Sodom ; and that therefore he would root up, and exterminate them from the land, that they might know

* Rom. i. 23.

and be confounded, and never open their mouth any more, because of their shame and their iniquity *.

Hence their repeated wars, their subjugations by other nations, and their consequent captivities. It was declared in the laws of the Lord, that *the man that doeth them should live by them*. And accordingly, when the whole nation had avouched the Lord to be their God, as he had done them to be his people, and were careful to walk in all the commandments, statutes, and ordinances which he had given them, the peace and prosperity of the whole nation in such seasons of obedience, is very remarkable. Instances of this will be found in the times of the judges, and of the pious kings of Judah; the former being careful to walk in the ways which the Lord had directed; the latter, to correct the abuses into which the people had run, and to re-establish that ancient worship from which they had swerved. And thus it was, even with the whole nation, when the administration of justice and judgment were observed by the kings, princes, and governors of the land, even though at no period can it be reasonably supposed that the heart of every individual was right with God. A fact this, which cannot be controverted, and which tends much to shew in what light Israel, as a nation, were the people of the Lord, and how the blessings he had promised were to be secured to them in their national capacity.

When thus speaking of their distinction, as a nation, from the other nations of the world, it is necessary to be observed, that they were never allowed to conform to others, but that others sojourning among them, behoved necessarily to conform to them, or else there could be no intercourse between them. Nor did such permission extend further than to individuals, and that to those

* See the whole of the prophecies of Ezekiel, particularly ch. xvi. and the prophecies in general.

only sojourning in their own land; for supposing that whole nations had wished to have formed an alliance with Israel, and to have become one with them, the people of Israel, for very important reasons which we shall presently notice, were not at liberty to form any such alliances *.

* This was an error into which some of the Jews ran however, as we learn from Josephus, Jewish Antiq. B. XIII. c. ix. § 1. and x. § 3.——We conceive the following observations on this subject by Mr Pirie, to be exceedingly just. Speaking of the difference between the Old and New Testament states of the church, he asks, wherein did it consist? 'This deserves particular attention,' he says. 'The Gentiles, we have seen, were admitted to both; 'but not on the same footing. The civil polity, or law of the 'state, did not admit Gentiles to become naturalized subjects of 'the Jewish commonwealth. Canaan, by the law, was divided 'among the tribes of Israel, according to their families, and what-'ever portion of the land was assigned by lot to a family, it was 'hereditary to that family, so that it could not be alienated, even 'to a brother Jew, but for a time; much less could it become the 'property of a stranger for ever, or even for a single day. Gen-'tiles then could only be admitted among Israel in the character 'of strangers and sojourners, incapable of being fellow-heirs, or of 'holding landed property among them. Servants they might be, 'according to the law, or they might trade with the Jews occa-'sionally, but brethren they could not be. So high, so strong was 'the wall of partition reared by the political law of that nation 'between Jews and Gentiles.'—See his Letters to Mr M'Lean, p. 92.

These observations, as we have already noticed, we conceive to be just; but we cannot avoid here detecting a principle held by Mr P. which is not only incompatible with his sentiments as given above, but which it is impossible to understand what he really means by it. He says, in the first place, that the land of Canaan was never promised nor designed for any but the believing seed of Abraham. Then he maintains, that Gentiles were never admitted into church fellowship with the Jews, but upon the profession of their faith, which, by consequence, must have entitled them to be reckoned among the number of this spiritual seed. And yet, after

But we mentioned, that in speaking of the natural seed of Abraham, to whom the promises belonged, it was necessary to distinguish, not merely between them and the other nations of the world, but between them and their brethren, who, though of the same family, had neither right nor title to the same privileges. Both Ishmael and Esau, though descendents of Abraham equally with Isaac and Jacob, were not however included among the people whom the Lord chose for himself; and therefore, being separated, they became founders of nations distinct by themselves. The Ishmaelites or Midianites, as they are sometimes called in Scripture *, or Arabs, Scenites, Saracens, &c. as we find them denominated in after times—a most numerous and powerful people, were the descendents of Ishmael. And as for Esau, he was also the founder of a nation, namely, the kingdom of Edom. The Edomites were also numerous and powerful, but though they manifested their enmity to their brethren the Israelites, they were not able to prevail; so that in them, the ancient prediction, that the elder should serve the younger, was accomplished in their final subjugation by the Israelitish arms.

And as for the other children which Abraham had by Keturah, though we cannot affirm that they became a people distinct by themselves, certain we are that they were separated from the seed to which the promise be-

all, we find him here declaring, as facts obliged him to do, that these spiritual children of Abraham were incapacitated, evidently on account of their not being related to him *according to the flesh*, though they were by *faith*, 'to hold landed property in Canaan for a single day.' Thus loose, inconsistent, inexplicable! is Mr Pirie's theory on this subject.—See the whole of his reasoning on article 4. of his 5th Letter, and indeed his work throughout.

* Gen. xxxvii. 28.

longed, even from the beginning; and we have every reason to believe that what was thus done by the sanction of Abraham, would be scrupulously adhered to by his after descendents.

In contemplating the many thousand descendents of Abraham, as many, or more perhaps, by those who were never in the covenant, by Ishmael, and Esau, and his six sons by Keturah, as by those who were in it; it is gloomy and even contradictory to think, according to the common interpretation, of the covenant, being the covenant of grace, (we mean in the sense of which we are speaking), and of course devoting to eternal perdition all who were not within its bounds, and saving, as it necessarily must do, all who were, however wicked and profligate as we have seen the lives of some of them to have been. But there are contrary facts in existence, which, when only known, would lead any reflecting mind to question all such interpretations, and all such systems as are built upon them. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, who was a Midianitish priest, doubtless was a wise and good man, and one who feared the Lord, though he was not in the line of those who were reckoned in the covenant*. It is very probable that he was

* Here, I doubt not but some will be ready to cry out—a thing not uncommon in the present day—'Did you ever hear such ignorance? He seems to be entirely unacquainted with his subject! Do *we* maintain that no person *could* be saved, but such as were in reality within the precincts of the Jewish church?' To which I would reply—*Ignorant* of what you may really *wish to be at*, I humbly confess myself to be; but of what are the *fair and legitimate consequences of your principles*, I absolutely deny that this is the case. I do not say that you assert, in so many words, that none but such as were in the Jewish church could be saved. But don't you assert, that the covenant which was given to Abraham, and to them through him, to be the *covenant of grace*? And have we not already proved, that neither Ishmael, nor Abraham's sons by Keturah, nor yet Esau, nor any of their descendents, had any

a descendent of Abraham; for as the Ishmaelites were called Midianites in the passage already alluded to *, and as the Midianites must therefore have descended, either from Ishmael, the son of Abraham by Hagar, or from Midian, one of his sons by Keturah; whichever of them it might be, it proves that Jethro, provided he was a Midian, as we know he was a priest among them, was a descendent of Abraham; and that though in the line of those excluded from that covenant in the acceptation of which we speak, he was not excluded however from what is, strictly speaking, the covenant of grace.

Job may be considered as another instance of the same truth. It is generally supposed that he lived prior to Moses; but that it was subsequent to that of Abraham, is pretty evident from the circumstance of one of Job's friends, Bildad, being a Shuhite, evidently a descendent of Shuah, one of Abraham's sons by Keturah †. Who were the progenitors of Job, is more than we can say; but certain it is, that he was not a descendent of Abraham in the line of Jacob, and consequently not a child of the promise. Nor was he a sojourner among them, but lived in the east country, in that country to which Abraham sent the sons of the concubines. Yet was he a spiritual worshipper of the God of the whole earth; and though not of that line to whom the promises were given, yet was he not ex-

right or title to that covenant, at least in this sense? Now if it be, as you maintain, the covenant of grace, and restricted to one particular branch of Abraham's descendents, and if all the others were cut off from having any interest therein, it then follows of course, that none *could* be saved but the members of the covenant:—And that it would save them infallibly, is as demonstrable as the other.

* Gen. xxxvii. 28.

† Job and his friends dwelt in *the east*, and *thither* it was that Abraham sent his children, Gen. xxv. 6.

cluded from the blessings of eternal life, which he knew and believed were to come through the Redeemer, Job xix. 25. &c.

Those descendents of Abraham who were not of the promise, carrying with them the knowledge of the true God, might preserve it among them for many generations, by which means thousands of them might be saved. Indeed, it is so gross to suppose that exclusion from the promise of God to Abraham, as it respected his family, or retention in it, was retention or exclusion from the family of God, as it respected their eternal state, that it requires very little argument in order to correct it.

This leads us again to repeat some of the reasons why Abraham's family by Isaac and Jacob appears to have been selected and distinguished, not only from the nations in general, but from the numerous branches which sprung from the same root. The distinguishing reason, we humbly apprehend, as indeed we have maintained all along, was the descent of the Messiah in that particular line; nor do we suppose that ever there would have been any such selection, had it not been for the accomplishment of this grand event. There has nothing happened similar to it, either before or since; and the event has shewn, that though the Jews have remained, even to the present times, a distinct people, yet their distinction is not of that kind which could now promote the end for which they were at first set apart. They are still distinguished as a people, it is true, but jumbled together as to tribes; so that, supposing the Messiah not to have come, it would be impossible now to distinguish him in the ordinary, and of course the most satisfactory way, when he does come. He was to come of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David; but, not to mention the predictions of the *time*, as given

by Daniel, even the family and the tribe can never be ascertained as the accomplishment of prophecy, without regular registers and records from the first to the latest period. And if the Jews in the present day have nothing of this kind to produce, it forms, in our opinion, the strongest presumption that their Messiah has indeed come, and that it is in vain for them to look for another. Still, however, not to say much of the prophecies of the *time*, we say, that down to the period in which we assert he did come, such registers and records were regularly kept; and whenever they came to fall into disuse, it was the clearest demonstration that Providence had no more to do with them, and therefore permitted them to fall to the ground, like the other peculiarities of their system; which, we say, were first appointed for the sake of bringing forth the *Messiah*, and received in general their completion by his advent.

As there are many things recorded of the natural descendents of Abraham subsequent to this era, however, so a word or two respecting these may not be improper. The Scriptures say, that they were cast off because of unbelief, but that when they shall turn to the Lord their God, and worship him with a true heart, they shall be received in again. But it is worthy to inquire, why do they still remain a distinct people? Why, though scattered through so many different nations, who differ so much from each other in customs, manners, and religion, &c. do they yet differ from them all, and are one amongst themselves, scattered as they are in all the regions of the earth? This fact is so striking, that you may know a Jew to be a Jew in any region of the world; for what they are as to their distinguishing peculiarities in any one place, that they are all the world over. Thus we consider them, though not designing it themselves, as a

witness for God—as a standing testimony to the truth of his gospel—a miracle daily performed, so to speak, in the face of the whole world, which all the cavils of scoffers and infidels will never be able to overturn. On the same score of evidence, we may refer also to the descendents of Abraham by Ishmael, the history of whom well illustrates the accuracy with which the ancient predictions concerning them have been accomplished, as has been both ably and clearly shewn by Bishop Newton on the prophecies.

Thus have we finished what we intended to say respecting the natural seed of Abraham. In our next section, we shall make a few remarks respecting his spiritual seed, or seed by faith.

SECTION III.

Of the spiritual Seed of Abraham.

As a spiritual seed is something entirely different from a natural, it is necessary, in the first place, to shew in what the difference consists, and to describe the manner in which men are constituted spiritual. Here then it ought to be observed, though indeed it be a truth generally admitted, that *all men* are naturally on a level before God. The universal depravity of human nature is a doctrine clearly taught in Scripture; and certain epithets are employed to distinguish those who are still labouring under this native depravity, from such as have been happily freed from it by the gospel of the grace of God. The two great heads of these respective bodies are distinguished from each other; the one being

styled the earthly, the other the heavenly Adam *. And in conformity to the heads, so are the members. They in like manner partake of the nature of their respective heads; for those who are of the earthly man, are earthly, and speak of the earth; and those who are of the heavenly, are heavenly, and have their conversation in heaven, whence also they look for the Saviour †.

To constitute men partakers of the first nature, it is only necessary that they be born of men; but to constitute them partakers of the second, it is necessary that they be born of God.

The change thus produced, in bringing men out of darkness into God's marvellous light, is always accompanied with a belief of the truth. As Abraham believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness; so they also believing in the same object, are hence counted Abraham's children, and their persons are justified in like manner. To be believers of the truth of God, therefore—to be born again—to be created anew in Christ Jesus—to be justified, adopted, and sanctified—are terms nearly of the same import, or inseparable the one from the other, and all relate to one and the same character. Such was the character of Abraham as a spiritual parent, and such is the character of his spiritual children.

Abraham, by the grace of God, was enabled to exercise faith in a most remarkable manner; and God, that he might put an honour upon his own work, constituted him the FATHER of all believers, from the beginning to the end of the world. This situation, in its original appointment, has something very peculiar in it. When his name was changed from Abram, which signifies a father by eminence, to Abraham, which denotes the father of a multitude, this was assigned by Jeho-

* 1 Cor. xv. 45. † John iii. 31. Phil. iii. 20.

vah as a reason, " For a Father of many nations I have made (or constituted) thee," Gen. xvii. 5. The word *father*, in this passage, should not only be connected with the change of the name, but with נתתיך, which our translators have rendered *made*, and which properly signifies to be *constituted* or *appointed to a particular thing* *. It thus denotes the sense in which Abraham was the Father of *many* nations, and distinguishes between the relation in which he stands to them, and that in which he stood to his natural posterity. The last was a relation of an ordinary kind, and denoted no more, even in Abraham, than what it does in any other human character. The first however is far otherwise. Here there is no relation by natural descent, nor any, but such as flows from a similarity of internal principles and dispositions, and which can be alone produced by the power of the truth upon the mind. Hence, that very truth which Abraham believed, is said to beget others to a belief of it likewise; and on this account, all believers being the children of faith, and begotten of the truth, Abraham is styled their father †. It is an appointment

* Macknight says, ' In the Hebrew it is *Nathattecha,—Dedi te, —I have given thee.* LXX. τεθεικα σε,---*posui te---I have placed* or *constituted thee.*' And we find Parkhurst also giving the same signification to the word, as it occurs in other places, though he has no remarks on it in this passage.

† See this connexion between Abraham as a spiritual father, and believers as his spiritual children, most explicitly stated by Paul, Gal. iii. 6, 7. " Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye, therefore, that they which are of *faith*, the same are the *children* of Abraham." That is to say, his *spiritual* children; for the apostle cannot once be supposed as denying the relation which subsisted at the same time between Abraham and his *natural* descendents. But really this is so evident, and so accordant with the principles of common sense, that we never should think of making the remark, if some in the present day were not so foolish as to call it in question.

or constitution of this kind, and not natural descent that the word מחיך evidently means.

In regard to the extent of this appointment, it is said, that he was to be made the Father of *many* nations. But that the word *many* was not to be limited, as signifying only a *part*, the apostle puts beyond a doubt, when he declares that Abraham had a promise that he should be heir of the *whole world*, Rom. iv. 13. When God devised the scheme of salvation by the mission of his Son into the world, he said, "It is but a light thing that he should redeem his people Israel, but that he should be for salvation to the ends of all the earth." He had accordingly "the heathen given him for an inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for a possession," Psal. ii. And still, in conformity to this design, Christ himself commissioned his apostles to go into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every* creature.

Thus, though salvation was *of* the Jews, blessed be God, it was at no period of the world entirely confined to them. Being free as the air we breathe, and bright as a morning without clouds, it was not to be monopolized by them, or any other who should receive it, but diffused abroad as a common interest, a gladening message sent to the nations, in which all are equally concerned, and from the blessings of which, even the most guilty and hell-deserving are not excluded.

The means of salvation, it is true, for a long season, were in a manner confined to Israel; but, in contemplating the spiritual Israel, we must extend our thoughts beyond the boundaries of that nation, and include all the true worshippers of God throughout the whole world from the beginning to the end. In the antediluvian age, there were many who believed in the promised Saviour; and *Jude** relates a prediction of Enoch,

* Chap. v. 14.

from which it appears that they even understood the doctrine of a judgment to come. Believers in that age were distinguished by several remarkable characters. It is said of Abel, that he sacrificed in faith*; and when Enos was born, that *men began to call upon the name of the Lord*†. And of *Enoch* it is said, that he walked with God; and of *Noah*, that he was a just man, and perfect in his generation‡. There is nothing in the Mosaic account of that period said respecting the number of God's spiritual worshippers; but considering that the epoch itself extended nearly to two thousand years, and that the lives of men were so exceedingly prolonged as to afford them much opportunity to propagate the truth, they would perhaps make greater advances in this respect than we are aware of. But if truth spread, we know that so did corruption, and *that* to such a degree, that a holy and righteous God, burdened, as it were, by the wickedness of his creatures, determined to cast off that burden, by destroying them all with a flood. Though Noah and his family were the only persons preserved from this dreadful catastrophe, I hardly think it probable that there were no other spiritual worshippers at that time besides him upon the earth. Be this as it may however, we may be assured that Noah, who was a preacher of righteousness to the old world, would be careful to lay the foundations of the new world, so to speak, by communicating God's purposes of grace, and of the world to come. And if Noah was not the means of bringing a goodly number to the knowledge of the truth, (considering that he lived six hundred years previous to the flood, and three hundred and fifty after it, and had that extraordinary event to refer to), he must have been one of the most

* Heb. xi. 3. † Gen. iv. 26. ‡ Gen. vi. 9.

unsuccessful preachers ever divinely commissioned. In regard to the more immediate descendents of this patriarch, it appears beyond a doubt, that the fear of the Lord was in many of them. Even many of the descendents of *Canaan*, who are generally considered as having been all devoted to perdition, in consequence of the curse pronounced upon their great predecessor Ham, even many of them appear to have been by no means destitute of this principle. Compare the genealogy of Ham, Gen. x. with what is narrated respecting Abraham and Abimelech, king of Gerar, chap. xx. And let us not forget, that at this time even God himself bears them witness, that they were not so profligate and abandoned as what is generally imagined, by saying, *their iniquity is not yet full*, chap. xv. 16.

Again, in looking into these genealogies, we find that *Uz* was a descendent of Shem, in the second generation. Now this Uz was no doubt the founder of that province or country in the east, which went by the same name, and in which the patriarch Job dwelt. But it ought to be observed, that between Uz and Abraham, there were no fewer than eight generations, and for the reason already adduced, Job must have been further distant still. Supposing it then to have been ten or twelve generations, that is to say, about the descent of Israel into Canaan—a space, I suppose, of nearly six hundred years, what views does it give us of the state of religion in these places during that period? Are we not assured that Job was a man who *feared God and eschewed evil*, and one who was exceedingly careful to train up his children to walk in the same paths? Yea, does not the whole controversy, which afterwards took place between Job and his friends, not only evince that Job was *not* solitary, but that they entered most deeply into the principles of

religion, and reasoned in a way even superior to what many are capable of doing in the present day, notwithstanding their superior advantages? From these facts, we would then observe, that if these were the effects of the oral instructions of those times, transmitted from father to son, and if these blessed effects endured for so many generations—still proceeding upon the same principle, what countless numbers might have been thus born to the Saviour.

We noticed that the worship of the true God seems also to have been preserved by that line of Shem's descendents in which Abraham came; for the God of Abraham is likewise styled the God of Nahor. And for the same purpose, we may refer to the account given in the xxivth chapter of Genesis, respecting Abraham's choosing a wife to his son. Principle, it should seem, restrained him from seeking one among the daughters of Canaan. He therefore sent to his father's house; and, lo! when his servant came and related to them his message, we find him amongst a people who knew and acknowledged the Lord, and who spoke in this manner, ver. 50. "The thing proceedeth from Jehovah; we cannot speak unto thee, good or bad;" that is, we evidently perceive the Lord's hand in it, and we cannot, we will not presume to gainsay him*. The sons of

* This statement of the piety of Abraham's ancestors, is generally thought to be contradicted by what Joshua says, chap. xxiv. 14, 15. when addressing the elders of Israel. But as he speaks not only of the strange gods which their fathers served on the other side of the flood, but *in Egypt*, and by consequence subsequent to the calling and separation of Abraham, I hardly think it fair to fix the attention *solely* on Abraham's *progenitors*, and in a general and sweeping manner, declaim against them all as superstitious and filthy idolaters. It is a fact well known, that in those days they had what were called *teraphim*, or household gods, a sort of images which were almost in every family, and which are sup-

Abraham by Keturah having been also favoured with similar privileges, they would hence carry the knowledge of the true God, and of his various transactions with Abraham, and indeed of all the instructions they had received, with them into the east, whither they were sent. We find accordingly that one of Job's friends was a Shuhite, evidently a descendent of Shuah, one of the sons of Abraham thus dispersed; and the same may be remarked concerning that excellent youth, Elihu. He was a Buzite, a descendent of Buz, son of Nahor, brother to Abraham *.

This investigation, had we time to pursue it, would not only be delightful in itself, but highly useful; as it would open to the mind one connected view of the family of God, and shew how erroneously those judge, who are for confining the whole knowledge of the true God then existing amongst men, to the Israelitish nation. But on this we cannot proceed further at present. As it is with the Israelitish nation, we have chiefly to do in our reasonings with Pedo-baptists, we must of course attend to this subject especially.

Two different principles, therefore, are here to be noticed—the one, that all the *natural* posterity of Abraham, in the line of Jacob, were actually *in* the covenant—the other, that notwithstanding this, they were not all *spiritual*; and by consequence, many who were included in the covenant, in the literal sense, had no

posed to have derived their origin from the Shechinah, or Cherubim, which the Lord himself placed at the east of the garden of Eden, Gen. iii. 24. That the use of these teraphim, may have given rise to the idolatry which afterwards ensued, I see no reason to doubt; but that they were devised with the express view of worshipping the Lord by means thereof, I should presume, is equally clear. See Gen. xxxi.

* Compare Job xxxii. 2. with Gen. xxii. 21.

manner of right to it, in the spiritual. How else can we account for these words of our Saviour, Matt. viii. 11, 12. "That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the *children of the kingdom shall be cast out?*" From which passage two things are evident; the first, that the children of the kingdom were the *Jews*. For it is between them, and the centurion who applied to Christ in behalf of his servant who was sick of the palsy, that the contrast, in respect of their faith, is here made, as we learn from verse 10th. The other circumstance equally obvious, is, the *expulsion* even of these very children of the kingdom. Now, the question comes to be, on what account were they expelled? To which we reply, it was manifestly for their want of faith. "When Jesus heard it," (the centurion's account of himself, namely), "he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come," &c. If then the Jews were really the children of the kingdom, and were, for want of faith, excluded from a participation of its blessedness in the world of glory, does not this shew that the interest they had in it here below, arose from some other source than that of personal conversion to God, and belief of the truth? *Here* they were positively "the children of the kingdom;" but *there*, "they shall be cast out into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." What then was their situation here as the children of the kingdom, when it shall fare so ill with them hereafter? Whether were they spiritual or carnal persons? Whether were they the children of the kingdom by faith in Christ Jesus, or merely by their natural descent from Abraham? It was by the last, most undoubtedly; and for want of

the other it was, that they could not be admitted into the kingdom of glory. Had they all been the spiritual seed of Abraham, as they were his natural, they would have been most assuredly as readily admitted into the kingdom of heaven and of glory, as, by being his natural seed, they were into the kingdom which God established upon earth with Abraham and his seed, till Christ should come. Hence all those, even among the Jews, who were related to Abraham, not merely in the flesh, but in the spirit, had a place assigned them, not in the kingdom of Israel, and land of Canaan only, but in that which both typified, and which was the grand and ultimate object of their faith. So we read of the thousands who were *sealed* out of every tribe, in the book of the Revelation *. These are the spiritual Israel, selected from amongst the carnal; and with these the apostle John connects "the multitude which no man can number," the redeemed "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and languages."

It is the whole family of God thus created anew in Christ Jesus, the redeemed of all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, who are the seed of Abraham in the spiritual sense of the word. And O what an exalted view of the greatness and grandeur of this family are we presented with in the Scriptures of truth! It was but a light thing for the Saviour to redeem such of his people as belonged to the Israelitish nation: he was to be for salvation even to the ends of the earth. The bulk of the Jewish nation, far from regarding the salvation even of their own souls, yet pluming themselves on account of their external privileges, hence became proud, self-conceited, censorious, and disposed to say to others, "Stand by, for we are holier than thou." On this account too, they would have no dealings with Samari-

* Chap. vii.

tans—counted sinners among the Gentiles as an unclean thing—vehemently opposed their admission into the kingdom of heaven, contradicting and blaspheming. But God, who was found of others besides them, and that not only before, but even after they had been selected to be his peculiar people, such as Jethro and Job, &c. shewed his impartiality and his readiness to accept all, in every nation, "who fear him and work righteousness," Acts x. 25. He gave therefore the severest check to the bigotry of the Jews, first, by the reception of Cornelius and his companions into the church, and afterwards by commissioning his servant Paul to go far hence among the Gentiles, and to preach the glad tidings even unto them. When the Jews rejected the doctrine of the apostles, counting themselves unworthy of eternal life, as the Scripture expresseth it, they said, "Lo! we turn to the Gentiles." To the Gentiles accordingly they did turn; travelling far hence among the nations, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And the effect was, that though some mocked and persecuted those heralds of the truth, yet others received with meekness the ingrafted word, which was able to save their souls. Disciples were converted, churches planted, ordinances instituted, apostolical instructions written, circulated, and designed to be transmitted to posterity, when their authors should be gone; so that by these, though they be dead, they yet speak.

But gloriously as the truth triumphed in the apostolic age, it was only an earnest of what should be in latter times. The first fruits of the Gentiles were then admitted into the church; but there was a whole harvest, or a *fulness* of them spoken of, to be reserved till the time appointed of the Father, and with them, his redeemed from among the tribes of Israel are also to be gathered in.

Hitherto the gospel of the kingdom has been published but partially among the nations. But we live in the triumphant expectation, that it shall yet be diffused, extending from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Yea, our hearts exult within us, in beholding the dawn of this glorious period beginning to break forth. We behold, with joy, men running to and fro throughout the whole earth, and the knowledge of the Lord encreased—the Scriptures translated into evelanguage, so that men may read, every one in his own tongue wherein he was born, the wonderful works of God.—

And it is by a steady perseverance in these means, that we can rationally expect an accomplishment of the end. Though both the latter-day glory, as it respects the nations, and the in-gathering of the Jews, be equally the subject of prophecy; yet we shall err most egregiously if we imagine, that in effecting either the one or the other, they shall differ in any thing from what they respectively were in the conversion of myriads, at the first promulgation of the gospel. The doctrines of the cross, which were a stumbling-block to the proud Jews, and foolishness to the learned Greeks, were yet the power of God unto salvation to every one that believed, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. And it is by the same means still that a people are to be made willing in the day of the Saviour's power. Truth alone is to be exhibited, and by Truth alone is he to subdue the nations, and his people under him.

Thus must a spiritual or believing seed, whether Jews or Gentiles, always have regard to the truth which begets them; and by the faith of which they live, overcome the world, worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus; by which also they are

justified, adopted, sanctified, and matured for eternal glory.

Many, it is true, in every age, profess to be of the truth, who nevertheless are not; but these exceptions make no difference in regard to the general rule, that the spiritual children of Abraham are such only as know God, and are known of him. Mere profession here makes nothing to the purpose; for if any man have not the same spirit of faith that Abraham had, he can be none of his spiritual children. The whole elect, indeed, in one sense, I mean as it regards the eternal purposes of God, are the children of God. But as it is also an undeniable truth that all men are born enemies to God, and can never be admitted into his kingdom of grace here, or of glory hereafter, till they are converted or born again; it must hence follow as a consequence, that even God himself never recognizes any, not even the elect whom he means to save, as his spiritual children, till they are such in reality. And may not this, by the way, correct all that has been said, both by Baptists and Pedo-baptists, about what has been styled *elect* infants? What meaning can there be in the term when applied to infants, to prove what either the one or the other assert? Because all the elect of God were once infants ere they could be men, does this prove that all infants are therefore elect? Or, because some of the elect may die in infancy, is this any thing like a certain data that could authorize us to say, that therefore all dying in infancy are elect? By no rules of right reasoning will it be possible to assert either, nor yet to deny as a general principle our position, that God recognizes none as his spiritual children, till they really are such. Even in the case of infants, the only case on which the contrary can be argued with any degree

of plausibility, I have no doubt but that this takes place even here. How easy is it with God, who hath immediate access to the heart and mind of all his creatures, and who can operate upon them in thousands of ways altogether unknown to us, when, in the course of his providence, the present transitory state of any one whom he means to save, should terminate the next moment after it is begun—how easy is it for him, we say, to produce a change in such a soul, and, from a mere child of Adam, create it anew in Christ Jesus? But though the Lord may do this in one, two, or a thousand instances, unless we have his word for it that he does it in every case, it would be very daring in any to assert so *.

Having thus spoken of the distinction between the carnal and spiritual seed of Abraham, and also in our two last sections treated of each separately, we shall go on in our next to make a few remarks upon the whole.

SECTION IV.

General Remarks upon the foregoing Sections.

1. If the view we have given of the distinction between the carnal and spiritual seed of Abraham be found to be correct, as I humbly conceive it will, we will thence be furnished with materials to oppose to that sentiment which some hold, namely, that there is no more but *one seed*, to-wit, the spiritual, ever recognized in the covenant with Abraham. It is granted indeed, that the apostle speaks of but *one* seed, in the

* See more on this subject, note, p. 3.

third chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians; but if we attend both to the very words he employs, and to the scope and design of the passage, we shall see but little reason, I presume, for drawing any such conclusion as we have stated.

The important, and, I may add, principal object the apostle has there in view, is to prove, in opposition to the judaizing teachers, who maintained that the Gentiles could not be saved, unless they were circumcised and observed the law of Moses, the doctrine of justification by faith. And this he does by a variety of arguments in the beginning of the chapter; and then proceeding to adduce the case of Abraham, and his spiritual children, he says, ver. 6, 7. "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith," whether Jews or Gentiles, "the same are the children of Abraham." But as this last sentence might be considered as merely an assertion without proof, the apostle goes on to shew the ground of it in that which follows. "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." On which passage, I would say nothing more than quote Dr Macknight's commentary, as I judge it to be fully in point. 'For God, the author of the Scriptures,' says he, 'having predetermined that he would justify the nations by faith, preached the good news to Abraham, before the law was given, and even before Abraham was circumcised; saying, Gen. xii. 3. *Surely in thee all the nations* of the earth *shall be blessed*, with the blessing of justification by faith. "So then," as the apostle adds, "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham," —blessed, not only with the promise of the life which

now is, but of that which is to come—with the blessings of justification and eternal life, flowing to them, though in themselves guilty and condemned criminals, as believers of the divine record.

In the next verse *, he shews that the law could not thus bless transgressors, but behoved to curse them; and then demonstrates from the Jewish Scriptures, that no man can be justified by the law in the sight of God, for those Scriptures declare, that the just by faith, and they only, shall live, ver. 11. and Hab. ii. 4. But, that none might thence complain of the dispensations of grace, as being calculated, in their nature, to frustrate good works, those very Scriptures, which declare that the just by faith shall live, declare also, ver. 12. that "though the law be not of faith, yet the man that doeth them shall live in them." If this obedience to the law, however, be that spiritual, perfect, and personal obedience, requiring us to love the Lord our God, with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, &c. where is the individual, since the fall, who hath ever conformed to these demands, or who is able, upon the fair, just, and impartial rules of moral rectitude, to expect justification in the sight of God? As none can thus perform the things contained in the law and live, the doctrine suggested by the apostle in the next verse, namely, the substitution and sacrifice of Christ in the room of the guilty, is of universal and individual concern. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, (Deut. xxi. 23.) Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

'This deliverance Christ hath wrought,' says Dr Macknight, '*that the blessing of* justification by faith, 'promised to Abraham, might come on the nations

* Ver. 10.

'through Christ Jesus, Abraham's seed, (see ver. 16.); 'and *that we* Gentiles *might receive the promised gifts of* 'the *Spirit through faith*, as the evidence of our being 'justified by faith, and of our being the sons of God.' Chap. iv. 5, 6, 7.

'*Brethren*, in confuting those who affirm that the 'blessing of the nations in Abraham, and in his seed, is 'to be accomplished by their conversion to Judaism, *I* '*speak according to the practice of men: No one setteth* 'aside, *or altereth a ratified covenant, though* it be *but* the 'covenant *of a man* *.' *No one*, that is to say, no neutral person, setteth aside or altereth a ratified covenant. This can be done by none save the contracting parties themselves; but if they should only will it, the same power (namely, their will) by which they confirmed the matter, can enable them to disannul it, but no other. And this being the case, even in human covenants, how much more must the immutability of God appear in transactions which bear his signature?

If then the promises of the covenant, concerning the nations being blessed with justification by faith, were declared and confirmed, long before the law of Moses existed, that which came after could have no power either to disannul, or to add to that of which it was not a party. To suppose this, was to mistake the very design for which the law was given, and to put it in a place it was never intended to occupy, and which must of course frustrate the very end of its appointment. *The law was not against the promises of God*, ver. 21. *It was only added* to the promises, *because of* the people's *transgression*, 19.; and appointed to serve as a pedagogue, or conductor of children, 24.—this being the state of the Jews in that dispensation, chap. iv. 1, 2, 3. *till the seed should come to whom it was promised*, chap. iii.

* Macknight in loc.

19, that all nations should be blessed in him.—And this seed being *Christ*, ver. 16. *whom God sent forth in the fulness of time, made of a woman, made under the law;* for the express purpose *of redeeming those who were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons*, ch. iv. 4, 5 :—The law having thus served its design, can have no longer place, not only over the Gentiles, of whom, properly speaking, it never had a hold, but even over the Jews, to whom it was given—They, the believers of them, being henceforth no longer servants, but sons, sons arrived at the age of majority, and freed from the government and tutorage of the law, and the elements of this world, under which, while minors, they were kept in bondage.—Such we apprehend to be the scope of the whole of the apostle's reasoning in this passage.

The expression he employs, when speaking of the *seed* of Abraham, to whom likewise the promises were made, is what we shall next attend to. As the apostle says, ver. 16. "Now, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made; he saith not, and to *seeds*, as of *many;* but as of *one*, and to thy *seed*, which is Christ;" some have asserted, that there was hence only *one* kind of seed, to-wit, the spiritual, ever recognized in the Abrahamic covenant. To make out this however, as the apostle seems to explain his own meaning by the word *Christ*, in the end of the verse, they have found it necessary to interpret that word as a collective noun in this passage, as a name here used inclusive of his people, the head being intended to express the whole body connected with it, and 1 Cor. xii. 12. is considered as a parallel passage, to which also reference is made*.

Now, all that I would say of such an interpretation, as it concerns the passage in hand, is, that it is exceed-

* See Mr Wardlaw's Lectures.

ingly forced, and very much akin to that which many give of that noted passage in the xviiith of Matthew, respecting the church. Some, because it is no part of their system to consider the brethren at large as the church, particularly in matters of discipline, have, in the most forced, arbitrary, and unnatural manner, explained the word church there as implying only the office-bearers or rulers. And I conceive this to be precisely the case here; for I do not believe that any one, unless he hath some system of his own to support by it, would ever betake himself to such an interpretation. I would therefore seriously ask, leaving such to be our judges, if the following interpretation by Dr Macknight be not only much more natural, but much more agreeable to the design of the apostle? He first says in his translation, *Now, to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He doth not say, And in seeds, as concerning many, but as concerning one person, and in thy seed, who is Christ* *. Then follows his commentary: 'Now, to Abraham were the promises made, that in 'him all the families of the earth shall be blessed; and

* '*Who is Christ*, Ὃς ἐστι Χριστος. Here the apostle, regarding the meaning rather than the form of the antecedent σπερματι, hath put the relative pronoun ὃς in the masculine gender, notwithstanding its antecedent is a neuter word. This change of the gender of the relative the apostle hath made, pursuant to his affirmation, that in the promise to bless all the nations of the earth in Abraham's seed, God spake of one person only.'—MACKNIGHT.

This sense of the passage, to me, appears both so self-evident, and so natural and easy, that I well recollect, that since ever I was capable of thinking on it in the smallest, however confused my ideas might have been in the main, this was the light in which it struck my mind. And I am decidedly of opinion now, that to give up a matter which has both reason and common sense so evidently on its side, for the arbitrary and forced interpretations of system-makers, would be as absurd as it would be ridiculous.

'to his seed, that in *it* likewise all nations, the Jews not 'excepted, shall be blessed. God doth not say, And in '*seeds*, as speaking concerning *many*, but as speaking 'concerning *one* person, he saith, And in thy *seed*; the 'nations are to be blessed, not through the whole of 'Abraham's seed, but through one of them only, who 'is Christ.'

Upon the whole, therefore, I have just to remark, that, as the apostle is not here speaking of the distinction between the carnal and spiritual seed of Abraham, but simply of the manner in which both Jews and Gentiles are incorporated into the society of the latter, to-wit, by faith in Christ Jesus; so, this is not the place to look for such distinction; nor yet can his silence on it here be justly interpreted as a denial of it altogether, particularly as it is so clearly revealed in other places.

Further, it has always struck my mind, as being exceedingly inconsistent for any to affirm, as those Pedobaptist writers certainly do, that none but the spiritual were recognized in the covenant, and yet to include all their natural offspring, who, we are sure from Scripture, are not spiritual, but carnal; being dead in trespasses and sins, and children of disobedience and of wrath, even as others, Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3. But of this more afterwards.

2. We would remark in the second place, that the want of attending to the distinction between the carnal and spiritual seed in the covenant with Abraham, has led many to adopt principles respecting the Christian dispensation, which are altogether unfounded in the Scriptures of truth. That the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, is an undeniable fact; but any system which admits depraved and corrupt men into it the moment they are born, must needs connect it with this world in the very nature of the thing. And whatever

verbal shew of spirituality, some may think proper to give it, still we know that it is a mere nonentity, if our children, be they descended of whom they may, in their natural state, are to be regarded as subjects of this spiritual kingdom.

But the connecting of the kingdoms of this world, with the kingdom of our blessed Lord, is not a subject of speculation only, but one that has been acted upon and avowed by many writers. This, this is the very principle upon which the whole of Dr Taylor's treatise on the Abrahamic covenant seems to go, regarding whole nations as Christian, after the introduction of Christianity into them. And indeed it must be owned, that this he does with a great deal more consistency with himself, though with equally as little with the Scriptures, than his brethren, who are for maintaining one part of his system, while they would deny the other.

That writer, after a long paragraph, in which he enumerates a variety of the glorious and eternal blessings of the covenant of grace, proceeds to speak thus respecting the actual reception and possession of them, by the sinful children of men *. 'And all this blessedness 'our God and Father, of his mere grace, hath bestowed 'upon us freely and generously, as he hath given us 'our breath and being, the light of the sun, and the 'common accommodations of this present life. It is an 'entailed inheritance, which, by a solemn grant, he has 'annexed to our being, and to which we have a right 'as heirs to an entailed estate; a right which, in itself, 'comes to us clear, full and certain, by the free gift of 'God; and therefore is the object of the strongest faith 'and assurance. It is our birthright, (Heb. xii. 16, 17.)

* Pag. 28. Edin. edit.

'to which we and our children were born, and to which 'we have a right as soon as born. For the gospel co- 'venant made with Abraham, was not only made with 'him, but also with his seed for ever. It was a grant 'to him and his heirs, insomuch, that every one of his 'heirs had a virtual right, at the time when the grant 'was made, and an actual right to the blessings of it, so 'soon as they came into being. And therefore his heirs 'are to be considered parties in the covenant as well as 'himself.'

He goes on to make a few reflections respecting the capacity of infants to inherit such blessings; but if the fact indeed be as has been stated, he might have saved himself the trouble, for who doubts the capacity of any one to heir an entailed inheritance? But while such reasoning may satisfy some, who, while they are considering such a subject as this, think on nothing else but how to support it, it is impossible that it can satisfy others, who wish to embrace no doctrine of Scripture in a detached manner, nor to hold any opinions which subvert one another. And, that this is the case here, is as evident as the light of day; for while Dr Taylor, and others, abettors of his system, maintain that the children of believers are born heirs of God's covenant of grace, and must, by consequence, be in a state of salvation, where is room left for many undeniable doctrines of Scripture, such as the universal depravity of human nature, the method of a sinner's acceptance with God, the necessity of faith, repentance, regeneration, or the new birth, and many others which we cannot name, far less discuss in this place? Now, while these doctrines seem all to be discarded, as it respects the children of believers at least, by the system we have mentioned, and an hereditary and consequently national Christianity, put in their place; how happily do we free our-

selves of all these inconsistencies and errors, by such a view of the subject as we have given? We are here for distinguishing between the things that differ. We are not for calling a carnal seed spiritual, neither a spiritual carnal; but are for keeping them as distinct in our system, as they are in their very nature, and as the Scriptures represent them to be.

3. Our third remark is this, that, as we can assign a most important reason why a carnal seed was ever included in God's transactions with Abraham, namely, that the Messiah might descend from him according to the flesh; and this having been accomplished, we think, and we conceive we think with a good deal of reason, that such a dispensation would cease of course. But it remains with our brethren, who maintain a very contrary doctrine, and roundly assert that a carnal seed, (if we dare venture to call the sinful and depraved offspring of believers such), has not ceased, nor ever will cease to be recognized as the Lord's peculiar people, equally under the new, as under the old dispensation; it remains with them, we say, to point out, if they are able, as important an end to be yet answered by the retention of a carnal seed, as that which it had during the time we consider it to have been in force. And perhaps it may assist them a little in this inquiry, if they would extend their investigations somewhat beyond the period of Abraham, and see whether there was any thing like a carnal seed ever recognized in the manner, till God restricted the first promise within narrower limits than ever it had been; saying to Abraham, that in him, and in his seed, meaning Christ, all the families of the earth should be blessed. With us, it is a point of no small importance, that if there was never the like before, and the reason for it then so very evident as we have seen, and if there cannot be adduced some as important and

evident reason for it still, it is altogether unlikely that a carnal seed has now any place in this covenant.

4. But again, fourthly, though we are for distinguishing between the two seeds of Abraham, and are of opinion that the carnal, having served its purpose, is now no longer retained, we are far from supposing that the covenant made with him and his seed, is therefore *dissolved*. No; by no means. That covenant, though consisting of various parts, some of which, when once fulfilled, must necessarily wax old, and vanish of course, is still an everlasting covenant in the strictest sense of the word, as it respects the spiritual seed, and the eternal inheritance which shall be made sure to that seed. This part of the covenant, is that new and better covenant, as Paul calls it, established upon better promises than the old and faulty covenant of Horeb; and wherein, God willing more abundantly to shew unto these spiritual heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. So that by two immutable things, the promise and the oath, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, the hope of an inheritance eternal in the heavens; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast; and which entereth into that which is within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec*.

Having thus treated of the persons included in the covenant, we come now to the *third* general branch of our subject—namely, the *privileges* to which they had a right by their interest therein.

* Heb. viii. 6, 7. & vi. 17,—20.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE PRIVILEGES OF THE COVENANT.

THE seed of Abraham included in the covenant, being two-fold in its nature, namely, *carnal* and *spiritual*, and the blessings two-fold likewise, they would accordingly be actually enjoyed by all within its bonds in exact correspondence to the particular situation they held therein. If spiritual, they would no doubt enjoy the rich provision of spiritual blessings therein bequeathed, in addition to the good things of this life; but if only carnal, higher enjoyments than such as were of a carnal nature they could not possess. That we may therefore preserve ourselves from confusion, we shall treat these two kinds of privileges separately.—We shall accordingly begin with the last first.

SECTION I.

Of the Privileges enjoyed by the CARNAL *Seed.*

ISAAC was the only child of promise in the family of Abraham, and Jacob in that of Isaac; but as both were evidently believers, and consequently spiritual, they are hence to be viewed in the one capacity as well as in the other. And the same observation will hold good, as it respects all the spiritual Israelites from that

period, down to the advent of the Messiah. In treating of the privileges enjoyed by the carnal seed, therefore, we do not mean to assert that all the natural descendents of Abraham, included in the promise, were *only* carnal, for this would be contradicting matter of fact; but we mean to treat of such privileges only, as either were, or might be enjoyed by such as were only carnal, not however excluding even the spiritual, as it regarded their carnal and temporal concerns.

With these views we therefore proceed; and accordingly we find that Isaac, the son of the promise in the family of Abraham, was made heir of all the carnal or earthly possessions that his father had. He gave gifts unto his other children, but Isaac succeeded in the possession as the heir.

But further, Abraham being a man devoted to God himself, a pious and religious parent and head of a family, he would of course train up his children and domestics in the fear of the Lord. In addition to a very extensive portion of the good things of this life then, his son Isaac, and indeed the whole of his household, would be blessed with the means of grace. They would enjoy early, seasonable, and wholesome instruction, recommended by all the influence of the good example of one who walked before God in a perfect way, and who performed such acts of faith and obedience, that he obtained the distinguished appellations of "The friend of God," and "The father of the faithful," throughout all generations.

And in addition still to verbal instruction and good example, they had God's ordinances instituted and dispensed among them: a kind of instruction peculiarly adapted to that period of the world, and which was therefore calculated to convey the strongest and most lively impressions of the things signified to the mind.

The rite of *sacrificing* was in use from the beginning, was retained in the Abrahamic dispensation, and was to continue till the great sacrifice should be offered up; which, by its efficacy, should so atone for the guilt of men, as to render other sacrifices unnecessary, and which, by its typical fulfilment of those shadowy representations which went before, should cause them all to vanish as the splendour of the sun does the shades of night. In this rite were they forcibly reminded of their guilt before God, of the necessity of an atonement distinct from themselves, of the awful demerit of sin in the shedding of the blood of the innocent victim, and of the inflexibility of divine justice in requiring satisfaction either from the principal or the surety.

To this glorious and instructive rite, there was added in the Abrahamic dispensation the rite of *circumcision*. This was also a significant ordinance. As it consisted in a cutting off of the foreskin of their flesh—was to be administered to every male throughout their generations—first instituted in connexion with the promise of the Messiah in the line of Abraham, and again abrogated when that promise came to be accomplished; it fitly pointed out, that the promised seed or Saviour should be a male, should for sin be cut off as a sin-offering in the flesh; and thus, marking his descent from Abraham, it would of course terminate in him for whose sake it seems alone to have been appointed. It is granted that it had a spiritual meaning, and was even "the seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham possessed in his uncircumcised state." But that even this did not exclude its relation or reference to the Saviour, is evident from the several statements in the book of Genesis. This rite was instituted when God promised particularly that Abraham should be the father of many nations, chap. xvii. But it was only through the Savi-

our that this was to take place. Abraham was to be the father of the Saviour, according to the flesh; and to the Saviour was given the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for a possession, Psal. ii. But when Abraham believed in the Lord, and had his faith counted to him for righteousness, it was the *promise of a numerous seed and heir sprung of his own loins* that he believed, as is clear from the account in the xvth of Genesis. Moreover, as this ordinance had indeed a spiritual signification, and was used frequently to denote the circumcision of the heart, every intelligent Israelite, having access to come to the knowledge of this, would hence be admonished respecting the natural depravity and wickedness of the heart, and respecting the change absolutely necessary to be produced ere they could serve God with acceptance.

Thus it was with the Israelites during the patriarchal age, till the time of Moses, whom God raised up to work deliverance for his people, and to institute a new and complete system of laws, which might regulate both their religious worship and civil polity. The laws instituted by Moses were various; but those delivered from the fiery mount, hold the most conspicuous place. The *ten commandments*, of which those precepts consist, though each of them be distinct from all the others, and are ranged under two classes, have only *one principle* running through the whole; and this principle is *love*. On this principle, therefore, rested the whole of the law of Moses; not only the ten commandments uttered by Jehovah himself, and written with his own finger on two tables of stone; but equally all the other precepts he authorized his servant to deliver. All the prophets likewise ran in the same strain; and as for the new dispensation under which we have the happiness to be placed, it has so much of this principle in-

terwoven with its various branches, that it may be emphatically denominated the *dispensation of love*. Whether, therefore, we examine the laws of the Israelites as regulating divine worship, or their conduct to one another, we find that love was the predominant principle which pervaded every part; and that the little selfish conceits and peculiarities on which men are ever apt to value themselves, and which extinguish every principle of extensive and universal benevolence, are nobly discarded, and the affections of the heart inculcated to be placed on their proper objects. As God himself is love, and as emanations of this heavenly principle are continually issuing from his throne; so he is to be loved supremely above every other object, and other objects only in proportion as they imitate and resemble him.

But though we might thus trace, in a general manner, the various privileges, both of a civil and religious nature, which must have been enjoyed by every Israelite, they will be seen to better advantage, by being brought into one view, in the case of the apostle Paul. Speaking of himself merely as a *Jew*, he says *, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh," namely, as the Judaizing teachers boasted to have by their descent from Abraham. Therefore, "if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." And again, still disputing with these false teachers, he says †. "I speak as concerning reproach," the reproach, name-

* Phil. iii. 4. † 2 Cor. xi. 21, 22.

ly, that those false accusers brought upon Paul and his companions, "as though they had been weak. Howbeit," says he, "whereinsoever any is bold (I speak foolishly) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I," &c. Their rites and privileges he yet further enumerates in the ixth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, ver. 4, 5. "Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen." They are likewise said, ch. xi. 28. "As concerning the gospel, to be enemies for the sake of the Gentiles," whose admission into the church they vehemently opposed; "but as touching the election,"—the election, I presume, of the seed of Abraham, first in the line of Isaac, and then of Jacob, to be God's peculiar people, of whom the Messiah was to come;—"to be *beloved* for the fathers' sakes*."

* That this is not an election to eternal life, or to the actual enjoyment of spiritual blessings, which are precisely the same thing, I should suppose pretty clear from this circumstance, that the elected, and consequently beloved persons, are said still to be enemies to the gospel. And, moreover, in no other passage in the whole Bible, that I recollect, is election to eternal life, or spiritual blessings, ever spoken of as running in an hereditary channel, from parents to children. And we may just add, that as the Bible does not teach it, neither do we see it verified by fact; but that a gracious and inscrutable sovereignty manifestly runs through the whole. For the sense in which the Jews are *beloved* for their fathers' sake, the ivth, vth, vith & viith chapters of the book of Deuteronomy may cast some light. And as the passage refers particularly to their dispersed state, in consequence of their sin and unbelief, perhaps the 42d verse of the xxvith chapter of Leviticus may greatly conduce to the same purpose.

These being the principal passages in which the rights and privileges of the Jewish people are enumerated, instead of going in quest of more, as they are perfectly sufficient for our purpose, we shall rather make a few reflections upon the whole.

As to the first, then, respecting what the apostle relates of himself, every thing of which the most bigoted, zealous, and enthusiastic Jew could possibly avail himself, in point of national and natural distinction, is there mentioned by the apostle. He was circumcised the eighth day; of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin; an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal for the religion and tradition of his fathers, persecuting the church; and, as touching the righteousness of the law, blameless. What had any of them more in which they could glory? What account does the apostle now make of such distinctions? And after all, what was his situation in the sight of God, in the sight of that God who looketh not on the outward appearance, but into the heart, and judgeth every man according to his real state? His privileges were indeed such as he once gloried in; but now that he had obtained juster views of the matter, he considered himself as even speaking foolishly, when he imitated others in their confident boasting, and counted all but dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. Had there been therefore any real spiritual advantage to have been obtained by a literal descent from Abraham, verily Paul, by his birth, was in a situation which bade the fairest for it. But of such a thing, he makes no mention. He only enumerates the various privileges to which all acknowledge he had a right by birth; but never once hints, as Dr Taylor and others have done, of his being a subject of God's covenant of grace by descent. Yea,

he avows the contrary. He declares elsewhere that he was *alive*, or imagined himself to be alive, as men naturally do, *without the law once; but that, when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died.* He then saw himself to be a sinner and undone, without an interest in the Saviour. And thus were all his flattering ideas about lineal descent from Abraham, and the various privileges and blessings consequent thereupon, forced to give way to his own individual concern about religion, and to that glorious truth, that God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. It seems to be undeniable indeed, that throughout all these passages, he goes upon the principle, that natural descent is nothing, and can do nothing for our eternal safety; and that personal and individual interest in the blessings of salvation, obtained through the belief of the truth, is all in all.

But while we are thus guarded respecting a subject unquestionably of the very last importance, let none imagine that we are hence for discarding all distinctions of this kind, or for undervaluing them as if not real blessings in themselves. By no means; far be it from us to do either. We know that they are blessings, and that not of an inferior nature; and would to God we could but duly appreciate them according to their real and intrinsic worth! Thousands of gold and silver, yea, kingdoms and empires, are nothing, compared with the lot of that man, be his outward condition in this world what it may, who has access to know the doctrines of his God and Saviour from his youth. This was the situation of the Israelites; and in this, we apprehend, lay the chief of their privileges. The Jews had many advantages above the Gentiles; but most of all, as the apostle says, "in having the oracles of God

committed to them *." To them also pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; and as these were all emblematical in their nature, so, when rightly understood, they were a source of the richest spiritual blessings to the soul. But to be thus acquainted with them, every Israelite surely had access. They had line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. To them God spoke at sundry times, and in divers manners, by the prophets. And those messengers of the Most High, were not only commissioned to deliver new revelations, but to expound and enforce those already given. The service of God too, in which the daily sacrifice, and the three annual feasts, the ablutions and purifications, &c. were to be punctually observed, were all calculated to convey instruction to the mind. The wise, righteous, and impartial laws likewise, which were to regulate even their civil polity, were none of the least of blessings. Wise counsels even from men, from inspired prophets and others, in whom was the fear of the Lord, would give such a tone to all their public concerns, that the blessing could not be but sensibly felt. But to have immediate access to God himself, and in all cases of emergency which proved too hard and difficult for them, to the symbols of his glorious presence which he had placed amongst them, what an additional national and church blessing was this! Deliverance from the Egyptian bondage too, their preservation in the wilderness, and their settlement in Canaan, with all the blessings connected with it, were so many privileges gratuitously bestowed upon them.

Thus have we enumerated some of the privileges of

* Rom. iii. 2.

the carnal seed of Abraham; and though several of them have been of a spiritual or religious nature, yet are they all of such a description as can be properly enough enjoyed by those who are only carnal. The mere external enjoyment of any of the blessings we have enumerated, does not necessarily imply the actual possession of internal grace; and therefore, as every Israelite had access to the former, but those only who were born again to the latter; so the distinction we are here drawing is far from being without foundation. Of this, more however in our next section.

SECTION II.

Of the Privileges enjoyed by the SPIRITUAL *Seed.*

As every Christian is a compound being, consisting not only of a body and soul, like the rest of his brethren of mankind, but of an old life derived from his connection with the first man, and of a new or spiritual life hid with Christ in God; so long therefore as these are both to be maintained, his wants, and the bountiful supply of them from the hand of a munificent God, in which consisteth his privileges, must by consequence be of a mixed nature. Though the spiritual children of Abraham are not *of* the world, yet as they are, for many wise reasons, designed for a season to be *in* the world, so while here they have a variety of bodily wants to be supplied in common with other men. God

therefore, who causes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust, hath in general decreed, for the sake of his people, that while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and summer and winter, shall never cease. To some of them indeed, he hath granted large portions of the good things of this life. So we read of Job, that he was the greatest of all the men of the east; his substance being seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; and that though, by an adverse dispensation, he was reduced to the extremest distress, and stripped of all that he had, that yet at his latter end he had double the possessions he had at the beginning. Abraham too was blessed of God, and enriched with silver, and gold, and cattle, and a very numerous household. And Jacob was so overpowered with the goodness of God in this respect, that he exclaimed, in his return to the land of his nativity, "With my *staff* I passed over this Jordan, and now—I am become *two bands*." And who does not recollect that the grandeur and magnificence of Solomon were even proverbial among the nations?

Now all this may teach us, that no rank in society, how elevated soever it may be, is absolutely incompatible with the life of God in the soul; though it still holds as a general principle, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but that God revealeth himself to babes comparatively, and hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom *.

Though God promised to Abraham, that his natural descendents should possess the land of Canaan as their

* 1 Cor. i. 26. & James ii. 5.

inheritance in this transitory state, yet as that seems only to have been for certain reasons peculiar to themselves, so, in speaking of the temporal good things which the spiritual Israel of God in general enjoy, we do not think it would be proper to take the promise of that land to Abraham and his literal descendents, for our pattern. Though the heathen, for instance, be promised to Christ for an inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for a possession, yet this is to be taken only in a spiritual sense; nor is there a promise in the whole Scriptures, on any particular portion of the world more than another, to which the converted among the nations are to resort.

It then follows that the general covenant with Noah, that "while the earth should remain, seed time, and harvest, and summer, and winter, should never cease;" and the grant, that "every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for man, even as the green herb was from the beginning *," are the only examples and patterns to which we can refer. And to these agrees the doctrine of our Saviour, when speaking of the same subject †. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is *in the field*,

* Gen. ix. 3. † Matt. vi. 25. &c.

and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ?"

If, then, religion hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come ; if in the keeping of the commandments, there is a great, a present reward ; if God even mitigates and shortens the judgments he sends upon the earth for the sake of his elect; if he would not have destroyed Sodom, had he found only ten righteous in it ; if he feed the ravens that cry unto him, and give meat in due season to all who wait upon him—surely so many demonstrations of his goodness, clearly evince that "the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy, and will not suffer those who trust in him to lack any good thing *."

But as it is not by miracle we are to expect the supply of our wants, but by the ordinary means God hath appointed, by tilling, sowing, and labouring with our hands ; we must be up and doing our duty, and be diligent in business at the same time we are fervent in spirit ; knowing that if any will not work, neither should he eat ; and that he who provideth not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel †.

Such are the temporal privileges of believers ; and we have the experience of one who says, "I have been young, and now am old ; yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." No, indeed ; the hand of the diligent maketh rich, and qualifieth him to stand before kings, and not before mean men ‡.

With respect to their *spiritual* privileges, eye hath

* James v. 11. & Psal. xxxiv. 10.

† Rom. xii. 11. & 1 Tim. v. 8.

‡ Psal. xxxvii. 25. Prov. x. 4. & xxii. 29.

not seen, nor ear heard, neither could it enter into the heart to conceive the things which God hath prepared, and revealed in the Scriptures, for them that love him. As their situation was once the most deplorable, being without God, and without Christ, and without hope in the world, so now, through grace, is it most blessed indeed, having obtained peace with God through their Lord Jesus Christ *.

We might here enumerate all the blessings of the new covenant, or covenant of grace; or, in other words, that old covenant which was formed and planned in the councils of eternity, ere the world began, and which is termed new, because it was never ratified, so to speak, save in a symbolical and typical manner, till the shedding of the *blood of Christ* in this new dispensation, which is the blood of this new and everlasting covenant. This covenant which regards the salvation of the guilty, and which is indissoluble and eternal in its nature, extends to the whole elect of God who ever have, or do, or shall exist in the world. It knows no distinction between Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, male or female. The only distinction it recognizes, is a distinction of character, alone produced by the belief of this very gracious expedient. And as it is character alone which it recognizes, so there are certain terms it applies to those who possess the character, to distinguish them from others. In plain language, devoid of all figures, they are distinguished as believers, righteous, justified, sanctified, &c. In figurative language, they are called Jews, Israelites, the circumcision, the children of God, and children of the promise, and seed of Abraham, and so on. But it is to be observed, that to these figurative expressions, there

* 1 Cor. ii. 9. Eph. ii. 12. and Rom. v. 1.

are generally annexed some qualifying phrases, which, on the one hand, shew that they are not used in the literal sense, and on the other determine the sense in which they are employed. When the term *Jew*, for instance, is employed in this spiritual sense, they are said not to be Jews *outwardly*, but *inwardly* *. *Circumcision* is distinguished in like manner, and also by a *worshipping of God in the Spirit* †. *Israel*, by the expression, that they are not *all* Israel who are *of* Israel ‡. And when they are represented as the *children of God*, or *children of the promise*, or *seed of Abraham*, then we are referred to the *typical* signification of the *birth of Isaac*, who was the child of the promise; and thus are we led to conclude, from the ivth chapter of Galatians, that his supernatural birth by the power of God typified the regeneration, or new birth, produced in the souls of men by the same power §. Thus we see in the case, both of Abraham and of Isaac, that while the one was constituted the father of all believers, the circumstances attending the birth of the other, were of such a nature, as figuratively to represent this relation, which subsists between Abraham and his spiritual children.

* Rom. ii. 28, 29. † Phil. iii. 3. ‡ Rom. ix. 6.

§ This is evidently the light in which the apostle there places the subject. It is Isaac's birth only, and Ishmael's, which are there spoken of as being typical. And the one typified the real, spiritual, and free-born people of God in all ages. The other, the state of the Jews as a nation, from the days of Abraham, or more properly speaking, of their great legislator, till the coming of Christ. And as it was the very nature of that dispensation to convince of sin, and so keep the sinner in bondage, till he found an escape by faith in the promised seed which was yet to come; the type, Ishmael, and the bond-maid, would also fitly represent the moral state of the whole human race in the sight of God.

In speaking of the *privileges* of the spiritual people of God, therefore, we ought just to pursue the same method in both dispensations; for all the blessings of the new dispensation existed in the old, under a variety of types, and shadows, and symbolical representation: so that, were we to draw a contrast between the two, we might see that in point of *clearness* indeed, *this* which succeeds, excels much *that* which went before, but that still one and the same object, and of course privilege, was common to both. It is upon this principle that the apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, proceeds; and hence we contend earnestly for that admirable unity which runs through the whole of the plan of mercy. All was designed to teach the same heavenly truths; to bring in the whole world as guilty before God; to shew that there is but one way of salvation, and one only, for Jews and Gentiles, old and young; for those born of believing parents, and those who are not; and that such as are converted in every age and nation, and *they* only, are to be reckoned in the *spiritual* sense; the children of Abraham by faith, and heirs, to whom the inheritance in this highest and most excellent sense shall undoubtedly be made sure.

For the further illustration of this subject, the reader is referred, in the *first* place, to the epistle to the Hebrews, in which he will find the subject as it regards the spiritual import of the former dispensation, explained by an infallible guide; and in the *next* place, to all the epistles addressed to the churches, in which both the present privileges and future prospects of believers are so fully detailed, that, to do justice to the subject, it would be necessary to quote a great proportion of them verbatim.

Conceiving these hints to be sufficient however for such as choose to investigate the subject for themselves: without enlarging on them therefore, we shall proceed to the consideration of the next thing proposed, which regards the permanency of the covenant in all its parts. This will accordingly be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PERMANENCY OF THE COVENANT IN ALL ITS PARTS.

In our fourth general head, we proposed to treat of the permanency of the Abrahamic covenant in all its parts; or, in other words, whether the same state of things is to remain under the Christian, as under the legal dispensation; or if they be altered, in what does the alteration consist?—what things were abrogated, and what remain?

That the same state of things as was established by the legal dispensation, or even by the covenant with Abraham, was not always to continue, is manifest from the apostles' decree in the assembly at Jerusalem; and that it was not to be wholly overturned, is equally obvious from our Lord's declaration, that he *came not to destroy the law and the prophets*. Was there therefore any alteration in this covenant, or if there were, in what did the alteration consist? Why was it continued the same till Christ came? Why was an alteration made at that period, rather than any other? In what did the alteration consist? And what was the state of things after it took place?—Answers to these important questions will form the subject of the present chapter.

We shall begin, therefore, with inquiring into the nature of the Abrahamic covenant respecting its *permanency*. In our investigation of this subject, in chap. I. we have seen that the covenant with Abraham consist-

ed of various parts; the principal of which were a carnal seed and carnal possessions, and a spiritual seed and spiritual possessions; the first relating entirely to the life which now is, the latter to that also which is to come. From its very nature then, it is evident that the carnal part, and all other things connected with it, as a dispensation, must have had but a limited duration, and behoved to terminate in time. What these things were, therefore, is surely an object worthy of regard, and the next thing in course demanding our attention.

That the covenant with Abraham was closely connected with the *law* afterwards instituted by Moses, seems clear from what the apostle says, that *it was added, on account of transgressions, till the seed came*, Gal. iii. 19. But we have already referred to a declaration of our blessed Lord, that the law and the prophets were not to be destroyed; and the apostle Paul, in that very chapter just quoted, says a great deal to prove the indissoluble nature of the Abrahamic covenant also. Are we from these two texts then to infer, that neither the *law* on the one hand, nor the *covenant* with Abraham on the other, were hence to undergo any alteration, but that both were to remain the same in *all* their parts, to the end of the world? As the epistle to the Hebrews evidently shews the very reverse, as it respects the law, and the apostolic decree, Acts xv. in abrogating *circumcision*, which, we are assured, *was not of Moses, but of the fathers* *, we have hence divine authority for an alalteration in both, and the question comes to be *in what?*

In attempting an answer to this question, I do not pretend to say that I shall be so minute as to mention every particular; being convinced that if we shall only

* John vii. 22.

have the happiness to strike the leading points, it will be perfectly sufficient for our purpose.

As the covenant with Abraham was distinguished into two principal parts, carnal and spiritual, so may the whole of the Mosaic law be distinguished into two likewise, namely, *ceremonial* and *moral*.

There seems to me therefore to be an amazing affinity between the *carnal* part of the covenant, and the *ceremonial* part of the law; and again, between the *spiritual* part of the covenant, and the *moral* part of the law; so much so, that really had they been given all at once, and not one part suspended for four hundred and thirty years after the other, it would have appeared quite consistent, and a beautiful harmony would have run through it as a whole.

If these observations be just, it will hence follow, that the corresponding parts of the law and the promise, must stand or fall together; and that, from their nature, the spiritual and moral parts must outlive the carnal and ceremonial, yea, endure when time shall be no longer; while the other, from their nature, must terminate in time.

In answer to the question therefore, which respects the *time*, when such alterations were to take place, we can with confidence say, that the ceremonial part of the law received its fulfilment in the advent and work of Messiah; and, for our part, we see no reason to entertain a doubt respecting the abrogation of the carnal part of the covenant, occurring at this period likewise. In a former part of this inquiry *, we trust we have shewn to satisfaction, that the *carnal possessions* granted to Abraham and his seed, in the covenant God made with him, as matter of fact, were taken from them at that time; so that we have now only to prove the ab-

* Chap. I. Sect. 3.

rogation of the other carnal part, that is to say, Abraham's seed according to the flesh.

We have elsewhere remarked, that there does not appear in the whole oracles of truth, another transaction similar to that in which God gave a particular portion of the earth to his church and people; and the *singularity* of his promise to Abraham respecting his seed in a particular line, seems so much a-kin to this, that we cannot but class them together. We say that this promise was *singular*, for nothing similar had ever been in the church before; and it remains a matter of dispute between Baptists and Pedo-baptists, whether any thing like it existed afterwards. It can be questioned by none, I will venture to say, that the promise to Abraham respecting *his seed*, was given at the time that the promise of the Saviour was restricted to his family. Nor was it *all* his seed, but his seed only in a certain line that had any interest therein. As the apostle therefore, in enumerating the privileges of the Jews, Rom. ix. mentions this among the rest, "whose are the fathers, and *of* whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came," does it not hence appear, that this was the principal reason why *they*, in contradistinction from all others, were selected? If it had been merely as descendents of believing parents, why not include *all the children?* If this had been all the purpose to have been gained, had not all an equal right? Yea, more, were not all on a level, as it regarded their moral situation in the sight of God? Whatever difference there might be afterwards, there was none surely when they came into being; and therefore, when we see Ishmael, and his brethren by Keturah, and Esau also, all born aliens to this promise, we are compelled to inquire after a more satisfactory solution of the matter than that afforded by the Pedo-

baptist scheme. If it had been merely to mark a privilege extending to all the children of believers, *all* certainly *might* and *would* have been included. But as this was by no means the case, this could not be the principal, if at all the design in the selection. All *might* have been included within the bonds of the covenant in the sense of Pedo-baptists, that is, as marking them out as the children of believers; but all *were not*, yea, *could not*, in the sense of being progenitors of the Saviour. And yet, that this was the sole reason why ever such a selection was made, seems demonstrable from the fact itself, that those in the line of primogeniture, and those only, were from the first included in the selection.

This being the case, it will hence follow, that whenever the design which gave rise to the selection of a certain line of Abraham's natural seed came to be accomplished, that all distinctions of this nature would terminate of course. The professed people of God would not be any longer distinguished by natural descent, even from so great a character as Abraham; but whether they were Jews or Greeks, barbarians, Scythians, bond or free, they would be all one in Christ Jesus, who had been represented as the "desire of all nations," the grand centre of union, who should unite all in himself.

Is it not truly remarkable then, that when Christ appeared according to the ancient predictions, and accomplished the great work which had been assigned him, that the Jews should have, from that period, and never before, been cast off as a nation—cast off, never again to be admitted in the same manner, or for the same purpose, but in exact conformity with the Gentiles, by personal faith in Christ Jesus? Nor can the immediate or ostensible cause of the rejection of the Jews, namely,

their wickedness and unbelief, be any argument to the contrary; for, as we have seen elsewhere *, such circumstances do not affect the purposes of Jehovah, but, mysterious and inexplicable as it may appear, it is by concatenations of such things that his purposes come to be accomplished †. Whatever therefore may be the opinion of others, to me it appears, that the events of providence are as clear and as satisfactory demonstrations of the divine decrees, as if they had been revealed declarations. The simple fact, then, that the Jews as a nation were cast off from being God's peculiar people, after the coming of Christ, but never before, and the view the New Testament gives of their restoration as being solely spiritual, and not at all of a political or carnal nature, is demonstration, in our view, perfectly sufficient, that at that period, all that was car-

* See pag. 20.

† As an additional instance to those referred to in the above note, we might select the sufferings and death of our blessed Lord. That he was to suffer and die, that the whole world might not perish, was a point clearly understood and determined from the beginning. But that this was to be accomplished through the intervention of the wickedness of men, facts have abundantly demonstrated. Though the Jews therefore, in all that they did to the immaculate Jesus, did nothing but what was determined before to be done, yet in vain do they attempt to plead the purposes, the eternal and irreversible purposes of God, as an excuse for their conduct. No, no: Well they knew, as Peter told them, that it was by wicked hands that they crucified and slew the Lord of glory. God's purposes in all such matters therefore, are one thing, and the motives influencing the conduct of men, (which conduct by the bye, and the consequences connected with it, is just the fulfilment of these purposes), are entirely another. Nor does the one in the smallest interfere with the other. Men act so freely, as if there were no such purposes, and the purposes again are by their actions so effectually accomplished, as if they had had nothing else in view.

nal in regard to the promise of the *seed*, was completely done away. The end had been obtained, the grand end, of a Saviour being born into the world; and as this could not be effected but by means of carnal descent, so whenever it came to be accomplished, such an appointment was no longer necessary.

Nor was this at all singular, or any thing more than what took place in like manner with the whole class of those subjects with which we consider this to have been related. *Sacrifices* for instance ceased in like manner, when the great Sacrifice was offered up. *Circumcision* too seems to have answered its purpose, and likewise terminated in him. The whole of the ceremonial law, and all the laws regulating the Jewish polity, likewise fell of course. In short, there remained nothing which had the mark of the then existing system; but being all *shadows of good things to come*, so whenever the substance prefigured by them appeared, the shadows flew away. All that was in its nature mutable, or had answered its particular end, underwent a change at that period; and all that was immutable, or of a general and spiritual nature, remained, and will remain to the end of the world.

Thus the gospel, which was before preached to Abraham, was the same as that preached to us still; and the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul or make it of none effect. Yea, not only the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, but the moral precepts of the law, are likewise still standing in their full force. And in this respect was not the law, any more than the promise, ever destroyed. Love to God and our neighbour was what the law required; and this, so far from being abrogated in the new dispensation, is rather enforced by additional motives. Yea, we may go further. We may assert with the greatest em-

phasis, that neither of these could possibly *be* abrogated. If sinners were saved under that dispensation at all, it must have been by the intervention of the gospel. The way of life to them and to us could not be different; it could not be two, but one only. And therefore, to abrogate what was life to them, would be death to us. And as for the law of love, it was morally impossible that it could ever cease. Creatures must first cease to be, before they can lawfully cease to love. To love God and our neighbour, is the very end of our being. And to be chargeable with defects here, as all certainly are, is calculated to make us feel the necessity of these glad tidings, which hold forth pardon even to the guilty.

Having thus given our views with regard to the things which are mutable, and those which are permanent in the covenant, we shall go on in our next chapter to treat of the distinguishing and characteristic marks of the two dispensations, in order to ascertain whether the latter in any respects resembles the former, in what may be denominated its *carnal parts*, whether regarding *ordinances* or *subjects*.

CHAPTER V.

THE DISTINGUISHING AND CHARACTERISTIC MARKS OF THE FORMER AND LATTER DISPENSATIONS.

In our investigations of the present subject, our thoughts will necessarily be turned to a variety of particulars. Though the period of the former dispensation might, in one respect, comprise all the intervening space between the giving of the first promise, till the coming of the Messiah, we shall consider it rather from the time of Abraham down to the same period; and this, both because the dispute we have in view chiefly rests here, and because several new regulations were formed at that time, and afterwards by Moses, as parts of the same system, but which together formed a system in many respects peculiar to itself.

We have already remarked, that from the whole genius of the gospel, and particularly from the epistle to the Hebrews, it evidently appears that the two dispensations are exceedingly different. They differ particularly in respect of their subjects, and in the manner in which they were respectively established. As these are both very important matters, they require to be treated somewhat particularly.

1. First then, they differ in respect of their *subjects*. The subjects of the one, as we have already seen, being both spiritual and carnal; those of the other, as we are going immediately to prove, being *only* spiritual.

2. Secondly, in the manner in which they were respectively established, they also differ. The one employing carnal weapons for its establishment and support; the other wholly disclaiming these, and making use of such only as are spiritual.

Nor need any be astonished at these things, for these different methods were not at all inconsistent with the respective dispensations in which they were employed, but rather admirably adapted for attaining the particular end each had in view.

As to the first point of difference, namely, in respect of their *subjects*, we have already fully proved the one to consist of a carnal, as well as a spiritual part, and we are now going to shew how different from this it is in the other.

When Jesus Christ sent forth his apostles to bring all nations into subjection under him, the only means he authorized them to make use of, was the preaching of his word. Indeed, if he had intended any other method, he would have needed to have employed both more numerous, and more powerful instruments; but, according to the design he had in view, the instruments he employed, though in themselves but earthen vessels, yet possessing the treasures of his miraculous grace, they were quite sufficient to effect all that he intended.

John the baptist, the harbinger of Jesus Christ, and first great prophet of this new dispensation, began by preaching that "the kingdom, or reign of heaven, was at hand." And when the Lord Jesus Christ sent out his servants, first the seventy, and afterwards the twelve, they were commissioned to testify the same thing.

Thus, a new dispensation was about to be erected, distinguished by the name of *the kingdom*, or *reign of heaven*. It was this which excited the attention of the

Jews to the doctrine of the baptist, and which caused them to send priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to inquire of him who he was*. The Jews in general were expecting the Saviour about this time; and therefore, John, by publishing this new doctrine, as the proto-herald of this new dispensation, had all eyes fixed upon him.

But the difference between the former and the latter dispensations, is more directly alluded to, on a certain occasion, by our Lord himself. In that memorable interview he had with Pilate, the Roman governor, at the mock trial which preceded his crucifixion, he gave it as his dying declaration, that his kingdom was not of this world. "If my kingdom," says he, "were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but *now* is my kingdom not from hence." John xviii. 36. Now, from this passage two things are evident. 1. That the kingdoms of this world defend themselves by means suited to their nature. Because they are carnal, they employ carnal weapons in their defence—they fight. And again, it is plain from the particle *now*, that Christ once had a kingdom partaking of this nature; but he declares that it is so no longer. "*Now* is my kingdom not from hence." It has now nothing carnal or worldly in its *origin*. Its *establishment* and *support* too, differ most materially from what they once were. To extend his empire, so to speak, in former times, fire and sword were necessary, because a wicked nation was to be punished, and worldly possessions were to be obtained, both of which objects were equally the subject of divine prediction, and well accorded with the use of such means. But now in the latter times, these things have no longer any place. There are no *national* judgments, should the nations

* John i. 19.

among whom they sojourn be even as wicked as Sodom, to be inflicted by Christians. Like their blessed Master, they are not to cry, nor make a noise, nor cause their voice to be heard, in a tumultuous manner, in the streets. Truth alone must now wage the war, and truth alone must win the victory. Nor must the heralds of truth employ weapons that are carnal, even for the preservation of their very life. A man may lawfully give skin for skin, yea, all that he hath, for the preservation of his life in other matters; but here, if he cannot escape by simple flight—the only means prescribed in God's word—he must e'en *die* for it. Nor need any be afraid that this would have a tendency to diminish the number of the godly. So far from this, it would certainly increase them. It is now a spiritual kingdom of which they are subjects, and truth and error are at issue; and what could give truth such a glorious conquest, as to see it so firmly maintained, that its advocates, rather than relinquish it, should regard not their very lives unto the death? The composed, patient, and firm death of a holy martyr for the truth, is a more powerful sermon in its defence, than all he could have said in the course of a long life. And that thousands should be converted by such means, is no way wonderful. It is only an effect consequent upon its cause.

Upon this principle then, the blood of Christians themselves may have been shed; but all the blood shed by such as have professed the Christian name, might well have been spared. Poor deluded mortals! what have they been all along dallying about? If they had attended to this one declaration of their professed Master, "My kingdom is not of this world," &c. they would have at once perceived that it could never be de-

fended by such means. Yea, it is evident that such means employed by Christians, under pretence either of extending or defending the religion of Jesus Christ, is doing more in support of error, than it is well possible to express. It is giving the most false view of the kingdom of heaven and of truth, and withal, causing people to imagine that they either are subjects, or can become subjects of this kingdom short of real conversion.

Now, this is another thing most clearly insisted on in this new dispensation. When our Lord was conversing with Nicodemus, he told him expressly, that unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. And why? Because this kingdom, unlike to the kingdoms of the earth, cometh not with observation. It is spiritual, and not an object of the organs of sight. They who are born again, as our Saviour says, and they only, can perceive it, and are admitted into it as subjects thereof. Nor can we sufficiently admire the precision of the apostle John on this subject, when speaking even of the Jews. "Christ," says he, "came to his own," to-wit the Jews, "but his own received him not." As there was the exception of a few however, he therefore declares, that "to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." From our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, we find the doctrine of regeneration, or the new birth, taught; here we see it exemplified. But exemplified in whom? In sinners of the Gentiles, and such as were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise? No: but in members and heirs of both. In a people who were born to God, Ezek. xvi. 20. and who were God's pecu-

* John iii.

liar treasure in a certain sense; a nation whom he chose in preference to every other nation of the earth, to dwell among them, and to be their God. It is to such a people that our Saviour declares the necessity of a new birth, and of such a people that John narrates the fact as having taken place. Does not this therefore teach us, that though *all* Israel were acknowledged as subjects of the *former* dispensation, yet only those who were subjects of the new birth, were, or could be, subjects of the *latter* dispensation? All the Jews were Christ's own when he came to them. They were acknowledged by him as his people. They were even brethren according to the flesh. But he came to establish a new dispensation in many respects different from that which had formerly existed, particularly in its subjects; and therefore, even members of the former could not be members of this, unless they came by their membership in the regularly established plan, which is conversion.

I am fully aware, that the same is asserted to have been the case even in the former dispensation. But never, that I recollect, have I yet seen any proofs produced. On the contrary, can it be denied that all Israel, on account of their mere natural birth, were considered by the Lord as his people? In that passage already alluded to, Ezek. xvi. 20. a passage by the way for which some Pedo-baptists profess very much regard*, is it not positively asserted that even the idolatrous Israelites, the only persons of whom the prophet is there speaking, had born sons and daughters to the Lord? If then they were born to the Lord, by what birth were they his? Or were they recognized as the Lord's, because they were the children of believing parents? On the

* Dr Taylor, and the editors of the last edition of course, as we may well presume from their *advertisement* prefixed to it.

contrary, were not their fathers idolaters, and that of the vilest kind, "who sacrificed their children to be devoured," and caused them to "pass through the fire," to their gods* ? And is it not equally evident, that *mere natural* birth is the only birth here spoken of; and that being Israelites, and belonging to that nation whom the Lord had chosen for himself, they were therefore said to be born to him ?

The same thing is also asserted respecting such Gentiles as were admitted into the fellowship of the Jews. It is said that they also were never admitted upon any other ground, than by a profession of faith in the God of Israel. But here too, instead of adducing direct proof, or yet fair deductions from reasoning, the whole is made to rest in the wide field of conjecture. Those who wish to see this subject more fully illustrated, may turn to what we have said in Ch. II. Sect. 1. And to our remarks there, we would just add in this place, that though it is a truth that the Lord always had some spiritual worshippers in Israel, and even always required such to worship him; yet it does not appear, *first*, from the case of a whole natural seed being acknowledged by him as his people, and *secondly*, from the case of strangers and slaves being obliged, in the first instance, to incorporate themselves with that nation by the rite of circumcision, in order to their having intercourse with them, that any thing more was required to give them a place in Israel. It is true, they were to abandon idolatry and every other species of will-worship. But it is equally true, that even while they were most deeply sunk in these, God still acknowledged them as his people †. And this he did not merely for one or two gene-

* See ver. 21.

† See the xvith of Ezekiel, to which we have already referred,

rations, but for many; even till Christ came and overturned the whole of this part of that dispensation, by establishing another upon very different principles.

Whether therefore it can be shewn, that conversion was indispensably required in order to membership in the former dispensation, we are confident it is so in order to membership in the latter; and we even question whether a single instance can be produced in all the New Testament, in which this did not appear as the first thing which gave any title to a place in this new dispensation. We have seen it required in our Lord's doctrine to Nicodemus. We have seen it exemplified in the Jews who believed on him. And when we turn to the Gentiles, do we not see the apostles preaching, men converted, churches planted, and all proceeding upon the same plan of apparent personal religion, in order to personal interest in this new dispensation? The case of infants, which is the only exception to this that can be alleged, will be considered immediately. But here we are going only upon positive facts; and facts, as logicians used to say, are stubborn things.

Thus then do the two dispensations differ most essentially in respect of their subjects, and of the manner in which their subjects were constituted. By mere natural descent, sons and daughters were born to the Lord, in the former dispensation; but in the latter, they are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. In that dispensation, aliens could be added, as in the case of slaves, for instance, at the entire will of a master, if he chose to purchase them; but in this, none can be admitted, neither bond nor free, who do not appear themselves to be

and, amongst other passages which might be mentioned, the 1st of Isaiah.

made free from the law of sin and death *. In this there may be counterfeits, it is granted, and many may seek admission into it, who are utter strangers to an inward change of heart; but such exceptions do not alter the case, that such a change is required, nor do they by any means form a paramount to what we find in the other dispensation. Here there is still a profession, though not real, a personal and voluntary profession too; but there, all personal and voluntary considerations seem to have been out of the question, and the subjects bound to submit to it upon the pain of non-employment. A stranger could not sojourn in Israel, unless he became a Jew, nor a Gentile of any nation perform even the work of a menial servant, without becoming altogether such as themselves. Now, that there is nothing like either of these in this new dispensation, we solemnly aver. The case of infants then, as we have just hinted, may be considered as the only exception, and on this important subject we shall therefore say a few words.

We stated formerly, that it appears to us, that the sole reason why children were included in the former dispensation, was for the sake of bringing forth the Messiah in a particular line. And this we think evident from the circumstance, that children never appear to have been connected with the church of God in the same manner, prior to the days of Abraham. That the race of the godly should in general run in the line from parents to children, rather than in any other, is not to be wondered at; for the means of instruction which they indisputably enjoy above others, are surely adapted to such an end †. But though such a circumstance might

* Rom. viii. 1, 2.

† This brings to our recollection one of the most strange reflections of a certain Pedo-baptist, who has appeared repeatedly as

have existed prior to the days of Abraham, and may continue to exist even to the end of the world, yet this does not necessarily prove that the same state of things existed through the whole of this threefold period, nor yet does it prove, that because children were evidently included in the second or Abrahamic period, that they were therefore inherently endowed with those gracious principles we have seen to be indispensably necessary, ere any can become subjects of the spiritual kingdom.

If we are therefore correct in our idea, as it respects the reason why children had a place in the dispensation established with Abraham, we think it should follow of course, that if there cannot be some as important reason for the retention of children in the church still, it would certainly terminate when the object for which it was chiefly appointed came to be accomplished. And what tends the more to confirm us in this, is the mighty difference between the two dispensations, as to their parti-

a champion in that cause, ever we remember of hearing." As if Baptists denied the *possibility* of their children's conversion, even when grown up, or as if they were to be converted by any other means than through the instrumentality of the *truth*, it was insinuated, in the case of Mr Carey's sons, the Baptist missionary in India, that *upon his own principles, there was an exception from the general rule.* What is the general rule then? Is it that none of the children of Baptists, but all the children of Pedo-baptists, shall be saved? Or is it, that any of them shall be saved by any other means than by a personal belief of the truth? Now, if it be alone through the instrumentality of the truth, who enjoy such advantages of being early instructed in the knowledge of it, as the children of believers, whether they be Baptists or Pedo-baptists? But if the Lord should be pleased in either case to bless the means of his own appointment, of the training up our children in his fear, could it with any propriety be said that it was a deviation from the general rule? If it be his rule to save only by means of the truth, in our humble opinion, it proves the very reverse.

cular nature and design. The former was adapted in every respect to answer the end we have assigned to it. An *infant* seed was absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of the promise, as it respected the Saviour. The *land of Canaan* too, as a place in which they might all be kept together, and separated at the same time from all other nations, was no less important; while *circumcision*, a rite to be observed throughout their generations, fitly marked them out as the descendents of Abraham. And thus when Messiah should appear, there would be no occasion for saying respecting other nations, Lo, here is Christ, or lo, there; but these circumcised descendents of Abraham were the people *of* whom, and the land of Palestine the particular spot *where* the Messiah should be born.

The question then comes to be, is there any thing like this to be obtained by the retention of infants in the church still? We do not suppose that any, even the most strenuous advocates for the subject, will venture to say so.* Indeed, all that they propose by their scheme, amounts to very little. They will tell you, when you come to get your children baptized, '*that* the 'blessing of Abraham is come upon the Gentiles—that 'as God promised to be a God to him and to his seed, 'so believers under the gospel have the same promise, 'that he will be likewise a God to them and to their 'seed—that by the administering of this ordinance, we 'do not consider any spiritual blessing to be conferred 'on our children, or yet that it is an indication of their 'final salvation, *for they were not all Israel, who are of 'Israel;* but we only administer the token of the cove-'nant, leaving it with God to make it manifest who 'among them shall be accounted for the seed*.'

* As a further corroboration of the very small amount of the Pedo-baptist principles, even in their own account, see the sum and

This, to the best of our recollection, is the substance of all that is proposed. And though we have many things to say of such a representation in general, we will not enter upon them in this place, but shall content ourselves with making a few remarks, by way of contrast, between this and the former dispensation.

We here say nothing concerning the *sense* in which we conceive the blessing of Abraham to be come upon the Gentiles; but as our brethren suppose it to consist in some nameless or particular blessings, (I am at a loss to say which), conferred upon the offspring of Gentile believers, we shall take them upon this score, to see whether the copy they draw in any measure corresponds with the original.

1. Was then the promise to Abraham, that God would be a God to him and to his seed, suspended upon such a superficial and slim foundation, as our brethren would here represent the connexion between them and their seed? I say *superficial* and *slim*, for certainly such any system must be, which proposes to go no further than the merely administering of the token of the covenant to such as it does not consider at the same time really to be heirs thereof. Such a connexion between believers and their seed, seems to me to amount to nothing; because, notwithstanding the seal with which it

substance of the whole that Philalethes maintains, comprised in the following sentence of Crito. 'I now add,' says Crito, 'the 'better city was promised to the fleshly seed of Abraham; not as 'merely such, but as also elect, these enjoyed it.' 'Here I beg 'to remark,' says Philalethes, 'that this quotation comprehends 'the whole of the hypothesis which I hold, and *as* I hold it.' And again, at the bottom of the next page, 'I am happy to find, 'however, that he now admits that the better city was promised 'to the fleshly seed of Abraham, though not to all of them, which 'is all that I contend for.' *Edin. Evang. Mag.* vol. iii. pp. 280. &c.

is contended for, the whole is made to depend, even according to their own account, on the future conversion of the individuals. If it were a matter only verified in fact, that when they grow up, all the natural offspring of believers were invariably believers likewise, then such a token might with propriety be administered to them, even while in infancy; for in this case, it would truly be a previous token of what should afterwards come to pass. But when only a part of this posterity, even suppose it to be the greater part, are converted by the truth, would it not be better to suspend the administration of the token, till the proper subjects had manifested themselves?

But it will be said, was it not thus administered to the posterity of Abraham? True. But we have already proved that the circumstances of Abraham differed very materially from those of any other believer, at any other period of the world. Abraham had two kinds of seed. He was not to have a carnal seed only, of whom the blessed Saviour was to descend, but he was constituted or appointed to be the *father* of believers of all nations and ages. It was therefore necessary, from the nature of the thing, to include with himself Abraham's natural seed, and to distinguish them from the other nations by such a mark as circumcision was, till the design of their appointment came to be accomplished. But the other species of Abraham's seed was differently propagated. And it is worthy of remark that *He*, and not believers themselves, throughout the succeeding periods of the church, is accounted the *father*. We Gentiles may be the *children* of Abraham in the spiritual sense, but in the same way that he was, we never can be *fathers*. If we literally have children, then we are *their* fathers, the same as Abraham was the father of his natural posterity; but though we may

ourselves be the children of Abraham in the spiritual sense, *by faith in Christ Jesus*, this does not however constitute our natural offspring his children likewise, unless they come to it by the same means.

We then take it, that the confounding of these two things, distinct enough, most certainly, in themselves, has been the cause of all the difficulties and errors on this subject. We plainly perceive that our brethren have not adverted to the fallacy of their own reasoning. Had they only attended to the distinction between Abraham's two kinds of seed, and inquired with themselves to *which* of them do we Gentiles belong? they would not only have been led into a very different kind of meditation from what it appears they have gone into, but all the direful consequences of disputing and wrangling with one another would have been happily prevented. Oh! when I reflect on the dismally controversial spirit which has been manifested on this subject, and perceive how easily matters might have been adjusted and brought to an amicable settlement, even by attention to this *single point*, though I could claim a victory, (a weakness, alas! too, too common among controversial writers), I could rather feel disposed to shed a tear. I trust that it is not for victory, but for truth that I write; and instead of triumphing over my brethren, it is rather my wish, if they have erred, in the spirit of meekness to do all that in me lies, to make the error manifest by the exhibition of truth, leaving it to themselves, in the presence of Him who shall judge the quick and the dead, which they shall choose.

The answer our brethren would have been led to give to the above question, would have served as a key to unlock the whole business. The question was—To which of the seeds do we Gentiles belong? And the answer they would have given it, 'Not to the natural,

'but to the spiritual, provided we be possessed of the 'faith of Abraham.' But then they would have reasoned, 'If we ourselves be connected with Abraham 'only by faith, and if this connexion be only spiritual 'and not carnal, how comes it to pass that our children, 'who are connected with us only by carnal descent, can 'be included in a covenant which we ourselves had no 'right to till we believed? Would not this,' they would say, 'be connecting carnal things with spiritual, and to 'the spiritual part of Abraham's seed, joining a carnal 'part, which is perfectly incompatible with the nature 'of the thing *?"

2. Thus it is evident, in the second place, that to follow up the contrast, it would be connecting together spiritual and carnal subjects, which by no means accords with the nature and genius of the gospel. The two, it is undeniable, were blended in the former dispensation; but in the latter, a carnal subject, as such, has no place.

3. And lastly, therefore, if the contrast were completed, it would connect the kingdom of our Lord with the kingdoms of this world, and lay a foundation for Christianizing whole nations, as all must be sensible that this was the case in Israel. National Christianity indeed has its very basis in the now obsolete Jewish system; and in vain do those calling themselves dissenters, attempt to invalidate one part of this unscriptural state of things now under the gospel, while they uphold another. The connecting of carnal members with the spiritual body of Christ, which consists of believers of his word, may indeed have several gradations, but one and the same spirit must necessarily be operating in all. If you admit the propriety of now receiving a carnal infant seed into the church, upon the ground that circumcision was administered to such in the former

* See Introduction.

dispensation, you pave the way, by the most natural transition, drawn from the same source, to a complete national establishment. Indeed the one seems, from its very nature, to stand or fall with the other. Yet I know from experience, that it is possible to conceive them to be so completely distinct, that the one may be viewed as the grand source of innumerable errors, while the other may be considered as perfectly scriptural. A little closer reflection however, would soon convince people of their mistake. National Christianity! Though this may sound exceedingly harsh in the ears of some people, what is it in the main but the principles of Pedo-baptists carried to their proper length? That remarkable saying of our Lord, "My kingdom is not of this world," and that description of its subjects, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*," are not more opposed by the one than by the other. The one lays the foundation, and the other only erects the edifice upon that which was laid. Supposing the scheme of Pedo-baptists but once to exist, through process of time what were they to do, to be consistent with themselves, with all those whom they baptized, or Christianized as many call it, in their youth, but to acknowledge them as Christians, and to give them a place in the church afterwards? Was not this the plan in Israel? Accordingly this, so far as I know, is denied by none of them. But many of our brethren, who indeed are aware of the fallacy of religious establishments, yet blind to that system (the Pedo-baptist, to-wit) which seems to have given rise to these, appear to be so far convinced of the error of their principles however, as to hold them upon a new, but sorry are we to say, more inconsistent ground. Like their brethren in the establishment, they look upon the whole natural off-

* John xvii. 16.

spring of believers to be *in* the covenant, quoting continually that passage, "The promise is to you, and to your children," &c. But then, as it is part of their system to maintain purity of communion, by exercising the discipline of God's house towards offending members, they represent this interest which their children have in the covenant, as limited in point of duration entirely to the period of infancy and youth. If they give evidence that they are unbelievers when they grow up, they are to be separated from the church; but by all means, they are always to be considered as members of it in the first instance *. Nay, some even go the length of regarding them spiritual members, on account of the alleged connection between them and their parents; and with a good deal of sectarian glee, they will run over such passages as these, "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.—If the root be holy, so are the branches," &c. as if they quoted

* I have had frequently occasion to notice inconsistencies; and though I set out with the full determination to offend none whom I ought to love in the bowels of Christian affection, yet I am apprehensive that this will hardly be the case, on account of the plain speech I am necessitated to employ. An inconsistency yet more glaring than any we have noticed, here presents itself to view. Notwithstanding all the ado which our brethren make about their children's interest in the covenant and place in the church, we have never yet seen them reduce their principles to practice, and really regard them as church members, as they pretend. 'As members,' they say, 'both of God's covenant and 'church, they are initiated by baptism;' but more we never hear of them, perhaps for six, eight, ten, twelve, twenty or thirty years, and of many of them, alas! never at all. And when we do hear of any of them, it is only in the way of applying for *admission into the church*, though it is said they were members of it from the first. Do not facts then demonstrate, and that more strongly than any thing which can be said to the contrary, what even their own sentiments are in regard to this matter?

them in their precise and undeniable sense, and as if no other more scriptural and consistent interpretation could be given of them *.

That these are the express views of some Pedo-baptists, could be easily shewn from their writings; and we surely may be credited when we say, that we have found many since our thoughts have been turned to this subject, maintaining precisely the same in conversation. But personal attacks we wish to deal in as little as possible, for which reason we decline referring to particular instances, and would affectionately beseech our brethren, if any of them may think it meet still to defend their principles, to go upon something of the same plan, and favour us with one connected view of them, without much regard to personalities in the affair. If Pedo-baptism after all be really scriptural, (a thing which we must say, however, we have no present grounds for supposing), we are convinced that it can be made clear, and the grievous and wearisome controversy brought to a happy termination, only by such means.

Let us now examine, by the unerring standard of truth, the principles at which we have hinted. We have given it as our decided opinion, that the most consistent view in which we think Pedo-baptist principles can be held, is that of national Christianity. It is thus that Dr Taylor treats the subject, and it must be confessed, that he is on this account pretty consistent with himself, though by no means is he consistent with the truth. For while that single saying of the faithful and true Witness has a place in our Bibles, "My kingdom is not of this world," we defy all who were ever born of

* See Chap. VII. Sect. I. where these passages, amongst others of a similar nature, are explained.

women, to prove that Christianity established by human laws is *scriptural.*

But what kind of subterfuge is this, to which our brethren have betaken themselves, since because they dare not from principle maintain the validity of religious establishments, to limit the duration of children's interest in the covenant, if so be they ever had such an interest? and what are the grounds on which they propose to proceed? It is, as we have before noticed, from the circumstance of the rejection of Ishmael and Esau, and the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness. If these cases however are the only grounds upon which such a sentiment has been formed, we trust that a candid attention to what we have already said on this subject, (Chap. II. Sect. 1.) will shew that it is founded entirely on mistake. From what we have there said, our readers will perceive, we trust, that these instances do not give the smallest countenance to such a theory. They will perceive, that the cases of Ishmael and Esau can make nothing for the point; they having been separated from the seed to which the promise belonged, not so much on account of the want of faith, as on account of the want of a joint interest with that seed. And, moreover, as the Lord had also purposes with them of a very special and important nature, so, for the accomplishment of these alone, had there been no other reason, it was necessary that such a separation should have taken place. But, that they do not afford even the shadow of a reason for the scheme here proposed, is evident to me, first, from the circumstance of Ishmael being declared, and that at a considerable period previous to the alleged cause of his rejection, that *he should not be heir with the child who should be born;* and secondly, from the fate of Esau, in this particular, being de-

termined before he was *born*, or *had yet done good or evil*, as the Scripture expresseth it. And as to the case of the unbelieving Israelites, we consider it equally inapplicable as the other; but without saying any thing further upon it here, we would refer wholly to what we have said in the place above alluded to. Before we dismiss this subject entirely, however, we shall say a few things respecting it in a general way.

We suppose then, that our brethren, who are for maintaining the scheme of cutting off such children from the church as give no evidence of their faith, will not scruple to re-admit them upon a subsequent profession. Will it not puzzle them however to demonstrate, that this was the tenor upon which the separation of Ishmael and Esau proceeded? Yea, is it not clear, on the contrary, that the Scriptures represent their separation as having taken place, in order to effect a particular purpose, and as having been all at once irreversible and final? They were separated, never again to be joined with the children of the promise, neither they, nor their descendents as a body, in all their successive generations. Upon the same tenor went also the denunciation against the Israelites in the wilderness. It was likewise irreversible and final. There was no place given for repentance; so that, of all the thousands in Israel, none entered the promised land, save Caleb and Joshua, the only exceptions against whom the threatening had not gone forth.

It is evident too, that the laws instituted by Moses respecting disobedient and froward children, partook more of the nature of civil legislation, than of church discipline. It is a principle inseparable from the latter, that excommunication is never to be had recourse to in the first instance, nor even at all, till the culprit has

been otherwise dealt with; and it is only after he has stood out against all salutary means of reformation, that he is to be cast out and accounted a heathen man and a publican. And even after all, should he manifest signs of repentance in any subsequent period, the brethren are bound to receive him with cordial affection, confirming their love to such a soul, lest he should be swallowed up of over much sorrow *. Nor further than simple excommunication does this power permit them to go. Though the subject whom they separate may speak all manner of evil against them, and persecute them with all the fury of a yet unconverted Saul, they are notwithstanding to bear it patiently, and not to touch a hair of his head to do him hurt, though they should have it in their power. They are on no account, as the disciples of Christ, and acting in his service, either individually or in their collective capacity, to shed the blood of any one. How different in all these respects, however, was the former dispensation? It was not mere exclusion, but positive *death*, which was the penalty annexed to many crimes. Israel was not only a church, but a nation distinct by itself; and as Jehovah was their king and head, so he gave them laws by which their conduct might be regulated, even in their national capacity. Church and state, under that dispensation, were blended; and as it is impossible to maintain the peace and order of a state without corporeal punishments, so there were laws enacting these, that those who wrought confusion in Israel might be set forth as examples of warning to their brethren. But never, except by the *apostolic rod*, which was peculiar to the apostolic character and age, were there any corporeal punishments inflicted in the new dispensation. And it is worthy of remark, that what punishments they did inflict, were

* 2 Cor. ii. 7.

not of an ordinary, but of an extraordinary and miraculous nature. Had they been of the former description, and to have been employed in succeeding ages, this would have been interfering with the magisterial power, and never could have been practised, save upon Old Testament principles, by the union of church and state, which would have completely contradicted that saying of our blessed Lord, that *his kingdom is not of this world.*

The only other distinction between the two dispensations we have yet to notice, is that respecting the *ordinances.* Concerning these, considerable opposition has existed between Baptists and Pedo-baptists; the first alleging the ordinances of the former dispensation to be wholly of a carnal nature, as those of the latter to be entirely spiritual. While the second, on the contrary, maintain, and I confess with a good deal of apparent reason, that there appears as much carnality, if you take the ordinances simply by themselves, in the latter dispensation as in the former. It is urged, and for my part I conceive conclusively, that there appears to be as little spirituality in the mere act of immersing in water, the only mode Baptists aver the ordinance can be attended to, as in the administration of circumcision.

Without therefore pretending to be arbiters in this affair, we would simply give our own views of the subject. Considering the admirable unity of design which pervades the whole of divine revelation, we would be far from supposing any of the ordinances, under either dispensation, though they may indeed possess characters peculiar to themselves, not to inculcate the same general truths. In speaking of the ordinance of circumcision, though we considered it as having a reference to some things which were not strictly spiritual, we were however far from excluding spiritual significations from

it altogether. And the same may be said of all the other ordinances under the law. The *paschal lamb* was primarily designed to commemorate the deliverance vouchsafed to Israel, in the preservation of their first-born, when all the first-born of the Egyptians were slain by the destroying angel. But it pointed to Christ, as a secondary and higher signification, through the shedding of whose blood deliverance from sin and wrath should be obtained. The laws respecting *cleanness* and *uncleanness*, while they primarily pointed out the ceremonial qualifications of such as could be admitted into the worship of God, signified in a spiritual sense that moral purity, which is the delight of Him who desireth truth in the inward part, and which is expressed in the New Testament by a worshipping of God in the spirit. The sins of *ignorance* fitly pointed out those daily shortcomings of the glory of God, with which his most spiritual and devoted servants were chargeable, and the necessity of continually having recourse, for pardon and forgiveness, to the blood of Jesus, who is the Mediator of the new covenant, the advocate within the veil, exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto his people, even the remission of their sins. The *brazen serpent* erected in the wilderness, evidently for a purpose, which suited the local situation of Israel at the time; though its existence was to be but temporary, it yet had a higher meaning, and pointed to the elevation of Christ upon his cross, by faith in whose blood men should be delivered from a worse evil than the sting of the fiery-flying serpents, even from sin and its infinite consequences, as an infinite evil, committed against such an infinitely great, holy, and munificent Being as God is. The law of the *lepers* too, and in one word, all the other institutions which can be named, while they had evidently a first or primary signification, had also a se-

condary or higher purport, in which consisted their very life and essence, and without attention to which they can never be rightly understood.

With respect to the ordinances of the New Testament, it must be confessed they are both fewer in number, and vastly more simple than those of the Old. Concerning the mere outward observance of them however, there can be little or no difference between the one and the other. The *water* used in baptism is but water still, and the ceremony either of immersing or sprinkling, has nothing spiritual in it, further than the subjects attending to it really extend their ideas beyond the merely sensible objects, to those spiritual and heavenly realities, which it is impossible can be the objects of sense. The *bread* and *wine* in the ordinance of the supper too, and the bodily exercise of receiving them, have nothing spiritual in themselves, nor differ in the least, except in the imagination of those who admit the wild doctrine of transubstantiation, from bread and wine eaten and drunken on any other occasion. It is only the mind which reflects on the grand design of its institution, and which sees through these sensible objects the body and blood of its dying Saviour, that gives any title to the idea of spirituality in the smallest. These ordinances may be attended to, as, alas! we have too much reason for supposing that they actually *are*, and that in an unexceptionable and scriptural manner, while there is no proper or scriptural idea of their signification and import present to the mind. Though the ordinances of the New Testament are alleged to be spiritual, as those of the Old carnal, yet the one does not secure spirituality in the observer more than the other. The allegation, indeed, we consider to be entirely false. No where does it appear to have any foundation either in Scripture or reason. As to their mere outward ob-

servance, all the ordinances appear to be on a level, and there were none of them destitute of a spiritual import, when the mind reflecting was truly under the influence of spiritual impressions.

The only difference between the one class of ordinances and the other therefore, I confess myself able to perceive, is simply the following. Those of the Old Testament, while they had a spiritual and heavenly import, referred also to something which was temporal and earthly. But those of the New, have only *one* kind of reference, and this being spiritual in its nature, so the overlooking of this distinction has no doubt led to all the mistakes which have been committed on this subject. It ought to be remarked too, that it is only the objects of the *reference* or things *signified*, and not those which are sensible, in which the spirituality of these ordinances consists.

We mentioned *paucity* and *simplicity* as being distinguishing characteristics between the Old and New Testament ordinances. The former dispensation was burdened with an innumerable train of ordinances; this, properly speaking, has but two only. Nor is the simplicity of these less to be admired, than their paucity of number. There is but one element used in baptism. In the ordinance of the supper there are two employed. Nor are the things signified by them either numerous or hard to be understood. Like circumcision, baptism is an initiatory ordinance; and as, in the New Testament, we have no example of its being administered to any who did not profess faith in the Saviour, we hence infer that it ought always to be joined with believing; and that one of its principal designs is, to afford an opportunity to the newly converted, to declare publicly their persuasion of the truths of which they have recently come to the knowledge. Thus while baptism,

being an initiating ordinance, and to be attended to but once, would usher the converted, so to speak, into the fellowship of the godly; the ordinance of the supper, by its frequent repetition, was designed to represent the nourishment, the heavenly and spiritual nourishment, which the soul continually requires.

As we are thus speaking of ordinances, we shall here make the following remark in regard to them, with which we shall close the chapter. It is a practice very common with many to represent some ordinances of the New Testament as having come in the *room* of those of the Old, to which they are supposed to bear some resemblance; but with what propriety we are not so very certain. Not that we have any objection to the thing, as running counter with any part of our system, but as it does not appear to be a self-evident truth, and no good reasons have we ever heard assigned for it, it is hence the least thing we can do, to inquire into a matter of this kind for ourselves.

Baptism is said to have come in the room of circumcision, and our Lord's supper in that of the passover. But if it be examined into, it will perhaps be found, that the analogy between circumcision, as it was practised among the Israelites, and baptism, as practised by the apostles and first Christians, is exceedingly faint, consisting in but *one* point of agreement, that is to say, in being dispensed but once to the individual, in which respect it cannot be denied that it was in both initiatory. In regard to the other, that Christ is styled our passover who was slain for us, is a truth which none can question; but that he is so styled in relation to the ordinance of the supper, and that this ordinance was instituted with a view to substitute the other, is a very different point. The passover was appointed when there was a certain primary object to be obtain-

ed by it; but only in a secondary, though it must be allowed, higher sense, it pointed to the Saviour. But to what else did the daily sacrifice, and all the oblations which they offered from year to year, on the great day of atonement, allude? To say then that the Lord's supper is a substitute for the passover, merely because that ordinance, in its secondary signification, had a reference to Christ's death, and because this was instituted at the last passover Christ ate with his disciples, would it not be equally as correct to say, that it is a substitute for the daily sacrifices, and particularly for that which was offered on the great day of atonement, which all terminated, properly speaking, at the same time? The fact however seems plainly to be, that each had a particular end of its own to serve, and was accordingly instituted for this particular purpose, without any idea of the one resuming its place, and the other stepping in to make up the deficiency. The ordinance of the supper is represented in Scripture neither as a *sacrament*, whereby allegiance is supposed to be sworn to the Saviour, nor yet as a substitute in the place of the passover, or any other institution under the law; but simply as a commemoration of the great event of Christ's pouring out his soul unto death, and, in a spiritual sense, giving his body to be meat, and his blood to be drink for the souls of his people.

We come now to the *sixth* thing proposed, which was to wind up our arguments, with a view, if possible, to bring the subject of dispute between Baptists and Pedo-baptists to an issue. This will accordingly be the subject of our next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

CONTAINING PARTICULAR REASONINGS WITH THE PEDO-BAPTISTS, AND UNDENIABLE CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FOREGOING ILLUSTRATIONS.

As our object in the chapter upon which we are entering will be, as far as in us lies, to bring the subject of dispute between Baptists and Pedo-baptists to a termination, it will be necessary, in the first place, briefly to advert to the different views, even among Pedo-baptists, in regard to this subject. Though most of them hold their principles on the grounds of the Abrahamic covenant, yet this is not the case with all. There are other considerations at least which many of them blend with these, and which together, in their estimation, afford authority quite sufficient for the baptizing of their infants. We have heard many reason, not only upon the principle that the promise is to believers and their children, but upon the principle of their having conveyed to their children a depraved and polluted nature; and that therefore it is their duty, not only to profess faith in the merits of the Saviour for themselves, but for their children also, whom they dedicate to him by baptism, praying, that as they have been the means of conveying to them *their* corrupt nature, so he may be graciously pleased to deliver them from its direful consequences, by washing and purifying them according to

the merits of *His* blood. And here it is to be observed, that it is not so much divine authority, as the supposed propriety of the thing, upon which these go. There are others, however, who from viewing the subject differently, represent the divine authority for it, as being all in all. These are such as hold it upon the ground of the Abrahamic covenant. The first thing they do, is to make out this covenant to be the covenant of grace; and then finding that God made it not only with Abraham, but with his seed, a part of which is Gentile believers, they hence infer that their seed also is in this connected with themselves. The manner in which they reason concerning this matter, is as follows. If, under the former dispensation, children were circumcised in consequence of their connection with believing Abraham, we know that now, under the gospel, the blessing of Abraham is come upon the Gentiles; and therefore, whosoever among them believe, have a right to baptism for their children, the same as believing Abraham had a right to circumcision for his. Nay, further, the covenant, they say, is the covenant of grace, and was made, not only with Abraham personally, but with his seed likewise; and therefore his seed, being positively parties in the covenant, have an indisputable right to the administration of its token. There are others again, who endeavour to support the propriety of infant baptism, though it must be owned in conjunction with the above, from the circumstance of *families* and *households* being mentioned as baptized in the New Testament.

Though these different points be completely distinct in themselves, we do not mean to say that each has its respective abettors, and that we are hence to look for Pedo-baptists only of the first, or second, or third description. On the contrary, the whole of the above

sentiments, so far as we know, are held indiscriminately by most. And how often does it happen, that, in arguing, when they are beat out of one of them, they will betake themselves to either or both of the other. We mention them however as distinct topics, which in reality they are, and under which may be comprehended the most of the arguments which have been brought in support of infant-baptism.

According to this plan, we shall therefore prosecute our subject.

1. First then let us attend to the argument for Pedobaptism, drawn from the fact, that we convey to our children a depraved and polluted nature. It may be observed, that the whole of this argument proceeds rather in the plaintive strain, or in what logicians term a *petitio principii*, than in going in quest of proof. It reasons rather upon the propriety of the thing, than attempts to bring, *thus saith the Lord*, for the practice it urges. And upon this ground we must therefore take it up.

I own that there is something exceedingly soothing, and at the same time plausible, in the topic we are going to consider. But as all that can be reasonably looked for, can be obtained independently of baptism, and above all, as the practice here objected to is calculated in its nature, not only to give the most false representation of that ordinance, but of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom in general; so we must proceed in unfolding *these* evils, without suffering our minds to be biassed by collateral considerations, which at best can make nothing at all for the point in support of which they are brought forward.

We say, that all that can be reasonably looked for in regard to our children, can be obtained independently of baptism. That they are *conceived in sin*, and *brought*

forth in iniquity, is a truth demonstrable from Scripture, and we are glad when we have it in our power so cordially to unite with those who have adopted opinions different from ours; and what we would here particularly request of them is, that they would see to it, that no part of their system shall ever be allowed to clash with such a clearly revealed truth, and a truth moreover, which they themselves acknowledge.

Now having acknowledged (themselves being believers) that they convey to their children a depraved and corrupt nature, what do they expect by dedicating them to the Lord by baptism? That it is the duty of believing parents to pray for their children, none will deny; and even as soon as born, they may lawfully lay their case before the Lord, particularly beseeching him, that as, through their instrumentality, they not only exist, but exist as depraved and guilty creatures, so, through the instrumentality of the blood of his own dear Son, they may be made partakers of the divine nature. It is their duty to pray, not only that they may be preserved in the world, if the will of God be so; but as no human being, even in the last stages of provocation and of guilt, much less any only entering upon life, is absolutely excluded from the hope of the gospel, they may hence pray for all those spiritual blessings to their souls, for which the gospel makes such a rich provision. And what more than this, pray, do our brethren propose by baptizing them? Do they mean to assert, that by the administration of this ordinance, some spiritual blessing or other is really communicated to their children? If there be any thing more than simply praying for these spiritual good things, we hope they will be kind enough to specify them; but if nothing more be intended, why attend to *this* ordinance more than any other, merely to offer up prayers?

But from several considerations it appears, that some spiritual blessings seem really to be expected by our brethren, in attending to this ordinance; for how often do we hear them urging the capacity of children to receive such blessings; and withal, quoting the circumstance every now and then of our Lord taking up children in his arms, and blessing them? Does not this tacitly evince, that they expect something of a similar nature to take place in respect to their children in baptism? But as it has been well remarked, it was not *all* children whom the Saviour thus blessed; and really till this be shewn, exceptions of this nature prove nothing. And besides, as the Scriptures do not annex a blessing necessarily with the observance of this ordinance, may not a blessing be as reasonably expected, yea, and a great deal more so, in answer to *the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous*, than by the attending to any ordinance, be what it may, particularly if that ordinance is not scriptural?

We also hinted, that this practice *gives a false representation of the ordinance itself.* In the conclusion of the immediately preceding chapter, we have shewn that the particular design of it appears to be a public avowal, made by the newly converted, of their conviction of the truths of the Christian doctrine. And in proof of this, we refer to all the cases in the New Testament, where baptism is spoken of, and we are convinced that it will be found that this was the tenor upon which they invariably proceeded.

If then this was the plan upon which the apostles and first Christians went, we ask, is it still the same upon which our brethren mean to go, in baptizing their infants? They will perhaps reply, that though it was thus most unquestionably in respect to the newly converted themselves, *yet along with themselves their house-*

holds were also baptized, and it is after their example that we mean to walk. That even this, however, is not so decisive as many may suppose, we hope immediately to shew; but here we shall take them up upon another principle. Can it then be denied, that the baptizing of infants, even though it be upon the faith of their parents, is still giving a false representation of the ordinance, if the administration of the ordinance, as may be seen in the New Testament, be always connected with a personal profession of faith in the subjects? At the very utmost, in this case it would be profession only by proxy. And supposing it once to become general, then indeed you may still have the form of the ordinance attended to, but you never in any case could have the spirit of it preserved, *which consists in a public avowal of truths which one believes for himself;* for it would be always the parent who would make the profession, and that by way of substitute for the principal; but never the principal, I mean in the administration of this ordinance, for himself. Thus would we, in fact, divest it of one of its most beautiful, instructive, and important designs, and substitute in its place what, strictly speaking, is but a mere shadow; for, is it not demonstrative, that among the thousands baptized in infancy, all said to be baptized into the faith, not a tenth part seem ever to know any thing of it, or to be at all concerned about it when they come to years? Nay, considering that the few who do come to the knowledge of the truth, come to it not on account of their being baptized, but on account of subsequent instructions with which they have been favoured, and which were blessed for the very end of causing them to know and believe; considering these things, we say, and along with these, the fact of what the lives of all of them without exception, previous to the period of their conversion, were, without God, and

without Christ, and without hope in the world, and that notwithstanding they were baptized in their infancy—considering these things, is it not a pity, we say, that their baptism was not suspended till it could be done in that instructive and significant way, in which it appears to have been practised by the apostles of our blessed Lord; that is to say, when they came newly to the knowledge of the truth? To baptize in any other situation, whether it be *infants*, or *persons who have had a long standing in the Christian faith*, taking the Scripture alone, and not the authority of men for our rule, seems equally foreign from the original design of the ordinance.

We mentioned moreover, that the practice we are here considering, *gives a most false representation of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom in general.* We need hardly repeat that saying of the faithful and true Witness, in which he testifies to Pilate, that *his kingdom is not of this world.* As little need we mention, we presume, that description of his subjects, that they are not of the world, even as He was not of the world, these being truths absolutely undeniable. But the question is, what station do our brethren assign to the children whom they baptize? Are they members of the church, or are they not? If they should assert the former, declaring, as we know many do, that they are members, then we ask, of what description? Whether are they spiritual or carnal? And as we know, from their own confession, that they convey to their offspring a depraved and polluted nature, and which is indeed the topic we are now discoursing on, we are assured that *carnal* they must acknowledge them to be. But if this be admitted, (as how can it be denied, but upon the principle of insanity alone?) then we boldly aver, that they are

not subjects of that kingdom, which Christ declares not to be of this world; for the subjects of this kingdom are not of the world, they are not carnal but spiritual; and if we thus prove a carnal offspring not to belong to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, we leave our brethren to make it out, if they can, that they are really members of his spiritual body, his church. Or upon the principle that they are spiritual, a position which some go even the length to assert, would it be too much to say, that if this really be the case, then no further change is necessary—they are spiritual—they are passed from death unto life. Conversion in their case is absolutely unnecessary. God has inverted his own constitution; so that it is no longer that which is born of the flesh is flesh, but positively that which is born of the flesh is spirit; and depraved and corrupt men no longer beget children in their own likeness, with inclinations and propensities similar to their own, but in the likeness of God, consisting in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness. And what would be the greatest wonder of all this, is, that notwithstanding they would thus bear the image of God at the first, that image would soon change into the likeness of men; and after such a marvellous retrograde change had been produced, they in their turn, though now in the likeness of man, would beget children in the likeness of God. And so it would go on, from one generation to another, beginning fairly and ending foully, the change always in the retrograde form, and always the perfect antipode of the Scripture.

But having said enough throughout the whole of this inquiry to expose this truly inconsistent and unscriptural idea, we shall not insist on it further here, but shall proceed in our next section to the consideration of the

second argument we noticed, which respects the propriety, and even scriptural nature, as it is asserted, of infant baptism, drawn from the Abrahamic covenant.

SECTION II.

Of the argument for Pedo-baptism, drawn from the Abrahamic covenant.

This, it may be remarked, is the grand source whence the practice of infant baptism seems to have arisen. It goes entirely upon the principle of circumcision having been administered to infants under the former dispensation. The only way, of course, in which it can be satisfactorily proved either to be right or wrong, is, by tracing the connexion between the two dispensations, in order to ascertain whether they resemble each other in this particular point. This, accordingly, has been our principal aim in all that we have hitherto said. With what success therefore we have exposed fallacious reasoning, must alone be judged of by a candid perusal of all that we have advanced. To bring the argument, however, if possible, to a termination, we would here attend to it in direct form.

It is asserted by Pedo-baptists, that the covenant made with Abraham, is the covenant of grace; that by consequence, it was not liable to change like the old covenant of Sinai; that it was made, not only with Abraham personally, but likewise with his seed; that they were parties in the covenant as well as himself; and

that, as Gentile believers are the seed of Abraham in the spiritual sense, so they have not only a right to the token of the covenant, which they say is baptism, for themselves, but likewise for their children, the same as believing Abraham had a right to circumcision for himself and children.

These are the topics in which we conceive the whole of the argument to consist, and which we shall therefore attend to in due order.

With respect to the Abrahamic covenant's being the covenant of grace, we have already given our mind fully on this point; and instead of making any repetitions here, we would refer in general to what we have said in the preceding pages. We have noticed that that covenant consisted of a mixed nature; and that really, according to any idea we have of the covenant of grace, this made with Abraham, cannot, strictly speaking, be considered such and nothing else.

The constituent parts of the Abrahamic covenant, we have seen to be exceedingly dissimilar in their nature, including blessings, as well as subjects, not only of a spiritual, but of a carnal description; for which cause we decidedly differ from Pedo-baptists, not only in regard to their views of the covenant, but also in regard to their representation of its subjects. To make out but *one* description of subjects, has been the principal attempt of that great champion of their system, Mr Pirie; and I find that my worthy friend, Mr Wardlaw, has thought proper to tread in the same steps. But, in my opinion, all that they have said on the subject, had been completely overturned by what even a brother of their own, I mean the great Dr Owen, published to the world long before either of them existed. The passage I allude to, may be seen in our 87th page, &c. The Doctor, though a Pedo-baptist, is not speaking there of bap-

tism, but combating Jewish errors; and it so happens, whether from the similarity between these, and those into which our brethren have run, that in effecting his purpose in regard to the former, he also cuts up the latter, root and branch. We have also shewn that Dr Macknight does the same. And from what both these eminent divines have clearly proved from the Scriptures of truth, we are firmly, and at the same time rationally convinced, that it never can again be maintained, that Abraham had only *one kind of seed, to-wit the spiritual, ever recognised in the covenant.*

It is not denied, that God established his covenant, not only between himself and Abraham, but likewise between himself and Abraham's seed; yet that this had, first, a literal sense, and included all the natural descendents of Abraham, in the line of Jacob, let any one read what we have said in the preceding pages, and controvert it if he can. But it has been our care, as indeed the subject itself suggests, not to rest in the mere literal interpretation of this glorious covenant, but to stretch our minds towards higher objects, as it respects both *blessings* and *subjects*. These more exalted objects are *spiritual* objects. We fully admit, with all the freedom which even the most strenuous Pedo-baptist can demand, that such objects were included, yea, formed a most important part in the Abrahamic covenant. But then we differ from them in this other respect. We maintain that these spiritual blessings are only suited for the spiritual subjects; and that the spiritual subjects are such only as are in the covenant, not merely by a natural connexion with Abraham, that is to say, his seed according to the flesh, but by a spiritual connexion, that is, his seed in the spiritual sense, or by believing the truth of God. Many who were connected with him by the first mode, may also have been con-

nected with him by the second; and thus there would exist between them a double connexion. They would be the seed of Abraham, not only according to the flesh, but his seed by faith. Gentile believers, however, can be his seed only in the latter respect; and considering that *he*, and not themselves, is always styled the *father* of this spiritual family, the literal interest so hotly contended for of the children of Gentile believers in this covenant, seems to be a mere nonentity. What interest, pray, had we ourselves in it, before we believed? Had we been Jews, born prior to the advent of the Messiah, the period, we conceive, at which all that was carnal in the covenant came to a termination, we might then have pleaded such an interest. But even then it would have been only an interest of a carnal nature; for if we had not been connected with Abraham, otherwise than in a carnal respect, we could have had no title to privileges which were conveyed through a very different channel. As Gentiles, however, previous to the period of our conversion, what was our situation? Let Paul answer. "Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise; yea, without God, and without Christ, and without hope in the world*." This, assuredly, was our situation, as really as it was that of the Ephesians. And it was not till, like them, we had been quickened from our death of trespasses and sins, that we were made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and made fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God.

But if it was thus with ourselves, what else can it be with our children? Do they not partake of identically the same nature with ourselves? And is it not true of them equally as it was of us, that they are corrupt, that there is naturally no fear of God before their eyes, and

* Eph. ii. 12.

that therefore they go astray as soon as born, speaking lies? If they have not been the subjects of a radical change, of a new birth, or new creation, as the Scriptures frequently term it, is it not a palpable fact, that all that they can derive from us can never raise them higher than what we ourselves were? Children are born to us, not as believers, but as men; and it is our nature as men, and not our faith as believers of God's word, which we convey to them; or, in other words, which constitutes all the connexion naturally subsisting between them and us. To join them with ourselves, therefore, in things spiritual, merely on account of this carnal connexion, seems to me truly the most inconsistent thing imaginable—an idea, apparently so absurd and unscriptural, that we may be well assured that it never could have arisen, but from the grossest misconception of the subject on which it is supposed to be founded. This subject is the Abrahamic covenant; and the mode of reasoning we consider so erroneous, proceeds upon the following principle. This covenant is asserted, without any qualifying consideration, to be the covenant of grace. It is hence indissoluble in its nature, and therefore exists equally under the Christian as under the legal dispensation. And that as it was made with Abraham's seed, no less than with himself, a part of which is Gentile believers, it is therefore imagined that their natural offspring likewise are included along with themselves, as the natural posterity of Abraham unquestionably was under the former dispensation. But such an inference seems to proceed entirely from a misapprehension of the matter.

The *first* error seems to be the unqualified assertion respecting the covenant's being made the covenant of grace. This, however, if they would only allow themselves to reflect, they would soon perceive to be an er-

ror; for this covenant, I mean the covenant of grace, would not only be indissoluble in its nature, but it would infallibly secure to the inheritance of its blessings all who were within its bonds. That many however were included in the Abrahamic covenant in the literal sense, (for it is indisputable that all his natural descendents in the line of Jacob were so), who were never in it in the spiritual, and by consequence were never partakers of its spiritual blessings, is a fact which it is impossible to deny.

Upon this principle of our brethren then, who maintain in a general and indiscriminating manner, that the Abrahamic covenant is the covenant of grace, and who will by no means allow themselves to take into consideration its literal signification, are we here presented with the most strange and heterogeneous mass which can possibly be conceived. We have, in the first place, a *spiritual* covenant, recognizing as its subjects many who were *only carnal*. Then we have a covenant, said to be indissoluble in its nature, changing nevertheless, or dissolving every now and then, the connexion subsisting between it and its members. We are presented, in short, with the free, sovereign, and unconditional covenant of grace, in a manner acting perfectly out of character with itself, first declaring that its subjects are not so constituted by hereditary descent, but by the sovereign good will and pleasure of the Almighty alone; then we have it immediately retracting what it had said, and declaring the very reverse; and, after having got all the natural posterity of Abraham in the line of Jacob, and along with them all the natural posterity of Gentile believers thus within its bonds, we hear it in effect telling them, that though it is indeed an indissoluble covenant, they must not however place any dependence on their positive interest therein for their eternal

safety; for it is not those who are actually within the bonds of this indissoluble covenant, but those who are born again, and those only, who shall finally be saved. In nothing less than all these absurdities do our brethren involve themselves, by the hypothesis we have been considering.

Their *second* error seems to be, that of placing themselves in a manner on a level with Abraham, and vainly imagining that, because Abraham and *his seed* were included in the covenant, so they and *their seed* are to be so in like manner. This we call *a placing of themselves on a level with Abraham*. But it ought to be recollected that Abraham was a person, and that by God's own constitution, entirely different from them; and it will be well for them, if they have only a place amongst the children of his family, without supposing that *they*, as well as *he*, can be *fathers* of this covenanted race.

The mistake of our brethren seems to be entirely owing to their not admitting the twofold nature of the Abrahamic covenant. And of course, not taking into account the distinction which subsists between them, as being in the covenant only by faith, and the carnal Jews who were in it, no less than such of them as were spiritual, by their mere descent from Abraham, it was exceedingly natural for them to do as they have done. But the question comes to be, Is their mode of procedure right, or is it wrong? Is it right in us Gentiles, who are ourselves connected with Abraham in no other way than by faith, along with ourselves to include our children also, and to bring in them for a participation of benefits, to which we ourselves had no manner of right till we believed, and this for no other reason, than merely because they are ours? If you should reply that the Jews did so, I cordially acquiesce; but I ask, upon what ground did they proceed in so doing? Were they

in your express circumstances? Or did their circumstances differ from yours? And if they did, in what did the difference consist? Answers to all these interesting questions, I humbly conceive, I have stated fully in the preceding parts of this work; but for their more ample elucidation, in a part of our subject which should not be allowed to perish by sterility, we shall here subjoin a few things more.

Between the Jews and Gentiles then, there was really a difference, and that of the most conspicuous kind. It consisted in the whole of the former, in the line of Jacob, being recognized as the seed of Abraham, and included in the covenant, which God gave to him and his seed after him, throughout their generations; whereas none of the latter are ever reckoned his seed, or regarded as members of the covenant at all, till they believe.

According to this view, therefore, it is maintained, that Abraham had two kinds of seed, a *carnal* and a *spiritual*, equally included in the covenant. The carnal were all his natural descendents, all of them without a single exception in the line of Jacob; the spiritual are all who believe, and who therefore are spiritual, whether amongst his natural posterity the Jews, or amongst the nations of the Gentiles to the uttermost ends of the earth.

As then, under the first class of a covenanted seed, were comprehended all the natural posterity of Abraham, in the line of Jacob; so when that seed is spoken of as being in the covenant, as is frequently the case in both the Old and New Testament, we are not to marvel if it should be said that their children, even literally considered, should be so in like manner; for in fact this was their express situation. And to them apply most aptly the words of Dr Taylor, when speaking of the Gentiles,

that they were born heirs to it, as to an entailed inheritance. But such language is by no means applicable to us. Here, our children have no part with ourselves, unless they believe as we do. It was upon this, that our own personal interest in the covenant depended. We were not the children of Abraham, nor at all in the covenant, till we believed; and how do we think it possible to alter the nature and constitution of things as it respects them? Our children, though they be ours, they are not Abraham's, unless they believe; and short of this, as Gentiles, it is impossible they can have any connexion with him. And therefore, to talk as many do, of the children of Gentile believers, and of such children having a place in the covenant as well as themselves, is the most vague kind of speech imaginable, and what the Scripture never so much as countenances. Of the *Jews* indeed, it is said, Acts ii. 39. *the promise is to you and to your children;* and again, chap. iii. 25. *Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers,* &c. And we are aware that a great proportion of the Old Testament, speaking of the same people, runs expressly in the same strain. But the Gentiles, to the best of our recollection, are not so spoken of. Throughout the New Testament, for it is here chiefly we have to go for information on this head, believers are in general reminded only of their own personal connexion with Abraham; and the most that is said respecting their children is, that they should train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; no doubt with a view, that by the divine blessing attending their instructions, they may come in due time to be also the children of Abraham, by faith in Christ Jesus. But as being his children, or seed, or subjects of the covenant which God made with Abraham, in the

state in which they are born, they are no where represented.

It may then be said, by some superficial investigators, if the difference between the Jews and Gentiles be really such as has been stated, the former had manifestly the advantage of the latter. To which we reply, no such thing. Abraham's seed amongst the Gentiles, are his seed in the highest and most exalted sense. They are his seed by conversion and the new birth, by faith in Christ Jesus; they are passed from death unto life; they are justified, adopted, sanctified, and thus prepared for eternal glory. But the Jews were his seed, and in the covenant, in their collective capacity, only in a literal sense, as the progenitors of the Messiah; but though they were his kinsmen according to the flesh, and a nation whom the Lord did choose to be his peculiarly above all other nations of the earth, yet unless they were in the covenant, and related both to their great progenitor, and also to their Messiah, in a higher sense than what flows merely by blood, it would avail them nothing to say within themselves, *We are the children of the prophets; we have Abraham to our father; salvation is of the Jews; and of us sprung the Saviour of the whole earth;* for all this may be true, as literally it was, and yet without this higher connexion they might be, as, alas! we have too much cause to fear many of them were, eternally lost. Where is then the comparison between the privileges of the seed of Abraham now under the gospel, and those which his merely literal seed enjoyed under the former dispensation? Lo! they will not bear a comparison.

But let us understand our sticklers. The comparison they mean to draw is not so much between Gentile believers *themselves*, and those of the former dispensation, as between the *children* of such as are believers

now under the gospel, and the covenanted Jews in ancient times. It is here, and here only, they make the contrast, as they know from the avowed principles of those they are opposing, that yielding the palm in favour of the latter, is readily acknowledged. It is part of the system of their opposite brethren freely to avow, that now, under the gospel, children, merely as such, have no place in the covenant with Abraham. They consider it as now consisting of an entirely spiritual nature; as recognizing none but such as really are spiritual; and as *blessing them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*: so that, if our brethren wish to reason with us fairly, *this* is the principle upon which they must take us up.

But, will they not be apt to say, we do not admit your principle of withholding from children, the children of believers, a place in the covenant? Children were unquestionably subjects of it under the former dispensation, and we ask, and we ask we know with an absolute silence of Scripture, *When they were cast out?*

But before there be any triumph allowed, let us seriously inquire whether they really were *ever in that covenant* of which you speak. Is not the covenant the covenant of grace? To make out the Abrahamic covenant to be nothing else than the covenant of grace, we know is the great bulwark of Pedo-baptists. And we hope they will not be disposed to relinquish that station now.

Well then, upon the principle that it is the covenant of grace, we resume an argument we formerly made use of, we lay it down as an undeniable axiom in the divine science, that this covenant, in the first place, *must infallibly include all the elect of God, and none else*; and then, in the next place, *that it must infallibly secure*

to such the blessings of eternal life, without the smallest possibility of a doubt of its being otherwise, from causes either on God's part or theirs. Such is the idea we entertain of the covenant of grace. We consider it as embracing within its bosom the eternal and irreversible purposes of God; his gifts and callings which are without repentance. The question then comes to be, was it thus with the Abrahamic covenant, as it respected the seed? To which I promptly answer both that it *was*, and that it was *not*. That covenant, paradoxical as some may reckon it, was the covenant of grace, and it was not the covenant of grace. In the sense in which all the nations, the Jews not excepted, were to be blessed in Abraham, that is to say, with the blessing of *justification through faith in Jesus Christ*, as the apostle clearly states it, it was indisputably the covenant of grace. But in the sense in which all Abraham's natural posterity, in the line of Jacob, were included as within its bonds, evidently for the sake of bringing forth the Messiah, it was not, nor could it be, the covenant of grace. And why so? Because grace is not hereditary; it does not run in blood, but entirely in the channel of the free and sovereign pleasure of the Almighty. And here it becomes us rather silently to adore what we are unequal to comprehend, than to summon to the bar of our shallow reason, the procedure of Him who must do all things right. Here it is that he takes one of a city, and two of a family, and brings them to Sion, without deigning to give any account of his matters.

These things are so palpable, that we are not a little surprised that our brethren, who we are convinced maintain the same doctrines when system is out of the question, should be so inconsistent with themselves as to maintain quite the reverse here. But as it is not without at least an ostensible reason, we must accordingly

examine it, in order to determine whether it be right or wrong.

We have just observed, that the principle of not reckoning children in the covenant now under the Christian dispensation, has been violently opposed, notwithstanding the irrefragable argument with which it is accompanied, namely, that Christ's kingdom is not of this world; that it is not carnal, but spiritual; and therefore, in the very nature of the thing, cannot embrace children in its bosom, as subjects thereof, unless it can be said of them that they *are* spiritual. This, accordingly, is precisely the very thing that is done in effect. Both the acrimonious Pirie *, and the more temperate Wardlaw, maintain equally that there was but *one* seed, to-wit the *spiritual*, ever recognized in the Abrahamic covenant, which covenant, without any qualification whatever, according to them, is the covenant of grace; and yet, strange is it to tell, that *children*, depraved and polluted children, in the very state in which they are born, form one of the most conspicuous parts of this spiritual seed. Thus do they, in effect, maintain on the one hand, the spirituality of children, and that in opposition to the clearest evidence to the contrary; and on the other, they manifestly overturn all that the Scriptures can say, respecting the universal depravity of human nature.

Now, how indiscreet soever it may be deemed, we will be bold to maintain, that upon their principles the whole of their system necessarily behoves to be new-modelled. Either they must relinquish their present

* That this is not an epithet of our own coining, but such as he assumes to himself, will appear from the last paragraph of his tenth letter to Mr M'Lean; and the black sentence with which the passage concludes, but too evidently demonstrates with what propriety it was applied.

scheme of infant baptism, or to make other parts of their system to tally therewith, they must embrace views of the various doctrines of the gospel, which are directly the opposite of those which they presently hold, and which, by the way, the gospel clearly inculcates. Nor will this demand, if it is but impartially considered, appear too much. It is merely wishing our brethren to be consistent with themselves. But of the propriety or safety of such consistency, we must be free enough to express our doubts; for a consistency with themselves here, does not necessarily imply a consistency with the truth. On the contrary, it implies the very reverse, and involves in it this most unwarrantable of all hypotheses, *that system is to be regarded in preference to truth, and that truth is to be sacrificed for the sake of system.*

That this is not saying too much in regard to the present contest, we shall pledge our all to make it evident. We would lay it down as an incontrovertible maxim then, *that in the Abrahamic covenant, all Abraham's natural posterity, even as such, in the line of Jacob, were positively included in it without a single exception.* And in this sense we maintain, that it was not, nor could it be the covenant of grace; for this very good reason, formerly assigned, that grace is not hereditary. Our brethren, therefore, who maintain the contrary, must do so upon the principle, either that the posterity of Abraham already specified, as such merely, were *never in the covenant*, or else they must do it upon the principle, that *grace is hereditary*. Either the one or the other of these is indispensable. And which soever of them they may think proper to adopt, we are confident it would be opposite to the plain existence of the fact. As it respects the first, words cannot be plainer than those employed in Scripture, confirming the covenant to these descen-

dents of Abraham, in contradistinction to the other branches of his family. In his own immediate family, expressly is it said, *Not with Ishmael, but with Isaac, will I establish my covenant* *. And in the family of his son Isaac, Jacob was the beloved in this respect, and Esau the not beloved; and their fate, as to their interest in this covenant, as it respected them merely as descendents of Abraham, was determined ere they were born, or yet had done good or evil. As Isaac was the alone child of promise in the family of Abraham, so in like manner was Jacob in that of Isaac. The assertion, therefore, of many Pedo-baptists, particularly Messrs Pirie and Wardlaw, that Ishmael and Esau were excluded from this covenant on account of their behaviour, is the most unfounded that can possibly be conceived, and stands directly opposed to the plain matter of fact, that neither of them were ever in this covenant, as it respected the natural descendents of Abraham. It was to Isaac and to Jacob that it was solely restricted, in these two families; and their brethren, though children of the same believing fathers, had no manner of right to it, neither by birth, nor by any other means, but were, and all their descendents likewise, as entirely strangers and aliens to it, as the other nations, with whom the promised seed were strictly prohibited from forming any alliances. But in the family of Jacob it was not so, nor in any of his descendents, till the advent of Christ. His family, though so numerous, and in point of real moral excellence not a whit before the others, had none excluded from it. They were all born heirs of the covenant. And all their descendents as a body, even in the times of the greatest degeneracy, are recognized by God as his people; are said to be born

* See Gen. xvii. 19,—21. and also what we have said on that passage in our comment, p. 42.

to him, Ezek. xvi. 20. though it be evident that no other birth is there intended but that of a natural one, and equally so, that their immediate parents were not believers, but, on the contrary, were a set of the most vile, cruel and superstitious idolaters. Yet because they were Abraham's children, in the line of Jacob, and as such were therefore children of the covenant, Jehovah, that his covenant might not be broken, even at the distance of many hundreds of years, still recognized them as his people, notwithstanding all their provocations and their guilt; yea, and continued uniformly to do so, till his Anointed came, for the sake of whose fleshly birth, they seem to have been set apart.

We hope therefore from these positive facts, that our brethren will never attempt to establish their system *of the Abrahamic covenant's being the covenant of grace*, upon the principle that Abraham's natural posterity, in the particular line we have specified, *were not in the covenant;* for this would be contradicting the most palpable truths. Admitting these truths therefore, as in duty they are bound to do, the only other principle upon which their cause can be defended, is that of *grace being hereditary*. This is therefore the next point we must attend to; and,

According to the Abrahamic covenant's being without any qualifying consideration the covenant of grace, it is surely not too much to say, that it would of course save eternally all who were within its bonds. We have seen that, according to the true scriptural account of this subject, the whole of Abraham's natural posterity, in the line of Jacob, were actually included in this covenant; and do not our brethren, supposing that it exists still in the same sense as formerly, maintain, that all the children of believers are now in it in the same manner? Thus then, according to undeniable scriptural

representation on the one hand, and according to what is conceived to be nothing less than infallible inference on the other, we have a covenant, maintained to be the covenant of grace, including a whole carnal race; and the question is, what does this alleged covenant of grace really do with those who are within its bonds? Does it save them all indiscriminately, or is there a distinction made between those who believe and those who believe not? And is the preference given decidedly in favour of the former, while the latter are regarded as having neither part nor lot in the matter?

We know it is undeniable, that the covenant of grace goes upon this last principle; and therefore, the simple fact that *any* were included in the Abrahamic covenant who did not believe, (and we know the Scriptures speak of many, for the Jews are always represented as having been a perverse people), is proof perfectly sufficient to convince every rational mind, that this covenant was not the covenant of grace, *in the sense in which it really included such.* On the contrary, had it been the covenant of grace, such could not have been included. And yet, that such were included in the Abrahamic covenant, and that such necessarily behoved to be included in it, according to the purpose of God in investing his Messiah with our nature, we should suppose to be demonstrably proved by what we have already advanced throughout this inquiry. And this grand object having been obtained, we should conceive we have proved with equal clearness, that the same state of things, as it respected a carnal seed, was not any longer to remain.

If it should therefore be asked, what do you make of the Abrahamic covenant *now?* our answer is, Expressly what our brethren would wish to make it, that is to

say, *simply the covenant of grace.* But this, we conceive, it was not before. It was not the covenant of grace *simply*, but along with this, it had another part of a carnal nature attached to it, which we consider now to be done away. We consider it therefore now to be left purely spiritual, as Christ himself declares; otherwise it could not be the covenant of grace simply, but behoved to be of a mixed nature; an idea however, with the Scriptures of the New Testament in our hand, we are far from admitting.

What is then the precise point of difference here existing between us and our brethren? Both maintain, in words, that the covenant is the covenant of grace. In this respect therefore we are agreed, but still we differ when we come to speak of its *subjects.* To make it purely the covenant of grace, without any ad-mixture or alloy therefore, we maintain that its subjects must be such as participate of a gracious principle; that they must be spiritual; and that, on this account, children, who we are assured are by nature children of wrath, *cannot be considered subjects thereof.* We of course consider none in the covenant, but such as shall eternally participate of its blessings. But in these respects do our brethren differ from us. True, they have verbal assertions, that none but the spiritual were ever recognized in this covenant. But so inconsistent are they with their own avowed principles, that it seems to appear nothing to them, in effect, to deny all that they had formerly maintained, respecting the spirituality of this covenanted seed, in order to give their carnal posterity a place in it likewise. And a place, for argument's sake, we shall therefore allow them. But when you have got them thus introduced, you surely cannot speak as formerly, about the spirituality of that seed which the covenant alone recognizes. You insisted that your

children, as well as yourselves, should have a place in it; and a place we have given them. But now you have brought yourselves under the necessity, either to give up that part of your system, in which you maintain the spirituality of the covenanted seed, which in truth would be giving up the idea of this covenant's being the covenant of grace entirely; or you must maintain, and that in opposition to the clearest Scriptures, that your children are spiritual; otherwise, according even to your own hypothesis, they can have no place in the covenant. Now, which of them would ye do? Or would you, for the love of system, dare to do either, how opposed soever they were to the truth? Only think what sort of a covenant you would make by the first scheme, when you began to admit it as a principle, that the subjects of it did not necessarily behove to be spiritual; but that children, in the very state in which they are born, with all their depraved propensities and inclinations, and without so much as possessing one gracious principle, could be members thereof. You surely cannot say it would be unreasonable to maintain, that upon this principle, if the covenant admits of such latitude in regard to children, it may surely do the same in regard to men; for what is corruption and the want of grace more in a man than in a child? Thus then you would overturn all the doctrines of the gospel, you would open the sluices of wickedness, you would buoy up your fellow-mortals in the most delusive hopes, and by one stroke of your pen, you would in a moment undo all that an infinitely wise God has thought it meet to take thousands of years to perform.

But supposing you adopted the other scheme, to-wit, that children are spiritual, as less detrimental, what would be the result? Would ye not still be opposing the truth of God? Would ye not be in ef-

ingly mistaken, if they suppose that the connexion between Abraham and his covenanted seed, even literally considered, was capable of suffering any interruption throughout their successive generations, on account of the ungodly character of some of their descendents; and yet this must have been the case, if their principle of casting such out of the covenant be true. But it is not true. As to the alleged cases of Ishmael and Esau having been cast *out of the covenant*, on account of the wickedness of their conduct, we have shewn, Chap. II. Sect. 1. that it proceeds entirely on mistake; for the fact positively is, that from the first moment of their existence, they never were in the covenant; and this being the case, it was impossible that they could be cast out of it. But with those who were included in it, the case was simply this. They were ever and anon *all* regarded, even in the most corrupt times, as a covenanted people, a people whom the Lord had chosen in preference to all others, beyond a doubt for this particular purpose, that in process of time all the earth should be blessed in the *seed* of Abraham, namely *Christ*, whom they should be the instruments of bringing into the world. This appears to have been the reason why Abraham's natural descendents, in a certain line, as a whole, were ever recognized by God as his people. But his acknowledgment of them in this sense, was not liable to continual interruptions, or to any thing analogous to what is alleged in the cases of Ishmael and Esau. Having once established his covenant with Abraham, in the line of Isaac and Jacob, evidently for the purpose of investing his Messiah with the human nature, there were no chasms, no interruptions ever suffered to take place; but it proceeded in one rectilineal course, excepting none of the descendents of Jacob, for a space of nearly two thousand years.

But upon the supposition of Pedo-baptists, that Ishmael and Esau were in the covenant, and were cast out on account of their wickedness and unbelief, we might surely expect to find something similar in the subsequent history of that people. If we have instances of two, acting in such a manner as to render their exclusion from the covenant necessary, so very recently from its commencement, we may surely expect to meet with many more of a similar nature, in after times. But this is so far from being the case, that we have in the very next generation, several characters no less than infamous, some of them guilty even of incest, as Reuben and Judah; some of murder, as Simeon and Levi, in the case of the Shechemites; and the whole of them, Benjamin excepted, conspiring with cruel hatred against the innocent Joseph; and yet there were *none* of them excluded from the covenant. Nor does any thing similar to what is here insinuated, or to what took place in regard to Ishmael and Esau, at all appear in any of their subsequent history. The case of the Israelites in the wilderness, is not in the least similar. Though they could not enter Canaan themselves, their children however entered it. But with the descendents of Ishmael and Esau it was not so. These parents, having no portion among the promised seed themselves, begat a posterity which never to the latest generation had any joint interest with that seed, nor could ever come in for a participation of its blessings, as the children of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness naturally did. In regard to the one, they were as a body for ever separated from having any interest with the promised seed; whereas, in regard to the other, as a body they were retained, and the children, notwithstanding the punishments occasionally inflicted upon the parents, succeeded throughout their generations still to be regarded

as the covenanted seed, without any interruption in consequence of the disobedience of the parents. Indeed, as it respected their actual interest in the covenant, the question was not whether they were descended immediately of believing or unbelieving parents, but whether were they the seed of Abraham in the line of Jacob, and to what tribe did they belong? And if they could only make out their relation to any one of the twelve tribes, their interest in the covenant, as God's peculiar people, (we mean in the literal sense only), was undeniable upon this ground alone, independently it should seem of any other consideration whatsoever. It was not because that either they, or their immediate progenitors, were spiritual, but because they were Abraham's *literal seed*, in that particular line to whom the promise was made, that they had a place in the covenant. And this seems to have been the precise principle upon which Jehovah acknowledged them to be his, as a nation; for frequently does he complain of them for their want of faith, at the very time he recognizes them as his people; proofs of which may be seen in abundance in all the prophets. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that this covenanted seed, in the sense of which we are speaking, were the descendents of but *one* man, and that the *whole* of his descendents in one particular line, chosen in preference to those of the others, not only before they manifested either faith or obedience, but before they existed. Though Abraham was a believer himself, therefore, unless faith had been semi-hereditary, if we may be allowed the expression, all his descendents in one particular line could not have been included with himself, while all those of the others were rejected. Does not this evidently shew then, that the covenant relation of these descendents of Abraham, was not of a spiritual, but of a literal nature? Besides, if it had been

of the former, why were Abraham's descendents only, and not those of any other person, included in the covenant in the same manner? Was Abraham the only spiritual person then existing upon the earth? So far from this, we know it is maintained by Pedo-baptists, that all his household who were circumcised were believers, at least so far as profession goes; and considering what a goodly number of them there were, is it not surprising that the descendents of one, to-wit of Abraham, should bear such a conspicuous place in this spiritual family, as Pedo-baptists exclusively consider it, while those of at least three hundred and eighteen are hardly ever noticed? Surely there must be a cause for all this, something entirely different from what Pedo-baptists have ever yet assigned. Upon their principle of connecting the children of believers with themselves in the Abrahamic covenant, and maintaining it to be the covenant of grace in the sense in which it includes such, we should expect to see the descendents of Abraham's faithful servant, Eliezer, as also those of Job, Jethro, and many others, bearing as conspicuous a place, and as great a proportion in point of number, as those of the *one man Abraham*. But the truth of the matter is, this could not be: for it was not with them, even as believers, but with him solely, that the covenant was made in respect of his children. And being with only a part, even of his children, and not the whole, therefore it is that this part is particularly noticed, as the apostle Matthew pointedly observes, for no less a space than three times fourteen generations, Mat. i. 17.

Now therefore we resume our question, and we ask, what is it in the Pedo-baptist's scheme that in any respect resembles this? As to the extent of their chil-

dren's interest in the covenant, there is no resemblance whatever. So far from extending to many generations, it does not even extend to the whole life of the individuals themselves. They are *born* heirs to it, one part of their system says, while another maintains that they are not, but all must depend upon their future conversion. While infants, they are baptized as heirs of God's covenant, and members of his church. But here accordingly it stops; for when adults, something more is required, and without this something they cannot have a place, neither in church nor covenant, though they were born with an indissoluble right to both.

From these considerations, does it not then follow, that all the noise which has been made respecting the baptizing of *infants*, as drawn from the Abrahamic covenant, has been exceedingly improper? We may almost affirm, that if our brethren would but impartially re-examine the subject without any regard to system, they will find matters so very different from what they have been accustomed to conceive, that they will be astonished at their own folly. But be this as it may, we must think for ourselves. It is not to one another, but to God, that we are amenable. As no man therefore dare with impunity shut out light when he may see it, so it is to be earnestly desired that Christians would grant to one another the free liberty of conscience, that none may be exposed to the temptation of so doing. It is only by acting thus, that we can prove ourselves to be genuine disciples of Him, who enjoined it upon his followers not to aspire to the foolish rank of *leaders*, but to be contented with the situation of brethren, knowing that *one* is our Master, who well deserves the honour, even CHRIST.

In our next section, we shall take up the argument

for Pedo-baptism, drawn from the example of households being baptized, as mentioned in the New Testament.

SECTION III.

Of the argument for Pedo-baptism, drawn from the baptizing of Households in the New Testament.

On entering upon this subject, we may remark by the way, that it is long since we have been of opinion that it is impossible arguments drawn from this source, according to the information afforded us in Scripture, either for the one side or the other, can be conclusive. We have no objections however to meet our brethren even upon this ground, and to reason with them in a fair and candid manner. We suppose then that it is not upon this ground alone, that any of them rest the authority of their practice; but that this is had recourse to, merely as a corroboration of what they reckon to be taught in other parts of Scripture. If this be the case, then the doctrine must stand or fall entirely by its own merits; or at most, all that this can do, is only to render it more probable. Were we to proceed according to this conjecture, therefore, we should not give this argument so much as a hearing, but should refer entirely to what we have said respecting the other points; for if we have met and fairly overturned the foundation arguments, it is altogether impossible that collateral ones can any longer stand. But though we might avail ourselves of this advantage, an advantage by which we

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might also save ourselves a great deal of trouble, yet, lest our brethren should deem it unfair, we shall willingly dispense with the one, and endure the other, in order to give our views of this subject fully. And for this purpose, we must in the first place inquire into the *specific idea to be attached to the word household in Scripture.*

It frequently occurs in the Old Testament, with the evident latitude of including, not merely the children, but servants, and all who were in the family. This was unquestionably the sense of it in that passage wherein it occurs in the book of Job. "And there were born unto him, seven sons and three daughters. His substance was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great *household**." Here it would even seem that the term household is used to distinguish the *servants* which Job had, from his *sons* and *daughters*, mentioned in the preceding verse. But this idea is still more clearly exhibited in that noted passage, in which it first occurs in Scripture, Gen. xviii. 19. where it is said respecting Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his *children* and his *household* after him," &c. This appears likewise to be its particular signification in Philippians iv. 22. "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cesar's *household*." But though this be evidently the sense of the term in the passages to which we have alluded, yet I should suppose that in the generality of other passages where it occurs, it rather includes the children likewise.

Now, if we examine the privileges to which *households*, in this sense of the expression, had a right, we shall find them to be the following. The feast of the passover was to be observed, without any restriction, by

* Chap. i. 2, 3.

the whole of a man's household, Exod. xii. 4. Not merely the children, but even strangers had a right to partake thereof, provided they were circumcised, ver. 48. In this sense likewise was atonement to be made for households, Lev. xvi. 17.

According to these principles therefore, would not our brethren, who are for maintaining the propriety of baptizing their children, from the example of *households* having been baptized in the New Testament, be led much further than they seem to be aware of? Is it not a principle with them to restrict the term wholly to their *children?* and do they not by this means inadvertently give it the very opposite sense which it bears, at least in some passages? While their system leads them to consider it as including none save their children, lo! we find it in the Scriptures including ALL, *children excepted.* And never do we find it at all employed in their sense, as comprehending *only the children,* and *not the domestics,* but evidently in all those passages where the children are included, the domestics are not excluded. From all this, it would then appear, that the Scriptures represent the very reverse on this head, of what our brethren in effect maintain. For while they would represent the term as restricted *wholly* to children, the Scriptures on the contrary sometimes employ it as including all *excepting* them; and even when they are included, never is it with the exception of the rest of the family.

From these undeniable facts it will therefore follow, that the example of whole households having been baptized, can never be urged as a warrant for baptizing only the *children* of a family; for the term is never used in this sense in Scripture. It sometimes includes domestics and not children, but never children and not domestics. When whole households therefore are said

to have been baptized, according to the most common and uniform application of the term, we can have no doubt but that servants, as well as children, must have been partakers of that ordinance. But whether there were *infants* in those households, or whether the households, supposing them to consist either of children or servants, were baptized merely on account of the *faith of their respective heads*, are very different questions—questions indeed which ought to be fairly solved, ere we can be authorized to speak in the same confident manner which many do on this point. A solution of them however, is what we shall not attempt in this place, having it in view to take up subjects of this nature in the chapter which follows. At present, our principal inquiry respecting households, is the signification of the term, and what must undoubtedly have been the fact in relation to it. If it was never employed in the sense necessarily excluding domestics, whether servants or slaves, but, on the contrary, included them equally with the children of a family; it is then demonstrable, that when households are said to have been baptized, all the members of those particular families must have participated alike of that ordinance. And therefore to restrict it, as is universally the case with Pedo-baptists, to one particular order of a family, namely to children, is using a freedom with the term, which we are fully persuaded Scripture by no means warrants. What we would here call the attention of our brethren to therefore, is not whether there were children in those households said to have been baptized in primitive times, but simply to the signification of the term when employed by the sacred writers. And we do insist upon it, that if they never use it in the restricted sense as including only the children of a family, but evidently employ it, on all occasions, as comprehending the very

meanest servant or slave who might be in it, our brethren are entirely wrong in taking the example of the baptizing of households as a warrant for baptizing their *children only*. If it be a warrant at all for any thing of the kind, it would go further than we have yet either heard maintained, or seen practised. It would go the length of including all their domestics equally with their children, and of bringing the former forward equally with the latter, in order to have the name of Christ named upon them. If children have a right to the ordinance of baptism, from the circumstance of whole households being baptized, so have servants, if there be any in the family; for these were likewise, on every occasion, reckoned among the members of the household: and every argument which can be produced from such instances, to prove the propriety of baptism to the former, will apply with equal force to prove its propriety to the latter likewise.

These three species of arguments having been duly considered, we shall proceed briefly to consider their amount.

Under the consideration of the first, we have seen, that all that can be obtained or reasonably looked for by the baptizing of our infants, may be obtained equally without it—that the act of applying water to the body, cannot convey spiritual grace—and that the not baptizing of infants, is no impediment in the way of believing parents from laying their case before the Lord, and praying for every blessing their sinful and wretched state may really stand in need of. Baptism, as a religious ordinance, to be administered to children, and prayer offered up in their behalf, are certainly two very different things. The last may be lawful, yea, positively binding, as part of Christian duty in general, but the propriety or legality of the first must arise from

some other consideration entirely different from the one here urged.

The second argument however might have been expected, *a priori*, to have been more conclusive; but even here, we have seen that, according to the common and indiscriminate interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant by Pedo-baptists, it would necessarily contradict a great portion of sacred truth, and overturn many of the doctrines most clearly taught in Scripture, on which account, conclusions drawn from hence for the scheme of infant baptism, never can be admitted. That covenant, most undoubtedly, in the sense in which it included all the natural descendents of Abraham, in the line of Jacob, was *not* the covenant of grace; or, if it was, then they must have been all gracious persons, otherwise they could not be subjects of a *gracious* covenant. But respecting this point, let the history of that people, as recorded in Scripture, speak for itself.

Being necessitated then to explain this covenant, both by a *literal* and *spiritual* signification, we find accordingly, that this plan answers all the purposes which the nature of the subject seems to demand, and which can by no means be objected to without involving one's self in the greatest contradictions and absurdities it is possible to conceive.

Moreover, as we can render a specific and distinct reason why even a carnal posterity was necessarily included under the former dispensation, (namely, for the bringing forth of the Messiah), but are unable to conceive any such object to be obtained by the retention of them still, we look upon the conclusion to be most fairly drawn, *that a carnal posterity has no manner of place in this latter dispensation.* Believers themselves, and not the offspring propagated by them as men, are the only seed of Abraham whom the covenant now recognizes,

Nor does their connexion with Abraham, as believers, necessarily imply the connexion of their children likewise. Nay, as it is only by faith that they themselves have any relation to Abraham, as *the constituted father of the faithful*, it implies the very reverse: it tacitly declares to every child of Adam, that though he be a man, he is not a saint. Yea, more, though the immediate descendent of parents who are so, yet as for himself he has no connexion with Abraham, unless it could be said of him also that he believes. But if the connexion between Abraham and his spiritual children be only thus formed, as we are firmly convinced the Scriptures represent no other, it will follow as a matter of course, that the station which Pedo-baptists assign to their children in the Abrahamic covenant, has no existence whatever in the Scriptures of truth. And therefore, to insist for baptism to them, on the ground that they are in the covenant, or connected with Abraham in any respect, merely because they have been born of religious parents, is taking a number of things for granted, which first ought to have been proved, and laying the foundation of a system which we do not hesitate to say, when all considerations are taken into account, is the most unscriptural, contradictory, and absurd that can possibly be imagined. And we would seriously ask our brethren, if the children of believers be really connected with Abraham in a spiritual sense, merely on account of their connexion with them, to what length do they consider this connexion to go? What blessings are specifically obtained by it? And whether does it secure, or even make any thing towards their eternal safety or not? These, without dispute, are questions highly important in themselves; and the proper solution of them will no doubt lead to more correct views of this subject, than may have been hitherto entertained.

Having thus seen the inconclusive nature of the two first arguments, the imbecility of the third, founded upon the circumstance of household, will be no less apparent. Here it is also taken for granted, that the word *household* always includes only the *children* of a family, children in infancy too; whereas, we have found the sacred writers employing it invariably in that sense which includes equally with the children, and sometimes, with the exception of them, all the domestic servants, slaves, sojourning strangers, or any others who might be in the house at the time. Besides, it equally takes for granted the grandest point of all. It supposes that the household were baptized merely on the *faith* of their respective *heads*—a point which ought to have been fully proved, before a single conclusion was allowed to be drawn from such premises. These things combined therefore, we are led to conclude, that if the circumstance of households proves any thing, it proves that servants and others connected with the family, no less than children, had a right to baptism on the same grounds with them. But even this it can by no means authorize, unless it could be proved that the members of these households were baptized on the faith of their respective heads; a circumstance which must be previously determined, ere any thing further can be said on this head.

We would remark then upon the whole, that neither from one or other of these three species of arguments separately, nor from them all taken together, do we see any thing like the principles of Pedo-baptism taught. On the contrary, even the most invulnerable point thereof, the Abrahamic covenant, appearing to contain principles, which in their nature cut up that whole system by the very roots, we must hence be allowed to express our convictions on this subject, and to give it a

place, in our judgment at least, among those doctrines, which have not the infallible word of God, but human authority alone for their origin and support. We however anathematize none. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Blessed be God that it is not to one another, but to Him we are responsible. We have all an undoubted right to think for ourselves; and should we even think differently from others, still no authority merely human has a right to call us in question; for this would at once be usurping the rights of conscience, it would be putting an end to all inquiry, it would be destroying the analogy which should subsist between religion and the other works of God, making of rational creatures mere machines, and sapping the very foundation, not to say of one doctrine merely, but of the whole extent of that beautiful religious system taught in the Scriptures. From all which evils, may the Lord ever preserve his own!

CHAPTER VII.

AN EXAMINATION OF SEVERAL DETACHED PASSAGES COMMONLY ADDUCED IN SUPPORT OF PEDO-BAPTISM, &c.

SECTION I.

WE remarked in the Introduction, that it must always be a source of grief to any person who loves truth, and who wishes truth alone to prevail, to see even good people supporting what they imagine to be truth, by improper means; and that, as on no subject has this method been more abundantly adopted, than on the one now before us, it is therefore our design to bestow a little attention upon it, and to assign this particular place for the consideration of the various false glosses, unwarrantable conclusions, and very improper treatment which the abettors of both sides of the question have reciprocally given each other. We shall therefore in the present section attend to the first point, which is *a brief review of the various passages of holy writ generally brought forward in support of Pædo-baptism.* And to preserve some kind of order, we shall endeavour to range them into the three following classes.—Class *first*, to contain all those passages in which a connexion between believers and their children seem to spoken of.—Class *second*, those passages in which they

seem to be distinguished from the children of the ungodly.—And the *third* class, those which are rather of a miscellaneous nature, and do not properly come under either of the two foregoing heads.

1. We accordingly begin with *class first;* and here, at our entrance, we have to detect that false principle we have so frequently adverted to, that of taking things for granted which should first have been proved, and of quoting them by the sound rather than by the sense.

Though it be allowed on all hands, that the Israelites were indeed a very rebellious, perverse and wicked people, and very seldom gave evidence that many of them, I mean comparatively, were really under the influence of the truth; yet when reasoning on the subject of baptism, our brethren seem invariably to take for granted, that in all those passages where the connexion between the parents and the children is spoken of, that it is a connexion between *believers* and *their seed.* Now, than this there can be nothing more opposite to the truth. Take for example that noted passage, Ezek. xvi. 20. we have already had occasion to quote, and see whether there be any thing like what they assume at all allowable. The connexion between the people there spoken of, and Jehovah as their God, is unquestionably manifest, as is likewise the connexion between them, as the children of God, and of their children as his children. But does it hence follow, that this was a spiritual connexion, or rather that they were at all believers, because such things are recorded of them? See also what we have said on it, page 163.

A number of other passages might here be quoted for the same purpose; but instead of loading our pages with mere texts without ideas, we shall rather endeavour to catch the principle upon which such a conexion is founded, than to transcribe from any Concordance

simply the places where it is to be found. When children, seed, offspring, &c. are spoken of, we ought always to attend to the connexion of the passages where they occur; for unquestionably they have not *one* uniform meaning only in the sacred Scriptures, but are used both in a literal and in a spiritual sense, even when applied to men. There seems to be one very evident circumstance pervading the whole Scriptures on this subject, and that is, the connexion between the Israelites and their three great progenitors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and this is the connexion much more frequently spoken of, than that of their lineal descent one from another in their successive generations. And it seems rather to have been on account of their being the descendents of these three patriarchs, with whom the covenant was originally formed, that they were recognized as children thereof, than on account of their immediate descent, throughout their successive generations, from believing parents. And what puts this matter beyond all doubt, is, that frequently those original transactions are referred to in the subsequent dealings of God with that people; whereas, there are but very few instances if any, strictly speaking, wherein the personal virtues of the parent are noticed as the cause of procuring blessing to the children. That there is something however like such a connexion, we will not dogmatically deny; for this seems to be the principle upon which the second commandment, the 17th verse of Psal. ciii. and several other passages run. But we suppose that it is pretty generally agreed, that the good or evil mentioned in such passages, as conveyed from parent to child, is rather on account of the child, in general, choosing to walk in the paths of the parent, by which it receives the blessing or the curse, as the just reward of its *own* deeds, rather than as a legacy, so to speak, procured

and left by the parent. The passage concerning the sour grapes, in the prophecies of Ezekiel, goes evidently upon the same plan.

There are a number of other passages however, which speak of seed, of children, and of offspring, &c. evidently in a spiritual sense. As, for instance, "All thy *children* shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.—As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy *seed*, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever*.—And their *seed* shall be known among the Gentiles, and their *offspring* among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed†.—For I will pour water upon Him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy *seed*, and my blessing upon thine *offspring*. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses‡, &c.—They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them §."

Now, when the spiritual meaning only is intended, it is altogether unallowable to connect a race merely carnal, or to reason upon the principle as if the seed, children, or offspring, were born only by carnal generation. In such passages, seed being used figuratively, it is perfectly natural to extend the metaphor, and to apply the expression, *thy seed*, and *thy seed's seed*, &c. even in a spiritual sense, without positively referring to the carnal issue of a man's body:—for, first, it is no unnatu-

* Isa. liv. 13. lix. 21.
† Ch. lxi. 9.
‡ Ch. xliv. 3, 4.
§ Ch. lxv. 23.

ral straining of the metaphor ; and secondly, it is not at all inconsistent, but on the contrary, is the very method by which even this spiritual progeny is progressively propagated. They are not, in the spiritual sense, more than in the natural, brought into existence all at once. The truth is preserved amongst men from generation to generation, and those who receive it, are represented as being all participants of one and the same nature, and thus forming a genus, seed, or kind, distinct by themselves.

Having made these remarks on the subject in general, we shall proceed to the consideration of particular passages, in order to be a little more minute. We shall accordingly begin with that famed one, in the second chapter of the Acts, ver. 39. " The promise is to you, and to your children."

And here, without reciting all the keen and acrimonious debates which this passage has given rise to, we shall rather attempt explaining it in a sober and rational manner, as the context shall appear to suggest.

The *persons* to whom the apostle is addressing himself, therefore, claim the *first* attention. They were Jews, the natural seed of Abraham, and part of that covenanted people or nation, whom the Lord had chosen in preference to all other nations, for certain reasons, to be a peculiar people to himself. But they were *unbelieving* Jews, persons whom the apostle could charge with the murder of the Lord of glory, and who had given their full consent to all that the Scribes and Pharisees proposed, concerning the immaculate Jesus, " crying, Away with him, crucify him, crucify him ; not this man, but Barabbas : his blood be upon us, and on our children."

This being their character, their immediate situation was that of persons in a manner giving up the ghost,

being almost overwhelmed with black despair. The apostle had boldly charged them with the sin of crucifying the Saviour, had demonstrated his resurrection and exaltation as events which had taken place, in spite of all the precautions which had been adopted for their prevention: *Therefore*, concludes he, *let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

Now, when they heard this, and reflected on the consequences which must thence result from the resurrection and exaltation of one whom they had put to death as a malefactor, *they were pricked in their heart*; they were afraid lest the awful imprecation of his blood being upon them and their children, should now be verified, and therefore, with the greatest emotion, *they cried unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?* To which Peter replied, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off*, as you, by your conduct, have undoubtedly proved yourselves to be, *even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.* The Saviour came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Guilty as you are, you are not beyond the reach of his sovereign power and grace; for the *promise*, or gospel, does not exclude you; yea, on the contrary, it is a device of infinite Wisdom, adapted to persons in your very situation. Nor are your children or little ones even beyond its reach, though you have done all in your power to render them so; for these glad tidings are free as the air you breathe, extending to every individual of the human kind, and to your children of course; there being no creature far or near, to whom they shall come,

who may warrantably consider himself as excluded from the hope of mercy.

Such appears to us to be a fair representation of the genuine spirit and purport of this passage. We conceive it as not at all natural, and as a matter exceedingly dubious indeed, that the apostle should have intended by the expression of the promise being to those Jews and to their children, the inseparable connexion which should subsist in all ages between believers and their children. The expression, upon this supposition, would imply that they, and their children, were already in the covenant; an idea however, which, if you take the covenant to be the covenant of grace, does not appear at all consistent on the following account. For first, in the apostles' view, their actual interest in *this* covenant seems to be suspended on their actual *faith* and *repentance*, and on *their saving themselves*, ver. 40. *from that untoward generation.* Secondly, all the nations, or those in the text, said to be *afar off*, would be in this covenant, and that in their national capacity, equally as they: for the promise, if it was originally to Abraham and his seed, was likewise to the nations in general, for *all the nations were to be blessed in him.* So that, thirdly, the grand point contended for from this passage, namely, the connexion between believers and their seed, as they are called, seems to have no existence; for unfortunately the example they would here produce, does not happen to be an example of *believers*, but of *unbelievers*, at least at the time the words were addressed to them.

The 20th and 21st verses of the third chapter of the first epistle general of Peter, constitute another passage to which we must here advert, as we know too well that some produce it as an example of the connexion contended for. The principle upon which the doctrine

is urged from this passage, arises from the circumstance of the preservation of Noah's family along with himself, at the time of the general deluge. And this again, because baptism is here said to be an antitype of that event. But surely such an important doctrine ought by no means to be assumed from such a superficial view of a confessedly difficult text. We shall therefore endeavour to ascertain its true meaning, before we say a word respecting this subject, either on the one side or on the other.

And, *first*, let us attend to the *kind* of baptism here spoken of.

Secondly, to the manner in which it can be said to *save* any; and,

Thirdly, to the *means* by which this is effected, namely, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. As to the first then, we would remark, that we shall exceedingly err if we take baptism in every passage in which it occurs, and in this perhaps no less than any, in its literal sense. The apostle himself indeed, seems to guard us against this, by the explanatory clause he immediately subjoins, *not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.* By the introduction of this clause, it evidently appears, that the apostle did not wish his readers to understand *baptism* in the common sense of the word, and which consisted in the cleansing or washing away defilements of the body. It is not this kind of baptism he intends, but a baptism connected with the maintaining, even in the midst of persecution, of *a good conscience before God.*

If we attend to the preceding context, we shall see this remark confirmed in the clearest manner. In the beginning of the chapter, the apostle had been exhorting to the conscientious discharge of mutual duties. At

the 8th and 9th verses, he enjoins it as a general maxim, that Christians, in their intercourse with one another, are to be sympathizing, tender hearted, and courteous: never rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; to the end that they might obtain the inheritance to which they were called. He then assured them of the divine protection promised to the righteous, and of the certainty of threatened punishment against the wicked, ver. 12. But *who*, says he, ver. 13. *will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?* Good conduct will even disarm your persecutors; for, "when a man's ways please the Lord, the Lord (in general) will make even his enemy to be at peace with him." *But, and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye* * *; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so* that ye are to suffer, *that ye suffer for well doing than evil doing.*" 14,—17.

Above all, to support their minds in this their suffering condition, he brings the previous sufferings of Christ, and the glory which followed, immediately before their view. And having hinted at his resurrection, here termed a *quickening by the Spirit*, ver. 18. he produces an instance of very ancient date, to confirm all that he had said respecting both the righteous and the wicked. This instance is what happened to Noah and his family on the one hand, and the men of that generation on the other, in the case of the general deluge. And it may be remarked in general, that the whole

* See Matt. v. 10, 11, 12.

consisted in the complete preservation of the former, and total overthrow of the latter.

As a proof of this general state of the fact, he declares, that that disobedient and untoward generation, who would not hearken to the preaching of Noah at the time that God exercised his long-suffering patience toward them while the ark was a preparing, were then *in prison*, or in hell, as a punishment for their disobedience; while, on the contrary, Noah and his family, amounting only to *eight souls*, *were effectually saved by water*.

Thus far we have proceeded on what seems to be pretty clear and evident grounds; but what may be the precise meaning of that which follows, there is more room for conjecture, and by consequence doubt. Taking the passage in its connexion, however, I should suppose that the *baptism* spoken of, ver. 21. as the *antitype* of the matters above specified in ver. 20.* and which the apostle here distinguishes from mere *water baptism*, is the same as that to which our Lord himself referred, when addressing the ambitious disciples, and also when

* Ver. 11. The relative ᾧ being in the neuter gender, its antecedent is by some considered to be ὑδατος, which is likewise neuter; but, in our opinion, this does not clear the passage of its difficulty in any respect, like that of considering the circumstances respecting Noah, specified in the preceding verse, as the antecedent. And it is manifest that this would be equally grammatical, it being a rule in almost every language, that 'when the relative respects a whole sentence, it is put in the neuter gender.' The sense will therefore be, Ὥ, "To which circumstance," (namely, that of the preservation of Noah and his family, by means of the ark), ἀντιτυπον Βαπτισμα, "the antitype baptism, doth also now save us, (not that kind of baptism however, which consisteth in washing away the filth of the flesh, but that which consisteth in the obtaining of the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

he said, *I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished* *? The baptism to which our Lord refers in these passages, is unquestionably *sufferings*; and as this is the grand topic the apostle is discoursing on here, we do not perceive how it would be in the least straining the point, to restrict its interpretation to this signification alone. And what would incline us the more to do so, is the *effect* said to be produced by the baptism the apostle is here speaking of on the persons to whom he writes. These effects are positively said to be salvation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is accordingly the *second* thing to which we were to attend for the illustration of this difficult passage.

2. And our inquiry here must be, *in what respects baptism can be said to save any?* Baptism, taken according to its common acceptation, cannot properly be said either to be the salvation or condemnation of a man. Where it is attended to in faith in the Son of God, indeed, it must be a duty pleasing in his sight, and such as he will own and accept through his merits; but no where do we find it in Scripture, so far at least as our present recollection serves us, save in this passage, ever represented as the salvation of believers. The very contrary seems to be insinuated, Mark xvi. 16. where it is said, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not*, evidently notwithstanding he should be baptized, *shall be damned.* But baptism, on the other hand, taken for affliction, is frequently represented as exceedingly conducive to this important end; and by a very chaste metaphor of taking the end for the means, a thing very common in every species of discourse, it may with propriety be said to be the salvation of the godly. Paul, speaking on this subject,

* Compare Matt. xx. 22, 23. Mar. x. 38, 39. and Luke xii. 50,

2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. terms these "afflictions but light and momentary;" and adds, that nevertheless "they work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and this again, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Exactly similar therefore to what Paul here says, do we conceive the salvation of which Peter speaks, in the passage under consideration to be. The believing *sojourners* to whom he writes, were called to *endure a great fight of afflictions*. Being Jews, they were therefore exposed to persecutions on every hand. Compelled to fly from the devouring sword in their own land, they found themselves equally destitute of shelter whithersoever they went. As it was with their great Master, so likewise was it with them. The heathen raged; the people imagined vain things; they rose up with one accord, even to extirpate his blessed name from the earth. As those in Judea effected, as they supposed, by his crucifixion, the total destruction of the Master; so those of the nations, stimulated by their example, imagined that by similar means, they would crush his rising fame, and deter every one, through the fear of persecution, from any longer defending his cause. But the attempt was vain. For while incontrovertible evidence could be adduced in proof of this one subject which the apostle here introduces, namely the *resurrection* of the blessed Saviour, persecution, so far from being an impediment in the way of believers, would invariably be the means of accelerating their progress. To us, therefore, and we repeat it again, it appears extremely evident, that this is precisely what the apostle is representing in the case before us. He had first spoken of the sufferings to which the believers to whom he wrote, were expo-

sed; then instancing the case of the Saviour himself, as not only "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"—He lastly brings in the example of Noah and the antideluvians, as a general illustration of the important facts on which he was here insisting. The salvation of Noah and his family by water, he represented as a type, the antitype of which was the preservation of believers amid the overwhelming billows of persecution. As the former were saved by means of the ark being borne up by the mighty flood, so the latter were preserved from sinking into eternal perdition, by being enabled to preserve a conscience void of offence, even in the midst of persecution, both towards God and towards man. Though many of them might actually fall by the hands of their persecutors, still this could have no influence in rendering their eternal state more insecure; for in all such cases, they were never to consult their own will, but the will of their heavenly Master, and with meekness to say, as they had been taught, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto men more than unto God, judge ye *." Thus would their very persecutions, which were like raging billows, and like *baptisms* in deep waters, so far from retarding, rather be the means of securing their salvation.

3. But we were to inquire in the last place, *why it is that this kind of baptism is attended with such blessed effects.* Paul states a general reason why it is so in the passage alluded to, in the ivth chapter of 2 Corinthians. But Peter is more explicit, declaring it to be *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Paul speaks only of the exercise of Christians in general, in having their mind called off by affliction from the contemplation of things which are seen and temporal, toward those which are unseen and

* Acts iv.

eternal; but Peter particularizes the precise principle upon which Paul's heavenly mindedness can possibly succeed, and shews that it must be from first to last, entirely through the resurrection of the Saviour. The simple fact of his having been raised after having been violently put to death as a transgressor, was such a firm ground of confidence, that the hope of believers can never be lost, that earth and hell in vain combine their force to deprive them of it. Was Noah in reality saved? Has the Saviour been raised indeed? Answers to these questions are calculated to dissipate every fear. And the man who has faith in them, is raised above the level of his fellow-men who are yet in unbelief; he is like Noah in the ark. "The floods of ungodly men cannot make him afraid; for the Lord will send strength from above: He will draw them out of many waters*." For if we believe that Christ died and rose again, then we are assured that those also who sleep in Christ, God will bring with him; and that if we suffer with him, we shall be also glorified together.

Thus signally does the *baptism of persecution* save through faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And how can it be otherwise? for if I believe that Jesus died and rose again, then by consequence I must believe that he is the *true Messiah*. And if this be admitted, then I must believe that the whole of his *religion* is true likewise. But if his religion be true, and yet, through fear of persecution, I should not dare to avow it, then, in this case, I would have to consider myself as sealing my own condemnation; for does not that religion teach, that whosoever will not confess the Saviour before men, him will not he confess before his Father who is in heaven?

* Psal. xviii. 4. 16.

In this case too, I could not have *the answer of a good conscience toward God.* For on account of the abundance of evidence to the truth on the one hand, and my own infidelity on the other, it would *smite* me for denying the Saviour. And thus by saving myself from the baptism of persecution, I should inevitably expose myself to a baptism which would be infinitely worse, even the wrath and displeasure of Almighty God, in the eternal world. Thus, from the admission of a first principle, I am led on to the admission of a second, and a second leads on to a third, a third to a fourth, and so on, till I am brought either to give up religion altogether as a cunningly devised fable, or else to maintain it with all the firmness of one fully persuaded of its heavenly origin, and that in opposition to all that my fellow-mortals can either say or do unto me. This last accordingly I do; having learned from this religion not to fear them who can only kill the body, but him who is able to cast both soul and body into hell fire. And in this object of my choice, I find the *resurrection* of the blessed Saviour, to be my *principal*, my *only* support, first, by way of *evidence*, and then by way of *hope*. For he arose, not as a private individual, but as a pattern and examplar of the resurrection of his people, testifying that by whatever means they should die, there should be hope in their death, and that it is utterly out of the power of earth and hell to deprive them of such a hope.

Such are the views we have ventured to suggest on this difficult passage. And if they should be found to be correct, we humbly apprehend that they will tend not a little to remove the difficulties, as well as be the means of preventing it from being employed, without good reason, in support of a doubtful theory. But so entirely without foundation do we consider the addu-

cing of this passage, as a proof of *infant baptism*, to be, that we shall particularly consider it, according to its own merits, independently of the views we have here given. It is insinuated, that because Noah's family were preserved from the effects of the deluge as well as himself, and this again being conjoined with the subject of baptism, hence arises an argument for the baptism of infants. But this conclusion we hold to be most fallacious, for the following reasons.

1. The children of Noah were not in their infant state. They had arrived at the years of maturity, had taken to themselves wives, and of course were themselves accountable, and not their parent, for the conduct they might pursue.

2. But secondly, it does not appear that they were really preserved on account of the faith of their parent, but, on the contrary, it would rather seem, by the becoming behaviour of two of them shortly after, that they had faith for themselves personally, or at any rate if this was not the case, that they were preserved along with Noah, for certain reasons not explained.

3. Therefore, thirdly, supposing those reasons to be really on account of something in the parent, might we not consider them as rather of a nature including only general things, than as specifically connecting a man's posterity, even in the covenant of grace, along with himself? Thus we read of Elijah, that he could shut and open heaven, that at his prayer the heavens gave no rain for the space of three years and six months, and that again, when he prayed, the heavens were opened, and poured out their rain in abundance. In this manner therefore, whole nations might be said to be saved or punished on account of the faith and prayer of Elijah; but it would be certainly straining the point to connect them with him, as it respected their preservation,

in the covenant of grace, and equally so to consign them, as it respected their punishment, to eternal perdition. Thus therefore Noah's family might have been connected with himself upon mere general principles; or more particularly perhaps, that through their means the earth might be speedily replenished, and that in the line of one of them the Messiah might descend. Besides, there was no little wisdom displayed in preserving more than a solitary individual, as by this means more ample testimony would necessarily be furnished for succeeding ages, to establish the truth of such an extraordinary event.

4. We must therefore remark, in the fourth place, that between the *type* and the *antitype*, according to the common explanation, there appears scarcely the least analogy; and what is perhaps worse, the passage is still left wholly unexplained, and involved in all the difficulties in which it was found.

5. Hence we must observe, in the last place, that unless it can be better explained than has yet been done, and proved beyond a doubt to be referring to baptism in the literal sense, it never can with propriety be employed by Pedo-baptists in support of their system; nor even then, unless they can make the type and the antitype to correspond in that particular point which is the subject of dispute, namely, the covenant connexion which is said to subsist between believers and their infant offspring.

Second class of passages. Under this class were to be comprehended those passages which seem to distinguish between the children of believers and unbelievers.

A very famed passage of this description is contained in 1 Cor. vii. 14. The apostle, speaking of the duties incumbent upon either believing man or woman, who might be joined, previous to their conversion, to an un-

believing partner, proceeds to reason upon the subject thus. First, that they ought not to separate on that account, ver. 12, 13. *For*, says he, ver. 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.*

Concerning this passage, we would only remark, that while Baptists on the one hand, contend that holiness here, as applied to children, signifies only their *legitimacy*, and Pedo-baptists on the other, that it signifies nothing less than a *federal* holiness, a holiness running in blood, descending from parent to child; we would remark, I say, that to us the following view of the late ingenious and judicious Macknight, appears to be the best we have yet seen. For various important reasons given in his fourth preliminary essay, he renders the Greek preposition ἐν in this passage, by the English preposition *to*; so that, according to him, the passage runs thus. *For the infidel husband is sanctified to the wife, and the infidel wife is sanctified to the husband; otherwise, certainly, your children were unclean, whereas, indeed, they are holy.* His commentary runs thus, '*For the infidel husband is sanctified*, is fitted to remain married *to the* believing *wife*, by his affection for her; *and the infidel wife is sanctified to the* believing *husband*, by her affection for him, *otherwise certainly your children would be* neglected by you as *unclean; whereas indeed they are clean*; they are the objects of your affection and care.'

To the text and commentary thus quoted in the Doctor's own words, we insert from him likewise the following note.

'*Otherwise certainly your children are unclean.*—Our translators seem here to have understood the terms *sanctified, unclean*, and *holy*, in a federal sense, which in-

'deed is the common opinion. But first, it is not true 'in a federal sense, that the unbelieving party in a mar-'riage is sanctified by the believing party; for evident-'ly no one hath any right to the blessings of the gos-'pel covenant, by the faith of those to whom they are 'married. In the second place, it is as little true, that 'the children procreated between believing and unbe-'lieving parents, become *unclean* by the separation of 'their parents, and *clean* by their continuing together, 'as the apostle asserts, if by *unclean* we understand ex-'clusion from the covenant, and by *clean* admission into 'it. For the title which children have to be members 'of the covenant, depends not on their parents living 'together, but on the faith of the believing parent*. I 'therefore think with Elsner, that the words in this 'verse have neither a federal nor a moral meaning, but 'are used in the idiom of the Hebrews, who by *sancti-'fied*, understood what was fitted for a particular use, 'and by *unclean* what was unfit for use, and therefore 'to be cast away. In that sense, the apostle, speaking 'of *meat*, says, 1 Tim. iv. 5. *It is sanctified* (fitted for 'your use) *by the word of God and prayer*. Ver. 4. *Eve-'ry creature of God* fit for food *is good, and nothing* fit for 'food *is to be cast away* as unclean. The terms in the 'verse thus understood, afford a rational meaning, 'namely, that when infidels are married to Christians, 'if they have a strong affection for their Christian 'spouses, they are thereby *sanctified* to them, they are

* *But on the faith of the believing parent.* Such, it appears, was the Doctor's opinion on this subject. But would it not have been better for him to have expressed himself here, as he had done a few lines above, and fairly to have owned that 'evidently no one hath any right to the blessings of the gospel covenant,' by the faith of those *of* whom they are born, equally as 'by the faith of those *to* whom they are married?'

'fitted to continue married to them; because their affection to the Christian party will insure to that party the faithful performance of every duty; and that if the marriages of infidels and Christians were to be dissolved, they would cast away their children as *unclean*, that is, losing their affection for them, they would expose them after the barbarous custom of the Greeks, or at least neglect their education; but that by continuing their marriages, their children are *holy*, they are preserved as sacred pledges of their mutual love, and educated with care.'

Another very noted passage to the same purpose, is that in the xith chapter of the epistle to the Romans, ver. 16. *For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.*

When I first heard this passage produced in favour of infant baptism, in consequence of a federal holiness said to subsist between the parent and the child, I confess I was not a little struck at the idea, and the more so, as it differed so much from the notions I had entertained of it, and which I do still entertain, as upon further reflection I conceive them to be more rational.

There were just two principles upon which I used to explain the passage, and which to me still appear to be happily free from that arbitrary and forced construction I here object to. The first was that of considering it simply as a figure, intended to convey a general truth, by means of which the apostle might convey most clearly his design to his readers. The second was to illustrate it wholly by the context, wherein there is no mention made of that particular subject for which it is produced; but, on the contrary, every thing to prove, that it is only personal faith which can give any a personal interest to the blessings in the covenant of grace.

As a general principle it is true, that a sample taken out of a whole must resemble that whole, and that if a root be holy, so are also the branches. See examples of this truth taught in the following Scriptures, Matt. vii. 16,—20. and James iii. 11, 12.

And that this general truth was consonant to the apostle's design in this passage, must appear evident to any one at first view. The subject of which he is here speaking, is the rejection of the Jews and reception of the Gentiles. These form a contrast in the apostle's account, in several of the preceding verses. But he speaks of an in-gathering, as well as a rejection of that ancient people, and passes several strictures relative to the effect that both were to have upon the Gentiles. "If the fall of them," says he, "be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" ver. 12. This the apostle spoke concerning the Gentiles, that he might stir up his brethren the Jews to emulation, and might be the happy means of saving some of them, ver. 13, 14. Then resuming, ver. 15. the same kind of reflection he had thrown out in the 12th, he says, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" After which follows the passage in question, *For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.*

From the connexion in which this passage occurs, it would then appear that, by the *first fruits*, we are either to understand converts from among the Gentiles in the early ages of Christianity, or those from among the Jews at the same period; or perhaps both ought to be kept in view, and then the *first fruit* thus understood, will be answerable on the one hand to the fulness of the

Gentiles, and on the other to the in-gathering of the Jews, which were both to take place in latter times.

As for the other figure taken from the vegetable world, the connexion between a root and its branches must be obvious to all. If the root be sound and healthy, the branches will be so in like manner; but if the root be corrupt, the branches must partake of corruption likewise. In this respect, the one must always keep pace with the other.

The question then comes to be, what is the root, and who are the branches the apostle has particularly in view by this figurative language? There are various passages of Scripture which represent Jesus Christ to be the root and offspring of David; and what he was to David in respect of a root, that certainly he is to the whole of his people. But there is another passage, Jer. xi. 16. in which the same kind of figure is employed, which some suppose to refer to Abraham as the root. Israel and Judah are there represented as "a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit;" but because of their lewdness, the Lord is said to have kindled a fire, and the branches of it are broken. As Abraham was then the founder of that nation, so he is considered by many in relation to this figure, as the root; and that it is to him, under the same metaphor, that the apostle alludes in the passage before us. To which interpretation, there can be certainly no objection, provided it be kept in view that Abraham is to be considered as a root in a twofold sense, carnal and spiritual; and that it is only in the latter, that the figure can be applicable in this passage. For as the believing Gentiles are the principal persons here spoken of, and along with them are connected believing Jews, it is demonstrably evident that Abraham was never connected with either of them in this character, but in the spiritual sense.

According to these interpretations therefore, the sense of the passage must be sufficiently manifest. The *first fruit* of believing Jews and Gentiles, would refer to the full harvest of believers of both classes, which was to take place in latter times. The qualities or characters of the full harvest, here represented by the expression *the lump* or mass, would in this respect correspond with the first fruit; so that, if the one was holy and devoted to the Lord, like the first fruits under the law, the other would be so in like manner; and therefore, from this passage, we are taught to think soberly in regard to the latter day glory, and to view it in all respects as corresponding with the sample afforded by the first fruits, in which it consisted in the conversion of individuals, by means of a personal conviction of the truth, and not the indiscriminate vocation of whole nations to the assumption of a name where there existed nothing of the reality. By this we perceive also what we are to understand by *the root and the branches*. Being only spiritual matters which are here spoken of, the connexion between the one and the other must by consequence be understood of this nature only. Whether therefore Abraham or Christ be considered as the root, the meaning will be the same; the root will be spiritual, and the branches also. Divesting the passage of all figures then, it will amount simply to what is clearly taught in other parts of Scripture, namely, that Abraham is the spiritual father of all who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, and that all who believe are spiritual children, and are therefore in this partakers of the nature and qualities of the parent. Or should any rather prefer to consider Christ as the root, still they will find that when the figure is stripped of its metaphorical signification, it will come to one and the same thing.

We would therefore ask, in the last place, that from

the passage thus explained, explained as we conceive without any unnatural, arbitrary, or forced meaning given to the words, wherein does it at all appear to give any countenance to those notions which Pedo-baptists deduce from it? On the contrary, we will be bold to affirm, that it will be impossible for them to find, either in this or in any other part of Scripture, that federal connexion they so vehemently contend for, if by this connexion they intend, as we know they do, the spiritual interest of a carnal posterity, in a spiritual covenant, in consequence of the faith of their parents. Yea, we are certain we are not assuming too high grounds here, when we roundly assert, that before such a point can be proved, they must first get rid of that undeniable and most clearly inculcated doctrine, *the universal depravity of human nature.*

Conceiving these to be the principal passages belonging to the *second class*, without spending time in the consideration of others of which these may serve as a specimen, we shall rather proceed to the consideration of the *third* and last class of passages, which were to consist of such a general nature, that they could not be well reckoned under either of the foregoing.

And here we would remark, that because several passages of Scripture speak of certain children as having been blessed in their early infancy or youth, this is hence urged as a reason why *all* children, of believers at least, ought to be baptized. The cases generally alluded to, are Samuel, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and the children whom our Lord himself took in his arms and blessed, in the presence of the multitude. But such instances surely, while they indeed display in a very conspicuous manner the riches of the Saviour's grace, can never be an example for Pedo-baptism, unless they had been represented with such a view. The

paucity of their number indeed, overturns the argument of itself; for unless it can be said of *all* children, or at least of as many as have the ordinance of baptism administered to them, that they in like manner are blessed and endowed with gracious principles, no arguments can be drawn from the one to the other. Besides, it was by no means in the act of attending to this ordinance that these children were blessed; neither do we read of any of them having been baptized, even after the blessing was conferred. What then is there in these passages that can at all countenance infant baptism? Much encouragement indeed they afford for Christians to confide in God in behalf of their children; but it is easy to conceive of this in a general manner, as indeed we are constrained from these passages to do, without considering all our children as therefore spiritual, and heirs of the covenant of grace, in consequence of their connexion with us.

The next passage to which we shall attend, is contained, 1 Cor. x. 2. *And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea.*

The chief argument commonly deduced from this text is, that as all the Israelites were baptized into Moses in the cloud, and in the sea, and as they carried their children along with them, they would all be baptized in like manner. Hence arises, it is said, the propriety of Pedo-baptism.

But concerning this subject, there are two weighty considerations which ought to be taken into account before any such deduction can be allowed. The first is, to ascertain the sense in which Israel was baptized into Moses in the cloud, and in the sea. The second to inquire whether baptism, as that particular institution enjoined by Christ upon his apostles, was specifically the same as that, and whether *that*, in this defined sense,

was observed and administered to infants in succeeding generations, till it came to be absorbed in the baptism of Christ as its antitype. In nothing less than these particulars do we consider the merits of this question to consist; for it is not from the mere sound of the word *baptize* in this passage, but from the sense in which it is used, in conjunction with the custom which prevailed in that dispensation, by which alone the argument, in regard to it, is to be decided.

In what *sense* then were the Israelites baptized into Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea? Or rather, it may be asked as a question more likely to illustrate the other, for what particular purpose does the apostle introduce this subject, and affirm them to have been so? In the preceding context, the apostle had shewn from his own example, the absolute necessity of an unwearied and constant perseverance in the paths of righteousness. He was constrained "to keep under his body, and to bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, after he had preached unto others, he should himself be a cast away."

Such strictures upon his own case, were finely calculated for the introduction of the same subject, as it regarded the Corinthians. But to make it strike with still greater force, he produces the example of the ancient Israelites, from whose history, both as standing high in the divine favour, being blessed with many great and distinguished privileges, and as a perverse and rebellious race, on whom he was constrained to pour out his judgments, they might learn the necessity not to trust in any gifts or privileges they might enjoy, while they could wantonly disobey the holy commandments of the Lord, ver. 1,—12.

The apostle, in enumerating the privileges of the ancient Israelites, tacitly represents them to have been

very great, and in fact very nearly analogous to those still enjoyed by Christians under the gospel. By means of the pillar of cloud and of fire, they were protected from the fury of their enemies; and by faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry ground, which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned. They were likewise all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink, which we Christians partake of in the ordinance of the supper; for they ate of the manna in the wilderness as we do of the loaf, both which symbolically represent the true bread which came down from heaven; "and they drank," as we do of the cup, "that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ," says our apostle; or rather, as his meaning must be, a typical representation of his blood.

Now, these their privileges being then so great, as a general truth it was applicable to them, as well as to others, that "to whom much is given, of them the more will be required." The privileges conferred upon the Israelites did not secure them from the displeasure of God in case of disobedience. Hence we read, that "with many of them," though thus highly favoured, "God was not well pleased; for which cause they were overthrown in the wilderness."

What then are we Christians to learn from the rehearsal of these things? "These things," saith the apostle, "have become examples to us, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted," &c. And again he adds, ver. 11. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Having thus represented what we conceive to be the sense of the passage in general, we shall now endeavour to be a little more particular, in order to discover if possible its true signification, in relation to the subject in hand. And for this purpose we shall consider the various expressions in the order they occur.

The first then is, " Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea."

Our fathers. As the Corinthian church was composed chiefly of converts from among the Gentiles, the apostle could not call the ancient Israelites *their* fathers, at least in a literal sense, therefore his meaning must be, either that they were their predecessors in the church of God, or that they were the fathers of the apostle and his brethren, *as Jews.*

Were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. Both these circumstances were the unspeakable privilege of that ancient people, as will be seen to the best advantage by considering their deplorable situation in Egypt, the protection, the pillar of cloud and of fire afforded them, and their miraculous passage through the sea, which completed their deliverance from that house of bondage.

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. What may be the precise meaning of the word *baptize* in this passage, as connected with *the cloud* and *the sea*, I own is not very clear. From the account given of the Israelites in the book of Exodus, it appears that they were exceedingly slow to believe the divine mission of Moses the servant of God, and probably they never fully admitted it, notwithstanding they had seen many miracles performed by him, till they had experienced the divine power by the cloud protecting them from the fury of their enemies, and by the sea divi-

'To both places, the name of *Meribah* was given; but 'the latter was called *Meribah Kadesh*, to distinguish it 'from *Meribah* of *Rephidim*. It is of the miracle per- 'formed in Rephidim which the apostle speaks; for he 'says, the greater part of them who drank of the rock, 'were cast down in the wilderness.

'*Rock which followed them.*—The *rock* here, as in the 'former clause, is put for the *water from the rock*. This 'it seems came forth from it in such abundance as to 'form a brook, which is said, Deut. ix. 21. to have *de- 'scended out of the mount*, that is, out *of Horeb*, Exod. xvii. '5, 6. for before that miracle there was no brook in 'these parts. The issuing of the water from the rock, 'is said to have been like a river, Psal. lxxviii. 16. cv. '41. The truth is, 600,000 men, with their women, 'and children, and their cattle, required a river to sup- 'ply them with drink. Accordingly the river from the 'rock followed them. For as Wall observes, (Crit. 'Notes, Vol. I. p. 106.) from Horeb, which was an 'high mountain, there may have been a descent to the 'sea; and the Israelites during the thirty-seven years 'of their journeying from Mount Sinai, may have gone 'by those tracts of country, in which the water from 'Horeb could follow them, till in the thirty-ninth year 'of the Exodus they came to Ezion Gaber, Num. 'xxxiii. 36. which was a part of the Red Sea, a great 'way down the Arabian side, where it is supposed the 'waters from Horeb went into the sea. The country 'through which the Israelites journeyed so long a time, 'being watered by this river, produced no doubt herb- 'age for the cattle of the Israelites, which in this de- 'sert must otherwise have perished. But in the four- 'tieth year of the Exodus, leaving Ezion Gaber to go 'into Canaan by the east border of Edom, they no soon- 'er entered the desert of Zin, which is Kadesh, than

'they were a second time distressed for want of wa-
'ter.'

And that Rock was Christ. That is to say, it was a type of Christ, as the grand source whence proceeds all spiritual and heavenly blessings. It would appear from what the apostle says in this passage, that the Israelites were taught to consider all these things in this light.

Having thus given what we conceive to be the sense of the passage, let us next enquire whether it can be employed, with any degree of probability, in support of the system of Pedo-baptists. The word *all*, which occurs so frequently in this passage, is the chief point they insist on. Without appearing to be much concerned about the sense in which *baptism* is here used, they seem to express themselves with no little emotion concerning this term, and exultingly say, *And they were* ALL *baptized, young and old, infants and adults, male and female.* Perhaps, they might have added, in this enumeration, since they will come to particulars, in the sense of the apostle at least, though not in theirs, *and their cattle and their baggage.*

The writer from whom we have quoted the above remark, goes on to make a great ado concerning the idea of the Israelites separating their children from them, at the period of their going to be baptized in the cloud and in the sea; an idea, we will venture to say, which never needed so much as to enter their minds, and which, notwithstanding that we consider Pedo-baptism to be unfounded in the word of God, we cannot but look upon in the present instance, had it occurred, to have been exceedingly absurd and cruel. 'Who could 'have dared,' says he, 'to have separated the little 'children from the camp of Israel, and said, we are 'now to be baptized, and we can only partake of this 'ordinance properly, believing in the Lord and his ser-

'vant Moses. You infants are incapable of this faith, 'and must therefore be left behind, and be separated 'from the church*.' To which I would simply reply, Who that understands the matter aright, would ever consider this as necessary? Separate their children in such an important concern as that of which the apostle is speaking! No; by no means! Their children were the most precious part of all their temporal property. They were fleeing from the face of an enemy, and had the prospect of a safe defence, by being taken under the cloud of God, and by walking in the paths he was going to prepare for them in the midst of the sea, both which circumstances the apostle figuratively represents as a baptism; and must the helpless infant in such a situation be separated from the tender and provident regards of the parent? They were not taught to act thus even with their silver, or their gold, or their cattle; but were to take all these under the cloud, and through the sea, along with themselves: how much more therefore their children?—Surely had this passage been but properly understood, it of any never could have been brought in support of a system to which it does not appear in the smallest to refer. Indeed, though it is not our inclination to deal in any prognostication of the kind, yet here we have no difficulty in saying, that if people will go to Scripture with their own several prepossessions, and illustrate those divine oracles by their respective systems, instead of taking the whole simply as it stands, it will be a thousand to one if even in a single point they determine rightly. As to the author of the above mentioned sentiments, we are unable to conceive how it could have been otherwise, but that his mind, by those views he entertained, must have been darkened as to the grand scope and design of the pas-

* See Brown's Dict. Perth edit. under the article Baptism.

sage. The sacred writer is not teaching here what *he* would teach. Not a word respecting *infant baptism*, either directly or indirectly, drops on this occasion from the apostle; and yet, in the hands of this author, he would seem to speak of nothing else. All the favourers of Sion, no doubt, long for her prosperity; but, ah! the prospect is dark, of gathering all her children into one, unless men act very differently in their investigation of sacred truth than the generality seem to do.

There are several other passages referring to children, which have been brought forward of late in support of this doctrine, with as little apparent propriety as those we have just considered. They are that class of passages from which some contend that children had not only a right to baptism, but are really to be considered as members of the church. Mr Walker of Dublin seems to be the principal person who has given them a kind of form. To his little desultory piece on *baptism*, he has these words for his motto. *And they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city; and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed* *. His subsequent sentiments sufficiently evince what he meant by this passage. He declares in plain language indeed, that, in the apostolic writings, it appears to him, that 'the children of those who were members 'of the several churches are considered as bearing that 'relation to the churches, which occasions the apostles 'to address them with exhortations and admonitions, 'such as they never addressed to those whom they did 'not consider as disciples.' p. 8. He then descants at considerable length on the 1st and 4th verses of the vith chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians. We have only to remark, that the drift of his reasoning here is merely to corroborate what he had avowed in the words we

* Acts xxi. 5.

have quoted. To make the children of whom the apostle speaks, first members of the church, and yet in a state of childhood, is his grand object; and he seems to think his point obtained by endeavouring, in pretty strong language, to represent the impossibility, upon Baptist principles, to attend to the apostolic injunction in this passage. I have just to inform Mr Walker, however, that he is in an egregious mistake, if he suppose that this view of the passage is absolutely necessary to the spiritual edification of the soul in speaking from it. No, indeed; I am one of many, who can bear testimony to the contrary, having heard it lately discoursed on in the most edifying manner, without any reference to his view, by my worthy and judicious pastor, Mr Innes. Yea, I will go further: I will not hesitate to say, that if Mr Innes could have been so injudicious as to have urged opinions like Mr Walker's, in connexion with the excellent things he advanced, instead of more strongly impressing the mind with the importance of the subject by such means, their effect would rather have resembled the "dead flies in the apothecary's ointment, which cause it to send forth an ungrateful savour *." The very introduction of such doubtful disputations, would have enervated all that he had said, and so far from edifying, it would have engendered strife.

But not to rest in general assertions, let us examine the grounds upon which Mr Walker here proposes to proceed. 'I know,' says he, p. 8. 'the reply which 'some make, that when the apostle, writing (for in-'stance) to the Ephesian church, gives that exhortation, '*Children, obey your parents in the Lord*,' &c. he ad-'dresses only those *adult* members of the Ephesian 'church, whose parents were living. That such are

* Eccles. x. 1.

'included in the admonition, I readily admit. But when 'I read immediately in the 4th verse, *And ye, fathers, 'provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in 'the nurture and admonition of the Lord*,—I cannot but 'think we are to understand children in a state of child-'hood, under parental discipline and instruction; and it 'seems to me to be putting a great force upon the pas-'sage, to interpret the same expression in the 1st verse, 'in a sense which excludes those whom it evidently is 'intended to include in the 4th verse. In fact, when 'that epistle was sent to the Ephesian church, any of the 'parents who complied with the exhortation addressed in 'the latter verse to them, would necessarily lead their 'children to consider the admonition given in the for-'mer as directed to themselves.'

I agree with Mr Walker, that we ought scrupolously to adhere to it as a general rule, not to explain the word of God by any unnatural or forced interpretation. I cannot avoid thinking, however, that he himself has inadvertently run into this very fault by the scheme he proposes. When we find the Epistle inscribed *, "To the *saints* who are at Ephesus, and to the *faithful* in Christ Jesus," will not Mr Walker's plan of considering as *members* of this *believing* † and *holy* society, those whom we find in this very epistle, (ch. ii. 1,—3.) to be the farthest from this character, be incomparably more forced than the interpretation he is opposing? If we are to consider with him the children addressed in chap. vi. children in non-age, and yet church members, then we are bound to consider them as also included in the inscription, and as possessed of characters which the

* Eph. i. 1.

† It is πιστοις, *believers*, in the original, and is so rendered, 1 Tim. iv. 12. *et alibi*.

Scriptures absolutely deny to all, who are born simply after the flesh. Have we not then the best of reasons for still retaining that very interpretation which Mr Walker considers so faulty?

But let us next enquire whether it be so unnatural and forced as he would seem to represent. The apostle is here discoursing of relative duties in general. Having described the duties of husbands and wives, (ch. v. 22,—31.) he proceeds to consider those of parents and children, chap. vi. 1,—4. As the duties the apostle is inculcating, are purely of a relative nature, he passes over those incumbent upon the parents, while as yet there could be no return on the part of the children. He proceeds here, as he does in every other place where the same subjects are treated, in the natural order of rising from the inferior to the superior. Wives are first addressed, then husbands; children, then parents; and servants, then masters *.

The reason the apostle assigns in the end of verse 1. serves not a little, in my view, to confirm the interpretation which has been given of it. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; *for this right*," or *just*. What can be the design of this address to the reason and understanding of these children? Surely it implies that they were in a situation in which they might be apt to consider themselves as freed from filial duties. And what situation was this so likely to be, as that of members of a Christian church, while their parents were yet alive, and perhaps unbelievers; while they, on the contrary, had received the word in faith, and had been made free born children in the family of God? Now, as servants were not to act otherwise than on the fair principles of *right*, be their masters either believers or unbe-

* Compare with this passage, Col. iii. 18. to the 1st ver. of ch. iv. 1 Pet. iii.

lievers, 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2. so here the apostle shews that the same rule binds children in every condition. The Pharisees indeed had a tradition by which they pretended to grant licenses of this nature *; but here we clearly perceive that there is no such thing in the churches of Christ. Christian youths are not to spurn at the reverence due to their parents, because their parents may not be of their mind in regard to the doctrines of the gospel; neither are they to despise such as may be of their mind, and united with them in the same Christian societies. By this precept, believing children are to obey, even their unbelieving parents, in every thing consistent with their duty to the Lord, as a matter of *right* or *justice*. They are to honour them with obedience, and, if need be, with maintenance, recollecting that this is the only proper return for the maintenance and education which they received from them. And also as it is to them, under God, they owe their very existence, what can be more just and equal than such obedience?

Parents, on the other hand, are next exhorted not to provoke their children to wrath, but to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Here children are evidently considered as yet situated under parental correction and instruction; and their duties of unreserved and cheerful obedience in such a situation, are taken for granted, and not expressed. But the apostle regulates the duties of the parents, as *they* are the only persons here supposed to act, just as he had done those of the children who are supposed to have attained that age of being capable to act for themselves, ver. 1. He binds it on Christian parents to train up their children in "the *nurture* and *admonition* of the Lord." That is to say, to instruct them in religious and all other useful knowledge, and not even to spare the rod of correc-

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tion when necessary. They are to consider them at the first as ignorant, totally ignorant of God and divine things, and to adapt their instructions accordingly. And the foibles that are inseparable from their vain minds, are to be timeously corrected by the chastening rod; for, as the wise man says, "He that spareth the rod hateth the child *." That fathers may not chastise after their own pleasure however, but for the profit of their children, the apostle in this, and in other passages, lays down the rule how it is to be done. Severity must be tempered with tenderness; though kept in their proper place, yet must they be encouraged. It will require line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, to furnish their young minds with ideas which will fit them, through the divine blessing, either to be received into the church of God, or qualify them to be useful members of society. But through the patient use of such means, success need not be despaired of; for we know who hath said, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Upon the whole then, I would now ask, what is there in all these duties incumbent upon parents toward their children, which it is impossible to perform, unless they be considered as church members? They *must* be considered as *disciples*, it is maintained, from their earliest infancy; and none can discharge this bounden duty if, with the Baptists, they refuse to consider them in this character. Nay, it is roundly asserted, that the very foundation of this duty is systematically assailed by Baptist principles †. But we ask, how so? And what is it that authorizes Mr W. to use such strong language? Will it be his concordancial references to the

* Prov. xiii. 24.

† Mr Walker's Thoughts on Baptism, p. 10, & 11.

various passages in which the word *admonition* occurs? But if admonition signifies *warning*, as he seems to admit, can none be warned, and even warned from the Lord, without being considered his professed people, and members of his church? Upon this principle, what should we then make of the mission of the prophet Jonah to the Ninevites, or of the prophetic warnings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others, to Moab, Tyre and Sidon, Assyria, Egypt, and the surrounding nations? Could the Lord not commission his servants to warn them, unless they were his professed people? or rather, more in conformity, it would seem, to the spirit of Mr Walker's remarks, do none stand in need of warning, but such as in word indeed profess his name, but in works deny him? Such notions in religion as too many have espoused now-a-days, we confess ourselves utterly at a loss to account for.

We own indeed, that we have no objections that children should be considered as disciples or pupils, if it can add any thing to the success in teaching them; but this is a very different thing from regarding them as spiritual, or at least as members of the church of Christ, which is his spiritual body. The relation between the teacher and the pupil is of a mutual nature, and it is only necessary that such a relation should subsist, in order to give effect to instructions, of whatever kind they may be. Upon this principle it is, that teachers instruct children at school, and masters their apprentices, in the various branches of their respective callings. And it is upon the same principle that the apostle here enjoins Christians to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; that is to say, they are to take this important concern into their own hand, as the fittest persons for such a work. Being instructed themselves in the doctrines of the gospel,

and in the infallible precepts of gospel morality, they are the only persons of course who can teach them to others. While the church then is represented as the pillar and ground of the truth, by exhibiting the truth to the world, every separate family will enjoy the same privilege in a manner within itself, by the faithful discharge of this apostolic injunction. And as the divine blessing is promised to accompany the faithful declaration of his word to the world, so we have every reason to expect it in an especial manner here; and hence it is that churches are mostly furnished with members from amongst the families of the godly. Not that they are naturally better than others, but that they have more attention bestowed upon them; and the faithfulness, as well as the goodness of God, bind him to bless the ordinances or means of his own appointment.

The next passage we shall consider, is contained Col. ii. 11, 12. "In whom also," namely Christ, "ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism; wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." 'Here,' says Dr Erskine, in his sermon on infant baptism*, 'the apostle, to withdraw the Colossians 'from the rites of the ceremonial law, and particularly 'from circumcision, to which the Jews warmly urged 'them to adhere, observes, that they were *complete in* '*Christ*, all spiritual blessings being in him, and all 'ordinances necessary to their happiness or comfort, 'being appointed by him; that in him they had the 'thing signified by circumcision, being sanctified in 'him, and so *having put off the body of the sins of the* '*flesh*; and that, though circumcision was completely

* Erskine's Sermons, Vol. II. p. 202.

'abolished under the gospel, they and their infant seed 'had baptism in its room, to represent and to seal to 'them the blessings of the covenant of grace. The 'apostle's argument,' he adds, 'would have been in-'complete and inconclusive, could the Jews have alle-'ged, that, under the old dispensation, their infants had 'promises belonging to them, and a claim to circumci-'sion as the seal of these promises; but that now they 'were deprived of both, and had nothing equally valu-'able substituted in their room.'

Thus far Dr Erskine; and it is but fair to acknowledge, that with his general view of the passage we heartily acquiesce. But he seems here to assert more than the text authorizes, which, for the truth's sake, we are bound to point out. Than the assertion, 'Though 'circumcision was completely abolished under the gos-'pel, they and their *infant* seed had baptism in its 'room,' nothing can be more unhappy in the place where it stands. For first, the text does not at all authorize it. There is not a syllable either in text or context, respecting children. The apostle says indeed respecting "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ*," to whom he is writing, that they themselves "were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands," that is to say, with spiritual circumcision, but not a word does he speak concerning their children. Again, their being *complete* in Christ, did not consist in having their children nominally connected with them in the covenant of grace, but in themselves being personal partakers of the Saviour's grace, and in the boundless grace of the Saviour answering all their individual exigencies. In opposition to all who would derogate from the Saviour's glory, by representing him as a creature, the apostle declares him, ch. i. 15,—19. to be

* Chap. i. 2.

the supreme God. And the expression he employs in the 19th verse of the first chapter, he resumes in the 9th verse of the second, which verse contains a general truth, and is the foundation of that which immediately follows. For the apostle having declared that in Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, immediately adds, "and ye are complete in him, who is the Head of all principality and power." Such then is the completion of the Christian. It does not consist in nameless or ideal blessings, extending to the offspring of believers, but in real and substantial blessings communicated to their own soul, through the belief of the truth. As the apostle John says, "They beheld his glory, and received of his fulness grace for grace *."

We therefore humbly apprehend, and that in opposition to so great authority as Dr Erskine's, the apostle's argument to be both complete and conclusive, notwithstanding he be considered as never having had Pedo-baptism in his view. The superiority of the latter over the former dispensation, does not consist in the number or external grandeur of its ordinances, but in having the substance in the place of the shadow, the thing signified instead of the sign.

This is the grand principle upon which its real superiority is founded, and, I may add, the only principle upon which the apostle seems here to proceed. The superiority of the Gentiles over the Jews did not consist in their having ordinances substituted in the room of such as were rendered obsolete by the introduction of the gospel, but in obtaining, in reality, the things spiritually represented in these ordinances. Thus *circumcision*, for example, the very subject the apostle here adduces, though abrogated and rendered void by the new dispensation, converts to this dispensation would yet suffer no

* John i. 14. 16.

abridgment of privileges, so long as they could enjoy one of the grandest designs implied in circumcision, that is to say, *the circumcision of the heart.* This is evidently what he means by their being "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands." This circumcision consisted in their "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh," or in other words, their renouncing the old man, which is corrupt, and their putting on the new man, by their conversion to Christianity. And because baptism, in those early ages, was always connected, or followed upon the first profession which any made of the doctrines of the gospel, the apostle here refers to it, ver. 12. insinuating that the circumcision he had mentioned in the preceding verse, was presupposed, by their being "buried with Christ in baptism, wherein also they are," figuratively, "raised with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Thus do we clearly perceive, that the apostle, neither in the circumcision of which he is here speaking on the one hand, nor baptism on the other, has *children in the smallest in his view*, but restricts both to such as were *circumcised in their heart*, and baptized accordingly, as a consequence of their personal profession of the faith into which they had been begotten through the operation of God.

As connected with the passage just now discussed, we proceed to consider Rom. xv. 8. where Christ is styled *a minister of the circumcision.* How this text is made to bear on the point of Pedo-baptism, I confess myself at a loss to say, having never heard it accounted for; but certain I am that it has been adduced in support of that system, and asserted in the most confident manner, as confirming it beyond the possibility of a doubt. What a pity it is that the grounds of such a positive assertion were not produced, for then we could have judged for

ourselves; however, as this is not the case, we shall attempt the elucidation of the passage notwithstanding, to the best of our ability.

Well then, when we read of *Jesus Christ as a minister of the circumcision*, are we not naturally led to inquire, And *who were the circumcision* of which Christ was a minister? And to this question the division of the apostolic charge completely furnishes us with an answer. The twelve apostles were likewise called *ministers* of the word, and the subjects of their charge were divided into two classes, namely, the *circumcision* and the *uncircumcision**. Now if we consult the history of our blessed Lord, we shall find that it was only to the *first* class that he was sent in regard to his personal ministry, notwithstanding he was to be for salvation to all the ends of the earth. At a very early period Moses intimated to the Israelites that the Lord would raise up a prophet from amongst their brethren like unto him, who should teach and instruct them as he had done; so that for the accomplishment of this very prediction it was necessary that Jesus Christ, to whom undoubtedly it referred, should appear as a teacher and a prophet to *that* particular people. Accordingly we read, that when he came, "he came to his *own*†;" that he was not sent save to the lost sheep of the *house of Israel*‡; and that when he sent forth the twelve to preach the gospel, he commanded them expressly, "saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; *but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel* §." All which passages abundantly shew in what respects Christ was *a minister of the circumcision*.

The next object then comes to be, to ascertain the design of the apostle in introducing such an expression

* Gal. ii. 7, 8, 9.
† John i. 11.
‡ Mat. xv. 24.
§ Mat. x. 5, 6.

in the passage now under consideration. The apostle is here, as the context evinceth, maintaining the unanimity among Christians, shewing, by a variety of arguments, chap. xiv. that Christians ought not to separate from each other on account of difference of sentiments. Then after having suggested some of the most beautiful and apposite reflexions in the beginning of chap. xv. he concludes, ver. 7. "wherefore receive ye one another," into your communion, namely, "as Christ also hath received us" all, whether Jews or Gentiles, into his family, "to the glory of God." The Jews had no right to object to the admission of the Gentiles into the church, on account of their not attending to many things they considered as sacred, and as little had the Gentiles any right to oppose the admission of the Jews on account of their scrupulously attending to *meats and days*, and a variety of other things from which they justly considered themselves as forced by the gospel of Christ. It was not their prerogative to judge one another in these things; but he who thought he had faith in the observance or non-observance of them "was to have it for himself before God," chap. xiv. 22. Whilst one believed that he might eat all things alike, and another who was weak, and of course could not take to himself that latitude, had therefore to content himself with herbs; this was equally the rule for them both, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received both the one and the other," ver. 23. "Wherefore," as the apostle asserts, chap. xv. 7. "we are bound to receive one another, as Christ also hath received us, to the glory of God."

But as to the union of Gentiles and Jews into one body, it might be urged as an objection, as the apostle

here insinuates, that if Christ meant to receive the former, he would have preached to them himself. But 'to this objection,' as Dr Macknight observes, 'the 'apostle replied, that Jesus Christ was born a Jew, and 'preached to the Jews only, because thereby, in the 'end, he most effectually accomplished God's promises 'to the fathers, concerning the blessing of the nations in 'Abraham's seed *.' Though our blessed Lord did not preach to the nations personally, he was not, however, forgetful of them, for he commanded in general his gospel to be preached to every creature; and, in particular, he commissioned his servant Paul, as his chosen vessel, to go far hence amongst the Gentiles, bearing his name, and proclaiming through the blood of his cross the remission of sins. Thus were the "Gentiles made to glorify God for his mercy," to glorify him for making the once crucified, but now exalted Redeemer, the head of the heathen—to rejoice together with his people—to praise the Lord; yea, exceedingly to praise him for his merciful kindness, which was great towards them †.

Now, after such a delightful representation, is it not painful to be under the necessity of still recurring to the old subject, and of enquiring what connexion has this passage with the point in hand? Assuredly if it go a single step in proof of Pedo-baptism, there is not a subject in the universe but what it may prove!

As we did not finish entirely the subject respecting *households* in the preceding chapter, we shall accordingly resume it, and give the remainder in this place. When formerly speaking on this subject, we saw that the term

* His view and illustration of the xv. chap. of the epistle to the Romans.

† Compare with this text 2 Sam. xxii. 44. 50. and Psal. xviii. 43. 49. and also Psal. cxvii.

household always includes the whole of the domestics of the family, no less than the children; yea, that in several instances it includes the former, but not the latter, but never the latter and not the former. Here we are therefore to enquire upon what principle does it appear, that the households mentioned in the New Testament were baptized? Whether was it on account of the faith of the respective heads of those households, or on account of their personal faith? And again, whether there were children in those families, or even servants; and whether they were both placed on a level, and had baptism administered to them equally, as circumcision was administered to the children and domestics of Abraham's household of old? Answers to these questions, we conceive, in as far as the Scriptures may guide us, will furnish us with all the information necessary on this head.

We begin accordingly with that of Zaccheus, as it is the first in order, see Luke xix. 1,—10. This passage we advert to, not because baptism is spoken of, but because at the conversion of Zaccheus, salvation is said to *have come to his house*. But to understand the subject aright, it will be necessary briefly to review the narrative at large.

The Lord Jesus Christ, a man mighty in word and deed among the Jews in those days, in the course of his public ministry, "entered and passed through Jericho," ver. 1. His fame had created general attention, and amongst the rest, Zaccheus, the subject of this history, was desirous to see Jesus who he was, ver. 3. But being little of stature, he found it impossible to get an advantageous view of him, while he remained on a level with his companions. He therefore thought of going before, in order to choose a proper situation, that he might see Jesus as he passed. He climbed up accordingly to a sycamore-tree; and here it was, to the astonish-

ment of the whole multitude, that Jesus manifested his concern to see Zaccheus, as much as Zaccheus had done to see him; and therefore, looking up, he said unto him, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy *house*."

The honour, thus conferred upon Zaccheus, who, though he was rich, yet was a sinner, and noted for filling an office held in universal abhorrence among the Jews, excited their envious minds with indignation at the conduct of the Saviour. But he here shewed that wisdom was justified of her children. Zaccheus, though an hard-hearted unrelenting extortioner before, by the gracious look and order of his Master, now manifested that he was changed into the same image; for having come down and received him joyfully, he stood and said unto the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold."

Hereupon Jesus was presented with the finest opportunity of exposing, and putting to the blush his constant and invidious adversaries. Therefore, immediately upon Zaccheus' confession, he turned to them, "and said concerning him," Why do ye oppose my going to be a guest with this man, to abide at his *house?* He is not a sinner of the Gentiles as ye suppose, for this day is he converted. Salvation has come to his house this day, so that in going to him, I am going to be entertained by a true son of Abraham according to the faith.

Such appears to us to be the true spirit and meaning of the passage. The introduction of the word *house* in the 9th verse, seems to have been occasioned by the opposition manifested to Christ's inviting himself to abide at the *house of Zaccheus*, ver. 5. And the Saviour, to shew that there was no good grounds for the objection that was urged, evinceth that the house was not now

what it formerly was, but that Zaccheus, the head of it, was converted, had obtained salvation, and was made a true son of Abraham, and that therefore, he was acting in character to go to such a house.

In no other sense than that now specified, can we understand salvation having come to the house of Zaccheus, if by salvation be intended any thing more than the *means of salvation*. But we are decidedly of opinion that more is intended, and that therefore, by the expression *house*, we must understand the *head* of the house, which we have accordingly done, as it is his conversion only of which we have any evidence. Those who desire more on this subject, may consult Poole, Scott, and other commentators.

In regard to our considering the 10th verse as addressed to the people, the passage itself fully justifies our conduct, for Zaccheus is there spoken of as the *third* person, which could not have been the case if Jesus had not been speaking to others concerning him *.

The next account respecting households, is that of Lydia, Acts xvi. 14, 15. "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 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."

The very scanty information this passage affords in relation to the subject in hand, fully justifies the opinion we have long entertained respecting the whole of this class, namely, that nothing decisive can be gathered from them, either for the one side or the other. However,

* Vid. Campbell on the Gospels, *in loc.*

as they have been employed both by Baptists and Pedo-baptists in support of their respective tenets with such an air of certainty, it is necessary for the sake of truth that they should be attended to, and each made to rest simply on its own merits.

In the case before us, we freely own it was not very likely that Lydia had any *children* with her in Philippi, for according to the account, she was a citizen of Thyatira, and had only come thither in the course of her business; and being a devout person, and one who worshipped God, it was too precious an opportunity to let slip the meeting of the religious at the river side on the Sabbath-day.

The effects produced on the heart of Lydia, were such as warranted Paul to administer unto her the ordinance of baptism, as Peter had done under similar circumstances to Cornelius and his Gentile brethren *.

As we have expressed our opinion respecting the household of Lydia, that it was unlikely there were children in it, so we acknowledge that little more can be said respecting the *baptizing* of her household, which will be at all likely to decide the question either on the one side or the other. The baptism of her household is here recorded, it is true; but there is not a word respecting *who* composed that household, whether it consisted of *infants* or *adults*; or whether they were baptized on account of the faith of Lydia, or on account of their own faith. Yet information in regard to these points, which God, in his infinite wisdom has thought it meet to withhold from us, is absolutely necessary ere any assume the high and dictatorial language, which alas! is too frequently done on this very subject. Some have supposed, that the household of Lydia was baptized on account of *her* faith, from the circumstance of

* Acts x. 44,—48.

her employing the *singular* number, when she said, "If ye have judged *me** to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there." But this is too far-fetched and forced an interpretation to decide a question of such importance; and we may even appeal to the common sense of those who urge it, that if they were in Lydia's circumstances, judging it proper to invite the servants of the Lord to their house, whether they would not adopt expressly the same language, notwithstanding their children or domestics had been baptized along with them even on account of their *own* faith. If Lydia was the mistress of the house, as we see no room to question it, this alone accounts for her mode of speech on the occasion, without needing to have recourse to any hypothesis which the rules of sobriety and good sense will by no means warrant. But on the other hand, Mr M'Lean† thinks that he makes this passage very clear, and places it beyond all manner of dispute, as proving his side of the question, by referring to the 40th verse, where it is said concerning Paul and Silas, that "they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia, and, when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed." The brethren here he supposes in the same arbitrary manner, as we have just seen to be of *Lydia's household*: But upon this supposition may it not be asked, and was this solitary family the whole of the concern the apostles had at that time in that city? Or were they going in a mean and selfish manner to repay a debt alone incurred by the generosity of their hostess, and to comfort only

* I here allude to a sentiment which dropped from Mr Ewing in the course of the last baptism he administered publicly in this place.

† Vid. his Commission, p. 116. second edit.

her and her family, while all the other brethren who were wont to meet for prayer at the river side were to be overlooked? Would it not be much better then, to consider the *brethren* in this passage, as referring to *all* the believers in Philippi, than in any forced or arbitrary manner, evidently for the sake of supporting a system, give it a sense which it will by no means bear? We are not called to contend thus for the faith. Nay, we must bear it in our mind as a general maxim, that he that striveth for the mastery must strive lawfully, or else it is impossible he can be crowned.

Thus I confess, whatever others may think, I leave this subject as I found it, deciding clearly neither for the one side nor the other, unless we shall be allowed to interpret it by other passages similar in kind, which accordingly we propose to do; not formally, however, but merely as we go along.

The next account of the baptism of households, is that of the jailor, Acts xvi. 31,—34. "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house, and he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

The chief difficulty here, arises, not from the circumstance of the jailor's household being baptized along with himself, for the principle cannot be more explicitly stated upon which they were so; but from the apostle's address to him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and *thy house*." Now, the natural question would appear to be, was the jailor's house to be saved as well as himself, upon *his* individual

belief on the Saviour? Or if this was not the case, what then may have been the cause and the purport of this appendage, *and thy house?* It strikes me, (but I mention it merely as a probable conjecture), that the jailor's family, amidst the dreadful catastrophe that had happened in consequence of the earthquake, were equally alarmed as himself in regard to the concerns of their soul; for it is likely they all inhabited that very dwelling, "the foundations of which were shaken;" were probably witness too, to the cruel treatment the apostles had received the preceding day; were equally astonished with him when they discerned the finger of God in the event, for they were, no doubt, the persons who assisted in fetching the "light," and accompaning the trembling jailor, and witnessed him falling prostrate before them, and perhaps were as ready as he was, to cry out, "Sirs, what must we do to be saved?" As our Lord, therefore, frequently answered questions which were put by one of his disciples, but which related to them all, in conformity to their general interest therein; so may the apostles' answer to the question of the Philippian on the present occasion, be considered. It is more than probable that they were agitated and concerned as he was on the present occasion; and that the apostles had access to know it we have no room to doubt, for we are expressly told that he brought them out, ere he put the question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Hereupon, most probably, the apostles beheld a whole family in the jaws of despair, and as one only had put the question, these servants of the Most High, in imitation of their great Master, answer him in such a manner as to excite hope at the same time in the rest. Upon this supposition, therefore, their answer was most wise. And had it been otherwise, and re-

stricted to the querist himself, it might have had such an effect upon some of the others as to have snapped the brittle thread of life in a moment, and thus have placed them beyond the reach of hope.

But however these things may be, we are certain as to their baptism, that they were all personally interested in the blessings of salvation, by a personal belief of the doctrines declared to them; for words cannot be plainer than those in ver. 34. that the jailor, "having been baptized, and all his straightway, brought the apostles into his house, set meat before them, *and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house*." And I must just here add, that the speedy evidence of faith being thus produced in the family of the jailor, tends not a little to corroborate the supposition we have hazarded respecting them. And, moreover, if they had not been present on the occasion, how could the apostles, strangers in Philippi, and particularly the jail, have possibly known whether the jailor had a family or not?

The next instance we meet with, is that of *Crispus* the chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth. But this case is so very clear, that we need to do nothing more than quote the passage, Acts xviii. 8. "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with *all his house*; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized."

Nor does the case of *Stephanas and his household* seem to be a whit more doubtful. In this case Paul was the baptizer, 1 Cor. i. 16. and he bears them witness that *they were the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints*, chap. xvi. 15.

Now, from the state of these three last instances of the baptism of households, are we not warranted to conclude what must have been the state of the first? Whether is it more reasonable to regard the *silence* in the

one, as proving all that is contended for by Pedo-baptists, than to consider the others as a key by which to *interpret* that silence? Surely, between the degree of reasonableness in these two cases, there can be no comparison. Taking the last, therefore, as expletive of the first, we conclude that the household of Lydia, though it is not expressed, must have been believers as we find the others to have been; and if so, then all arguments for Pedo-baptism, drawn from this source, must be entirely nugatory.

Having thus finished what we intended in regard to the baptizing of households, we proceed to the consideration of another set of passages which occur in the course of Paul's reasoning in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians. These, it may be observed, form the subject of Mr Wardlaw's lectures. We shall not here, however, attempt to make any formal answer to them; this having been done very ably by another *. Neither do we propose to say all that might be said on this important subject. All that we intend, is a very brief view, in order to discover whether it has any connection either more immediately or remotely with the subject of Pedo-baptism.

The passages we allude to, are contained in the 4th chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and in the third of that to the Galatians. The apostle seems to be treating of the same subject in both, which is, the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law. To both these passages we have spoken somewhat already †. We have seen that the apostle proves the point for which he is contending, in the clearest manner possible, by the circumstance of Abraham having been justified

* Mr M'Lean.

† See p. 34. &c. and chap. ii. sect. 4.

through faith, while he was yet uncircumcised, Rom. iv. 10. He then proceeds to specify a particular reason *why* the ordinance of circumcision was given. Though it was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith" which Abraham possessed prior to it, it was not to be regarded in his case so much in a personal as in a federal point of view, namely, "that he might be the Father of all them that *believe*, though they be *not* circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also," ver. 11. But lest the Jews might consider this statement as excluding them, the apostle immediately shews that this federal connection between Abraham and believers of the uncircumcision, was not entirely confined to them, but that by circumcision he was likewise *federally* a father "to them who are not of the circumcision *only*, but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham, which he had in uncircumcision," ver. 12 *.

From these verses it is therefore manifest, that circumcision was given to Abraham as a *seal*, assuring and confirming, that all uncircumcised Gentiles who believed, were to be reckoned as his children; and were to obtain righteousness through faith, as he had done, even in their uncircumcised state. And it is no less evident in regard to the Jews, that this *federal* relation between Abraham and believers, does not extend to them *all*, but to such *only* as are possessed of like precious faith with Abraham, which he had in uncircumcision.

The apostle next proceeds to prove his position, "that justification is by faith without the works of the law," from this circumstance, that "the promise that Abraham should be the heir of the world," that is to

* This verse, in my opinion, clearly intimates the distinction between the two seeds of Abraham; but for a more particular view of which, the reader is referred to chap. II. of this work.

say, the whole *believing world*, whether Jews or Gentiles, "was not made to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith," ver. 13. It was upon Abraham's believing the promise of God, that "he should have an heir who should come forth of his own bowels," and "a seed," doubtless spiritual as well as natural, "who should resemble the stars of the heavens for multitude," that "his faith" was originally "counted to him for righteousness *;" and, therefore, the law, which was not till four hundred and thirty years afterwards, could not alter the constitution established by the promise, "that righteousness or justification should be by faith alone †." The apostle then declares, ver. 14. that if a right to the inheritance of the blessings connected with justification "were by the law, then faith would be rendered void, and the promise," which restricted them to the instrumentality of faith alone, "made of none effect." But this promise of blessing believers of all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, with the blessing of justification in this world, and of life eternal in the world to come, we are assured, Gal. iii. 17. was ratified in the covenant with Abraham by God himself concerning his Son Jesus Christ; and that therefore, "the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after the promise, cannot disannul it, that the promise should be made of none effect." No, indeed. Even the simple promise of Jehovah, who is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent, effectually secured its immutability. But God inclining to afford to the heirs of promise greater security still, in a manner, gave not only the simple promise, but accompanied and confirmed the promise with an oath ‡. It was therefore vain

* See Gen. xv. 4, 5, 6. † Gal. iii. 17.
‡ See Gen. xxii. 16, 17. and Heb. vi. 13. to the end.

in the Judaizing teachers to insist, as we are informed, Acts xv. 1. that "Except the Gentiles were circumcised, after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved."

By this it would appear, that they imagined an observance of the law would save them, particularly when conjoined with the merits of Christ. But the apostle proves in his letter to the Galatians, the impossibility of such a scheme, and testifies that every one who submitted to circumcision upon such terms, was a debtor to do the whole law; that they had fallen from grace, and that Christ had become to them of none effect *. To the same purpose he reasons in the passage before us. So far from the law conferring the blessings alleged, "it worketh out wrath to every transgressor;" but in the promise, "where there is no law, there can be no transgression," the subjects under the promise being forgiven their iniquities. "Therefore it is by faith that it might be by grace, in order that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that seed only which is of the law," believing Jews namely, "but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham from among the Gentiles, for he is the father of us all, according to what is written," Gen. xvii. 5. *Surely a father of many nations I have constituted thee.* See Rom. iv. 15, 16, 17.

The apostle proceeds in the verses which follow, to declare the strength of Abraham's faith in the promise that he should have a son, and instances the imputation of righteousness which he obtained by means hereof, as the pattern of the imputation of the same blessing to all who "believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead," ver. 17,—24.

* Chap. v. 3, 4.

Having thus analysed the first of these passages from which Pedo-baptism is so strenuously contended for, may it not now be asked, wherein does it appear to imply any such doctrine? But without tarrying here to descant on reflections of this nature, let us proceed to the consideration of the other passage, and then, by seeing more clearly, we shall draw such conclusions as may be necessary.

Gal. iii. Here it may be observed as in the former instance, that the apostle is proving precisely the same doctrine, namely, justification by faith without the works of the law, as is manifest from ver. 2. The example of Abraham's justification is again adduced; and as the apostle has here to reason against the doctrines of the Judaizers, who were for imposing the yoke of circumcision upon Gentile believers, so his arguments chiefly turn upon this point. Passing, however, over a few of the first verses, as of too general a nature for our present design, we shall begin at that part which is more immediately connected herewith. In the 6th verse, the apostle intimates, as he had done in his epistle to the Romans, that Abraham, the father of all believers, was justified by faith without works, "for he believed God," saith he, "and it was accounted to him for righteousness." He then shews, ver. 7. that they who, like him, believe in God, are Abraham's children, namely in a spiritual sense, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of *faith*, the same are the *children* of Abraham." And in ver. 26. he shews that to be the children of Abraham in this sense, and the children of God, are synonymous terms, "For ye are all the children of God by *faith* in Christ Jesus." "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ," ver. 27. And this privilege of being children of Abraham and

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of God by faith in Christ Jesus, is not confined to one description of men, "For in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female;" but all who *believe*, of whatever age, nation, or language, are one united body of which Christ is the head. So that those who are Christ's by this spiritual union, are at the same time "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise," in the highest sense of the word, see ver. 28, 29. To them belong the incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance of which Peter speaks *, even the everlasting possessions of the heavenly country, which were typified and shadowed forth by the earthly possessions of the land of Canaan to Abraham's natural seed.

To confirm this grand object is what the apostle has in view, as is clear from the close reasoning he employs in the intermediate verses. But these we do not intend to illustrate here, this having been sufficiently done already for the purpose we have in view, in the place to which we formerly alluded. Hoping that the reader will therefore take the trouble of reviewing what we have there said, we shall proceed to enquire what connection these passages have with the subject of Pedo-baptism. Does the apostle so much as hint at this subject? No. How then do some suppose that it can be clearly proved from hence, and that it is impossible to interpret these passages aright, without considering this as an undeniable principle? The cause seems evidently to originate in the want of the scriptural distinction between the literal and spiritual seed of Abraham. If this were but only attended to, then all difficulties concerning the subject of baptism would vanish of course. The whole of the Pedo-baptist system rests

* 1 Pet. i. 4.

upon the idea that the children of believers are the children of Abraham no less than themselves; a position, we have seen, the apostle most guarded against. Again and again does he tell us, that *believers themselves* are Abraham's seed, but never does he give the most distant hint that their seed are any thing more than what he declares in the epistle to the Ephesians, "By nature children of wrath even as others."

We must therefore join most heartily with Mr M'Lean, in deploring the conduct of those who would endeavour to make the Holy Ghost speak another language from what he intends. Far are we from supposing, however, that any Christian could do this knowingly; yet as it appears to have been done in the present instance, we conceive there is great reason for our brethren to re-consider the matter, in order to discover whether there may not have been some flaw in their leading views. But if they will still maintain that there was never any but a *spiritual* seed recognized in the covenant with Abraham, and yet, that their children to this very day are members thereof, we intreat them to try whether they can reconcile this part of their system with the doctrine of human depravity in general, and with the other doctrines of the gospel which point out the absolute necessity of a radical and divine change before any of the children of men can enter the kingdom of God. Of all the passages therefore contained in the Scriptures of truth, those we have been now considering are the most unlikely in our view to prove the doctrine of Pedo-baptism. Yea, they go to prove the very reverse. Yet are they perpetually had recourse to in support of that system, but with what propriety we leave every candid and impartial investigator of the word of God to judge. This is nothing less than taking

up the argument of the other side of the question, as Mr M'Lean justly observes; and which, by a train of ingenious and intricate reasoning, is made to conclude in favour of a subject at which the apostle does not so much as hint.

The only other texts we have yet to notice, are the addresses to the seven churches of Asia, contained in the second and third chapters of the Revelation. Because some of those churches were infested with hypocritical professors, having amongst them those who "called themselves Jews, and were not, but did lie;" it is hence inferred that they were exactly similar to the church of ancient Israel, and that none were recognized as Jews even in it, though they might call themselves by that name, but such as were so in a spiritual sense. Such an argument, however, does not once deserve a consideration. It is never had recourse to, indeed, but in desperate cases, and where they feel themselves pressed to account for the alleged spirituality of the members of that ancient church; and then, without directly answering the point at issue, they recur to this as a general salvo. The same has been argued respecting the persons who composed what has been called *the circumcision*, from the apostle applying that term, Phil. iii. 3. to believers. But it cannot be doubted that he there uses the term in a spiritual or mystical sense; nor as little can it be doubted that it had also a primary or literal signification, and in this sense distinguished between Jews and Gentiles in a national capacity, as is evident from Gal. ii. 7, 8, 9. These passages are surely explanatory of one another, and if more be still contended for from the expression in the Revelation, we are confident it can serve no other end than as an apology for impure communion.

Having thus completed our view and illustration of

the various passages produced in support of Pedo-baptism, we shall proceed in our next section to consider the charges which have been mutually had recourse to in order to discard each others system.

SECTION II.

Of the reciprocal charges which have been brought by the abettors of both sides of the question, with a view to discard their respective systems.

THE discovery of truth alone ought to be the grand object of all our investigations, and if we shall have the happiness to hit on the truth, it will surely he attended with evidence sufficient of itself, by which we shall be enabled to convince the thinking and rational part of mankind, without needing to have recourse to that most unfair practice, of fixing certain stigmas on the systems from which we may differ, and of ascribing to them consequences which they by no means involve. This remark, which is applicable to all subjects, civil or religious, is peculiarly so to that we have now in hand. Here it is that the different combatants have manifested no little dexterity in raking up all the errors, faults, or improprieties into which they may have respectively gone, and confounding these with the merits of the point at issue between them, with no small degree of religious zeal, as they are pleased to term it, they indiscriminately place their whole system on a level with what may be erroneous parts of it.

the *spirituality* of the Abrahamic covenant? And here I must answer for myself, whatever be the opinion of others on this head. I confess myself to be of those principles, that is to say, I do not see the baptizing of infants to be scriptural, and yet I do not *deny* the spirituality of the Abrahamic covenant. Yea, I will go farther. I will solemnly aver, that I never had such a consistent spiritual view of this subject while I was of opposite sentiments, as I have now obtained through the goodness of God leading me to view it in the manner I have related in the preceding parts of this work. But here, by the way, is it not as great an evil to make that spiritual which is only carnal, as it is to make that carnal which is spiritual? It will never surely be maintained that the one would be nearer the truth than the other. Let our brethren then who bring the charge of denying the spirituality of that covenant, see to it whether they be not making it *too* spiritual; for if they should err here, as there is indeed every reason to conclude they do, though it may be considered as an error on the right side, yet will it lead them to equally erroneous views of what God intended by it, as an error on the other side.

3. Thirdly, How do Baptist principles lead to the non-sanctification of the Lord's day? If some who profess those principles should profane the Sabbath, or not set apart the whole of that day to the Lord, does such conduct necessarily flow from the principles which lead us to decide respecting baptism, or is it not rather to be attributed to the effect of other principles held in conjunction with these? For my part, as I have said before, I have no objections to own with the charge of being of Baptist principles, in as far as they respect the unscriptural nature of that ordinance when applied to infants, and yet I have no idea of denying the sanctifi-

cation of the Sabbath. I conceive it to have been wisely appointed by the great Head of the church, to be a means of supplying his people with spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. And as an emblem of the eternal Sabbath to be enjoyed in the sanctuary above, we ought to say with David, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, there they shall still be praising thee. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents, in the palaces of wickedness *."

A seventh part of our time to be devoted particularly to the service of the Lord, is a moral duty in itself—was appointed from the beginning, Gen. ii. 2, 3.; and from all the information of the New Testament, seems never to have been deviated from, excepting in the change of the day. Moreover, because some professing Christians have abominably unholy and ungodly lives, is the charge therefore to be brought against the religion they profess, or against some corrupt principles they hold in conjunction herewith? Not against the former surely, though here it is that infidels always fix the charge, but against the latter. For the lives of such people belie their profession, and every precept of the religion they profess condemns them to their face. Let Christians therefore see to it, that they are not in this joining with the infidel, in endeavouring to substantiate the charge we are now considering.

4. In the fourth place, how do the Baptist principles *carnalize* the whole of the former dispensation? Here I should suppose, that even Pedo-baptists will not venture to affirm, that that dispensation was *wholly* spiritual. The apostle himself, indeed, speaks of carnal things connected with it. In drawing a proper line of dis-

* Psal. lxxxiv. 4. 10.

tinction then between what was spiritual and what carnal, is it fair that we should be taxed with denying the one altogether? For my part, if I could conceive of any, whether Baptist or Pedo-baptist, disposed to question the existence of spiritual matters in that dispensation, I would not hesitate to say he was wrong, as the examples of the faith of Abraham, Job, Moses, &c. do clearly evince. But would the person not be equally erring, who from such examples would declare the whole to have been spiritual? Here then, as in a former instance, it is impossible to decide the merits of the question, without examining their respective tenets, and bringing these to the touch-stone of the word, for it is to the law and to the testimony; and if the sentiments of any man agree not herewith, it is because he has not divine light in him.

5. But fifthly, how do these principles "incapacitate us for the discharge of parental duties, or of bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? How do they systematically assail the very foundation of this duty?" Can this duty not be discharged, simply in obedience to the apostolic injunction? Or is it necessary to set aside this injunction, as the very suggestion of the charge would seem to imply, and to enforce it entirely upon another principle, that, to wit, of their interest in the covenant with Abraham? But this last is the grand point in dispute, the other is not disputed at all. It stands clear and valid, and the professing Christian who is chargeable with defects in regard to it, may be convicted of his sin at once; whereas taking him up upon the other ground, he may betake himself to subterfuges from which it is impossible to beat him out. With what grace could it be urged upon a brother who was defective here, "We perceive, brother, that you are deficient in the discharge of

that most important duty of instructing your children in religious knowledge. Now, this must proceed from your erroneous notions in regard to their situation in the covenant of grace. Do but allow yourself to be corrected here, and we are morally certain it will be otherwise." Such mode of reasoning is certainly implied in the objection. It affirmatively implies the certainty of attaining the end, by the adoption of the opposite principles. Now we ask, is the end in reality a single whit better secured by the espousal of the one more than the other? Were we to descend to particular instances, should we not find as many, yea, and a great deal more neglect of the religious education of children among those who baptize them in infancy, than among those who delay their baptism till they be personally convinced of the truth of our holy religion, and profess faith in the only Saviour for themselves? Nay, is there any comparison between these two systems, for rationally leading to such instruction? That of the Baptist system, speaking even as a neutral person, when rightly understood, has something in it which must render godly parents exceedingly zealous for the religious instruction of their children; for besides the express injunction to this duty, their principles, which continually lead them to look upon their children's true state, as being children of wrath, must mightily stimulate them, that so under God they may be the means of their conversion; whereas the system of the others, by which they consider their children as being already in the covenant of grace, and by consequence in a state of safety, has every thing in it, in my apprehension, to render parents in regard to this duty, careless and remiss.

Thus do we see by a fair investigation of principles, how exceedingly unfounded the charge really is: And

now, though we might with as good a grace heap charges upon the other side, we shall not give vent to our evil passions in so doing, but shall simply beseech our brethren to beware of acting any longer in the manner they have done in regard to this subject.

6. The last charge we were to notice, was the *want of zeal* for the conversion of sinners. And here, I suppose, it would become us all better, rather than bringing it as a charge against one another, each of us to be deeply humbled for our woeful short-comings in this respect. If we perceive our brethren deficient in this, our zeal for the Lord is not to be manifested by yarring at them, but in lending an active hand towards the furthering of his neglected cause, remembering that our work in the vineyard is increased in proportion as the labourers are few. Here then, we ought all to be up and doing the work of the Lord; and truly, if we had more zeal amongst ourselves, our good example might be the means of stimulating our brethren, and at all events, we should find our hands so much occupied in the pursuit of more important objects, that we would not have leisure for lodging complaints against one another of this nature. Such complaints, to me, I confess, always convey the idea of weariness of the work in those who make them. Instead of it appearing to be a work of love, by which they are animated and inflamed to endure hardiness as good soldiers, by such conduct it appears to be a work of drudgery, too heavy to be borne, and hence they angrily complain against their brethren for not assisting them. It would be desireable, it is true, were all the Lord's people to appear as one united body, having nothing but one interest and one cause common to them all, in which there were no seeking every man his own things, but every man the things of others, his neighbour's good to edifi-

cation—even the things that are Christ's, that he might be all and in all. Till this period arrive, however, and we have every reason to hope that it shall, the duty of such as are looking and longing for its accomplishment, is certainly the reverse of that of complaining in an irritating manner against their brethren. If their brethren be faulty in the respect we are considering, it is certainly their duty to endeavour to convince them of their error by an opposite conduct; and this, they may rest assured, will be attended with infinitely better effects, than what would accompany even the most forcible things they could urge by way of complaint.

But still the question recurs, how do *Baptist principles* impede the zeal of Christians in the conversion of sinners? Do we not know for certain, that there are in existence societies even of this description, I mean our Baptist brethren in England, whose exertions in this respect have been incalculable? so that instead of they needing to copy after our example, we have rather reason to copy after theirs. Facts of this nature must then bring the matter within a narrower compass; they must convince us, that the evil complained of is not peculiar, nor at all to be ascribed to those principles, but that it flows from some other source entirely distinct from them, and which may be seen to have much more extensive influence, pervading Christian societies even of various descriptions, much more than we may be aware. Does it not then come to be an act of positive *injustice*, to ascribe to any set of principles, effects which do not belong to them, and to decry those principles as erroneous and dangerous, upon no other ground than this false allegation? Is it not then to be sincerely wished, that Christians would only consider what they are about?

Another grievous evil, which it is here proper to notice, is, that of endeavouring, as it would appear,

to misunderstand one another's reasoning on this subject. I have enumerated about fifty different places in Mr Pirie's Letters to Mr M'Lean, which, in my judgment, come under this description, and can be attributed to nothing save a captious and cavilling spirit. See, besides, how *angrily* he speaks on the subject. 'It is highly probable that the Baptist ideas 'will prevail. Dipping is a novelty in this country. 'Mankind, too, are fond of a showy, ritual religion, 'chiefly if it points out an easy way to heaven. Such 'is that of the Baptists. The weak, the splenetic, the 'fanciful, the fond of novelty, the lovers of pleasure 'must naturally embrace such a religion. The Socinians or half Deists also, are mostly Baptists in principle. These two ideas combined, will, probably, in 'a short time, form the reigning religion. I have not 'the vanity to think that any thing I can say shall 'reach conviction to the Baptists. The illusions of 'fancy are not easily dissipated by reasoning and argument. The moment these people are dipped in water, they too often shut their eyes against the light of 'truth—to be opened no more, while the ear can listen 'with attention to nothing but the cry of the party—'plunge and be saved. When the young disciple has 'been taught to exclaim against infant-baptism, which 'he calls Roman-sprinkling, and to cry, what can infants do? can an infant believe? he has learned his 'whole lesson, and is dubbed an adapt in Christian 'knowledge.' These are expressions to be found in his preface. With such a frame of mind did this author begin; and the subsequent parts of his book shew how much he remained under its influence.

Under this head also, the late controversy recorded in the third volume of the Edinburgh Evangelical Magazine, between Crito and Philalethes, may with pro-

priety be noticed, for almost the one half of what there occurs consists of mutual recriminations; the one affirming 'that his words had been mistated, his meaning misrepresented, and his argument misunderstood;' while the other, strenuously denying these allegations, retaliates in his turn, 'that his antagonist, so far from repelling, has not even met his argument.' And indeed, I must confess, after the most careful perusal I have been able to bestow on these papers, that there appears to be too much reason for these loud complaints. In the mean time, what a melancholy view do the papers on both sides afford of the lamentable sectarian spirit so prevalent throughout the whole of Christendom! A spirit which astonishes even heathens! 'Rica,' as we learn from the Persian letters, 'having been to visit the library of a French convert, writes thus to his friend in Persia concerning what had passed. 'Father,' said I to the librarian, what are these huge volumes which fill the whole side of the library? 'These, said he, are the interpreters of the Scriptures. 'There is a prodigious number of them, replied I; the 'Scriptures must have been very dark formerly, and very clear at present. Do there remain still any 'doubts? Are there now any points contested? Are 'there, answered he with surprize, are there? There 'are almost as many as there are lines?. You astonish 'me, said I, what then have all these authors been 'doing? These authors, returned he, never searched 'the Scriptures for what ought to be believed, but for 'what they did believe themselves. They did not consider them as a book, wherein were contained the doctrines which they ought to receive, but as a work 'which might be made to authorize their own ideas. 'For this reason, they have corrupted all the meanings, 'and have put every passage to the torture, to make it

'speak their own sense. 'Tis a country whereon 'people of all sects make invasions, and go for pillage; 'it is a field of battle, where, when hostile nations meet, 'they engage, attack, and skirmish in a thousand dif-'ferent ways *.'

What a just, and at the same time, what a dismal representation of real matter of fact is this! 'How long 'will such spiritual gladiators,' as Mr Newton somewhere remarks, 'continue to slash one another for the 'amusement of the public!' No wonder that such conduct should astonish a heathen, for we may rest assured that if such a passion could enter the world of spirits, it would excite astonishment even in the angels.

These strictures I have taken the liberty to suggest with all the freedom of a friend. And it is hoped they will not be considered as improper, as our chief desire is, not to speak lightly of our brethren, but really to awaken them to a consideration of what they are about. Nothing can afford us greater pleasure, than to see the doctrines of the word of God investigated; but let this be always done, not in the way of controversy or speculation merely, but in the way of removing real difficulties by casting light on the subject. This point, however, both the brethren of whom we are speaking, seem to have entirely missed. The papers of both sides are conceived in such dark and ambiguous language, the thoughts so illogically arranged, extraneous matters, particularly those of the self-vindicatory kind, which is made always to keep pace with the degree of

* See Dr Campbell's Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence, whence we have transcribed the passage. An author, whose works ought to be in the hand of every Christian given to disputation; for, next to the Scriptures, his performances, above all others we have ever seen, contain the best principles of conduct in all such matters.

blame each attaches to his fellow, so permitted to enter the body of their arguments, that we are positively at a loss to say where they begin, or where they end. As it is not then for the mastery we ought to write, so neither ought we to defend at all hazards those particular tenets we may have espoused. Truth can never suffer by fair and open investigation. If we have been in the right formerly, all that our brethren can say, will but tend to confirm us the more in our views; but if we have been in the wrong, let us not think it a dishonour, but our bounden duty to acknowledge it freely. What other object ought Christians to have in view but the pursuit after truth? When we perceive two parties opposing each other then, we may be fully assured that the truth does not rest with them both. But this very circumstance ought to create diffidence on all hands. It should set them both about searching and sifting the matter to the very bottom, and desiring in good earnest that they may see the truth, that so they *may be one* in Christ Jesus; for it may be there is a flaw on the one side as well as on the other. And when the truth is thus discovered, they will not need to charge each other to come over to his respective side; for if such particular and impartial investigation were but fairly to be adopted, there would be ten thousand to one, if both should not be under the necessity in some respects of shifting his ground, and thus forming in a manner a mutual exchange. But alas! instead of this rational mode of procedure in a work of so vast importance, do we not behold many who have scarcely learned to lisp in matters of religion, setting themselves up as geniuses of the profoundest knowledge, who had actually made a discovery of all that can be discovered, and the language of whose conduct virtually is, See, we exhibit before your eyes the whole of the infallible

standard of truth, and if ye do not conform to the pattern we show, it is because Christ's word hath no place in you? Nor is this a disposition peculiar to one denomination of Christians merely, but it less or more pervades all denominations, and is one of the grandest barriers in the way of Christian union and improvement.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE MODE OF THE ORDINANCE, AND OF THE SUBJECT OF RE-BAPTIZING.

SECTION I.

Of the mode of the Ordinance.

THE state of the argument respecting this subject is as follows. The one side conceive, that as water is the element to be employed, and as the things signified by it in the ordinance of baptism are frequently represented in Scripture by the figurative language of *pouring*, *sprinkling*, *washing*, &c.; so, whichever of these modes be adopted, it comes to be a matter of comparatively small importance, provided the grand and spiritual design of the ordinance be properly understood. The other side, however, contend for the mode of *immersion*, in opposition to all others, and allege that they demonstratively prove their position from the derivation and use of the original word, and from the uniform practice of apostolic and primitive example. As it is not our intention, however, either to lead or to be led by mere assertions, we must accordingly examine these tenets in order to enable us to render a reason for whichever principle we may see it proper to coincide with.

We take it for granted then, that with regard to the design of the ordinance and the element to be employed, there is no difference on either side; and that the only point of difference respects the *manner* in which this element is to be applied, whether it is to be by immersion, washing, sprinkling, or pouring.

The first, exclusively, is the opinion of all Baptists so far as we know, and they adduce two arguments in particular in support of it. 1. That it is the express signification of the original word; and 2*dly*, that they have apostolic example for their conduct.

As to the first of these, it will be readily admitted, that the original word βαπτιζω generally signifies *to dip, plunge, or immerse*. We say generally, for we have the authority of a very eminent lexicographer, (Parkhurst), who considers this signification as limited, and whose words are, after the definition just given, 'But in the New Testament it occurs not strictly in 'this sense, unless so far as this is included in sense 'II. and III. below.' (which see). Dr Campbell, however, seems to restrict it entirely to this sense, and quotes Tertullian, the oldest of the Latin fathers, as rendering it by *tingere*, the term used for dying cloth, which is by immersion *; and in conformity to this, it is contended that the whole phraseology, in regard to this ceremony, concurs in evincing the same thing. The original expression, it is said, is always baptizing *in*, or *into* a thing, and the baptized person is said to come up *out of*, or *from* the water †.

But though the definition of the word to baptize may be as we have stated in a general sense, yet as applied to that religious ordinance instituted by our blessed

* Campbell on the Gospels, Matt. iii. 11.

† M'Lean's Commission, p. 109. &c.

Lord, this mode is conceived to be incompatible with several examples recorded in Scripture. It is positively denied, as in the case of the eunuch for instance, Acts viii. that there was a sufficiency of water for this, in all the way whither he went in the desert of Gaza. In like manner, Peter's mode of address respecting Cornelius and his brethren, "Can any man *forbid* water that these should not be baptized," is, with much apparent reason supposed, that in their case water was to be *brought*. And there is no person of candour but must abhor the pitiful shifts to which some betake themselves in order to be uniform on this head, in the case of the Philippian jailor. Mr Pirie records an instance of this sort, though it must be confessed it is in his old acrimonious manner, which occurred at Newburgh, the place of his residence. He informs us of a preacher of the Baptist connection of Edinburgh, who happened one day to be preaching from the xvi. of the Acts, and who, in order to support his favourite idea of *immersion*, had really the face to account for it, by a *canal* which he supposed might lead between the jailor's house and the prison. Now, when we attentively examine and weigh all the circumstances of this event, how that it happened during the *night*, the earthquake occurred, the jailor and his family had the word of the Lord spoken to them, believed, washed the wounds of the apostles, and straightway were baptized, and how all these things seem to have taken place prior to the jailor's bringing the apostles into his house, and setting meat before them, we confess it appears altogether unlikely that they were baptized by the mode of immersion. But here, we are aware it will be said, how else could they *be* baptized, for is not *to dip*, *plunge*, or *immerse*, the very signification of that word? This we do not question as to its general acceptation, but these cir-

cumstances in particular cases, tend not a little to shake us in regard to its signification when applied to a religious ordinance, and certainly demand another kind of solution than mere dogmatical assertions in regard to the etymology of the word. If etymology is to be followed, as one * justly remarks, it ought not to be restricted to this particular ordinance, but be equally applied to other ordinances, in order to determine upon what grounds we proceed when we have recourse to this species of argument. The word Δειπνον, it has been observed, the term in the original employed to denote the ordinance of the *supper*, signifies a *full meal*, and frequently a *feast* or sumptuous entertainment. Thus it occurs Matt. xxiii. 6. Mark vi. 21. Luke xiv. 12. In the last quotation, it is indeed distinguished from αριστον, *dinner*, or meal eaten in the morning; but here, as in the other passages, it evidently signifies a feast or entertainment. Now, if etymology, or the literal signification of a term is to be had recourse to for determining subjects of this nature, will it not hence follow, that arguments drawn from the common use and acceptation of the word δειπνον, must be equally conclusive in directing our practice in regard to the ordinance of the *supper*, as those drawn from the common acceptation of βαπτιζω, in regard to the ordinance of *baptism?* And, therefore, reasoning on the former, in the manner which is commonly done on the latter, we would hence have to conclude, that in the ordinance of the supper we must positively receive a full meal, for any thing short of this would not be coming up to the signification of the original word δειπνον. Accordingly it appears that the church of Corinth understood it in this light. But the apostle corrects the abuse into which they ran on this account, expressly declaring that such a practice as that

* Pirie's Letters to M'Lean, p. 188.

of indulging themselves in a full meal when met for the celebration of that ordinance, was not attending to it at all *. Although, therefore, we have not the same formal refutation of our brethren's reasoning on the word βαπτιζω, yet the instances we have mentioned of the eunuch, Cornelius, and the jailor, in our apprehension, create such difficulties as lead us to suspect that this word is not to be taken in its literal or common signification, when applied to a religious ordinance, more than the other.

As to what Mr M'Lean says on the *import* and design of baptism, we admit it to be ingenious, similar, indeed, to what Macknight has on the subject, and heartily agree with it, considered in the light of doctrine. But as in our opinion, the passages he quotes from Rom. vi. and Col. ii. wherein believers are represented as being "buried with Christ in baptism," ought to be taken in a spiritual sense only, we hardly see how they can be in any respect conclusive in determining questions which regard the mode of that ordinance. It is evident, indeed, that the apostle's language is highly figurative in both these passages, and in the former ver. 5. it is manifest there is a mixture of metaphor, or to speak more properly, he employs two *new* metaphors, expressive of the same general truth of which he had been speaking in the preceding verses, "For if we have been *planted* together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." And so he says, chap. viii. 17. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Believers are, by the prophet, called "Trees of righteousness †," therefore are they here said to be "planted." And still in conformity to the same phraseology, Paul says of himself, 1 Cor. iii. 6. "I have planted, Apollos

* 1 Cor. xi. 20. &c. † Isa. lxi. 3.

watered." And in the 9th verse of that chapter, he again uses a mixture of metaphor, and says to the Corinthians, "Ye are God's *husbandry*, ye are God's *building*." To be "planted," therefore, in the passage before us, is to be made "Trees of righteousness" in the husbandry or vineyard of God. And as the death and interment of Christ, was not only a fit emblem of burying seeds in the earth in order to their growth, but the sole cause, to preserve the metaphor, why any of the degenerate plants of a strange vine could be transplanted into this vineyard of God; they are therefore said to be "planted together in the likeness of his death," that is to say, his death and interment not only prefigured their implantation as trees of righteousness into the spiritual vineyard of God, but they were, as the old divines used to say, the procuring cause of it. Moreover, so intimate is the union between Christ and his people, that all that hath happened to him, may be considered as happening to them. Hence the apostle proceeds, ver. 6. to declare that they were crucified with him. Then he remarks, ver. 8. that as *crucified* persons, they are dead or died with him. In like manner, he says of himself on this subject, Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Now, from all the expressions, as it has been justly remarked, to contend for the mode of literal immersion, on account of the apostle's saying in a spiritual sense, that believers were buried with Christ by baptism; it might be equally contended that they were literally *crucified* with him likewise, for it is impossible to shew that the one is more figurative than the other.

The following note from Dr Macknight, in my opi-

nion, sets this whole subject in a pretty clear light. 'Believers being considered as members of Christ's 'body on account of the intimate union which subsists 'between them and him, every thing happening to him, 'is in Scripture said to have happened to them. Thus 'the Jews are said to be *put to death in the body of Christ* *, 'and *our old man* is said to *be crucified with Christ*, 'Rom. vi. 6.; and we are said to have *died together 'with Christ*, ver. 8. and *to be buried together with him 'by baptism*, ver. 4. and *to be dead with Christ from the 'elements of the world*, Col. ii. 20. and *to be risen with 'Christ*, Eph. ii. 4,—6. and even *to be circumcised with 'Christ*, Col. ii. 11. on which account, believers of all 'nations are called περιτομη, *the circumcision*, Philip. iii. 3. 'These expressions the apostle took great delight in, 'because they make us sensible that Christ became 'man, was circumcised, crucified, and buried, and rose 'again to deliver us from punishment, and to procure 'for us a blessed resurrection to immortality. More 'particularly, as Christ suffered death for us, we are 'said to have been *actually put to death in him*.'

Upon the whole then, if the things we have stated are not convincing to the mind, we must just remark, that we leave this kind of dispute to those who have more liking to it than we have, or rather to some more friendly hand who will endeavour to remove our difficulties; for to speak the truth, though we are not opposed to the idea of immersion having been practised in primitive times, yet we can by no means perceive this to have been the case so universally, as not to have our difficulties on the subject. The three instances we have specified—the contrasting of βαπτιζω with δυπνεω—and the apostle's meaning in the passages we have been

* The place whence this quotation is taken is Rom. vii. 4, note 2.

just considering, present difficulties in our view which at least demand attention. Nor will they be removed by a round of dogmatical assertions respecting the original word, for here, we should presume, we have heard all that can be said. Nor would even other well authenticated instances, which, however, we shall rejoice to see brought forward, altogether remove our scruples on this point, for these particular cases ought, in a rational manner, to be accounted for by themselves, without having recourse to the puerile and pitiable shifts, into which some, through the heat of their zeal of having things to be in that particular manner they would like, have been betrayed. In the case of the *eunuch*, for instance, if it cannot be proved from geographical accounts, histories or travels, ancient or modern, that there was a river, or other natural collection of water in the place where he is said to have been baptized, of sufficient capacity for the immersion of the body, we really do not think it justifiable to attempt the solution of the difficulty upon the principle which some have done, namely, that the rivulet might have been *dammed*. This would have been fine work! would it not? for Philip and the eunuch? And how unlike to the work of him, who, in another ordinance, no less sacred, made a very small portion of the elements employed, represent to the soul all the rich provisions of his heavenly grace! Though it be contended that baptism by immersion was emblematical of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, &c. yet we may be assured that its emblematical signification, even though administered in this way, could not be understood unless the mind had been informed respecting it. If, therefore, it required instruction in order to understand its true nature and design, the accuracy of ideas respecting it, must rather have depended on the accuracy of the instructions

afforded, than on any mode, be what that might, of administering the ordinance. The bread and wine, in like manner, in the ordinance of the supper, are emblematical of the broken body and shed blood of the Redeemer; yet it is not the mere act of partaking of bread and wine, in what manner soever this may be done, but the idea in the mind as the result of instruction, that can put us in possession of proper conceptions respecting it. It is therefore our belief at present, and must continue to be so till we shall see the contrary proved in a sober and rational manner, that the eunuch, Cornelius, and the jailor, and those connected with them, were baptized by some other mode than that of immersion; nor can we conceive that they would have been at any loss, notwithstanding, as to the grand and spiritual design of this ordinance, considering that they were under the immediate tuition of apostles and other inspired men. Instruction by ordinances are like parables, and parables again are like verbal hieroglyphics, and though all of them are admirably calculated to convey instruction in the strongest possible manner, yet do they require a key in order to understand them. As, therefore, the person would be but trifling, who would attempt to account for every circumstance in a parable, and not only trifling, but pursuing the very plan which would effectually prevent him from seeing its grand design; so, we find it impossible to separate a similar idea from our minds, in regard to those who seem to lay such a stress on the mode of this ordinance, as if what Christ required, and what he designed by it, could not be obtained but by attending to it in a certain manner. Now, our brethren will please observe, that if the Scriptures represent this subject in that strong, important, and convincing point of view which they would inculcate upon

us, we shall be exceedingly obliged to them if they would only produce the proof, that we may distinguish between the voice of man and the voice of God in this particular; and we trust, that if they make it appear that the Scriptures inculcate those things they so strenuously insist on, we shall not be backward to obey the heavenly mandate.

Upon the whole then, the reader will easily perceive from what has been said, that we cannot but deplore the taunting and scoffing air which some have assumed on this subject, in regard to the other modes which many Christians have conceived it their duty to practise—scoffing at the terms *sprinkling*, *pouring*, &c. as if they were not terms employed by the Holy Spirit, to signify the operation of his benign and heavenly grace upon the heart of his people.

SECTION II.

Of the subject of Re-baptizing.

HERE, we are aware, that our brethren the Baptists, will be ready to condemn this inquiry from its very title, for we know it is strongly alleged that nothing is Christian baptism, but what accords with their view of the subject. We hope, however, they will give us credit when we say, that it is not in order that we may differ from *them*, but in order that we may investigate and determine for ourselves, that ever we thought of considering this matter here.

Respecting this subject, we remarked elsewhere, that it is an initiatory, appointed to be administered to the disciples of the Lord Jesus immediately upon their conversion to the faith of his gospel. The baptism of John even did not differ in this respect. His was the baptism of repentance, and hence we read "that there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were baptized of him in Jordan, *confessing their sins* *." The confession of sins was necessary in order to his baptism, and invariably wherever such confessions were made, such penitents were straightway baptized. As the harbinger of the Lord, he preached to the people, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and whosoever gave credit to his doctrine, were thereupon baptized into the profession of it, confessing their sins. The apostles of our Lord went upon precisely the same plan. The three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, were baptized and added to the church the *self-same day* †. And the same was also the case with the eunuch, Cornelius, Lydia, and the jailor, Paul himself, and those whom he baptized, the Ephesian elders, and in short, all who received the word during the whole period of the apostles' ministry. Immediately upon their reception of the doctrine of the apostles, they had this ordinance administered to them as an initiatory rite, by which they were introduced into the profession of the belief of certain truths which they had never either believed, or professed to believe previously. Thus it is manifest, that baptism, as practised by the apostles, was the grand initiatory rite by which the newly converted made their first public avowal of their belief of the doctrines of the gospel, and professed themselves to be disciples of him who had

* Matt. iii. 5. Mark i. 5. † Acts ii. 41.

died for their sins, and risen again for their justification, and who had received all power in heaven and in earth, that as the great Head of his church, he might regulate and govern it.

Since then, baptism, in the days of the apostles, was uniformly administered to *newly* converted persons, and to such *only*, it comes to be a subject of no inconsiderable importance to ascertain whether, in the case of those who have been known for many years to have professed the Christian faith in a consistent and irreproachable manner, it ought to be again administered upon their views coming to be changed in respect of this ordinance. And here it is to be taken for granted, that if it had so happened, that their mind had been rightly informed in respect of this point at the period of their conversion, they would have willingly submitted to it. But this not having been the case, till ten, twenty, or perhaps thirty years from that period had been suffered to elapse, would the receiving of baptism under such circumstances then, be at all similar to the instances we have in the Scriptures? Or rather, would it not be giving a false representation of this ordinance, and be rather apparently baptizing men into *baptism itself*, than into the faith of doctrines they had so long professed? Here then, for we must express our sentiments freely, here lies the chief difficulty with us. We find it impossible for us to separate from the idea of baptizing under such circumstances, the idea of giving the lie to the whole of one's former profession, and of beginning entirely anew, as if he had known or professed to know nothing of Christianity before. If baptism is an initiatory ordinance, how is it possible to initiate a person into the profession of that which he has for many years actually professed already? Nor is

it mere profession in behalf of which we are here contending. The character we have more immediately in view, is that of a person who has professed Christianity not merely in the vague sense of the word, in which whole nations have been considered as Christians, but as a true and sincere follower of the Lord, and one who is desirous in every thing to do only that which is pleasing in his sight. This is the person of whom we are speaking, and the point to be determined respecting him is, whether he is to be re-baptized upon the change of his views respecting this ordinance being administered to infants. This indeed, is what he once held to be proper, but now he considers it as not so, therefore he desists from it. Is this not therefore enough? Must he not only give up the baptizing of his children, but be baptized himself, and thus declare publicly, if the ordinance has any meaning, that all his former profession was fallacious and vain?

But here we are aware it will be asked, was then this person of whom you speak ever baptized? Did he ever receive Christian baptism? we mean that baptism enjoined by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament? We are aware also, that supposing these questions should be answered in the affirmative, it will be immediately replied, Then the Scripture teaches *infant baptism!* Now, as we consider this objection to be nothing less than a mere quirk, so it must be answered accordingly. In our turn, we must say to such an objector, then, upon your principle, do not the Scriptures teach that a person should be baptized fourteen, twenty or thirty years after he has been converted? If the Scriptures do not teach infant baptism, we are certain that neither do they teach nor afford an instance of baptism being administered in such circumstances as these. As therefore, in our opinion, to assert the *last* would

be equally as unscriptural as to assert the *first*, the only difficulty with us comes accordingly to be, which of these two practices ought then to be adopted? As to that of re-baptizing in the circumstances we have supposed, we do not perceive how we could be exempted from the charge of exceeding the bounds of scriptural example; so we are of opinion, that the only evil to be rectified, is that of baptizing our children, and that to refrain from this whenever we are convinced of its unscriptural nature, is both the best way for persons in our circumstances of manifesting our regard for the authority of Christ, and of striking at the root of the evil which has got in amongst us. And it is because the other plan seems both to do more than the word of God warrants, or the nature of the subject requires, that we have entered into our present train of reasoning in this place.

In addition to those evils already mentioned, of going beyond due bounds in regard of scriptural example, as well as giving a false representation of the ordinance itself, there is another great and important evil of which it is necessarily a cause, and that is, divisions among the people of God. When a person who is a member of a church of Christ comes to be baptized, after he has professed the gospel for a number of years, his baptism, in the nature of the thing, does not so properly initiate him into the profession of the Christian faith, as into a profession of a different kind, and which seems to consist chiefly in constituting a difference between him and the brethren with whom he was formerly connected. Thus, while it seems to do nothing more satisfactory, does it lay a foundation for extending and still protracting the horrible evil of even real Christians dividing and separating from one another. It thus gives occasion for men to range themselves under different lead-

ers, and to call themselves by different names, by which they may be distinguished the one from the other, but which, according to the apostle's determination of such subjects, is a certain indication that they are so far carnal *, 1 Cor. iii. 4. And what is a consequence ever to be lamented in such cases, is, the exultation and triumph manifested by both parties in proportion as either of them may gain over proselytes to their respective sides. On these accounts we therefore conceive, that for persons in such a situation, when they come to have their views changed in regard to infant baptism, it would be acting fully as scripturally, and vastly more in conformity to their Christian profession, for them merely to refrain from baptizing their children, for this would be removing to all intents and purposes the grand source of the error, and would be laying a foundation for bringing all matters right, while at the same time the other evils would be avoided, in the course of a very few years.

We repeat it again, however, that we have no expectation, but that this reasonable mode of procedure will be violently opposed by such as assume too high grounds in regard to this subject, and who seem to imagine every thing concerning it to be clear and de-

* It has been with much regret that, in the course of this inquiry, we have been under the necessity of conforming to the established custom of distinguishing between Christians by different names. If our sense could have been equally understood, the reader may rest assured that he would not have been troubled with the terms *Baptist* or *Pedo-baptist*, as epithets which distinguish some of the people of God: Nor have we regard for the one term more than for the other, for it is not as Baptists or Pedo-baptists, that we wish to know Christians, but as persons who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and amongst whom, through whose marvellous loving-kindness, there exists the most endearing and indissoluble union.

monstrable truths. As we have no inclination to enter the list of combatant with any, however, all we would ask of them therefore is, that if they would shew us from Scripture either an example or precept for the baptizing of persons in such a situation, we shall thank them for the information; and till some such clear and irrefragable evidence is produced, it is hoped that Christians will in this matter think and act deliberately, without suffering themselves to be hurried into a practice which, at best, is equally as doubtful as that they may be at present pursuing. If our brethren can cast any light on the subject, their debtors we shall consider ourselves for so doing. But should we see reason for differing from them still, we do not perceive how we would be giving any just grounds of offence, as we are certain our conscience bears us witness that we do not deal thus in regard to them.

APPENDIX.

OF CHRISTIAN UNITY AND FORBEARANCE.

PART I.

Of General Principles.

WHAT attentive observer is there, who is not stung to the very heart with all the unhappy differences which exist among the people of God? The number of sects and parties into which they are divided, is almost infinite. And what is worse, like the Jews and Samaritans of old, they will have no intercourse with one another. They more nearly resemble the independent states of the ancient Greeks, among which were perpetual contentions and discords, than that *one* body of redeemed sinners, which the Scriptures represent them as constituting. Does church history consist of any thing else almost, but the doleful detail of the lamentable differences, the mutual and mean jealousies, and the hostile-like conduct of the professed followers of the Lamb? As in societies formed upon maxims merely of human policy, so here, we behold one party rising on the ruins of another, and this, after having flourished for a season, is found to give place to a more powerful foe.

To trace the various serpentine courses into which Christians have wandered in the violence of their opposition one to another, would be a work as extensive as it would be foreign to our present purpose. All that we intend to do, therefore, is to examine a few of the principles which must necessarily have given rise, as well as still continue, to protract this great and crying evil.

That Christians are necessarily to be conformed to each other in *every* respect, is a position we must set out with doubting, as we see nothing analogous to it in any of the other works of God. When we inquire into the world of nature, and arrange the various materials with which she furnishes us into their respective classes and orders, though we indeed perceive such general marks of agreement between them, as sufficiently to justify the propriety of our conduct in regard to this point, yet still, when they are more minutely considered, such differences will be found, as manifestly to distinguish each individual from all the rest of its order. So that, if men were foolish enough to proceed upon the same rule here, that many affect to do in regard to religion, instead of classifying, they should divide and subdivide, not to say every class, but every individual of every class, into the minutest principles, and the result would be found, that no two particles were exactly alike. But because of this variety, are they therefore void of utility? Or would any man be so foolish as to reject the provision with which the great Author of nature provides him, such as food and raiment, because they did not come up to his wild and preposterous notions of absolute uniformity?

But in matters relating merely to the present life, men conduct themselves more like rational beings than in matters of religion. Though objects are thus varied

in the world of nature, yet no person ever thinks of casting out with his neighbour on this account. Every individual has his own particular make and conformation of body. There are not two faces alike, two handwritings, two tones of voice in different individuals; and yet we never heard of any so absurd as to be displeased with his friend, because that in these respects he was not framed and modelled entirely after his likeness. Do we not find also a variety as to sex, complexion, taste and size? Yea, do not naturalists tell us, that there are not two hairs, two leaves, two piles of grass, two atoms of any description, when reduced to their ultimate, their elementary particles, that perfectly agree? Would not the demand of uniformity in these respects therefore, be a demand utterly to annihilate the whole universe to a single individual, yea, more, to a single atom of that individual?

Now since the glorious works of nature are thus varied, and since this endless variety is of itself the stamp which they all bear of their great Original, shall men, Christian men too, ever think of altering this admirable order which their Father and their God has constituted in the universe? Or is it in any respect to be wondered at, that our minds, faculties which are in a manner beyond our controul, should not be exactly alike, since our bodies are thus fearfully and wonderfully constructed, and since all nature bears the equally paradoxical stamp of its first great Cause, variety and harmony? Nor can we imagine that these admirable evidences of the finger of God will terminate here. Could we take a glance into the world of spirits, and contemplate the glories of that state, should we not there behold the most striking analogy in this respect to all that we now see or hear? As love and affection, emanating from the throne of God, and published to

guilty men in the gospel of his Son, is the only centre of union in the church here below; so is it expressly the same principle which knits all hearts into one in the temple above. But as the objects of their contemplation are infinite, and as all have not the same faculties, nor have made the same progress in research, there must be diversities, and harmonious discords, so to speak, though still all under the operation of one and the same spirit.

Were men mere machines indeed, or brute creatures, destitute of the rational faculties, the scheme of reducing all to one uniform rule in every respect, might probably succeed. But as well deprive us of life altogether, as, with this invaluable blessing, and with the other, which is even more so, attempt to reduce us all to the standard of any individual. To be capable of thinking is our glory as men, and to think soberly, that is to say, to think as the word of God directs, without at the same time imposing our individual views, even of divine truth, upon the consciences of our brethren, is our glory as Christians.

But it may be said, if every individual has thus a liberty of thinking for himself, is there at all any likelihood that the jarrings, discordances, and divisions in the church of God, will ever come to an end? Now, supposing we were not able to answer in the affirmative, what then? Must we therefore not think at all, because we may perchance think differently from our brethren? But supposing again that men could be found so mean, and so entirely destitute of every principle of religion and common sense, as to conform to this demand, still, we ask, to what length would you wish to carry it? Who are the persons you would have to walk at liberty, and who would you thus fetter hands and feet, that you might do with them whatsoever thou

listest? Were it put in the power of our own choice, would not every one of us covet to be this Son of liberty? And if the privilege were to be extended to a few more, would not every partizan wish that it were at least himself, and the party to which he belongs? But if there were more than *one* thus permitted to think for themselves, would they not still be in danger of falling into the same snare by and bye, of having a discordancy of sentiments? Or supposing it to be restricted to one, still would not that individual, unless he were under the influence of an infallible guide, be in danger at times of disagreeing with himself? But happy is it for us, that God has not laid us under any such interdict, though nothing less is indeed the grand point at which all true party-men aim.

As we have seen that it is not essential to our existence as men to be all precisely of one visage, size, or shape, in respect of our bodies, so in like manner as little is it necessary to our possession of the rational faculties that these should operate exactly alike in every individual, and that the generations which succeed should not have it in their power to add to the aggregate sum of ideas collected by their forefathers. Yea, who does not perceive that the very introduction of such a position would inspire us with fear and trembling, and totally incapacitate us for the rational discharge of every moral obligation? If uniformity of sentiment is absolutely necessary, what if at some unguarded moment a new reflection should dart into our minds from which we found it impossible to free ourselves; in this case we would be under the necessity of either acting the hypocrite and dissembler, or be exposed to the severest of all fates, viz. that of being cast out of the church.

It will perhaps be said that I mistake the idea that is meant to be conveyed, and that this representation of

unity of sentiment is altogether going to extremes which were never so much as thought of. How far then would you be disposed to go? Would the simple acknowledgement of the doctrine of Christ, namely, that "we believe and are sure that he is the Son of the living God," and a life and conversation in all respects correspondent with such a profession, be all you would then demand? No, say you; there must be also a unity in regard to church order. What order would you then be for? The most scriptural, it will be replied. But then, will not this notion of the most scriptural order be varied according to all the different and even contradictory opinions men have formed upon the subject? Here then, were we to follow out the inquiry, we should at once find ourselves launched into a boundless ocean, to which "neither sun nor stars would for many days appear*," but where rocks, shoals, and quicksands exist in such abundance, as imminently to endanger the lives of all its adventurous and rash navigators. We should find ourselves, in short, in a field of battle, carried to be witnesses of all the desolating campaigns which the revolution of several centuries has produced; and after the most dreadful struggle between armies and champions of all descriptions, we should still be as far as ever almost, at a loss to say in whose favour the victory ought to be declared.

These reflections we the more readily suggest, not that we have no fixed principles in regard to church order, but because we are decidedly of opinion that the Scriptures never represent this as the bond of union among Christians. As little do they afford us much room either to complain or to glory, that matters either are or are not, in this respect, such as we might prefer. But what they give us liberty to rejoice in, is to see Christians living at peace and harmony with one ano-

* Acts xxvii. 20.

ther, and, like their benevolent Father who is in heaven, extending their love to all who bear his image, and even with much long-suffering and patience bearing with those who perhaps, through the whole course of this mortal life, may never see as they do.

But to return to the contended for unity of sentiment with which we set out, we readily grant, that how varied soever the material objects of nature may be, yet there is a natural principle in the human mind, which has been distinguished by modern philosophers under the title of *Common Sense*, which will not permit us to differ so materially in respect of the decisions of our minds. Mankind have, in general, the same ideas of colours, sounds, sweet, bitter, hard, soft, and so on, with every other object that comes under the cognizance of our senses, unless it be in cases where these are deranged. Truth, in like manner, would be always *one* to the mind, as these qualities are to our various organs of sense, provided we could come to the same certainty in respect of it that we can in respect of the objects of sense. There are indeed some truths partaking of the same nature, which have been called axioms, as, for instance, that two and two make four, a whole is greater than a part, and two halves make a whole, and so on; and it so happens that there are never any differences respecting these. But truths which are the product of reasoning are always liable to be the subjects of difference, in proportion to the different lights in which different individuals take them up. Were it possible for us, however, to enter upon their investigation entirely free of prejudice, and in the first place, to furnish ourselves with all the information which may be lying scattered throughout either the Scriptures or the world of nature, before we allowed ourselves to draw conclusions, these would not be so discordant as they fre-

quently are. Some are prejudiced in favour of their old forms and manner of conceiving of objects; and others, wholly disregarding these, set their imaginations to work, and devise new systems, and then have recourse to Scripture in order to prove them. And till these evils be rectified in the church of God, we do not expect to see either much progress in real useful knowledge, nor love and concord among the brethren.

This leads us to observe another thing Christians ought to attend to, and that is, holding the truth in *love*. We have just observed that one, and perhaps the principal cause of difference about truths which are the product of our reasoning faculties, is the different lights in which different individuals take them up; but as it is sometimes in a manner entirely beyond their power to act in these matters otherwise than they do, let us beware of treating them either with contempt or ridicule, or yet of ascribing to them the worst of motives. If we have the truth on our side, let us maintain it in peace; and I am certain this will do more for its establishment, and will likewise be a greater blessing to ourselves, than if we indulged in all the asperity we were capable of exercising. For my part, I am wholly at a loss to conceive what kind of ideas those have either of themselves or of their brethren, or yet of the dispensation of grace, who seem to imagine that they alone have discovered and maintain the truth, and who are for taxing all others with sin who do not see matters in the very same light. If it is indeed the true grace of God that they have discovered, they ought to recollect that these discoveries may have been owing to some circumstances in the mysterious leadings of divine Providence, and not to any thing in themselves; and, therefore, instead of being elated, they ought to be humbled in the sight of God, who thus maketh them

to differ. Would it be a whit more inconsistent in a converted person to triumph over the rest of his brethren who are yet in their sins, and to treat them in such a manner as would only excite their corruptions, and rivet them the more in their hatred of the gospel, than such foolish treatment of one another among Christians? The Scripture indeed saith, "Every one to his own Master (meaning God) he standeth or falleth," Rom. xiv. 4. But does not the conduct of almost all say, We are your master, and these are the rules we prescribe you, and if you do not conform to these, we will condemn you with the greatest severity?

But here again we would inquire, is it really the fact that, between two contending parties, the truth must be necessarily either on the one side or on the other, or perhaps on neither, but that it is altogether impossible that both can be holding it so as to be pleasing God? If this question could be satisfactorily answered, notwithstanding to whatever line of conduct it might lead, it would certainly, in great measure, bring to a happy termination the various contentions which have so long agitated and rent the church of God. But as it cannot be answered directly, neither said of any man, or set of men, that he or they alone, to the exclusion of all others, maintain what is right, a more generous spirit than is generally to be found among the various contending partizans of every sect, ought undoubtedly to be cultivated. So long as we behold truth partly maintained on both sides; so long as both are able to render a reason for what they do, such, at least, as satisfies their own minds in the presence of a holy and heart searching God, though not to the conviction of their opposite brethren; and so long as God, by his blessing gives countenance to both, and renders them a blessing in the world,

it will still be our duty to seek to be preserved from the sin of party-zeal, and to acknowledge with humility and gratitude whatever is so manifestly the doing of the Lord, wherever we shall behold it.

We are fully aware that these observations, though founded, not only on undeniable matters of fact, but on what constitutes the very basis of all true religion, namely, on the right which every one possesses in these matters of judging for himself, will yet be exceedingly unwelcome to some. Though the whole family of heaven and of earth is only one in Christ, and though it was one of the last petitions which Jesus while on earth presented to his Father, that his disciples might all be united, that by their union and their love the world might be convinced that he came from the Father; yet strange is it to tell, that it has now become a principle with some to reverse these sentiments of the Saviour, and to make it a part of their system to divide and subdivide the church of God even into twos and threes, and without any regret to separate even these, by boldly asserting, "That even two cannot walk together unless they are agreed *." And here we would have it to be

* Though we have no desire of dealing in harsh or bitter language, yet the gross perversion of this sacred text is too glaring to be passed over in silence. It occurs in Amos iii. 3. and it is a difference between Jehovah himself and his people Israel, and not any differences between his people among themselves, which is there mentioned, though this last be the general, and almost the exclusive application of the passage. And even here it is applied so very vaguely, that it may be made to signify every thing or nothing. When brethren differ in respect of any thing almost, foh! it is contended there must be a separation, For how can two walk together except they are agreed? Well, since you wish to know, Paul tells you how it can be done. Respecting personal differences he says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind,

known, that we do not charge one particular sect more than another with this improper conduct; for the evil, alas! has spread far and wide, so that individuals enjoy not the liberty of thinking for themselves, or if they do, and happen to think differently from their brethren, they are exposed to the danger of being excluded their society.

meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye," Col. iii. 12, 13. Or if they are differences respecting modes and forms of worship, &c. read what he says in the xiv. chapter of his epistle to the Romans. Yea, when divisions or schisms were running very high in the church at Corinth, one saying he was of Paul, another of Apollos, and a third of Cephas, and so on, he quashes all their altercations, by exhorting them to live at peace and harmony with one another, 1 Cor. i. 10.

APPENDIX.

PART II.

Of Particular Principles.

In farther prosecuting the present subject, our reflections will be chiefly of two kinds. The one regarding the principles upon which individuals ought to unite, and so forming societies or churches. The other, the principles upon which such societies or churches ought to recognize one another.

Respecting the first, the belief of the confession of Peter, namely, "That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," is positively all that is required of the sinful children of men to a full and complete title to all the blessings of the gospel. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," saith the apostle John, "and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him *." Thus we perceive that the union of Christians is as natural as it is endearing. In the very nature of the thing, love to the members must keep pace with our degree of

* 1 John v. 1.

love to the head; for if we indeed love him who begat, we cannot but love them who are begotten of him. Now, how does love operate? Surely not by standing at a distance from, or by biting and devouring one another. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour," Rom. xiii. 10. "It doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked," 1 Cor. xiii. 5. "A righteous man is merciful even to his beast, whereas the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," Prov. xii. 10. But we speak not here of the difference between the righteous and the wicked, but of the one spirit of love, tenderness, and sympathy which must necessarily pervade the children of God in all ages and climates. As the blessed Saviour is universal Lord, so all the saved in every age and nation, own him to be such. They love him with their whole hearts, and it is in a manner inseparable from their very being to have any other principle in regard to their brethren. Love to him who begat, makes the heart of Christians throughout all the world vibrate in the most perfect harmony, with love to those also who are begotten of him.

But we remark farther, that the principle of Christian union is not only natural in itself, but that the Scriptures afford such abundant evidence in support of it, as really to evince that there must be no little criminality on the head of those who would dare to oppose it. Not to mention the sentiment of our Lord in regard to the man who was prohibited by his disciples from casting out demons, we would refer to his own intercessory prayer, as the most indubitable evidence on this head. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be ONE, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," John xvii. 20, 21. As nothing can be more

evident than that it was the design of the Saviour that there should subsist the most perfect harmony among his followers, so, the reason assigned for it is such as ought to be deeply impressed upon the heart of all. The reason is nothing less than that of an evidence of his divine mission to the world that lieth in wickedness. Hence it follows, that wherever there is an opposite conduct to this design of the Saviour, his authority is not only disregarded, but the world is deprived of a privilege to which they have a right by the seal of Heaven, and which, by the blessing of God, might be conducive to their conversion. In the early ages of the gospel, the affection manifested by Christians toward one another, made the world to take knowledge of them, and to conclude that they had been with Christ. But alas! it is so very different in the present day, that it comes to be a problem well worthy of discussion, whether there is any likelihood that it ever shall be otherwise. To trace the causes and origin of this evil, and to state the principles from which Christians must have swerved when they began to walk in devious paths of their own, seem to bid the fairest for its solution.

The principal cause which must have given rise, as well as protracts the differences amongst Christians, in our view, is that of an intolerance of spirit whereby they will not allow each to think for himself, but condemn and anathematize one another with the most unrelenting severity, not unfrequently magnifying the veriest trifles as if they were the grossest errors; and hence they conceive themselves warranted to separate and stand aloof from those very persons with whom they are one after all, in the bonds of the gospel. We are aware that this conduct must have taken its rise on account of principles having been introduced into the

church, to which some could not give their assent. Now, as there were examples of this nature even in the days of the apostles, we would do well to attend to the manner in which such matters were treated by those infallible guides. It is to be particularly observed, that every error was not placed upon the same level, nor was the same line of conduct to be pursued toward every aggressor. In relation to this subject, Jude * says expressly, "Of some have compassion, making a difference, and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." The difference here enjoined by Jude, in regard to the treatment of offenders, is doubtless equally applicable to errors whether of sentiment or of conduct, on which account we must trace a few examples, in order as much as possible to come at precision on this point.

As to errors of conduct then, throughout the whole of Scripture, and especially the apostolical epistles, gross immorality, indeed, is uniformly condemned with the greatest severity. But a person might be chargeable with other species of misconduct, so as even to be marked by the brethren, and they charged to "have no company with him, and yet he was not to be accounted as an enemy, but admonished as a brother†."

So, in like manner, differences of sentiment in some cases were not permitted to have the *smallest place*, but Christians were to separate from those who were not of the same mind in this respect. We shall err most egregiously, however, if we suppose this to have been the case universally. On the contrary, there were, and might be many differences in respect of sentiment, and yet Christians were not to separate, but to go on with their brethren with whom they were united in other respects. What then is the precise point of distinction between

* Ver. 22, 23. † 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15.

these two classes of difference of sentiment? Just the old distinction between *essentials* and *non-essentials*, if the captiousness of the present times did not decry all such distinctions as erroneous and unscriptural. But as we feel no itch for such terms more than that they are the signs of ideas, so if we can convey our meaning equally without them, we most willingly let them go.

Of the first kind of difference of sentiment, is that of which the apostle John speaks in his second epistle, ver. 10. saying to the elect lady and her children, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." The doctrine concerning which this supposed messenger might be lacking, was, as we learn from the seventh and ninth verses, the doctrine concerning Christ, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." "Beloved," says the same apostle, 1 epist. iv. 1. "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God."

On the same score of erroneous sentiments, Peter speaks of some who should "privily bring in damnable heresies," 2 Pet. ii. 1.; and Paul says in writing to Titus, chap. iii. 10. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." Now, what were those destructive heresies of which Peter speaks? They consisted in a "denying even of the Lord that bought them." Thus, therefore, Peter evidently agrees with the apostle John, and both fully authorize Christians to have no manner of religious fellowship with

such as either "deny that Christ is come in the flesh," or who would rob him of his divine character, which is indeed the principal gem of his crown. But this is a very different cause of separation from the generality of those upon which Christians in the present day insist. In truth it is not a separation amongst Christians themselves, but merely a separation between them and such as have no manner of right, on account of the principles they hold, to assume the name.

Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, chap. iii. 1,—5. describes another set of characters from whom he commands Christians to turn away. In his letter to the Romans, chap. xvi. 17. he earnestly entreats that the persons who cause divisions, contrary to the apostolic doctrine, should be carefully avoided. Concerning the false teachers in the churches of Galatia, he says, Gal. v. 12. "I would they were even cut off which trouble you." The Philippians he exhorts in the following manner. "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision," chap. iii. 2. And to the Colossians he writes, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." The apostle Jude, in like manner, ver. 19. makes mention of certain characters who even separated themselves from the fellowship of the saints. And what kind of characters were they? They were such as the saints must have separated from their societies, had they not gone away of their own accord. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit." But still all this does not come up to what we see practised in the present day.

Again, when we turn to what the apostle Paul says, 2 Cor. vi. 17. or the apostle John in regard to the apocalyptic Babylon, we still find separation urged upon

one and the same principle. Paul indeed describes what he means by "separating" in the 17th ver. by exhorting the Corinthians, ver. 14. "Not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship," saith he, "hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty *." The voice from heaven, which John describes, in like manner, assigns a similar reason for the exhortation, "Come out of her, my people," Rev. xviii. 4. It was for the sake of not partaking of her *sins*, that they might avoid her punishment. Now, what were the sins of this mystical harlot? This is an important question, and as we shall have further occasion for it by and by, we wish it to be particularly attended to. Let it be then observed, that there were not only innumerable sins of the most gross and immoral nature, but as if all these were not enough, there was the sin of *enslaving the souls of men*. But after all, when we compare this with what we see in the present day, there appears to be no analogy in the smallest. It is not Christians separating from Christians which we here behold, but from spiritual tyrants —from a system which makes merchandize of the souls of men, by the sale of indulgences—a system

* 2 Cor. vi. 14,—18.

which is wrong in its very foundation, regarding another besides Christ as its great Head—a system, in short, which takes away the key of knowledge from the people, and which places on a level with the divinely inspired oracles, their own dogmas, most of which are evidently the product of men of corrupt minds. These are some of the things for which Christians are exhorted to "come out of her;" and is not separation in such circumstances most essential indeed?

Thus we perceive, that neither on account of *sentiment* on the one hand, or of *conduct* on the other, were professing Christians to regard it as a light matter in separating from one another. The examples of the first kind which we have seen, regard what have not improperly been termed, as already observed, the *essentials* of religion, that is to say, doctrines, the denial of which unchristianizes a person altogether; so that this in the apostles' account was the grand, the sole reason why a man was either received, retained, or excluded from the society of the godly. Conformity to one another in matters such as these was absolutely indispensable; and if there was not conformity to one another here, it was on account of nothing less than want of conformity, one or other of them, to the image of God in the spirit of their mind.

But it will be said, if there is to be a separation on account of such matters, will not this in its very nature lay a foundation for a difference among Christians? To which we would reply, Yes, it may among professing Christians, but not amongst those who are Christians in deed and in truth. Amongst these, there can be no difference, as happily there is none, in regard to such important matters. These are matters most surely believed by them all, yea, and upon the belief of which is their whole claim to the Christian character suspend-

ed. Wherever we behold a person, therefore, denying as the Jews do, that the Messiah is come, or that he is truly and properly God as well as man, as many have impiously done, such characters cannot be reckoned as having any title to the appellation of Christians, for in truth they are not. Supposing then, that true Christians should either themselves separate, or expel such from their society, and that such should form a society by themselves under the same name, yet this could not be reckoned as constituting two distinct Christian communities; for the truth is, the one should be holding principles which are subversive of Christianity altogether, and therefore, to be consistent with themselves, they ought to give up all connection with the title of course.

It may be further said, that if such communities as have been supposed were but once to exist, is it not possible that real Christians might mingle with them; and therefore, if the separation contended for were to take place, would not this be constituting a difference among the people of God? In answer to this, however, it ought to be observed, that though the possibility of real Christians being to be found in such circumstances be fully admitted, yet that they can allow themselves such liberties as flowing from a mind properly informed in respect of the tenets of those with whom they associate, seems most doubtful indeed. It is essential to the character of a Christian, for instance, to acknowledge the God-head of Christ; yet for want of connecting this part of the Christian system with the system of those with whom a Christian may associate, it is possible that he may be found amongst men who deny this fundamental article. Again, in order to have correct notions of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, it is essential to view it as wholly spiritual, and completely

distinct from the kingdoms of this world; but for want of attending to this speciality of character in his kingdom, it is possible that Christians may be found connected with a system which blends the two together. Likewise, to acknowledge the supremacy of Christ as the head of all things to the church, is essential to our entertaining proper ideas of the high character he sustains; but for want of connecting this part of the Christian faith with the pretensions of the popish hierarchy, it is possible for Christians to be found even in the bosom of the man of sin, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God *."

But it is a question which is surely not difficult of solving, whether, if they understood their own systems, could they any longer remain in them? Because, were we to answer in the negative, there is little doubt but we should be right, for it seems impossible that the sheep of Christ, who hear his voice, should have any hesitation of relinquishing a situation at his heavenly direction; and the more so, when they would perceive that by their remaining in it, they would be giving their assent to doctrines or practices which are so evidently subversive of his revealed will. Were it allowable for a person to give his own experience on a subject of this nature, we could say in regard to establishments, this being the only case of the three instances we have specified in which we have been concerned, that it would be impossible for us now to have any longer connection with them; and this, not so much on account of the corruption which exists in those churches, for corruption, alas! may exist in any church, but because in their very constitution they connect the

* 2 Thess. ii. 4.

kingdoms of this world with the kingdom of our blessed Lord; a circumstance which requires no strength of reasoning, but simply attention to this one passage, "My kingdom is not of this world," to see how very unscriptural and inimical to real religion all such systems must be. To separate from such societies therefore, is not properly speaking separating from churches of Christ, for as Christ's kingdom is not of this world, societies such as these, which blend the two together, must needs be some other thing than that spiritual and heavenly kingdom he came to erect.

But though separation in respect of such unscriptural systems is not only allowable, but most important and proper for the maintaining of his religion pure and entire, yet this is still a very different thing from that of Christians separating from one another about matters which are of a far more doubtful nature. Before the tenets we have specified can be at all admitted, the whole of the New Testament would behove to be new modelled; but certainly differences in respect of other things which are not incompatible with any part of revealed truth, ought not to be placed on the same level. In the New Testament indeed, such points of difference are frequently alluded to; but not in a single instance can it be shewn that Christians might lawfully separate from each other in regard to them. In the Corinthian church, for instance, there were several differences of this nature; and as they are particularly treated by an inspired apostle, we cannot do better than examine these, in order to arrive at certainty in regard to the line we ought to pursue. And here, without going in quest of something of our own to say, we would rather take the liberty of inserting a few of Dr Campbell's sentiments on *schism*, as being at least as well adapted to our present purpose as any thing we could devise.

That eminent author, after shewing from several passages in the gospel by John, that the word Σχισμα is used to signify a difference in opinion expressed in words, proceeds to remark farther, 'But it is not barely to a declared difference in judgment, that even the 'metaphorical use of the word is confined. As *breach* 'or *rupture* is the literal import of it in our language, 'wherever these words may be figuratively applied, the 'term σχισμα seems likewise capable of an application. 'It invariably pre-supposes that among those things 'whereof it is affirmed, there subsisted an union formerly, and as invariably denotes that the union subsists 'no longer. In this manner the apostle Paul uses the 'word, applying it to a particular church or Christian 'congregation. Thus he adjures the Corinthians by 'the name of the Lord Jesus, that there be no divisions 'or schisms among them *, ἱνα μη η εν ὑμιν σχισματα; and 'in another place of the same epistle †, he tells them, '*I hear that there are divisions* or schisms *among you*, 'ακουω σχισματα εν ὑμιν ὑπαρχειν. In order to obtain a proper idea of what is meant by breach or schism in this 'application, we must form a just notion of that which 'constituted the union whereof the schism was a violation. Now, the great and powerful comment which 'united the souls of Christians, was their mutual love. '*Their hearts*, in the emphatical language of holy writ, '*were knit together in love* ‡. This had been declared 'by their Master to be the distinguishing badge of their 'profession. *By this shall all men know that ye are my 'disciples, if ye have love one to another* §. Their partaking of the same baptism, their professing the same 'faith, their enjoying the same promises, and their join-

* 1 Cor. i. 10. † Chap. xi. 18.

‡ Col. ii. 2. § John xiii. 35.

'ing in the same religious service, formed a connection 'merely external and of little significance, unless, agree-'ably to the apostle's expression *, it was rooted and 'grounded in love. As this, therefore, is the great 'criterion of the Christian character, and the founda-'tion of the Christian unity, whatever alienates the af-'fections of Christians from one another, is manifestly 'subversive of both, and may consequently, with the 'greatest truth and energy, be denominated *schism*. It 'is not so much what makes an outward distinction or 'separation, (though this also may in a lower degree 'be so denominated), as what produces an alienation of 'the heart, which constitutes schism in the sense of the 'apostle, for this strikes directly at the vitals of Chris-'tianity. Indeed, both the evil and danger of the 'former, that is, an external separation, is principally 'to be estimated from its influence upon the latter, that 'is, in producing an alienation of heart, for it is in the 'union of affection among Christians, that the spirit, 'the life, and the power of religion are principally pla-'ced.

'It may be said, does it not rather appear, from the 'passage first quoted, to denote such a breach of that 'visible unity in the outward order settled in their as-'semblies, as results from some jarring in their reli-'gious opinions, as by consequence in the expressions 'they adopted? This, I own, is what the words in im-'mediate connection, considered by themselves, would 'naturally suggest. *I beseech you, brethren, that ye all 'speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions*, '(schisms), *among you, and that ye be perfectly joined to-'gether in the same mind, and in the same judgment* †. It 'cannot be denied that a certain unanimity, or declared 'assent to the great articles of the Christian profession,

* Eph. iii. 17. † I Cor. i. 10.

'was necessary in every one, in order to his being admitted to, and kept in the communion of the church. But then it must be allowed on the other hand, that those articles were at that time few, simple, and perspicuous. It is one of the many unhappy consequences of the disputes that have arisen in the church, and of the manner in which these have been managed, that such terms of communion have since been multiplied in every part of the Christian world, and not a little perplexed with metaphysical subtilties, and scholastic quibbles. Whether this evil consequence was, in its nature unavoidable, or, if it was, in what manner it might have been avoided, are questions, though important, foreign to the present purpose. Certain it is, however, that several phrases used by the apostles in relation to this subject, such as ὁμοφρονες, το αυτο φρονεντες, and some others, commonly understood to mean unanimous in opinion, denote more properly, *coinciding in affection, concurring in love, desire, hatred, and aversion*, agreeably to the common import of the verb φρονειν, both in sacred authors and in profane, which is more strictly rendered *to savour, to relish*, than *to be of opinion*.

'Further, let it be observed, that in matters whereby the essentials of the faith are not affected, much greater indulgence to diversity of opinion was given, in those pure and primitive times, than has been allowed since, when the externals, or the form of religion came to be raised on the ruins of the essentials, or the power, and a supposed correctness of judgment made of greater account than purity of heart. In the apostolic age, which may be styled the reign of charity, their mutual forbearance in regard to such differences, was at once an evidence, and an exercise of this

'divine principle. *Him that is weak in the faith*, says 'our apostle, *receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations, 'for one believeth that he may eat all things, another who 'is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth, despise 'him that eateth not; and let not him who eateth not, judge 'him that eateth* *. *One man esteemeth one day above 'another; another esteemeth every day alike.* As to these 'disputable points, *let every man be fully persuaded in 'his own mind* †; and, as far as he himself is con-'cerned, act according to his persuasion. But he does 'not permit even him who is in the right, to disturb 'his brother's peace, by such unimportant inquiries. '*Hast thou faith*, says he, the knowledge and convic-'tion of the truth on the point in question? *have it 'to thyself before God. Happy is he who condemneth not 'himself in that thing which he alloweth* ‡. And in ano-'ther place, *Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be 'thus minded, and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, 'God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, where-'to we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, 'let us mind the same thing* §. We are to remember, 'that *as the kingdom of God is not meat and drink*, so nei-'ther is it logical acuteness in distinction, or gram-'matical accuracy of expression, but it is *righteousness, 'and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*; for he that in 'these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and 'approved of men ¶.

'Now, if we inquire by an examination of the con-'text into the nature of those differences among the 'Corinthians, to which Paul affixes the name σχισματα, 'nothing is more certain, than that no cause of dif-'ference is suggested, which has any the least relation

* Rom. xiv. 1, 2, 3. † Ver. 5. ‡ Ver. 22.
§ Phil. iii. 15, 16. ¶ Rom. xiv. 17, 18.

'to the doctrines of religion, or any opinions that might 'be formed concerning them. The fault which he 'stigmatized with that odious appellation, consisted 'then solely in an undue attachment to the particular 'persons, under whom, as chiefs or leaders, the people 'severally ranked themselves, and thus, without ma-'king separate communions, formed distinctions among 'themselves, to the manifest prejudice of the common 'bond of charity, classing themselves under different 'heads. *Now this I say*, adds the apostle, *that every 'one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of 'Cephas, and I of Christ* *. It deserves to be remarked, 'that of the differences among the Roman converts 'concerning the observance of days, and the distinction 'of meats, which we should think more material, as 'they more nearly affect the justness of religious senti-'ments, and the purity of religious practice, the apostle 'makes so little account, that he will not permit them 'to harass one another with such questions, but enjoins 'them to allow every one to follow his own judgment; 'at the same time that he is greatly alarmed at differ-'ences among the Corinthians, in which, as they result 'solely from particular attachments and personal 'esteem, neither the faith nor the practice of a Chris-'tian appears to have an immediate concern. But it 'was not without reason that he made this distinction. 'The hurt threatened by the latter was directly against 'that extensive love commanded by the Christian law; 'but not less truly, though more indirectly, against the 'Christian doctrine and manners. By attaching them-'selves strongly to human, and consequently fallible 'teachers and guides, they weakened the tie which 'bound them to the only divine guide and teacher, the

* 1 Cor. i. 12.

'Messiah, and therefore to that also which bound them 'all one to another.'

From this quotation, which, though long, requires no apology on account of the excellency of the matter, several important principles may be observed. In particular, the important distinction respecting the signification of the original terms rendered by our translators *the same mind and same judgment*, ought especially to be noticed. And were it necessary, the doctor's opinion might be corroborated by the concurrence of almost all critics on the Greek language. In particular, *Leigh* says of the verb φρονεω, 'that it is a general word com-'prehending the actions and operations both of the *un-'derstanding* and *will*, and that it is in the Scripture ap-'plied to both, but most commonly to the actions of 'the *will* and *affections*, which are particular motions 'of the *will*."

It evidently signifies a *disposition of the mind* towards a particular object, in the following passages, Matt. xvi. 23. Rom. viii. 5. xii. 16. Phil. iii. 19. Col. iii. 2.

On 1 Cor. i. 10. Macknight has the following observations. '*That ye be compactly joined*, εν τω αυτω νωι, *by 'the same mind*, that is, by mutual good affection; for '*the same mind*, in the sense of *the same opinion*, is not 'to be expected in any numerous society. We have 'the same direction, Rom. xv. 5. thus expressed, *the 'same disposition towards one another*. See also 1 Pet. 'iii. 8.'

'*And by the same* γνωμη, *judgment*. This word de-'notes *that practical judgment* which precedes volition. 'The meaning is, that in our deliberations we should 'yield to each other from mutual affection, and from a 'love of peace. Accordingly, the heathen moralists 'described true friendship, as cemented by the same 'inclinations and aversions, *idem velle, et idem nolle*, &c.'

Now, if the fact be thus, does it not shew how greatly those err, who are for insisting on a perfect uniformity of sentiment in respect of what they consider as religious ordinances? And particularly when uniformity here is made the grand criterion and bond of religious fellowship? For my part, if I am not altogether deceiving myself, I think my conscience bears me witness, that there is no part of religion as taught in the Scriptures, which I would have any hesitation in receiving; and yet, I confess, that my mind would require to be modelled entirely anew ere I could embrace or relish a number of things pretended to be drawn alone from that source. It is the magnifying of circumstances trivial in themselves, and the giving to them such an air of importance, as if on them the whole of our salvation depended, that seems to be the bane of Christian union in the present day. One while we behold this union suspended upon the difference between what have been called Baptist and Pedo-baptist Christians; another while we behold the standard shifting its position, and including along with this, a number of other things which appear to have had no existence, neither in the Scriptures nor any where else, till they appeared as ideal spectres only in the minds of some more fanciful than wise, who brought them forward. There was a period, when in England, the doctrine of non-conformity, and in Scotland, the solemn league and covenant, were reckoned the bond of union among Christians. Then the burgess oath, and after that the power of the Magistrate in ecclesiastical matters, came to be agitated with the same view. And more recently still, what have been called the ordinances of salutation, public discipline, exhortation by the brethren, &c. have been maintained upon the same ground, urged, indeed, so strenuously in some churches, that it has been posi-

tively asserted that these matters must be introduced though five hundred should go away.

The point then that falls to be considered here, is not respecting the scriptural or unscriptural nature of any or all of these; but it is, whether do the Scriptures represent them in the same important light our brethren would affect to do? If these are to be the bonds of Christian union, and if the Lord has no intention of deceiving his people, (as far be such a thought from our minds), why has he not commissioned his servants to speak plainly? Is not the opposite of perspicuity evidently implied, in the perpetually shifting standard of different individuals, and even of the same individuals at different times? Now, can a shifting standard be a divine standard, or yet the standard of truth?

Amidst such jarring sentiments respecting the standard of union, which are as varied as those of weights and measures in different countries and provinces, is there not to be found one more simple, more easy of comprehension, and which would supersede the necessity of all others, by its remaining unalterable and unchanged to the latest generation of men destined to inhabit this globe? 'To employ, as the fundamental 'unity of all measures, a type taken from nature itself, 'a type as unchangeable as the globe on which we 'dwell—to propose a metrical system, of which all the 'parts are intimately connected together, and of which 'the multiplys and sub-divisions follow a natural pro-'gression, which is simple, easy to comprehend:—this 'most assuredly is a beautiful, great, and sublime idea, 'worthy of the enlightened age in which we live.'

Such were the ideas which influenced the French National Institute, when they chose as the base of the

whole metrical system, the fourth part of the terrestrial meridian between the equator and the north pole.

Now, let us sanctify this thought, and endeavour to ascertain whether the Scriptures do not afford something equally simple, natural, and unchangeable, as the standard of unity among Christians. And, in order to this, we have to preserve in our minds but one idea only, namely, the principle upon which additions were made to the churches in the days of the apostles. In those days, being happily freed from distinctions into sects and parties, character alone was made the criterion, and not those refinements and subtilties of sentiment varied according to the disposition of every leader which succeeded in after times. This was the principle upon which Paul, out of the midst of a benevolent heart, desired again and again, grace, mercy and peace to be multiplied to all the churches of the saints, yea, to the whole Israel of God. Upon this principle likewise it was, that even a greater than Paul prayed for the unity of his people, saying, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall *believe* on me through their word, that they all may be *one*, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Here, let it be noticed, that the bond of union among Christians, is belief in the *Saviour*, and not in the different and jarring dogmas of men.

In order to restore the pristine unity, we must therefore recur to the original standard, and by no means allow ourselves either to dictate more to our brethren, or suffer them to impose more upon us.

Thus united upon a simple definite principle, we shall hence know the bond of our union, we shall glorify God in each other's behalf, for the manifestation of his grace

in thus calling us out of darkness into his marvellous light, we shall love as brethren, we shall be pitiful and courteous, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us, and thus shall we convince the world that there is a reality in our religion.

This standard of unity is both the most exalted, at the same time that it is the lowest and most condescending that can exist. It is beautiful, great, and sublime, as the French say of their metrical standard, and to deviate from it either to the right hand or to the left, must be attended with all the evil consequences which have ever existed in the church.

But it will be asked, how is it possible thus to maintain the unity of the body in the bond of peace, to exercise love towards one another, and to go on together, notwithstanding difference of sentiment? Nothing can be easier than to answer such a question. If the subject of difference do not involve in it the principal, the only point of your union, whence, pray, can the difficulty arise? Respecting such matters we must say as our Lord did to Peter, when he asked him how often his brother might trespass against him and yet be forgiven, "till seven times? Nay, but till seventy times seven." There were no hasty steps to be adopted that might tend to dissolve the connexion subsisting between them, but being filled with a love which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things," the utmost patience was to be exercised, leaving it to God to determine, in the day in which he shall judge every man according to his works, who was in the right, and who in the wrong. In these matters of difference, what occasion is there for contending and fighting so much about them? Is it not sufficient that we are all amenable to

the impartial decisions of God? Must we likewise be so to one another? Are we to be the umpires of another man's liberty? Or do the Scriptures not teach, "To his own master every man standeth or falleth?"

Though it be therefore the duty of every Christian, in the spirit of meekness, to watch over his brethren, there is, however, a wonderful distinction between this situation and that of a judge. Decisions in matters of conscience, each may lawfully draw for himself; but decisions for one another, we have no manner of right so much as to attempt. The free exercise of conscience is the indisputable right of every individual, and all the restriction which even God has laid upon it, is, that it be regulated according to the tenor of his holy word.

Nor let any imagine, that by thus granting liberty to our neighbour, we would necessarily be sacrificing truth. How could this ever happen, if every one held truth as he ought to do for himself alone, and not for his brother? "Hast thou faith?" saith the apostle, "have it to thyself before God," recollecting at the same time that thy brethren have the same account to make, and therefore must think for themselves. But their liberty does not infringe upon yours; neither, should you even think differently on some subjects, does it imply that such differences should be followed by open rupture. For Christians to come the length of separating from Christians, we are confident the word of God affords neither precept nor example. But as it is character alone which affords any right to the fellowship of the saints, so it is on account of character alone that any can be excluded.

The only exception to this rule, if it may be called an exception, is, when brethren are not inclined to allow one another to think for themselves, but who are

for urging their own particular views, and that upon divine authority, without any regard to those who may differ from them. In such a case there behoves of necessity to be a separation; but woe to that party whoever they may be, who would thus lay a burden upon the neck of the disciples. We have seen it to be a principal feature in the character of Antichrist, that he *enslaved the souls of men*, and we leave all the world to judge, whether this is not assuming the Antichristian character in its most direct form.

But here it must be observed, that as no man is disposed willingly to acknowledge that he maintains principles of spiritual tyranny, so neither let it be supposed, that the man who by his principles lays his brethren under gallings of conscience, is granting to them that liberty to which they have a right by the gospel of Christ, by telling them that if they cannot correspond with his principles they must just go away. Would not this be an admirable method for promoting the union of Christians? Were all to act upon it, as all have an equal right to do so, or rather no right at all, would it not absolutely bring their association down to individuals? Those sentiments can be granting no liberty to a man to think for himself, that expose to the necessity of a separation if he should happen to think differently. What should we think of that government which pretended to grant toleration to all its subjects, and at the same time declared to those who did not conform to the particular mode of worship established by law, that they must go out of the kingdom to enjoy it?

Again, there is a sentiment respecting *forbearance* which some at present hold, that we cannot avoid noticing in this place. They seem to imagine that it ought to be exercised only for a limited space, other-

wise their progress in what they term a going forward, will be apt to be checked by the dull or the stubborn. Now, respecting the alleged desire of pushing on toward improvement, I most readily applaud it; while, at the same time, I cannot but deplore such a sentiment respecting an article which may be most injurious, not merely to the stubborn and the dull, which here seem below notice, but to the weak, the conscientious, and perhaps even more intelligent than themselves. Oh! how unlike is such a sentiment to those of the apostle! "To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law; to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not*?"

Upon the whole then, as there is not a single passage in Scripture that would justify such a sentiment, and as it would by no means retard real improvement to act upon the principles of true gospel liberty, it is sincerely to be hoped that Christians will recollect themselves, and proceed no farther than the word of God evidently warrants them.

In regard to the subject of unity among the *churches*, we profess to have only a few things to say, which, however, were they only to be attended to, they might perhaps be the means of circumscribing the evil. It is fully admitted that those societies only which have

* 1 Cor. ix. 20,—22. 2 Cor. xi. 28, 29.

Scripture for their basis, have any right to be denominated churches of Christ. As in the same Christian society, there can be no connection between believers and unbelievers, so as little can there be any connection between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of Christ *. It is not a unity among churches thus heterogeneous in their nature, therefore, in behalf of which we plead, but merely a unity among those which are alike in regard to the grand and constituent principles upon which they are formed. But what are these, it will then be asked, that we may know precisely what you intend? Without therefore entering into any discussion respecting church government, I own, after the most careful examination I have been able to give the subject, that the Scriptures appear to me decidedly to exhibit that which has been called the congregational form. Now, it is among churches of this description that we think a union should subsist; nor do we conceive the various denominations at present extant, any more necessary than that Christians should be separated all into individuals. Yea, we would go farther, we would even call in question whether a single reason can be assigned that would justify even the very existence of a plurality of such denominations, that would not equally justify the separation of Christians to the greatest possible extent. Indeed, though we would be far from entertaining harsh sentiments of our brethren, yet, on account of the self-interested conduct which the advocates of each party manifest for its honour and success, and this even at the destruction of others, we are strongly of opinion that if the desire of being leaders of parties were less prevalent, there would be both fewer distinctions, and fewer contentions.

* See 2 Cor. vi. 14. to the end, and John xviii. 36.

Now, supposing Christians of different denominations were to relinquish this improper situation, as in duty they are bound, would not this of itself be such an approximation towards unity, that it would require but a step or two more for its completion? When Christians had first learned to detest each for himself the title of *leader*, they would soon come to allow the right each had to think for himself, and even though on many points they should happen to think differently, not to be at perpetual war one with another. They would soon come to view the cause of Christ among the different parties of Christians as one interest; this again would insensibly infuse into them the idea that they were but one body, so that if any part of it were honoured, whether in their particular community or out of it, all would rejoice as members thereof.

Now, is this representation merely ideal? Oh! no. Good cause have we to hope in God that it shall in reality be verified. Yea, we bless his holy name that there are not a few who earnestly desire it. And should the most of these be but obscure individuals, still we have cause to hope that "he will cause their light to rise in obscurity, and their darkness to be as the noonday." It is a thing impossible that God should be deaf to the prayers of his people and his Son.

In this place, there are four or five classes of Baptists, and I do not know how many Independents, all professing to belong to the same great family, and what is more, have their churches founded upon one and the same constitution; amongst none of them yet, except two of the Independent churches, is there any manner of communication. The world around, and strangers from a distance, marvel at this, and ask the grounds of the differences, which no one can distinctly tell. What

a pity is it, however, as they are not unsocial, but have all connection less or more with Christians in other places, that they do not seriously lay it to heart to establish some kind of relation with all those who are in the same place! This we know many would desire; and what, if party distinctions did not run so high, would be more easy to effect? If each party did not seek their own, but the things that are Christ's only, how exceedingly comforting and edifying would such a delightful scene be! Nor let any suppose that this would gender strife, if they all understood aright the doctrine of gospel liberty. If Christians as individuals, are to have no communication with any but such as are of their peculiar sentiments, and if churches are to stand opposed to churches, except the few who may be formed upon their particular mode, does this not imply that the kingdom of Christ is divided, or else if it is entire, that one only is right, and all the others are wrong? Upon this principle too, could heaven admit any save Christians of one party only?—for if their principles must be so rigid as to permit them to hold communion with none but one class here, where is the promise in the whole word of God, that such a peculiarity and aversion of mind shall terminate at death? The same principle which shall unite Christians in eternity, ought unquestionably to unite them in time. And we are fully satisfied that this union might be effected without any hazard of the smallest disagreement, were all but seriously disposed to give up contending for their own selfish peculiarities, and allow a free toleration in these matters for each to think for himself.

But union among churches, if it be proper to express ourselves so, might yet be more easily obtained. There would be no occasion for altering any of their internal

arrangements, if the brethren themselves did not see it to be proper. For it is not with these that their association would have to do, but with the spiritual edification of their immortal souls, and with the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, topics we conceive very distinct from the other.

Now, were some association such as we have suggested but fairly to be adopted, one important benefit it would immediately effect, would be, that it would lessen the desire of party proselytism, and thus remove the snare to the assumption of the *leader*. Is it not strange enough to reflect, that Christians can form connections with Christians at a distance, but seem to count it an evil to be so connected at home? If names and parties were but buried in oblivion; if leaders had but the honesty to descend to the level of *brethren*, we are morally certain such a phenomenon would no longer be seen.

But again, another benefit which would result from the adoption of such a principle, is, that Christians would then be put in a situation to make real, manly, and sanctified improvement. As matters are at present, each party think themselves wiser than their neighbours; and each has a champion to fight all their battles, a casuist to solve all their doubts, a monitor, whose office it is, to warn and to prejudice them against thinking favourably of any but themselves. But here, the spell would be broken. Darkness, ignorance, presumption, and conceit, ashamed, would hide their heads. Men would think freely, and because unfettered by any human yoke, they would think more rightly. The Scriptures would be investigated for the sake of alone knowing what they contain, and whether as individuals, they collected much or little information from them,

it would in the end come to be a sort of common stock, like the manna among the Israelites of old, out of which each might receive more than he could consume. And we submit it to every rational understanding, whether jangling and contention, and an enslaving turn of mind, are not the very bane of improvement.

Here it will perhaps be insinuated, that such blessed effects are not to be expected in the present state of society; with which insinuation I readily agree. And it is because of our sense of its most lamentable aspect, that we have endeavoured to detect several of its prevailing evils, by probbing them to the bottom. But because matters are so bad, is all hope of amendment therefore to be given up? Though the generality should even spurn at such a subject, still this is no reason why those who are otherwise minded should not endeavour to meliorate the evil to the utmost of their power. The very smallest beginning is better than no beginning; and who knows what blessed effects the Lord may cause to flow from the weakest attempt to restore to its pristine simplicity, his long forgotten cause? An upright, simple, and honest heart, a heart that is as desirous to be corrected of its own errors as it is to correct those of its neighbour, seems all that is necessary for the task. But without principles of this nature, the attempt would be vain. If Christians are not heartily grieved at the long state of warfare which has existed in the churches, and are disposed in good earnest to follow only the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another, it is impossible that any happy consequences could result from it. They ought therefore to count the cost before they begin, remembering that a cause once frustrated, is more

difficult of revival than one which has never been attempted.

Upon the whole then, since there are many in the present day who can deliberately argue in behalf of Christian disunion, it seems to be high time for those who are otherwise minded, to shew that, in proportion as they advance in the divine life, they lose the inclination for contention, and are in the true way to unity, and can breathe forth the true spirit of the gospel, "Glory to God in the highest, on the earth peace, and good will toward men."

THE END.