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*Gifts of the Theological Seminary,*

PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by Mr. Samuel Agnew of Philadelphia, Pa.

*Agnew Coll. on Baptism, No. 10412*

SCB

10412





# FOUR DISCOURSES

ON THE

NATURE, DESIGN, USES AND HISTORY

OF THE

## Ordinance of Baptism;

WITH A

### PREFACE,

CONTAINING SOME STRICTURES ON DR. PRIESTLEY'S "LETTER TO A PÆDOBAPTIST;" AND ON SOME PASSAGES IN MR. DYER'S "NATURE OF SUBSCRIPTION," AND MR. FRENCH'S "LETTERS TO THE BISHOP OF LINCOLN."

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BY JOSHUA TOULMIN, D. D.

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"Insignificant as this pen is, it would not bear false witness to an error on the one hand, nor on the other make light of what appeared a Christian institute, for the universe."

*Dyer "On the Nature of Subscription," p. 418.*

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LONDON :

*Printed by C. Storer, Paternoster Row ;*

AND SOLD BY D. EATON, 187, HIGH HOLBORN ; BELCHER, AND W. H. SMITH, BIRMINGHAM.

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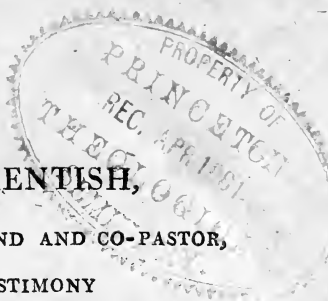
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THE HISTORY OF THE  
CITY OF BOSTON  
FROM 1630 TO 1800

The city of Boston was founded in 1630 by a group of Puritan settlers from England. They established a settlement on the eastern shore of the harbor, which was named Boston in honor of the city of Boston in England. The settlers were led by John Winthrop, who gave the famous "City upon a Hill" speech, in which he described Boston as a model of Christian society. The city grew rapidly in the following years, and by 1680 it was one of the largest and most important cities in the New England colonies. Boston was the center of the American Revolution, and it was here that the Boston Tea Party took place in 1773. The city was also the site of the Battle of the Clouds in 1780, which was a tactical draw during the Siege of Fort Mifflin.

After the Revolution, Boston continued to grow and prosper. It became a major center of commerce and industry, and it was the site of many important events in American history. The city was the birthplace of the United States Constitution, and it was here that the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. Boston was also the site of the Boston Massacre in 1770, which was a pivotal event in the American Revolution. The city was the center of the abolitionist movement, and it was here that many of the most important abolitionists lived and worked. Boston was also the site of the Boston School Desegregation Crisis in 1974, which was a major event in the history of the American South.



TO THE

REV. JOHN KENTISH,

HIS HIGHLY ESTEEMED FRIEND AND CO-PASTOR,

IN GRATEFUL TESTIMONY

OF THE CANDOUR AND LIBERALITY OF THE

CONGREGATION WHICH THEY SERVE

IN THE GOSPEL;

AND OF THE HARMONY HAPPILY SUBSISTING BE-

TWEEN THEIR MINISTERS,

NOTWITHSTANDING A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION AND

PRACTICE ON A SUBJECT WHICH HAS

AGITATED THE CHRISTIAN WORLD WITH MUCH

BITTER CONTROVERSY;

***THESE DISCOURSES,***

STATING THE AUTHOR'S VIEWS ON THAT SUBJECT,

AND OFFERED TO THE PUBLIC WITH THE

KNOWLEDGE AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HIS WORTHY

COLLEAGUE,

ARE RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED.

*Birmingham, 18th Jan. 1811.*

THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
IN SENATE  
January 15, 1875.

REPORT  
OF THE  
COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE  
IN ANSWER TO A RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE SENATE  
MAY 15, 1874.

ALBANY:  
PUBLISHED BY  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & COMPANY,  
105 NASSAU ST.,  
1875.

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## PREFACE.

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“BAPTISM,” observes a judicious writer, “is not a thing in its own nature good, but the whole duty and benefit of it arises from the command of Christ; before that command was given, if a man was washed he was not the better, nor if unwashed ever the worse; but it is no longer indifferent, when commanded: whatever the Son of God has ordered ought to be done, and in such a manner as he ordered it, and no other: I desire, therefore, to find by testimony, as all distant facts must be proved, what practice the Apostles established in the Church in consequence of the directions which Christ gave them. The most authentic witnesses of this are his own immediate disciples; nor can the opinion of any later writers, however eminent or numerous, be allowed, if they contradict what the Apostles plainly declare.”\*

\* Barker’s “Duty, Circumstances and Benefit of Baptism:” Preface, p. 4. A tract, it is supposed, little known; but a work of merit. The author, a layman, was, on the maternal side, nephew to the celebrated and upright Mr. William Whiston, and published two other theological tracts; one on the Prophecies concerning the Messiah, the other on the Demoniacs in the New Testament.

On these principles the two first of the following discourses are composed. They profess to exhibit the doctrine of Christian Baptism, not on the ground of analogical reasons and uncertain inferences, but in the plain declarations of the sacred code, as to its practice and uses. The third details the history of its practice, of the corruptions of it, and of inventions engrafted on it, through the succeeding ages of Christianity after the apostolic times. The fourth consists of practical addresses, arising from the subject on differences of conduct, with respect to this institution, that may exist among the readers.

It has been the aim of the author to treat the subject with candour and simplicity, free at once from the bitterness and chicanery of controversy: with this view have all the passages, in which baptism is mentioned in the New Testament, been adduced: not, indeed, exactly or wholly, in the order of the books which form that volume, but in such a method of arrangement as he conceived would elucidate and simplify the subject, by distinguishing between the principal design and the practical uses of baptism. The appeal to the New Testament, if, as he trusts, the testimonies from it are brought forward correctly and fairly, must carry with it authority and conviction. One advantage arising from the mode of treating the subject, which he has adopted, is that so far as the New Testament falls under examination in the discussion, the tenor of these discourses is necessarily practical and devotional; the address is made to the conscience, as well as the understanding of the reader; and

honour is done to the institution of Christ, by showing that it is not a mere ceremony, but a practice interesting and impressive; a practice which has an important meaning, and a moral influence; subservient to the cause of Christianity, and conducive to the formation of the essential branches of the Christian character, subjection to the authority of Christ, love to our fellow Christians, and purity of manners.

If the statement of the doctrine of the New Testament, in the two first discourses, be correct, it precludes the controversy about infant Baptism, on which so much has been written, and so much party passion has been spent. The author has, it will be observed, passed it over in silence, except in the historical discourse; because the New Testament, it will appear, is silent upon it.

But though it did not offer itself in any of the scriptural passages which he has produced, and he did not think it proper to interrupt the strain of his remarks by introducing it, he may be allowed, in this place, to offer some observations on it. He thinks himself, indeed, called to it, in "A Letter to an Antipædobaptist," by Dr. Priestley, 1802. Because, independently of the weight which the name of that illustrious man gives to every question and opinion, he informed the author by a private letter, that "the Antipædobaptist, whom he meant to address, was himself; whom he wished to notice it. That notice, though meant to have been immediately bestowed on the Dr's. tract was, through various circumstances, delayed, till by the death of his highly esteemed friend, the time of meeting his desire in

his life was passed. But it did not go without pertinent, candid and judicious strictures from another pen, in "A Review of Dr. Priestley's Letter to an Antipædobaptist," by JOB DAVID. This piece supersedes a full discussion of Dr. Priestley's arguments at this distance from their publication, especially on a point which is not popular.

A remark or two may, perhaps, be deemed proper, and be sufficient. It will appear to some singular, that on a subject which must derive all its authority, if of a divine origin, from the express declarations of scripture, the Doctor waves stating "the scripture doctrine, and appeals only to the evidence of what was the doctrine and practice of the primitive Christians, those who lived nearest to the time of the apostles," p. 3. And the several arguments which he produces, in the first section of his tract, he concedes are of the *presumptive* kind only. It may be asked, Is this the kind of evidence adapted to a matter, that is at once settled by explicit command, and a plain narrative of precedents? Why appeal to writers, living after the apostles, to ascertain what was an apostolical practice, if the history of the first planting of Christianity, by their ministry, furnished any express instances of, or directions about, infant baptism? Such an appeal is a tacit acknowledgement, that the apostolic history is silent on the point. The reader, if he refer to the quotations which Dr. Priestley produces from Hermas, Clemens' Recognitions, Justin Martyr and Irencæus, will observe, and observe with surprise, considering what it was the design of the Doctor to establish,

that not one of them speaks explicitly of an apostolic practice; but only in general and allusive language of baptism: yet the Doctor infers from them, that infant baptism was an apostolic practice, though the passages do not assert the fact.

The Doctor, who wrote fully and judiciously on the "Corruptions of Christianity," in the present case seems to have lost sight of the very early date of those corruptions. It appears to have escaped his recollection, that even in the times of the apostles, attempts were made to subject believers to "the commandments and doctrines of men:" Col. ii. 22. That at the very commencement of Christianity, the mystery of iniquity already worked: 1 Thess. ii. 7: That even then the spirit of antichrist had made its appearance, and "many false prophets had gone out into the world:" 1 John iv. 1. 3. So far is it from being true, as he supposes, that those Christians who lived nearest to the times of the apostles, as they could not but be acquainted with their instructions and practices, "would most assuredly have conformed to them." p. 2. It was the opinion of a learned writer\* (and an advocate for Pædobaptism) on the authority of Hegesippus, "that if the question concerning the pretended purity of the three first centuries was thoroughly examined, it would appear that the Christians preserved their virgin purity no longer than the apostolic age." It escaped the Doctor's recollection, that though "the primitive fathers were, it is true, pious men, they were most of

\* Mr. BREKEL. See Memoirs of BOURN, p. 178.

them very weak, injudicious, and credulous, and very ill informed as to many transactions before their own times. It escaped the Doctor's recollection, that "we hear of sponsors in baptism, of the sign of the cross, of anointing the baptised, and of giving them milk and honey as early as we hear of infant baptism."\*

In reply to Dr. Priestley's endeavour to prove that infant baptism was an apostolic practice, by conclusions from some, and they but few, general and ambiguous passages in early Christian writers, it may be observed, that another learned writer, Van Dale, a physician in Holland, has shewn, that in the two first centuries infants were not baptised, but those only who could render a reason of their faith: that the baptism of infants began to be introduced in the time of Tertulian, who even censured it, and advised the deferring of baptism which he would not have ventured to have done if he had looked upon the baptism of infants as an apostolic tradition. Le Clerc observes, that Van Dale might have added, that at that period the existing form of baptism was not suited to the case of infants, but only to those of riper years.† With Van Dale, agrees Suicer, a learned divine and professor of Greek and Hebrew at Zurich: "in the two first ages," he says, "no one received baptism but he, who, having been instructed in the faith and imbued with the doctrine of Christ, was able to testify that he believed; because of

\* STENNET'S ANSWER to Dr. Addington. p. 240, 241, 244.

† Bibliothèque Choisie, vol. ix. on the article VAN DALE *Historia Baptismorum cum Hebraicorum tum Christianorum.* p. 231.

those words, 'He that believeth and is baptized.' It was first required to believe; hence the order of Catechumens in the church.\*" Even in the third century, when clear proofs offer, that infant baptism was practised, those very proofs evince that it was not an universal practice, and create suspicions of its origin, authority, and antiquity, if they do not fully satisfy us that it was an innovation. Origen informs us, that debates often arose on the propriety and ground of baptising little ones. The author of a work ascribed to Dionysius, the Areopagite, but which learned men, on a diligent investigation, place in the fourth century, or in the beginning of the sixth, tells us, that the mode of administering infant baptism by a mock instruction to those whose age was incapable of understanding, and by the declarations of sponsors, was objected to as an apparent absurdity; and laughed at as ridiculous†. It is submitted to the judgment of the reader, whether such a custom carries not on the face of it the evidence of an innovation; of an imitation of a practice that originally accompanied, with propriety, the baptism of those who had been instructed, and could give the answer of a good conscience; and from hence transferred into a service, in which it was a mere form, and was thus degraded into a farce. The direct terms in which Tertullian opposed the practice of infant baptism, the objection he urges against it, the remonstrances with which he presses the adherents to it, are a censure of it;

\* Suiceri Thesaurus Eccles. sub voce *συβαξίς*.

† BARKER on Baptism, p. 131, 153.

and cannot be reconciled with the idea of its being an apostolical tradition.\*

The authority, which is directly to the purpose of Dr. Priestley's argument, is a passage from a work of Origen on the Epistle to the Romans, as it exists in Rufinus' translation. Having mentioned the offerings for new-born children under the law, he says: "Pro hoc et ecclesia ab Apostolis traditionem suscepit etiam parvulis baptismum dare: *i. e.* for this reason the church received by tradition from the Apostles, that baptism should be administered even to young children." p. 15. A foregoing and subsequent clause, which another writer gives us more fully, lays down the grounds of the offering under the law, and of the practice, said to be received from apostolic tradition; and the whole passage runs thus: "By the law a sacrifice was offered for him who was born;—could then a new-born little one sin? It had then sin (*peccatum*), for which a sacrifice was ordered to be offered; from which he says 'none can be clean if his life is but of one day'; of that David said, 'in sin hath my mother conceived me:' therefore the church received a tradition from the Apostles to give baptism even to little ones; because the natural pollution of sin is in all, which must be washed away by water and the spirit."† This passage is a proof that original sin and infant baptism brought in one another, and that if the latter be a practice, the former must have been a doctrine, received by tradition

\* BARKER ON Baptism, p. 85. See also p. 52, 53, 54, of the following discourses.

† BARKER ON Baptism. p. 94.



from the Apostles; which the Doctor would scarcely have admitted.\* In reality the passage is a very precarious and doubtful authority for either point. "The Latin translations of Origen's works, especially those made by Rufinus, have been complained of as not faithful," says the candid Lardner, "and," he adds, "some learned men suspect that the pieces still extant in Greek have been interpolated, or otherwise altered, to make this great man speak more agreeably to the modern orthodoxy upon original sin and some other controverted points, than he really thought or wrote."† It is remarkable that Rufinus himself candidly acknowledges, that he had made as free with Origen's commentary on the Romans as he did with the other pieces he translated. Besides, this editor complains, that the commentary had been much interpolated before his revision of it.‡

Doctor Priestley thinks that the argument drawn from the silence of Pelagius, in his controversy with Austin about original sin, respecting infant baptism being an innovation, approaches nearly to a demonstration of its antiquity and apostolic authority, p. 17—21. Had Pelagius proved the practice an innovation, it would have cut short the controversy: whereas Austin asserted, that the practice was allowed by Pelagius and

\* See his History of the Corruptions of Christianity, vol. i. part iii.

† Works in 8vo. vol. ii. p. 455.

‡ GALE'S Reflections on Wall's History of Infant Baptism. It is to be wished that Dr. Priestley had seen and read this learned work, in reply to his favourite authority. See also p. 55, 56, of the following discourses.

his followers, and that the question between them and him was not whether infants are to be baptized, but the reason why they are to be baptized? A question ariseth here; on what the force of the Doctor's reasoning turns? Is it ascertained, that Pelagius did not deny the divine authority of infant baptism? The works of Pelagius have not come down to us. Nothing from his pen remains but those passages, which are preserved in the writings of Austin. "They are preserved," it is justly observed, "in a very suspicious channel it must be confessed! Will any man assert that it is probable we have all the arguments which the critic urged against the champion of orthodoxy."† Without any particular impeachment of the fairness of Austin, do writers always state the arguments of their opponents correctly and fully? Is it not a common practice, through misconception, or in consequence of haste and too "rapid a glance of the eye," over passages that call for a minute examination, to misrepresent, or suppress some part of an author's reasoning? Do we know, for the writer of this professes not to be acquainted with the works of Austin, what Pelagius advanced in different stages of the dispute between them? Do we know, whether he and his adherents did all along to the termination of the controversy admit the custom of infant baptism? Unless the works of both, unless the arguments of both, at full length and in their own words were before us, a very imperfect judgment can be formed of the concessions or arguments of either

† WALL. DAVID'S Review, p. 21.

Austin or Pelagius. But even if there were materials on which to form a correct and conclusive opinion on the point, is this sufficient to establish a practice which, to be binding on the conscience of Christians, must owe its authority to divine law and institution? But waving these arguments, be it granted, that Pelagius and his friends, "men of learning, and who had travelled much, and must have been acquainted," as Dr. Priestley says, p. 20, "with the customs of many churches, and no doubt with all those that were of the most note," did admit the universal practice of infant baptism; what follows more than that they, as well as Austin, afford a testimony to the existence of the custom at that period? Is this a proof, that they considered it as an apostolical tradition? There were other customs and practices, generally received in the churches of that day, for which Dr. Priestley would not contend that there was apostolical tradition. Even Austin, it appears from the passage the Doctor quotes from him, p. 20, does not directly assert, but only infers from the prevalence of the custom, its derivation from the apostles. "If any person," he says, "ask for *divine authority* in this matter, that which the whole church practises, and which has not been instituted by councils, but which was in use, is *very reasonably believed* to be no other than a thing delivered by the authority of the apostles." This same Austin, who in another place strenuously vindi-

\* For some ingenious remarks on this point, see "The Monthly Repository for 1807, p. 514.

cates the custom, as a practice “not to be disregarded, “nor accounted needless, nor be believed to be any “other than the tradition of the apostles;” yet draws an argument for it from another source: “We may, “besides, make a *true estimate* how much the sacrament of baptism avails infants, by the circumcision “which God’s former people received.” If Austin could argue thus, is it not a possible case at least that Pelagius might admit the universal practice of infant baptism, and approve of it, on a ground very different from that of apostolic tradition; though he did not admit its necessity to wash away original sin?

This argument, on which Dr. Priestley lays so much stress, it may be added, was viewed in a very different light by an eminent man, in the seventeenth century; Bishop Taylor. I will quote his words; the reader will decide between the Bishop and the Doctor. “That there is,” says the prelate, “a tradition to “baptize infants, relies but upon *two* witnesses, “Origen and Austin; and the latter having received “it from the former, it relies wholly upon a single “testimony, which is but a *pitiful argument* to prove “a tradition apostolical. He was the first that spoke of “it, but Tertullian, that was before him, seems to “speak against it, which he would not have done, “if it had been a tradition apostolical. And that it “*was not so*, saith the bishop, it is *but too certain*, “if there be any truth in the words of Ludovicus “Vives, saying that anciently none were baptized, but “persons of riper years.”\*

\* De Laune’s Plea for Nonconformity, p. 37. Part I. 1733. B. Ludovicus Vives was a learned Spaniard, tutor to Princess Mary,

In our times a learned and liberal member of the Church of Rome, Dr. Courayer, though he represents the baptism of infants as of great antiquity, and by its antiquity, perhaps, giving rise to the idea of original sin, yet says: "I do not see, however, that Jesus Christ, or his apostles, have prescribed for them this baptism; which *he* seems to have established only to reclaim adults to repentance, and to the reception of the gospel, and in order to purify them thereby from the sins of which they had been guilty before. It does not appear even after the practice was introduced, that it was judged as of necessity to salvation, since it was very common to defer the reception of this sacrament to an advanced age, and even to death."\* Hath not, it may be asked, this delay of infant baptism, this want of precision, as to the time of administering it, very much the appearance of its being a practice, introduced by human invention; the season of which had not, as in the case of circumcision, been fixed by a divine law? Has it not the appearance of a practice not existing from the beginning, but adopted on the ground of some general principle, supposed to dictate its expedience, if not necessity: and not derived from an authority which would probably have limited the time as well as instituted the rite? For in a rite, which expressed nothing voluntary, which depended for its performance in the daughter of Henry VIII. who wrote a Commentary on St. Augustine's "City of God." He was born in 1492, and died in 1540.

\* Life of Courayer in the Universal Theological Magazine for December, 1804, p. 291, 292.

no degree, on the conviction or consent of its subject, a definite time would, to secure the administration of it, become an important part of the institution.

I will, on this point, subjoin a concluding paragraph in the Doctor's letter.—“ Thus, my friend, I have laid before you the principal *facts* and *arguments*, that weigh with me in favour of infant baptism; and I cannot help thinking, that when you give due attention to them, they will make some impression on your mind.” p. 45.

On this the author would observe, that the “ Antipædobaptist,” whom the Doctor meant to address, most highly respected his great talents, most cordially valued his friendship while he was living, and cherishes the remembrance of him with great regard and affection; and amongst the blessings of that gracious providence which have crowned his life, now lengthened out to an advanced age, he numbers as not the least of all, his having known Dr. Priestley, having for many years enjoyed his esteem and friendship, and last of all the honour to succeed him in his pastoral connections at Birmingham. But the Antipædobaptist cannot resign his judgment to even a Dr. Priestley. That the Doctor's letter has engaged his attention, the preceding pages will shew. The animadversions which he has offered on it, are the reasons why he is not convinced by the Doctor's arguments and facts. He conceives, that all those facts and arguments, if the former were more direct, and the latter more conclusive than, in his opinion, they really are, would be little to the purpose for the government of his own religious conduct

on the subject, till the divine law and testimony could be produced in favour of infant baptism. To *that* must be the appeal, to *that* as the dernier resort of the Christian, who would keep the commandment of Jesus pure and uncorrupted. A Christian institution, about which the original divine documents are silent, in the opinion of the Antipædobaptist, is a solecism. The word institution implies a command; a declaration, that enjoins a particular practice; that ordains, or appoints it. Tradition, independently of this, appears to him no sufficient authority for a new rite, or the application of a divine rite to an object different from its original design. To appeal to traditions, he thinks, is to appeal to human integrity in reporting them, and to human sagacity and diligence in tracing back their antiquity. To appeal to traditions is to appeal to authorities, which can scarcely be ascertained without long and laborious researches, without turning over volumes, and nicely poising evidences. To appeal to traditions is virtually to sanction the errors and superstitions of the Church of Rome. To appeal to traditions, is to authorize the early and gross corruptions of Christianity. In a word, it is to desert the great protestant principle, the sufficiency and authority of the scriptures. "Traditive interpretations of scripture are pretended, but there are few or none to be found: no tradition," saith Chillingworth, "but only of scripture can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly proved to be brought in, in such an age after Christ, or that such an age *it was not in*." In a word, there is no sufficient *certainty* but of

“Scripture only, for any considering man to build upon.”

But, though the letter of the Doctor has not made that impression on the mind of the Antipædobaptist, which the excellent author seems to have promised to himself from his facts and arguments; yet he heartily joins with the Doctor in “the hope that they will contribute something towards the great Christian virtue of mutual candour.” p. 45. On this ground he greatly regrets, that the liberal writer of the “Letter” should have cast, p. 21, 23, on a character, to the worth and respectability of which he himself has borne a merited testimony, some very heavy reflections, which shall not be here repeated. It is sufficient to refer to the notice that has been taken of them: \* adding, in the words of an able writer, Mr. Robinson’s recent biographer; “It is a sad proof of the frailties to which even great and good men are subject, when they hastily advance serious charges against persons whom they habitually esteem.”

The author of the following discourses, dismissing the subject of infant baptism, would observe, that if the institution of baptism be truly represented in them; this account of its object and uses will, in his opinion, settle the question, which has in modern times and very recently, been started, concerning the perpetuity of baptism as binding on the descendants of nominal

\* David’s Review, p. 21, 22, and Flower’s Life of Robinson, in his edition of Robinson’s “Miscellaneous Works,” vol. 1. Life, p. cvi—cviii.



Christians.\* WAKEFIELD, FRENCH and DYER, names that command respect, have, within these few years, doubted, if not denied, the necessity and propriety of the baptism of those whose parents were believers. The excellent Mr. Emlyn, early in the last century led the way, in this country, in the discussion of the question concerning the necessity of the continual use of baptism among the posterity of baptized Christians? In the beginning of the seventeenth century, Faustus Socinus, in Poland, controverted the obligation of baptism on those who from their earliest years had been educated and instructed in the Christian discipline, and published a dissertation on the subject. But the question was not, even in those times, perfectly novel. For about the middle of the fifteenth century, there was a number of Christians, called Eleutherobaptists, who left it to the judgment and conscience of those who joined their communion, to be baptized, or to pass their life without baptism. In this instance they afforded to the age and to future times, an example of religious freedom, that has been rarely exhibited: and which the Polish Unitarians, who on account of his opinion concerning baptism, excluded even Socinus from their communion, did not imitate. Ambrosius Pelargus, in his *Opuscula* in 1534, animadverted on the sentiments and conduct of those liberal Christians, who appear to have felt the force of the apostolic principle:—"Let every man be

\* French's Animadversions on Bp. Prettyman's Elements of Christian Theology, Letter III. and Dyer's Enquiry into the Nature of Subscription, p. 413.

“fully persuaded in his own mind.” Rom. xiv. 5.\* They who have doubted concerning the necessity and propriety of baptism, as to the offspring of avowed Christians, have not, however, been numerous. The Polish brethren, Crellius, Schiichtingius and others did not, on this point, fall into the sentiments of Socinus. The uniform and universal practice of the Christian church, with the few exceptions, have, through all ages been in favour of the perpetuity of this rite. Van Dale replied to Socinus’ discourse on this subject; † and appealed to the testimonies of the most ancient Christian writers, who had mentioned baptism, as attesting the fact of the continued practice of it, with respect even to those who were born of Christian parents; and he challenges those who were disposed to deny, that it arose from the times of the apostles, to shew when, by whom, or on what occasion this universal practice was introduced and established. In the pages of ecclesiastical history are enrolled the names of persons of great celebrity, who, born of Christian parents, were themselves, though at the period of riper years, baptized: an evidence unfavourable to infant baptism, but expressive of a common opinion as to the obligation of that rite even on those who were descended from Christians; such were Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Jerom, Ambrose, Augustin, and the Emperors Constantine and Theodo-

\* Bock’s *Historia Antitrinotoriorum*, tom. ii. p. 676.

† *Bibliothèque Choisie*, tom. ix. p. 228.

sius.\* Socinus argued, indeed, in defence of his views, from the silence of the New Testament concerning the baptism of the descendants of Christians. To which Van Dale replied, that no conclusion could be drawn, to this purpose, from the silence of a history written in so concise and abridged a form, and not extending beyond the time and instances of the first converts to Christianity.†

It, however, admits a question, whether the New Testament be *silent* on this head. It, certainly, records several instances of households' embracing Christianity, and being baptized. In some of these cases, it describes these conversions and baptisms in such terms, as shew that the individuals who composed those households, acted for themselves in this matter, followed their own convictions, and made their own personal profession of the gospel. "All the house of Cornelius, as well as the devout centurion himself, feared God, and presented themselves before God to hear all things" that Peter had been commissioned to command. Acts x. 2, 33. The members of Lydia's house appeared to have been baptized on their *own faith*, or could they have been the proper subjects of that word of exhortation and comfort, which Paul and Silas, after their release from prison, addressed to them as *brethren*, ch. xvi. 40. Of those that formed the house of the jailor, it is expressly said, that those

\* De Laune's Plea, Part I. p. 38. Catechesis Ecclesiarum Polonicarum. Note, p. 27, 1684.

† Bibliotheque Choisie, ut ante.

preachers of Christianity spake the word of the Lord to *them all* as well as to him; that not he alone, but *they* also, besides “being baptized, *believed* in God and “rejoiced,” i. e. in the profession they had made, and “in the prospects that opened before them: v. 32, 34. “If Paul baptized all the house of Crispus, the chief “ruler of the synagogue, that *house believed* in the “Lord.” ch. xviii. 8. He “baptized also the household of Stephanas.” 1 Cor. i. 16. This consisted, we find by an honourable mention of it, in another place, of persons of such riper powers, that they were examples of faith, benevolence and zeal; that they were “the first fruits of Achaia,” the first converts to Christianity in that country, and eminent supporters of the cause, for “they addicted themselves to the ministry “of the saints;” ch. xvi. 15. a service that required judgment and discretion, as well as it implied labour and expense. This indicates, observes the excellent Doddridge, “that it was the generous care of the *whole* “family to assist their fellow Christians; so that there “was not a member of it which do not do its part.”

It is an obvious conclusion, from these concise traits of capacity and character in the mention of the baptism of these households, that if some of the members of them were the descendants of the heads of these respective families, that the reference is to such only as had attained to riper years, whose profession of Christianity by baptism was not superseded by that of the parents; and was not the consequence of any supposed *patria potestas*, extending its influence to the children and servants of a family. It is an obvious conclusion, that

the baptismal profession of Christianity was a personal act, even in the individuals of a family. The argument rises in force and strength, *if* we advert to a qualification required in a Christian bishop. Tit. i. 6. that he "have faithful," i. e. *believing*, "children;" or such as have embraced Christianity. This is a direct proof that the profession of the offspring, much less of all the children of a man, was not involved in that of the parent; nor uniformly the consequence of it. Religion, especially as it rests on Christian principles, is a *personal* thing. It forms a personal character, derived from conviction and choice, and accompanied with appropriate, personal blessings: "Every one shall give an account of himself to God." Rom. xix. 12. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, hath everlasting life." John vi. 47. "As many as received him, gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of *blood*, not of the will of the flesh, not of the *will of man*, but of God." Ch. i. 12, 13. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." Gal. iii. 26. The notion of the profession of the children being included and involved in that of the parents, of the former being superseded by the latter, is a sentiment repugnant to these declarations, and contradicted by them.

An argument that the New Testament is not so silent, as it is supposed, concerning the baptism of the descendants of Christians, offers from the reasonings and exhortations and references to baptism, which occur in the epistles, Rom. vi. 3. Eph. v. 6. 1 Cor. i. 13. vi. 11.

Gal. iii. 26, 27. Col. ii. 12. Tit. iii. 5. Heb. x. 22. 1 Pet. iii. 21. The dates assigned by Lardner to these epistles, are the years 52, 56, 58, 62 and 63 after the birth of Christ: a distance, on an average, of fifteen or twenty years, probably, from the first planting the churches, to which they are inscribed. During which time many must have been born to those who, in these places, were the first converts to the gospel. Yet the references, reasonings and exhortations suppose all to whom they were addressed to have been baptized: or else the propriety of them would not be seen, nor the force of them felt. An ingenious writer seems to think, that the phrase "*as many of you as were baptized,*" Rom. vi. 3. Gal. iii. 27, intimates a limitation, and suggests that there were some in the churches of Rome and Galatia who had not been baptized.\* With deference, it may be observed, that the mode of expression *as many of you, or of us* does not necessarily imply, that some had not been baptized, but is only an idiomatic phrase to signify a fact of universal extent: that it is in those places closely connected with a strain of reasoning, undoubtedly, applicable to every member of those churches, and evidently meant to include each: that it has the force of an appeal to the recollection and hearts of those to whom it is directed, occurring in a series of exhortations and arguments from the force and obligation of which not one individual in those churches could be supposed to have a ground of pleading an exception. It is as if the apostle had said, "Ye know

\* Dyer on Subscription, 2d. edit. p. 416.

“ that all of you, being baptized, were baptized into  
 “ the death of Christ, and have put on Christ.” But it  
 is also worthy of notice here, that in the other pas-  
 sages, in which the sacred writers refer to baptism, the  
 terms *as many of you* are not met with it: but the lan-  
 guage is so universal, as not to suggest, or admit an  
 exception of any individual. Those are therefore a  
 key to the phrase under consideration.

Another very sensible author argues thus: “ Com-  
 “ pared with the Jews, all the heathens were impure ;  
 “ and, if any one, sensible of his errors and impurities  
 “ became a convert to the Jewish worship, baptism  
 “ was the ceremony previous to his initiation. On the  
 “ conversion of the heathen to the Christian religion,  
 “ their former impure life was acknowledged, and  
 “ they were by baptism initiated into a purer mode of  
 “ life and worship. From being an unholy and im-  
 “ pure race, they became holy and pure. The heathen,  
 “ who was introduced into the congregation of the  
 “ Jews, became holy like his new brethren, and there  
 “ was no subsequent baptism to initiate his now holy  
 “ offspring into the father’s religion. They were all  
 “ born *holy* in the holy religion ; and if the first fruits  
 “ were holy, so were the branches. In the same  
 “ manner the apostles, on converting any individual  
 “ among the heathen, purified them from the impure  
 “ mass by baptism: they were set apart as a peculiar  
 “ people;” and their offspring required no new puri-  
 fication, since they were not born like their fathers  
 in impurity.\*

\* FRIEND’S Letters to the Bp. of Lincoln, p. 15, 16.

In all this reasoning, the author, it is apprehended, loses sight of the *primary design* of baptism, which is a solemn profession of Christianity. Its uses, as an emblem of moral purity, or as a purification from legal impurities, are only concomitant circumstances, or subordinate designs of it. On our author's idea, it might be concluded that Christian baptism applied only to the state of the heathens, and was meant principally, if not solely, to bring *them* into a condition of equal privilege and holiness with the Jews, compared with whom, he says, they were all impure. Yet the Jews themselves, on embracing Christianity, though a holy people, "born holy in the holy religion," were baptized as well as the heathen. This holy descent, according to our author's principles, should have precluded the necessity and the use of baptism as to them: and one should have expected to have seen the practice of it confined to heathens only. The fact is, that though washing in water be an emblem and means of purity, though baptism be, frequently, spoken of in connection with repentance and forgiveness of sins, it will appear on an inspection of all the passages, in which it is placed in these views, not one refers either to legal uncleanness, or to circumstances of depravity and defilement, under which any are born, but only to past acts of moral guilt and actual sins. This being the case, it is not easy to see, how the descendants of Christians are exempted, by the baptism of their parents, from the obligation and moral influence of this institution. They, also, as well as their ancestors, have, ere they reach to years of reflection, sins of their



own, of which they should seek the forgiveness, and from which they are to recover by newness of life.

In a word, if the representations of the primary design and secondary uses of baptism, given in the following discourses be just, they apply to the descendants of Christians; and the *profession* of Christianity becomes the duty of every one for himself, inasmuch, as after the evidence of its excellence and divinity have been laid before him, and have carried conviction to his mind, *faith* in it is his duty and wisdom; unless we can be Christians by proxy, and receive its everlasting benefits by imputation. There is nothing in the nature, or design of the institution, that limits it to the first age of Christianity, or to mere converts from another religious profession.

“ I would ask those who are for dropping entirely  
 “ the ordinance of baptism, with regard to the poster-  
 “ rity of Christian parents in what way or manner  
 “ the posterity of Christian parents are to make  
 “ their profession of Christ’s doctrine, or whe-  
 “ ther they are to make no profession at all? If they  
 “ are to make any profession, let us know what rule  
 “ they are herein to follow; or whether one is to take  
 “ one away, according to his own choice and liking,  
 “ and another another.”\* Such is the nature of reli-  
 gion, that every one ought to act from his own con-  
 victions and choice. Can others believe for us? Can  
 others, without our consent, avouch for our senti-  
 ments? It follows then, that the posterity of those who

\* Burrough’s “ Two Discourses on Positive Institutions,” p. 60.

have been Christians, as the mind opens, and reflection on the nature and evidences of religion is called into exercise, ought, each for himself, to make the profession of Christianity. It has, therefore, been granted, nay, insisted upon by judicious and learned advocates for Pædobaptism, that “as infants give their consent “ by proxy, the ceremony of confirmation, by which “ young persons who are of age to answer for themselves, ratify the baptismal vow, and take upon themselves, in a voluntary manner, the Christian “ profession, is very expedient and proper, though indeed it be not of divine appointment: it has even “ been allowed, that without this Pædobaptism, can “ scarcely be defended.”\* But the Christian lawgiver by his institution of baptism, has provided a mode for all ages, by which the profession of faith in him should be made. There is nothing in the nature of this institution, there is no explicit declaration, that should limit it to the case of *converts* in any period of time. The connection, in which it stands with faith, the solemn manner in which an obedience to it is enforced, give it an use, importance and weight that extend through all ages of the Christian church, and reach to every individual who believeth that Jesus is the Christ, whether

\* Jortin's Sermons, vol. vii. p. 18. And Ostervald: “ Pædobaptismum minime damnandum esse, ac pie et utiliter retineri posse statuimus, DUMMODO, ubi infantes adoleverint votum baptismi publicè et coram Ecclesia confirmetur. Absque hac enim confirmatione VIX DEFENDI posset Pædobaptismus.” Theol. Christianæ Compendium, Par. II, sect. 6. cap. iv. num. 4.

he be descended from Jewish or heathen parents, or has been “brought up in the nurture and admonition of “the Lord.” HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED, SHALL BE SAVED.” Mark xv. 16. The sentiment of the heart and the external declaration of that sentiment come under the same law and the same sanction. It may be, also, submitted to the consideration of the candid reader, whether it be not a solecism; a thing contrary to all the analogies of human life, of propriety and of the former dispensation of Moses, that the gospel should prescribe a rite, as the Lord’s Supper, by which its professors were from time to time to recognize their Christian faith and hope, and not one by which, when a conviction of the truth of this faith, is produced in the mind of each person, he should commence that profession, and put on the Christian character? I will dismiss this topic in the words of a popular but judicious author: “It had been a very strange thing to both “Jews and Gentiles, and very unsuitable to the nature “of man, if the most spiritual and heavenly religion “that can be, on this side of heaven, had been instituted “without any external rite for the admission into it; “this had been to suppose the church to consist of an- “gels, and not of men, who have need of assistance “from outward objects in their highest acts of religion; “it had been to make men suspect that the body (as “some heretics imagined) was little regarded of God, “if no *notice* had been taken of it, at our reception “into covenant with him; and it besides had been to “contradict the notion which mankind have ever had

“ of religion, and to give the highest scandal both to  
 “ Jews and Gentiles.”\*

But it is fit no longer to detain the reader from the discourses; which are submitted to his candour. The Preface would not have been extended to this length, had not the author wished that the discourses might be as free as possible from polemical discussions! After all he has his apprehensions, that the subject may appear to some unimportant. To those who are disposed on this ground to censure the time and attention he has bestowed on it, he would say that, if the subject is not of the first importance, yet every thing relating to “ our  
 “ religion is of *some*; and the most distant relation of  
 “ any thing to a great object gives us an interest in  
 “ it.”†

The manner in which Lord Bolingbroke speaks of baptism and the Lord's Supper, as it is honourable to Christianity, so it justifies any attempt to elucidate and simplify either of these institutions, and may carry weight with some who are not disposed to pay great deference to the disquisitions of a theologian. “ No in-  
 “ stitutions,” says he, “ can be imagined more simple,  
 “ nor more void of all those pompous rites and theatri-  
 “ cal representations that abound in the religious wor-  
 “ ship of the heathens and the Jews, than these two  
 “ were in their origin. They were not only innocent  
 “ but profitable ceremonies, because they were ex-  
 “ tremely proper to keep up the spirit of true natural

\* Jenkins' “ Reasonableness of Christianity,” vol. ii. p. 393.

† Priestley's “ Letter to an Antipædobaptist,” p. 2.

“ religion, by keeping up that of Christianity, and to  
“ *promote the observation of moral duties*, by maintain-  
“ ing a respect for the revelation that confirmed  
“ them.”\*

\* As quoted by Archbishop Newcome in his admirable “ Observations on our Lord’s Conduct and Character,” p. 26. Note, n.

## POSTSCRIPT.

On the question concerning the obligation of baptism on the descendants of Christian parents, the author begs leave, for a fuller view of the subject, to refer the reader to a publication some years since, entitled "A Short Essay on Baptism; intended to elucidate the Question concerning the Extent and Perpetuity of its Obligation." 1786. He feels more confidence in calling the attention of his readers to this tract, as Mr. Dyer, though he appears to think that "many difficulties are not removed, and many objections not answered in it," yet with great candour says; "With respect to Mr. Toulmin's Essay, the arguments in favour of the perpetuity have been stated sensibly and candidly; many of them will be allowed to have considerable weight."\*

On the other question which has come before the reader in this Preface, the author may be allowed to refer him to Foot's "Plain Account of the Ordinance of Baptism; in a Course of Letters to the Right Reverend Dr. Hoadly," 12mo. a piece which has ever appeared to his own mind, clear and decisive on the question.

\* On the Nature of Subscription, p. 419.



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DISCOURSES  
ON  
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

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DISCOURSE I.

A NATURAL and indispensable obligation lieth upon all who are under the authority of another person, to receive and follow the directions of him only, in all points that concern the peculiar design of this state of subjection. From whom ought a child, while under age, and residing in a parent's house, to receive the rules of his conduct but from his parent? Whom ought a servant to obey but his own master? Or who has a controlling power over the domestics of another man? To whom should the pupil look up for instruction in the pursuit of science, but to his own tutor? What laws of civil life should the subject regard, but those of the government under which he lives? In all the connections of this world, every man is amenable to his own parent or master, or instructor or governor,

only; not to those who sustain such relations to others. How wise or equitable soever their rule may be in itself, it is nothing but a foreign rule to those who are not immediately placed under it. These principles apply, strictly and properly, to religion.

Here *'one is our Father, even GOD: one is our Master, even CHRIST.'* In what concerns the worship of God, *his will* is our only rule. In what relates to the kingdom of Christ, *his laws* are the only guide. In all points of religious faith and practice, the last appeal, the only authoritative force lies with GOD; *'who, having in sundry times and divers manners spoken in times past unto the Fathers, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.'* This holds more especially true of all points, that depend merely on particular and express appointment. They derive all their authority from the will of the divine Lawgiver. His will can be known only from the instructions which he has given, or the precedents which he has furnished, either by his lips and his own practice, or by the declarations and practice of those who acted under his immediate direction.

The Christian Lawgiver, it is allowed, has left two ceremonial rites only; Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The former relates to the first reception of his religion; the other relates to the future conduct of those who are become his disciples. The former fixes the mode of commencing the profession of faith in him; the latter ascertains the mode of perpetuating the memory of his name, and the

character of believers in him. The question then is, what hath HE said and enjoined with respect to these rites? What may have been the sentiments and practice of the Roman, or the Greek Church, of Lutherans or Calvinists, of the Presbytery of Scotland, or of the Episcopacy of England; of those who in the grossest age of darkness were not blended with the church of Rome, or of those who, a few centuries since, came out of that church and protested against it,—this is only a point of curiosity. The most exact and authentic information that we can obtain, will not have the force of a law. Those bodies of men, considered in the most respectable light, are fellow-disciples only of the same Master; they are all subject to the same divine authority. What opinions soever have prevailed amongst them, are merely their explanations of the law of Christ; not that law itself. Their customs are practices founded on such explanations. The law lies in the New Testament. To the New Testament, then, must we have recourse. Let us consult it, and particularly inquire what is the information which we can derive from it on the subject of baptism. The institution is generally considered as forming part of the commission which our Lord gave to his disciples previously to his ascension. Matt. xxviii. 17—19. ‘Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ Here we have the words of Christ him-

self enjoining that rite, directing the application of it to all nations, and pointing out its use.

The first point of inquiry is, what was the rite which our Lord Jesus enjoined, as the mode of commencing his disciples: It was *baptising*. The reason that this becomes a matter of inquiry, is not so much that the sentiments and practice of Christians have been different from each other on this point, but that the word, which expresses our Lord's injunction, is not really translated, either in the English, Latin, or French versions of the New Testament; but given in the character only of those respective countries, and agreeable to the orthography of those languages; *baptising*, *baptizantes*, *baptisant*. *Baptising* is not a translation of the original, but the Greek word in an English form. Would we know how it should have been translated, we can scarcely appeal to a better authority than to that of our translators. Though they have, through the New Testament, uniformly preserved the original Greek word in an English form, in the few passages of the Apocryphal books, which are not found in Hebrew, and could be translated from the Greek only, when the word occurs, they have given it in English. As in Judith xii. 7. 'She, i. e. *Judith*, went out in the night into the valley of Bethulia, and washed herself, βαπτίξασθαι, in a fountain of water by the camp.' Ecclesiasticus, xxxiv. 25. 'He that washeth (βαπτίζομενος) himself, after the touching a dead body, if he touch it again, what availeth his washing?' The Hebrew word, which the Septuagint has rendered

βαπτισαλο, our version has translated *dipped*. 2 Kings v. 14. 'Then went he down, i. e. Naaman, and *dipped* himself seven times in Jordan.' It is clear from hence, that our translators understood the command which Elisha gave to this Syrian, to 'walk in Jordan seven times,' to mean to bathe himself. From these passages it may be inferred, how they would have rendered the word, had they judged it proper to have given a translation of it in the New Testament. They would, to be consistent with themselves, have substituted a word or phrase, denoting immersion, or putting the whole body under water. These instances shew, that the word bears, as much as any other word, a precise and definite meaning. \*

\* Pertinent, here, is the concession of Mr. Frend: "According to my view of the subject," he says, "our Saviour gave a *p. culiar* direction to his apostles, when he ordered them to teach and baptise the Heathen; and his direction was to teach them first, and then to *dip* them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: and if any society chooses to admit members by sprinkling their faces with water, this may be an innocent, or a useful rite, but I cannot allow it to be the baptism ordained by Christ, and practised by his apostles." See his state of the whole argument in "Letters to Bp. Prettyman:" p. 9—13.

The learned Mr. Wakefield speaks decidedly to the same effect. "The Greek word Βαπτισω, says he, "which occurs not unfrequently in classic authors, universally signifies, as far as my observation has extended, to *dip entirely under water*. Nor is there any proof or presumption to the contrary in any part of the New Testament."—Plain and Short Account of the Nature of Baptism, p. 10.

The remark of another sensible writer on this subject merits attention. "The frequency and popularity of immersions of the whole body into water, sometimes in a religious view, and some-

“ It falls out very remarkably that the *only two* words which the *Greek* of the *Old Testament* makes use of to express the rite of washing the *whole body*,” (viz. βαπτίζω and λυω), observes a clear and candid writer on this subject, “ as distinct from *all other rites* of sprinkling, pouring, washing the hands and feet : both these words, and *only these*, are made use of in the *Greek* of the *New Testament*, to specify and determine, with *precision*, the action of *baptising*. So that if the evangelists and apostles had, on purpose, sought words which should *precisely* express *a bathing the whole body*, and *prevent* all inquiry whether they meant nothing short of it; they *could not possibly* have met with two fitter words. Βαπτω would hardly have done so well, because borrowing their *Greek* from the *Old Testament*, this last word is never used there to express the rite of washing or dipping a person’s whole body.” \*

It follows, that when our Saviour says, ‘Go, teach all nations, baptising them ;’ and in another

times for the purposes of health and refreshment, not only amongst the Jews, but in almost all the Eastern nations,” being considered, “ it cannot surely be thought harsh in us to affirm, that the supposition of this mode of immersion would be far more admissible than any other, even though the New Testament had left us to our conjectures only, upon this subject.”—Amner’s Positive Institutions of Christianity ; p. 75, 76.

Full and decisive proof that the meaning of the word, βαπτίζω, is not vague and indefinite, is offered, in my opinion, in Marsom’s small tract, entitled, “ An Examination of Mr. Elliot’s opinion respecting the Mode of Baptism.” 1788.

\* Foot’s “ Letters on Baptism.” p. 21, 22. 3d ed.

place, 'He who believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved;' he gave a specific direction. It has been said, that there is no particular direction in Scripture, on the mode of applying water in baptism. "Before this position can be admitted," says a judicious and learned writer, "it must be proved that the word, to baptise, was used in Scripture in these different senses; that it meant at one time to immerse, at another time to affuse, at another time to sprinkle. On the contrary, if the word, to baptise, meant only to dip, if it had been always understood in this sense, if dipping had been the constant practice, then our Saviour's words are as explicit as possible, and a particular direction is given for the use of water. 'Go, teach all nations, dipping them. He who believeth and is dipped, shall be saved. Let every one of you be dipped upon the name of Christ.'"

The language of the New Testament, in other places, quite corresponds with this translation of the word, and confirms this interpretation of Christ's command. A river, we read, is chosen, in which to baptise: the baptiser and the baptised both go down into the water, and come out of the water: a spot which afforded much water was singled out for the administration of the ordinance. The allusions and comparisons under which this rite is exhibited, such as a burial and rising again, are evidently borrowed from the practice of immersion; for as Bp. Hoadly observes,

\* Friend's "Animadversions, on the Bishop of Lincoln's Elements of Christian Theology": p. 11.

“If baptism had been performed as it is now among us, we should never have so much as heard of this form of expression, of dying and rising again in this rite.”\* The fact is, that baptism was at first introduced, as a learned writer confesses, in mild and hot climates, where bathing and washing the body was a general practice. Afterwards in northern climates, and colder countries, it was judged to be troublesome and dangerous; and so, by degrees, *pouring* or *sprinkling* was introduced in its stead.† This is a candid testimony from an author very conversant in Christian antiquity, from an author thoroughly acquainted with the Greek language, that sprinkling is not *baptism*, but a *substitute* for it, introduced on the principle of convenience, grounded on primitive practice; invented by man instead of the real institution of Christ.

Having thus ascertained the true, precise meaning of our Lord’s commission, as far as it relates to the action itself, it is our business to inquire next into the design of this action. What is the use of this immersion into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? To shew this, I will recite the passages in the New Testament which speak of the baptism of Christ. In the historical books we meet with the narratives of its administration, and in the epistles with arguments drawn from it.

If we begin with the gospel of Matthew, the

\* Hoady’s “Plain Account of the Sacrament.”

† Jortin’s “Sermons,” vol. vii. p. 11.



first time it is mentioned by him is in the before-quoted text. But this, it is evident by comparing it with John iii. 22, 26, we are not to understand as the first appointment, but as an enlargement of the commission to baptise, on which the apostles had before acted. Accordingly the language of the passage in Matthew points out this interpretation of it. For, whereas before they had baptised in the land of Judea only, they are now to go into all nations. 'Go ye and teach,' or disciple and make converts in all nations, 'baptising them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'

The 'name of God, or of Christ,' is an expression used in the Scriptures to mean the *doctrine* concerning them. Jesus said to Annanias, who made an objection against going to find Saul, 'Go thy way for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to *bear my name* before the gentiles and kings and the Children of Israel:' i. e. to preach my doctrine: 'for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.'\* The Apostle Paul saith, that 'he thought with himself, that he ought to do many things contrary unto the name of Jesus of Nazareth' † Elsewhere he expresses himself thus; that he 'persecuted this way unto death;' ‡ i. e. pursuing with the greatest violence those who professed the religion of Christ. The 'name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit' means then the doctrine or religion, which had the

\* Acts ix. 15, 16.

† Ch. xxvi. 9.

‡ Ch. xxii. 4.

Father of all for its author, which Jesus, the Son of God, taught, and which the Holy Spirit, with its miraculous gifts, had confirmed. The apostles are commissioned to make converts to this religion and to baptise them, when convinced of its truth, into the profession of it. ‘Go ye and teach all nations:’ i. e. make disciples, bring men over to the faith of the Gospel, and when they are instructed and satisfied about my religion, baptise or immerse them.

The next passage is in Mark’s Gospel, which is exactly parallel to that in Matthew. ‘And he said unto them, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature: he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.’\* This explains the more concise expression of Matthew. The Gospel is to be published, its leading principles unfolded, and its truth to be evinced, when men were satisfied about its heavenly origin, and disposed to embrace it; this change in their sentiments, this commencement of the Christian character and profession was to be expressed and signified by their being baptised.

The next mention of baptism, which we meet with, following the order of the books of the New Testament, is in the gospel of John. † ‘After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them and baptised:’ i. e. as Dr. Clarke paraphrases the words, “there by the ministry of those his first dis-

\* Mark xvi, 15, 16.

† John iii. 22, 26.

ciples, he baptised and received into his company many others, who were likewise convinced by his works and doctrine, that he was the true Messiah, and professed their belief in his name. It appears, then, that the baptism of Jesus was practised before the commission, recorded by Matthew and Mark, though we meet with no trace of it in their gospels, till just before our Lord's ascension. From the words of John, it is evident, that baptism was from the beginning of Christ's ministry, the mode of assuming the character of a believer in him. In like manner as those who were awakened and convinced of their sins by the preaching of John, received *his* baptism, in token of their repentance and of their subjection to *his* authority, as a prophet sent of God. In v. 26. the evangelist, again, introduces this subject. The jealousy of John's disciples, on the increasing reputation and influence of Christ, led him to mention it. 'And they,' i. e. the disciples of John, 'came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptiseth, and all men come unto him.' These words shew, that it was not only the earliest but the general and universal mode of acknowledging their faith in Christ.

The subject occurs once more in this gospel.\* 'When therefore the Lord knew, how the Pharisees had heard, that Jesus made and baptised more disciples than John (though Jesus himself baptised

\* Ch. iv. 1—3.

not, but his disciples) he left Judea and departed again into Galilee.' We are, here, informed of a circumstance which is not intimated any where else; namely, that this rite was administered not by Christ himself, but by his disciples. Whatever was the reason for our Lord's transferring this office wholly to them,\* this piece of information is, in some degree, important; for it leaves no doubt, that his disciples acted under his direction, and by a course of practice were accurately instructed in the nature of this rite, the subjects and the design of it. The commission, which they received after Christ's resurrection, together with the knowledge acquired in their former ministry, made them full masters of the law of baptism.

Hitherto it clearly appears, that baptism was used as a mark of a discipleship, proceeding from instruction and faith: it was applied to such only, as had received sufficient information to convince them, that Jesus was a teacher sent by God; to those only who were of an age and capacity to judge concerning the nature and truth of his claims. As to any others, their kindred, dependents, servants or children, there is a silence, a total silence. Disciples, believers only are baptised.

This is all which the sacred history says, concerning the nature and design of this ordinance, during the ministry of Christ, and previously to his ascension into heaven. We now proceed to the Acts of the Apostles.

\* See Doddridge in loc.

There we learn, that great numbers were affected and pricked in their hearts by the first sermon, which Peter preached after the descent of the Holy Spirit. The word came to their hearts with a divine energy, in connection with the astonishing wonders they saw. ‘Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit: for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar of, even as many as the Lord, our God, shall call.’\* That is, “That God intended the benefit and effects of this great promise of the Holy Spirit to the whole Jewish nation; to them first, and afterwards to as many of the Gentile world, as should hear and believe the Gospel.”† ‘Then they that gladly received the word were baptised.’‡ Here the Apostles began to act upon that large and liberal commission, which they had received from Jesus, previously to his being taken up into heaven. But the only difference, as to the subjects of the rite, ariseth not from age, but from nation, in connection with moral dispositions. The Apostle addressed himself to the men of Judea and of Jerusalem, in the hearing of great numbers of devout men, out of every nation under heaven. He adapts his exhortation to the different circumstances of his hearers. In reference to the people of Jerusalem who had by wicked hands taken and crucified him, he calls

\* Acts ii. 38, 39. † Pyle’s Paraphrase in loc. ‡ Ver. 41.

on *them* to repent, and exhibits to them in particular the hope of forgiveness: with reference to the inhabitants of various and distant countries, he exhorts *every one* to be baptised; and invites them by an assurance of the extent of the divine promise and counsels. Here it may be observed, for the first time, is the doctrine of the remission of sins introduced in connection with baptism; which, probably, arose from the peculiar condition of those to whom the discourse of Peter was particularly addressed, who had imbrued their hands in the blood of Christ, and had called his blood upon themselves and their children. Thus instructed and encouraged, ‘they that gladly received his word were baptised; and the three thousand who at this time were added, continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, and in breaking of bread and in prayer.’ This is, in fact, telling us how many were baptised, namely, three thousand, i. e. no more than those who believed and embraced the gospel, and from conviction and choice adhered to it.

The next instance of baptism is the passage, in which the historian informs us, that upon Philip’s preaching Christ to the Samaritans, ‘when they believed Philip, preaching things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, they were baptised both men and women.’\* This is a most explicit limitation of the design and application of this rite, to its being an avowal of the sentiments and intentions of believers. The

\* Acts viii. 12.

consequence of hearing the word of the kingdom was faith: the consequence of faith was being baptised into the religion of Christ. The account of the historian goes to no other point, than to a *voluntary, personal* profession of Christianity. He is silent about all who either were not convinced of the truth, or not capable of forming and expressing an opinion concerning the excellence and evidences of the gospel. Being baptised into the religion of Christ discriminates those of each sex, who were believers, from children incapable of faith, and from those who rejected the counsel of God against themselves.

The same chapter presents us with another example of the administration of this rite. Philip under a divine direction, met with a devout man, an eunuch of great authority, under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This person was fully convinced of the truth of the Christian religion by the discourse of the evangelist. ‘And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water, and the eunuch said, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptised? And Philip said, if thou *believest* with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptised him.’\* A circumstance is mentioned in this narrative, which does not occur in the

\* Acts viii. 36—38.

others; but, from the stress that is laid upon it, it appears to have been an essential, and hence a constant, condition of the administration: this was the requisition of an explicit confession of faith in Christ. This explains the declaration of the apostle Paul; that ‘if thou confessest with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.’\* This explains the allusion of the apostle Peter, when he speaks of the answer of a good conscience towards God, and its efficacy in this ordinance. It is a plain and express representation of the design of this rite, as an external and public sign, accompanying the confession of the lips, that Jesus is the Christ the true Messiah and Saviour.

If we proceed, in the Acts, we come to another instance of baptism. We meet with it when Peter, in obedience to a heavenly vision, went and preached the gospel to Cornelius, a devout centurion and a Gentile: while he was speaking, the Holy Spirit, in its miraculous powers, fell on all them that heard the word. On which Peter asked,

Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord?†. Here we see, that the word of the gospel is heard, con-

\* Rom. x. 9, 10.

† Acts x. 44—48.



viction of its truth is produced, and a profession of this conviction is made by baptism.

In a subsequent chapter \* two other instances of the administration of this rite are furnished. ‘A certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, then a resident in Philippi, who worshipped God, heard Paul and Silas, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things, which were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptised and her household, † she besought those ministers of Christianity, ‘If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide.’ ‡ The apostle and his colleague, after having been cast into prison and discharged from it, returned to the house of Lydia, as to their lodgings. The statement of this incident casts some further light upon the short history of her’s and her household’s profession of Christianity. ‘And 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.’ § This clause ascertains the import and extent of the general term, *household*, used in the concise narrative: it justifies the conclusion, that the family of Lydia acted upon the same convictions, which had governed her, and were voluntary converts to the Christian faith. The consolations, or exhor-

\* Chap. xvi.

† i. e. As Mr. Pyle paraphrases the clause, “After she and her whole family were fully instructed and baptised into the Christian religion.”

‡ Verses, 14, 15.

§ Ver. 40.

tations, with which they were addressed, bespeak the understanding and choice from whence they became Christians.

The other example of baptism, supplied by this chapter, arose from the consequences of the impressions made on the mind of the jailor, to whose custody Paul and Silas had been committed. The wonders that followed that imprisonment had such an effect upon his heart, that he earnestly sought from them instruction in the way of salvation. ‘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 baptised, he and all his straight-way; and when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house.’\* “Upon their solemn profession of the Christian faith, he and all his family received baptism with great joy and thankfulness.” † The language here is sufficiently full and explicit to show, to *whom*, to what extent, and with what design baptism was administered. They, who had been instructed in the word of the Lord, and in consequence of being instructed had embraced it, were baptised. The same remark applies to another case. ‘And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house: and many of the Corinthians believed and were baptised.’ ‡

The same idea of the nature of this ordinance, is

\* Verses x. 32—34. † Pyle in loc. ‡ Chap. xviii. 8.

illustrated and proved by the next passage, in which it occurs. The apostle Paul met at Ephesus with certain disciples, who had never received any of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and had been baptised only into John's baptism. 'Then said Paul, John, verily, baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him who should come after him; i. e. on Christ. 'When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.\* Those who were baptised of John, confessed their sins; those who were baptised into the name of Christ, professed their faith in him. Thus they commenced his disciples: and this was required of those who, by John's ministry, had professed repentance from dead works.

The only other instance of this institution, which the history of the Acts affords is that of Saul, who from a violent persecutor became a zealous, active preacher of the Christian religion. The account, indeed, is given under the form of an exhortation to what Paul should do; but no doubt can exist, that he complied with it. 'And now why tarriest thou, arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.' † The *washing away of sin*, seems to be introduced here in particular reference to the former conduct of Saul, who by his opposition to the Christian cause had contracted great guilt: though concerning the righteousness which was

\* Chap. xix. 4, 5.

† Chap. xxii. 16.

by the law, he was blameless.' In the examples of baptism, which have passed before us in review, this and that of the first converts in Jerusalem, where Christ had been put to death, are the only places, in which baptism is mentioned with repentance and remission of sins. The baptism of John is uniformly represented as the baptism of repentance: for *that* was its first and leading use. The baptism of Christ is generally exhibited, as the sign of faith in his mission and character. A profession of faith in him is its great and discriminating use: but as his character was that of a Saviour, a *secondary* use of baptism, arising out of its primary design, is the profession of repentance, animated with the hope of pardon. These two views are nearly connected especially in those who had been stained with the guilt of presumptuous sins and of a vicious course. But the main design of it, applicable to all converts, to the pious centurion and the devout Lydia, as well as to the sinners of Jerusalem, and Paul the persecutor, is the open acknowledgment of faith in Christ.

All that is said about baptism, as an ordinance of Christ, in the historical books of the New Testament, has been now laid before you. From a survey of these passages, what is the idea of the design of this rite, which they give us, but that it was used as an acknowledgment of faith in Christ; as a token of embracing his religion? We see that it was uniformly, universally practised, whatever had been the character or situation of the converts to the gospel. All who were convinced of

the truth of Christ's claims and were disposed to become his disciples, were baptised. Idolatrous Pagans, devout Gentiles, pious proselytes, and native Jews commence the Christian profession by the same mode. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, strangers from remote countries, and the people of Samaria; Cornelius, who prayed to God always and gave much alms to the people and Saul, the persecutor, assume the Christian character by the same rite. One common description marks them all; one common condition, that of being *believers*, runs through every case; one leading design, that of owning themselves believers, applies to all.\* Even in the case of whole families, their baptism, it appears, was the consequence of instruction, the effect of conviction, and an expression of their voluntary choice. The conclusion that arises from all these passages is this; that baptism is a *solemn* rite by which is made a *voluntary* declaration of becoming the disciple of Christ: it is a *voluntary* declaration, because it is a personal profession of faith; it is a *solemn* one, because it is made in obedience to divine authority.

\* "One reason for which our Saviour so strictly required that they who were converted by his disciples should be baptised, seems to have been this. His design was to collect and form a religious society or church; and therefore it was not sufficient for men to receive his' gospel, if they concealed their faith and kept it to themselves. They were to enter into his church, by baptism, openly and in the face of the world, and afterwards to continue in the open possession of their religion. With a view to this he said also; 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, shall deny me, shall not confess me before men, I will disown him before my Father.'"—  
Jortin's Sermons, vol. viii. p. 6.

This view of the nature and design of baptism reflects honour upon Christianity; as enjoining a service easy, simple and rational. The profession of Christianity becomes a matter of deliberate and free choice. Men are put on examining the evidences of the Gospel, and gaining an acquaintance with its principles. They bring themselves under engagements, explicitly and seriously made, to conform themselves to the religion of Jesus, and to learn of him, as their Master. They are, naturally, led into a train of serious reflections upon the nature, obligations and advantages of the Christian character. They are brought to make a *pause* in life: from this act arises a new period, to which the memory and thoughts may frequently turn back with great pleasure and advantage. Is it not, in these aspects, an intelligible and useful rite? Is there not a propriety and decorum in it? Ceremonial religion is, by this means, made subservient and conducive to the exercise and improvement of the understanding, and of the best affections of the heart? Religion becomes an act of the judgment; the effect of conviction.

What remains, but that upon this ground we revere Christianity and obey it? Here are none of the weaknesses and the insignificant practices of superstition. What remains, but that *we* should by this act avow ourselves the disciples of Christ: or if we have done this, that we continue to act as such, and to walk worthy of our name? How happy would it be, did we live under the power of this engagement, or ever behaved as the disciples

of Jesus! Observant of our Master, attentive to his instructions, affectionate to our fellow-disciples, concerned for the credit of our profession, and still following on to know the Lord!

## DISCOURSE II.

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### THE SECONDARY AND PRACTICAL USES OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

**I**F we would form clear, precise and just ideas concerning the institutions of Christianity, it is a point of some consequence to distinguish between their primary and subordinate ends; between the grand, leading design of each and the uses, which by easy and natural consequence, arise out of it; between the rites themselves and the reasoning grounded on them.

The first and great design of the Lord's Supper is a religious memorial of the death of Christ. Other views are connected with this primary purpose and flow from it; such as to maintain, by a repeated avowal of it, the character of Christians: to profess an exclusive attachment to the Founder of our religion, and to testify our common relation to our fellow Christians, and our communion with them in the participation of the same memorials of the



body and blood of Christ. These are ideas not expressly mentioned in the original institution, but are evidently included in it; and are the uses to which the apostle applies it. 1 Cor. x. 16, &c.

But in proceeding from the fundamental and most obvious design of any divine ordinance, we should use great caution; we should go on with wary steps, and not give a loose and play to our fancies; otherwise we shall fall into gross abuses of it, and sink deep into superstition. Our security lieth in adhering closely to the scriptures, and going no further than the declarations and reasonings of the scriptures will justify.

In the former discourse I gave a view of the practice of baptism, as it is represented in the historical books of the New Testament. From each and all the instances of it one great and leading design offers; namely, a profession and acknowledgment of faith in Christ, on commencing the character of his disciples. This is the fundamental design of the rite. So far only doth the history of its administration go.

The other uses of it, if other uses there be, must be learnt from the discourses of the apostles, in which they introduce the mention of it, and apply it to the case of those who had submitted to it. There are several passages in the epistles, even more frequent references to this ordinance than to the Lord's Supper, from which we may learn the uses to which the practice of it may be improved, and the inferences that may be justly drawn from it.

In collecting together these passages I shall, not as in the former discourse, follow exactly the order of the sacred books, but will range them under different heads, according to the different views, the different subordinate ends, which we find ascribed to the ordinance.

We shall find it represented as a ground for regarding solely the authority of Christ in matters of revealed religion—as an obligation to purity and holiness—and as a bond of union and love among Christians. It will appear, I apprehend, that under these particulars, we may bring into review every passage relative to baptism that occurs in the epistolary part of the New Testament. In the book of Revelations there is not, I believe, one allusion to it, nor the least express mention of it.

Besides, then, the primary design of the rite of baptism, as a declaration of faith in Christ, one use to which it is applied is,

1. That it is a ground for our regarding solely the authority of Christ in matters that relate to his religion. This is an use most strictly connected with its primary design; for, after having thus professed our faith in Christ and embraced his religion, what of course follows, but evidently this, “That we ought to look upon ourselves as *His*, obliged to hearken to *His* doctrine, to follow *His* instructions, to obey *His* commandments?” \* This view of baptism we are not left merely to deduce from its grand design, It is held up to our

\* Dr. Clarke.

attention by the Apostle Paul; for soon, alas, there arose occasion for it.

In a very early period of Christianity, the spirit of discord and division broke out in the church of Corinth. The members of that church split into parties, and enlisted themselves under different leaders. Paul had his friends, Apollos his followers, Cephas his adherents; and Christ was looked to by some as their only master and head. 'It has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, or Peter, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptised into the name of Paul? I thank God, that I baptised none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say I baptised into my own name.' \*

The apostle argues, here, from the nature and design of baptism, to expose the inconsistency of the Corinthians; while some followed one man and others embraced the doctrine of another. The reasoning of the apostle evidently points to the primary design of baptism; and exhibits an argument, drawn from it, against all human authority in the concerns of religion. The design of baptism is a man's entering himself among the disciples of him, into whose name he is baptised, professing to receive his doctrine and rules, and to

submit to his authority; the argument derived from it is, that to submit to the dictates, or assume the name, of another teacher, is a departure from his engagement to the former; admitting claims distinct from and incompatible with his first profession.

The method in which the apostle reasons, illustrates the utility of this ordinance, as affording one common principle, to which Christians may be brought back, when they are disposed to run into parties, and to set up different teachers. The remedy in this case is to refer them to the import of their baptism! Were they baptised into the name of Christ, or of any other person? Whose disciples did they by this rite commence; the disciples of Christ or of Paul, or of Luther, or of Calvin? If they were baptised into the name of Christ, as a teacher sent from God, and their guide to eternal life, His gospel and not the doctrine of any other man, is certainly their rule: His laws and not the injunctions of any other, are to be the principles of their conduct: His authority, and not that of any other teacher, is binding upon their consciences.

This reasoning applies, with equal force, to expose the folly of submitting to the authority of any *body* of men, as well as of any individuals, over the faith and consciences of men. “Had the differences in the church of Corinth, which the apostle calls *schisms*, regarded any whole societies, as setting up pretensions to guide and direct the faith of others, the case would have been exactly

the same. Had every one of them said, I am of the church of Corinth, and I of Ephesus, and I of Philippi, and I of Rome, Paul would still have given the very same reproof: 'Is Christ divided? Was the city or people of Corinth crucified for you? Or were ye baptised into the city or people of Corinth?' In like manner could Paul hear men contending and pleading that one of them was for the council of Trent, another for the Synod of Dort, and a third for that of Constantinople, he would still make the same reply; 'Is Christ divided? Was the council of Trent crucified for you? Or were ye baptised into the synod of Constantinople or Dort?'" \* The use to which the apostle thus applies the ordinance of baptism is very important: the argument which he draws from it, is close; and his reasoning is as plain as forcible. Another view of this ordinance is,

2. That it is an obligation to purity and holiness. "The means of forming virtuous and religious character," observes a late excellent writer, "which the gospel recommends, are the most useful. To aid the efforts of the mind, the rite of institution to Christianity, is an emblem of that purity which it requires." † The first passage to this effect, and which is very full and express to the purpose, is Rom. vi. 3, 4. 'Know ye not, that so

\* Dr. Samuel Clarke's Sermons, vol. iv. p. 55. 8vo.

† SIMPSON, in his valuable Treatise, entitled, "Internal and presumptive Evidences of Christianity," p. 245.

many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ,\* were baptised into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' The design of this appeal and reasoning was to anticipate and remove an objection, which might be urged against the doctrine advanced in the former part of the epistle. The apostle had endeavoured to establish the doctrine of justification by the free grace of God, without any regard to prior works. Persons of ill-disposed and vicious minds might be ready to draw encouragement from hence to continue in sin, in order to enhance the grace of God. Ver. 1. 'What, shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?' To which he replies with just spirit and indignation; 'God forbid! how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? know ye not that as many as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead even so we also should walk in newness of life?' The immersion of converts into water was an emblem of their spiritual death and burial: the rising again up out of the water was a representation of that spiritual resurrection, which rendered them new men.—This ceremony was also a memorial of the death

\* "Into a profession of him as our Lord, the words are equivalent to the form," Acts xix. 5.—Arch. Newcome.

and resurrection of Christ, of their faith in which the receiving of baptism was a devout acknowledgment, and which they promised to imitate by crucifying their evil passions, and by living as men who had the hope of a happy resurrection.\* The apostle's argument is deduced from the profession of Christianity which they had made, and, also, from the manner of it, as emblematical of the conduct, to which that profession in itself obliges them.

The apostle applies the consideration of their baptism to the same purpose in his epistle to the Colossians, chap. ii. 11, 12. 'In whom also,' i. e. in 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

\* L'Enfant et Beausobre in loc. "Tout ceci est fort figuré. Le sens est, que tous ceux, qui par le baptême devenoient les disciples de J. C. s'engageoient à mourir par rapport au péché, comme il étoit mort à cause de leurs péchez, et à vivre d'une vie toute nouvelle, comme le Seigneur étoit ressuscité pour leur justification. Cela étoit fort bien représenté par l'ancienne cérémonie du baptême, Voyez sur Matt. 3, 4. Car en plongeant les prosélytes dans l'eau on figuroit leur mort et leur sepulture spirituelle, et en les retirant de l'eau, on figuroit de même cette résurrection spirituelle, qui les rendoit des hommes nouveaux. Cette même cérémonie représentoit aussi la mort et la résurrection de J. C. que les Prosélytes confessoient d'imiter en crucifiant leurs passions, et en vivant comme des personnes, qui espèrent une résurrection bien heureuse." Beausobre et L'Enfant sur Rom. vi. 3. "Consider whether a partial covering of the body by water largely poured is sufficient for the comparison here pursued."—Archbishop Newcome.

faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.' The apostle evidently describes here, the excellence and superiority of the Christian character, above that of the Jewish profession. The badge of the Jewish was the circumcision of the flesh, which was the mark of their being the people of God; this was 'made with hands,' and existed in the body only; the converts of Christ had received a more valuable distinction, 'the circumcision of Christ,' which consisted in 'putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,' in a change of character, or in a moral renovation. He thus explains it in another place, Phil. iii. 3. 'For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice, or boast and glory in Christ Jesus.' This is the 'circumcision in the heart,' and in the spirit, as the apostle speaks, Rom. ii. 29.

The mention of this spiritual circumcision, this new state of those who 'had been called in uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh' made by hands, seems to suggest to the mind of the apostle another idea, that of the time, or rather of the manner in which this new character, this change of state commenced; and leads him to add, 'buried with him in baptism, wherein ye are also risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead.' This is a description of their moral and religious condition, under different figures from the former; figures drawn from the manner of their making the profession of Christianity. In the



former clause the Christian profession is spoken of as a spiritual circumcision: here it is compared to a burial and resurrection. Purity, or holiness of character, is the chief idea conveyed under both allusions.

The design of the apostle, in this passage, it may be noticed, is not entirely the same as in that before quoted from the epistle to the Romans. *There* his view was to guard the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, from abuse, and to enforce the practice of righteousness: *Here* his leading design appears to be to represent the excellence of their state, to whom he wrote, as Christians, and to illustrate his assertion, ver. 10. 'Ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power.' The language is also more general than in the epistle to the Romans; for there the idea is limited to newness of life; here it is more undetermined, and the words are as applicable to the privileges and hopes of the Christian profession, as to the moral obligations under which it brings its professors.

It has been thought that, in this passage, the apostle compares circumcision and baptism, and represents the latter rite as answering, under the gospel, to the former under the law. To me this does not appear a just representation of his words. The circumcision of which he speaks is not the external rite, but an internal, spiritual change, made without hands: baptism, therefore, can not be the counterpart to it; for *that* is made with hands. The allusion made to baptism, in the 12th verse,

would connect with the 10th verse without any injury to the reasoning of the apostle, or the connection of his words. The arguments borrowed from circumcision, and that deduced from baptism, are distinct illustrations of the same principle, that Christians are complete in Christ. There is here, what is very common in the writings of Paul, a transition from one topic to another, and a change of figures in quick succession, to make the subject more plain, to place it in different points of view, and to argue his point with more fulness and force. —In a word, as far as it relates to baptism, this passage is rather descriptive of an alteration of circumstances, than an exhortation to practice. It conveys, however, this instruction, that a recovery from a state of sin and guilt to holiness and righteousness is the genuine effect and design of the profession of faith in Christ by baptism: or that baptism is an emblem and figure of this renovation, and consequently an engagement and obligation to it.

The next express declaration which we have, concerning the moral and practical design of baptism, is in 1 Pet. vii. 21. ‘The like figure, whereunto,’ (i. e. to the preservation of Noah and his family by water, \* in the ark) ‘even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.’ In allusion to the manner in which Noah and his

\* Or, “Through the midst of the surrounding waters.” Arch. Newcome.

family were preserved in the ark, the apostle here speaks of the efficacy of baptism; but to guard against any misconstruction or abuse of this doctrine, he immediately, as it were, corrects himself, or more explicitly and fully explains his meaning. It is not, he observes, the mere external act, it is not the ceremony which has such a saving effect, but a good conscience accompanying it. Baptism is an outward profession of Christianity, but unless it be attended with a sincere belief of its truth, and with an unfeigned purpose to adhere to it, it could be of no avail.

It is generally allowed that the phrase, 'the answer of a good conscience,' is an allusion to the interrogations, or questions, put to persons baptised, concerning faith in Christ; such as Philip proposed to the eunuch. If the answer were not made with godly simplicity and sincerity; if it were not followed with a courageous performance of the whole duty, this hypocritical faith in Christ could answer no valuable purpose.

The idea, on the nature of baptism, suggested by these words, is that it is a stipulation or promise of fidelity and attachment to Christ Jesus, as our Master and our Saviour: that it is not like to many of the ablutions, or washings, among the Jews, a mere removal of bodily or ceremonial uncleanness; \* but a conscientious declaration, by which the party binds and obliges himself to act as

\* See Schlichtingius in loc. Gal. iii. 27. Col. ii. 12. Titus iii. Grotius in 1 Pet. iii. 21.

the disciple of Christ; a promise to God as well as a confession before men. A more practical idea could not be advanced on the subject; nor one more pointed against the false dependencies of a superstitious mind.\*

These, I think, are all the passages in which the moral tendency and design of baptism is urged. There are some other passages in which there is an allusion to its moral influence. ‘But ye are *washed*.’ 1 Cor. vi. 11. ‘According to his mercy he saved us by the *washing* of regeneration, † and renewing of the Holy Spirit.’ Tit. iii. 5. ‘Our bodies *washed* with pure water.’ Heb. x. 25. ‘That he might sanctify and cleanse it.’ i. e. his Church, ‘with the *washing* of water, by the word.’ Eph. v. 26. ‡ ‘He that lacketh these things,’ i. e. the graces before specified, ‘that is barren and unfruitful.’ Ver. 8. ‘is blind and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was *purged* from his old sins.’ “Whence note,” says the pious Mr. Henry, that “forgetfulness of our baptism is at the bottom of all our barrenness and unfruitfulness, and deficiency in goodness.”

The third view under which baptism is repre-

\* It is a just and important observation of Grotius, that the apostolical writers with the mention of baptism introduce the doctrine, or moral instruction implied in it; as Rom. vi. 3, 4. Ephes. iv. 5.

† “By baptism, which places men in a new state, on account of their new obligations, motives, instructions, promises and assistances.”—Archbishop Newcome in loc.

‡ “Through the washing of water in baptism, a rite administered to adults in consequence of instruction,”—Id. in loc.

sented as subservient to a valuable moral purpose is, that it is a bond of love. To this purpose may be quoted, 1 Cor. xii. 13. 'For by one spirit we are baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free.' But as the apostle, in the preceding verses, is discoursing of the various miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, the words are rather to be understood, not of the baptism of water, but of the baptism of the Spirit; or of the abundant communications of those extraordinary powers and endowments, with which the first Christians were favoured, which, all proceeding from the same Spirit, from the same divine source, afforded a just and powerful argument for mutual love and condescension; as they were all designed to operate in support of the same cause, and to mutual edification.

The application of the baptismal rite to the same argument is, however, very explicitly made in other places. It is represented as a bond of union, cementing all Christians together under one common Creator. Gal. iii. 27, 28. 'For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ: i. e. "have put yourselves under an obligation of laying aside all other distinctions, and of being united upon the foot of obedience to his alone commands." \* 'There is henceforth neither Jew nor Greek; neither bond, nor free: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus: 'one body, one family, one kingdom. By the rite of baptism, Christians are in-

\* Dr. Clarke.

corporated into one society. It is the common, external sign of entering into the same connexion with one Lord and Saviour.

In this view it is an obligation to mutual affection; and the apostle himself has instructed us to draw this argument from it. Eph. v. 1, 2, 3, 5. 'I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace:' Among other motives to enforce these benevolent persuasives, the apostle urges this consideration, 'There is ONE BAPTISM.\*' The apostle reasons here upon baptism, as he had done upon the Lord's Supper. 1 Cor. x. 17. † The passage in 1 Cor. i. 3, quoted under our former head, may properly be again brought into review here. 'Is Christ divided? Were ye baptised into the name of Paul?' The same consideration, which is a valid reason against setting up, in matters of

\* It deserves consideration, how far the sentiments and practices, with respect to baptism, that have prevailed in the Christian world, and are now popular in this or other countries, correspond with this ONENESS of baptism, of which the apostle speaks. The *rite* itself is not *one*; for it is apprehended that it may be, indifferently, immersion, or pouring of water, or sprinkling. The *object* and design is not *one*: for it expresses a personal profession of faith, or a profession of the parent's faith, or the dedication of a child to God, or a vow for its religious education. or a seal of the covenant of grace. Doth this variety, it may be said, repugnant both in mode and design, consist with the simplicity which the apostle ascribes to the Christian ordinance?

† L'Enfant et Beausobre in loc.

religion, another teacher or head independently of, and distinctly from, our great lawgiver Jesus, is, by its influence or tendency in this respect, a cement of mutual affection; for the reflection that we have only one head or master, and that we form one body under him, naturally disposes the heart to kindness and love.

Such are the plain and rational views given us of the practical influence and uses of baptism, in the New Testament: such the moral purposes to which it is improved. It is a rite of extensive influence. It applies, with justness and force, to the allegiance due to our Divine Master; to the universal purity of character, incumbent upon his disciples; and to the particular duties of condescension and love, which Christians owe to one another. It attaches our regard and attention to our great teacher and lawgiver. It is an emblem of moral purity, and an obligation to holiness, to all holiness of life. And it is a bond of union among the disciples of the same master.

Should it be said, that a profession of Christianity, by generally appearing and worshipping with any Christian congregation, will answer the same practical and moral purposes; it may be replied, that it is natural, that a personal profession of faith in Christ should commence in a particular manner—in a manner, that expresses conviction and declares the sentiments and views of a man; that marks the character and draws attention to it. Making it by a solemn rite, by a rite appointed by God and in obedience to his commands, answers

these purposes, and is, in these views, proper and forcible.

A more pertinent, a more significant rite, for this design, could scarcely be devised, than what Christianity has enjoined. The simplicity of the rite is a recommendation of it. It is not difficult to be understood, nor expensive or dangerous to be practised. It is, in a striking manner, emblematical. Water is a symbol of purity; washing the most efficacious mode of purifying; and washing or bathing the whole body the most complete and extensive manner of doing it. And while baptism, on these accounts, is an expressive representation of 'putting off the old man with his deeds, and of putting on the new man; of dying unto sin, and of rising to newness of life;' it is also an affecting memorial of the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

From the tenor of the passages which have been reviewed, it appears, that this rite giveth occasion for very close reasonings and persuasive arguments; which being borrowed from sensible objects, are more lively and pathetic than exhortations addressed to the understanding merely. Any rite by which the divine author of our faith had required us to make the personal profession of his religion, would have demanded our obedience and respect; but when this rite is, in itself, the most natural and significant that can be, we are under additional obligations to look on it with reverence and approbation, because we can discern the evident wisdom with which it was chosen for this



purpose. We cannot but entertain a still higher sense of the wisdom of our divine Master in this matter, when we reflect, that this rite is adapted not to answer any whims of superstition, but the highest moral purposes—purity of character and benevolence of heart \*. In itself it is the profession of Christianity; but, in its application and tendency, it looks forward, much more forward, than to the first commencement of the Christian profession. It layeth a foundation for being addressed and appealed to in a cogent and insinuating manner on moral duties, and being thus led on to the best and highest attainments, as the disciples of Christ. Is it then a mere ceremony? Doth not its utility recommend it? They who submit to it assume not a name only; but bring themselves under the weighty obligations of that name; to take Jesus Christ only for their master, to walk in newness of life and to love their fellow-disciples.

\* “I for my part,” says a learned and liberal writer, “think it very consonant to scripture and the account of the nature and design of baptism there laid down—that baptism should be administered only to such subjects as are capable of believing in, and confessing Christ crucified, and of remission of sins. The benefit of it being administered this way would be very great, and we should be secure of having all our children brought to catechism, (to the neglect of which I really think the great infidelity and profaneness of the age is owing) were it made necessary in order to their being counted Christians; and every one being baptised upon his *own personal, solemn profession and renunciation, would give Christianity greater effect, and the profession of it in this manner would have deeper and more lasting impressions on the mind.*”—Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. John Jackson, p. 46, 47. 1764.

These hints shew with what sentiments we should come to baptism, and what should be our subsequent conduct. We should come to it with a full conviction of the divinity of Christ's mission, and of his authority, as made by God the Father, 'Lord and Christ, a Prince and a Saviour;' with a deliberate and serious preference of a holy and virtuous life to every other kind of life; and with a full disposition of mind to serve and edify that society into which we enter. What is the conduct that should follow our baptism, but the habitual prosecution of these good and pious designs; what, but a life formed on these principles and purposes? To put on Christ by baptism with such holy, humble, fixed intentions of mind is a rational act. To follow them up with such an adherence to the instructions of Christ, with such holy manners and such a benevolent temper is laying good foundation against the time to come: It is 'to keep the faith, to finish our course, and to obtain eternal life.'

With such views let us seek, with such a conduct let us adorn the baptism of Christ. We shall enlist under a good master. We shall engage in a good and holy profession. Great and precious are the promises of the gospel to induce and invite us to make, and having made, to hold fast the profession of the Christian faith. 'Whosoever confesseth me before men,' saith our divine Master, 'him will I confess before my Father and the holy angels. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' Let us all be candidates

for the blessings contained in these gracious promises. Great and glorious, blissful and everlasting will be our reward. Amen.

### DISCOURSE III.

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#### AN HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE PRACTICE AND CORRUPTIONS OF BAPTISM.

WE have examined into the doctrine and history of baptism, as they are laid down in the New Testament. We have seen with what principal view it was instituted, and to what moral purposes the improvement of it was directed. Every instance of its administration points out its primary and great design to be the profession of Christianity by the person who was baptised. All the reasonings and arguments grounded on it are closely connected with this leading end, and are the practical conclusions drawn from it. The baptised, by this rite, commenced disciples of Christ and laid themselves open to all the remonstrances and exhortations arising out of their profession, assumed in this explicit and emblematical manner.

In all these accounts of baptism every thing is easy, simple, and rational. Here is no encourage-

ment to superstition: no ground for erroneous and false dependencies. It must be allowed, that the most important benefits are held up in connection with this ordinance: 'He that believeth and is baptised,' saith our Lord, 'shall be saved.' 'Repent and be baptised every one of you,' saith Peter, 'for the remission of sins.' But from the very nature and primary design of this institution, it is evidently not the meaning of these declarations, that such blessings are annexed to the external ceremony merely; but to it in connection with the dispositions of the mind, with faith in Jesus Christ and repentance towards God, expressed and avowed by this outward act; with becoming a disciple of Christ; with the humble, grateful, obedient acceptance of the gospel; which his authority enjoined should be expressed in this manner.— Peter thus explains and guards his declaration, when he saith, that baptism saveth us, not 'the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.'

Very soon men came to mistake this matter and to ascribe to the *sign* what belonged to it as a *genuine* token of *real* principle; or of the temper and dispositions of the soul expressed by it. It soon happened with respect to this institution, as it did to the other ordinance of Christianity, the Lord's Supper. The scriptural simplicity of it was lost in human additions: the purity of it was defaced by the inventions of men; and the design of it perverted by their misrepresentations of its nature.

It is my intention now to produce the *facts*,

which will prove and illustrate these assertions. As I have gone through the accounts of baptism that we meet with in the New Testament, I will now represent the deviations from its simplicity and design, from authors in the succeeding ages of the church; and will take a general survey of the corruptions of this ordinance, and of the changes which it hath undergone. For every notion of its nature, every circumstance in the administration of it which differs from or goes beyond the scriptural representations of it, must be considered as a corruption of it; as the misconception, or invention of men, acting under no peculiar illumination or authority.

“Nothing more,” observes with accuracy, Dr. Priestley, “seems to have been meant by baptism originally, than a solemn declaration of a man’s being a Christian, and very far was it from being imagined, that there was any peculiar virtue in the rite itself. It was considered as laying a man under obligations to a virtuous and holy life, as the profession of Christianity necessarily does, but not of itself making any person holy.”\* An ecclesiastical historian †, of great credit, tells us, that “the sacrament of *baptism* was administered in the first century, without the public assemblies, in places appointed and prepared for that purpose,

\* History of the Corruptions of Christianity, v. ii. p. 68.

† Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History, translated by Maclaine, v. i. p. 94, 104. 8vo. 1758. See also Synopsis Historiæ Sacræ a Lampe; p. 83.; and Suiceri Thesaurus Eccles. sub voce *Συναξίς*. p. 1136.

and was performed by immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font: and that then none were admitted to baptism, but such as had been previously instructed in the principal points of Christianity, and had also given satisfactory proofs of pious dispositions and upright intentions.”

Let us now see, how soon and by what steps men departed from this original institution. The first writer \* of the Christian church, after the times of the apostles, though he does not appear to deviate from the original idea of baptism; yet as he is often an obscure writer, so he appears to have used too bold a language concerning the benefits of this institution, and to have incautiously ascribed a divine virtue and energy to the rite itself, when he speaks of its “bringing forgiveness of sin;” and says “we go down into the water full of sins and pollutions and come up bringing forth fruit in the heart, having fear and hope in Jesus by the spirit.” †.

The two next fathers ‡ agree in the use of a language concerning this institution, which, if correspondent to the original representation of it, is not known in the New Testament, calling it “a seal,” and “the Son of God’s seal.” The latter employs these strong terms to convey the idea of the effect and importance of this institution: “when a man has received,” says he “that seal, he is free from death and appointed to life:

\* Barnabas, A. D. 50.

† Barker’s Duty, Circumstances and Benefits of Baptism, p. 47.

‡ Clement of Rome, A. D. 70. Hermas, A. D. 80.

and that seal is water, into which men go down subject to death, but come up assigned to life." He appears even, to have adopted an extravagant notion, "that the apostles, after their own decease, went to preach to those who were dead before them, and to administer this seal to them." \* This style of writing is, indeed, allegorical and obscure. But while it lies open to this construction, it certainly expresseth very high ideas of the efficacy of the rite.

In the beginning of the second century, Ignatius † calls baptism "a Christian's arms," and contends for the power of bishops to administer it as their exclusive right and privilege. This was, evidently, a deviation from the original practice. At first it was customary, that the converts should be baptised by those, by whose preaching they had been prevailed on to embrace Christianity. The Samaritans, Simon and the Eunuch were baptised by the deacon Philip.

The administration of the ordinance was, afterwards, in this century, subjected to regulations and accompanied with circumstances, which had no foundation in apostolic practice. Two seasons in the year, the festivals of Easter and Pentecost, or Whitsuntide, were the fixed times of its administration. "The persons that were to be baptised, after they had repeated the *creed*, confessed and renounced their sins, and particularly the *devil* and his pompous allurements, were immersed under water and received into Christ's kingdom by

\* Barker, p. 47.

† A. D. 110.



a solemn invocation of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. After baptism they received the *sign of the cross*, were *anointed*, and by *prayers* and *imposition of hands*, were solemnly commended to the mercy of God, and dedicated to his service; in consequence of which they received *milk and honey*, which concluded the ceremony. Adult persons were prepared for baptism by abstinence, prayer and other pious exercises. It was to answer for *them*, that sponsors or godfathers were instituted.” \*

It may be concluded, that some of the innovations, here specified, did not take place till towards the end of the century, for Justin Martyr, † writing on this subject, in a plain and rational manner, free from the obscurity of figure and flight of imagination, takes no notice of them. But his account of the manner of solemnizing baptism much corresponds with the history of it in the New Testament.

“As many,” says he, “as are persuaded and do believe that those things, which are taught and spoken by us are true, and engage to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to implore of God, with fasting, the forgiveness of past sins, we praying and fasting together with them. They are then led by us to a place, where there is water, and they are born again with the same new birth as we were. For in the name of God, the Father of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the

\* Mosheim, v. I. p. 171.

† About A. D. 140.

Holy Spirit they are washed in water; for Christ said ‘ unless ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ We learned,” he adds, “ the reason of this from the apostles, that since we were born at first, without knowledge, by necessity, and brought up in wicked customs, we should not continue children of necessity and ignorance, but of choice and knowledge, and receive forgiveness of our former sins by water.”\*

It has been justly remarked upon this passage, that as Justin has spoken of Christians, as Christians, not as converts, it is the baptism of Christians in general he ought to describe, for all are baptised. And Justin’s reason for baptism, that religion should be a work of *choice* and not of *necessity*, as “ our first birth was, takes in both native and convert Christians, but expressly excludes infants, for to them baptism must be as much a work of ignorance, as their birth.” Again, “ they are born again with the same new birth as we were,” that is, as the members of the church were, which then consisted as much or more of native Christians as converts. † While this passage is thus conclusive as to the subjects and extent of baptism, it is proper to observe, that a circumstance is mentioned here, as attending the ordinance, which has no precedent, or countenance, in the New Testament, namely, joining *fasting* with it. It should be, also, added, that Justin represents baptism under three different

\* Barker, p. 65.

† Ibid. p. 65, 66.

views, which, though not explicitly pointed out, seem to have some sanction from the New Testament, namely, being “made new,” “a new birth,” and “an illumination.”

This kind of figurative language was carried further by Clemens Alexandrinus. \* “Being baptised,” says he, “we are enlightened, being enlightened we are adopted, being adopted, are perfected, being perfected are made immortal. It is called,” he adds, “the laver (*λιβηρον*), because we are washed from our sins; grace (*χαρισμα*), because the punishment of sins is done away; illumination (*φωτισμα*), because the holy, saving light appears, by which we see God: and we call it perfection (*τελειον*), because without defects.” This language is very different from the guarded manner of the apostle Peter; who, when he ascribes a salutary efficacy to baptism, enters a caution against being understood of imputing it to the mere ceremony. But if the words of Clemens may be considered as expressing the prevailing sentiments of the age, we learn from this instance, and from similar modes of speaking, in preceding writers, that Christians soon lost sight of the primary design of baptism, and fixed their attention on some subordinate, or concomitant view of the ordinance. This laid a foundation for future corruptions of it, and for high ideas of the absolute necessity and virtues of the rite itself, without regard to the capacity of age or the intention of mind, in those to whom it was administered.

\* A. D. 190.

Hitherto these authors, as well as the writers of the New Testament, are silent about a practice, in after times generally prevalent,—the baptism of infants. “This omission is, in Justin Martyr, peculiarly striking. For his account of the administration is an apology, \* designed to vindicate the Christians of those times from the cruel reproaches of their enemies, and among the rest of murdering their children, and making an impious use of their blood. How naturally would his design have introduced the express mention of infants, if it had been the practice to baptise them; especially as he assures the emperor, that he meant, by describing this solemnity, to avoid the charge of seeming to deal unfairly in some part of his apology.” †

A passage is quoted from Irenæus, ‡ as a proof of the practice; but it is such a proof as arises from a single clause, and even this, on the supposition that it is to the point, is clothed not in plain but metaphorical terms: it occurs in a paragraph marked with glaring contradictions, and is quoted from a translation, which is said to have taken scandalous liberties with the original. What great stress can be laid upon such an ambiguous and uncertain testimony?

No writer till Tertullian, at the beginning of the third century, affords any direct proof or makes

\* Written after the year 150.

† Dr. Samuel Stennet's Answer to the Christian Minister's Reasons for Bapising Infants, p. 216.

‡ A. D. 170.

any mention of the baptism of infants, as an existing practice. In his writings we also meet with the first traces of the doctrine of original sin. He speaks, in strong terms, of the necessity of baptism; but yet censures those who were precipitate in administering it to infants. "Baptism," says he, "must not be given rashly; delaying of it is better according to each one's state and age, chiefly as to little ones; for why need those who answer for them be brought into danger, since they may fail of their promise by death, or be deceived by a bad disposition? The Lord saith, 'Forbid them not to come unto me;' let them become Christians, when they know Christ. Why does the innocent age hasten to the forgiveness of sins? Let them know how to ask for salvation, that you may appear to give it, to one who seeks it." \* It has been argued, that Tertullian nowhere insinuates that infant baptism was not even the universal custom of his time, or that it had been an *innovation*, which in "pleading against it, he might naturally have been expected to insist upon." † It is true he does not, in so many explicit terms, call the baptism of infants an *innovation*; but, in my opinion, no stress is to be laid upon this circumstance; for long before this time Christians, it appears, on this part of Christianity as well as on other points, were not offended at the apprehension of any sentiment or practice being an *innovation*;

\* Barker, p. 83.

† Dr. Priestley's History of the Corruptions of Christianity, vol. ii. p. 74.

nor entered into the consideration of what was or was not so; long before this they appeared to have lost sight of the importance, necessity and duty of adhering closely to the doctrine of Christ, as taught by Christ and his apostles. And in *his* age many innovations, at which I do not find that Tertullian took umbrage, prevailed in the administration of baptism. But though he does not censure infant baptism as an innovation, but speaks of it as an USUAL practice, he evidently speaks of it with disapprobation, and as not justified by the words of Christ to which he refers; he even remonstrates and reasons against it, which he scarcely would have done, had he looked on it as a divine institution: this, methinks, is to *treat* it as one; if not to *call* it, an innovation. Nay further, in other passages, he speaks of baptism in a manner, that shows that not only his own idea of baptism, but that also the views and principles on which it was generally practised were such as do not apply to the baptism of infants. He refers to the case of such as had reached to marriageable years, but had not been baptised, whom he would have delay their baptism, lest they should violate the purity of their manners. He observes that “the soul is sanctified not by washing, but by an *answer*,” alluding probably to 1 Pet. iii. 21. He says “Baptism is the seal of *faith*, which faith is *begun* and approved by the *faith of repentance*. Therefore we are not washed, that we *may leave off* sinning, but because we have *already left* it off; because we *are become* pure in heart. When going into the

water we *professed* the Christian faith in *appointed words*, we *protested with our own mouth* that we renounced the devil, his pomps and his angels."\*

If the practice of infant baptism is considered as deriving any sanction from the mention of it, as a common practice, by Tertullian, the writings of this author will equally furnish a sanction to other practices, that have no foundation in the New Testament. These were the use of sponsors, the consecration of the water, the appropriating the administration of it to the bishop, or to persons acting under his authority, an explicit renunciation of the devil, his pomps and his angels, a threefold immersion, anointing with consecrated ointment after baptism, and tasting milk and honey. It deserves observation, that this writer speaks of these ceremonies as forming a ritual universally received, fixed and of a long standing, without any intimations of there being exceptions to it, and without any express disapprobation, as in the instance of infant baptism.

It appears, also, from this father, that passion-week was regarded as the most solemn time for baptism; though with some degree of liberality and judgment, he remarks, that "every day is the Lord's, and every time fit for baptism; if there is any difference in the solemnity, there is none in the grace."† He is the first person, as I can learn, who applied to this ordinance a term, that was very

\* Barker, p. 83, 86. Stennet's Answer to Addington, part ii. p. 226.

† Barker, p. 85.

soon given to the Lord's supper, and is, to this day, retained with respect to both these institutions, though it generally means, even now, the latter of them: this word is *sacrament*. He calls baptism "the happy *sacrament* of water, and the *sacrament* of sanctification." The word is a military term, and signifieth an oath to be true to a leader. As baptism is an avowal of becoming a disciple of Christ, the application of this term to it is no great deviation from the original idea; but the word is not to be found in the New Testament.

The person who flourished next in order of time, among the celebrated early Christian writers, was the famous Origen.\* He does not seem to differ materially in his representations of the nature of baptism, from those who preceded him; except that he is supposed to speak plainly and fully on the administration of it to infants, and its uses to "wash away their pollution; and to secure to them the forgiveness of sins." But after every concession in favour of the authenticity of the passages quoted from him, and the exactness and fidelity of the translations in which they appear, all that can be concluded from his writings is, that he thought, "children came defiled into the world, yet not properly with sin, but by some legal pollution, such as Jesus himself needed cleansing from: he therefore was baptised." If Origen assert that he received this practice as a tradition from the apostles, it is also evident from what he says, that

\* A. D. 230.



some doubted of the fitness of it, and that it was frequently debated, among the brethren, what sins little ones had to be forgiven that they should be baptised for the forgiveness of sins? The existence of this debate makes it probable, that neither the opinion of a pollution even from birth, nor the baptism of little ones were then established, nor the authority of apostolic tradition universally admitted.\* It is further probable, that by *little ones* † Origen did not understand infants, or children immediately after birth, but arrived at an age when they could just speak, and did make the answer themselves, though not capable of much instruction, as he bids every one remember what words he used in baptism, how he renounced the devil, would not use his pomps or works, nor obey his services and pleasures. ‡ The expressions of this writer serve to shew, that as the doctrine of original or of a natural defilement, of which there are no traces till after the time of Justin Martyr, gained ground, the practice of infant baptism advanced along with it. They too brought in and established one another. § Origen, it may be added, uses a manner of speaking on this subject peculiar to himself; and though not sanctioned by similar language in scripture, yet just and emphatical: he speaks of it as a religious *contract*, || in which the party baptised answered to those who examined them, “We will serve the Lord, for he is our God.”

\* Barker, p. 95. † ἡλικίας. ‡ Barker, p. 97, 98.

§ Barker, p. 95, and 101. || Id. p. 97. θεοσεβείας συνθηκαίς.

As we proceed in the history of the Christian church, we meet with new and numerous instances of the changes and corruptions of the whole scheme of Christianity, and of its positive institutions. The practice which Tertullian treated as an innovation, by expressing his displeasure at it and remonstrating against it, became so prevalent, that at a council held at Carthage, not the validity and authority of it was disputed or denied, but the subject of debate was, whether infants ought not to be baptised on the eighth day, in conformity to the practice among the Jews of circumcising on that day; or whether it might not be dangerous to delay baptism even to that time. The assembly decided, that it should not be deferred so long. Their decision was founded on this principle, "That as a new-born infant, being born of the flesh after Adam, had received the infection of death at his birth, he ought not to be hindered receiving grace and forgiveness of sins." This was the determination of the western bishops.\* It may surprise a reader who would expect to find in the decision of this synod a decree, founded either on express authority or pertinent and close reasoning, to meet with such arguments, as are not analogical merely, but fanciful and allegorical. They were these: "The Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; therefore as

\* The above was the decision of the western bishops. Infant baptism, though creeping in by degrees, was not established in the eastern church, until 150 years later,—Stennet as before, p. 237, and Barker, p. 111.

much as lies in our power, no soul is to be lost. God is no respecter of persons, so neither of years ;” intimating that he would be so, if he denied to infants what he grants to adults ; that infants and adult persons have the same equality in the divine workmanship, which is proved from Elisha’s laying “ on the child, putting his head on the child’s head, his face upon his face, his body upon his body, and his feet upon his feet ; herein expressing the divine and spiritual equality, that all men are equal and alike, when they are made by God ;” meaning that refusing to baptise infants would be partial and destroy this equality. The reasoning of these African bishops does not display a very sound judgment, and their recourse to it indicates a conscious want of *divine authority* for their determination. \*

Cyprian, who gives us the decision of the African assembly, attests also, the custom of giving the Lord’s supper to infants. “ Original sin, infant baptism, and infant communion kept equal pace together.” † The more modern notion of imitating circumcision was then in its infancy. The ritual of baptism was, about this time, increased. A custom then prevailed of kissing the newly baptised. The oil as well as water, before they were used, were consecrated. Their conceptions of the absolute necessity of baptism and of its immediate efficacy, led them to adapt it to the circumstances of the

\* Barker, p. 102. Robinson’s History of Baptism, ch. xxii. p. 197.; and for the decree at length see King’s Inquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church, part i. ch. 3. § 2.

† Barker, p. 104.

sick and dying; and as they were incapable of being immersed, water was poured upon them; though some doubted the validity of this baptism, and others objected to the ordaining of those who had been thus baptised.\* By degrees the ceremonies attending it, are repeated and multiplied. † A two-fold renunciation of the devil is introduced. This renunciation was performed with the face towards the west; the confession of Christ was made looking to the east. The ointment was applied to various parts; first to the forehead, then to the ears, the nose and the breast. One custom seems to have existed from the beginning, that of laying on of hands on the baptised, as a sign of communicating the gifts of the Holy Spirit; which sign and pretension to such gifts they retained for several centuries, though the miraculous gifts must of course have ceased with the apostles, and at the death of those who had received them from the hands of the apostles, for they alone had the power of conferring them. But the ritual seems to have derived its perfection in this century, from the form of exorcising, or driving out evil spirits; for “none were admitted to baptism, until by the menacing and formidable shouts of the exorcists they were supposed to be delivered from the dominion of the prince of darkness. After the administration of baptism, the candidates returned home adorned with crowns and arrayed in white garments, as sacred emblems;

\* Barker, p. 108, 109.

† The same, p. 124.

the former of victory over sin and the world, the latter of their inward purity and innocence." \*

The inventive genius of superstition was so fruitful in this age, as to leave, one might suppose, no room for the next to attempt to add to the solemnity or significance of the original institution. But Christians of the fourth century conceived, that they could still make improvements on it. Salt was used as an emblem of purity and wisdom, and thrown with this view into the mouth of the person baptised. A double unction was every where introduced in the celebration of this ordinance, the one preceding, the other following it. The baptised were required to go clothed in white garments during the space of seven days. † Here superstition appears to have exhausted its powers, as far as concerned this ordinance; for we find no other additions or changes made to it, till the Reformation from Popery commenced.

In the third century arose a warm controversy concerning the manner of receiving again into the reputed orthodox church, those who had fallen into any supposed heresy. While the greatest part of the European Christians used no other form at the restoration of those who were deemed heretics, than imposition of hands, the Asiatic Christians, in more than one council, established it as a law, that all such should be re-baptised before their admission again into the communion of the true church. This conduct was founded on miscon-

\* Mosheim, v. I, p. 236, 237. † Mosheim, v. I, 234, 235.

ceptions of the design of baptism : it implied, that the first baptism of those who had joined any heretical sect, was by this deviation from their former principles, totally vitiated. It made baptism, instead of a profession of subjection to the sole authority of Christ, a renunciation of errors adopted after embracing Christianity ; and it converted the rite of expressing faith in Christ, into a mode of submission to human authority ; to the authority of some particular teachers, who arrogated to themselves the claims of infallibility.

During the long period between the fourth century and the grand æra of the Reformation, it appears, on good grounds, that there existed a people in the vallies of Piedmont, who, in the worst of times, maintained the doctrine and institutions of Christianity in primitive purity, and were of apostolical original.\* Out of them arose the Waldenses of the twelfth century, many of whom, but not all, denied infant and practised believers' baptism only, or to speak more accurately, " they baptised minors after they had been instructed ; and there is no positive proof that they baptised babes. † The word infant was used in a

\* Stennet's Answer to Addington, part ii. p. 252. and Morland's History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valley of Piedmont, b. i. ch. iii.; and Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches, p. 458, &c.

† In the confession of the Faith of Waldenses, dated 1120; i. e. near 400 years before the time of Luther and Calvin, their sentiments on baptism are expressed in very general terms: " We acknowledge no other sacrament but baptism and the Lord's supper." In another confession, without date, they declare: " We believe, that in the

vague sense, for a minor, and used on monuments for young persons of different ages, as two, thirteen, eighteen, and so on." \*

sacrament of baptism, water is the visible and external sign, which represents unto us that which (by the invisible virtue of God operating) is within us; namely, the renovation of the spirit, and the mortification of our members in Jesus Christ; by which also we are received into the holy congregation of the people of God, there *protesting and declaring openly our faith and amendment of life.*" This last clause does not correspond to the case of new-born children. In a third, dated 1532: "We have," they say, "but two sacramental signs left us by Jesus Christ; the one is *baptism*, the other is the *eucharist*, which we receive to shew that our *perseverance in the faith* is such as we *promised, when we were baptised, being little children.*" In a confession of faith, presented first to Ladislaus, king of Bohemia, in 1508, and then to Ferdinand, king of Bohemia, in 1535, they represent it as one of their articles of faith, that they teach that baptism is a saving administration, instituted by Christ, and added to the gospel, by which he purifieth, cleanseth and sanctifieth his Church in his own death and blood, as Paul saith, 'Christ loved his church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, being cleansed by the washing of water through the word.'

"Likewise they teach, that children are to be baptised unto salvation, and to be consecrated to Christ according to his word, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God,' " &c.

In a brief confession of faith, published by the reformed churches of Piedmont, 1655, as what they had hitherto professed and did to that day profess, they deliver it as their avowed opinion, "That God has ordained the sacrament of baptism to be a testimony of our adoption, and of our being cleansed from our sins, by the blood of Jesus Christ, and renewed in holiness of life."—Morland's History of the Churches of Piedmont, p. 34, 38, 53, 67.

\* Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches, p. 469, 470, 471.

Before the ninth century all the words, "child, little one, infant, innocent," and all the diminutives of these little words, stood for such as could ask to be baptised, as a letter of a certain bishop, published by Florus, deacon of the church at Lyons, not long after

Before the Waldenses attracted notice in the eleventh century, the Paulicians, a party of Christians, severely persecuted by the Grecian emperors, and driven from the eastern provinces in the ninth century, rejected baptism, and in a more especial manner, the baptism of infants, as a ceremony that was in no respect essential to salvation.\* About the year 1110, PETER DE BRUYS, a great reformer of Languedoc and Provence, made, says Mosheim, "the most laudable attempts to reform the abuses, and to remove the superstitions that disfigured the beautiful simplicity of the gospel." It was one of his leading tenets, "that no persons whatever, were to be baptised before they were come to the full use of their reason."† Henry, his successor, an Italian by birth, was of the same opinion. A letter written to Erasmus, out of Bohemia, in 1519, mentions a sect then in existence, and which had subsisted in that country for above 90 years, whose practice is thus described:

the death of Charlemagne, proves. To this day the word infant is used for youth from eight or ten to twenty years of age. For in Italy, there are seminaries in which boys of these ages are trained up to music, and they are often called infants, but oftener INNOCENTS. Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches, p. 469, 475. It may be added, that to the present times, a male or female, under twenty-one years of age, is styled, in our law, an infant and treated as such.—Blackstone's Commentaries, v. 1. p. 463. 8vo. 1791.

\* Mosheim, v. ii. p. 349. "These Christians also affirmed, that the institution of funeral rites was an effect of sacerdotal avarice, and that it was a matter of indifference whether the dead were buried in the churches or the fields."—Id.

† Stennet's Answer to Addington, part ii. p. 261, 262.



“Such as come over to their sect, must every one be baptised anew. They make no blessing of salt, nor of the water, nor make any use of consecrated oil.”\* It was the opinion of the great Wickliffe, that baptism was necessary to salvation; but he opposed the superstition of three immersions; and, in case of necessity, he thought that any one present might baptise. The Unitarian societies, that were formed in Poland, about the middle of the sixteenth century, universally rejected the baptism of infants. Faustus Socinus considered it as a great and hurtful error. He and some of his followers asserted, that the ordinance of baptism was not binding upon those who are born of Christian parents, and grow up in the knowledge of the gospel, and with the supposed character of Christians. In England, the same opinion was advanced and defended in the beginning of the last century, by the excellent Mr. Emlyn. It has been more recently brought forward and supported by another eminent sufferer for righteousness’ sake, the learned and very worthy Mr. Wakefield. † The sentiments and practice of the Anabaptists in Germany, who have not been always treated with impartiality and candour, it is well known form a singular æra in the history of this institution. The Mennonites, who admit

\* Mosheim, v. ii. p. 446. 447.

† Since the appearance of his tract on baptism, it has been advanced and supported by another writer, distinguished for his religious integrity and learning.—Frend’s Letters to Bp. Prettyman, letter iii.

none to the sacrament of baptism, but persons that are come to the full use of their reason, constitute, in the present age, a numerous and respectable body of people in Holland.

It is generally known among us, what is the state of opinion and practice on this subject, since the Reformation in England. The baptism of infants, the sign of the cross, god fathers and god mothers are still retained; and, according to the ritual of our established church, are essential to the ordinance. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the custom of dipping was laid aside, and sprinkling was substituted in its room. The doctrine of our national church is, that "the inward and spiritual grace, signified by the washing of water in baptism, is a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace."

But though the law of the land has given a sanction, perpetuity, and universal extent to these sentiments, there have been, ever since the Reformation, some whose principles and practice have formed a protest against them. While the whole body of dissenters from the established church have discarded the cross in baptism, and the office of god-fathers and godmothers: it has been a distinguished tenet of the quakers, that water was never intended to continue in the church of Christ any longer than while Jewish prejudices made such an external ceremony necessary. The baptists have discarded both the baptism of babes and the practice of sprinkling;

limiting the administration of it to the immersion of those who are of years to make a profession of faith in Christ. There were persons of this persuasion in the reign of Henry the VIII.; in that of Edward VI. there was gathered in London, a congregation of foreign Baptists. This body of people now form one third of the whole body of dissenters; and there is reason to think, that their opinions not only meet with a more candid treatment than in some further periods, but are gradually gaining ground.\*

From this survey of the history of baptism it is evident that no change from the original practice, has been so universally received and so long retained, as the custom of baptising new-born children. This practice, whether we judge of it by its own nature and design, or the support which it has received through all ages, and does

\* "The Baptists," observes the ingenious and learned Mr. G. Dyer, "have been an injured people. In our College statutes libertines and Anabaptists are reckoned as one:" Stat. Reginal. Coll. 20. de hæresibus non defendendis; and at a time when an act of indemnity passed, state criminals and Anabaptists have been excepted.—Burnet's History of the Reformation.

What a contrast to this spirit is the liberality of Mr. Friend. "Though it appears to me, that baptism is no longer necessary in Christian countries, I can not look upon the advocates for this rite with either scorn or derision; I highly respect those who, in imitating the practice of our Saviour and his apostles, act on the idea of obedience to his command; and by him who is fully convinced in his own mind, that our Saviour's command reaches to the present times, it ought to be observed in its fullest extent."—Dyer on Subscription, 2d. ed. p. 27. Friend's Letters to Bp. Prettyman, p. 20.

now receive, from the suffrage of the Christian world in general, or that of its learned and pious advocates in particular, appears to call for our especial notice. Yet in this general unanimity and harmony, as to the practice itself, it is worthy of our observation, that its advocates are by no means agreed concerning the principles on which they vindicate it, nor about the purposes and ends which they assign to it.

It seems to have originated from high ideas of the efficacy of baptism, and from an apprehension of its necessity to salvation, grounded on the words of Christ: John iii. 5. 'Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Austin and several of its patrons founded it on the doctrine of original sin. The liturgy of the Church of England refers to both these principles as reasons for it; though not in perfect consistency with the notion of being conceived and born in sin, it urges not only the attention which Christ paid to little children, but the exhortations he gave to his hearers to follow their *innocence*, as inducements "to bring children to holy baptism, and as encouragements to believe that God favourably *alloweth* this *charitable work*." The practice of circumcision and the conformity between the Abrahamic and Christian covenants have been considered by some as conclusive arguments for the administration of baptism to infants. Others have laid the chief stress upon the resemblance of baptism to a supposed custom of admitting proselytes in the Jewish church by this

rite, from whence they apprehended, that it originated. The right of infants to this ordinance has been argued by others from the exhortation of Peter to the awakened Jews. Acts ii. 38, 39. "Repent and be baptised, *every one* of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins—for the promise is unto you, and to your *children.*" To others the instances of whole households being baptised at once appear to be quite in point. Some attempt to defend the practice from the authority of antiquity. Dr. Priestley conceived that it would naturally come into use from the power of a master of a family, who, upon his own conversion, would of course have his children baptised with himself. Many advocates for this practice have chosen to give it all the force which it could derive from the united weight of all those arguments; others have preferred resting the defence of it upon one or two leading principles.

On the other hand, it is to be observed, that there is, perhaps, no argument brought for it which has not been rejected by some who have yet espoused the practice. Hammond and Whitby have discarded the reasoning drawn from Acts ii. 38, 39. Whitby and Pyle, it is evident from their paraphrases, were not impressed with the argument deduced from the instances of households. It has been granted by some learned Pædobaptists, that infant baptism did not universally and constantly prevail till several centuries after Christ. Proselyte baptism, which has been considered as the model of Christian baptism, it

has been shewn by elaborate investigation, did not exist till long after Christ.\* On this topic the accurate and candid Larøner thus expresseth himself: "As for the baptism of Jewish proselytes, I take it to be a mere fiction of the Rabbins, by whom we have suffered ourselves to be often imposed upon."† The great Dr. Clarke represents in general the arguments from analogy, as uncertain and dubious.

There has not been a more perfect agreement in opinion concerning the importance and design of this practice. Austin maintained, that unbaptised infants were adjudged to everlasting punishment. Dodwell asserted that the soul was naturally mortal, and that immortality was only conferred at baptism, by the gift of God, through the hands of one set of regularly ordained clergy. It has been the opinion of one eminent writer, that as those who die in infancy never come to be *moral* agents, God might, in perfect consistency with his holiness, justice and goodness, treat them as he does other animals that are *not moral* agents, i. e. either *annihilate* them at death, or cast them into a state of *eternal sleep*; he therefore aimed to shew, that young children, who under the *Abrahamic* covenant were circumcised, or under the *Christian* were baptised, would not be thus dealt with, but would have the Almighty for their God,

\* Dr. Gale's Reflections on Wall's History of Infant Baptism, No. ix. x. Dr. Gill's Dissertation concerning the Baptism of Jewish Proselytes; and Jennings' Jewish Antiquities, v. i. p. 177. 136—138.

† Letters to and from Dr. Doddridge, 8vo. 1790. p. 275.

and be heirs of his future kingdom ; or be children of the resurrection, as well as members of the church. \* Another very respectable author, † without carrying his ideas so high as to the effect of it, has conceived that the condition of baptised infants would be, in a future state, more happy and advantageous than will be that of those who were never thus solemnly devoted to God. The Church of England instructs its members, that by this rite children are regenerated, and will receive the blessing of eternal life. It is, I apprehend, a general and firm belief in that church, that the future state of unbaptised infants is materially affected by the omission of it. Dissenters seem to consider it as a token of God's favour to their offspring, as a profession of Christianity on the side of parents, and as a consecration of their children to God, and a solemn vow for their education.

This discordance, this repugnance of sentiments concerning the grounds and uses of infant baptism, is truly remarkable, and suggests a strong presumption against the divine authority of the practice. ‡ The defenders of it are not consistent with themselves and with one another, though

\* Hallet's Tracts, v. iii. p. 324, 325, &c.

† Mr. Micaiah Towgood.

‡ "A remark of Le Clerc, on another subject, appears to be justly applicable here : ' Un systeme, composé de principes vrais, & de consequences necessaire, qui on en tire ,ne sauroit etre contesté par ceux, qui l'entendent.'—Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne, tom. 27, p. 44,

they have all the same practice to support. If there were plain declarations, if there were precise directions about it in the New Testament, whence could this variety and uncertainty arise? In a matter which can eventually rest on the will and declarations of the lawgiver alone, disagreement and confusion, one would think, might be easily avoided by an appeal to *his express words*, to his authoritative appointment. Instead of this, arguments are drawn from various different and foreign sources; and there is no harmony among those who advance them on the validity of these arguments. When full justice has been done to them, when they have been placed in the most luminous or forcible point of view, still they labour under a great defect, still they fall *essentially* short of the point which they are meant to establish; they offer reasons for *engrafting* infant baptism on Christianity; they do not prove it to be an *institution* of the Christian Lawgiver. When the author of "Christianity not founded on Argument," because it answered his purpose, asserted that the introduction of children into the Christian church by *baptism* was the *ordinance of God*, the learned and candid Bp. Law ingeniously observes, "he goes perhaps a little farther than he will be able to prove."\*

As the practice of infant baptism appears to rest upon indeterminate, uncertain grounds, it is proper to add, that besides being a deviation from

\* Theory of Religion, 7th ed. p. 23.



the original and primary design of baptism, it hath been the cause of some peculiar, extravagant notions and superstitious customs. The doctrine of an orthodox father of the Christian church, Fulgentius, a disciple of Austin, on this point, delivered with all the confidence of infallibility, offends reason and shocks all our feelings. It stands thus: "Admit without any doubt, and firmly maintain, that little ones, whether they die in the mother's womb as soon as they begin to live, or whether after their birth, they pass out of this world without the sacrament of holy baptism, will be punished with everlasting fire."\* To the practice of infant baptism must be ascribed, though not the origin, yet the supposed utility of continuing the use of godfathers and godmothers, and the expediency and design of confirmation, according to the sentiments and customs of the Church of England. Among Dissenters it has given occasion to a peculiar idea concerning the design of the Lord's supper; namely, that it is an open and solemn renewal of the baptismal covenant, which persons ought to make, when they come to years; and to a practice recommended by devotional writers, that of drawing up and signing a written covenant with God in the private transactions of the closet. Both these notions

\* *Firmissime tene, et nulla tenus dubites, parvulos, sive in utero matrum vivere incipiunt et ibi moriuntur, sive cum de matribus nati sint sine sacramento sancti baptismatis de hoc seculo transeunt, ignis æterni sempiterno supplicio puniendos.*—Bp. Watson's *Two Sermons and a Charge*, 1795, p. 69.

would be precluded by an adherence to the primary design of baptism. Among the members of the established church and the Dissenters a high idea of its influence on the future state of children, transmitted from the days of Austin, has given rise to great anxiety and precipitance for its administration, when a child has appeared in danger of dying. Then the fears of parents are alarmed, and superstition suggests hard thoughts of God, the merciful father and equitable judge of all. There is generally produced in the minds of those to whom baptism has been administered in their infancy, a full conviction that by it they were made Christians; especially when they are taught, from their earliest years, as in the church catechism, that by it "they were made members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." Such notions cannot but create delusive hopes, and tend to betray men into a neglect of forming *that* Christian character, which is the result of consideration and conviction, of choice and virtuous pursuits on evangelical principles. "We find," says a diligent inquirer, "one benefit *adult baptism* regularly performed had over that of *infants* or *clinics*; that though all were much corrupted, yet the remembrance of the solemnity and promise had more influence on the conduct of those who made baptism their own choice, than when it was done to infants who knew it not, or hummed over in sickness, as indeed it is very natural to expect it should."\*

\* Barker on Baptism, p. 128.

The great instruction which arises from this review of the history of baptism, of the alterations which it has undergone, of the new ideas which have been associated with its original design or substituted for it, and of the additions which have been made to the ritual—is this: that we make our appeal not to this or that age of the Christian Church; not to this or that father or leader; not to this or that synod and assembly, but to the scriptures of the New Testament. All that has been advanced concerning the nature and design of baptism over and above, or different from the declarations of the New Testament, amounts to the opinion of men only; sometimes learned, wise and pious; sometimes weak, ignorant and designing; at all times liable to err. All the ceremonies which have been incorporated with it, are the traditions of men only; mere will-worship, flowing from mistaken views and superstitious notions.

It was the great glory and advantage of the Reformation, that it led men back to the scriptures. No where else can we find safety or comfort. It is our duty, it is our wisdom to act still on the principle on which the Reformation commenced, namely, the fulness and sufficiency, of the scriptures; and to apply it especially to every point which hath no other foundation but the WORD OF GOD.

This is the way to recover Christianity to its primitive purity, to revive its ancient glory, and to support its authority over the minds of men. This is the way to establish our own hope and confidence before our Lord and Master at his

coming; the hope that He will own us as his disciples, who in the seriousness and integrity of our minds, have 'kept his commandments pure and undefiled.' Amen.

## DISCOURSE IV.

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### PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS GROUNDED ON THE PRECEDING DISCOURSES.

WE have examined what is the primary design of the ordinance of baptism. We have followed the apostles through the reasonings and conclusions which they drew from it, and have traced out its subordinate and practical uses. And we have reviewed the history of its practice in different ages, to mark the corruptions that have been introduced into the administration of it. What remains is, that we apply the subject to ourselves, and form our conduct, with respect to it, upon what hath been offered.

It cannot but differently affect our minds, in proportion as we are convinced that the rite has been mistaken and corrupted; or as we have lived in the neglect of this institution; or, having submitted to it, are under obligations of a serious nature to follow up this profession of Christianity with a becoming conversation. These different circumstances call for different exhortations. It is my hope that some addresses suited to each case will be favoured with a candid attention.

I. Let us correct our mistakes upon this subject, and use our endeavours to rescue this institution from the errors and corruptions, that we conceive, have been mixed with it. In whatever instances the sentiments and practices of men have been deviations from the original simplicity of Christ's institutions, those sentiments should be discarded, and those practices laid aside.

Thus Protestants have acted with respect to the rituals, which the church of Rome has introduced and observed under the name of sacraments. Thus judicious Christians have acted, in particular, with respect to the Lord's supper. It is equally reasonable and fit that we should pursue the same line of conduct with respect to baptism. The same principles bind in one case as in another. There is no effectual security against the revival, spread and effects of superstition, but by recurring, in all instances, to the original and divine standard. In what respect soever the religion of Jesus is encumbered or corrupted by human inventions, in that respect it undoubtedly lieth open to attack, and is indefensible. Its glory in that instance is tarnished, its wisdom is liable to be impeached, its utility may be called in question; nay, hurtful consequences may be imputed to it. To the sincere friend of Christianity this must be a painful thought.

The sole consideration with many, on the corruptions of Christianity, is their influence with the salvation of mankind. They conceive, that if any innovations or abuses do not relate to essential

matters, if they who retain them may be in a state of acceptance with God, things may as well remain as we have received them from our forefathers. To attempt a reformation, they think, would be an ill-judged direction of zeal and a needless effort. If this reasoning were just, it would leave the reformation from popery in a very imperfect state. The freedom of inquiry, and the manly vigour of mind in following the dictates of the judgment, would yield to an indolent acquiescence to a certain point in received abuses, and be lost in the surrender of the right of private judgment to human authority, or to prevailing custom. This is the leaven that would in time again leaven the whole lump.

It is not thus that the floor of Christ will be thoroughly purged. It is not thus that every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted will be rooted up. To answer and to carry on the designs of providence, with regard to these objects, it is not necessary that *every* Christian should free himself from every error and superstition which he perceiveth hath been blended with Christianity? The honour of our religion is as really, if not to the same extent, affected by the least as the greatest instances of corruption. The authority of our great Master, of the Founder and Finisher of our faith, is as binding with respect to the circumstances as the essentials of it.

How can we be more justified in altering the rule for baptism, or in deviating from the leading and primary design of it, than in changing the nature

or departing from the end of the Lord's Supper? The former is as much an institution of Christ as is the latter. The former, as well as the latter, hath it precise and determinate meaning and importance in the Christian system.

Far be it from us to fail in any expressions of candour and respect for those who may differ in opinion from us on this point; and who, according to our apprehensions, greatly mistake its nature, and deviate from its design. But if we conceive our own notions concerning it to be more just and scriptural, ought we not to act upon our own ideas and not theirs? Do not consistency and integrity require this? Nay further, ought we not to adopt every step which will not interfere with the Christian liberty of others, to procure an attention to, and forward the reception, and promote the spread of what is, in our opinion, a just sense of its true nature?

This is to show our regard to genuine Christianity; this is to advance in a freedom of thinking on religious subjects. The mind is strengthened and ennobled by exerting its vigour and spirit. Benevolence is gratified by every endeavour to correct the errors and enlighten the understanding of others. An essential service is done to our common Christianity by taking pains to rescue it from every innovation and corruption; till no mark of the beast remains on its aspect. The least which can be done is, to refrain from every act that would give countenance to the abuses of the ordinance of baptism. But if we would, with effect, counteract them, it



is necessary on all proper occasions, and in a candid manner, to enter our modest, but firm protest against them. Nothing in this view can be more consistent and effectual, and, at the same time, more inoffensive than our obedience to this ordinance agreeably to its original purity and design. This leads me,

II. To urge a compliance with this institution. 'As many,' saith the Apostle, 'as have been baptised unto Christ, have put on Christ.' This is the discriminating and appropriate act by which men take upon themselves the Christian character, and give themselves up to the authority and guidance of the great Messiah. The only question one would think that can arise, when invited to be baptised into the name of Christ is this: are we convinced that he is the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world, and are we disposed to embrace him under this character? If we be, here is the appointed way of professing our sentiments and resolutions. Permit me to call upon you "to stand forth and declare yourselves Christians by this solemn act, appointed for that purpose."\*

It is a recommendation of this rite that it is an easy and intelligible institution. It may be urged in its favour, that it is highly expressive, significant and emblematical. It is another circumstance which speaks for it, that it carries on the face of it a manly and rational aspect. It is an ingenuous avowal of our inward sentiments, and it implies a

\* Priestley.

conviction of the understanding, and a voluntary determination of the mind on a subject of great moment to our present character and future happiness, that of the divine mission of Jesus of Nazareth.

But the consideration of the greatest weight, which is of itself binding, and which gives force to all others, is, that baptism is the ordinance of Christ. During his ministry it was practised by his direction and under his eye. And it was among the last directions and commands which he gave, before he ascended into heaven, that what had hitherto been a law and ordinance for those only who believed in him in Judea should be the law for the whole world; the standing and universal mode of commencing his disciples. To believe that Jesus is the ‘prophet whom God hath raised up, whom we should hear in all things, whatsoever he should say unto us,’ and yet to live in the neglect of one of his express and peculiar commands, of what may be called the first, and certainly a discriminating act of obedience.—How inconsistent is this!

Our Lord himself did not treat with such disregard the ministry and baptism of his forerunner John. He went from Galilee to Jordan, unto John, to be baptised of him. John, with becoming humility, would have declined administering his baptism to one so much his superior. Our Lord replies, ‘Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes to fulfil all righteousness.’ He thus expressed his reverence for that divine authority by which John acted. It is remarkable that this act of piety was followed,

with signal proofs of the acceptance of heaven. For when he was baptised he went up straightway out of the water, and lo! a voice from heaven, saying, '*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*'\* The baptism of this prophet, because it came from heaven, was a branch of righteousness. - With what strength and force does this consideration apply to the baptism of Christ himself! He was the Son of God. His baptism, in its primary and leading design, as an acknowledgment of his divine mission, like faith in him, is of universal and perpetual application. If we really have a reverence for the name and example of Christ, this instance of his conduct must have weight with us, and must teach us to think justly on this subject, and to 'go and do likewise.' Who can justify it to himself to omit any testimony of respect to the authority of that divine Master, who took considerable pains to shew *his* pious regard for the authority by which his inferior and forerunner preached? If we can justify it to ourselves, we certainly lose much advantage and pleasure.

The yoke of Christ is not only easy, but his commands are profitable, and 'in-keeping of them there is great reward.' This commandment, among others, has its uses of practical improvement. Since it is a personal, explicit, and public profession of faith in Christ, it strengthens every ob-

\* "Fully to perform, (Rom. xiii. 10.) all positive as well as moral righteousness." Archbishop Newcome, *Matt. iii. 13, 17.*

ligation of reason and religion, and is a voluntary bond of obedience. Every act of obedience disposes the mind to other acts, and tends to establish a habit of submission to the divine authority. No command of God can be obeyed without creating in the mind the pleasure that flows from a consciousness of having done the will of God. The pleasure in the instance under consideration is improved and heightened by the sublime hope, that as we have 'confessed Christ before men, he will,' according to his own promise, 'confess us, if faithful unto death, before his Father and his holy angels'. It is a powerful inducement to this act of obedience, that thus we lay open our hearts to the influence of Christian principles. And it is a delightful thought that we thus enter into the kingdom of divine truth and grace, animated by the prospect of eternal life and glory.

To these considerations should be added one more, which ought to have great weight with us, as it is undoubtedly one great reason for the institutions of baptism and of the Lord's supper. It is this, that these ordinances are *memorials* of the character of Christ, and monuments of the great facts on which Christianity rests, addressed to the senses of men; consequently, an obedience to them is one means of rendering a material service to the cause of Christianity, by keeping up the remembrance of its Author, by calling the attention of those to it who either cannot, or will not read, and by awakening, through this address to the senses, and by the influence of our example, pious thoughts.

and purposes in the minds of others. Baptism is a testimony given in a solemn and significant manner to the divine character and mission of Jesus Christ. He who thus stands up a witness for Christ becomes, in this respect, a *preacher* of the gospel. In these views of the ordinance trace we not the wisdom of the appointment, and the utility of our obedience?

When usefulness and pleasure invite, when Christ himself commands and leads the way by his own example, let us not be backward to obey him, who, we are convinced, is made by God, the Father of all 'Prince and a Saviour.' Let no weak excuses be formed. Let no objections be sought out to evade a matter of plain duty. No other pre-requisites can be necessary than a persuasion of the divine authority, and mission of Jesus, and an humble disposition to learn of him and obey his doctrine. 'Let a man examine himself and prove himself whether he be in the faith.' If he be, let him avow himself a Christian. This way of doing it may not be popular and fashionable, but the command of Christ is to be set against every objection drawn from the opinions and customs of the world. To the sneer and contempt of men is to be opposed the awful declaration of Jesus—'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in *that* of his Father and of his holy angels.'\*

Let not your fears discourage you. Ye cannot

\* Luke ix. 26. chap. xxiv. 47.

be more unworthy and criminal than the three thousand who, being convinced by the preaching of Peter, were invited immediately to repent and be baptised. Ye cannot be more unworthy than the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who had killed 'the Lord of life,' yet to them were the first offers of forgiveness of sins, the first calls to repentance addressed. Ye cannot be more unworthy than Saul the persecutor, who, on inquiring with compunction and humility, 'what the Lord would have him to do,' was immediately exhorted, in the language of remonstrance, 'Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.'

Let not apprehensions of falling away from the Christian profession prevent your assuming it; but be only incentives to watchfulness, humility, and prayer.

Let not the burden and multiplicity of earthly cares be a bar to your rising purpose. 'One thing is needful.' It is true wisdom to prefer 'the better part.' 'Seek first,' saith our Lord, 'the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' In the Christian profession ye will meet with supports and consolations. In the world ye may have anxiety, fatigue, and tribulation; but, in Christ Jesus, and in an adherence to his religion, ye shall have peace. Away then with objections. Dismiss every plea that may be suggested against your putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, by being baptised into his name. If a hope may be entertained that these persuasions will, in any instance,

prevail; that any mind will yield to a sense of duty on this point, and to the force of these exhortations, I would

III. Address those who are disposed to make this profession of Christianity, and to shew their reverence for this institution, and their sentiments concerning its nature and design. The advices, which are suitable to your intentions, arise out of the primary end of this rite. It is a profession of Christianity. Would ye act with judgment and propriety? In this case, the first question is obviously this: What is that scheme of truth which ye will profess to embrace? What is Christianity? The next question will be, What evidences and proofs offer, that this scheme is of God?

The first question is indeed of great extent and wide compass, and will furnish matter for future inquiries, and improving proficiency. But there must, evidently, be some first principles; some general and leading ideas, plain and obvious, and which distinguish Christianity from every other system. The faith which constitutes a man a Christian, and which he avows in his baptism, can consist of essential and fundamental articles only. In the case of converts, at least of those who were not educated in the knowledge of Christianity, other articles may be learnt after baptism. It will be exceedingly proper to open and carefully to consult that book which informs us, what doctrine the apostles preached to bring men over to the Christian faith. This book is not so much the whole New Testament, which, indeed, will call for your re-

peated and constant study, as, in particular, the ACTS of the APOSTLES. Read that treatise with attention, and as ye proceed, often ask what read we here? What are the instructions given to teach men the knowledge of Christ? And what is the faith required of those who were baptised? The case of the Eunuch is very full and explicit.

While ye peruse this book, to attain the solution of the first question, ye cannot fail to obtain information also upon the second point of inquiry, What are the proofs that the Gospel was from God? Ye will find that they who preached it were supported by the witness of God to the truth of their claims, in great miracles which they wrought. Ye will find that it was the doctrine of an holy and excellent person, who did such works as no man could have done, unless God had been with him: of a person, who, after having been crucified and buried, was raised from the dead. Ye will find, that this doctrine had no aid or support, no means of success but what were from heaven: its own excellence and the signs, wonders, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which accompanied it. They who preached it were unlettered men, without power, without wealth, without influence, to give any advantage to their doctrine. They sought not their own glory or interest, but exposed themselves to every disgrace and suffering. Ye will find that their doctrine was opposed and yet prevailed; that it was persecuted, and yet it flourished. 'The word of God mightily grew and increased.' Ye can scarcely peruse this entertaining, interesting,



and amazing history of the planting of Christianity without being convinced that those men who preached Christ Jesus, were 'the servants of the most high God, who taught the way of salvation.'

I recommend particularly, the serious and careful perusal of this evangelical treatise, with a view to form just ideas of the nature and evidences of Christianity, because it is a source of information within every one's reach; the accurate reading of it will take up no great portion of time; and it is to have recourse, after all that has been said or written on this point, to the first and purest source of instruction. It would be endless to enumerate all the treatises on this subject, that might be consulted by those who have time to read, or the means of procuring them.\*

Having obtained satisfaction on these points, it is very expedient that previously to making the profession of Christianity by baptism, ye take a deliberate and serious survey of the nature and extent of those obligations under which ye will bring yourselves. It is observable that our Lord, when persons expressed a disposition to become his disciples, often warned them of the difficulties to which they would expose themselves, and ingenuously laid down the terms of discipleship. There is a passage in Luke's Gospel very full and perti-

\* Some merit particular notice; as Locke's "Reasonableness of Christianity;" Squire on "Indifference to Religion;" Orr's "Theory of Religion;" Dr. Priestley's "Institutes," and "Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever;" and Paley's "View of the Evidences of Christianity."

ment to this purpose. Luke xiv. 25.—33. ‘And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned and said unto them, if any man come unto me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life,’ i. e. “be not ready to forsake them; see verse 31, and thus seem to neglect or hate them; see Matt. x. 37:”\* ‘he cannot be my disciple and whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.’ Then to impress a conviction that “coming to him was an important matter, requiring forecast,”† he illustrates the subject by appeals to his hearers under the form of striking similitudes. ‘For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying this man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth embassage and desireth conditions of peace. So, likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not,’ is not ready to forsake, if so required, in order to follow me,‡ ‘all that he hath, cannot be my disciple.’

\* Archb. Newcome.

† Id.

‡ Id.

These comparisons are very aptly used by our Lord Jesus to point out the wisdom of considering the nature of his requirements, and of anticipating the difficulties that may obstruct the path of duty. The mind will be, by these means, prepared and fortified to meet the one and fulfil the other. The way of integrity and conscience is not exempt from obstacles. Present interest, present gratifications and evil examples will often occasion some opposition.

Look forward then, and lay up those principles which will enable you to withstand temptation. Take a survey of the extent and compass of Christian duty, that ye may not, in any part, knowingly fail. The sermon of Christ on the mount, furnishes a very comprehensive outline of the obligations of the Christian character. Suppose that under your present intentions ye were to take up that discourse, to read it very deliberately, to enter into the spirit and force of every requirement, and, as ye go on, were to put to yourselves these questions—"Am I disposed, and by divine help determined to cultivate the dispositions therein recommended, to observe the rules of conduct therein laid down, to follow after the purity, benevolence, devotion and righteousness therein inculcated, and to act on the principles therein advanced?" Let this summary of Christian morals be made familiar, and as each verse or each precept is read, let the heart be examined, let the conscience be charged to observe it.

Thus will the Christian profession be assumed with judgment, under the most serious convictions,

and with the most just and rational views. Your baptism will not be a matter of form merely, or an useless ceremony. It will be a solemn act in which the understanding, the conscience and the heart will each perform their part. It will be the commencement of a most valuable and useful character. And a foundation will be laid for supporting that character with purity and propriety, with dignity and pleasure. A conduct may be expected to arise from it, which no choice or pursuit can equal in the solidity of its principles, the comfort and honour of its present fruits, or the glory and bliss of its future reward.

Lastly, it remains that they who have put on the Lord Jesus Christ by the profession of faith in him made in baptism be addressed. Your duty, ye avowed disciples of Jesus, is clearly intimated in the commission that Christ gave to his disciples; in which he directs them to teach those whom they had discipled and baptised 'to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them.' Matt. xxviii. 20. The practical exhortations which we have seen the apostles derived from the rite of baptism, point out your duty in its various branches. These are, to regard yourselves as the disciples of Christ, to walk in newness of life, and to cultivate the spirit of harmony, peace and love. The first converts, after the descent of the spirit upon them, formed themselves upon these principles. 'They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer, and, adhering to this pious course, they did eat

their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.'

With this kind of conduct are ye to follow up the profession made at baptism. Ye are to learn of Christ, taking your religion from the New Testament and not from human systems and creeds; looking up to Him, whose name ye bear, as your only Master, convinced that ye are complete in him, that his religion is so adapted to the state of mankind as not to need, so perfect in itself, as not to allow any additions to it. But in vain do ye learn your religion of Jesus, if ye do not carry the principles, in which ye are instructed, into practice. We must be Christians in deed and in truth.

“ Though our tenets are few,” says a great man, “ our professions are very large; no less than to conduct ourselves, in all respects, in this transitory life in such a manner as shall secure to us a happy immortality after death; to pass through an ensnaring world, without being ensnared by it; to see vice with all its allurements; but to abhor it and to practice virtue; to see others engaged in the eager pursuit of riches, honours, and sensual pleasure, as if they were the chief good of man, but not to join in that pursuit; to give indeed some degree of attention to these things, but to set strict bounds to our attachment to them; considering them as things of secondary, and not of primary importance; and keeping all our appetites and passions within the just restraints of reason and conscience.

“ It must be our case, as Christians, to be af-

fectured by the good and evil of this life much less than other persons are; to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and to weep as though we wept not, because the fashion of this world passes away. We must use the world, as not abusing it, being influenced by higher and nobler principles, by a supreme regard to God and his authority; wholly devoted to his will in doing and in suffering, and affectionately concerned for others as for ourselves, more especially to guard them from vice, as the greatest of all evils, that they, together with ourselves, may become partakers of a divine nature, and be heirs of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”\*

To acquit yourselves of these obligations will call for circumspection and vigour of mind. The admonition of our great Lord is here of the first importance and utility.—‘Watch and pray.’ It is also a point of great wisdom and duty not to forsake the assemblies for religious worship, nor to withdraw our attendance at the table of the Lord. The instrumental duties of religion fan the flame of devotion, bring eternal and divine objects into view, compose the mind to seriousness, and elevate the thoughts to God and heaven. With the neglect of these usually begin declensions from the life of virtue and the power of godliness. When men leave off prayer and devotion, they fall into a careless worldly temper, are betrayed into irregularities, and are prepared, by degrees, for presumptuous sins.

\* Dr. Priestley’s “Forms of Prayer for Unitarian Societies,” page 145, 6.

It becometh you to guard against every declension, against every snare that would draw you from your holy profession. It becometh you to 'give all diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end.'

In one word, be firm, Christians, to your purpose, and adorn your profession. 'Build up yourselves in your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' Amen.

FINIS.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses. The names are written in a cursive hand, and the addresses are in a more formal, printed style. The list includes names such as John Smith, James Brown, and William Green, with their respective street addresses in New York City.

2. The second part of the document is a letter or a set of instructions. It begins with a salutation, possibly "Dear Sir," and contains several paragraphs of text. The handwriting is consistent with the first part, suggesting it was written by the same person or in the same office.

3. The third part of the document is a receipt or a record of some transaction. It contains a date, a description of the item or service, and a signature. The handwriting is again consistent with the previous parts.

1850  
New York









